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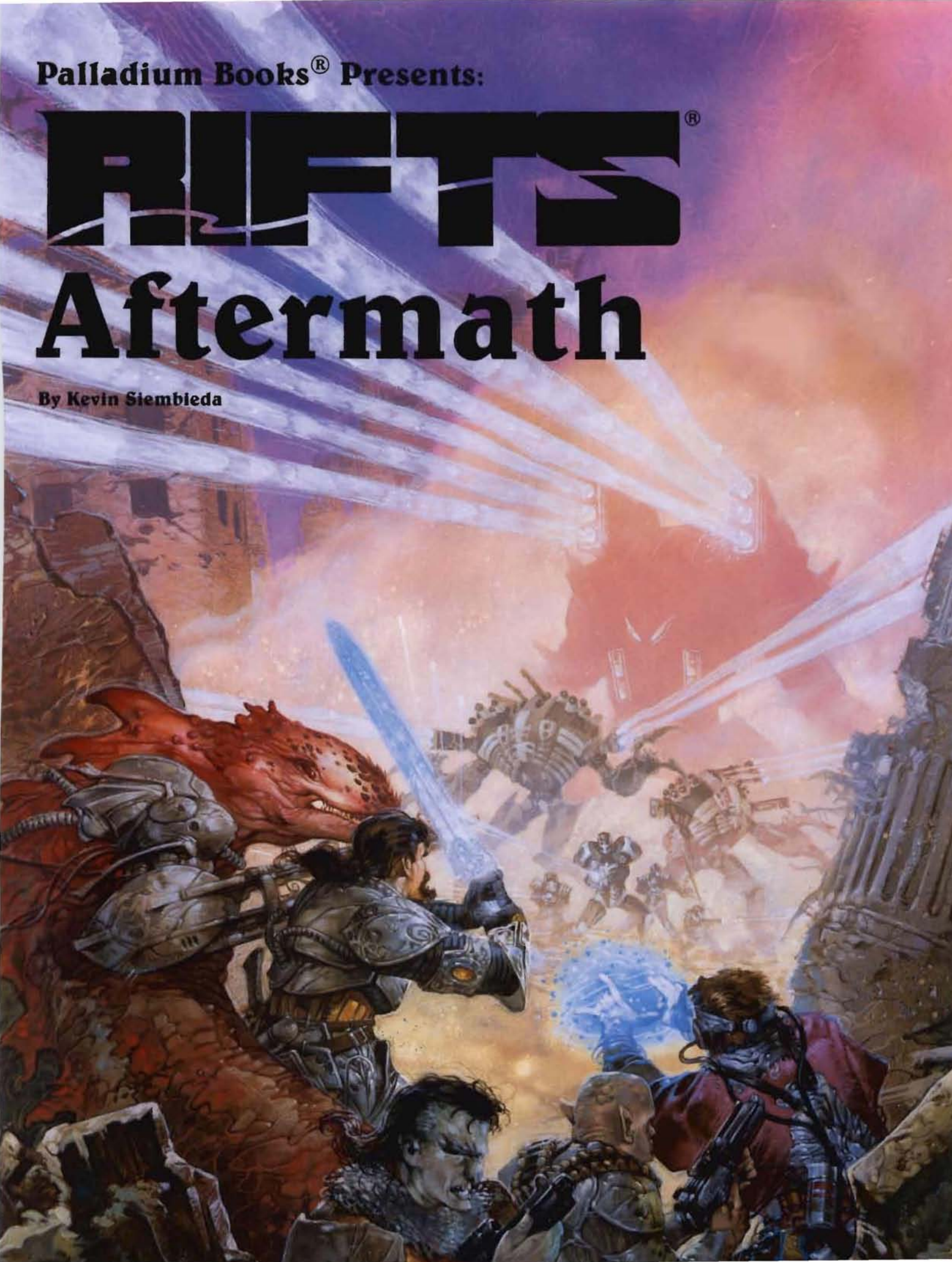
Aftermath

By Kevin Siembieda



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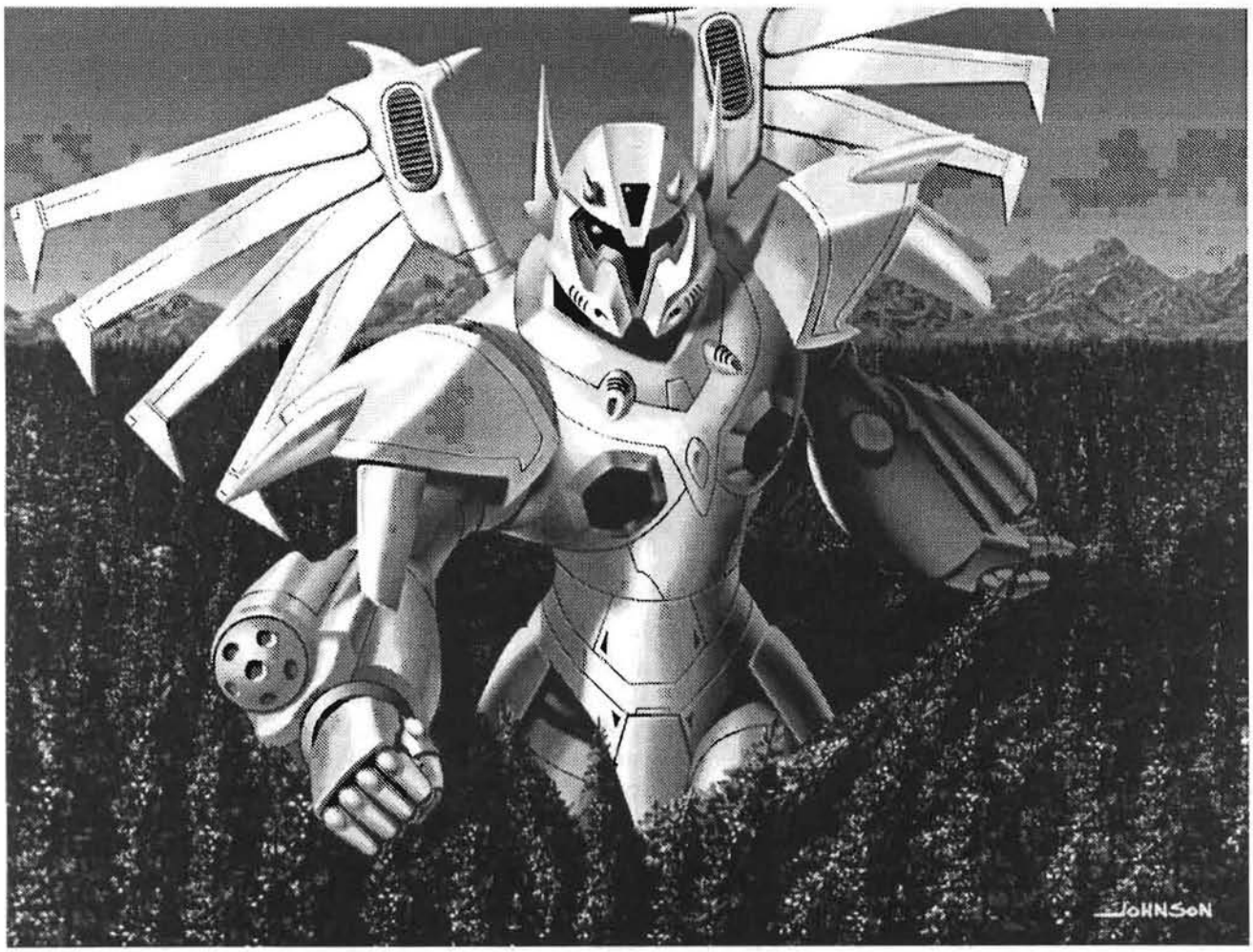

A World Overview, 109 P.A.

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To my brother, Brian and my father, Henry.

Life is a war of attrition. This book is dedicated to everyone who fights the good fight with some modicum of dignity, style and grace, and to those who hold onto their dreams.

— Kevin Siembieda, 2002

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The cover: Tolkeen resistance fighters ready themselves for a platoon of Coalition soldiers pressing through the smoke and haze of the city still under siege. Painted by Dave Dorman.

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Rifts® Aftermath, 109 P.A.

Life after Tolkeen and an World Overview

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Special Thanks to all my artists for working with me through thick and thin (not to mention helping me look good with their fantastic artistry), and to Maryann, Wayne, Alex, Steve, Bill, Erick and all the Palladium madmen who put their hearts and souls into making Palladium Books the best we can be.

— Kevin Siembieda, 2002

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A changing world

The fall of Tolkeen means different things to different people. For the Coalition States it is a moment of triumph and sweet revenge. For the refugees it is a time of terror and survival. For most people in North America it marks an end of innocence and a new era of uncertainty.

For us, dear Reader, it marks the passage of time and infinite new possibilities. It gives us the opportunity to revisit old friends and familiar places. To explore new avenues of adventure and face new challenges. To breathe new life and energy into a magical and ever-changing world we only thought we knew.

We have hopped approximately four years into the future since the Siege on Tolkeen began. The world has changed, and the fall of Tolkeen has ushered in a new era. This book tries to present a comprehensive *overview* of not only events still transpiring at Tolkeen, but the world at large.

For some, not much has changed and Tolkeen's destruction has little or no impact on them. For others, the loss of Tolkeen is profound, and may even mark a new beginning or a terrible end. For most, it foists upon them a turning point in their lives. For better or worse the world is not the same. This sourcebook sets the stage for those changes and events to come around the world. In the short term, there are dozens of adventures and dramas involving the Tolkeen refugees and the CS occupation of Minnesota. In the long term, there is trouble brewing with the Xiticix, Federation of Magic, Archie-Three, Free Quebec, Lazlo, Atlantis, and the Pecos Empire, among others here, in North America. There is also the promise of adventure and discovery in exotic lands yet to be explored.

Yes, there will be some omissions and vagueness. Yes, there will be tantalizing hints of things to come that leave the Reader hungering for more, and parts of the world left unexplored and, for the moment, to your imagination. Fear not, this sourcebook will answer more questions than it leaves, and should ignite the imagination to provide a new era of adventure.

– Kevin Siembieda, 2002

Tolkeen, 109 P.A.

"Freedom for Tolkeen! Tolkeen forever!"

Two days after Tolkeen's collapse, these cries continue to ring out from the shadows of the shattered cities, usually accompanied by gunfire or the crackle of mystic energy.

"Tolkeen forever," may be the shout of defiance, but it is the Coalition Army who is triumphant and in control.

All the great cities of the magic Kingdom of Tolkeen have fallen to the Coalition Invasion Force – Salvation, Lucky, Mad Town, Blueline, Motor City, Cobalt, Riverton, Hillcrest, Center Gear, Solomon, Markeen, Magestock, Freehold and the greatest of them all, Tolkeen.

This is the period where the thoughts of many Coalition soldiers turn to finishing the job, mopping-up, going home and try to forget the horror and hardships they have endured. The thoughts of other CS troops turn to revenge. This is their chance to return the favor of the Sorcerers' Revenge in kind. Many CS officers encourage genocide and turn a blind eye to atrocities. Surprisingly, torture and rape have been minimal, but the soldiers have been unrelenting, dispassionate and ruthless in "dispatching" the enemy. Anybody who does not wear Coalition colors dies. It is as simple as that. "No prisoners. No mercy. Remember the Sorcerers' Revenge," is the unofficial motto and "death to all," the unspoken creed for the majority of the CS troops. Wanton destruction and mass murder are leveled against the survivors of Tolkeen with methodical precision. War has erased what little, if any, compassion the soldiers might have once held for Tolkeenites. Now, they seek to wipe their enemy from the face of the Earth. To make them pay for all they have done, and pay with their lives.

The greatest resistance comes from **The Barrens** in the southeast and the last grand cities in the heart of the kingdom – **Blueline, Center Gear, Magestar, Freehold** and **Tolkeen**. Most of the smaller communities either have been flattened or are completely under CS domination, their inhabitants fled into the wilderness or massacred by the occupying Coalition Army. CS troops systematically sweep through the streets in search of resistence cells to destroy and magic items to collect. Rarely are prisoners taken. Most "enemy personnel," including civilians down to every last man, woman, and child, are put down/terminated with extreme prejudice. Giant robots and demolition crews follow behind, destroying every last standing structure, leaving only piles of rubble and stone in their wake. The CS Military High Command wants no place left for the enemy to hide, and Emperor Prosek wants "the blight that was the Kingdom of Tolkeen to be erased from the earth and buried forever." However, for the troops in the field, the most important job of these mop-up crews is the search and recovery of fallen comrades before the robots and bulldozers level the place, or the monsters and scavengers return to exact painful vengeance.

The fortunes of war

Soldiers looking to improve their own lot in life seize the moment to do so. **Opportunists and cutthroats** rob the dead, loot the ruins and sell what they can to the *Black Market* or *mysterious strangers* willing to pay in Universal Credits, no questions asked (often agents of the Federation of Magic or the Splugorth of Atlantis). Ill-gotten loot may include books, works of art, statuary, jewelry, gems, and gold, but weapons, Techno-Wizard gizmos, magic artifacts, magic weapons, and

scrolls top the list, though anything that looks magical or *might* make them money is a viable target. Half the "Dead Boys" have no idea what's magical and what's not, and most of them (90%) cannot even read. If it glows or some sorcerer or freedom fighter wants it, they assume it is magical or has value and it becomes fair game. (**Note:** The Coalition Military High Command also seeks to recover magic items and documentation and books so they can be destroyed or locked away. They do not want them falling into the hands of resistance fighters and other enemies. To this end, the CS has established special *Recovery Teams* to locate, identify and extract dangerous objects of magic and arcane knowledge. Combat soldiers know they are to collect and turn over any suspected magic items and books of every variety they might find in the field of operation. Such items are to be presented immediately to one of the CS Magic Recovery Teams or a commanding officer. If a cache of items or a Techno-Wizard laboratory, factory or library is found, the MR-Team is to secure the site and call in its coordinates immediately. Special Teams will arrive at their position within 1D4+1 minutes to take over the "clean up and extraction" or "immediate destruction" of said cache or compound.)

Honorable troops seek to win field promotions and recognition for some act of heroism, resourcefulness, intelligence, tactic or one last grand battle. Others plan to do so by capturing important figures in Tolkeen's government or military such as members of the Circle of Twelve, King Creed, Warlords (Tolkeen's Generals), other high-ranking officials or spies.

Most Grunts just want to get out alive and go home. They tend to follow the rules, turn over suspicious items and gizmos to the military authorities, accurately report what they uncover, and watch each other's back. They don't expect to get rich and sure as hell don't want to end up court-martialed and imprisoned for being greedy and stupid, not after making it this far. They keep their noses clean and play it by the numbers. They don't question orders to treat all non-Coalition personnel with "extreme prejudice" and just do what they are told. Half of them consider it fair payback, some have qualms about gunning down women and children, especially humans, but follow orders, and others are too numb to care. Besides, they have all heard stories (if not having experienced it firsthand) about dragons, demons and spell casters who disguise themselves as innocent civilians, so why take chances?

Securing the area

Top priority is securing the area to stop the attacks on Coalition troops and to prevent Tolkeenite resistence fighters, mercenaries and bandits from acquiring weapons, supplies and technology of any kind that might be used against the CS here in Tolkeen or elsewhere, now or later. The impressive stockpile of weapons, magic items and supplies throughout the kingdom are a threat to the security of the Coalition Occupation Force and the States. Adventurers, mercenaries, criminals and freedom fighters as well as organizations like the Black Market, Federation and Pecos Empire are dying (sometimes literally) to get

their hands on as much as they can. It is the Coalition Army's responsibility to make sure that does not happen.

Securing the area means pushing the enemy and looters out of the urban combat zones. This is a much more difficult job than it may sound. While the smaller cities and towns can be bulldozed under, the large cities like Tolkeen, Freehold, Magestar, Center Gear and Blueline will take weeks to demolish and until then, offer countless places for freedom fighters and thieves to hide.

Resistence cells are holed up behind barricades, fortified positions and on rooftops throughout the cities. Likewise, snipers and bushwhackers deploying hit and run tactics are all over the place. CS aircraft bomb and strafe with limited effectiveness, and ground troops do the best they can.

Matters are complicated by the fact that local Tolkeenites know "their" city's layout like the back of their hands. They know the short cuts, the hiding places, the secret basements and all the roads and back alleys, enabling them to circumvent the movements of the best trained CS Rangers and Special Forces. As a result, local snipers and guerilla fighters can strike, do damage, and slip away before the CS troops can adequately respond, and by the time the Dead Boys arrive at the location they *think* their assailants attacked from, the perpetrators are long gone, or worse, in position to hit them again. In short, though *fragmented* into hundreds of small groups scattered across the city, these fighters are highly mobile and can, for the moment, run rings around the CS invaders. This has made "securing" more than a third of the neighborhoods impossible. And without secured lines of defense, Tolkeenites, bandits and adventurers are able to slip in and out of even those areas considered being held by CS forces, compromising the entire operation. This is to be expected, especially in the early days after Tolkeen's fall, but expected or not, it leaves open endless opportunities for the enemy and opportunists.

The rather *unexpected* appearance of third party outsiders such as the Splugorth, Black Market, Federation of Magic and bold gangs making raids and salvage runs into the occupied zones complicates matters further, adding to the chaos and unpredictability, forcing the CS troops to spread out thinner, and causing a number of tactical and logistical problems.

Environment and extenuating conditions are also a factor. As noted above, the "urban" setting with its skyscrapers, large buildings, underground tunnels, basements, sewer systems and so on, always creates one of the most difficult environments for invasion, for they stymie both ground and air operations. The heat, smoke and falling ash from the parts of the cities on fire, while destructive, fouls sensors and provides cover for the enemy. Not only that, but the CS troops must stay out of the fire's way or suffer injury. Its true that environmental body armor, power armor and robot vehicles protect their users, but vision and optics are still diminished, and the heat in some places exceeds the limits of the armor, and more importantly, damages the integrity of the burning structure. Falling debris and collapsing floors and walls can all crush, pin, bury and kill careless soldiers. On the other hand, there are supernatural beings and magic that can better protect the enemy, enabling Tolkeen's

resistence fighters, rescue teams and scavengers to use fire and smoke to cover their activities. In fact, some commanders suspect sorcerers are fueling and controlling the fires to their advantage and using Elementals to gather what they need, hold up buildings or spread the carnage to afflict the Coalition troops.

Magic also remains a thorn in the Coalition's side. Now that a couple of days have passed, the trio of ley lines have settled down, making them available for use by Ley Line Walkers and others who can draw upon and manipulate their energies. Fortunately for the Coalition Invasion Force, they have done such severe damage to the infrastructure of the kingdom and the tri-city area (Tolkeen, Freehold and Magestar) that the primary magical defenses are destroyed, the government shattered, the military in tatters, and the majority of magic wielding defenders, warriors and leaders dead or on the run. That leaves only scattered groups of independent resistence fighters, individuals, bands of refugees, and the influx of outsiders coming in to loot the cities for the Coalition Army to deal with. It is enough. Practitioners of magic and supernatural beings are teleporting in and out using the ley lines, deploying Elementals, demons and spirits to do their searches and assist in recovery and defense, and raising the dead of their fellow Tolkeenites to attack the soldiers for a second time. Magic also helps to conceal, obscure, and secure enemy activity, as well as mislead CS troops and foil sensors. These factors all play a role in the Coalition's Military High Command taking a hard line with their "shoot to kill" edict and the scorched earth approach. The CS needs to eliminate as many things that work to the enemy's advantage as possible in order to fight their opponents effectively and win. Since they can't take away the ley lines themselves, they will do everything in their power to take away everything else: starting with hiding places, resources, spell casters, ease of movement and strength in numbers. Reduce these elements and the enemy is crippled, and it is only a matter of time until they are crushed entirely.

A race for magic & secrets

One of the stranger aspects of the fighting in and around the city of Tolkeen and other centers of magic, is pitched battles between Coalition troops and one or more outside factions trying to recover magic items and state secrets. This has created a frenetic free-for-all contest as every faction imaginable scrambles to find and capture Tolkeen's most powerful magic weapons, war machines, magic artifacts and secrets before the others. Not only does this make it a Coalition Army against the world situation, but rival factions are often willing to kill each other over the magic items. All parties brave the CS occupied ruins of Tolkeen's Techno-Wizard and manufacturing centers in search of documents, notes, and clues, while others seek to find some of the actual inventors and laborers who might know enough of a procedure that one might be able to figure it out for oneself.

The Coalition States does not want *anybody* to get their hands on magic items or Techno-Wizard design secrets. Thus, the Army has made it a top priority to find and destroy all Techno-Wizard factories, labs and research facilities.

Second, is to find, confiscate and lock away or destroy all Techno-Wizard weapons, devices and gizmos, as well as any items of magic and books on the subject.

Third, find and destroy all *Techno-Wizards* so they can NOT share their secrets or help the likes of the Federation of Magic piece together Tolkeen's secrets.

Fourth, find and destroy all *Iron Juggernauts* and other unique TW creations so they cannot be taken apart and reverse engineered.

Fifth, track down and terminate any *individual or group* believed to be selling, buying, smuggling, stealing, or making magic contraband.

Sixth, track down and terminate all outside parties searching for magic contraband or interfering with Coalition business (i.e., raiders who target CS troops and transports).

The Federation of Magic and the **Splugorth of Atlantis** both desperately desire to acquire the secrets of the *Iron Juggernauts.* Running across a few of Tolkeen's rarest and most powerful magic artifacts are also desired but secondary objectives. The Iron Juggernauts represent a new technological breakthrough in Techno-Wizardry and both empires want it. The secrets of the Juggernauts' designs may already be lost. Half of Tolkeen burns. The other half lays in ruins. Many of the key practitioners of magic working in the tech-centers have already perished or run for the hills. Furthermore, recent bits of information suggest that King Creed deliberately kept the entire creation process divided into three elite groups of Tolkeen Techno-Wizards. Without the knowledge and expertise of all

three groups, the Iron Juggernauts cannot be made, and rumor has it that Warlord Scard has assassinated one of those three teams to prevent the secret from being used by outsiders.

Lord Dunscon has dispatched 600 agents to find the secrets of the Iron Juggernauts, Lord Splynncryth of Atlantis, 1000 of his Minions (many unsuspecting slave races, as well as a few elite groups of Tattooed Men, Sunaj and dragons).

Tolkeen resistence fighters want these precious magic items and weapons to supply their own underground forces. Without manufacturing capabilities and with the kingdom of Tolkeen in ruin, those who fight on must scavenge for everything from weapons and gear to food and clothing.

Adventurers, mercenaries, pirates and thieves could care less about technological secrets, they seek magical artifacts and lesser magic items, weapons, components and treasure – pulling them from the rubble and out of the hands of anybody who may have gotten to them first. This means adventurers, fellow sorcerers, Tolkeen survivors and Coalition troops are regularly attacked and robbed of magic items scrounged from the ruins or as they are being carried off to other locales. These fortune hunters come from all over the country, but rarely represent any community or government. The largest and boldest of the mercenary groups and raiders dare to attack Coalition convoys believed to be carting magical booty back to Chi-Town to be locked away inside the Black Vault. According to urban legends originating from the Chi-Town 'Burbs, the Black Vault is an ultra-secret containment facility where the CS stores rare and indestructible magic items to take them out of circulation and prevent them from being used against the CS. Legend has it that thousands of items have been collected, crated and locked away since the days of the Federation of Magic's first attack on Chi-Town and Joseph Prosek's Bloody Campaign. Some tales claim the CS started to collect magic items before that time to empower its spell casting Special Ops division disbanded nearly a hundred years ago.

Archie Three has been studying CS operations, strategy and tactics throughout the war. He is curious about the different technologies at Tolkeen, but fears magic and avoids Techno-Wizardry. Archie is the only one NOT trying to capture Tolkeen magic items and tech secrets. However, Archie may direct (via satellite) his Skelebot spies to intercede on behalf of the CS by using the 'bots to report "enemy activity" and have his faux Skelebots respond to trouble the same as the real article, thus drawing CS troops to the scene of conflict. Archie has no love for the Federation of Magic or the Minions of Splugorth, and is happy to foil any of their schemes. Hagan, on the other hand, would love to get hold of powerful magic weapons and gizmos, but has his hands full with other matters.

King Creed, Malik Savant and other good folk (the player characters?) will realize that the Tolkeenites have opened a Pandora's box with their TW creations. They never stopped to think about what might happen if they lost the war or in whose hands their secrets might fall. As much as they hate the CS, they realize that the Federation of Magic is evil and even worse. If their secrets fall into the Federation's hands, only war, violence and evil can come of it. Consequently, they and others (rogue Cyber-Knights, well-intentioned practitioners of magic and those enlightened to the horrors that such secrets in the wrong hands might bring) are all actively out to *destroy* and bury their own creations!

Adventure ideas based on this theme:

1. Find a secret base or lab to destroy it or the vital data it contains. That means avoiding the Coalition's notice and losing any third party who might be tailing the group.

2. Find and destroy the Federation or Splugorth team that has gotten some files.

3. Find and destroy Federation or Splugorth teams that have gotten hold of one or more Iron Juggernauts for reverse engineering.

4. Find Federation of Magic (or other) team that has captured one or more scientists and Techno-Wizards being tortured or coerced to reveal their secrets. May involve extortion, kidnaping, disappearances, and threats against the Tolkeenites' loved ones.

5. Bandits who have gotten their hands on computers, data files, prototypes and/or some other vital information or key component for creating Iron Juggernauts, but don't know what they have. This information must be retrieved (and destroyed) before it falls into the wrong hands. Taking it by force is one option, but these bandits are entrepreneurs and glad to sell or trade whatever they have.

6. Mad scientist/Techno-Wizard who knows all the secrets is willing to give the Federation of Magic anything they want, regardless of the consequences, to extract revenge against the CS. Find and Mind Wipe this sucker before it's too late!

7. Free-for-alls. This is a wild situation where free-for-all competition is likely. In many cases the contest to get this information will be a three- to five-way skirmish: Good guy Tolkeenites, Bad guy agents of the Federation of Magic, good guy player characters (perhaps representing the interests of Lazlo, Cyber-Knights or other force for good), maybe a fourth party (mercs, pirates, Splugorth, Black Market, Archie, Cyber-Knights, adventurers, etc.), *plus* the CS who wants to see the others all eliminated and the data destroyed. In fact, this will happen whenever a high profile magic artifact or cache of weapons or magic items is discovered or its *alleged whereabouts* become known, not just over Juggernaut secrets. Remember too, that this is war, and during war, intelligence reports are unreliable, so half the time rival factions will be fighting and killing each other for *nothing*.

CS Magic Recovery Teams

For the Coalition Occupation Force, the aggressive action taken by outside forces scrambling to loot the cities of magic drives home just how urgent it is for them to recover magical artifacts and destroy Tolkeen documents, books, and records as quickly as possible. If they fail, magic items and weapons of mass destruction may fall into the hands of other monsters and evil empires. The Federation of Magic is one such enemy, the Minions of Splugorth another. The Coalition High Command has come to expect the worst from the Federation so their appearance is not unexpected. It does disturb them, however, that the Minions of Splugorth are on the scene. The army hopes the Minions have come so deep into Coalition held territory only to take advantage of a rare opportunity, but fears that the Splugorth may be eyeballing parts of North America for conquest and testing the Coalition Army's mettle. In a show of force and disdain, Coalition forces are actively hunting Minions of Splugorth and destroying them wherever they are encountered, even if it means

allowing D-Bees caught as slaves to escape their clutches. The Coalition Army will not tolerate these monsters for any reason and trusts their swift action will give the Splugorth reason to give up any ideas about expanding into the Americas.

To expedite the recovery of dangerous magic items and secrets, the CS military has formed special squads of elite soldiers known as Magic Recovery Teams (MR-Teams). These Special Ops have only two objectives: 1. Find and recover magic items. This includes documentation and machinery used for the creation of magic devices. 2. Prevent said magic items from falling to the enemy by any means necessary. This includes destroying all opposition, and if a given magic item(s) cannot be recovered it is to be destroyed.

Unlike the regular army whose troops work in a coordinated effort to secure and hold the enemy strongholds that are the streets of the fallen cities, the MR-Team does not wait and goes out into hostile, enemy held and unsecured areas to do their job. For them "the enemy" includes resistance fighters, bandits, scavengers and anybody who is an obstacle in the completion of their objectives. Though they may report enemy positions, strongholds, and troop movement, the MR-Team does not engage them unless they represent an immediate threat or obstacle to the mission, otherwise they are noted, ignored and avoided. Likewise, refugees hiding among the ruins or trying to flee the city are completely ignored, unless there is reason to believe they may possess magic items or secrets. Thus, CS Magic Recovery Teams prowl the ruins of Tolkeen's cities quietly searching for magic and competing with rebel and inhuman rivals on the same quest. To be safe, MR-Teams investigate anything that resembles a salvage operation and small groups who seem to be looking for something or obviously have one or more practitioners of magic among them. Though this may lead to a dead end, MR-Teams follow every lead as well as their gut instincts and the impressions of their psychic teammates. All squads have at least two psychic sensitives (four including Dog Boys), two soldiers with expertise in demolitions, two SAMAS for ground to air and air to ground assaults, and two heavy ground units for support and heavy munitions. Dozens of these squads are found in every city, operating around the clock, twenty-four/seven. MR-Teams may go into the field without reporting to base camp headquarters for up to three days at a time. They are considered a Special Ops unit engaged in covert activity involving reconnaissance, search and destroy, sabotage and recovery.

The typical Coalition Magic Recovery Team (12 member unit) consists of one RCSG Scientist, one CS Ranger or Commando, two Coalition Psi-Stalkers or psychics, two Dog Boys, two CS Juicers, one Cyborg Strike Trooper, two Special Forces in SAMAS power armor and one RPA pilot in an IAR-4 Hellraiser or IAR-5 Hellfire. Soldiers with EOD will carry a variety of explosives into the field, including Fusion Blocks.

Support: A wing of 1D4+4 *SAMAS* can be to any "hot zone" in two minutes. An *armored squad* of 2-4 giant robots (any

combo of UAR-1, IAR-2 and IAR-3) and 6-8 infantry power armor troops (typically Maulers and/or Terror Troopers with one or two Hellraisers or Glitter Boy Killers) or a Spider-Skull Walker with a full contingent of standard troops, can usually be on the scene within 1D6+6 minutes. **Note:** Support is only called when the MR-Team is under heavy fire and taking casualties, or when a magic design compound, TW factory or large cache of magic is found and the team needs help with the recovery or destroying it on sight.

Insertion: Method of insertion is typically by foot, but sometimes involves a ground transport vehicle or airlifts via combat helicopter.

Extraction: Combat Helicopter, Death's Head Transport or Spider-Skull Walker. If the "hot zone" is really hot the extraction may be supported by additional heavy armored units (tanks, giant robots, other Walkers, etc.) and/or air units (helicopters, power armor, etc.).

CS Rescue & Recovery Teams

Hand in hand with securing the occupied enemy territory is the recovery of fallen comrades. This is the mission of CS Rescue and Recovery Teams (RRT). These units search for fallen comrades laying hurt and in need of help, buried under tons of debris or slain in combat and in need of recovery before their bodies can be desecrated or eaten by the fiendish denizens of Tolkeen. A Rescue and Recovery Team may even attempt to rescue soldiers being held captive by the enemy or pinned down by enemy fire, though most call for the infantry (a squad or platoon, or Commando unit) to lead the charge while they provide support. For most soldiers in the field, this is top priority, second only to securing the vector. Even retribution against the enemy comes second.

The "Dead Boy" environmental armor worn by the Coalition troops dramatically improves the odds for a Coalition soldier's survival even if a building is dropped on top of him. However, while the Mega-Damage armor *might* help to save a soldier's life, the impact and weight of the debris may still crush and kill the warrior, and will certainly inflict injury and bury or pin him. When buried under tons of debris, the Mega-Damage body armor, power armor, and robot vehicles can save lives, provided the armor is not breached, injuries are not life threatening, and some of the other debris has helped to disperse the weight and pressure of the load. The armor improves one's chances for survival when buried alive, but death is still a possibility, turning the armor into an M.D.C. coffin. Sensors and radios do not work well underground or when buried under tons of debris. For one thing, the impact is likely to damage them (01-75% likelihood) and for another, the tons and tons of dirt, metal, rock and debris covers and interferes with mechanical sensors and communications (01-50%). If the integrity of the armor is breached, the environmental capabilities are compromised and the air supply is reduced by half.

Armor & Air. Most suits of environmental body armor can keep air pumping for a minimum of five or six hours. If the vic-

tim can avoid hyperventilating and relax, since he is inactive, the air supply can usually be stretched by an additional one third, double if the character is skilled in the ways of *meditation*. The air filtration and circulation system in most suits is such that it can usually recycle the air for 2D6+10 hours without much difficulty. Beyond that it is a crap-shoot (2D4 hours). Of course, if there is an air pocket trapped with the buried victim, the suit's oxygen and air purification system will not engage until the available air supply is used up or goes bad; an air pocket may last 6D6 hours. In rare cases, a regular stream of air is available indefinitely. Most environmental suits automatically engage when air is gone or toxic gases are detected.

Dead Boy body armor has a five-hour oxygen supply that is easily good for 2D6+10 hours. All **CS power armor** (and most good quality commercial power armor) and **robot vehicles** can last for 72 hours (three days) without difficulty, and after that the air starts to get stale but remains breathable for another 2D4+10 hours (+12 for robot vehicles and tanks). Beyond that, every six hours there is a 01-33% chance the air goes bad or the circulation system shuts down. These facts make the rescue of foot soldiers buried alive top priority, and the recovery of power armor and robot units secondary, unless it is known their air or armor has been compromised.

Other life-threatening factors. Coalition soldiers trapped in the field of combat are more likely to perish from dehydration, starvation, physical injury or enemy attack.

Dying from dehydration (lack of water) can kill the average human in 3+1D4 days, as well as causing muscle cramps and severe weakness. If a victim has air and drinkable water but no food, he can survive for at least a month, probably twice that long. He will be weak from starvation but one can survive much longer without food than without water.

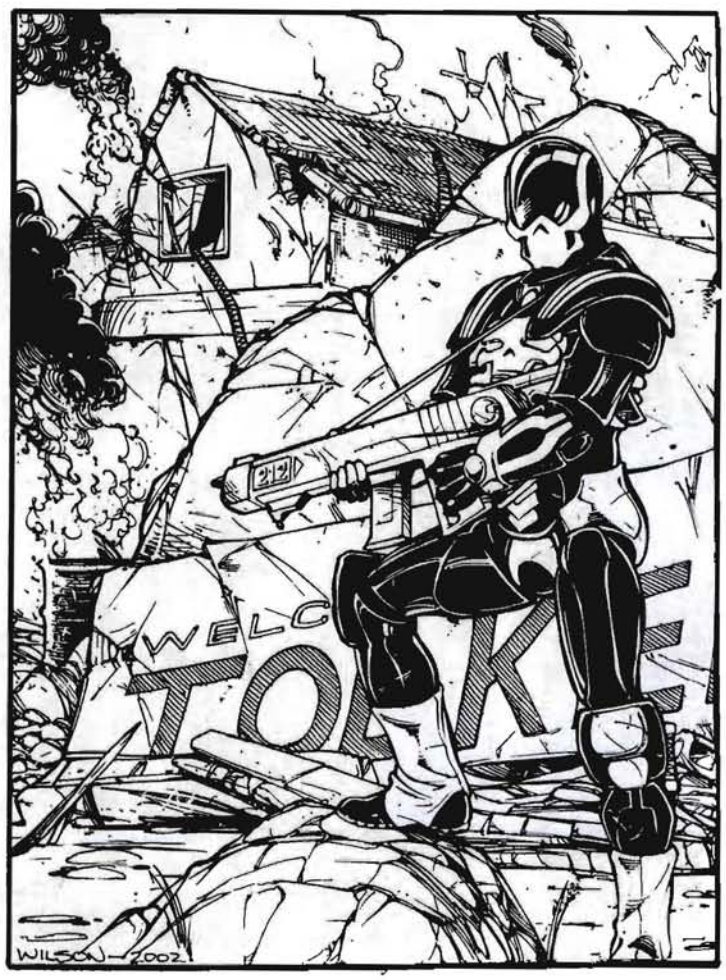
Physical injury, even minor injury which is not normally a problem, can become life threatening if trapped without medical treatment. A slow loss of blood from a wound or internal bleeding can result in death within a few hours to 48 hours depending on the severity and whether anything can be done to treat it in the least. Likewise a wound can become infected and without treatment, ravage the body. With water and air the injured and ill individual may last 1D6+4 days before dying from infection.

The enemy is always a threat. In the case of trapped Coalition soldiers it comes down to who finds them first, their comrades or the enemy. If found by the enemy, the question becomes, what will the enemy do to them? There are three likely outcomes: 1. Kill them where they lie. 2. Take them prisoner. 3. Cover them back up, and leave them where they lie. Only the most noble of heroes will rescue and release hated Coalition soldiers, but it may happen once in a while. Soldiers taken prisoner are likely to be interrogated and killed, or interrogated and used as hostages to extort the Coalition Army for any number of things (safe passage for refugees, release of Tolkeen P.O.W.s, food or supplies, etc.). Monstrous factions might kill and eat prisoners. Slavers will capture them, strip them of weapons and armor, chain them and export them to be sold as slaves anywhere in the world, or beyond. Rarely will captive CS soldiers be interrogated and released. **Note:** Remember, the Tolkeen government and military are *GONE*. All that is left are independent and vengeful bands of resistence fighters and predatory gangs of bandits, looters, slavers, mercenaries, adventurers and refugees. There are no P.O.W. camps or unifying leader. It is a savage free-for-all.

The typical Coalition Rescue & Recovery Team (12 member unit) consists of two Medical Specialists (basically two Doctors with basic Grunt combat training), two or three Dog Boys of a breed known to have a keen sense of smell to literally sniff out survivors, one Psychic Sensitive to sense for signs of life, two or three Grunts, two Coalition Cyborg Strike Troopers (may have special attachments for digging and drilling like commercial Mining 'Borgs), one Military Specialist or Commando with EOD skills, two RPA pilots in Mauler or Terror Trooper power armor and one in SAMAS power armor. May be accompanied by one RPA pilot in an IAR-4 Hellraiser or IAR-5 Hellfire. The use of Dog Boys has played a huge role in locating injured, trapped and dead troops.

Support: A wing of 1D4+4 *SAMAS* can be to any "hot zone" in two minutes, or an *EVAC Helicopter* in four. An *armored squad* of 2-4 giant robots (any combo of UAR-1, IAR-2 and IAR-3) and 6-8 infantry power armor troops (typically Maulers and/or Terror Troopers with one or two Hellraisers or Glitter Boy Killers) or a Spider-Skull Walker or other armored ground transport with additional medical help can usually arrive within 1D6+6 minutes.

A "dig" team – one or two full platoons composed of engineering, mining, medical and emergency specialists trained in digging people out of rubble without killing them – can be assembled and on site in 1D6+15 minutes. **Note:** Support is only called when the RRT is under heavy fire and taking casualties



and when troops requiring immediate medical attention are discovered. A "dig team" is called only when the RRT has made positive identification of trapped troops requiring excavation.

Insertion: Method of insertion is typically by foot, but sometimes involves a ground transport vehicle or airlifts via combat helicopter.

Extraction: Combat Helicopter, Death's Head Transport or Spider-Skull Walker. If the "hot zone" is really hot, the extraction may be supported by additional heavy armored units (tanks, giant robots, other Walkers, etc.) and/or air units (helicopters, power armor, etc.).

Psychological Trauma Table (optional)

Even if one survives the ordeal, the soldier is likely to suffer from the emotional trauma of having been *buried alive* for hours, possibly days. Roll on the following table to determine if there is any emotional/mental trauma and its severity. Unless stated otherwise, the condition is permanent.

01-10% Severe trauma: Cannot wear full, environmental armor of any kind even though it saved his life; feeling like he cannot breathe and is suffocating as soon as the helmet is put on, locked and sealed. Can wear armor without a full helmet. Dislikes small, enclosed places but can handle it.

11-20% Severe trauma: Terrified of the dark. Outdoors at night with its ambient light and wide-open spaces, the character feels a bit jumpy (-1 on initiative), but otherwise okay. In total darkness or if locked inside a pitch black room, the character curls into a ball and becomes catatonic, incapable of anything but trembling and whimpering.

21-30% Severe trauma: Claustrophobic. Ironically, this character has no problem wearing his protective armor and talks about how it saved his life all the time. However, he cannot stand to go into small, enclosed areas such as a narrow sewer pipe or tunnel, solitary confinement, a closet, small room, small elevator, trunk of a car, or small dark confined areas of any kind. If necessary, he can go into an elevator or tunnel provided it is only for a minute or two, it is well lit and keeps moving. If he has to stop or the lights go out, the soldier goes into a panic attack, screaming and trying to claw his way out, or slips into a catatonic state. Recovers his senses a minute or two after he is removed from confinement.

31-40% Minor trauma: Afraid of the dark. Okay outdoors, but frightened and jumpy when in a dark confined environment like halls and rooms inside a dark building, an unlit basement, tunnels, etc. While in that environment reduce all of the character's combat bonuses by half, skill performance by -10%, and he is -3 to save vs magical or psionic "fear" attacks. Recovers immediately when away from that situation. Okay if there is ample light.

41-50% Minor trauma: Abandoned buildings or any situation where the character could get buried alive makes the individual nervous and distracted. While in that environment reduce all of the character's combat bonuses by half, skill performance by -10%, and he is -3 to save vs magical or psionic "fear" attacks. Recovers immediately when away from that situation.

51-60% Temporary trauma. Feels anxious, distracted (-1 on all combat bonuses, -15% on skill performance) and cannot sleep. Symptoms last for 3D6 days before going away, otherwise, okay.

61-00% Shook up, but okay.

Mop Up Operations

The Coalition Army has pretty much secured the perimeter around each city, including Tolkeen and Freehold, leaving only the "inner city core" and isolated neighborhoods unsecured. Thus, for the moment, Military Operations, field command, base camps and hospitals are located on the *perimeter* while the infantry and special forces continue to clear out the urban hot zones and isolated, entrenched enemy strongholds.

Coalition casualties resulting during the Siege on Tolkeen have been relatively light, especially compared to the tens of thousands of Tolkeenites who perished when the tri-city area fell, and the thousands of refugees, resistance fighters and holdouts who continue to fall.

In the days following the collapse of Tolkeen the Coalition's numerical superiority, firepower, and quick response are able to keep Tolkeen resistance off its feet, on the run, and unable to organize into an effective counterinsurgency force. The Tolkeen army is crushed and only tiny resistance groups working alone and without proper resources remain to be ferreted out and destroyed. It will take a while, but even tapping into the ley lines the level of damage they can inflict on the CS is low. Magic continues to be the "great equalizer" and gives the Tolkeen resistance fighters an edge. However, the Coalition High Command considers this to be a standard "mop up" procedure that will take an extra couple of months due to the involvement of magic. They are probably right.

CS Field Medical Ops

Although casualties (i.e., actual deaths) are surprisingly low for the Coalition Army, injuries are heavy. Mega-Damage armor only protects to a point, powerful impacts, falls, and getting clobbered by magical weapons may fracture ribs, break or dislocate bones, sprain muscles, and cause concussions, contusions and lacerations, as well as possible internal injury. Furthermore, damage to the armor may cause shrapnel to injure the wearer or puncture the suit negating the "environmental"capabilities of the suit, and some magic spells and psionic attacks can bypass the armor to directly affect the wearer inside. The bottom line is that, every day, the Coalition field hospitals and triage centers are packed with soldiers suffering from minor cuts, bruises and injury from the field of combat. Most are not serious enough to send them home, and the majority of the injured are cycled back into the field of duty in 2-4 days, but they do require some medical attention.

Coalition military hospitals are clean, efficient and well managed. The main facility is a combination of tents, light prefab M.D.C. buildings that can be quickly put together and torn down for easy transport (all army hospitals are mobile units) and offers a full range of advanced medicine, procedures and facilities, including Cyber-Docs, medical specialists, nano-repair systems, synthetic skin and the whole-nine-yards. The most severe cases are sent to Chi-Town or Iron Heart via Medivac.

The collection and **disposal of the dead** also falls to the Medical Division of the Army. Coalition soldiers lost in combat

are recovered, identified, bagged, and shipped home to their loved ones for a proper burial.

The disposal of the enemy is also part of the job. Digging out the dead Tolkeenites is an important job because they represent a serious health hazard, especially in the summer heat. Wild dogs, wolves and other meat-eating predators and scavengers are attracted by the scent of death and prowl the crumbling cities of Tolkeen to feed upon the dead and dying. Animals represent a threat to troops by way of animal attacks as well as carrying and spreading disease, and provide one more cover identity for spell casters who can use metamorphosis to transform themselves to look like an ordinary animal. Of greater concern are decomposition and the threat of disease. Another worry is that every dead body represents an automaton a *Necromancer* can animate and use against CS troops. Consequently, the recovery and disposal of the dead is a priority issue for the CS Occupation Forces. The Medical Division coordinates and supervises such operations, but it is poor *grunts* who are made to go out to gather and bag bodies by the thousands and transport them to "disposal centers." The cheapest and easiest way to dispose of the bodies is to *disintegrate* them. Most Mega-Damage energy weapons effectively atomize or disintegrate S.D.C. structures – or as warriors say, "mist" them, turns them into a thin red mist. Burying the remains in a mass grave is not a viable alternative, because the bodies could still be used by Necromancers or inhabited by entities. As a result, the dead are gathered up, dumped in a pit at a disposal center, nothing more than an open area designated as a drop point with several huge pits dug out. M.D. plasma and flamethrowers are used on the body piles to incinerate the remains completely, leaving only a thin dusting of ash.

Coalition Bounties

With the end of the Coalition-Tolkeen War, there are a large number of mercenaries out of work. Added to their numbers are a good number of freedom fighters, psychics and practitioners of magic who learned how to fight during the war, and now hope to parlay that knowledge and experience into a way of making money as mercenaries. Desperate and hungry, many are willing to work for just about anybody for a quarter or third of what they normally get. This means any tin-plated tyrant, wealthy businessman, gang leader, crime lord or mercenary outfit can hire these freelancers to do just about anything.

Ever the opportunist, the Coalition Army has hired hundreds of mercenaries for seek and destroy, reconnaissance, sabotage and spy missions as well as offering millions of credits in *bounties*. Coalition High Command figures that having mercenaries, adventurers, and bounty hunters chasing after fugitives for a reward will keep these roughnecks busy, out of trouble and engaged in efforts that should help the CS eliminate monsters and potential resistance leaders. With any luck they may actually produce results in getting some of the war criminals wanted by the CS.

To collect on a bounty, the man-hunter must provide *indisputable proof* that said individual is dead or the captive is who he is supposed to be. That's where a live prisoner is best, or a dead, recognizable body comes in handy, though DNA testing may be required as further evidence. Next, he must find a CS Representative who has the *authority* to accept bounties in order to pay out on a bounty. As a rule, that is a *CS Office of Bounties*. This means sometimes the bounty hunter must be escorted by a CS squad, along with his prisoner(s), to the proper authorities. This may offer an opportunity for the prisoner to escape (sorry, no bounty even if he escapes because of a CS blunder) or for the group to fall under attack from the prisoner's allies, freedom

fighters or even other bounty hunters who want to claim the reward for themselves and are willing to jump a CS squad of soldiers to get it. Similarly, turning a captive over to a Military Commander/CS Officer is sheer folly as the officer has no authority to pay and may, if unscrupulous, collect the bounty for himself or skim 10-50% off for himself, claiming the bounty had been reduced.

Note: The regions where bounty hunting is highest (almost to the point of ridiculousness) are *Minnesota, Wisconsin,* and the Coalition States of *Iowa, Missouri, Lone Star* and *Chi-Town* (namely in the Chi-Town 'Burbs) for Tolkeen fugitives and other humanoids; Minnesota, Wisconsin, the Dakotas, Manitoba, and southwestern Ontario for Xiticix bounties.

Bounties on Tolkeen War Criminals:

There are bounties on a thousand people from Tolkeen the CS wants "brought to justice," *dead or alive*. Not to mention other criminals, fugitives and enemies of the Coalition States (most are in the 20,000-100,000 credits range). Typical bounties are as follows:

Bottom of the barrel: 100-1000 credits for ordinary Tolkeen resistence fighters, suspected spies, and monstrous minions like Brodkil, Gargoyles, Witchlings, etc., brought in "alive." However, this is a hit and miss proposition, and whether a reward is paid for these bottom-feeders of the old Tolkeen Army often depends on the mood of the Coalition Officer or Agent for the Office of Bounties to whom the individual is turned over.

Low-End Tolkeenites is 10,000 to 40,000 credits, including Daemonix and dragon hatchlings.

Mid-Level Desperados: 75,000 to 250,000 credits; includes Cyber-Knights known to have fought on the side of Tolkeen, adult dragons, Tolkeen's commanders and known champions, leaders of *ongoing resistance,* and members of the most notorious combat squads, including the First Calgary Volunteers, Caliber Street Irregulars, Simvan Lord Murgesh, The Jorukeva, Jara & Company, The Dark Cabal (all described in *Coalition Wars 3: Sorcerers' Revenge*), and The Timewalkers to name a few.

The *Most Wanted:* 500,000 to two million credits! Includes members of Tolkeen's Circle of Twelve, Generals and top Warlords, some of the most famous (and powerful) practitioners of magic and Dragon Kings.

Xiticix bounties:

50 credits a head for Workers, Nannies and Nits.

75 credits a head for Warriors and Diggers.

100 credits a head for Leapers.

150 credits a head for Hunter/Scouts.

200 credits a head for Super Warriors.

100,000 credits for a young Queen.

500,000 for an elder Queen.

The use of mercenaries and bounty hunters is a double-edged sword that cuts both ways. Bands of mercenaries who cannot find gainful employment (of which there are many) may engage in cattle rustling, robbing, raiding and intimidation/extortion tactics (i.e., threaten they will attack) to get food and basic supplies. These bands have turned into raiders and bandits who plunder other groups of mercenaries, adventurers and even refugees and resistance fighters.

They are a problem for the Occupation Force because with so few viable targets in the area, that only leaves the Coalition Army and the ruins of the kingdom to target. As a result, there are scores of independent bands of well equipped and experienced mercenaries digging through the ruins of the fallen kingdom to dig out whatever valuables, magic items, secrets and just about anything they can sell for a profit. This adds to the Coalition's problems in securing the urban hot zones and stopping scavengers from looting the cities of magic, data and valuables. The boldest mercenaries raid supply depots, transport vehicles and troops in the field, stealing whatever gear, food and equipment the brigands can lay their hands on.

Amateur Bounty Hunters. With the bounties offered for Xiticix heads and so many Tolkeen fugitives, there are a good number of "amateurs" out hunting, hoping to make some easy money or a big score. Of course, the work of man-hunting is far from easy, and even gunning for Xiticix is fraught with peril. Consequently, these amateur bounty hunters regularly get themselves killed or into trouble. Many get lost, starve to death, or fall victim to their prey. Others accidentally get in the way of or interfere with the capture of a "mark" by professional bounty hunters. They are also the ones most likely to resort to bushwhacking and jumping other hunters to steal supplies, ammunition and even a captive to claim the reward for themselves. These would-be man-hunters often travel in packs like scurvy wolves, 1D6+5 members strong.

The Streets of Tolkeen

It is only a few days since the heart of the Kingdom stopped beating with the fall of Tolkeen and Freehold.

The sounds of fighting and gunfire ring out from the still smoking ruins. In some parts of the city, fires still burn, filling the sky with black clouds as if a storm hangs over the city.

Other parts of the city are quiet, nothing moving among its shattered bones. Silence and calm, however, can be deceiving, for *anything* could lurk among the ruins of toppled buildings and blasted walls – a pack of wild animals, an Iron Juggernaut, Daemonix, wounded Gargoyle, an angry Brodkil, a squad of freedom fighters, a lone sniper, a band of wizards, bandits, adventurers, Splugorth Slavers, a dragon (perhaps disguised as a refugee, hound or rat), Elemental, demon, Coalition Death Squad, Skelebots or just about anything. Though the cities of the Kingdom of Magic have emptied, the fighting continues. The streets are alive with all manner of beings running from shadow to shadow, the body count of those left behind or who have gone back, rising with every passing day.

The Coalition Army is the dominant force, putting down resistance, sniffing out snipers, and conducting search and destroy missions around the clock. Where the area has been secured, demolition teams, tanks, bulldozers and giant robots work to bring down buildings to reduce the number of places where dissidents and monsters can hide or from which they can attack. Methodically, relentlessly the Coalition war machine crawls through the streets, killing everyone they see and demolishing all they survey, but still the CS invaders have a long, hard way to go.

There are still strongholds that refuse to fall, pockets of resistance fighters and monsters yet to be ousted. Guerillas who continue to battle, striking out of nowhere and vanishing into nothingness only to reappear and strike again.

Then there are the raiders and looters who hope to salvage weapons, magic and valuables from the ruins, and bounty hunters and slavers looking to profit at the expense of other life forms.

Madmen and those lost to despair looking to extract some last ounce of revenge even if it means they die in the effort. Other are adventurers and shadowy figures with their own secret agenda, as well as spies and saboteurs.

Huddled in shadows, under hanging portions of collapsed walls or dank basements are the innocent, trapped and frightened with no easy way out. Hiding and praying for a savior to rescue them.

Refugees also run through the rubble filled streets and across the fallen husks of toppled skyscrapers, battling their way out to what they hope is freedom while others sneak back *in* under the cover of night searching for loved ones who may yet live, or for the bodies of dead so they might find some closure and move on.

And these are but part of the denizens who remain to thwart and test the Coalition Occupation Army.

Tolkeen Resistance Fighters

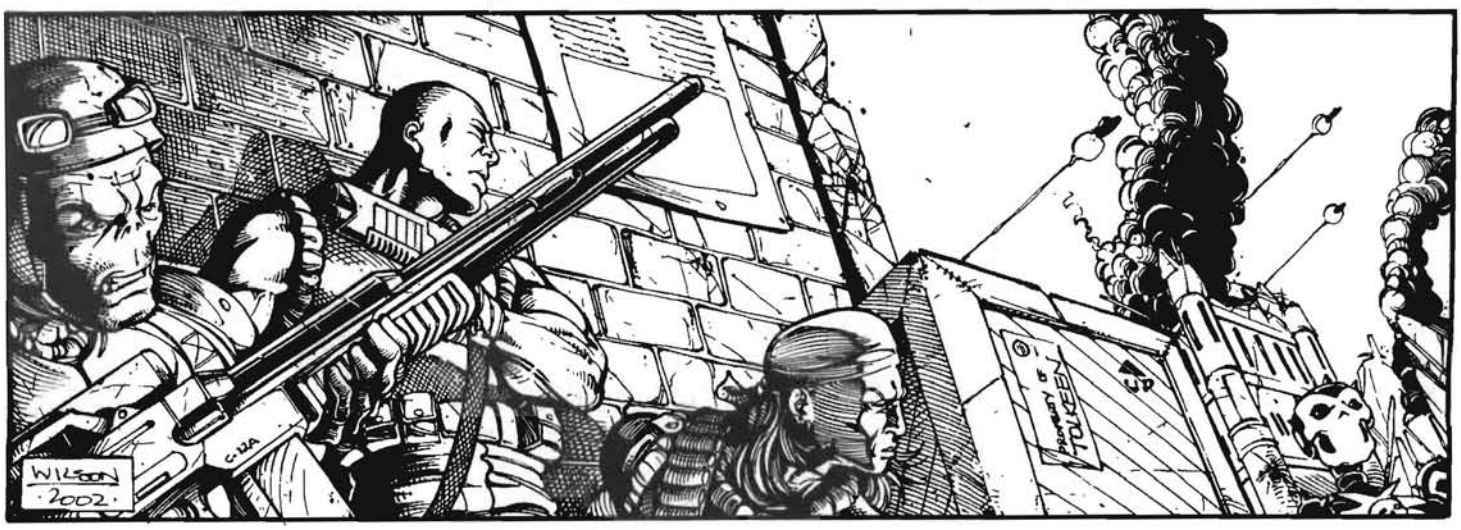
The warriors of Tolkeen who refuse to give up and admit defeat, gather as hundreds of small bands and groups to engage the enemy in guerilla strikes, kamikaze raids, death marches, acts of defiance, sabotage, vandalism and final acts of retribution. Most of these groups have some leaders at the helm, but no commander in chief to coordinate them, so they fight as individual, self-autonomous combat units a few steps away from "street gangs." They have no master plan or any real hope to defeat or repel the enemy, they have simply resolved to fight to the bitter end. To harass the enemy and make them pay for every inch of the kingdom they try to seize. As a result, each band is isolated and works independent of the others, picking and choosing the fights they think they can win and taking advantage of luck and happenstance. Most resistence groups range in number from 6-24 members. All use guerilla warfare strategies and tactics, hitting and running, sniping at the CS from a distance, setting traps and ambushes, using decoys, staging crossfire zones, dividing and conquering, and always retreating before their opponents can launch a successful counterattack. This type of *harassment* prevents the Tolkeenites from killing a great number of Coalition soldiers, but they have definitely slowed the CS occupation and demolition effort, inflicted plenty of harm and confusion, and kept the CS from securing the area and guessing at how many Tolkeenites really oppose them.

Why do the freedom fighters do it? The reasons are as varied as the men and women who fight. Some do it for humanitarian reasons, coming to the aid of those in need and doing what they can to help refugees escape the clutches of the CS, slavers and bandits. Others fight on in an effort to regroup and launch some last desperate measure to save the day. Some have nothing left and know nothing but fighting. A few Tolkeenite bands battle for treasure and personal gain, justifying their ghoulish quest by telling themselves it is better "they" get it than the Coalition States or Federation of Magic. Many resistance fighters, however, fight not for a good cause or treasure, but for pure and simple *revenge*. The CS has taken from them everything they had built and, in many cases, everyone they loved, and they *will* be made to pay for it.

Most resistance fighters are mortal humans and D-Bees. Most of the dragons and supernatural defenders are gone, slain or fled before the might of the Coalition Army. One in eight is a practitioner of magic or psychic or possesses some unique ability. One in 50 is an Iron Juggernaut or supernatural being (dragon hatchling, demon, sub-demon, superhuman, etc.). Fewer than 3000 operate in any one city, though their numbers seem to be 5-10 times greater to the Coalition Army, and this does not include the outside third parties like the Federation, Splugorth or mercenary looters. Most travel on foot or on small, fast vehicles like hovercycles and rocket bikes. The Coalition Army was smart enough to destroy all the teleportation and magical transport systems as well as all stone pyramids, power stations and energy conduits. However, with the ley lines settling down, Wing Boards and other silent Techno-Wizard vehicles and devices are suitable for travel throughout the tri-city area. Likewise, spell invoked teleportation and Ley Line Magic are safe to use again. Sadly, there just aren't that many powerful practitioners of magic left to draw upon the lines. Few of the most experienced and powerful warriors, leaders and spell casters remain to carry on the fight. Most perished during the final siege, others fled. Thus, with rare exceptions, the average level of experience of resistance fighters is 2nd to 5th level, with leaders and lone-wolf powerhouses ranging from 4-8th level.

Of the warlords and leaders to have escaped the fall of Tolkeen, two-thirds are realists who have given up on the Kingdom of Tolkeen. They realize the kingdom is lost and that they, like the other refugees, must rebuild their lives somewhere else. Many realize the folly of the war and feel ashamed by what they did or encouraged others to do. Some plan to live in self-imposed exile or to try to forgive and forget and start over with a better life.

The rest are lost in hate and crave revenge. Some have gone to join the Federation of Magic or other enemies of the CS, while the rest gather their own legion of followers and plot ways to extract murderous retribution. To that end, Warlord Scard and others have created **Retribution Squads** – terrorist groups sent forth with the command to take the war to the enemy's doorstep and strike down the enemy away from Tolkeen. This means scores have scattered across the country to the 'Burbs of Chi-Town and Iron Heart, and other CS cities, towns and farmlands to harass and kill the enemy. Unfortunately, "the enemies," as seen by these hate-filled zealots, include not only CS soldiers and authority figures, but CS citizens and sympathizers



as well as people they have decided betrayed Tolkeen like the people of *Lazlo, New Lazlo, Lord Coake's Cyber-Knights* and *any* who declined to join the battle against the CS when the call went out.

Retribution Squads out to get the CS may attack outposts and facilities, including CS patrols, police, farms, food storage facilities, factories, etc., anywhere in the Coalition States, but most have slipped unnoticed into the 'Burbs. There in the 'Burbs they have ample targets: CS Military Patrols, CS Police, CS officials and citizens of the fortress cities come out of their shell to go "slumming," as well as spies, informers, and mercenaries employed by the CS and the misguided multitude who come to the 'Burbs with the dream of becoming CS citizens or are already CS citizens hoping for a better life inside the fortress city – *traitors all.* Consequently, these brigands attack CS soldiers and police with indifference toward the people around them. Any "innocent" bystanders who get hurt are shrugged off as unavoidable "collateral damage" or traitorous CS wannabes and sympathizers who *deserve* to die. The worst of the lot deliberately attack civilian targets under the precept that they are, after all, Coalition citizens and that their deaths are payment in kind for the hundreds of thousands of innocent Tolkeenites who died in the war. These attacks can happen anywhere in the 'Burbs, but are generally aimed at those who are better off living in the Old Towns and New Towns. Meanwhile, dozens of Retribution Squads search for ways inside the great fortress cities to hurt or kill hundreds if not thousands of cozy citizens who believe they are safe behind the city's Mega-Damage walls. So far, none have succeeded, so they vent their ire on those around the city and continue to search for ways to hurt those within. They can think of no greater revenge than to strike at the heart of the CS where the Emperor and his people think they are untouchable. In fact, many of the schemes involve the assassination of Emperor Prosek, members of the Prosek family and top CS officials.

There is no "typical" resistance fighter. They can be any O.C.C. or R.C.C., human or D-Bee, and fight with magic or advanced weaponry. As noted elsewhere, the typical fighter is second to fifth level, the leaders and lone-wolf vigilantes fourth to eighth. Of course, some are first level and some are higher level, but the majority of fighters fall into the 1D4+1 range. The only thing resistance fighters share, whether a Rogue Scholar or Headhunter, farmer or spell caster, is their commitment to keep fighting. A full half will fight to the death. The rest will flee when the Coalition becomes too much for them, but most of those will probably oppose the CS or fight for other causes of freedom and justice, in some way, for the rest of their lives.

Cyborgs and Headhunters. With the ever declining numbers of practitioners of magic and supernatural beings to carry the load, full conversion cyborgs and Headhunters (partial cyborgs) play an increasingly important role in the rescue and defense of refugees, and the continuing war of resistance against the Coalition Army. Cyber-Knights, Juicers and Crazies are superhuman heroes valued in the resistance too, but their members pale compared to the vast number of full conversion 'Borgs and Headhunters on the scene. These "M and M's" ("modified men"or "metal men") have become the *backbone* of the resis-

tance and the foundation for rescue operations. They play crucial roles in rescues, both in the excavation and digging out of survivors and the protection of rescue crews and survivors from enemy attacks. Cyborgs and Headhunters can use their incredible strength, endurance, speed and machine components to tear through rock and metal better than anyone, with the exception of Earth Elementals and dragons, of which there are precious few. At least 20-25% of the resistance fighters are full or partial cyborgs of one type or another. Average level of experience: 1-6.

Common Urban Warfare Strategies and Tactics

1. Wait for the moment. A common tactic is to watch and follow Coalition squads and wait for an opening before firing. This can include picking off individuals who fall behind or take too far a lead, or attacking when the squad splits in half or when they pause for a break or foolishly remove a helmet to eat or take a gulp of water or unfiltered air. These are the moments to strike.

2. Shadow games. This tactic requires following the enemy closely, without being detected, and then breaking away to go somewhere else, or to follow and gather intelligence, or to avoid being found by the enemy because the rebels are right on top of them too close to be noticed. This can be a dangerous ploy that ends in disaster if one pushes his luck.

3. Running the pattern. First, the enemy is carefully observed, with keen attention to schedules and troop movement. Human beings are creatures of habit and tend to slip into comfortable patterns and routines. Once a fundamental (sometimes precise) pattern of movement and routine/schedule is determined, a squad of resistance fighters can "run the pattern." This can be used one of two ways.

A) To slip through enemy defensive lines by avoiding patrols and taking advantage of weaknesses in the line (blind spots, coffee break, etc.). This tactic is used to slip in and out of *supposedly* secured areas, and avoid routine patrols.

B) To hit the enemy at intervals along a specific route or pattern, because the attackers know exactly who will be where, when, how many to anticipate, and so on. The latter can make for an extremely devastating attack or raid followed by a clean escape, provided the timing is just right.

4. Take away and deny. Resistance fighters watch and follow Coalition squads, from a safe distance, but do not attack even when there is an opportunity to do so. Instead, they wait to see what is it that soldiers are looking for or trying to get. Only when they are about to achieve the object of their task do the resistance fighters strike. The idea is to take away or deny the CS from getting what they want. Take away means just that. If the CS squad has found a magic item or weapon, the Tolkeenites attack and try to steal, take, or extort whatever it is away. The battle, in fact, will be designed not to kill, necessarily, but to put them in the position to get the object of the squad's desire. This includes people. If the Coalition squad has captured a scientist, or rebel leader, or just a refugee family, the resistance fighters will try to rescue them. They might even help Minions of Splugorth or an old rival, rather than let them fall into the Coalition's hands.

Deny typically falls into the category of, "if we (the freedom fighters) can't get it, nobody will get it." This often applies to large items, caches of weapons, a research lab, etc., which the rebels cannot actually "take away," but they can "deny" their enemy from getting it by *destroying* it, or in some cases, allowing some rival faction to get it instead (Federation of Magic, Minions of Splugorth, looters, mercenaries, etc.). As long as the Coalition Army is "denied," the rebels have done their duty.

5. Hide and Seek or "peekaboo" tactics. This is often a sniper's game or tag-team effort between two or three freedom fighters. It is most effective when the snipers/tag-team have great speed, prowl abilities and/or magical powers (including spells to hide, teleport and escape). The resistance fighter picks a location where there are numerous avenues of attack, such as several tall buildings from which one or more snipers can attack or ambush can be launched from, because it will keep the CS troops under attack by the 1-3 resistance fighters afraid to step out in the open or make an aggressive move, for *fear* that other snipers or guerilla fighters are waiting to strike the moment they make themselves vulnerable by stepping in the open. This works best when there are two or three assailants working together, each at a different location, but where all can see the basic playing field or target zone. The trick is to for the other two to hold off from attacking, letting the Coalition soldiers think that maybe there is only one attacker, and then, the moment the squad divides to work around the lone gunman, one or both of the other snipers open up when one or more make themselves a target. The tag-team approach usually allows for the initial gunman to do what damage he can, but at some point, he stops shooting to relocate to a different position (or make good his escape). When those he had pinned down begin to move, or go to investigate the first sniper location, or to relocate themselves, the second and/or third sniper starts shooting. Not only should they get a couple of good shots in, but it will convince their opponents that it *is* a trap and god only knows how many Tolkeenites are waiting for them out there. This will immobilize the group and probably get them to call for SAMAS or Sky Cycle air support. This is when the "tag-team" needs to make good its escape or prepare to take out the air support (typically the former). This setup can be repeated time and time again, even in the same location. It is also an effective trick in making the enemy believe there are more fighters than there really are and can often hold back any advances – convincing them that the area is an enemy stronghold.

Ultimately, the idea of hide and seek tactics is to strike from a position the enemy is not expecting and not be there when the enemy retaliates or works his way to that location.

6. Prevent defense. Another common tactic is to set up an arbitrary defensive position from which to make a stand. However, other than some basic tactical advantages provided by the position, and having a fall back position and at least two escape routes planned, the defensive line has no real strategic value or purpose. It is designed to create a brief, pitched battle in which serious damage can be inflicted on a Coalition squad – ideally wiping it out or pinning it down. Should the squad rally or reinforcements arrive to push the freedom fighters back, the warriors drop back to their fall back position, do more damage and before other CS troops arrive, slip out one of the escape routes and vanish to fight another day.

7. Drop and pop. This tactic involves luring a Coalition patrol into a crater, cavern, basement or some kind of depression or cavity in the ground where movement is restricted. Better yet, to lure them into a "pit trap" where all or most of the squad has the ground drop out from under them and fall into a pit. While they are recovering from the fall and in a confining pit, they are mercilessly attacked from above. If the Coalition soldiers have fallen into the pit, the attackers automatically get the initiative and soldiers lose two melee attacks for that first round of combat. Obviously this gives the attackers the advantage, and not only do the CS troops have to fend off an attack but they are pinned down in a place open to attack and must expend time and energy trying to climb out and move to a defendable position. The best pit traps make firing on the soldiers like shooting fish in a barrel. In the alternative, a Magic Net and other entangling or incapacitating magic can be used to capture or immobilize the CS squad, or to cover and contain them, or to slaughter them.

8. A magic mouse trap. A common ploy is to lure Coalition squads and platoons into a death trap. As a rule, magic plays a big role in this. Typically, a band of 4-8 ordinary fighters (humans and D-Bees) attacks a group of Coalition soldiers. The trick is to make the fight look good, before retreating from the (seemingly) superior Coalition forces. Then, without warning, the trap is sprung. A hail of lightning bolts crash down from out of the blue (practitioners of magic hidden away). Mice scurrying past the soldiers' feet suddenly transform into dragons or a Shadow Beast lunges out of the darkness, or warriors magically made invisible or to meld with their surroundings thanks to a Chameleon spell, step forward and start shooting in a crossfire, and so on. Elementals of all kinds are ideal for these situations. Suddenly, one or more Earth Elementals rise out of the debris or under their feet, or an Air Elemental swoops down or a fire Elemental steps out from a burning building, or a pool of water congeals into a Water Elemental, all hurling magic spells and using their natural powers. Tectonic Entities, Possessing Entities, animated dead and other supernatural creatures can be used to similar effect.

Illusions, charms, fear and immobilizing types of magic can also be deployed to stop, pin, threaten, frighten and chase away CS troops. Blasting and killing is not always the best strategy in war. Sometimes holding a position or demoralizing the enemy is just as effective and sometimes even more powerful. Soldiers expect to be shot at and killed. They become desensitized to it to some degree, but being magically dazed, terrorized, knocked down, held at bay, chased away or made to face an opponent who seems to be one step ahead or impossible to destroy can create confusion, intimidation and break their spirit.

9. Dead man's bluff. This is a simple ploy in which a Necromancer animates and controls a number of corpses or skeletons to shoot (wild) and move about to make it *appear* as if there is a larger number of defenders than there really are. This bluff is used to make patrols back off and retreat or dig in, or take a different path, and so on. Animated dead can also be used to lure or mislead enemy troops so the living can make good their escape, reposition, rescue innocent civilians, and so on. To make the bluff convincing, the dead bodies are dressed in clothes or body armor with face-covering helmets so outsiders can't tell they are dead, and made to look as "real" as possible. Animated dead are also used in traps and ambushes.

10. Pot shot. Outnumbered and overpowered, sometimes all a resistance fighter can do is take a "pot shot," run away and hope for the best. This is exactly how it sounds and barely counts as a skirmish and is more of an annoyance than harassment of the enemy, but it's something.

Note: These are just some of the more notable or unique tactics used by the resistance. They also use all the usual guerilla "hit and run" tactics common to urban combat.

Other places of resistance

The Barrens is overrun with Coalition troops and so many Skelebots that it seems as if they are a black tide rolling over the scorched earth and jagged rock. It is only a matter of time before those who remain fighting perish before that tide of blackness, but for the moment there remain strongholds that will not yield to the hammering wave of Coalition might, and fight on. Here Elementals of Earth, Water, Fire and Air continue to wreak havoc upon the CS forces, as do the last demonic legions of Tolkeen, Necromancers, sorcerers and dragons.

The Bridge, an experimental Techno-Wizard construct near *Blueline,* enables practitioners of magic to fly and Rift to any point on the three ley lines around the city of Tolkeen. Fighting is heavy at this bunker-like tunnel and the bridge itself is down.

Warlocks & Elementals

The use of Elementals has played a huge role in the Coalition-Tolkeen war, and continues to do so. However, there are fewer and fewer experienced Warlocks and Shifters able to summon and control them.

Earth Elementals have been vital in finding and safely rescuing people trapped in tunnels, basements and collapsed buildings, as well as recovering the dead for a proper burial. In combat situations the hulking creatures shield refugees and resistance fighters with their stone walls and massive, regenerating M.D.C. bodies.

Another common use of Earth Elementals by resistance fighters is to mold and shape the tons of debris into innocent looking mazes, barriers and traps. Debris and earth structures molded to look like nothing more than heaps of rubble and partial walls until intruders begin weaving through and around them, realizing too late that it is really a labyrinth or defensive corridor designed to lead them into traps, ambush points and gunfire from concealed bunkers. Such earth mazes are not obvious from the ground and may cover a length of alley or street to several city blocks, and even weave in and out of buildings and underground chambers and tunnels. It is best if an Earth Elemental is present, because the creature can subtly, quietly, *move* the walls, changing the path just taken and seal openings and exits, collapse walls, send lava cascading down their path and open up the ground beneath the enemy to swallow them whole.

Simple ploys involving an Earth Elemental include it moving rocks and making noise to distract or lure the enemy away, or mislead them into thinking there are more fighters surrounding them than there really are, perhaps causing them to retreat, dig in (buying the freedom fighters valuable time to escape, reposition, effect a rescue, etc.) or call for reinforcements who come running into a trap or are lured away from where the real action is about to take place, and so on. This ploy is also good for creating diversions and spooking patrols. Earth Elementals can also use their magic to create dust storms, pools of mud, rivers of lava, earthquakes and a number of phenomena to attack, block, slow and destroy CS opposition or punch though perimeter lines. The Earth Elementals' ability to travel through the ground enables them to pop up in the middle of enemy forces to startle, divide and attack or to rescue prisoners. In an urban environment pitted against ground troops these creatures are amazing and devastatingly effective.

Air Elementals are important for leveling the playing field when it comes to the Coalition's air superiority, and the Elementals can deliver a deadly one-two punch to CS operations when combined with the coordinated efforts of an Earth Elemental. Low flying SAMAS and small aircraft racing between buildings are not only vulnerable to Air Elemental spells and the creatures themselves, but to Earth Elementals who can strike from the sides of the stone and concrete buildings or use the building itself as a weapon. A favorite tactic is to lure enemy air and ground forces into such an environment (an easy task considering half of the city of Freehold and Tolkeen fit the bill with towering buildings), then have the Air Elemental use magic or engage in combat to stall/hold the enemy in the concrete canyons while other fighters and spell casters attack, or long enough for an Earth Elemental to collapse the side of a building on top of the enemy, taking down both the flyers and the ground troops below. Air Elementals have proved to be invaluable for conducting searches, finding people trapped behind enemy lines and survivors buried under debris, as well as finding concealed chambers and caverns under the rubble, transporting fighters and refugees, delivering messages, and harassing, diverting and slowing down the enemy. Since they are invisible by nature, and can fly, Air Elementals can attack soldiers without warning, zooming in like an assault helicopter to provide air support or extraction, or to use their power and invisibility to trick CS

troops into thinking they are surrounded by fighters moving through the debris fields or lead them away in hot pursuit of a phantom. Air Elementals can also use their strength or wind magic to topple buildings, create dust clouds, and create obstacles and distractions.

Note: Although used to deliver messages, spy and conduct searches, the effectiveness of Air Elementals, or any Elemental put in this kind of situation, is very limited. Remember, Elemental beings are so completely *alien* that they have tremendous difficulty understanding directions or comprehending the human world. For example, only the most simple spoken message can be relayed, and only if there is someone who can speak Elemental. A written or taped message can be hand delivered, but the Elemental may have difficulty recognizing or understanding exactly who is to get the message (unless it is a Warlock) and it might go to the wrong person. Likewise, when instructed to find or recover "refugees" or "Tolkeen warriors" trapped under debris, Elementals can NOT differentiate between them and CS troops or humanoid monsters for that matter, and certainly cannot tell the difference between the living and dead, especially if the living is unconscious.

Fire Elementals are being used in combat and as a source of energy and heat, as well as to set traps, lunging out of burning fires to attack an unsuspecting enemy and to keep some of the fires burning at strategic locations, because the smoke provides cover and the fire and collapsing structures keep Coalition soldiers out of those areas (or mostly).

Water Elementals are put to work to magically provide much needed drinking water and as a supernatural force to foil and attack Coalition ground and naval troops. Water is used to create mud and other barriers, wash away debris and grime, weaken structures or the ground beneath them, as well as create cover to conceal refugees and ground movement via fog, mist, rain, etc.

Note: All types of Elementals are used as guards and defenders, given the simple command to attack and destroy anybody who looks like CS troops (i.e., Dead Boys, Dog Boys, and SAMAS and others utilizing the Death's Head design).

In the war of the resistance fighters, however, Earth and Air Elementals are considered the most vital and therefore the most in demand. That having been said, there are fewer than fifty Warlocks in Tolkeen capable of summoning true Elemental beings, and half that number of Shifters. Matters are not any better anywhere else, and are probably worse (1D4x10% fewer than those at Tolkeen).

Other Supernatural Creatures among the resistance fighters

The nature of most supernatural beings and creatures of magic are such that self-preservation comes before friends and noble causes. When the Kingdom of Tolkeen clearly lost the war, most of their supernatural allies vanished. Many, particularly beings like Gargoyles, demons and other monsters, were effectively *slaves* to begin with. Forced against their will or ensorceled by magic to serve and fight for their mortal masters. When the masters were slain, the magic that bound them to Rifts Earth was broken, allowing them to return to whatever hell-spawned dimension they originated from or to run free. Demons, being vile, self-serving creatures, either fled or engaged in acts of cruelty and murder against any too weak to oppose them. When things get too deadly or peaceful, they will return to their home dimension or seek trouble elsewhere.

Brodkil

Brodkil are sub-demons who like to fight and kill, so they are among the few supernatural beings who are found among the mortal resistance fighters. However, they are not fools or suicidal and will *not* fight to the death. The Brodkil stay only as long as they can have murderous fun, and even those who continue to fight the CS are in the minority. Many more Brodkil have turned to looting and banditry. These thieving and warring sub-demons hope to acquire weapons and magic items they can use, as well as other valuables they can trade to get weapons, bionics and magic items. They love bionics and will tear cybernetic limbs off the dead, sometimes the living, in order to have the bionics implanted in themselves at a later date.

Brodkil hate and fear the Splugorth and will avoid their Minions or join forces with humans and others to battle and rob them. Though afraid of the Minions of Splugorth, they have no qualms about raiding and stealing from them. Bands of Brodkil are also known to bushwhack other bandits and mercenaries to get what they want, but their favorite target is the Coalition Army.

As a result of their experience, the Brodkil who have fought on the side of Tolkeen have developed greater acceptance and trust of humans and D-Bees, particularly practitioners of magic, Juicers, Crazies and Cyber-Knights – they have always re-

spected cyborgs and Headhunters. This makes the Tolkeen Brodkil more likely to trade, trust and join forces with mortals. Like the rest of their kind, these demonic beings really only respect brute force, technological superiority and magic, but anyone who can prove they fought for Tolkeen is definitely elevated to a place of respect. Some of those known to the Brodkil or who fought at the monsters' sides may even be considered a little brother. However, it is best to remember that Brodkil don't hesitate to fight, kill and maim their brothers.

Daemonix

Most Daemonix have been destroyed by the Coalition Army. Though as many as three or four thousand have survived, most fled the region when the government collapsed and the city of Tolkeen fell. A few have remained loyal to various mortal Tolkeenite leaders and follow them in resistance against the CS troops or into exile. Some have fled to the Magic Zone to join the *Federation of Magic.* Many more have gone to the *Calgary Rift.* The rest, without a master to guide them, return to their evil ways, going off in all directions, feeding on humanoids and trying to figure out what to do next. Daemonix who remain in the Minnesota region without a mortal master prey upon the very people they once promised to serve and protect.

Dragons

More dragons have perished in a single conflict than anyone can remember in 200 years. The rest have fled. Perhaps fewer than a dozen can be found anywhere in the crumbling kingdom, and most of them are dragon hatchlings; average level of experience: 2-6.

Entities

The supernatural energy beings known as "entities" were called upon by the Shifters of Tolkeen to power some of their magic and for some like the Haunting, Tectonic and Possessing Entity, to harass and attack the enemy. The Haunting Entity and Poltergeists, though annoying and somewhat frightening, especially to those uninitiated to the supernatural, are mostly "side effects" of other summonings. These two entities are infamous for sneaking into other planes of existence whenever a dimensional portal or Rift is opened, and that's where many of those in and around Tolkeen came from. Entities are naturally attracted to ley lines and by crisis and powerful emotions, making the Tolkeen tri-city area a magnet for these creatures. As a result, the tri-city area and The Barrens are particularly plagued by "ghosts" that are actually *Poltergeists* and *Haunting Entities* (see **Rifts® Conversion Book One** for details on Entities, Banshees, Ghouls and a host of other demons and monsters).

Tectonic Entities are aggressive beings who make a physical body from junk, bones, and rubble. They were summoned as inhuman monsters who could not be killed even when their artificial bodies were destroyed. However, they made for poor warriors who were difficult to direct. Without Shifters and other mages to control them, many Tectonic Entities have returned to their home dimension, while others roam the wasteland of The Barrens and the streets of the burning cities, wreaking death and destruction upon *all* they encounter, Tolkeenites and Coalition alike.

Possessing Entities were summoned in an attempt to infiltrate the Coalition States and possibly even assassinate Emperor Prosek and other highly placed officials. While a few high-ranking military personnel were framed and terminated this way, the intelligent and evil Possessing Entities proved to be equal parts of uncontrollable and unreliable. Few haunt the Tolkeen war zone, but they are out there.

Gargoyles

Gargoyles and their kin could care less about humans, the CS or the war. They are just glad to be free. Those who have not returned to their home dimension have scattered to the winds, with at least one third going to the Calgary Kingdom of Monsters to see what promise it may have to offer, and the rest off to find their own place in the world. A tiny percentage linger among the ruins of Tolkeen, extracting their own bit of revenge or searching for magic, treasure or purpose.

Iron Juggernauts

Although they look like giant robots, Iron Juggernauts are the twisted creation of science and magic that bonds the living to the machine, making them living machines. Engines of destruction designed for war, they will have grave difficulty finding a place in the world. For one thing, the mind of the living volunteer inside is not as lucid or "human" as it once was, and most volunteers were consumed with hate and vengeance for the CS in the first place. Thus, most Iron Juggernauts fought like demons during the final siege and battled to the death. Perhaps as many as a hundred (probably half that) followed a few Warlords or other leaders on as they fled, vowing revenge. The only other survivors were those in The Barrens (their numbers thin with each passing day) and perhaps a few dozen that were buried under collapsing buildings and required a few days to dig themselves out or to be rescued. Most survivors of the siege have joined the resistance and/or actively participate in the rescue operations of civilians still trapped in the cities, using their great strength and powers to save lives and defend them from the Coalition patrols hungry to mete out death to those just saved and their rescuers.

No Wing-Blade or Millipede Iron Juggernauts are known to have survived, though rumors persist about one Wing-Blade operating alone in Tolkeen and supposedly Warlord Scard took three or four with him along with a mixed squad of others, but no one knows if either of these stories are true.

Other Monsters

Other creatures such as the Black Faeries, Witchlings, Neuron Beasts, Chatterlings, Threno Bat-Things and other monsters have crawled back into whatever holes they came from or have limped away to lick their wounds and find new places to trouble. Some linger, preying upon refugees, resistance fighters, adventurers and Coalition forces without discrimination.

The Unbidden

Creatures not summoned by Tolkeen's sorcerers, but which have come through the Rifts "unbidden" also roam the land. They are typically strange one-of-a-kind monstrosities or small groups of creatures (rarely more than 12 or 20 total) who prowl the landscape with their own malevolent agenda. This book was supposed to present a half dozen specific creatures, but they were sacrificed so more attention and pages could be devoted to the **109 P.A. World Overview.**

Rescues at Tolkeen

The first order of business in the last days of the Siege on Tolkeen and the days since its fall, has been the evacuation of as many of its citizens as possible. In the final hours of the grand city, hundreds of thousands tried to flee. King Creed, Cyber-Knights, heroes within the Council of Twelve and other leaders and champions of Tolkeen worked feverishly to rescue as many as they could. Tens of thousands were teleported to the western border or at least beyond the frenzied Coalition Invasion Force. Others made a mad rush through the weak CS lines in the west and southwest – troops who cared little about fleeing refugees and more about surrounding and taking the city.

Since everybody believed the cities of Tolkeen, Freehold and Magestock were invincible, they *never* believed the cities could fall. Not even when the Coalition Army came knocking at the front gates with cannons blazing. It was not until the tri-city ley line defenses buckled and the city of Tolkeen began to burn that people began to have their doubts. Yet even then most waited, believing their army and the Dragon Kings would push the invaders back and seal off the three cities from further attack. It was only in the last 48 hours before Tolkeen's and Freehold's utter collapse that people began to flee en masse. Only by then it was too late for many. The twin cities were surrounded, the

Dragon Kings had taken flight and Magestock, the little brother, had already fallen to the CS. Thousands upon thousands of civilians perished in the Coalition's aerial bombardment of the cities. Thousands more fell to the swarming troops that had punched through the northern perimeter and holes in the east where the heaviest battles raged. What made the carnage that much more horrible was the fact that there could be no surrender. The Coalition Army was not on a mission of conquest and suppression, but a quest to annihilate. No prisoners. No building left standing. No mercy. And in the background, the shouts, "Remember the Sorcerers' Revenge! Death to all!"

Having waited till the last minute to evacuate, thousands have been left behind. Many have already fallen to the onslaught of the Coalition Army while others hide in basements, churches, sewer pipes and secret places or scurry from place to place trying to keep one step ahead of the Coalition Death Squads out to exterminate them all. Ordinary civilians without any military training or magic powers to speak of, the majority are fairly helpless, trapped and don't know where to turn or how to escape. They can barely stay alive.

Refugee Rescue Operations

Missiles, bombing raids and combat between giant robots and dragons and mystical forces have demolished and toppled hundreds of buildings, making death and injury from falling debris the number one cause of death for civilians. Getting shot or blown up is number two.

Coalition troops caught under falling debris can often survive such catastrophes. Clad in environmental body armor or locked inside a suit of power armor, giant robot or armored combat vehicle, many of the trapped soldiers can survive for days.

Most inhabitants of Tolkeen are less fortunate, and measure the last moments of life in hours, the lucky ones, a few days. So it is that a desperate cat and mouse game of avoiding CS patrols, rescue and combat begins, as Tolkeenite *rescue teams*, usually led by Cyber-Knights, Cyborgs, psychics, Warlocks and other spell casters, reenter the burning cities of the Kingdom to find and rescue those trapped under the rubble or left behind. It is a game of life and death, because they must do their life-giving work in the shadows and under the cover of night to avoid the Coalition troops swarming throughout the city. Soldiers ordered to kill all non-Coalition personnel and investigate their activities afterward. The Coalition Army is on an extermination mission. Few prisoners are taken, the rest are executed on the spot, their bodies gathered and incinerated. When Tolkeenite survivors are found alive in the debris, they are either left to die or slain on the spot – gassed, shot or bludgeoned to death.

Digging out survivors in a disaster is a battle against time in and of itself. Under these conditions, it is a brutal war with enemies and obstacles at every turn. It is an environment where the rescuers can become the victims of war in a heartbeat as Coalition soldiers target all non-CS personnel as the enemy, and most CS patrols are effectively "Death Squads" gunning down everyone they encounter. Some CS platoons go so far as to stake out trapped refugees as bait, waiting in hiding for a rescue team to *arrive on* the scene, only to gun them down, drag away their bodies, and wait for the next group of rescuers to be lured to their doom. Looters, scavengers and agents of Splugorth, the Federation of Magic and others are not much better, ignoring the plight of those in need of rescue, to continue their own quests. As for victims found by slavers, they might wish they had died rather than face a life of slavery.

Note that victims of collapsed buildings are not the only ones in need of a rescue. There are thousands of people who are trapped in the city with no idea how to sneak out without getting themselves killed. Most are cut off, isolated and afraid. They typically gather in small groups of 3-30 with no combat skills or magic powers. They can walk on their own two feet and have their wits about them (as a rule), but need somebody else to tell them what to do and lead the way.

The roles the various O.C.C.s/R.C.C.s play in rescue

Body Fixers are medical doctors needed to diagnosis, treat and dress injuries. Without them and psychic healers, many would die.

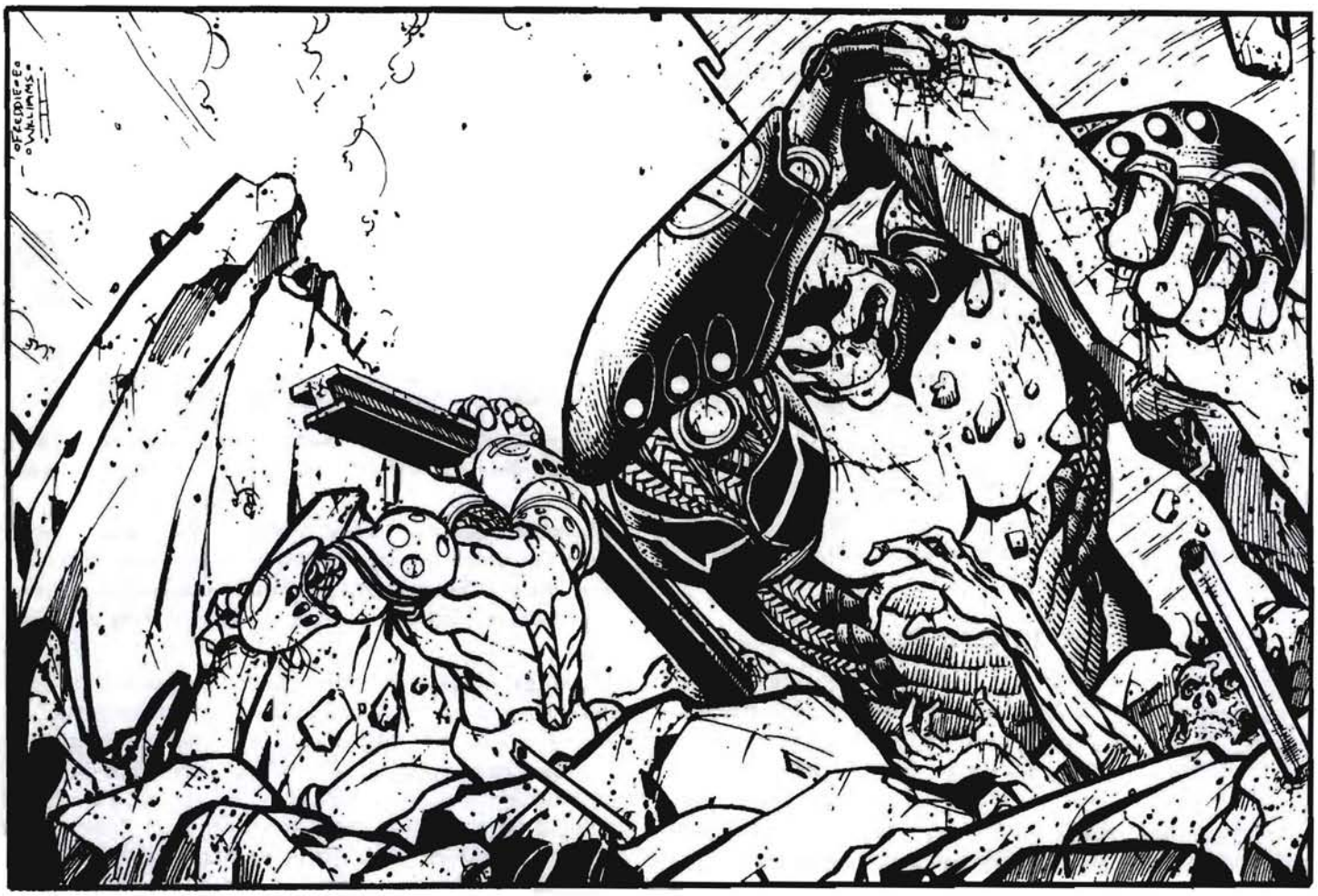
Cyber-Knights are natural leaders who bring a sense of calm, unity, order, and hope to these dire operations. Most function as team leaders, coordinating the rescue operation, directing workers and helping with the task, as well as serving as protectors.

Cyborgs and Headhunters, with their mechanical strength, extra endurance, hard metal bodies and fierce determination, are ideal for both the labor intensive work of digging out survivors and protecting the rescue team. *Mining 'Borgs* with their special, modular "tool arms" are perfect for ripping, cutting and drilling through debris to get to survivors. (See *Rifts® World Book 14: New West™* for details on Mining 'Borgs.) *Headhunters* tend to provide scouting and perimeter defense, but may participate in any aspect of the rescue. Some specialize in rescuing refugees cut off behind occupied territory and living in hiding without a clue of how to escape.

Elementals and Warlocks, especially Earth and Air Elementals, are invaluable to the rescue and recovery operations, using their magic and powers to locate, move, lift debris and dig out victims trapped, pinned and buried under rubble with minimal risk of further injury to the victims. And they can recover victims in a tiny fraction of the time needed by conventional methods. Earth Elementals can conduct rescues and excavations by moving *through* the earth and rubble unseen, like a fish in water. Occasionally there is a ripple or a tremor to suggest its presence, but little more until it rises up from the earth, prize in hand. Air Elementals are also used to probe the debris, flowing through and around it like the wind. Unfortunately, Elementals are so alien and stupid they often need a Warlock taskmaster to keep them on track and to help identify survivors.

Heavy Construction Robots (see *Rifts® Sourcebook One,* page 51) manufactured and sold by Northern Gun are designed for construction, mining and heavy labor. They can work for hours but lack the care and finesse of living workers. Light Labor 'Bots are suitable for light work and Triax Dyna-Bots are also suitable for medium to heavy work. All of these robots are fairly uncommon in the Kingdom of Magic, but there are some being put to work. Giant robots are unsuitable for this kind of work.

Iron Juggernauts. As noted earlier, very few Iron Juggernauts are available to the Tolkeenites. Those involved in rescue operations are best suited to heavy labor and moving massive



pieces of metal, concrete and walls. They can also be used to help support weak, crumbling structures and shield workers with their bodies from falling debris and CS attacks. Iron Juggernauts can also call upon a limited range of Elemental Magic that may come in handy. Other Iron Juggernauts fight among the resistance.

Juicers, Crazies and others with the gift of great strength and physical endurance are vital in digging through the debris, removing obstacles and defending rescue workers from Coalition intervention. Crazies, even more than Juicers, have been working around the clock like mules and taking insane risks to rescue people from the catastrophe. It is earning them new found respect by all who witness their herculean efforts and unwillingness to give up hope. Crazies and Juicers are both usually the last to give up.

Operators and Techno-Wizards are useful in operating and maintaining machines and medical equipment necessary for the operation and many have a better understanding of the stress factors and structural limits of damaged buildings, support beams and such. They can often recognize structural weaknesses, instability and how to compensate for it. They may also maintain and pilot evacuation vehicles.

Ordinary people, humans and D-Bees, are both the rock and cement that make up the foundation of rescue operations. Those with magical or superhuman powers are the steel support beams that help to hold the rescue team up and lead the charge, but the ordinary people work to accomplish the impossible – thousands of volunteers tirelessly working to save complete strangers. Many will die for their effort, crushed under falling debris or shot dead by vengeful Coalition soldiers.

Other Practitioners of Magic, particularly spell casters, are crucial because they can use their magic to locate victims, help in rescue operations, and heal injuries. Many parts of Tolkeen and the tri-city area are close enough to ley lines that practitioners of magic can draw on the ley line energy to further aid the victims and empower the mages to work beyond their normal P.P.E. limitations.

Psychic Sensitives as well as Psi-Stalkers, Psi-Druids and Wilderness Scouts are especially helpful in finding living victims, **Healers** for soothing the victims' pain and healing them on the spot, **Physical Psychics** in the actual recovery-rescue operation as well as defense, and the powerful **Mind Melter** for all of the above.

Simvan, or at least certain clans, were convinced to fight on behalf of Tolkeen. Most did so more for the opportunity to war than any true loyalty to the magic kingdom. Consequently, with the collapse of the nation, Simvan have become wild cards who care nothing about rescue operations and only seek to fight on in their own way and on their own. Only the rare Simvan can be made to command animals to help in the search for survivors trapped under debris or the recovery of bodies.

Wilderness Scouts, Rogue Dog Boys and Psi-Stalkers are good at locating victims, finding those separated and lost, and recognizing signs and signals of trouble.

Night Stalkers in the City

Nighttime is dangerous for refugees trapped in the city, and even adventurers had better watch their backs. Many of the creatures noted below may be encountered day or night, but are most active during the night and tend to sleep or hide during the day.

Wild dog packs roam the ruins day and night, while wolves and other predators come in at night. Most are content to feed on the carrion of those who have died in the siege, but many of the animals are becoming increasingly bold and aggressive. Packs as large as 10-60 animals stalk the streets and prowl throughout the ruins of the city, attacking humanoid children and those who are sick, injured, or trapped. Emboldened by strength of numbers and agitated by the scent of death that permeates the air, the beasts are even beginning to attack lone adventurers and groups of four or less. The dog packs are a danger even to those clad in Mega-Damage armor, for the animals can blow one's cover, announcing an individual's location with their barks, growls and behavior. This is becoming a huge problem for those trying to hide from the CS or who hope to quietly root through the ruins without being noticed. The canines also get underfoot, chasing and nipping at the heels of giant robots, power armor and vehicles, announcing their approach. This problem bothers the Coalition forces more than Tolkeenite resistance fighters, adventurers and looters. The CS troops have taken to shooting the animals, but there are too many and the pack scatters as soon as two or three of their members are killed. Once in a while, 1D4 *Loup Garou* transformed into the shape of a giant wolf run with these packs, sometimes leading them. Packs that are led by or include a Loup Garou are much more aggressive, attack living prey, and exhibit human intelligence. Similarly, a lone *Simvan Monster Rider* may seize control of a pack of wild dogs or monsters to do as he commands. Basic Stats for a typical wild dog: Three attacks per round, 4D6+3 for Hit Points, 2D6+12 S.D.C., 35 mph (56 km) maximum running speed and bite does 2D6 damage. Wolves have roughly 10% more H.P. and S.D.C. and their bite does 3D6+4. See complete stats for wolves and bears in **World Book 20: Rifts® Canada** and more on canines in **Rifts® World Book 13: Lone Star.**

Deadlier than the dog and wolf packs are the dinosaurs and other light Mega-Damage creatures. Animals like the **Silonar** and **Tiger Claw Raptors** are also feeding on the dead and preying on humanoids. Like the canines, they snarl, hiss and bark at anyone who happens to disturb their meal and those that gather in packs are much more aggressive about defending their carrion and adding living beings to their dinner. They too prey upon the living, but are much more versatile in their method of attack. Tiger Claw Raptors are notorious for hunting in packs that use tactics involving laying in wait, surrounding and ambushing their prey. They are also known to attack from above, leaping from windows and from on top of rubble two-stories high. Silonar also use similar tactics, but usually gather in smaller numbers and stick to ground tactics and running down their prey. See **Rifts® World Book 14: New West™** for complete stats on both creatures.

Fury Beetles are common throughout southern Canada and the middle and eastern United States. They are not predators, but as omnivores they do eat carrion, and 1D4 of the gigantic creatures are sometimes found in the ruins munching on the remains of dead humanoids and animals. Unlike true predators, Fury Beetles do not attack humanoids unless they are startled or feel threatened. They are easy to avoid. **Rhino-Buffalo** are, likewise, animal predators attracted to the smell of death and easy prey. However, they are much more aggressive and easily provoked to attack than Fury Beetles. Solitary hunters, they are bold nonetheless and have been known to charge UAR-1 robots and small to mid-sized vehicles. Simvan Monster Riders who once fought for Tolkeen and resent the CS presence sometimes send Rhino-Buffalo and small herds of Fury Beetles into Coalition platoons and perimeter lines to cause trouble to cover up a raid.

Supernatural Scavengers and predators are also a problem. As noted earlier, **Poltergeists** and **Haunting Entities** are drawn to places of war and conflict and wander the ruins of the fallen cities of Tolkeen, wailing and reliving the events of the past. They are unnerving and annoying, but do not usually represent a genuine danger. Likewise, demonic **Banshees** appear from time to time (small numbers) to wait and wail over the dying. While they do not actually attack and kill anyone, they often roost over people who are sick, injured and hiding, or trapped in the rubble, and their wailing attracts Grave Ghouls, predators and Coalition Death Squads who have learned to use the Banshees to locate the enemy. **Grave Ghouls** are disgusting creatures who are the equivalent of supernatural vultures who come to feast on the dead. They are gruesome little monsters who defile the dead and make identifying the deceased impossible. Everybody hates these creatures and kills or chases them

away wherever they are found. Timid, comparatively weak lesser demons, they are usually easy to handle. Wherever Ghouls are found, one can expect to find a pile of dead.

Some **Loup Garou** have found the events around the Kingdom of Tolkeen to be amusing and now that the war is over, have come down to stalk refugees for sport and food, and mess with the CS, playing cat and mouse games with them, leading them on merry chases and generally causing mean-spirited mischief. A few are so bold as to slip into CS camps and slaughter 1D6 soldiers in their sleep, before making a run for it. Loup Garou have no love for Tolkeen nor do they seek revenge upon the CS for anything, they just like the challenge and fun of messing with such a powerful "human" opponent. Others prey upon refugees, adventurers and bandits lurking in the shadows of the toppled cities. Many people mistakenly believe Loup Garou to be nocturnal hunters, and while they prefer night stalking, they can hunt in animal form day or night. See **Rifts® Canada** for complete stats and info on Loup Garou.

Devil Unicorns are said to be *evil incarnate*. Monstrous beasts from the Rifts who are both predators who prey on humanoids, and fiends who deliberately inflict terror and suffering for the sadistic pleasure of it. They delight in cat and mouse games and like to take captives to torment and maim before finally killing them a week or two later. Those in Tolkeen enjoy taunting refugees and foiling escape attempts or leaping to attack when freedom seems within their grasp. For some reason, Devil Unicorns love to take away what others covet. In the case of the refugees, it is their freedom, for the CS troops and agents of Splugorth or the Federation of Magic, it is magical treasures. Among the hundred or more Devil Unicorns attracted to the city of Tolkeen and another hundred or so at Freehold, many have taken to following treasure hunters and foiling their recovery operations or stealing and hiding or destroying the prize they seek. This includes magic items, the secrets of the Iron Juggernauts, and other things of value, sometimes that includes people. They may do so through direct attacks that kill the searchers or raids that allow the Devil Unicorns to steal or destroy the item(s). However, they prefer tricks and treachery in which they or an ally pits two or more groups against each other, and while those groups fight, the Devil Unicorn and/or its allies find and steal or destroy that which they battle over.

Though notorious loners, many of the Devil Unicorns in the tri-city area of Tolkeen have joined forces with other malevolent beings to take on the rather powerful and determined CS, Federation, Splugorth and independent agents searching to recover the kingdom's lost secrets and magic. These "partners" are frequently Black Faeries, Witchlings, Brodkil, lesser demons, and dark practitioners of magic, but any powerful and ruthless being may suffice. Some even pretend to work with the Splugorth, only to lead them into confrontations with Coalition forces or powerful bands of adventurers and rivals.

The wretched creatures are also known to torment resistance fighters and heroes through trickery, treachery and open acts of mayhem and destruction. Devil Unicorns love to put innocent and helpless people in jeopardy. They will often arrange things so two different groups or causes are in peril, forcing heroes to choose between them or divide their forces between both and, perhaps, saving neither. Another favorite "game" is to secretly help a rescue team find people in need and wait for the team to be on the verge of rescuing them, only to have the monster do something to spoil it or kill everyone (cause a cave-in or wall to collapse, or the CS or a monster to appear, etc.). Some allow the rescue to go off without a hitch, only to track and slaughter those rescued a short time later when everyone thinks the danger has passed, or to do something to threaten their lives or create some new dilemma. Devil Unicorns are wicked in the extreme, and the mangled cities of Tolkeen have become their new playground. See **Rifts® World Book 14: New West™** for details.

Tree Spiders are weird alien things who tower 150 feet (46 m) above the ground on stilts or "tree-like" legs. Despite their height, they can prowl and hide among the tall buildings and travel through the neighboring forests with surprising stealth. Tree Spiders are predators who set ambushes or hide and wait silently until prey comes near and then snatch them up with their long, retractable tentacles. Again, humanoids tend not to look up, so Tree Spiders hiding among the trees of the forest and standing walls of rubble often go unnoticed (their long thing legs taken for tree trunks or support beams) until it is too late. See **Rifts® World Book 14: New West™** for more details.

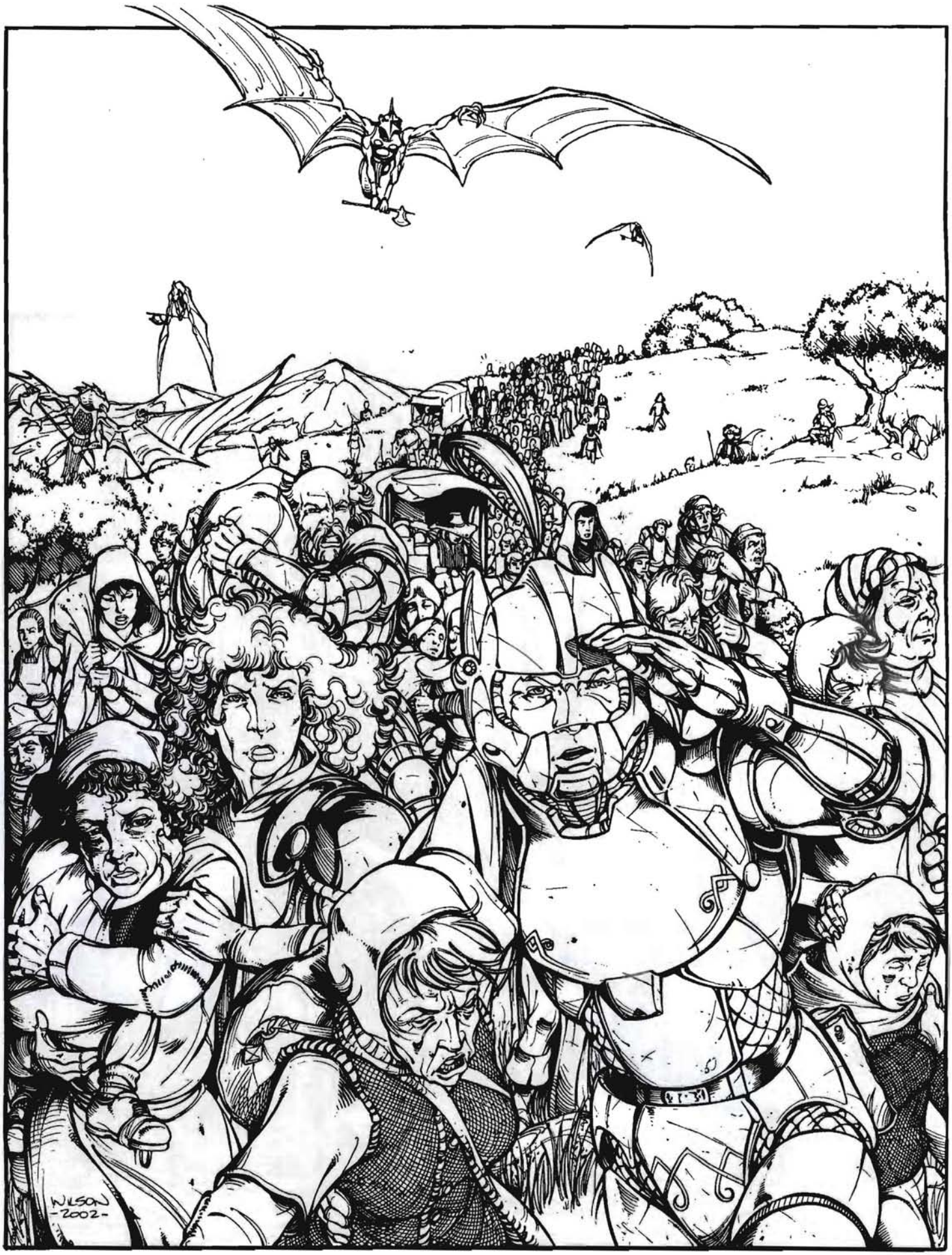
Splugorth Slavers bear mention here both because they are supernatural beings attracted to Tolkeen since the war's end, and because they hunt and capture many of the creatures noted in this section. They may be encountered day or night *away* from the cities where they run down and capture bands of refugees, sometimes by the hundreds. However, they usually enter the burning cities at night in smaller groups to hunt and capture "exotic" prey such as the monsters and demons noted here to freedom fighters, mercenaries, adventurers and practitioners of magic whose experience, skills and powers can fetch a good price on the Slave Market or who can be used as contestants in Gladiatorial games. Most everyone hates, fears and either hides from or attacks Splugorth Slavers and their female warrior henchmen with the slightest of provocations, which is just the way the arrogant and powerful enslavers like it. After all, the hunt and capture are the fun part of their job.

Other wicked supernatural beings such as Black Faeries, Witchlings, Canadian Demon Bears, lesser demons and the Unbidden (strange creatures from beyond the Rifts) prowl the ruins in search of victims to molest, torture and kill. Some are common to the region. Others are from distant lands and alien worlds. Remember, there was a point where the sorcerers of Tolkeen dared to call upon and associate with all manner of evil in hopes of enticing or forcing them to champion their war. As a result, a number of rare, strange and unusual beings not normally found in this part of the world may be encountered in and around the Kingdom of Tolkeen. It is a lasting legacy of the extreme lengths taken by the Tolkeenites to win at all cost.

Bands of mercenaries, bandits and looters also come out at night to search for weapons, magic, treasure and Tolkeen's secrets. If they think a refugee or a resistance fighter has what they want or knows where to find it, they will try to get it from him. The safety of being in a group offers little defense against the most ruthless of these cutthroats, many of whom are willing to do *anything* to get what they seek. People who get in their way are just another obstacle to be *removed*. Those who deny them face their fury and may be threatened, extorted, brutalized, tortured and killed unless they comply. Brutes without scruples

who may visit pain and suffering upon those the group loves or upon innocent victims they have never met before. Most of these brigands have no qualms about threatening or killing an entire family to coerce "heroes" to do what they demand. Characters hiding from the Coalition or rivals are stuck between a rock and a hard place when threatened by these independent bands. Unless they can take them down quietly with magic or quickly by other means and leave, the sounds of a skirmish will bring them unwanted attention.

Gunfire, especially prolonged gunfire, suggests a firefight that will bring the CS and/or others to investigate. Villains use this to their advantage, cautioning their victims not to scream and to do as they say if they wish to live. Blatant opportunists, most of these cutthroats do let their victims live if they give them what they want. Those who oppose them can expect trouble. However, some of the gangs back down if the opposition looks too powerful and determined. Depending on the situation, the bandits' threats may be nothing more than a "bluff," and if that bluff is called, the crooks grouse and threaten but run off into the shadows. Half the time these plunderers cannot afford a prolonged battle or CS intervention themselves, and will back off if sternly denied, or launch a brief attack that lasts only a minute or two before giving up and running off – a cue their victims should follow to avoid a clash with the CS or others. Many of these lowlifes do not forget the faces or identifying marks of those who dare to stand up to them, embarrass them or beat them in a fight, and will extract revenge if the opportunity comes their way.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Refugee Exodus

When the cities of Tolkeen and Freehold fell, there could be no denying that the kingdom was lost. There was no other nation or power to save them or offer arms and troops. All they had available had been spent. There was nothing left to do but to run. Thousands did just that, in a great exodus in every direction, but the greatest waves of people headed west.

The exodus for the refugees who flee Tolkeen does not end with them leaving the city. Their journey is long and filled with danger. Groups of more than a few dozen people are difficult to conceal, and many of the refugee groups consisted of thousands, even tens of thousands – easy pickings for CS aircraft and equally easy targets for Splugorth and other slavers, well as raiders, bandits and ravaging monsters.

Only a third of the refugees have vehicles or some other special mode of travel. That means navigating the wilderness with hundreds or thousands of people on foot. Most are women and children, and among them are the injured and the elderly. Less than 15% have any combat experience, only 20% have a ranged weapon (whether they can use them with any effectiveness on not) and fewer than 3% wield any type of magic. The best warriors, the most powerful spell casters and the most experienced people have either perished in the war or continue to fight for their lives elsewhere in the crumbling kingdom.

Shortly after the fighting ends at Tolkeen, Freehold and Magestock, the Coalition Army will come looking for survivors in a more organized fashion. While refugees flee for the imagined safety of the western border, there is nothing to stop the Coalition from hunting down Tolkeenites in the Dakotas or wherever they go. The Cyber-Knights and heroes who lead this exodus can only do so much to turn away the Coalition war machine and pray it will be enough. The trouble is, the vast multitudes traveling on foot move slowly, and the Knights and their helpers can barely manage to keep them safe from monsters, raiders and themselves.

If they can manage it, the Cyber-Knights' clever leader, Lord Coake, has made arrangements to put the refugees in the most unlikely of safe havens. Castles in the sky that *should* hide them from the CS and keep them safe from most other menaces. Lord Coake and his Cyber-Knights are friends with a race of aliens few people on Rifts Earth know even exist, the Coalition States and the Splugorth included. They are the reptilian people known as the **Lyn-Srial**, and they are masters of the alien *Cloud Magic*. The Lyn-Srial are something of knights themselves, fighting only in self-defense and promoting freedom, justice and peace for all living creatures. They have built a city in the walls of the Grand Canyon, in Arizona, where all peace-loving people are welcomed. The Lyn-Srial could find no reason to join the war of hatred and revenge at Tolkeen, but they do have compassion toward the refugees and agreed to help by building them Cloud Castles as a temporary haven. The farsighted Lord Coake had them begin their task nearly a year ago, so the havens in the sky would be ready when they were needed. With the collapse of the cities of Tolkeen and Freehold, that time is now and the Lyn-Srial and nearly the full army of Lord Coake's Cyber-Knights join the refugees in a bid to lead them to safety. The Lyn-Srial hang back and avoid direct combat, using their magic to heal and conceal the fleeing multitude. It is one thing to crush one's enemy utterly, as the CS has done, and one can argue that the Tolkeenites got what they deserved, but the Coalition's continuing campaign of genocide goes beyond justice or reason (just as the Cyber-Knights predicted). That is why the Lyn-Srial Sky-Knights and Cloudweavers join this cause to save lives. They just hope that after all these people have suffered, being taken to a Cloud Castle is like being rescued in a fairy tale and will bring the innocent a little peace and joy, and give the guilty a place to reflect and change their ways. The Lyn-Srial support that cause too and will gladly engage in discussions and philosophical debate, and try to steer the survivors of Tolkeen away from thoughts of revenge and toward rebuilding a new and better life.

But first, the refugees have to get there in one piece.

Mundane Considerations

The evacuation of Tolkeen is more than just a foot race to the windswept prairies of the Dakotas. People need to eat, drink, rest and find or build shelter. They need medical treatment and emotional support. They need guidance and help making their way. The survivors are predominately farmers and city-folk. They don't know much about the wilderness or wilderness survival. Most are suffering from emotional, mental and/or physical trauma to begin with, having just lived through a brutal invasion, lost loved ones, seen their homes destroyed, and their homeland gone up in flames. They have lost everything and don't know where to go, or what to do. In no derogatory way intended, they are like *shell-shocked sheep* looking to someone, anyone to lead them and help.

Medicine and healing. Depending on how many are injured and what kind of medical and magical resources are available, some, perhaps many, will die along the way. They will die not only from battle injury and wounds, but thousands will perish from infection, dysentery, exhaustion, heat, dehydration and starvation. Thankfully, drinkable water is plentiful. Those who are injured, as well as children, the elderly, and the weak, will require physical help and slow the progress of the entire group.

Finding their way. Those who wander off may get lost and the rest of the group will have to decide if they can afford the time and risk of stopping and searching for them. Those left behind (often by accident) must fend for themselves in a hostile wilderness – finding food, water, shelter and the way on their own. Away from the relative safety of the group, they are vulnerable to mishap, injury, animal predators, misanthropes, slavers and monsters. As noted earlier, the wilderness is made all the more dangerous with Tolkeen's reckless unleashing of demons and monsters to battle the Coalition Invasion Force. And speaking of the CS, many squads and platoons of Coalition troops will follow the refugees into the badlands of the New West. Thankfully, most will give up after a few days, especially when the refugees seem to vanish (into the sky) and return to Minnesota where they are needed more. Bounty hunters and slavers may not be so easily dissuaded.

Finding food for any group in the wild can be difficult, but finding enough food to feed thousands borders on the impossible, even with the help of magic. Years of war, destruction and the Coalition's latest "scorched earth" campaign have depleted

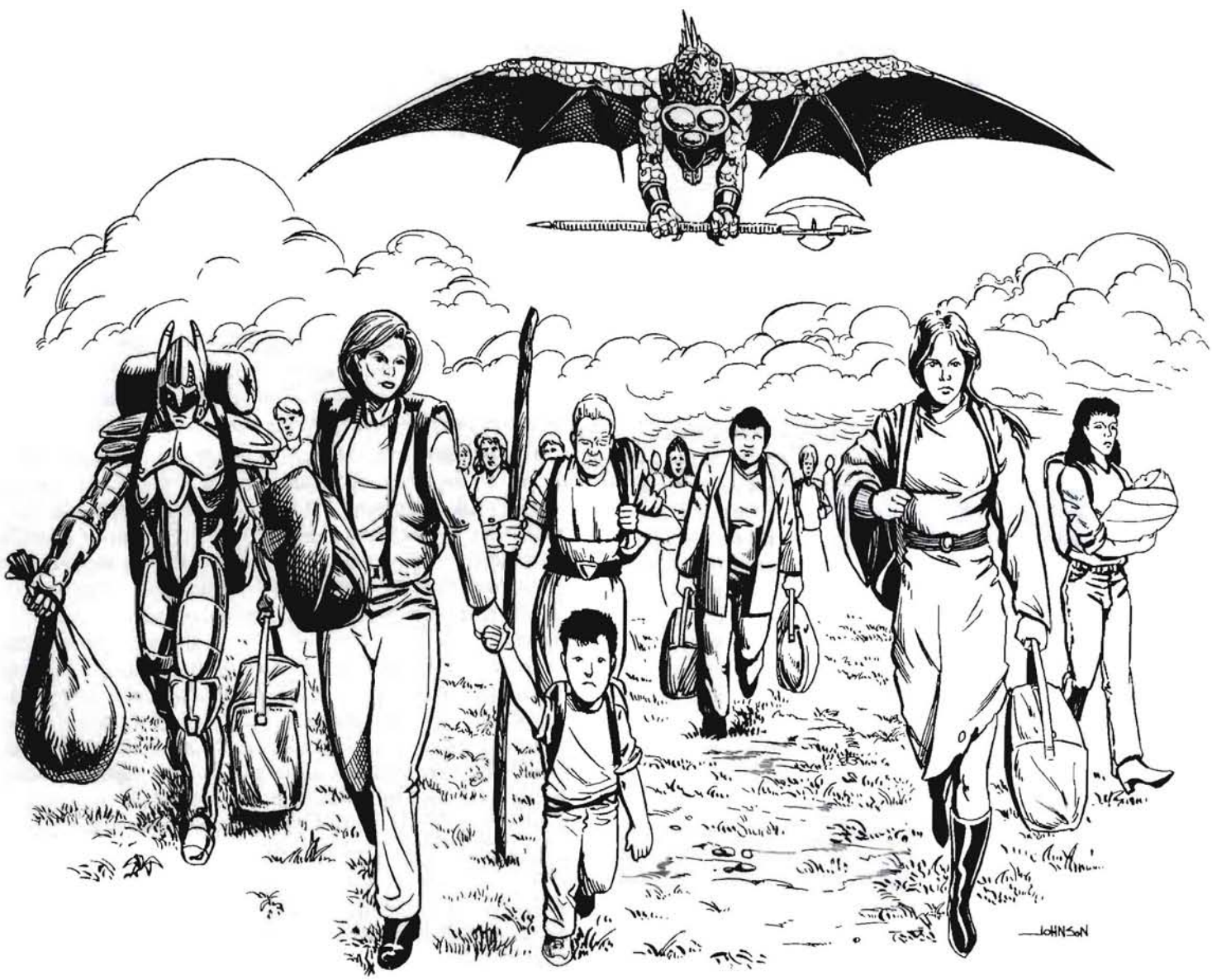
or taken away food and other resources throughout Minnesota. There are few farms with any viable crops and fewer communities that have not been destroyed or abandoned by the inhabitants themselves, taking everything they could carry or plundered later by mercenaries, thieves and refugees who came before. Sources of wild food have likewise been plundered or destroyed, and the war has even chased away most of the animals, making hunting and trapping exceedingly poor, and fishing insufficient to feed large numbers. Food must be rationed and shared but starvation remains a reality.

No shelter to be had. The few communities that remain are likely to have been partially destroyed, abandoned and/or *taken over* by villains or monsters, or even the Coalition laying in wait. There is no safe place to stop at along the way. They must sleep under the stars, endure the elements and press on.

The elements. Even with a few Warlocks in the group, the elements cannot be escaped. Heat from the sun causes heat stroke, sunburn, and dehydration. Rain cause chills and illness as well as impairs visibility, slows progress and creates danger of getting lost, stuck in mud or getting washed away in a flash flood. Fog and mist likewise impair travel, force delays and create settings for ambush and trouble.

Large numbers cut both ways. On one hand, there is safety in numbers. Large numbers keep away marauders, small gangs, and most wild animals. On the other hand, they make attractive targets for pursuing CS troops, bandits, slavers and raiders with superior weapons, raw power and fighting skills. The majority of these people are civilians, mainly women and children at that. Very few carry weapons or know how to use them. The few defenders among them are spread thin as it is, and there are not enough of them to respond quickly enough to stem the charge of a well armed, well-prepared attack force. Worse, when attacked, it is human nature to run. CS troops, slavers and raiders count on it, because they can frighten and divide the larger force to go after the small groups that splinter away from it. In other cases, raiders use hit and run tactics, usually striking where the cavalcade is most vulnerable, creating a great deal of noise and confusion (chaos helps them), shooting or stomping whomever gets in their way (to stop them, not necessarily kill), and grabbing whatever they can and leaving.

Slavers use similar tactics, following from a safe distance, picking off stragglers, and conducting raids that divide the people to grab those "cut from the herd," if you will. They too make raids, only in this case what they want are the people, them-



selves, grabbing whomever they can and making off with them. The dilemma for Cyber-Knights and other protectors who might want to run off to rescue those spirited away, is that if they do so, they leave the rest of the massive group less protected from attacks, raids and kidnaping while they are gone. Which may be what the first attack was meant to do in the first place. Thousands of humans, D-Bees and even supernatural beings and monsters have been captured by slavers, two thirds of them by Splugorth Slavers.

Attacks, Ambush, Robbery and Murder:

1. Refugees are targeted and attacked by *bandits* who want to steal the last of the possessions and any valuables they have managed to save this far.

2. Attacked by *slavers and raiders* who know the traumatized people will offer little resistance except for a small handful of protectors trying to keep them safe.

3. Refugees are attacked by *other refugees* who are desperate for food, clothes, guns, ammunition, vehicles and gear so *they* may survive. When it comes down to survival, it is all too often a "dog eat dog" situation.

4. Attacked and eaten by *predators and monsters* who regard humanoids as "food."

5. Attacked and tortured by *demons* and intelligent monsters such as Daemonix, Black Faeries and Brodkil no longer held in check by their masters at Tolkeen. Creatures that have either reverted to their evil nature or seek revenge upon those they see as the people who had enslaved them.

6. Waylaid by unscrupulous or desperate *mercenaries* or *adventurers* who need what few supplies or little food the refugees may have for themselves.

7. Harassed by *bounty-hunters, hired killers* or *extortionists* out to collect the reward they believe is on the head of someone among them. The refugees must give up said individual or else. Likewise, the refugees have some magic artifact, component or secret that the professional recovery experts want for themselves or to sell or trade for a profit. The refugees may not even know they have what these brutes want, but are bullied and harassed until it is found.

8. *Thieves and con-artists* who will not threaten or physically hurt the refugees but who try to cheat and bilk them out of what little they might have.

9. *Traveling Shows* may stop to offer a little free entertainment to lift spirits or a helping hand by way of free or cheap medicine, healing, food, fresh water, basic supplies and even tents or a roof to sleep under. However, many traveling shows are nothing more than fronts for criminals, spies, thieves and worse. If the refugees are not careful, they may find themselves missing a few of their fellows (captured to become an enslaved attraction, forced labor, play-thing or even food) or missing some valuable or tricked into revealing some secret (about Tolkeen, someone on the run, and who knows what) when the show departs. The refugees many not even know what they have done.

10. *Recruited* or enslaved by one or more powerful but evil practitioners of magic, dragons or supernatural beings who offer the refugees their protection, assistance and maybe even a new home in exchange for their service, labor and/or worship.

11. Then there is the *Coalition Army*. Extermination Squads who want to see as many D-Bees, sorcerers and freethinking rabble destroyed as possible pursue them on a crusade to destroy nonhumans and sorcerers so they may not rise again and threaten the CS way of life.

And this is not the entire list of trouble and dangers the refugees must face, just many of the most notable. Feuds, theft, fights and dissension are likely to arise within the refugee groups themselves as emotions run hot and people struggle to survive and protect their loved ones and their secrets.

Paths to Freedom

The Cyber-Knights' plan for the survivors of Tolkeen is to take them **west** where the Knights have prepared Castles in the Clouds for them. Here the refugees can lay low for a while (or stay for years), recover and make plans to rebuild their lives. However, not all people fleeing the Kingdom of Tolkeen follow the Cyber-Knights nor welcome their help.

The west is considered to be an uncharted and hostile wilderness filled with savages, monsters and hidden danger. Few willingly want to travel through them let alone settle the region. Over time, **North and South Dakota** will prove to be less scary and dangerous than originally believed, but they are not candidates for settlement because of their closeness to CS claimed Minnesota and the Xiticix Hivelands. Settling in the Dakotas creates the same close proximity problem that cursed the Kingdom of Tolkeen. It is just too darn close to Coalition held territory. Additionally, if war is declared on the Xiticix, the battle zone would be right in their backyard.

Colorado has appeal to some survivors of Tolkeen and a few thousand have gone there to rebuild their lives. A few thousand others are considering, as well as eyeing other places. The far American west – *California, Oregon and Washington* – are complete unknowns and only the most adventurous consider embarking for those lands.

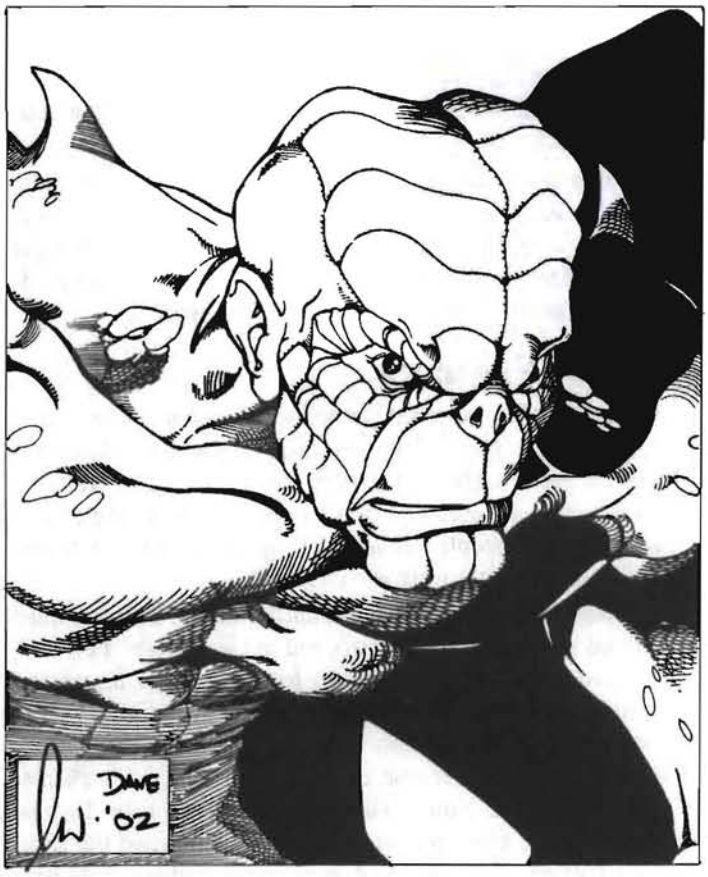
Nebraska, Kansas and **Oklahoma** present some possibilities but they too are part of the wild and untamed New West and not very appealing to most civilized Tolkeenites, at least not at the moment.

The Southwest is also part of the wild New West, and though there are settlements, ranches and cities sprouting up, it is famous for being a lawless land plagued by gangs of desperados, gunslingers, savages and the likes of the Pecos Empire, not to mention vampires, dinosaurs and a slew of strange monsters (well, strange to people from the east). Still, the southwest appeals to some, inviting a trickle of Tolkeen survivors to settle there.

The Magic Zone and the east are the most appealing to survivors of Tolkeen because the environment is very similar to Minnesota and there are communities of practitioners of magic and civilization. Getting there is the problem.

The Inhuman Factor

One of the things that limits where the survivors of Tolkeen can hide or go to live, is their race. Most are D-Bees, and the Coalition Army is hunting for D-Bees. Their alien looks, shape and size make them easy to spot from humans and targets for extermination. Thus, their own appearance makes them marked for death by the CS and hard to hide. This is common knowl-



edge that has made some predominantly human settlements, who might otherwise help the refugees, turn them away for fear of CS retaliation. This has also made slavers much more brazen toward capturing D-Bees. Flushed from their sanctuaries in the Kingdom of Tolkeen, poorly equipped and no place to go, they are trapped outdoors and vulnerable to capture, or "harvesting," as the Splugorth Slavers like to call it.

The barrier to the East. The Coalition States add to the D-Bees' dilemma because they block the refugees' way to the east. With the addition of the State of El Dorado (Arkansas), the Coalition States effectively cut the United States in half along the Mississippi River. The Coalition Army expects a large number of survivors to head east to the Magic Zone and wilderness beyond, so armed forces patrol by land, water and air along the Mississippi from Minnesota to Arkansas on guard for refugees. Any large group of travelers is stopped and wherever D-Bees and practitioners of magic are discovered, they are ruthlessly gunned down where they stand. This means Tolkeenites desiring to go east must try *sneaking* through Coalition held territories or make long detours through hostile wilderness to loop around them. Otherwise, the east offers unclaimed wilderness lands similar to those of Minnesota to settle, the Magic Zone and Michigan where cities of magic and numerous towns and settlements already exist, and the promise of Lazlo and New Lazlo in the northeast.

North to Canada offers the same problems as heading east. To avoid Coalition troops, the best avenue is to travel west and then up into Canada, otherwise one must brave travel through the Xiticix Hivelands. Even if one heads for western Canada that leaves only the Province of Saskatchewan as an easy destination. Going further west, into Alberta, means skirting around the Calgary Rift and avoiding the gangs of monsters that gather there. Besides, western Canada, like the American west, is mostly uncharted wilderness. The north lands are also wilderness and the tundra is not an inviting place for most city folk. To head east one must make another long detour through the wilderness around the Manitoba Hivelands.

Going through Wisconsin may sound easy, but it is an unclaimed wilderness occupied by Coalition forces. Unknown to most people, the CS has two military bases in the northwestern corner of Wisconsin, one on the shore of Lake Superior. Coalition soldiers patrol the border along Minnesota and Wisconsin, as well as the Great Lake and skies overhead, looking for "spies" and "dangerous invaders" (i.e., Tolkeenites & D-Bees). Making it beyond the CS forces in Wisconsin is a more difficult task than most take it for. At least half of those who try, perish.

The Southwest detour mean navigating through or around the Pecos Empire and past the new Coalition State of El Dorado to get east of the Mississippi River and to the Magic Zone or eastern wild lands.

Tolkeen's Transient Population, Broken Down by Race

3% Aarden Tek (Canada)
9% D'norr Devilmen (see *Coalition Wars™ Three*)
2% Grackle Tooth (Canada)
4% Greot Hunters (Canada)
34% Humans
15% Larmac (see *Coalition Wars™ Three*)
1% Lanotaur (Psyscape)
4% Noli-Bushmen (Canada)
4% N'mbyr Gorilla Men (War Campaign)
2% Psi-Stalkers (these are citified Psi-Stalkers)
5% Quick Flex-Aliens (War Campaign)
1% Fennodi (New West)
2% Tirrvol Sword Fist (War Campaign)
8% Vanguard Brawlers (War Campaign)
3% Yeno (Canada)
3% Others, mostly supernatural beings or creatures of magic like Amorphs, Chatterlings, Dragon-Apes, Dragon-Cats, Demon-Dragonmages, Power Leeches, Yhabbayar Bubblemakers, Zenith Moon Warpers, dragons, and rare and unusual D-Bees or monster races.

Note: Most races listed are described in the pages of **Coalition War Campaign™, Psyscape™** and **Rifts® Canada™**. See the two **Atlantis** books and **Vampire Kingdoms** for rare and unusual D-Bees.

The Second Juicer Uprising

The second coming of Julian the First

Blood poured from his nose as he slowly sat up, his palsied left arm trembling like a leaf in a breeze.

His muscles felt like coiled steel that refused to bend – heavy, taut, cold.

It was an effort to cough up the phlegm that choked his throat. His head ached and pounded liked it always did in the mornings before he "dialed up." Aching as if it were caught in a vice. His left ear rang like an angry alarm clock, his right felt as if it were stuffed with cotton.

The very act of sitting up sent an electric shock through every muscle in his body and caused his left arm to jerk as if striking at some phantom to his left. It was an act of will to make his right arm move, in slow motion, to hit the control mechanism on his left shoulder. The entire ordeal took three minutes.

He didn't feel the needle of the injection collar pierce his skin, he never did, but he felt the chemicals burning through his veins like liquid fire.

Finally, Julian opened his eyes to see his loyal friend and assistant, Lieutenant Domino Smythe, standing in front of him, his mechanical arm holding up a ball of tissue to wipe the blood from Julian's face and chest. His nose bleed had stopped already (Julian barely noticed them anymore) and the fire in his veins had already begun to uncoil his stiff muscles and unclog his right ear. The headache and the ringing of the other ear never went away, but the chemical cocktail would tone them down to a manageable level.

"You know, Dom," coughed and wheezed the great Juicer leader. "If one of my enemies ever struck before I dialed up my coffee-fix .... it would take me twenty minutes before I knew I was dead."

"Then it's a good thing you only sleep five hours a day." replied his friend.

"Five .... hours. There was a time .... " groaned Julian as he rolled his shoulders to loosen up. "There was a time, Domino, when .... I could go on .... without sleep for 72 hours without skipping a beat. Now .... I sleep half my life away."

Suddenly, Julian pitched to one side and fell on his left side. Domino ran to his leader's aid.

"I'm okay. I'm okay. I .... just slipped. Leaned on the plastic with my bad arm an' slipped is all."

"I don't know why you keep that damn thing laying on the cot next to you." groused Lieutenant Smythe.

"What? My body bag?"

"Yes."

"'Cuz, my dear friend, one of these mornings I'm not gonna be getting out of bed, and you can just roll me into it and zip me up."

"Ha, ha. It's stupid and .... "

Before he could finish his statement, Julian had vaulted out of bed. The drugs that fed his Juicer body were doing their job of bringing him back to action.

"Morbid?"

"Just stupid."

"Look, Dom, my death is a fact of life. There is no reason I've survived Last Call this long. By all rights I shoulda died three years ago. There's no sense why I've lived so long. Every Juicer who started with me is gone. Every last one."

"You survive through seer force of will, my liege."

"Yeah? Maybe so," chuckled Julian. "Maybe so. Or maybe God is punishing me. Or maybe there's something I gotta do before I die. Or maybe I'm just too stupid or mean to die. All I know for sure is, it hurts, Dom. Hurts so bad .... just to get moving in the morning. Having that black body bag lying next to me gives me a reason to go on, Domino.

"How'z so?"

"'Cuz every morning I wake up and find myself laying next to it, rather than in it, I know I cheated death one more day. It reminds me that I'm not dead yet. That may be where I'm headed, but as long as I can get outta bed, I'm not there yet. The pain's just a little reminder I'm still alive. And you know what?"

"What?"

"Death must be one hacked-off dude, 'cuz I've been cheating him for quite some time now. Every time I creak out of bed must be like a fart in ol' Death's face."

Both men laughed, and Lt. Smythe handed Julian his usual breakfast of five eggs and a 20-ounce steak.

"Funny," said Julian in a more somber tone as he gulped down a mouthful of eggs, "when you're young and stupid, five, six years as a superman seems like a long time. I mean such a long time. But you know what? It's over in a blink. A blink, Domino. Six years .... hell, ten or twenty years ain't nothin'. But when you're young, it seems like an eternity. Now every freakin' day I can open my eyes feels like a miracle, even with the torture of my body dying on me a little more every day."

"How old are you Julian – if I may ask?"

"What do I look like? Thirty-five? Forty? Fifty?"

"I know you're not that old, I'd guess .... "

"Twenty-five. Next month."

"Oh."

"I look forty-five. I know. That's what the Juice does to you. Burns you out fast."

"Would you .... knowing what you know today, would you .... um ... "

"Do it again? Get Juiced?"

"Yeah."

"Hell, no!"

"Really?"

"Why? Does that surprise you?"

"I, um, I don't know. I mean, you never talked about doing a detox."

"Detox? And give up all this?!" laughed Julian as he winced with pain.

Domino smiled and went about his duties.

"You're a good friend Lieutenant. You know that, right?"

"Thank you, sir."

Lt. Domino Smythe walked to the tent's exit, about to leave, but stopped and with his back still to his leader, asked, "Sir, why didn't you? Why didn't you detox, for real?"

"A lot of Juicers will tell you once you've been a superman you can never go back. I've known my share who did detox and killed themselves a year later 'cuz they couldn't handle being normal. To be honest, I never gave it any thought I was too wrapped up in the moment. I had too much to prove. It just never occurred to me until Last Call set in, and as you know, it's adios muchachos by that time. Ain't nothing I can do now but live it out til I drop. That's why we're here."

"Here? I don't understand?"

"I became a Juicer 'cuz I was angry at the world. I was 17 and mad as hell. I've been angry and hating and fighting ever since. Hating and fighting the Coalition. Hating and destroying the UTI aliens. Hating the world. Sometimes the causes I fight for are just, but mostly I just had a need to kick some ass. Inflict some hurt. Getting Juiced let me pour out some of that hate on others. It's funny, Domino, some people see me as some kind of hero or icon. I don't feel like no hero, ain't sure what an 'icon' is exactly. But I do know this. I'm alive and kickin' for some reason, and I want to go out doing something good. I think saving the Tolkeenites headed west is it. Besides, I get to stick it to the CS one last time in the process. Can't beat that."

"Then what?"

Julian laughed a hearty laugh. The best laugh he'd had in a while.

"There isn't any, 'then what,' Dom. This is it for me. I may be able to throw a Headhunter like you around this tent . . . . maybe . . . . but I'm half as strong and fast as I used to be. I don't have skills like I did once. My body hurts all the time like you won't believe. I mean it feels like my muscles are turning to stone and crumbling away at the same time. You've seen me in the morning – the ten minutes it takes me to crawl out of my cot takes an act of God and half the time I'm not sure I can do it. Once I get the juice flowing and my body moving, I'm better, but . . . . Anyway, this is it for me. I may not fall in the first battle, but sooner or later, Dom, sooner or later . . . ."

"I understand."

"Don't sound so glum, boy! I've done all the living this body can handle. I'm the oldest living Juicer there probably ever was, and I can still handle myself in a fight. I'd rather die out there, in the field of battle, than have you roll me into that black bag one morning. It's as simple as that. It's what keeps me from rolling into the bag and zipping it up myself."

Suddenly, Lord Julian is standing before the lieutenant with that thin smile of his. Despite his complaints the man could still move like lightning and as quietly as a panther. "I'm ready to die. I just want to die well, you know. Die doing something good for a change. Something to help people. Save lives." And with a wink to punctuate the matter, Julian added, "This is the one, Dom. The good fight."

Domino couldn't help but to smile, "Yes, sir. This is the one."

"Oh, you do have to promise me something, Lieutenant."

"Yes, sir. Anything!"

"This is *not* your last fight, you hear me? It's mine. You, my friend, will do everything in your power to survive and go on. That's an order."

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Now that my belly is full, let's go rescue us some weak-kneed refugees from them Dead Boys."

****

Julian the First came into prominence as the leader of the infamous *Juicer Uprising of 105 P.A.* It was a sordid affair in which the CS, through Colonel Lyboc, had orchestrated a plan to win some 60,000 Juicers to their side with the promise of a prolonged life. A company known as UTI claimed to have had developed a process that could allow a Juicer to live 20-30 years long, some rumors claimed 100 years. Any Juicer wanting this so-called "Prometheus Treatment" could get it *free* from the CS. Well not quite free, they had to promise two years of service in the Coalition Army in the battle against Tolkeen. Lyboc's plan was that the Juicers would lead the first attack on Tolkeen to soften up the enemy and let the regular Army roll in behind them and finish them off. However, just as the scheme was getting off the launch pad, someone found out it was all trick. The Prometheus Treatment only added two years of life and the rest was lies to get Juicers to do the Coalition's dirty work against Tolkeen for them. When the truth was learned, the Juicers rioted. Julian the First took command of an army of 20,000+ – over 10,000 of them Juicers – and tore the city of Newtown, the UTI industrial center, to pieces. In the process they learned UTI

was a front for aliens known as Vallax. Aliens who had suckered the nefarious Colonel Lyboc, and together with the Colonel had "conned" the CS to help them in their own scheme to take over North America, by turning Juicers into *Techno-Zombies* under their complete control.

It all worked out in the end. As far as Julian could tell, all the Vallax and their Techno-Zombies were destroyed, he made a point of that, personally. Newtown was razed to the ground and the Coalition Army given their just deserts. Fort El Dorado was torn up too, and the Coalition forces there, embarrassed to no end. Ironically, Tolkeen was never touched by the incident and the Coalition's treachery made thousands of Juicers and mercenaries join the defense of the Kingdom.

Though the rebellion faltered after a few days and he and his army had to back down from the advancing Coalition Army, the Juicer Uprising has earned Julian a lasting place in the history books and has made him a larger than life hero to many. **(Note:** See **World Book 10: Juicer Uprising™** for the complete lowdown and even *play* through the events of the Juicer Uprising.)

Of course, Emperor Prosek and the Coalition propaganda machine have successfully whitewashed the entire incident. With most of the Juicers from the Uprising dead, so few know the true story. The Prometheus Treatment has been buried and forgotten, any impropriety by the CS buried with it, the UTI front for the Vallax aliens has been completely concealed by the CS, and all UTI tech centers dismantled and impounded by the CS. Fort El Dorado was rebuilt and has recently become the newest member of the Coalition States. Only the duplicitous Colonel Lyboc has felt any repercussions, having lost favor with his superiors and his rank frozen at Colonel. Of course, the CS branded Julian the First and his Juicer Army of Liberation as unstable maniacs and traitors to be shunned and feared (though the CS has made no effort to track him or his men down to punish them for their misdeeds).

Julian the First has since gone on to fight with and against the Pecos Empire, battled vampires in Mexico, and challenged the Coalition Army on many different fronts, including skirmishes around *Free Quebec* the last 14 months of that war. Oddly enough, he never felt one way or the other about magic or the Kingdom of Tolkeen. He comes to the aid of the survivors to do one thing he knows is "good" and to give the CS one last kick in the groin.

Many, including the CS, believe Julian the First is *dead*, and that the man who claims to be Julian is an imposter. To support this claim, they point to the fact that the "imposter" is easily 25% smaller than the "original" Julian and looks much too old to be the genuine article. However, those who follow him in the Juicer *Army of Liberation (JAL)* know he is indeed, Julian the First. For many he is the greatest Juicer to ever live, earning him devotion that borders on worship. He is smaller, because for the last four years he has faced "Last Call" – slang for the last days of a Juicer's life when he burns out, shuts down and dies a debilitating and painful death. Typically, Last Call lasts a few months, and in the case of Mega-Juicers, the warrior literally bursts into flames. How Julian has survived without suffering pyrotechnic "Burnout" is beyond anyone's guess. Some say he must be a mutant, others that he survives by sheer force of will. Meanwhile, rumors abound about this. One of the most popular is that Julian was a recipient of the Prometheus Treatment and that it really does keep Juicers alive, though not in good condition or for as long as the treatment promised. That rumor may sound good, but Julian never received the treatment. Another popular one, born from the confrontation with the UTI/Vallax aliens, is that he is really a *Techno-Juicer Zombie* who has somehow managed to keep his free will and human mind, also not true. Another claims he is a new sort of *Murder Wraith Undead Juicer* created by the Grim Reapers – which is preposterous because Julian the First has always warned Juicers not to believe the promises of the Grim Reapers and that the life they promise as an undead is really life as a mindless zombie slave. Julian hates the Grim Reapers so much that he and the JAL have clashed with the group on three different occasions and have destroyed two Grim Reaper cells and a good number of Murder Wraith Juicers. If he could, he'd wipe the cult off the face of the planet. Anybody who has ever served under him knows this, and would never willingly submit to becoming a wraith. In fact, Julian the First's true legacy may be proving the extended promise of life by the Grim Reapers and others like UTI to be false and repulsive lies, and that Juicers need to accept what they are and die with dignity or give up the life before it is too late.

Julian the First, Quick Stats

Alignment: Was Aberrant, but is now Unprincipled.

M.D.C.: Was 143, is now 79.

Attributes: The numbers in parenthesis are the original stats compared to his current degenerative condition: I.Q. 14 (16), M.E. 11 (14), M.A. 21 (23), P.S. 18 (32), P.P. 17 (21), P.E. 21 (28), P.B. 9 (12), Spd. 45 (87). Strength and endurance are still *supernatural.*

P.P.E.: 21

Level of Experience: 12th level Mega-Juicer.

Attacks per melee round: Nine.

Bonuses as per his current condition: +2 on initiative, +6 to strike, +7 to parry and dodge, +2 to disarm, +1 to entangle, +5 to pull punch, +4 to roll with punch fall or impact, +3 to save psionic attack, +5 to save vs poison and toxins, +6 to save vs Horror Factor. Most are roughly half of what they once were.

Special Abilities that still apply: Automatic dodge, regenerates 2D6 every hour.

Skills: All those standard to the Juicer O.C.C. and then some. All at 90-98% proficiency.

Juicer Army of Liberation Breakdown by O.C.C.

Approximately 26,000 troops total. 12,422 Juicers:

40% Classic Juicers
7% Delphi Juicers (Psionic)
13% Hyperions (Speedsters)
12% Mega-Juicers (Supernatural P.S. & P.E.)
8% Phaetons (Master Pilots)
6% Psycho-Stalkers (Juiced up Psi-Stalkers)
14% Titan Juicers (superhuman P.E./S.D.C. & P.S.)

— 13,578 others, a variety of fighter and adventure O.C.C.s.
1% Psychics & Mages.

Juicer Army of Liberation to the rescue

Julian the First has pulled his force of warriors down from Canada and up from the Southwest. Worshiped as something short of a living god and galvanized by the Siege on Tolkeen, the JAL is the largest it has ever been, with approximately 26,000 troops, 12,422 of them Juicers of one variety or another. They arrive in South Dakota, near the southwest corner of Minnesota, three days *after* the city of Tolkeen and the tri-city area have fallen to the relentless Coalition Invasion Force. He had hoped to join the Tolkeenites in their last stand, but can see they have missed it. As much as he'd like to mount a direct assault against the Coalition forces, he knows it is suicide, and he's not about to send his men to their doom in some pointless battle, especially not against the great General Jericho Holmes. Julian is one of the few people not surprised to see General Holmes alive and kicking, he'd expect nothing less from that crafty old fox – Holmes is the only man in the Coalition Army Julian has found to be worthy of his respect.

JAL scouts have returned from the north with reports of vast caravans of refugees and a personal appeal from *Lord Coake*, himself. That request is to trail behind them to stand between them and any Coalition pursuers that follow into the Dakotas. To close the "back door" behind the knights and the legion of Tolkeen survivors they lead to salvation in the northwest. A mechanized army of some 1100 armored troops (tanks, robots and power armor) and 32,800 infantry troops of **Larsen's Brigade**, led by Colonel Marcus Larsen personally, was supposed to be in place to help with the evacuation, but he appears to be lost and delayed some place along the Saskatchewan-Alberta border. The unexpected appearance of the Juicer Army of Liberation (JAL) is a godsend – provided they agree to help.

To Julian the First, this turn of events is indeed a sign. Somehow he is in the *right place* at the *right time*, to *save* lives and die in a blaze of glory just as he has hoped. It couldn't be more perfect if he had planned it that way. He agrees and quickly positions his troops between the fleeing refugees and the advancing Coalition Army following from the Minnesota war front. The Juicers camp out in the open where they cannot be missed as if to dare the Coalition Army to make a move against them. Roughly 20% are held in reserve some miles away, while 5% are dispatched to take food, water and supplies to the refugees and ordered to do whatever the Cyber-Knights tell them to help escort the refugees to safety. The main army, Julian places in the capable hands of his hand-picked heir apparent, a young *Hyperion Juicer* who has proudly taken the name of *Julian the Second*. As for Julian, he has (correctly) decided there must be bands of survivors still trying to escape the Kingdom of Tolkeen with no one to help them. So he has taken one thousand of his Juicers, riding Tarantula Jump Bikes and souped-up hovercycles (20% flying Wellington Assault Hover Bikes and Icarus Flight Systems; see **Juicer Uprising** for complete descriptions), into the war zone. As always, he takes his position at the head of his troops and sallies forth to save some more lives, Coalition Army be damned. If he's lucky, he'll die pulling a few thousand Tolkeenites out of the carnage and to freedom in the Dakotas.

The Juicer Army of Liberation meets the Coalition Army

"Retreat! Retreat is your recommendation, Colonel Lyboc?!"

"You asked my opinion, take it or leave it."

"I heard about you, sir. But such cowardice in the face of the enemy . . . . " Young General Bertram Wallace was so infuriated that he couldn't find the words to castigate the notorious Colonel Lyboc. Beyond the trees, a few kilometers ahead of General Wallace's army, camped an estimated 18,000 well-equipped warriors. At least half appeared to be Juicers, and the insignia of the *Juicer Army of Liberation* waved from a hundred banners.

"Look . . . . first, they aren't the enemy. As far as we know, they are a group of unallied mercenaries. Second, they are camped out in South Dakota, which is not territory under Coalition domination. They can camp anywhere they want to without making it an act of war."

"Then they might not even be hostile."

"Don't be stupid. Of course, they're hostile."

"Some respect, Colonel!" The young General practically screeched the words. Colonel Lyboc had to choke back a smile and his contempt for the punk-General.

"Look . . . . um . . . . General, I've had some experience with Juicers and the JAL in particular, this is not an innocent coincidence. These are not unseasoned refugees running with their tails between their legs. Hell, they're not even freedom fighters, these guys are the best.

"How can you know that for a fact?"

"Because they are the JAL. Remember the Juicer Uprising? That's them, um, sir."

General Wallace glared at Lyboc, "I'm warning you, Colonel, watch yourself."

"Yeah . . . . er . . . . yes, sir."

"The Uprising was almost five years ago. These can't be the same men."

"A Juicer is a Juicer, sir. None of them go down easy."

"But we don't know how many might even be real Juicers."

"If they are displaying the JAL flag, General, you can count on a good half of them being Juicers."

"How can you say that, Colonel. Anyone could be displaying those colors."

"No, sir."

"What you mean, no!?"

Colonel Lyboc hated dealing with these candy-cane officers straight out of cadet school with a year or two of experience under their belt from some cushy outpost, giving them delusions that they actually knew their elbow from a hot rock. He could hardly control himself. He knew having to answer to greenhorn officers out of the academy was part of his penance, but he didn't have to like it.

"Because, sir, nobody flies the JAL flag who isn't a member of the JAL. Not unless they are tired of living. The JAL is to be respected, General, don't take them lightly."

"You don't think these frightened animals might use a cheap trick like displaying banners of the JAL to save their cans? For all we know, that's not an army at all, but refugees shining us on and having a good laugh at it."

"I've had it with you, you stupid son of a . . . . I'm trying to save your ass here, and you're too dumb to know it." barked Colonel Lyboc. "I don't expect you to thank me, but give me a little credit. Listen to your scouts and use your head. Think, damn it! Think! Did these 'frightened animals' of yours just happen to have Juicer costumes hidden way so they could trick us when we came looking for them? No! They barely have the clothes on their backs. If your Intel is saying there are THOUSANDS of Juicers and they're all waving the JAL flag then it's the damn, Juicer Army of Liberation! Not some piece of garbage freedom fighters. Not a magical illusion, but the damn JAL! The Juicers who leveled Newtown, had once seized control of Fort El Dorado and who hate our guts with a passion! Got it?"

Staring into the shocked, bulging eyes of General Wallace brought Colonel Lyboc down to earth and calmed his tone.

"Look, General Wallace, you're a young officer. I mean no disrespect, sir, but you are green. I may be some lowlife sleaze-bag to you, but you need to trust me on this one. I am intimately familiar with the JAL. It was my involvement in the Juicer Uprising that sent my career into the toilet. You don't mess with these guys unless you have the firepower and the commitment to see half your troops die. Do you want to lose a thousand or more men, General?"

Silence.

"Because that's what will happen." continued Colonel Lyboc. "You have a field army of 24,000 men at your disposal. That's not enough against an army of seven or eight thousand Juicers and their ten thousand D-Bee buddies. It wouldn't matter if General "God Almighty" Jericho Holmes led twice that number into battle, the result would be the same."

"But . . . ."

"But nothing, General. You ever see a Juicer fight?"

"Once."

"How many men did he take down before he fell?"

"Killed one, crippled one, incapacitated two others."

"Sounds like he went easy on them."

"He was only trying to escape."

"Do the math, General. Do the math and think. We finally won this war. Tolkeen has gone down in flames. It is a decisive victory. Now, ask yourself, do you really want to instigate a battle where we're going to have losses of four to one? Four human lives lost to every one Juicer, and how many injured, just to go after some stinking D-Bees who'll probably die in the wilderness anyway?"

Lyboc took a dramatic pause, and continued. "It's your career, sir. Your call, but I'd have to advise against it. And remember, sir, I may only be a Colonel, but my brigade is an autonomous field unit. We don't answer to you and will not follow an order to attack the JAL. My objections and condemnations of your actions will be spelled out in my official report, Sir."

The General was silent for a moment. The anger drained from his ashen face.

"Thank you, Colonel. Your advice has been most, um, enlightening. I agree. It would be folly to attack an army of Juicers. And . . . . and there's just no reason to risk so many lives."

"That's all I was trying to say, General."

"Yes. What was I thinking? If you hadn't stood up to me and . . . ."

"That's my job, General. It's a good call, sir. *You* made the right choice. That's what my report will say, sir."

"Your report?"

"Yes, sir. You made a good call today. Saved lives. I support *your* decision completely, General. That's what I'll be telling the Brass."

"Thank you, Colonel Lyboc."

"You're welcome."

"Colonel!"

"Yes?"

"This matter . . . . our, um, talk, you won't . . . ."

"My report will state you asked for my assessment, weighed the issues and decided not to let yourself be provoked into futile combat, sir. Probably avoiding a repeat of the Juicer Uprising. It was your call, and you made a good one, sir."

"Thank you, Colonel. I won't forget this."

"Really, sir?"

"You stopped me from making a terrible . . . . "

"Uninformed decision, General."

"Yes. That's what it was."

"I'll go tell the men to stand down, and write that report now, sir, if you are done with me."

"Yes, Colonel. Oh, and Colonel Lyboc, I do appreciate what you did today. Your loyalty to me won't be forgotten."

"My pleasure, Sir."

With that, Colonel Lyboc exited the General's office onboard the Death's Head Transport. *"It is good,"* he thought, *"to have a baby General eating out of your hand. Good to have a General, even an idiot General, owe you one. Maybe things are looking up for me after all."*

Despite this happy little story, there will be skirmishes between the JAL and the Coalition Army around the Kingdom of Tolkeen and in the Dakotas. Julian the First and his rescue battalion will see the heaviest action but there will be others. Whether Julian dies in combat, we leave to the individual Game Masters. Certainly it is the way he wants to die, and his days are numbered one way or another. Even an iron will and obsession as strong as his has its limits. He has already achieved the impossible and earned himself a glittering page or two in history, all that is left for him to do is "die well."

Larsen's Brigade

Coalition Major Marcus Larsen was the hero of the Odessa Maneuver, in which he led 400 CS troops to vanquish 2000 Pecos Raiders. A year later, "Colonel" Larsen flushed out and exterminated a nest of 3000 vampires. According to the "official" Coalition report, this "favorite son" decided to quit the Coalition Army after his triumph over the undead, to start his own mercenary company and continue his crusade against vampires and monsters in ways the Coalition Army could not. A fitting end for a Coalition hero.

Of course the *truth* takes a different turn. After Colonel Larsen's success with the vampires, he openly defied the General he served under. Colonel Larsen had never agreed with the Coalition's policy of genocide for D-Bees. He sees value in all life and could find no honor in slaughtering innocent people regardless of their inhuman nature. In fact, to the open-minded Marcus Larsen, D-Bee lives are as worthwhile as humans. Consequently, when he refused to wipe out a town of 300 innocent D-Bees, the hero was arrested, charged with treason and locked up for transport to Chi-Town. A squad of Larsen's most loyal men took it upon themselves to break him out of lock-up, and before the Colonel knew it, a full mutiny had erupted. He did his best to keep loss of life to a minimum, but a few Coalition soldiers died in the melee. Realizing the soldiers and Dog Boys who threw in to rescue him would be court-martialed and executed, Larsen decided to lead them into Old Mexico where they would be safe from Coalition retribution. Like the pied-piper, along the way a few hundred D-Bees joined his ranks as did other Coalition deserters from the Army. Colonel Larsen's act of just defiance and rebellion had made him a hero to the people of the southwest, and attracted other CS soldiers who shared his views or sought a different life where honor and justice really meant something. It was not anything the Colonel had planned or wanted, but as so often happens in life, was thrust upon him.

Emperor Prosek and his son feared that if word of the incident and subsequent defection reached the States, people who loved and respected this Coalition Military hero might begin to question the Coalition's stance on D-Bees, and bring about reform that might diminish the Emperor's hold on the hearts and minds of "his" people. To minimize the publicity and prevent people from questioning policy, the CS propaganda machine whipped up the cover story about Colonel Larsen's choice to "retire" to follow his own heroic crusade against vampires and monsters. To get Larsen to go along with the plot and keep the noble warrior out of the affairs of the Coalition Army, Emperor Prosek promised to drop all charges against him and *ALL* of those who deserted. They too would be allowed to "retire" with full honors and remain citizens of the Coalition States, able to return and visit family and even live in the CS – but only on the condition that Larsen and his Brigade of mercenaries stayed clear of CS business and did not speak out against or militarily oppose the CS in the future. The Emperor calculated that the noble and compassionate Larsen would not jeopardize his men or their families, and that such a deal would keep the young Turk from challenging and embarrassing the CS any further.

The scheme worked beautifully, preserving the Coalition Army's reputation, burying the mutiny (few know it ever happened), keeping Colonel Larsen a famous Coalition hero, and cutting Larsen out of the affairs of the empire. The only casualty was the pride of a disgruntled, second-rate General who threatened to blow the entire coverup until he met with an unfortunate end at the hands of some sorcerous assassins. It was a fortunate coincidence for the Military High Command who was plotting a way to silence the lout themselves. (Actually, it was no coincidence at all, but the handiwork of *The Vanguard*, ever vigilant of ways to protect the CS.)

To date, Colonel Larsen has been good to his word. He has stayed out of Coalition affairs and made a mark for himself and The Brigade as noble heroes who fight vampires and battle monsters to keep *all peoples* safe. It hurt him to keep out of the war at *Free Quebec*, but he did, and he has steered away from other incidents since his mutiny in 103 P.A., including the Juicer Uprising. However, he could not stand by and let the Coalition Army slaughter hundreds of thousands of Tolkeenites as they fled into the wilderness. Colonel Larsen found the actions of

Tolkeens as abhorrent and dishonorable as the Coalition's, but that doesn't make Coalition genocide any more palatable. When his connections in the Coalition Military confirmed the army would launch a mass extermination campaign against the civilian survivors, Colonel Larsen contacted the Cyber-Knights and pledged his support. He hoped the CS would not consider the Brigade's actions to be a violation of his promise, because they would never actually set foot *inside* the Kingdom of Tolkeen or support any aspect of the war or subsequent resistance. Larsen's Brigade would only stand ready to give protection and assistance to those who made it beyond the borders of Minnesota – a wilderness territory outside Coalition jurisdiction. It would be the Coalition Army overstepping their boundaries and challenging him, not the other way around. At least that was how he saw it. Not to compromise his men, many of whom still have family in the CS, he asked only for volunteers to join him. Roughly 5000 warriors, approximately half of his entire army, has joined him.

As fate would have it, Larsen's Brigade cannot make it to the Dakotas and the JAL led by Julian the First has taken up The Brigade's role as protectors, and they welcome CS transgression. For now, at least, Larsen's bargain with Emperor Prosek remains intact and The Brigade's reputation is about to grow. En route to the Dakotas, Larsen chose to swing up from his base in the *Manistique Imperium,* travel through Canada, loop around the Manitoba Hivelands and cut down along the edge of Saskatchewan. Trouble hit three hours upon entering Saskatchewan.

In a preemptive strike by the Monster Kingdom of Calgary, its ruler sent a horde of demons to attack a large band of Tundra Rangers known to be helping a settlement in eastern Saskatchewan. Colonel Larsen happened to appear moments after the fighting had begun and rode to the rescue. Four days later, the fighting continues. Larsen's Brigade has a decisive upper hand but the demons and monsters will not relent and are continually joined by a hundred here, a hundred there, who join the battle. Fortunately, there is enough distance between them and the Xiticix to avoid stirring them up. So far, casualties have been light. Barring any unforeseen turn of events, The Brigade and Tundra Rangers will win, but for now they are pinned down and dare not leave for fear that the Rangers and the innocent settlement will be overrun.

If there was any doubt that the Monster Kingdom of Calgary was a serious danger to mortals in the region, it is gone now. On the plus side, the accidental intervention of Colonel Larsen has tipped the monsters' hand and has earned them the wrath of The Brigade. Up until now, Colonel Larsen felt the Cyber-Knights' concern was overblown, now he wonders if he should not throw in with the Knights and Rangers in exterminating the infernals.

See the **Rifts® Mercenaries** sourcebook for details about Larsen's Brigade, other mercenary companies, O.C.C.s like the Spy and Smuggler, miscellaneous equipment and other good stuff.

Archie Three

Archie has been studying CS military procedures, strategies, and tactics throughout the war via his own network of spies and robots. Archie has a couple hundred Skelebot imposters deployed throughout the Kingdom of Tolkeen as part of the CS Occupation Force. He has also dispatched a few other robot teams not constrained by pretending to be CS 'bots. They generally move in small squads and form large assault groups only when told to do so by Archie, Hagan, or Argent. In addition to observing and feeding information back to Archie, these secret agents have been directed to foil the operations of the Splugorth and Federation of Magic. This is accomplished by bringing attention to their activities and causing the CS or other parties to respond by attacking them. In the case of the faux Skelebots, they can attack directly and radio for a CS Response Team to join the combat. For the other robot spies, they can attack small groups themselves or cause a ruckus that alerts the CS (or rivals) to something going on and slip away.

The machine entity is curious about the different technologies at Tolkeen, but fears magic and avoids Techno-Wizardry. He is one of the few third parties not interested in collecting magic items or learning Tolkeen's TW secrets. Archie's concern is the number of monsters on the loose in the region and the presence of the Splugorth Minions and agents from the Federation of Magic. Like the CS, he may not understand or have any need for magic himself, but he doesn't want Tolkeen's weapons stockpile or its mystic secrets falling into the hands of these two nations.

See the section on the Eastern United States and Shemarrian Uprising in the **World Overview** part of this book for more on Archie Three.

The Federations of Magic

As noted elsewhere, the Federation of Magic is taking full advantage of the situation at Tolkeen to strike against the CS from the shadows, but more importantly, to acquire powerful magic artifacts and Techno-Wizard secrets in Tolkeen's possession.

At least one or two thousand members of the Federation fight at the fallen Kingdom. Most are independent bands from the splintered Federation who set traps and ambushes to waylay the CS Occupation Force and assist resistance fighters in renewed guerilla warfare. Though these Federation fighters are comparatively small in number and scattered throughout the kingdom, they are having an impact on the Occupation Force. However, they fight not to rescue refugees or to push the CS from the region, but for personal revenge and profit. They could care less about the Tolkeenites. They want only Coalition blood and to loot the treasures and secrets of Tolkeen before the CS or some rival gets them first. It is a free-for-all environment, don't forget.

In addition to vengeful spell casters and warriors from the Magic Zone, are agents working directly for Lord Dunscon and the True Federation of Magic. Hundreds of agents, many working in teams of 4-12, have come to search the bones of Tolkeen, Freehold, Magestock and the Kingdom's Techno-Wizard centers to acquire the secrets to making Iron Juggernauts and other Techno-Wizard devices and war machines. They are also charged with gathering magic artifacts and TW weapons to supply the Federation's own army. Most of these agents are as evil and murderous as any Coalition soldier, stealing and killing to get said items whenever cheating, lies and "reason" do not suffice (reason means for others to give in to their threats). Most are diabolic fiends who will say and do anything to get what

they want, including attacking other practitioners of magic, adventurers, Minions of Splugorth and Coalition soldiers. In fact, once they realize they and the Splugorth are both looking for the same things, the Federation agents and Minions become arch-rivals, both of whom constantly trick, sabotage and kill each other in their own private little competition.

For now, at least, Federation agents and combatants are not recognized by the Coalition Army, and most skirmishes with them are blamed on Tolkeen resistance fighters, not the Federation of Magic.

Note: The Pecos Empire is also out to collect magic items, as are mercenaries (who keep some but sell most), bandits, independent adventurers, other practitioners of magic, dragons and even vagabonds hoping to luck out. For all of these opportunists and fortune hunters it is a free-for-all atmosphere with intense rivalry, cheating, bushwhacking and conflict between all parties – which may, in turn, attract Coalition soldiers to investigate and try to seize or destroy the prize they seek. Then sometimes, the true owner comes looking for the magic item or relic and he does not appreciate having to fight looters and miscreants to get what is rightfully his.

Splugorth Minions at Tolkeen

A lot of exotic D-Bees, Daemonix, demons, and other beings are on the loose. Most are renegades, wanted criminals and fearsome creatures that must now fend for themselves while avoiding the CS and bounty hunters, forcing them to gather in small groups and making them easy targets for experienced Slavers. With the fall of Tolkeen, Splugorth Slavers have been chasing down and capturing humans, D-Bees, and creatures throughout Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa. Some have even been reported in the State of Chi-Town (the wilderness portions of Missouri and Illinois), lower Manitoba and along the border of South Dakota! These Slave companies are scooping up human and D-Bee refugees, warriors, sorcerers, dragon hatchlings, and monsters like the Brodkil, Gargoyles, Witchlings and Daemonix as slave stock or fodder for gladiatorial contests in the arenas of Atlantis.

Meanwhile, Kittani and Kydian scouts and "salvage recovery teams" are regularly plumbing the ruins of Tolkeen, Freehold, Blueline, and other centers of magic in search of rare magical artifacts, magic weapons, and mystic secrets held by the Tolkeenites. The creation of the Iron Juggernauts is chief among the things the Splugorth covet. In addition, the Lord of Atlantis has dispatched a number of Sunaj assassins, and special teams (3-6 agents) consisting of Tattooed Men (various) and Slave races (various) to insure he acquires that which he desires. Many of these teams are led by a Splugorth High Lord, Conservator, or Power Lord and may include one or more Stone Masters, Bio-Wizards, Tattooed Men, or monstrous slaves. Unknown to Coalition Intelligence and Tolkeen's defenders is that many of the Gargoyles and supernatural beings found in the cities of the fallen kingdom are not those who once served Tolkeen (most of them have fled for the hills or to Mexico or Calgary), but are Minions of Splugorth sent to observe, investigate and scrounge

around for magic, clues and information, as well as alert the ground teams of impending danger and likely places to search. Note: See Rifts® World Book Two: Atlantis for details about the Minions of Splugorth, slave races, and magic, and World Book 21: Splynn Dimensional Market™ for more data on other slave races, additional magic items and the marketplace itself.

Never before have the Minions of Splugorth been so brazen or traveled so deep into the American heartland. Even the full presence of the Coalition Army in Minnesota is not enough to deter Splugorth interests in the region. Right now their numbers are small, fewer than a thousand scattered into squads, platoons and the occasional company-sized group, however, the fact that Splugorth Minions are present at all, is reason for every intelligent creature living on the continent to be concerned. The Coalition Army has already clashed with Splugorth Slavers and other Minions on several occasions, and are ramping up operations to purge them from the region. The Minions of Splugorth have quickly risen to the top of the Coalition's list of most dangerous enemies for immediate elimination. That distraction will help hundreds of Tolkeenites to escape the death mark of the CS and the slave pens of Atlantis.

Freehold will become a hotbed of activity as CS soldiers, Federation agents, Minions and bold freebooters dig through the rubble and explore subterranean chambers in search of magic items, treasures and alien technology. Dragons are famous for their treasures, so Freehold (and to a much lesser degree, Tolkeen) offers the greatest promise of vast wealth and magic. Thus, the CS has tried to cordon off the city and have several huge digging and salvage operations going on at various locations with a good number of power armor and robot troops for protection. The CS is using seismic and other sensors to locate monsters and survivors trapped below and pockets that might hold treasure.

Mercenaries

As noted elsewhere, Bounty Hunters and Mercenaries desperate for work have turned to collecting bounties and taking jobs from anybody. Many of these guns-for-hire will gladly sell or trade their services to protect and escort Tolkeenite survivors out of the war-torn region, provided the refugees can actually afford to *pay* them. The problem is, most can't, not even at cut rates. Some mercenaries whose hearts are touched by the plight of the innocent, help on a voluntary basis, but most are not so kindhearted.

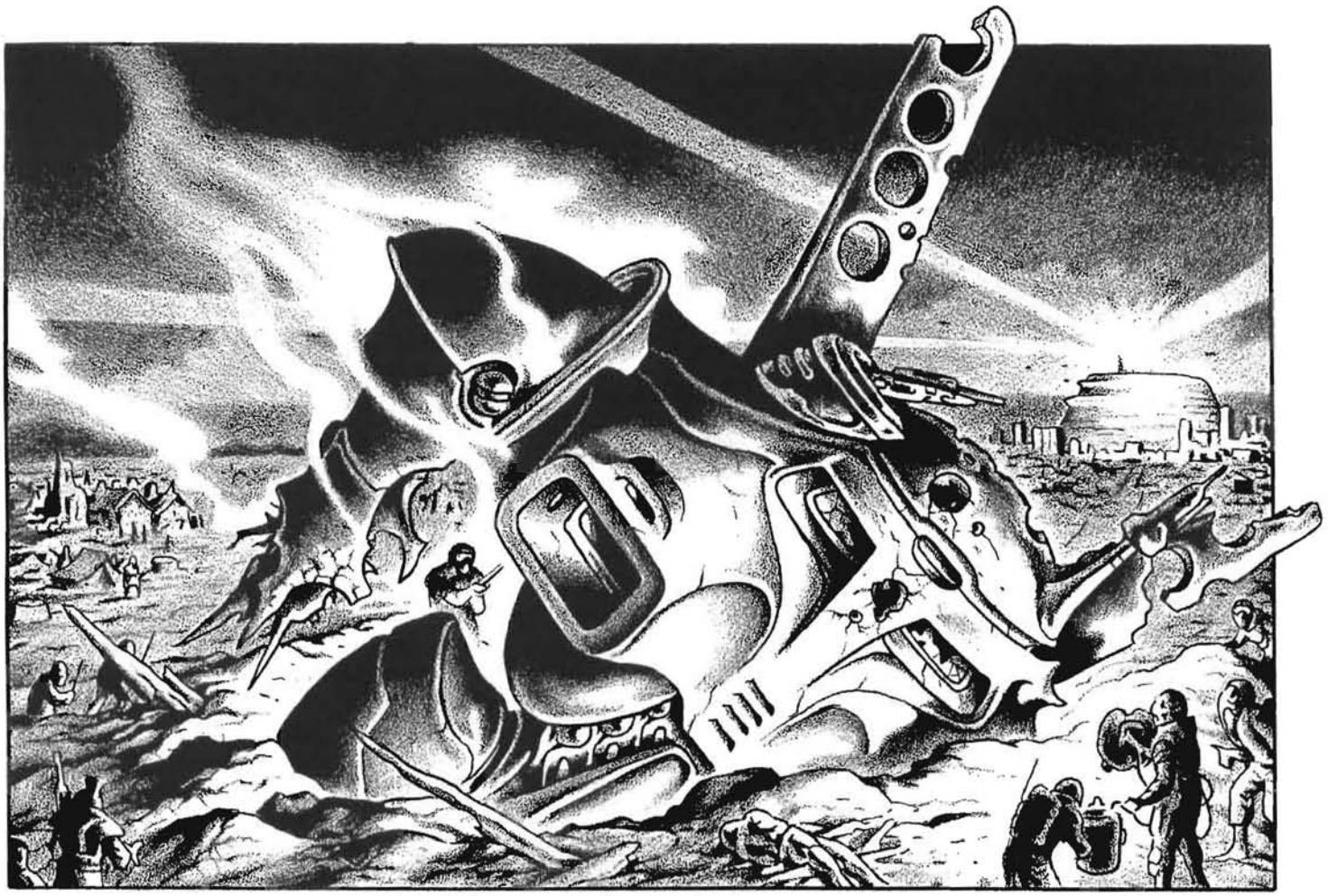
The majority of "mercenaries" live up to the title and sell their services to whomever can pay up-front. This makes the Coalition States and the Black Market the two primary employers. Those willing to work for the CS may be hired to go looking for specific individuals, political and military leaders and Warlords of Tolkeen under a flat fee payment agreement with the Coalition Army or as freelance man-hunters hoping to collect on a bounty. The worst of the lot hire themselves out as CS military "scouts and support groups" whose real job is to go hunting for D-Bees! Others hire out to do "monster hunting," again getting paid a flat monthly fee as a "freelance soldier" or a small bounty of 20-50 credits a head in an effort to clear the area of "dangerous creatures." Still others hire-on to track down and eliminate resistance fighters. The work is there for those willing to take it.

Black Market Bonanza

Agents and merchants for the Black Market are everywhere! Buying and selling, but mostly buying loot scavenged from the ruins or taken away from resistance fighters and refugees, often over their dead bodies. Anything of value that is not tied down or in the hands of characters who can hang onto their possession is fair game and has led to a frantic wave of pillaging and looting. Weapons and body armor, power armor, vehicles and military gear of all kinds, including CS items, are in the greatest demand and fetch the best prices, typically 10-20% of the list value, less if obviously damaged. Reusable parts, generators, engines, power cells, nuclear batteries, E-Clips, electronics, circuit boards, and magic items are the next most valuable commodities, getting 10-15% of book price. The Black Market has no interest in people unless there is a substantial bounty to be collected or the individual is a fugitive with the money to pay to get himself smuggled out. (Typical costs are 10,000-20,000 credits per person to smuggle out nobodies, 50,000-75,000 credits to smuggle out low ranking Tolkeenites and 200,000-500,000 credits to smuggle out top dogs like members from the Circle of Twelve.) The Black Market does not traffic in the slave trade, but will buy and sell Slavers goods and services.

The Coalition's Next Move

Larsen's Brigade, the Juicer army, the Cyber-Knights, tribes of Native Americans and Psi-Stalkers, and other groups, and even Lazlo and the Pecos Empire have taken exception to the Coalition Army pursuing refugees and freedom fighters beyond the borders of Minnesota. And it is outside Minnesota where the Coalition Army has met its greatest opposition from these unexpected parties. While many of these groups stayed out of the war for any number of reasons, they are NOT willing to stand by idly while the CS slaughters thousands of innocent people on the run or allow them to make incursions into "their" territories. This has shocked the Coalition's military leaders, who mistakenly believed their impressive triumph over Tolkeen would frighten away any other opposition. Quite the opposite, it has made others watch the events unfolding in the Kingdom of Tolkeen more closely and to stand strong against further Coalition aggression. In fact, General Cabot has made the astute observation that any future campaigns in the New West or against peaceful kingdoms (i.e., Lazlo) will come with a price that will make the Siege on Tolkeen pale by comparison. Thus, despite the fears that the Coalition States will continue to expand and conquer at a rapid pace, it is unlikely. As much as those who despise Emperor Prosek would like to think of him as a vicious madman, he is nobody's fool and will not jeopardize his empire on campaigns that will weaken the Coalition States. He will bide his time, regroup, grow and tackle small targets and unsympathetic enemies (the Federation of Magic perhaps).



The World of Rifts® – 109 P.A.

The Coming of the Rifts transformed the planet. The Great Cataclysm shattered human civilization. And during the ensuing 200+ years of the Dark Age, humankind almost slipped over the edge into extinction.

What once was is nearly forgotten.

The past is the stuff of myth and legend idealized to sound like a paradise. Real history is unknown to the masses, as is the ability to read or write. It is a strange realization in a world where technological wonders like the Glitter Boys and other power armor, robots, energy weapons, hovercycles and wondrous high-tech creations are as common as the microwave oven and cell phone were in the 21st Century.

Humans have lost their identity. They know nothing of their history and little about their world and peer into an uncertain future. Global communications is one of those myths and simply does not exist in the world of Rifts Earth. For the vast majority of *everyone* living on Rifts Earth, including the comparatively advanced Coalition States and New German Republic, what exists outside of their *immediate locale* is an utter mystery. Many people have no idea what exists a hundred miles (160 km) beyond the border of their community and are afraid to find out. Life on another continent might as well be on some distant star. Oh, the government might have some inkling, as will isolated groups of explorers, Rogue Scholars and adventures, but the vast majority of the people – ninety-nine percent of the inhabitants of Rifts Earth, human and nonhuman – know very little about the rest of the planet. It is, for most people, impossible to travel great distances, so their paths never cross. They never interact. Most are sealed off and isolated by geography, a savage wilderness, governmental authorities, magic and monsters. There are a lot of contributing factors to this, the most notable of which include the complete collapse of human civilization, a two hundred year long Dark Age, the general loss of pre-Rifts technology, the disappearance of a global or even regional communications network, the mythical ring of killer satellites believed to circle the Earth that prevents launching new satellites

into orbit, interference from the Rifts and ley lines, the introduction of new alien or supernatural beings, and the ever changing environment.

In short, the people of Rifts Earth are starting from scratch on a blank (or mostly blank) page. They might as well be Chinese or Viking explorers traveling uncharted waters, uncertain that another continent even exists across the sea, and troubled by the thought that they might fall off the end of the world. For the most part, what science and technology humans have are secrets of the past which, in most cases, have been seized by a regional power like the Coalition States or the Black Market, kept out of the hands of the common man, and used to insure their own survival and base of power. That is why the CS sponsors state run propaganda and willfully keeps its people illiterate and ignorant. That's why new and alien technologies like Techno-Wizardry emerge. That's why Rogue Scholars and Scientists are criminals to be feared by the CS and are hunted down with more tenacity than a murderer, for they threaten the Coalition's base of power. Ignorance and misdirected fear and hate are among the most powerful weapons in the Coalition's arsenal, giving its government the means to keep its people grateful sheared sheep. The CS are masters of propaganda and societal manipulation. As long as the current administration rules, ignorance shall reign. The tragedy of their example is that they are just the most successful at it, many kingdoms exercise similar tactics. So it is that the average inhabitant of Rifts Earth knows only what he has seen with his own eyes and knows personally.

D-Bees are no better off than most humans, for they are strangers in a strange land. Often torn from their own world and brought to Rifts Earth against their will through magic or dimension warping energies or villainous means (i.e. slavers, etc.). Trapped on a world not their own, and with no way to get back home, they are prisoners in a savage land they know nothing about. Those who manage to survive, adapt the best they can, but can only learn from the native humans and personal experience. Consequently, most are as isolated and ignorant about Earth's history, geography and science as the humans emerging from the Dark Age. Many are uneducated and illiterate. Those who possess alien science, technology and/or magic are hunted down for it, and usually destroyed (case in point, the Naruni, and the prejudice against D-Bees in general).

The omnipresent dimensional Rifts and ley lines bring magic, the supernatural and multiple realities into the equation, complicating matters all the more. Making Rifts Earth an ever changing, unpredictable and often illogical environment. Things are constantly changing. The appearance of a new race may mean invasion, cause disease, introduce a new magic or technology, or alter the balance of power or the very ecosystem. Such beings emerge from the Rifts regularly, causing conflict and shifts in power, knowledge and reality itself. Plato, the philosopher dragon of Lazlo, is often quoted for saying, "The only true constant on Rifts Earth is change."

For most people, the planet has been thrown back into an age where what is known pales before what is *unknown*.

Perhaps the single greatest effort to *reeducate* the people of Rifts Earth with what exists on the planet is **Traversing Our Modern World**, written by the scholar Erin Tarn in P.A. 101. In the eight years since this book's release (and others by the author), Erin Tarn has become a legendary figure and outlaw, hunted by the Coalition States and idolized by all those who embrace learning and reject tyranny. In the magic city of Lazlo, Erin's home, rumor mills report that she is using the wide network of correspondents and colleagues she has cultivated across the world, and even from other dimensions, to write another book. These friends and correspondents funnel all sorts of information to Ms. Tarn, who supposedly is writing a new book called, **A Rediscovered World**. Oddly enough, **Traversing Our Modern World** was never actually compiled or published by Erin Tarn herself, rather it was published by an unknown third party who merely collected loose letters and speeches of hers into an *anthology*. Pestered to write a new and updated book of her own, Erin has supposedly given in and will have her manuscript completed by the Summer or Fall of P.A. 109.

Exactly what **A Rediscovered World** will contain is a mystery, as Erin Tarn is keeping the manuscript close to the vest. Not even her closest friends and bodyguards know what the book says, but it promises to provide an incredible amount of detail on not only Rifts Earth, but a number of different worlds and dimensions it is connected to by way of the Rifts.

It should be stressed that at this point, **A Rediscovered World** is only *rumored* to be in the works. Ms. Tarn herself has repeatedly denied that she is actually putting such a project together, but the point might soon become moot. For even if she does not write such a book, those who put together *Traversing Our Modern World* might very well do it for her.

An Overview of Rifts Earth, circa 109 P.A.

What follows in this section is a much expanded overview of the setting for **Rifts®**, both on Rifts Earth, and in space and beyond. If the Game Master likes, he can use this section as a transcript from Erin Tarn's new book, **A Rediscovered World**. Or, he can simply treat it for what it is: Descriptions from many corners of Rifts Earth. Some of the descriptions have appeared in the different **Rifts® World Books**, other entries are completely new, all have been updated for the year 109 P.A. Either way, what you see before you is a vastly expanded and somewhat clarified overview of the world of **Rifts®**. It is a vast canvas of adventure, action, mystery, drama, horror, heroism, villainy, intrigue, and everything in between. It is arguably one of the most extensive and fleshed out settings for any role-playing game in the last decade, and with a little luck, for decades to come. We invite you to read through this section, find a part of the **Rifts®** world that really intrigues you, and take your **Rifts®** campaign there. Feel free to pick up whatever sourcebooks describe that area fully, or better yet, use your imagination and build upon it yourself. Have fun, and let your imagination run wild. That's what this game is all about!

This overview is broken into nine sections, each covering a major section of the **Rifts®** game setting. They are:

- North America (USA, Canada, Mexico)
- South America
- Europe
- The High Seas
- Atlantis
- Asia
- The Solar System
- Africa
- Australia

Rifts North America

Canada

An Overview

Like the rest of North America, the Canada of today is mostly a wild and untamed wilderness. Because it is home to the Empire of *Free Quebec* (once a member of the Coalition States and second in size and power only to the State of Chi-Town), the *Coalition State of Iron Heart* and such places as the magical city of *Lazlo,* some people think of Canada, or at least eastern Canada, as the center of human civilization in North America. For with the exception of the much vaunted *Chi-Town*, it is (arguably) the most heavily populated by humans, technologically advanced and civilized region on the continent. Perhaps it is civilized when compared to other parts of North America and the world, but not really. Between every trading post, farm, town and occasional city, is a dark and dangerous wilderness. The Wendigo, Loup Garou, and a host of other alien creatures, monsters and demonic beings stalk the countryside. The Detroit and Windsor Rifts are a constant source of turmoil in the region, while Splugorth Slavers appear with increasing regularity along the eastern seaboard. Meanwhile, its midsection is being turned into an alien landscape by the bug men known as the Xiticix (Z-eye-tick-icks) and beyond the eastern and lower southern settlements is the desolate north lands, home to the Inuit people and the spirits of the wind, earth and ice.

Southeastern Canada is dotted with hundreds of tiny settlements and small towns, some low-tech, others quite advanced and some reliant entirely upon magic. While some, like Free Quebec, are the epitome of modern advancements, many others have returned to a simpler life which harkens back to an earlier time when Canada was a wilderness frontier just being settled by Europeans. A handful of others rely on magic or alien technology. Many make the most of their limited, although improving resources, often using the same vehicles or items for years, modifying, retro-fitting, repairing and souping them up to keep pace with the times.

It is interesting to note that outside of the *Chi-Town* region of the Coalition States (Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri) and few other scattered places here and there throughout the US and Canada, the southeastern region of Canada is the new *technological center* of North America! Think about it, there is **Iron Heart** in the Sudbury/North Bay area, the ex-Coalition State of **Free Quebec** ("The" high-tech power in Canada), **Lazlo** with its Techno-Wizards at the site of old Toronto, and scores of reasonably modern outposts and small towns throughout southern Ontario and Quebec, all clustered within relatively close geographic proximity. Roughly a one thousand mile (1600 km) diagonal strip running from Chi-Town to Free Quebec is dubbed "The domain of man," because of these technological kingdoms. A swath that includes, by the way, **Ishpeming/Northern Gun** and the **Manistique Imperium** in the upper peninsula of Michigan along the border of Ontario, Canada. All draw upon pre-Rifts history, science and technology, each is a power in their own right, and each has a profound impact not only on the region immediately surrounding them, but the entire continent, particularly the territories once known as the United States and Canada. However, the weapons, vehicles and technology of Northern Gun and the Manistique Imperium are even found in monster ridden Mexico and beyond into Central and South America, and even Europe and Asia – carried there by bold adventurers, mercenaries and explorers. This cluster of humanity and technology in North America is starting to spread south with places like the State of Lone Star (northern Texas), the new Coalition State of El Dorado (Arkansas), and a dozen other kingdoms and city-states appearing in the heartlands and American southwest, but most are comparatively small, fledgling settlements new on the scene, often isolated and either unproven and vulnerable, or unstable. Their future is yet to be seen and many may perish.

The general living conditions in Canada are reminiscent of the American Old West or the early frontier days of colonialism when the French and English first discovered the "New World." Consequently, most communities are small towns, farms, logging camps and isolated settlements with trading posts, homesteads and cabins peppering the southeastern Canadian landscape. Hunters, trappers, woodsmen, fishermen and farmers are a common sight. Most of the people are friendly and good-hearted, yet at the same time there is an air of wildness and frontier adventure, even at some of the big towns and advanced cities. This is due, in part, to the omnipresence of the *Great Outdoors*, the chaotic and unpredictable times, and the threat of attack from bandits, mercenary raiders, monsters, aliens, and primitive savages like the Psi-Stalkers, Simvan, Xiticix and others. Of course, *unlike* the frontier days, many of the homes, especially those found in towns, are made with 21st Century Mega-Damage materials, and are well insulated and heated by high-tech generators, hydroelectricity, solar panels or other means of advanced technology. On the other hand, there are just as many old-fashion, brick and mortar, wood and log S.D.C. structures heated by wood burning stoves, fireplaces or magic.

Communities are connected by an ever-growing network of dirt trails and stone covered roads. There are even a few railways that have been reestablished, and the many lakes and waterways provide comparatively quick and easy travel by boat. Let's not forget about ley line travel either, which includes water vessels, aircraft and TW Iron Horses (trains) roaring across lines of energy rather than waterways or rails of iron. Most communities have a frontier or New West feel with a small "downtown" or business/community meeting area with a wide main street and residential areas spanning for miles in all directions. Larger towns and fledgling cities usually arise when one or more communities merge, often with a high-tech facility, or

strong defense (fortifications and army), and/or some sort of industry or natural resource that attracts a larger number of people than usual. Industry plays a large role in shaping the central community and those around it. Common types of industry in Canada include energy (namely hydroelectric which often goes hand in hand with light manufacturing, but these are typically the most advanced towns and the rarest), fishing, trapping, raising (and butchering) livestock, farming, logging/carpentry, mining, textiles, trade centers and places/facilities offering special services such as medical treatment, mechanics, repairs, building, and so on (special services and manufacturing almost always built upon part of a surviving pre-Rifts facility and/or technology).

Most people are *overprotective* of their land, home, possessions, achievements, community and neighbors, which means the people of Canada are typically very close-knit and come to one another's aid. This also means they are suspicious of strangers, especially D-Bees, mages and adventurers *armed* to the hilt. The Canadian frontier is crawling with small bands of raiders, thieves, highwaymen, confidence artists, mercenaries and adventurers down on their luck, and drifters and rovers who waylay and rob unsuspecting travelers, plunder towns and raid crop fields or storage bays. Many are simply thugs and thieves who steal what they need, but try to avoid killing people. Others are cutthroats, murderers and misanthropes who kill anybody who gets in their way, ignore the law and wishes of others, and who may also rape, pillage, vandalize, brutalize, kidnap, blackmail and torture others for fun or to prove how powerful they are.

D-Bees are often stereotyped as the most dangerous and bloodthirsty of such brigands, because they are inhuman and said to have no regard for life. Some believe D-Bees are born monsters, others that they are forced into crime and evildoing because they are outcasts and have no other opportunities. These sentiments are especially common in and around *Free Quebec, Iron Heart*, and most of the *Coalition States*, but this is not true. While they may be outcasts from human society and lost and alone in an alien world, most D-Bees are in roughly the same shoes as humans. Many are peaceful and share a high regard for life, even alien life forms like humans. Furthermore, many D-Bees take the outlook that they are "aliens" in a world not their own, which tends to make them more tolerant, polite and even submissive toward the human "natives" of Earth. This is particularly true of small clans or groups where only a handful to a few thousand of their own kind exists. They don't want trouble, they want to survive like everybody else, and most are willing to work and live with humans and other races with minimal strife or hostility. It is only the truly alien beings, like the Xiticix, natural predators, and those who represent sizable populations numbering into the tens or hundreds of thousands like the Simvan, who can be uncooperative, aggressive and willing to seize land for themselves through war. The other exceptions are beings like the Splugorth and their minions, as well as Gargoyles, Brodkil and others demons, sub-demons, and powerful aliens who look at Rifts Earth with a deliberate eye for conquest. However, most D-Bees are *not* world conquering invaders, but lost and frightened visitors from another world, unwillingly dislocated from their home world and typically disgorged from a dimensional Rift. They don't want to be here, but have no way of getting home. Of course, after a couple hundred years, many begin to see Rifts Earth as their adopted home and wouldn't leave even if they could. Such is the lot of the average D-Bee throughout the world.

Note: The majority of frontier people in Canada tend to be more accepting of D-Bees and many commingle with them with little prejudice or stigma. On the other hand, places like Iron Heart, Free Quebec and some frontier towns are made up of human supremacists who hate and kill D-Bees, while others only see value in them as slaves.

Free State of Lazlo

The City of Lazlo is built on the ruins of what was once Toronto, one of the largest and most celebrated cities of pre-Rifts Canada. It is said that over a million people (actually it was over two million) perished in Toronto when the Great Cataclysm toppled it like a city made of a child's toy blocks. Even today, psychics claim to feel the lingering phantom presence of those who died so long ago. The ruins of Toronto were first covered in grass and vines, but with time, this special place, laced with lines of magic, was rediscovered.

Lazlo began as a tiny community of mages that settled on the site of the dead city at the end of the Dark Ages. In fact, some believe that the melding of the "twin sciences of magic and technology" known as Techno-Wizardry was first developed here. Indeed, Lazlo has since grown to become the capital of Techno-Wizardry and a center for learning.

All creatures are welcomed at Lazlo. All philosophies are discussed. There are schools, a university of learning, a university of magic, a dozen libraries, museums, art, history, and law, as well as industry and science. The city of nearly one million inhabitants is powered by harnessing the energy of a Rift! A feat Erin Tarn says she still marvels at. And mechanisms of magic and technology are everywhere.

Another 200,000-250,000 people are found living in the peaceful towns, hamlets and farms that surround the city, and that does not include the city known as *The Relic*, only 35 miles (56 km) away. While many of these people consider themselves to be free and independent, living as they choose, they also consider themselves to be *members* of the Free State of Lazlo – people who choose to join the so-called State of Lazlo and uphold the community's high ideals.

Lazlo is governed by two political bodies that serve as a check and balance system of government. They are the Congress of the Electorate and the Council of Learning. Both are composed of compassionate and intelligent beings, human and nonhuman, who are dedicated to the pursuit of freedom and the betterment of all life. A Cyber-Knight named *Sir Thomm* is the head of the Congress, and an ancient Great Horned Dragon, known as *Plato*, heads the Council.

The defenses are composed of citizens who form an elite militia when danger threatens. The militia includes several dragons (both young and old), Techno-Wizards, practitioners of magic of all sorts, psychics, and men of arms. All are volunteers. The chore of day to day peacekeeping is placed in the capable hands of *Arl Xzzyni*, a kind of D-Bee man-wolf of vast tolerance and understanding. In his own world, his kind are known as "Wolfen." His is a world much like our own, where there are many races, but little understanding and constant conflict. Arl has organized a well trained and gentle force of peacekeepers of

every race and power. Most are of noble heart and free of corruption.

Erin Tarn has written,

"Lazlo is unlike any other city I have seen (not that I have seen them all). Only the fabled City of Splynn located in the heart of the dreaded Splugorth's Atlantis is more magical and impressive, but in an overwhelming, oppressive and alien way. Lazlo is what I would envision a modern day Camelot to be. In the heart of the city is the Tower of Higher Learning, a 30 story edifice of white marble, trimmed in gold. Its ledges and peaks ornamented with beautiful statuary that makes me think of it as being protected by a legion of winged angels and wondrous spirits. The top is crowned with a comparatively small obsidian pyramid that harnesses and directs the magic energy that courses through and around it. For you see, the Tower of Higher Learning sits directly on a ley line nexus, intersected by three ley lines. Yet the energy is channeled in such a way that it has no negative effects on those who live and work in the megalithic structure. Nor any ill effect or slightest irritation on any who live in the enchanted city. I am told the building, which covers an entire city block, is a marvel of Techno-Wizardry unlike anything the world has ever seen, and rivals the stone pyramids of Atlantis and was copied by the City of Tolkeen.

"The Tower of Higher Learning is also the living quarters of my dear friend and confidant, Plato, head of the Council of Learning for these past 60 years. It is from here that he meets with fellow mages, scholars and students to share their understanding of the world and learn from each other. This is also where the Council of Learning meets.

"Outside the Tower are the parks and campus of the University of Magic. Around it are the other places of learning and residents of the city. Beyond the city proper are the many towns and farms that comprise this free State. To me, the entire city has an air of magic about it. Of course, this is due, in part, to the fact that much of it is built by magic and incorporates hitherto unseen advancements in Techno-Wizardry. Being built on a network of ley lines also means the skies are filled with Wing Boards and TK Flyers of all kinds, as well as other air and ground vehicles powered by magic. But part of the "magic" of the enchanted city of Lazlo is its elegance and works of art that are found throughout the city.

"The Wizards' openness and acceptance of all others and their pursuit for knowledge attract like-minded people, even among the multitude of D-Bee refugees and misfits. Most follow the sorcerers' good example and strive to learn and live in peace with one another. The Wizards teach through word and example rather than lead by political maneuvering or the rattling of sabers. Where Chi-Town and the Coalition States instill fear and hatred in their people, the leaders at old Toronto teach tolerance, acceptance and love. They encourage the curious mind and make learning fun and exciting, while the Coalition States work to keep their people ignorant and subservient, crushing the curious spirit and teaching that asking questions is bad.

"Although it was never their intent, the practitioners of magic looking for a quiet place to live and study had built themselves a city. No, a wonderful kingdom built on imagination and hope. A flower in a garden of weeds.

"By 49 P.A., the little Wizard Community turned into a boom town. A city of 100,000 residents with thousands more living in its outskirts, and more flocking to it with each passing day.

"When I first visited Lazlo in the year 62 P.A., it was already nearly 250,000 strong, the great Tower of Higher Learning and much of the infrastructure had already been laid, and its future was promising.

"The one thing that struck me most at that time, however, was that this wonderful place filled with wise men, teachers, scholars, theologians, scientists, artists and mages had no name. It was generally known as the "Haven by the River" and "The City of Magic." The name, "Lazlo," is derived from the famed 20th Century scholar/mage, Victor Lazlo. It was this humble historian who introduced the writings of Victor Lazlo to that community, and I take great pride in knowing that because of it, I am responsible for the name of this marvelous place."

– Erin Tarn, 100 P.A.

Lazlo – 109 P.A.

A letter from Erin Tarn to a friend in Kingsdale, Spring 109 P.A.

I am glad to tell you that Lazlo remains a place of high ideals, art, philosophy and peace. However, the clouds of war, both in the east at Free Quebec and in the west at Tolkeen, dim the brightness of this regal place. A sort of gloom hangs over the people here, smothering what I once thought of as an eternal and indestructible optimism. Please, do not mistake my words. Joy and happiness prevail and Lazlo is still a city of light that dreams of a brighter future for all people. It's just the horrors of war touch us all in ways we never imagined and makes us sad and worried.

The Coalition's siege on Tolkeen draws to a close. Although the leaders of that land claim victory with the Sorcerers' Revenge, their cheers of triumph ring hollow. Their losses are as great as the Coalition's and their resources far less reaching than the CS. Already I can see cracks in Tolkeen's infrastructure and the wild seeds of anarchy taking deep root. Tolkeen claims victory, but in truth, they have lost. I speak not of the growing numbers of Coalition troops mounting along the kingdom's borders, nor Emperor Prosek's vow to destroy the kingdom utterly; all of which harkens to an impending and horrible end. No, I speak of their loss of the moral high ground. The loss of ideals. The loss of their sense of wonder. The loss of life and spirit. The Tolkeen civilization as we knew it is gone. Replaced by something brutal and ugly. Even if, by some miracle, the Kingdom does survive, the Tolkeen that was a gem of magic, learning, reason and peace is gone forever.

It is this loss that makes us sad and frightened. Makes us wonder how we might fare under similar circumstance. Would we take the high ground? Or would we relent to the base needs of survival and desire for revenge? Would we too become like our enemy and lose the very things we fight to uphold? It is a sobering thought. One that preys upon our imaginations and chills our hearts.

I think when we fear for Tolkeen, we fear for ourselves as well. While I believe Tolkeen could have ... should have ... taken a different course, I still weep for its people. I see the smiling faces and bright minds that I have known and loved, and know

that I will never see them again. It hurts and I cry. For me, it is like looking up into the night sky and seeing a cluster of stars blink and vanish into the void, never to light up the heavens ever again. It is a loss that cuts deep and I think we all bleed for it.

The loss of Tolkeen, I think, also signifies our loss of innocence. I don't know if you see it where you are, but the loss is palpable here at Lazlo. As I have said, the enthusiasm has dimmed. The future seems darker and less certain. Our dreams seem a little more ethereal. Intangible. For these past many years, I think we have all thrived on a sense of excitement and wonder given birth by our imaginations and life through magic, hard work and unbridled optimism. We had a dream and we worked to make it reality. The dream and its realization blinded us to the harsh reality of the world around us. Like bold teenagers we embarked on a journey of discovery and living life. We thought of ourselves as invincible and lived our lives without fear or regret. The war at Tolkeen has suddenly shattered our illusions of invincibility and shown us our own fragile mortality.

It forces us to look at the world through dark glasses and to wonder about our own fate. It makes us ask the question, what will happen after Tolkeen falls? Will the Coalition States be satisfied with their grim accomplishment, or will they soon turn their attention to other targets? Will we be next? That is the gloom, the fear, the questions that now haunts us and threatens to steal away some of our optimism and dreams.

It has vexed me so much that I had become mired in doubt and self-pity. That is why it has taken me so long to write you. I have closed myself away in my home at Lazlo, sitting alone in the dark wondering if I only make matters worse. In my zeal to help and teach and free the hearts and minds of all freethinking people, human and D-Bee alike, I asked myself, have I helped to doom them? Do my words really educate and break the bonds of ignorance and tyranny, or do they condemn every innocent soul who embraces them? Am I an idealist or a fool?

You are among the people who herald me as a visionary and a hero. Labels and notoriety I never wanted, but have acquired nonetheless. Because of it, people look to me for knowledge and guidance, but who am I to give them anything? I'm just a stupid farm girl with a gift for words and conveying ideas. In my youth and idealism I tried to find and reveal what I thought was the truth. I tried to point an accusing finger at injustice and evil, and inspire people to right wrongs, battle for equality and throw off wickedness and cruelty. But is that what I have done? Or do I simply stir a hornets' nest and unleash their angry wrath upon the innocent?

For the first time in my long life, I truly doubted myself. I asked myself, what if all I have done with my words and deeds is anger the vengeful giant that is the Coalition States? What if my words ... MY ... words have helped condemn Tolkeen and thousands of others who embrace what I say? Am I wrong? Am I right? Does it matter one way or another? I don't know, and people are still dead. Their bodies litter the fields of Tolkeen. I had even thought about leaving Lazlo and going into hiding, lest my presence here bring down the fury of Chi-Town upon those I love and hold dear.

Plato and others tried valiantly to console me and push aside my doubts. They told me I'm grief stricken over Tolkeen and not thinking rationally. They made impassioned arguments that ignorance, lies and injustice are never acceptable when they serve to oppress others. That someone will always stand up to call the kettle black. To speak out on what is true. To speak to the heart as well as the mind, and inspire change. It would seem that in this day and age, I am that "someone." That somehow I have become the voice of reason, compassion and justice. That I somehow give voice to the people. That is why they embrace me and my writings. That I do not fill their minds with ideas or rebellion, but inspire them to give flight to what is already in their

hearts. I like this argument. It helps me to bury my dread and imagine a bright future of a better world. Still, I can't help but to wonder if they speak the truth or spin a pretty fairy tale.

I have pondered these questions and a thousand others this past year, and they weigh upon me like a heavy stone. I think most of us have considered the same questions and have felt similar doubts and fears. I think we have all asked ourselves if we will be the next to fall, and have come up empty, for it is a question that can only be answered by the future. The weight I speak of hangs upon us all, threatening to crush our spirits. That is the gloom that envelops Lazlo. It has paralyzed me this past year. Stopped me from working on my book and made me a prisoner of my fears.

I am told, as much as they try, even the greatest of Mind Melters and Gray Seers can not see the future. That they too suffer from doubt and self-recrimination. I am loath to admit that this notion gives me some solace. I guess misery does love company. But I'm done with feeling sorry for myself and being frightened. No one of us knows what the future holds. None of us know if we will make a lasting difference in the world or whether we can live up to the standards we place on ourselves.

I do know this, however, we can make a difference. Each and every one of us. Every man, woman and child, human and D-Bee, dragon and alien. We matter to each other. We touch other lives and in so doing, can make the lives we touch better and brighter or grim and dark. I choose better and brighter. I choose life and beauty, knowledge and art. Maybe I am just an old fool, or mad as a Hatter, but I dare to dream of lofty ideals, goodness, compassion, freedom of expression and a better world for all people. I can not live in a world without these things. Nor can I stand by silent as others try to crush them.

That is my choice and I pray it is the right one, for despite my fears and doubts, I hope others make the same choice.

A gloom still hangs over Lazlo, but I see this renewed optimism beginning to shine. It is welcomed like the sun piercing the haze after a long, dark storm. For me at least, I have decided it is better to live with dreams and die trying to make things better than to live in the gloom of hatred, fear, and ignorance. Write back soon to tell me whether you think I'm a crazy person or not.

– Erin Tarn, Spring 109 P.A.

Erin Tarn's letter reflects the sentiments, fear and "gloom" that have hung over Lazlo and other communities for the last three or four years. People not allied to the Coalition States took Emperor Prosek's **Campaign of Unity** speech in 105 P.A. as a pronouncement of new imperialism, if not outright war. The announcement alone was reason for concern, but when Emperor Prosek put his campaign into *immediate* action, it signaled a new age of terror, and people trembled from one end of the continent to the other. Never had the CS considered such a massive undertaking: two declared wars, two military fronts against two continental powers in their own rights – Chi-Town's and Free Quebec. This was much more than saber-rattling or one of Tolkeen's famous purges. This was a declaration of military power and conquest. The Coalition's alliance with Northern Gun and the Manistique Imperium, the rousting of Naruni Enterprises (an X-factor that threatened the status quo), the unveiling of the new Coalition War Machine, and the welcoming of El Dorado (Arkansas) as a candidate for statehood, all spoke to the Coalition's plans for continental domination and its skill at strategy, tactics and subterfuge. For this to all unfold so quickly and smoothly the CS had to have had meticulously planned and set this into motion years earlier. And not only set it into motion, but kept it secret. The Campaign of Unity was not a hollow threat or the ranting of a madman. It was an elaborate and calculated campaign for war, revenge and conquest.

If there was any doubt about the Coalition's intentions, it vanished with the swift invasion of Tolkeen and Free Quebec. A bold move that changed the political and military landscape of the continent overnight.

Lazlo and the war at Free Quebec

The war at Free Quebec launched in the summer of 105 P.A. was more than an act of revenge against a troublesome neighbor. It sent a clear and unmistakable message to all people and kingdoms who dared to reject CS rule for their own independence – defy the Coalition States and be destroyed. The fact that Free Quebec had been a loyal member of the CS for over fifty years only punctuated the point. Nobody, not even an old friend and fellow human supremacist nation, would be spared. Begging the question, if the Coalition States is willing to attack Free Quebec, is anyplace safe? It is a question that caused virtually every independent kingdom and community north of Mexico to be frightened and wonder about their place in the world.

Lazlo (Toronto, Canada), New Lazlo (Ann Arbor, Michigan) and the many independent communities between them were especially nervous. For one thing, they laid between Chi-Town, the center of CS power and orchestrators of the "Campaign of Conquest" (as those outside the CS often call it), and for another, Lazlo and many others embraced freethinking, magic and D-Bees, all taboo to the Coalition. They feared that the CS Military might use the war as an excuse to invade them on their way to Free Quebec. Others worried that the CS might have their "new allies" *Northern Gun* and/or the *Manistique Imperium* do their dirty work for them, even though neither kingdom had ever taken military action against another community. However, this was pure speculation and paranoia. The two industrial powers took no action against their neighbors whatsoever, other than to curtail the sale of their weapons and gear to "enemies of the Coalition States." An arrangement that was easily circumvented by selling their arms to acceptable third parties who could, in turn, sell them to Lazlo and other "CS enemies" without breaking the letter of their treaty with the Coalition States. The only way this pseudo-embargo hurt Lazlo and other outlying communities was that availability of certain items became unreliable and the cost for most goods escalated by 20-75 percent. Ironically, Lazlo prospered from the arrangement. It had always been completely self-sufficient, and with the smaller communities cut off from the two Michigan manufacturers, sale of similar goods increased dramatically. With Northern Gun and Manistique out of the picture and war to the east and west, mercenary companies, communities and independent people turned to other sources, most notably, *Lazlo, New Lazlo, Wilk's Laser Technologies, Titan Robotics Industries, Kingsdale, the Black Market* and even the *Colorado Baronies, Bandito Arms,* and the *Pecos Empire* as well as traveling merchants. (Also see **Northern Gun** in the Michigan entry).

As things turned out, Lazlo's fears about a secret CS "invasion" were unfounded. True to form, the Coalition Army remained focused on their prime targets, *Free Quebec* in the east and *Tolkeen* in the west, ignoring, at least for the moment, the smaller, rural communities of Michigan and Ontario.

The majority of the fighting at the eastern front would take place hundreds of miles away from Lazlo, though the war would be felt. As noted by Erin Tarn, a gloom enveloped the Kingdom of Lazlo and many of the communities in the region, and elsewhere. Any sense of security was shattered by the knowledge that the Coalition's Campaign of Unity meant crushing the opposition. And the "opposition" was (and still is) anybody who does not forsake magic, D-Bees, the pursuit of knowledge, and freethinking for acceptance of the Coalition way of life. That leaves a lot of people as "enemies." People who often live in small, low-tech communities painfully vulnerable to CS incursion. Few, like Lazlo, even come close to the size of Chi-Town, let alone the combined might of the allied Coalition States combined. This has made everyone feel naked, vulnerable, and scared. Suddenly, the future seems less promising and bright.

That uncertainty has had a profound impact, not only on Lazlo, but on many independent communities. While it has helped to unite people and create alliances, it has also created a certain amount of dread, suspicion, fear, and paranoia. Indeed, for the first time in its illustrious history, the city-state of Lazlo braced for a possible all-out attack by a foreign power. Prior to the Campaign of Unity, the people of Lazlo never believed the CS would invade them or any other major kingdom, with the possible exception of the Federation of Magic. That comforting assumption is no longer the case, quite the contrary.

As a result, the leaders of Lazlo have scrambled to reassess its defenses and battle tactics. They have spent the last four years subtly and as imperceptibly as possible improving its defenses and developing strategies, tactics and countermeasures for Coalition aggression. A scenario that many now fear is only a matter of "when" rather than "if" the Coalition States should attack.

Furthermore, the Coalition's new military imperialism has caused Lazlo (and others) to regard the CS as a real and immediate threat that necessitates keeping a close eye upon. This has led to the creation of an ultra-secret Intelligence Agency and network of informants and sympathizers, and even attempts to infiltrate the great fortress cities of *Chi-Town* and *Iron Heart*. Not to engage in sabotage or murder but to observe and learn of any plots against them. This is of grave concern to the Councils that rule Lazlo, for if discovered, such activity is an open invitation for the CS to declare war on them. As one Councilwoman noted, it is "rather like a deadly game of hide and seek," for if Chi-Town ever has reason to believe Lazlo is a threat, the Coalition Military will come down upon them like a pack of ravenous wolves. The catch twenty-two is that the very existence of Lazlo spies endangers the noble community, yet without these spies, they will not know if the CS is plotting to attack them. This means all "spies" operate under a veil of intense secrecy and gather intelligence only. They do nothing to undermine or threaten the CS in any way. It is a tightrope balancing act that must be executed with the greatest of care.

Erin Tarn's multitude of contacts, acquaintances, fellow scholars, scientists, City Rats, fans and admirers provide a constant stream of vital (as well as useless) information to her and Lazlo. While this network of friends and admirers has been completely innocent all these years, in a "war" situation it could give the Coalition States grounds to brand the matriarch of history and justice as the head of a spy network should they choose to take that route. Erin hates becoming embroiled in politics and war, but she accepts that her contacts could mean the difference between falling to a surprise attack and survival.

Along these lines, the agents and allies have been dispatched to observe and record the war at both fronts firsthand. The purpose is to make note of Coalition Military procedure, standard operations, strategy and tactics, fears, and strengths and weaknesses. Especially close attention is being paid to the war at *Tolkeen* where the combat conditions are almost identical and the CS faces a *magic* wielding opponent. Armed with this knowledge, the leaders of Lazlo hope to avoid Tolkeen's mistakes and develop an effective plan of defense and countermeasures for what many believe will be an inevitable attack by the CS.

Meanwhile, Lazlo is keenly aware that the Coalition States and Free Quebec are likewise engaged in acts of intelligence against them. Not only intelligence, but also sabotage. The Coalition has sent its share of spies, assassins and saboteurs to the powerful and growing city-state with the assignment to observe, infiltrate and undermine the enemy. Acts of sabotage and terrorism, crimes against D-Bees, and assassination attempts on important city officials, leaders, and teachers (Rogue Scholars and Scientists are, remember, criminals and dissidents in the eyes of the CS) are all on the rise. A few have even been proven to be the handiwork of Coalition agents. This has made a place that once celebrated freedom and welcomed everybody to become suspicious of strangers and recognize that malicious plots and shadowy figures are at work to hurt them. This is not paranoia. It is the grim reality of a changing world.

Another affect of the wars has been to draw more people to Lazlo. Although the city has always been a magnet for educated and peace-loving people, it has grown a record 40% over the last four years. Some see Lazlo and/or the communities around it as a comparatively safe haven for freethinkers. Others see it as one of the last bastions of peace and learning on the continent, and still others as a place of tolerance where D-Bees, practitioners of magic and monstrous beings such as dragons are still welcomed and safe. A growing number are also refugees from Tolkeen. Those who left the Kingdom before its fall, naturally gravitated to Lazlo. Practitioners of magic, scholars and scientists looking for a techno-magically advanced and civilized city have only a few options, with Lazlo being at the top of the list. While the Federation of Magic *may* seem like a logical choice, and is getting its share of Tolkeen survivors, the Federation is most attractive to vengeful and evil beings rather than those looking to rebuild a peaceful life. Likewise, the Magic Zone tends to be a hostile environment dominated by the war-mongering and evil members of the Federation of Magic.

The war against fear and prejudice has also become a new challenge for the people of Lazlo. The renewed CS aggression against nonhumans and practitioners of magic coupled with constant reports of events unfolding on both fronts put Coalition

cruelty, murder and atrocities in the front news almost every day for the last four years. Most people in Lazlo have had more than one loved one, or know someone who has had loved ones fall to CS aggression, making it easy to fear and hate the Coalition States. Fear and hate make people crazy. They lead to paranoia and lust for revenge and invites mistakes in judgement. Pitfalls the leaders and intelligentsia of Lazlo struggle to avoid. Lazlo has always been an open society that upholds equality, freedom, and peace above all else. If its people succumb to hatred and fear, the Coalition wins, and they will follow down the path of destruction that consumed Tolkeen. Consequently, their daily fight is to keep the war picture and CS threat in perspective, and prevent emotions from spiraling out of control. They try to focus on the positive and keep spirits high, steering people away from thoughts of revenge or impending doom. They point out that the Coalition has no reason, real or imagined, to fear or attack Lazlo (other than the obvious), and that Lazlo is stronger and better defended than Tolkeen. And, since observing the war at Tolkeen, better prepared for war. The leadership insists that those who believe war with the CS is inevitable are mistaken and that the citizens of Lazlo must now, more than ever before, stand as a shining example of peace, tolerance and hope. It is a convincing argument that appeals to the spirits, sensibilities and dreams of most (75%) Lazloans. Still, their hope and dreams are colored in the gloom of anxiety, uncertainty and fear. Ultimately, they hope for the best but fear the worst, even as they struggle to hold on to their dreams of creating a better place in the world.

The CS-Free Quebec peace resolution is welcomed by Lazlo with mixed emotions. On one hand, it puts an end to the war in the east and has seen the hundreds of thousands of Coalition troops retreat completely from the neighboring lands. On the other hand, it makes one wonder what will come next.

Coalition spies and saboteurs are known to remain in the streets of Lazlo and surrounding communities, including Old Bones, Montreal and Free Quebec, herself. While it seems unlikely that Free Quebec would ever rejoin the Coalition States, it also seems unlikely that the CS will honestly accept the rebel state as a free and sovereign nation, despite what Emperor Prosek may publicly decree. This suggests future conflict will arise between the CS and Free Quebec. Most believe the Emperor has not so much accepted Quebec's independence as bought himself a way out of a bad situation and given the CS time to change their tactics to something less overt. The CS was losing its war with Quebec and CS citizens really *never* supported the war. To most, the military subjugation of a human nation that had been like a brother to the CS seemed wrong. With things going badly in Minnesota, the Emperor had to turn things around to prevent the seeds of dissension and doubt from taking root. As horrific and devastating as Tolkeen's Sorcerers' Revenge campaign was, it gave the Emperor the opening he needed to make a dramatic change. Tolkeen's simultaneous treachery to bushwhack CS troops in Free Quebec, and the Québécois' courageous sacrifice of their own troops to defend the Coalition soldiers could not have played out any better if Emperor Prosek had planned it that way himself. Thanks to Tolkeen's treachery and Free Quebec's loyalty to the "cause of humanity," the Emperor could now withdraw troops from the eastern front and accept Free Quebec's independence without losing face or seeming weak. In fact, Emperor Prosek's calculated risk of publically apologizing for the war against Free Quebec and calling the Québécois "heroes and brothers" made the Emperor seem all the more magnanimous and strong in the eyes of the CS citizenry. Not only that, the two events vilified Tolkeen to such a degree that it gave the Emperor carte blanche to take whatever action "he" deemed necessary to crush the kingdom of magic. The CS citizens were so riled up that tens of thousands of city folk threatened to join the Coalition Army and take up arms against Tolkeen themselves. A sentiment quelled only by Emperor Prosek's assurance that sending troops from the Quebec front to Tolkeen would be more than enough to deal with the murdering demon worshipers in Minnesota.

Others in Lazlo fear that while the Coalition States may have accepted Free Quebec as an independent "allied" nation, that Quebec will follow the CS lead to become more militaristic and aggressive toward communities that accept magic and/or D-Bees. Some have gone so far as to speculate that Free Quebec may have promised the CS to take up its crusade of purification and annihilation of places like Lazlo as part of its pact with Chi-Town. Certainly the treachery of Tolkeen and its plot to ambush and slaughter an entire Coalition field army only fuels both nations' fear and contempt for practitioners of magic. However, this is pure speculation without an iota of fact to support it. The leaders of Lazlo seriously doubt this is the case and hope that Free Quebec has no reasons to consider their kingdom a threat to it or the CS. They also point out that Free Quebec will need several years to recover and rebuild from the war and that they have other worries to address, making any concerns they may have over Lazlo extremely low priority.

For the time being, Lazlo's leaders are more concerned about fortifying their own magical and conventional defenses, calming fears and dealing with more immediate problems. One of those immediate problems is the increased level of lawlessness and violence that had come with the war. Thousands of mercenaries, brigands and opportunists flocked to southeastern Canada to fight on both sides of the war, or to profit from the situation. Emperor Prosek's unexpected about face and immediate withdrawal of all CS troops has left these mercenary groups high and dry. With no war to fight, they must find new causes to champion and new patrons to pay for the privilege. Likewise, brigands who came to raid and pillage Coalition or Free Quebec troops no longer have targets – the CS is gone, leaving Free Quebec's forces free to hunt down raiders in that nation. As a result, these lowlifes must find new opportunities. However, factions among both mercenaries and brigands are underequipped and unprepared for the situation thrust upon them, and so they turn to pillaging the smaller wilderness communities outside of Free Quebec's jurisdiction. That has made the communities in the old Ontario Province a prime target (as well as the region that was once the northeastern United States from New England to Wisconsin). Since Lazlo is "the" power in that region, not only do its own citizens expect protection, but many of the neighboring communities appeal to Lazlo for help.

Avenues of adventure. The above situation and the Shemarrian crisis (noted below and in the section on the Eastern Seaboard) opens up numerous possibilities for adventuring. For example, **1.** Lazlo is looking for heroic *volunteers* and *mercenaries/adventurers for hire* to defend the dozens of small communities and hundreds of homesteads and farms from raiders,

bandits, barbarians, monsters and all sorts of danger. **2.** They also need groups to hunt down and chase out bandits, raiders and monsters, not to mention track down and chase away or otherwise eliminate spies, assassins and saboteurs – henchmen not only from the CS but also from Free Quebec, the Federation of Magic, Atlantis, and local rivals and villains. **3.** Assessing security of the realm means sending teams into the wilderness and the surrounding region (the wilderness around and beyond Free Quebec, Michigan, the eastern seaboard, etc.) to determine the current status of the country and to investigate rumors about new dangers and threats (secret CS outposts and reconnaissance teams, the Splugorth, Shemarrians, Federation of Magic, monsters from the Detroit-Windsor Rifts, etc.). This is vital intelligence. **4.** Don't forget about possible missions into the Coalition State of Chi-Town and the 'Burbs (reconnaissance, spying, sabotage, rescue, and delivery or recovery of important information, person or magic item, and so on) as well as, **5.** rescue missions to help Tolkeen refugees and, **6.** operations to prevent certain information and magic items from falling into the wrong hands such as the CS, the Vanguard, Federation of Magic, Daemonix, Splugorth, would-be tyrants, raiders, slavers and other evildoers.

Lazlo and the siege on Tolkeen

The siege on Tolkeen signaled a new age of military power and aggression by the Coalition States. It was clear that Tolkeen's close proximity to the State of Chi-Town made the CS uncomfortable. Tolkeen was also a much more manageable

target than invading the wilds of the Magic Zone and trying to take on the fragmented and scattered Federation of Magic on their home, ley line laced, turf. Tolkeen was a highly visible, comparatively isolated and consolidated target. The perfect location for a CS war campaign and a good target to make an example of with a show of force and to announce the Coalition's new resolve to destroy practitioners of magic and D-Bees.

The siege sent shock waves through Lazlo, not only because of its ties to the kingdom of magic in Minnesota, but also because the two were markedly similar in their outlook, culture, laws, design and defenses. In fact, much of Tolkeen was inspired by and patterned after Lazlo, so in a way, watching Tolkeen under attack was like watching a terrible dream of a possible future for Lazlo itself. Indeed, many people took the war against Tolkeen as a grim portent of things to come.

The choice not to directly help Tolkeen was a difficult and painful decision. After months of strategic planning and debate, the leaders of Lazlo came to the conclusion that the war at Tolkeen could *not* be won. Not even if Lazlo, New Lazlo, Kingsdale, the Colorado Baronies, and the full force of the Cyber-Knights jumped in with both feet and weapons blazing. The only thing their involvement would achieve was to prolong the war, force the Coalition States into war with all allies of Tolkeen and doom them all. As cold as that assessment might sound, it is an accurate one. Thus, Lazlo counseled the leadership of Tolkeen to abandon their kingdom and relocate, perhaps farther west or up into Canada. Lazlo reckoned this would buy them years and volunteered to help them with the traumatic transition. Understandably, the Tolkeenites were opposed to being bullied out of their homes and made the commitment to stand and fight. A choice Lazlo could not support. While some (about 25%) of its citizens disagreed with this decision, the majority (roughly 75%) concurred that this was a fight that could not be won. Though the powers at Tolkeen would accuse the people of cowardice, it was a truly agonizing decision calling upon tremendous strength of will. As noted earlier, virtually every person living in Lazlo knew somebody or had some friend or relative living in Tolkeen. Not rushing to their aid was the hardest thing they ever had to do and tortured them down to their soul. They felt as if they were turning their backs on their loved ones and had to constantly remind themselves that the alternative was suicide.

Only humanitarian aid was provided, and the only direct hand Lazlo played in the war was the open offer to find homes within their own borders for citizens and refugees fleeing the war-torn kingdom. This is more dramatic than it may sound, for the Coalition troops sought to cut Tolkeen off from the outside world and captured or destroyed anyone trying to get food or medicine to their enemy. Likewise, champions, adventurers and practitioners of magic from Lazlo established an underground railroad to bring desperate refugees out of Tolkeen and safely transport them east to a safe haven. Hundreds from Lazlo met their end trying to rescue others.

The fall of Tolkeen

The fall and occupation of Tolkeen has dealt a severe blow to *Lazlo* and to free and independent kingdoms everywhere. For decades the Minnesota Kingdom of Magic had served as a refuge for D-Bees, magic, learning and peace. Though in the end its people gave in to hatred and cruelty, it had, for decades, been a symbol of tolerance and enlightenment, and will be sorely missed.

For Lazlo and many places, the fall of the Kingdom of Tolkeen is a crisis of sorrow and confidence. Morale is low, depression high. Most people have lost loved ones, some have lost half of their family. People are overwhelmed with grief and still can't believe the once great and noble kingdom is gone. They weep and mourn, not just for the loss of loved ones, but for the loss of the ideals the kingdom represented.

As noted earlier, intermingled with the sorrow and loss is fear. Fear of the Coalition States, fear of what the future may have in store for them and their children, fear that everything they have built may come crashing down as it has at Tolkeen. And when the sorrow and fear is choked back, hatred begins to smolder. For the leaders at Lazlo the fall of Tolkeen has struck a painful blow to the heart and spirit of their people, and they must do everything in their power to keep their own people from sliding into hatred, prejudice and thoughts of revenge.

The refugee relief effort. The people of Lazlo have stepped up their efforts to rescue, help and escort Tolkeen refugees to safety. This is a perilous mission, for Minnesota remains a hotbed of armed conflict and misery. Coalition troops remain in full force as they secure the region, which Emperor Prosek has *annexed* to the ever expanding State of Chi-Town. Soldiers sweep and secure the toppled cities, and roam the woodlands relentlessly hunting down pockets of resistence fighters, executing practitioners of magic, and slaughtering D-Bee refugees by the thousands. Anyone caught aiding and abetting these "enemies of the States" (i.e. refugees, D-Bees, sorcerers, and rebels) or opposing the Coalition War effort in any way, are likewise branded as enemies and liquidated on the spot. Worse, the CS has begun to pursue refugees and rebels beyond the borders of Minnesota.

The situation in Minnesota is further complicated by demonic creatures, monsters, bandits and desperate freedom fighters taken to preying upon the people of Tolkeen and anybody who crosses their paths. Splugorth slavers, raiders and other evil opportunists have arrived like vultures to feed on the carcass of Tolkeen, continuing to victimize the Tolkeenites and those trying to help them.

The presence of the Splugorth Slavers is disturbing because they have never been known to travel this far west, and adds fuel to the fire of concern that Atlantis may be sizing up the Americas for conquest.

Without Tolkeen's Warlords and Dragon Kings to control and lead them, bands of Brodkil, Gargoyles, Daemonix, Witchlings, Black Faeries and other monsters turn on the people they once served, enslaving, tormenting and feeding upon them with impunity. Moreover, with the CS in hot pursuit of all monsters, many are deserting Tolkeen and spreading into the surrounding lands – half following the trail of the refugees for they are vulnerable and easy pickings.

Then there are the Xiticix who have never quite settled down since General Holmes' trek through their hivelands. They are more aggressive than ever.

One of the less obvious, but worse troubles in the region is food, or more to the point, the lack of food and basic supplies. At this point, all farms and stores of food have been completely plundered, many destroyed by the CS invasion force. There just

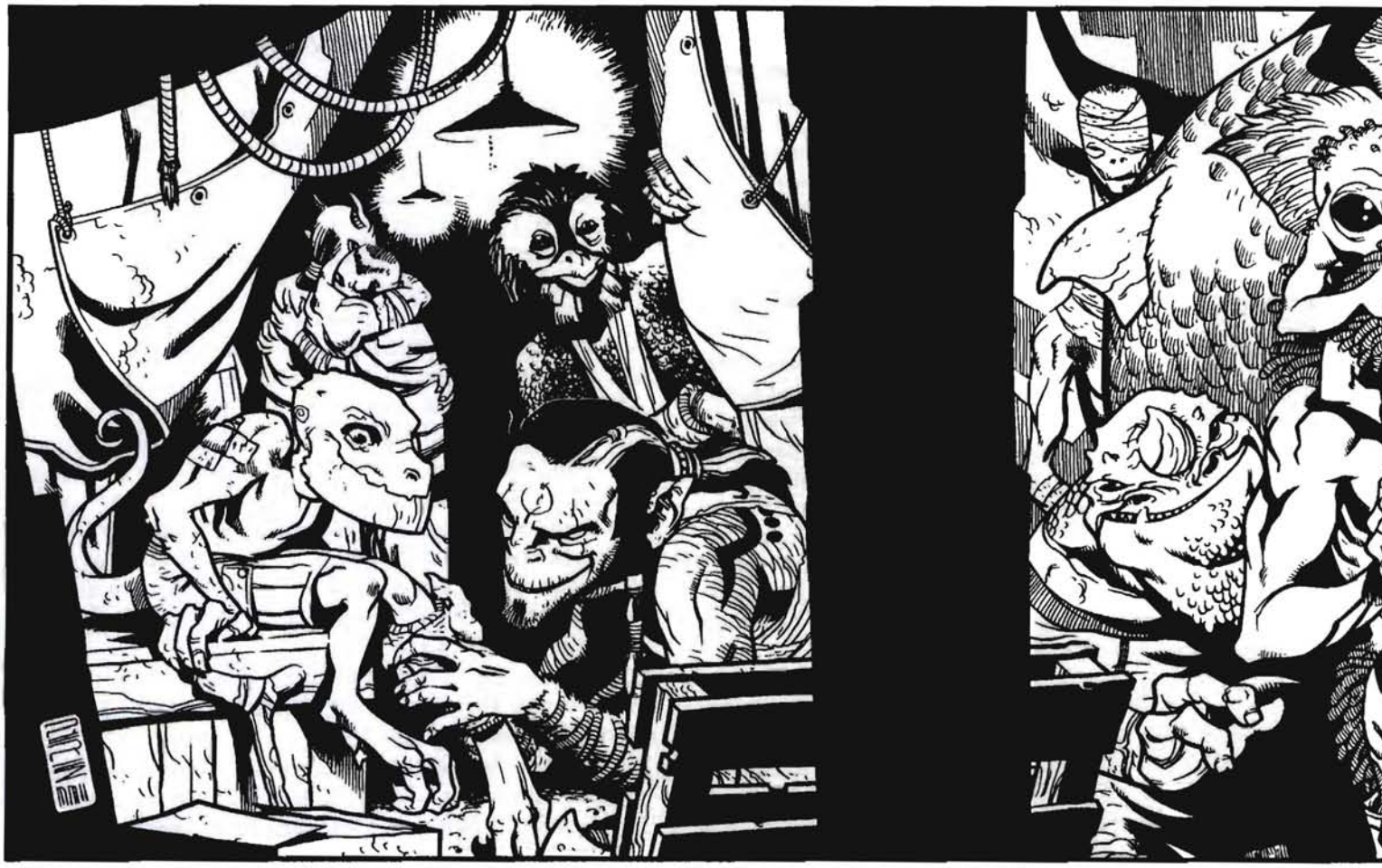
isn't anything left. People are starving and those with the strength and firepower to do it, are willing to kill for a handful of food. Consequently, many of the attacks and raids are not for weapons or treasure but for food. This has made outside "relief efforts" difficult in the extreme as bands of freedom fighters and mercenaries, as well as, bandits and monsters regularly attack and rob them before the relief can get to the starving refugees. Even Coalition camps and supply convoys fall under attack. Medicine and basic supplies are also targets.

All of this makes the efforts by the people of Lazlo and anyone who tries to help, deadly. The Cyber-Knights, Lyn-Srial and other champions do what they can to help the refugees and relief volunteers, but they are too few and the trouble and villains too many. This situation doesn't only apply to Minnesota, but the Dakotas, Missouri and Wisconsin as well, all of which have been plundered and remain under siege by the starving and desperate multitudes. In fact, anywhere refugees have fled en masse are experiencing thefts, destruction of property and violence. In many cases, the refugees have been followed by raiders, freedom fighters, and mercenaries as well as monsters, all of whom hope to intercept vital food and supplies intended for the refugees. And the situation will only get worse with the onset of winter coming in a few months.

Refugees at Lazlo. Despite the trials and tribulations, the people of Lazlo have played a huge role in the relief effort and have already taken in nearly 10,000 refugees since Tolkeen's collapse, and that does not include the thousands who have streamed into the city-state over the last four years of war. This creates problems on a number of levels, but the most notable are as follows: **1.** Lazlo's infrastructure can only sustain so many new people so quickly. It is rapidly reaching the breaking point already with an estimated 20,000 to 50,000 more refugees expected to arrive over the next three months. **2.** The refugees carry disease with them. **3.** They also bring hatred and horror stories with them that inflame the populace of Lazlo and breed hate and revenge. **4.** Their vast numbers have created housing problems and tax the resources of the kingdom. **5.** They come with nothing, and many suffer from malnutrition, sickness, emotional trauma and are unable to support themselves. This has created a ghetto of poverty and crime the likes of which Lazlo has never known. **6.** It is impossible to weed out criminals, troublemakers and dissidents from multitude. Nor is it possible to sniff out spies and enemies from the Coalition States, Lazlo and other places. **7.** Offering Tolkeenites "protection and aid" invites the wrath of the Coalition Army, first upon the relief workers in the field, and second, against the city of Lazlo. Where this *may* lead is yet to be seen. So far, other than dispatching spies and the occasional rabble-rouser and saboteur, the CS has taken little action against Lazlo. **8.** Among the refugees are *Tolkeen Retribution Squads*, patriotic zealots who seek to inflict bloody retribution upon those they blame for the fall of Tolkeen. These blame the fall of Tolkeen on Lazlo's refusal to join their war and fight the Coalition. For that, Lazlo shall pay.

Protecting secrets of magic

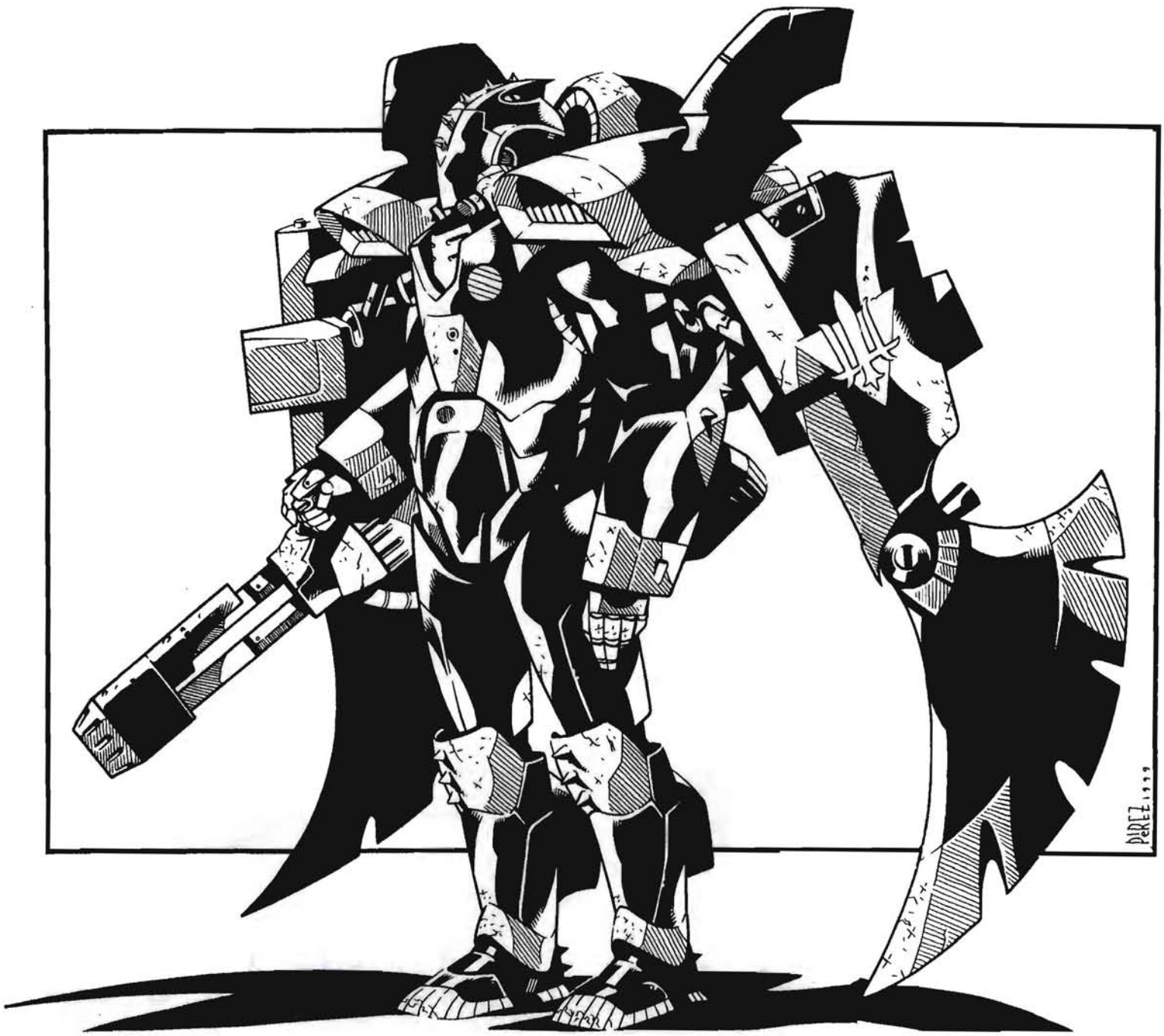
The leaders of Lazlos, as well as numerous independent brotherhoods and individuals from Lazlo, the Colorado Baronies, Federation of Magic and others (possibly including Atlantis), are actively trying to secure what weapons and secrets



of magic they can. Tolkeen had acquired a number of *legendary magical artifacts*, any number of which could give a group or individual incredible power. Likewise, the Techno-Wizards of Tolkeen made a number of impressive (and arguably frightening) innovations in the areas of combat and war machines such as the Iron Juggernauts. Innovations that the Tolkeenites kept secret and which the Federation of Magic and others would dearly love to acquire. (**Note:** Actually, the leadership at Lazlo would like to make sure some of those secrets, including those involving the Iron Juggernauts, Daemonix, Necromancy and other dark magicks, stay lost. They shudder at the thought of what groups like the Federation of Magic, Vanguard and the Splugorth might do with such secrets.) Consequently, the CS occupied lands of Tolkeen have become something of a free-for-all, with numerous regional powers and individuals racing against time and competing against each other to acquire weapons, secrets and magic artifacts of great power. The most ruthless and power hungry will stop at nothing to acquire these things for themselves and will lie, cheat, rob and kill anyone to get them. Thus, there is an undercurrent of treachery and viciousness prevalent throughout the defeated kingdom, with the cities of Tolkeen, Freehold, Center Gear, Blueline and other centers of magic and Techno-Wizardry centers of this intrigue. Coalition versus practitioners of magic and treasure-seeking adventurers, versus each other.

Some are so intent on acquiring these magic items and technology for themselves or their cause, that Coalition convoys conveying magic items and documentation are regularly targeted and attacked. Often the CS has no or little idea of what they are carrying, except for what one of their psychics may have gleaned from an Object Read or other psychic impression. Consequently, sometimes they don't assign enough soldiers to protect an item of significant importance, and other times assigning heavy troops only serves to indicate that the CS thinks it has something of great value (half the time they are wrong). On another note, the fact that the Coalition Army is impounding and transporting magic items and information to Chi-Town has given credence to the rumored existence of the *Black Vault*, an ultra-secret storage facility (and some say research facility) where the CS locks away magic items and secrets. With more and more people convinced of its existence, it seems only a matter of time before some enterprising soul will try to find and break into it. But that's another story for another time.

So in the end, few other than the Cyber-Knights and high-minded champions of Lazlo are actually out to protect any secrets of magic, but get them for their own insidious purposes.



Free Quebec

Overview

Free Quebec, until five or six years ago a member of the Coalition States, has become an independent nation, self-reliant and an industrial and commercial giant in her own right. For generations the nation has battled and survived against monstrous hordes, dark magic and inhuman invaders. Somehow, with the help of their Glitter Boys, they have managed to hold on and grow as a people, civilized society and sovereign nation. This accomplishment has created a tremendous sense of pride and patriotism that has reached renewed heights under the leadership of Prime Minister Lorne. It has also created a fierce sense of independent nationalism, and some measure of arrogance, especially toward those who refuse to acknowledge their achievements and independence. It is these feelings that ultimately led to Free Quebec's continual disputes with its one-time sister Coalition States, followed by the loss of support from Emperor Prosek and the inevitable schism that would divide the two powers forever.

A powerful and self-reliant nation, the people of Free Quebec have always regarded their relationship with the Coalition States as one of *choice and convenience.* An alliance with a nation of like-minded humans and parallel ideals regarding human supremacy and anti-magic sentiments. Their mutually strong economies and industries stimulated each other and helped them both grow stronger. Equally as driven and fascist as Chi-Town, the people of Free Quebec remained fiercely independent, refusing to allow any outside power to "control them" – even their Coali-

tion brethren. This refusal to follow Imperial decrees created a level of tension between the two States that eventually erupted as the secession of Free Quebec from the Coalition States and war!

Now a nation-state without outside interference, Free Quebec stands poised to make their mark in the human affairs of North America. With the support of the populace, combined with their strategic geographic location, technology, industry and untamed spirit, they are ready to once again take charge of their own destinies. This confidence and bold independent spirit is pervasive throughout Free Quebec, from their charismatic Prime Minister and other leaders to the ordinary man on the street.

Technology. Although generally 15-25% less advanced than Chi-Town, Free Quebec is a modern nation and has its areas of specialty (most notably Glitter Boy technology). Very much like any of the Coalition States, technology has become a way of life within Free Quebec. The urban centers are high-tech communities with sprawling factories, commercial centers, countless office buildings, modern apartments, hospitals, research facilities, communication centers, television and radio networks, theaters, sports arenas, M.D.C. fortifications and the occasional building towering well above the usual six stories. However, most buildings rarely exceed three or four stories, unless they are fortified, M.D.C. military or municipal buildings.

The City of Free Quebec is the exception, for like Chi-Town it is a titanic megalopolis that stands like a man-made mountain reaching to the heavens, and enclosed by Mega-Damage walls and fortifications. The city proper is home to over one million people with several smaller, less heavily fortified city-communities and industrial complexes broken by smaller, less advanced towns and farms scattered all around the fortress city. Monsters, bandits and raiders tend to stay away from the City and other modern communities for fear of having to face Free Quebec's ever vigilant Military defenders and law enforcement. The fact that the response to such criminals and invaders is merciless deadly force from companies of Glitter Boys or rocketing SAMAS keeps serious attacks away from the population centers. Instead it is the smaller, more distant communities and wilderness settlements who face the worst from the outside world.

Beyond the City of Free Quebec, most buildings follow modern architecture, and there are some districts within several cities or smaller communities that mimic the pre-Rifts era. In both cases, however, all buildings are outfitted with modern amenities such as indoor plumbing, central heating and cooling, electric lights, video screens (TV), communication systems, computers, modern entertainment centers, appliances and most anything else one could imagine a home or business might need or want. Of course, the more money one has, the better the quality of life.

D-Bees in Free Quebec. There aren't any. Period. At least none that are "officially" tolerated, especially in or around human population centers. Since before joining the Coalition States, *Free Quebec* has been one of the most ruthless campaigners for human supremacy, their actions against D-Bees rival anything perpetrated by Chi-Town. In fact, the idea of purges and many other strategies and tactics used by Chi-Town were a page taken out of Free Quebec's handbook for dealing with nonhumans. The consensus view is that D-Bees are monstrous, alien "invaders" and a threat to all human life. People of magic are held in equal contempt, accused of actively consorting with evil forces and assisting them to harm humans. Moreover, Free Quebec's history is filled with centuries of struggle and war against wave after wave of supernatural monsters and alien invaders. This long history of strife, murder and mayhem suffered at the hands of nonhumans has forever colored their view and sown the seeds of deep-rooted hatred and prejudice. Had Tolkeen known and understood Free Quebec's history, they might never have tried to ally themselves with the human supremacists, and may have anticipated Free Quebec's choice to side with the CS rather than work with an "alliance of monsters."

Free Quebec: The changing tides of war

It is ironic and fitting that *Tolkeen's* own treachery would give Free Quebec the opportunity to get back into the good graces of the Coalition States, bringing an end to war in the east, and sealing their own doom. The Warlords of Tolkeen's undoing was not understanding Free Quebec's history and hatred for all things inhuman. Tolkeen's subsequent treachery unleashed in the *Sorcerers' Revenge* quickly followed by the subterfuge they proposed to the Quebec Military to crush the Coalition on both fronts, did not resonate with the Québécois as justice or righteousness, but as the kind of duplicitous evil one could expect from the likes of Tolkeen. If anything, the Tolkeenites only showed Free Quebec their true colors, compelling them to choose their CS enemy over the monsters of Tolkeen. Even if it meant their own destruction at the hands of the Coalition Army, the Québécois could not let the demon hordes of Tolkeen overrun the Coalition Military in another surprise attack. Certainly no self-respecting Québécois would willingly participate in such treachery. Given their history and generations of conditioning, it was second nature for them to sacrifice their own lives against the invading monsters from the west, rather than allow them to waylay the unsuspecting Coalition troops. More than any moment in the war, these two events – the Sorcerers' Revenge and the Free Quebec Double-Cross, as it has come to be known – changed the course of the war on both fronts.

Emperor Prosek had been looking for a way out of the Free Quebec War without looking weak or defeated. Truth be told, things were going terrible for the CS on the Minnesota front. The Tolkeenites had proven to be considerably more resourceful, difficult and powerful than the Coalition government and military had anticipated. Their creative use of magic stymied the Coalition Invasion Force at every turn. What modest success the CS enjoyed came at a heavy price in loss of life and resources. Meanwhile, the war in Free Quebec *never* had the support of the CS citizens or its military. Although Coalition forces gathered on the border of Free Quebec simultaneously with those on the western front, combat was reduced to saber rattling, threats, demands and minor skirmishes. Each side wanted the other to capitulate to its will, but neither truly wanted to go to battle. While combat raged along the border of Tolkeen, the first "real battle" for Free Quebec did not occur until a year and a half after war was declared, and it was followed by a six month "holding and

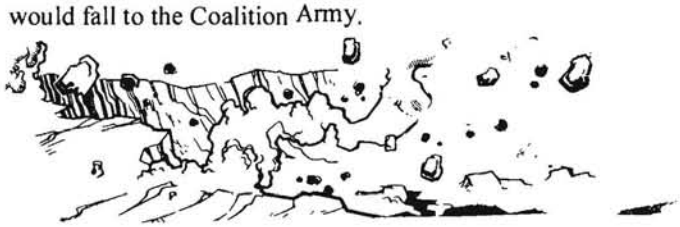
containment" action by the CS rather than pressing their attack. Combat would heat up on the Free Quebec front and several outer cities and territory would fall to the Coalition Army, however losses on both sides were light, roughly 10% for Free Quebec and under 7% for the CS (and most of those losses suffered by the CS Navy).

Free Quebec would never see the kind of war and devastation leveled against Tolkeen. As fate would have it, just as the Coalition Armies on the Eastern front prepared to finally press an all-out campaign against the Canadians, the incident known as the *Free Quebec Double-Cross* unfolded. This turn of events froze military aggression on the part of the CS and bought Free Quebec a brief respite from what it thought was an inevitable siege campaign. Nobody anticipated Emperor Prosek's reaction.

Always a cagey strategist and politician, the Emperor saw his opportunity to pull out of Free Quebec and leapt for it. With characteristic flare and brazenness, he declared Free Quebec "champions of humanity," "brothers" and "courageous heroes." The Emperor took the responsibility for the declaration of war against the nation squarely upon his *own* shoulders. He blamed his own fallibility and called "his" decision a "mistake." He then apologized to the citizens of both the Coalition States and Free Quebec, adding that he hoped the people and leaders of Free Quebec would not hold *his mistake* against the people of his nation, and that the Québécois could one day find it in their hearts to forgive him. Emperor Prosek followed this sentiment by publicly declaring the Coalition States' official recognition of Free Quebec as a "free and sovereign nation."

It was a gambit the Emperor's advisors counseled against for fear that it would make him look weak and indecisive in a time of war, especially after the unprecedented and horrendous defeat resulting from the *Sorcerers' Revenge*. Only his son, Joseph Prosek the Second, and a few others supported the plan. In fact, Joseph wrote much of the speech. It was the savvy young man's intention to appeal to the sensibility of the common man who never truly supported the war against Quebec. To make the Emperor look as fallible as any man, but humble and brave enough to admit his mistakes, honorable enough to try to make amends for them, and courageous enough to press forward against their "true" enemy at Tolkeen. To punctuate this point and play upon the Emperor's resolve and strengths, he had his father vow to avenge the tragic losses of the Sorcerers' Revenge and to punish every D-Bee, monster and evildoer who participated in the massacre. Furthermore, the troops from Free Quebec would not be brought home, but sent directly to the front at Tolkeen as valiant and trusted heroes of the Coalition States. Soldiers the wicked Tolkeenites feared so much that they tried to destroy them in the ill-fated ambush the cunning and brave Québécois helped to prevent. "These troops," the Emperor announced, and every resource at the Coalition's disposal, would be now be directed to the solitary purpose of "wiping out the abominations and cowards of Tolkeen."

Approximately three months later, Tolkeen and Freehold would fall to the Coalition Army.



Free Quebec – 109 P.A.

The people of Free Quebec were as shocked as anyone by Emperor Prosek's dramatic change of heart. For the last few months its leaders have been half expecting some new condition or offense to break the Coalition's pact, but so far the Emperor's word has been as good as gold. Absolutely all CS troops have been removed, Prosek sent the Prime Minister of Quebec a personal letter of apology and Chi-Town has dispatched diplomats and emissaries to talk about reparations and reopening trade and communications channels!

Understandably, the more suspicious minded leaders suspect treachery buried somewhere beneath the surface of it all. Some have gone so far as to speculate that the Chi-Town power brokers have simply opted for a new strategy to conquer Free Quebec. One that is not so costly in manpower and physical resources. They have suggested that the CS now hopes to get into their good graces and subtly undermine the nation of Free Quebec from within rather than through military might. They believe the Coalition States will send in spies and propagandists to sow the seeds of discontent among the citizens of Quebec, perhaps arrange the assignation of Prime Ministers and other key government leaders and corrupt the hearts and minds of the people to get their nation to rejoin the Coalition States. These paranoid loyalists insist the CS has not acted yet, because it is biding its time. Waiting to lull them into a false sense of security before implementing any operations to undermine and over throw the government of Free Quebec. Others agree that the CS is biding its time and up to no good, though it is unclear, as of yet, just what that insidious scheme may be. No Québécois can bring themselves to believe that Emperor Prosek was so moved by Free Quebec's sacrifice to save Coalition troops from Tolkeen's demon horde that he has given up on bring up their nation back into the CS fold, one way or another.

Suspicions aside, the war with the Coalition States is over, and Free Quebec, as a nation, can take a collective sigh of relief and go back to life as normal. Fortified defenses remain in place and the military remains on alert, but peace with the CS does seem to be real. Whether or not it will be lasting is yet to be seen.

Unlike the people of Lazlo who live in a gloom and wonder about their future, most citizens of Quebec are cheerful and optimistic. They have come through a difficult period with flying colors. They are jubilant about (seemingly) winning their independence from the Coalition States and earning the respect of Emperor Prosek. They have always seen themselves as uncompromising heroes and survivors, and believe their fighting spirit and independence has "won" them the war. For them, the future is bright and all is right in the world. At least that is the general consensus. The government knows better.

The Quebec government and military leaders are similarly positive about the outcome of the war, though they are not yet convinced they have seen the last of trouble with the CS. Their joy, however, is tempered with reality and a number of things they must contend with in the aftermath of the war.

Mercenaries for hire. With the end of the Coalition-Tolkeen War, there are a large number of mercenaries out of work and desperately in search of gainful employment. Added to their numbers are freedom fighters, psychics and even

practitioners of magic and D-Bees who learned how to fight during the war, and now hope to parlay that knowledge and experience into a way of making money as mercenaries. Desperate and hungry, many are willing to work for just about *anybody* for a quarter or third of what they normally charge. This is bad news for Free Quebec, because the cutthroats among these mercenaries can be hired by any tin-plated tyrant, wealthy businessman, gang leader, crime lord, raiders or pirate outfit to do just about *anything*.

Meanwhile, many of those who came specifically to fight on the side of Free Quebec don't have the resources to pack up and go elsewhere, so they turn to the government to bail them out with freelance work. This can actually work to Free Quebec's advantage, enabling the government to hire reasonably reliable mercenaries sympathetic to Free Quebec to investigate the goings-on in the east. Free Quebec intelligence has learned things are brewing with the enigmatic Shemarrians in the southeast, and they also suspect the Splugorth Minions of Atlantis are colonizing, or preparing to colonize, part of the Atlantic coast. Rather than risk the lives of Quebec soldiers, the government can hold back most of its military forces to defend its borders and hire mercenaries to look into matters involving the Shemarrians and Splugorth.

Mercenaries and miscreants. Many mercenaries and so-called adventurers are nothing more than bandits and cutthroats who use their combat skills, weapons and powers, if any, to intimidate, rob, and bully those weaker than them. Many such warriors linger in and around Quebec held territory. The greatest trouble is found along the war torn outskirts and wilderness areas of Free Quebec. Here bandits, raiders, slavers, spies and criminals can plot their escapades, strike and retreat back into the wilderness. Trouble from bandits, raiders and pirates is at an all time high. Mercenary bands who can not find gainful employment (of which there are many), engage in rustling livestock, highway robbery, raids and extortion to get the food and basic supplies they need to support themselves.

Montreal. The number of bandits, mercenaries and pirates at the *Kingdom of Montreal* has swollen to unheard of numbers. These lowlifes are emboldened by their strength of numbers and relentlessly raid and plunder Free Quebec's border towns and coastal settlements along the Saint Lawrence River. Many criminal types see this as the time to make their scores, because the army and navy of Free Quebec are still spread out, weak and recovering from losses during the war. Others are full of themselves, reveling in their exploits during the war and continue to sow their wild oats. Also see pirates.

Pirates. The Navy of Free Quebec successfully and single-handedly ripped the Coalition Navy to shreds, destroying an estimated 50% to 75% of the Coalition's Great Lakes fleet (which represents two thirds of the Coalition's entire Navy). While Free Quebec's losses were comparatively few, its Navy remains scattered and in a weakened condition. Needless to say, pirates, slavers and freebooters have been quick to take advantage of the situation, conducting raids on both sides of the St. Lawrence and throughout the Great Lakes. The Coalition Navy *had played a* much greater role in curbing piracy and coastal raiders than anyone had imagined. With the CS fleet gone, and 5-8 years from being rebuilt, piracy along the Great Lakes, river ways and eastern seaboard is at a record high. The Quebec Navy is reasonably effective at protecting its own nation's ships and coastal settlements, but that leaves most everyone else to fend for themselves. Moreover, worried about spreading itself thin and leaving its borders unprotected, few Quebec Navy vessels give serious pursuit of pirates. Unless they think the pirates can be dealt with quickly, most Quebec naval vessels let the pirates escape.

Spies. Spies from Iron Heart, Chi-Town, Lazlo and the Federation of Magic, among others, still operate in the traders' city of Old Bones, and some continue to try to infiltrate the City of Free Quebec.

Tolkeen Retribution squads. Among the Tolkeen survivors are militant groups of expatriates, fanatical freedom fighters and grief stricken warriors who are bent on extracting revenge upon those they believe contributed to the destruction of their kingdom. Among these groups are those who blame Free Quebec (as well as Lazlo, New Lazlo, the Federation of Magic, and the Cyber-Knights). Quebec's famous double-cross would be reason enough to seek retribution. The fact that Quebec's treachery won them the favor of the CS and stopped their war only adds insult upon injury. These groups want to make Free Quebec pay in blood, thus they engage in acts of destruction, sabotage, terrorism, and assassination, as well as undermining the government any way they can and making trouble in general.

The Minions of Splugorth. To their dismay, Free Quebec is aware of an increase in activity by the Minions of Splugorth along the Atlantic coast. The presence of larger and more numerous parties of Splugorth Slavers and scouting parties along the entire Atlantic seaboard is of grave concern to Quebec's leaders. While they hope the Minions are only taking advantage of the chaos and opportunity brought about by war, they fear the Splugorth of Atlantis are looking to colonize the coast for themselves or even plotting an invasion. The war has certainly enabled the Splugorth to take the measure of the three primary powers on the continent, The Coalition States, Free Quebec and the kingdoms of magic, and plot an effective invasion campaign if they are so inclined. However, all Free Quebec knows for certain is that Splugorth Minions have established a strong presence along the coastal territories of what was once Canada and the USA, as well as having established a handful of slave camps – what appear to be permanent outposts in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Maine and, they fear, other places up and down the coast. It is a matter Quebec is addressing with the utmost urgency, and if the Splugorth are planning to colonize or invade, they will take immediate action to counter it. For the time being, they have not informed the CS about their misgivings for fear that it would make Quebec look weak, elicit the return of Coalition troops and invite trouble.

The Shemarrian Uprising. Free Quebec is also aware of trouble among the Shemarrian people (detailed nearby in this section). The mysterious, monster-riding warrior women have appeared in greater numbers than originally thought to exist (at least triple) and have become extremely aggressive and protective of the woodlands they inhabit from Maine to Virginia. Even more surprising are reports of Shemarrians further north, in eastern Canada. The Quebec Military suspect their increased numbers and aggression has something to do with the incursions by the Minions of Splugorth in their hunting grounds. In fact, it may very well be a concerted effort on the part of the

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Shemarrians to retaliate against the Splugorth. This could explain why they have recently appeared farther north, following the trail of the Minions of Splugorth. If so, these strange people (suspected of being mutant humans like the Psi-Stalkers) may be potential allies if it comes to war with Atlantis. However, Free Quebec's military leaders fear there may be something else afoot, and plan to find out what it is as quickly as possible. Additionally, Free Quebec's leaders have come to the realization that neither they nor the Coalition States know much of anything about the Shemarrians – whether they are humans or mutant humans, D-Bees or what. That too, is a situation Quebec Intelligence plans to correct.

At the moment, all Military Intelligence knows for certain is that the Shemarrians have gathered in greater numbers than previously believed to exist, they are in a highly agitated state, aggressive, defensive of their territory and seem to be preparing for war against an unknown enemy. Free Quebec is reasonably certain that neither they or humans in general are the Shemarrians targets, and hope the Amazonian-like warrior women are up in arms against the Minions of Splugorth. Though they are loath to admit it, the Quebec Military secretly hopes the Shemarrians intend to fight the Splugorth Minions found throughout the eastern seaboard of the old American Empire. Such an independent effort would help Free Quebec with its own actions against the monstrous Atlanteans, especially since Quebec hopes to avoid calling upon the Coalition States to join them in any conflict with Atlantis.

Business as usual. Then there is the usual business of defending its borders and the mundane chores of running and maintaining the nation.

Splugorth Incursions

Eastern Canada – 109 P.A.

North America is starting to feel the presence of Atlantis and its Splugorthian masters more than ever before. Until a few years ago, Splugorth Slavers were seldom seen inland more than a few hundred miles off the Atlantic coast. However, over the last two years, Slavers and Altara Warrior Women, and even Kittani, Kydian Overlords and other "minions" have been reported as far west as the Mississippi River. Splugorth Bio-Wizard weapons and symbiotes have also recently begun to surface more frequently than they have in the past, suggesting Splugorth technology is somehow starting to creep into North America. Unsubstantiated second- and third-hand reports from trappers and adventurers from the east insist that large groups of landing craft have come ashore, delivering an army of Splugorth minions. However, no such army on North American soil is known, leading some to believe these woodsmen are mistaking large raiding parties of Splugorth Slavers for an entire army. Then again, it has made some wonder if the Splugorth haven't decided the time is right to invade. Perhaps encouraged by events in the Kingdom of Tolkeen, where rumors persist that some members of The Circle of Twelve had tried to cut a deal with Lord Splynncryth to send troops to their aid.

Whatever the reason for the increased presence of the Minions, it is bad news, and suggests Lord Splynncryth of Atlantis is making plans for the North American Continent.

Splugorth Colonies in Canada

While the powers that be wonder if the Splugorth have taken an interest in North America, those living in the eastern wilderness know it for a fact. In just the last two years, the Minions of Splugorth have become more active in North America than anyone can remember. They were originally drawn to the islands of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, where Splugorth Slavers could "harvest" Faerie Folk for use as living components in a variety of magic weapons and items (see **Rifts® Book of Magic** or **Splynn Dimensional Market**). Large animals and humanoids found on the mainland of Canada and the United States also attracted Slavers. Fury Beetles and other monstrous creatures always have value as riding animals and exotic exports to other worlds, as do humans and many D-Bees. The hunting has been so rich along the Atlantic coast and the sales so lucrative these past few decades, that Lord Splynncryth has decided to establish a dozen permanent colonies and Slaver Outposts along the coast, as well as increase the level of "slave harvesting" by going deeper inland; something that Lord Splynncryth had, up until now, refrained from doing. Even the Vampire Kingdoms have experienced recent incursions by the Splugorth, but then Vampire Intelligences and Splugorth are ancient rivals.

While profit and glory appear to be the incentive for the increased activity, one can never be certain with these duplicitous creatures. Beside, regardless of Lord Splynncryth's motives, it does not change the fact that North America is being plundered (if not actually invaded) by the Splugorth of Atlantis. Whether Lord Splynncryth is just testing the waters to see how much he can get away with, or whether there is something more dangerous unfolding, is yet to be determined.

Free Quebec's viewpoint. This is the first time the inhuman denizens of Atlantis have made a move to claim any land outside their own island nation, and it is a turn of events *Free Quebec* finds unacceptable. Not only does it threaten their security, but, if left unchecked, it gives the Splugorth Minions a solid foothold on North American soil. Since the Splugorth Minions appear to be most firmly entrenched along the eastern shores of Canada, it has fallen to Free Quebec to be the first to investigate and address this problem. Free Quebec has already dispatched mercenaries, adventurers and a few select military operatives to investigate, while its military draws up strategies and tactics for what may lead to war against the monstrous invaders. However, unlike other altercations with monsters, Free Quebec has never confronted an entire nation of monsters. Though little is known about Atlantis, they understand that the Splugorth can draw upon the resources of numerous alien worlds, and that if the stories are true, could have conquered the Earth by now, as they have many others. The leaders of Quebec assume the Splugorth would have done so long ago unless some outside consideration/force/reason or X-Factor prevents it. They hope that if openly challenged by the Quebec Military, the monsters from Atlantis will back off without much of a struggle in order to maintain the status quo. If they are wrong, however, they worry that they could be lighting the fuse to a war the likes of which the Earth has never witnessed. With no other viable options, Quebec prepares to take the gamble of challenging the Splugorth colonies in the east.

"Little Atlantis," the Splugorth colony of Southern Newfoundland. The Quebec Army and Navy have their work cut

out for them, for the Splugorth of Atlantis have established a major "port colony" on what (in Rifts Earth) is the main island of Southern Newfoundland. It was selected by the Splugorth because the large island is unclaimed by humanoids and is filled with Faerie Folk to capture, but mainly because it is strategically located in the center of Splugorth slave operations, is easily defendable, and because one could make the argument that it is not, strictly speaking, part of the North American continent.

To call this operation a "colony" or "port" is a gross understatement. Lord Splynncryth has christened Southern Newfoundland "Little Atlantis" and his Minions have already created a major seaport of 40,000 people on its eastern shore, not including 20,000 slaves. This port is known as the **First Citadel** and is already a fully operational city with two port areas each capable of accommodating a fleet of 30 ships at any given time. A full quarter of the city is dedicated entirely to the slave trade, including holding areas for humanoids, monster pens, containment pits, exercise yards, showrooms and display areas (effectively a massive prison compound).

Population Breakdown of First Citadel: 45% Kittani, 15% Kydians, 20% Altara Blind Warrior Women, 10% Slavers, 3% Horune Pirates (see *Rifts® Underseas*), 2% Gargoyles, 2% Metztlains (no more than a dozen of the giant ones are usually found in the city proper) and 3% others.

Notable features of First Citadel: **1.** A city market region like a tiny Splynn Dimensional Market with plenty of room to expand is located between the two ports. This market and the presence of a Bio-Wizard compound suggests that Bio-Wizard items and Splugorth symbiotic augmentation *may* become more easily available to North America along with other Splugorth merchandise. Not necessarily a good thing.

2. Four residential districts: One for Kittani, one for Kydians, one for Slavers and their Altara warrior slaves, and one for all others. **Note:** The Metztlains inhabit parts of the surrounding wilderness, particularly the southeastern peninsula and the cluster of islands connected to it by a large ley line.

3. Industrial district where basic goods are manufactured as well as Faerie-powered magic items. Included in this district are a number of high-tech manufacturing facilities, primarily for the creation and maintenance of Kittani weapons, armor and vehicles (nothing heavy). Food processing facilities are also located here.

4. A small Bio-Wizard research and development complex, complete with holding pens for the victims of the research, is located in the Industrial district.

5. An ominous stone pyramid is rising on a ley line in the heart of the city. It is only half done but construction should be finished within 4-7 months. Presumably it will serve as a controlled dimensional portal to Atlantis, and possibly elsewhere, as well as a means of harnessing the ley line energy to cast magic, control the weather and seas, and power magical defenses. If this colony is to be stopped and its inhabitants sent back to Atlantis, it must be done before the pyramid is completed. When it becomes fully functional, the Minions will be difficult to rout, reinforcements can teleport in from Atlantis, and Little Atlantis will be ready for further expansion of additional Citadels to follow the First.

6. *Point Metzzyl* is the southeastern peninsula some 70 miles (112 km) south of the First Citadel. It is so named because it and the cluster of islands to the south are largely inhabited by the massive Metztlain population of Little Atlantis.

7. The rest of Southern Nova Scotia and most of the small islands around it remain a wilderness where Faerie Folk and wild animals are hunted and runaway slaves hide before trying to get to the mainland.

8. Little Atlantis is designed to be the North American launch point for Splugorth Slave and scouting operations. It already coordinates slave runs into Nova Scotia, Canada and the US up and down the east coast. Its location also gives them access to the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes and their tributaries.

Note: A second Splugorth city/colony, the Second Citadel, is under development on the opposite side of Southern Newfoundland, between two ley lines. It will also have two ports. Currently it is only in the earliest stages of construction, with city planning and land clearing underway. Only 3,000 Kittani, 800 Kydians and 10,000 slaves are currently at the second site. However, work at this location has been hampered by acts of sabotage from an unknown assailant (See *Archie Three* and *Shemarrians* for details).

"Ghost Island": The Splugorth Cape Benton Colony, Nova Scotia. The northeastern most island in the Nova Scotia chain has been reputed to be haunted since the Dark Age, however, that has not scared away the Minions of Splugorth. Here the Minions are busy putting the finishing touches on their latest Slavers' outpost and port town. It is a small, basic version of Little Atlantis with a port that can accommodate 20 ships, and has a small town of 8,000-12,000 depending on how many ships are in. A medium-sized stone pyramid is nestled on a ley line, with a second one under construction at the south end of the island and a third being built at a ley line nexus on the main island of Nova Scotia. A fourth is planned for a nexus point on the mainland in what was once New Brunswick. The purpose of this pyramid network is to create a teleportation system for the Minions of Splugorth operating in the region, connecting the Newfoundland colonies, Ghost Island, and operations in New Brunswick to one another as well as to Atlantis. In effect, a trans-dimensional transit system that would enable large numbers of Minions to hop from one locale to another in a matter of seconds. The stone pyramids would also enable the Minions to command the mystic energy of the ley lines to modify weather (keeping them safe from storms) and drawing upon the lines to open Rifts to other worlds and locations further inland on the continent. This would help them to avoid unwanted encounters with the CS, Free Quebec and other powers that are inevitable by conventional means of travel. With the pyramids in place, the Slavers, scouts and spies can navigate and hunt throughout the continent with relative ease – especially if other stone pyramids could be established in the interior parts of the continent.

Other tiny Slaver outposts, barely more than a permanent campsite or trading post staffed by 10-40 low-end Minions, are located in Maine, Massachusetts, and Virginia. A dozen others had also been established, including a growing trading town off the coast of what was once New Jersey, but it and the others have all met with disaster. Half have fallen to Shemarrian attacks, others to bands of adventurers who unexpectedly rose up against them, and some fell to a mysterious assailant – *all* Minions destroyed, so this nemesis has yet to be identified. The latter mystery is only of minor concern to the Splugorth Slavers

and other Minions operating in North America, because they are consumed with their work and are focused on establishing a stronghold off the east coast of Canada before expanding elsewhere. However, there is a growing concern about the Shemarrians, especially since they have suddenly begun to appear in alarming numbers and exhibit a deep-rooted hatred for the Minions of Splugorth that they can not explain. Or is it that these warrior women have become more territorial than previously thoughtand respond to the Minions' presence as an invader? Whatever the case, the Splugorth leaders are not worried about it ... yet, anyway.

Splugorth Minions at Tolkeen

With the fall of Tolkeen, Splugorth Slavers have been reported chasing down and capturing humans, D-Bees, monsters and demons throughout *Wisconsin, Minnesota*, and *Iowa*. Some have even been reported in the *State of Chi-Town* (the wilderness portions of Missouri and Illinois), *lower Manitoba* and along the border of *South Dakota!* These Slave companies are scooping up human and D-Bee refugees, warriors, sorcerers, dragon hatchlings, and monsters like the Brodkil, Gargoyles, Witchlings and Daemonix as slave stock and contestants in the gladiatorial arenas of Atlantis.

Meanwhile, Kittani and Kydian intelligence and "salvage recovery teams" – often led by a High Lord, Conservator, or Power Lord and which may include one or more Stone Masters, Bio-Wizards, Tattooed Men, or monstrous slaves – are regularly found plumbing the ruins of *Tolkeen, Freehold, Blueline,* and other centers of magic in search of rare magical artifacts, magic weapons, and mystic secrets held by Tolkeen; the creation of Iron Juggernauts being chief among the things the Splugorth covet. In addition, the Lord of Atlantis has dispatched a number of *Sunaj assassins,* and special teams (3-6 agents) consisting of Tattooed Men (various) and slave races (various) to acquire what the Lord of Atlantis wants. What most people, Coalition Intelligence, Cyber-Knights and Tolkeen defenders alike, do not realize, is that many of the Gargoyles and supernatural beings hanging around the fallen kingdom are *not* those who once served Tolkeen (most of them have fled for the hills or Mexico or Calgary), but are *Minions of Splugorth* sent to observe, investigate and scrounge around for valuables, clues and information. **Note:** See *Rifts® World Book Two: Atlantis* for details about Splugorth Minions, slave races, and magic, and *World Book 21: Splynn Dimensional Market* for data about other slave races, additional magic items and the marketplace itself.

Never before have the Minions of Splugorth been so brazen or traveled so deep into the American heartland. Even the full presence of the Coalition Army in Minnesota, which has clashed with Splugorth Slavers and other Minions on several occasions now, is not enough to deter Splugorth interests in the area. Right now their numbers are small, fewer than a thousand scattered into squad, platoon and the occasional company sized groups, however, the fact that Splugorth Minions are present at all, is reason for every intelligent creature living on the continent to be concerned.

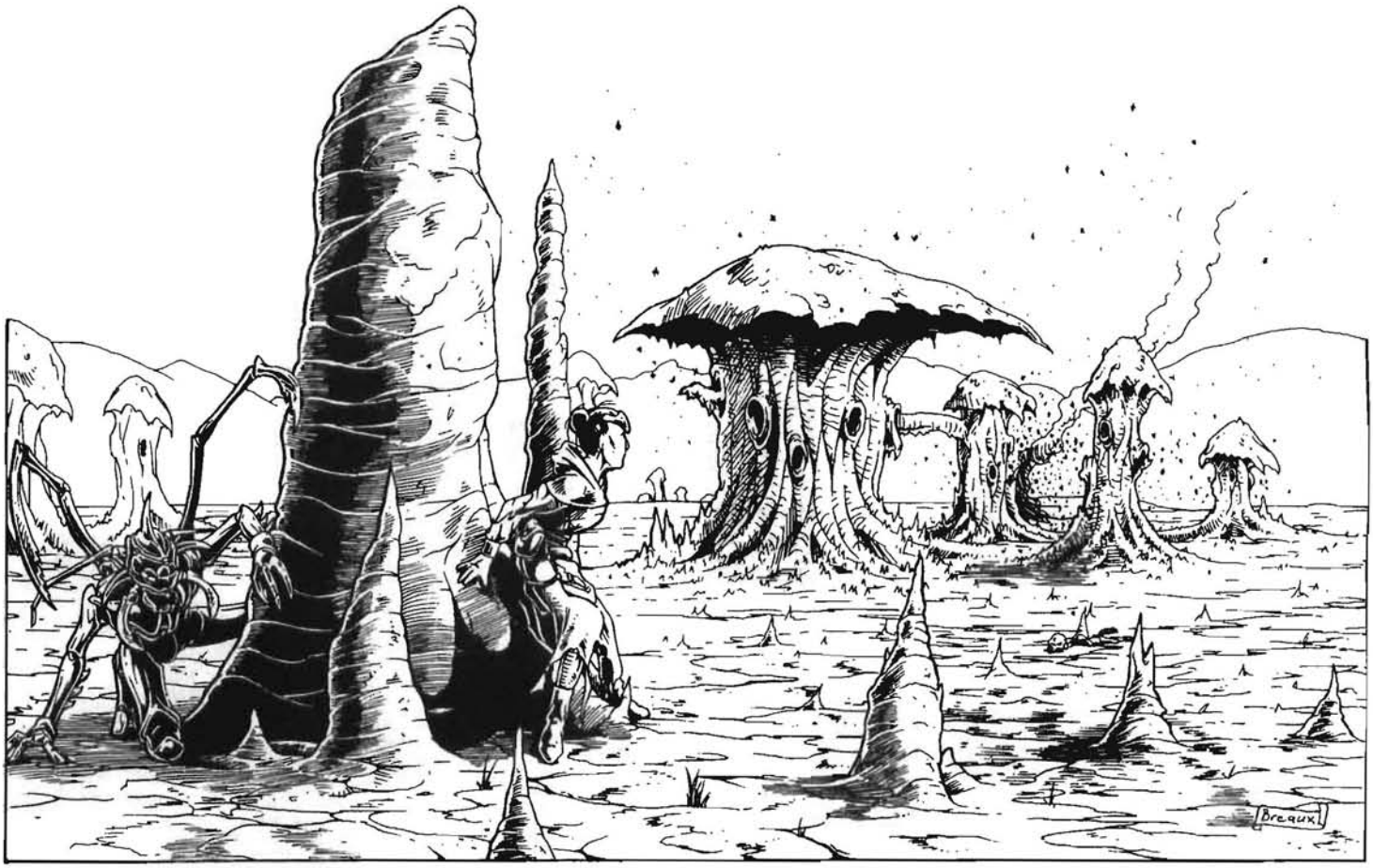
For the Coalition Occupation Force, it drives home just *how* urgent it is for *them* to recover magical artifacts and destroy Tolkeen documents, books, and records as quickly as possible before they fall into the hands of other monsters and evil empires. The Coalition High Command hopes this is the only reason the Minions of Splugorth have come so deep into Coalition held territory, but fear that the Splugorth may be eyeballing parts of North America for conquest. In a show of their disdain, Coalition forces are actively hunting Minions of Splugorth and destroying them wherever they are encountered, even if it means allowing D-Bees caught as slaves to escape their clutches. The CS hopes the Splugorth will get the message that the presence of their Minions will not be tolerated on North American soil. Additionally, the Coalition's stint in and around Free Quebec allowed them to take note of a much stronger Splugorth presence in that part of the world than earlier intelligence reports had indicated. A CS naval operation also reported evidence the Splugorth were building a colony in Nova Scotia. The CS has yet to investigate and debate rages within the CS Intelligence Division as to whether or not they should recommend sharing this information with the nation of Free Quebec (they are leaning toward sharing).

Xiticix Hivelands

Manitoba & Minnesota

If anything sets the Xiticix apart from other beings on Rifts Earth, it is their extremely alien nature, their territorial behavior and their vast numbers. Some people have likened the insect-aliens to a *cancer* or a plague because they started in one tiny area and have quietly but continually grown and expanded. Their completely inhuman mind-set and insectoid appearance have made them seem all the more frightening and monstrous.

The Xiticix live in what humans call a **Hive Network**. A sprawling city-like complex of constructs that resemble giant concrete mushrooms or an alien city of towers and skyscrapers.



Others have likened these Hive Networks to a city of giant termite mounds, although they are more complex with numerous portal-like entrances and exits, ramps and bridges connecting the many towers from the outside, and a tunnel network in the towers and underground. Inside is an infrastructure of chambers, passageways, ramps, tunnels and holes that lead to the various "work stations," living areas, and chambers of the Xiticix inhabitants. The lower a visitor goes, the more likely he is to encounter the Xiticix denizens who rarely leave the internal confines of the hive, such as *nits, grubs, Diggers, Nannies* and *Queens*.

The Xiticix can cling to porous surfaces (i.e. material that has a rough to slight texture, as opposed to smooth glass or polished metal) and climb the walls and ceilings of their tunnels and chambers like Earth ants. This means invaders must stay alert for hive defenders dropping off the ceiling or hiding in crevices and holes. Speaking of holes, since these insect beings can climb walls as easily as humans run across flat ground, the Xiticix have no need for stairs and even ramps are at a minimum. Access from one level or floor to the next is often a hole straight up or down (i.e. a vertical tunnel). The largest holes are the most frequently used and traveled tunnels, however small vertical tunnels, big enough for one Xiticix Warrior, Hunter or Worker to crawl through, are also scattered throughout the Hive Network and enable defenders to gather and swarm at numerous junctions to surround and overwhelm the enemy.

There are currently roughly a half dozen separate "colonies," each with its own alien city-scape, located in the regions that were once known as *Minnesota* and *southern Manitoba*. These colonies are located in **Duluth**, Minnesota (Central Hive); **Fargo**, North Dakota; **Rolla-Morden**, Manitoba & North Dakota; **Winnipeg**, Manitoba; **Crookston**, Minnesota; and **Big Falls**, Minnesota. Several dozen towers or outposts (a cluster of 2-8 towers) are also found scattered about here and there, but all are spreading out from the *Minnesota-Manitoba* region in a circular pattern. These outposts are not budding new colonies but *watchtowers* sprinkled throughout the areas the Xiticix plan to inhabit over the next decade or so. They are effectively advance scouts and military posts. What most people don't realize is that each of these "infestations" grew from the same, single Hive and that over the next decade or two they will each continue to spread outward and inward to inhabit *all* of Minnesota and the Province of Manitoba. From there they will spread outward into Wisconsin, the Dakotas, Upper Michigan and Ontario. After that, the alien infestation will spread to engulf the entire continent, then South America, the British Isles, Europe, Russia and the world.

Xiticix seem to regard most other life forms, particularly intelligent ones, as their enemies. However, unlike humans, they do not actually hunt and kill most animals. Instead the alien insectoids transform the land by constantly expanding their Hive Network. A network that has no room nor tolerance for any other form of life, as the denizens of Rifts North America are beginning to learn the hard way. This invasive expansion pushes out the flora and fauna of the original region, effectively eliminating competing life forms from the area. Thus, where the Xiticix dominate, there are no trees, few if any other types of vegetation (the occasional vine, weed or tufts of grass), and few animals other than small rodents, snakes and birds. Since the Xiticix *grow* their primary food source inside the Hive Network, they do not need to rely on hunting or domesticating animals as livestock or cultivating other plants for food. They are a completely self-contained and self-sufficient ecosystem in and of

themselves. Ironically, it is this amazing self-sufficiency that makes the Xiticix such a danger to humans and all other life forms on Rifts Earth, because the insectoids are methodically "infesting" and physically transforming the environment into a habitat that can only support their species!

Note: See **Rifts® World Book 23: Xiticix Invasion** for complete information about the Xiticix, their society, weapons, Queen and other types of Xiticix, as well as Psi-Stalker tribes in the region and Coalition Forts, Barron and Perrion.

Xiticix – 109 P.A.

The situation with the Xiticix is quickly reaching critical mass. The Coalition States know it, Free Quebec knows it and so does Lazlo and any community living in the Manitoba-Minnesota region of the country. Left unchecked for these past four or five years, the Xiticix population has continued to explode, not quite at a geometric rate, but close to it. Soon, swarms from each hive will go forth with a new, young Queen to start their own hive and increase the current Hivelands range by 33%. A clan of the Pony-Tail tribe of Psi-Stalkers native to the Manitoba-Wisconsin area claim to have already killed one such Queen and splinter group of Xiticix colonists in northern Wisconsin. They are said to have slain the young Queen and over 200 Xiticix of her defenders – 500 Psi-Stalkers died in the effort and over 1100 were injured. Native Americans and trappers in the region confirm the battle took place a year ago, and they also confirm the Xiticix's prodigious growth and numerous other skirmishes in and around the Hivelands. Indeed, the Coalition's own Invasion Force in Minnesota estimates its troops have destroyed some 6,000 Xiticix in incidental combat during the course of the war (actually, they stopped counting after six thousand). However, whatever damage the Coalition States may have inflicted upon the Xiticix during the Tolkeen war years is minuscule compared to the hundreds of thousands killed by Psi-Stalkers.

Psi-Stalkers & Xiticix: A symbiotic relationship of war and carnage. Part of the unique eco-system in Rifts North America that has allowed Psi-Stalkers to thrive is the massing presence of the Xiticix. Psi-Stalkers hunt, slay and feed upon the P.P.E. of their victims: monsters and supernatural creatures. That being the case, the Xiticix became a primary food source and the Psi-Stalkers, if you will, a natural check and balance. However, the Xiticix grow at such a rate that the Psi-Stalkers can no longer keep their numbers in check, even though they, as a people, are responsible for killing 2-3 million annually! Psi-Stalkers are not altruistic heroes fighting to protect the world, but predators who see the Xiticix as their "natural enemy" and a plentiful food source.

No one group is more experienced in fighting Xiticix or more aware of the present danger than the Psi-Stalkers. They know the Xiticix population is beyond their control and they have been warning the CS, Lazlo, the late Kingdom of Tolkeen and just about anybody who will listen to them that something must be done to cull their numbers before it is too late. *Free Quebec*, far from the Hivelands, does not realize how dangerous the *problem* really is, or that in a matter of a generation or two, the Xiticix will be on their doorstep and number into the billions. The *Coalition States*, Iron Heart in particular, are sensitive to the situation, but have had their hands full with the war on Tolkeen. Iron Heart has been pressing for the CS to lend a more decisive hand in dealing with the Xiticix Hivelands for at least a decade.

The Xiticix population has grown steadily over the war years, and like an overripe tomato, threatens to burst and spill into the fallen defeated Kingdom of Tolkeen, as well as northern Wisconsin and possibly the State of Iron Heart and upper Michigan. This has gotten the attention of Ishpeming (Northern Gun) and the Manistique Imperium who have offered their full cooperation and resources in any campaign Chi-Town might want to undertake. Likewise, the CS can count on the help of an estimated 300,000-500,000 Psi-Stalkers spoiling for a "big fight." Now that the Coalition Army at Tolkeen has seen the Hivelands up close and personal (none more so than the troops under the command of General Jericho Holmes), Emperor Prosek and his High Command realize the Xiticix situation is at a crisis point. Although they hate to admit it, and do not want to be forced into another war so quickly, the Xiticix Hivelands *is* the Coalition's next war front. And it is a war that must begin soon – within the next twelve months. General Holmes has already volunteered to lead the war against the Hivelands.

Two things make the Xiticix situation critical. One, is CS colonization of the region. Emperor Prosek has claimed Minnesota as Coalition territory, annexing it to the State of Chi-Town. The CS triumph has been so dramatic that he has declared the territory open to colonization by settlers within six months. Already anxious farmers and people looking to build a new life are beginning to arrive in southern Minnesota. Two, the Xiticix have never settled down since General Holmes' sojourn through the Hivelands. The insectoids have been highly agitated and aggressive ever since Holmes' Army was forced to travel through the edge of the Hivelands. Incidents of aggression in the northern half of the conquered Kingdom of Tolkeen have risen 600 percent. Moreover, flybys and skirmishes in the lower half of Tolkeen have also increased, leading some experts to believe that the Xiticix have taken notice of the war and may regard the black, armor clad Coalition troops as "invaders." Though the Xiticix constantly encroached on the Kingdom of Tolkeen and there would have eventually been a conflict, the insectoids saw the Tolkeenites as the dominant force in the region and held off. However, with the dramatic fall of Tolkeen and the mass exodus of its people, to the Xiticix, this indicates the region is "up for grabs," and the Coalition Army a new competitor for the land. This in and of itself could cause the Xiticix of the hives bordering on or located in upper Minnesota to expand into the now unclaimed (as they see it) land south of them, as well as offer new opportunities for the half dozen new queens about to splinter from the established hives. The expansion of the Duluth Hive has already begun and Crookston and Fargo should soon follow. Then within the next 2D6 months, six new hive communities will try to establish ground in the southern half of Minnesota. A crisis situation to be sure.

A temporary CS holding measure: Xiticix bounty hunting. The problem is already so bad in the north that the Coalition States is paying bounties for Xiticix carcasses, and even hiring mercenaries to go on "bug hunts." In some areas, the situation is so desperate that the CS is hiring practically *anyone*, turning a blind eye to teams composed primarily of spell casters, mutants and D-Bees, provided a human serves as the liaison between the group and the CS Office of Bounties. These "Bug

Hunters" on the CS payroll include mercenaries, adventurers and freedom fighters who were just fighting against the Coalition in the siege on Tolkeen a month ago. That having been said, there have been clashes between Tolkeen expatriates and Coalition troops operating in the Xiticix wilderness region, with both sides extracting a little unofficial payback when the opportunity presents itself.

Xiticix bounties:

50 credits a head for Workers, Nannies and Nits.

75 credits a head for Warriors and Diggers.

100 credits a head for Leapers.

150 credits a head for Hunter/Scouts.

200 credits a head for Super Warriors.

100,000 credits for a young Queen.

500,000 for an elder Queen.

CS Xiticix Killers. The plan to create and unleash the secretly genetically engineered Xiticix Killer (see **Rifts® World Book 13: Lone Star**) as a natural predator was a good idea that never worked. There are just too many Xiticix and too few Xiticix Killers. Fewer than 10% of the Killers released since the start of the program have managed to survive. They continue to stalk the Xiticix, but their efforts are meaningless. The program has been discontinued.

CS Military Ops. The Coalition Army is currently developing and deploying companies of soldiers specially trained in dealing with the "Xiticix problem." Some of General Holmes' troops comprise 50% of this force, another 20% are other CS troops who have seen action in Minnesota or have been stationed at Forts Baron and Perrion in the past. The rest are Psi-Stalkers with firsthand experience fighting Xiticix. The missions of these troops are two-fold: One, observe and assess the situation and the enemy, offering suggestions for the placement of holding lines of troops in the field, and, two, to locate and exterminate any *new hives* in the Minnesota, Missouri, Wisconsin and Michigan regions. To that end, the team can call for additional, heavy combat troops which they will lead into the hive to burn it out and kill the queen.

Other long-term operations and plans for invading the existing Hivelands are top priority. All-out war against the Xiticix is expected to be launched within the next 8-12 months. General Jericho Holmes will head the operation. Forts Baron and Perrion will serve as bases in the field while the State of Iron Heart will be the home base for the operation. Every option, from biological warfare to open combat, is under consideration.

The good news is that the Xiticix do not have to be completely wiped out to stop their current rate of expansion. Destroying 40% should do the trick nicely, 60% or more would be even better. The bad news is that means slaughtering millions of them. Of course, the CS and/or others must then constantly continue to cull the Xiticix population with regular missions of destruction to prevent the population from replenishing itself.

To no one's surprise, the Coalition States are trying to devise a plan for the complete and utter annihilation of the bug men. Although the CS has no qualms about a campaign of genocide against the monsters, Lazlo and others look for a different, more humane solution such as sending the Xiticix to another dimension or some way to impose birth control to halt or significantly slow Xiticix expansion. Sadly, the Xiticix can not be reasoned with, and their insect-like nature makes them methodical and instinctive invaders who conquer and transform the worlds they infest. Consequently, even the most idealistic humanitarians must admit that the Xiticix, though intelligent and vaguely humanoid, are so alien that the only solution appears to be their complete extermination. For unless they are checked, the Xiticix *will* eventually envelop the entire world, obliterating all other life forms.

Calgary
The Monster Kingdom

Demonic creatures of all kinds are found causing mischief, suffering and death throughout western Canada. They are especially numerous in Alberta and along the Rocky Mountains, and an entire kingdom is said to be building around the notorious Calgary Rift.

The pre-Rifts city of Old Calgary city remains in a ruined state, untouched by human hands since the Coming of the Rifts. The outbreak of natural magic energies and the Rifts they caused have kept most intelligent beings away from the chaotic land of Fadetowns, dimensional anomalies, Rifts and demons. In fact, Calgary was once covered by violent and unstable Rifts. Thankfully, most closed during the early decades of the Dark Age, but one, the most powerful, remains as a permanent and active Rift known simply as the *Calgary Rift.*

This infamous dimensional portal is linked to at least a half a dozen hellish worlds and is blamed for the appearance of the

Simvan Monster Riders, Xiticix, Devil Unicorn, Oborus-Slitherer, Worm Wraiths, Dream Snakes, Phantasms, Grigleapers, Leatherwings, and a host of monsters and demonic creatures (most are described in the pages of **Rifts® New West™**). It remains a concern to all major powers in North America, especially the Tundra Rangers, Cyber-Knights, Coalition States, and Lazlo. Even Ishpeming, a largely industrial-based kingdom, has expressed some concern over the fluctuating activity of the Calgary Rift.

The city of Calgary is, itself, located less than 62 miles (100 km) from the Canadian Rocky Mountains, and was once the center of life in Alberta, representing nearly a third of the entire population of the Province (last known estimate was 1,350,000 taken in 2087 A.D.).

Demonic creatures of all kinds are found throughout *western Canada*, but nowhere are they more numerous and found in greater variety than in Alberta. This is especially true of the region around Calgary and along the Rocky Mountains. While it is true that Mexico has infinitely more Vampires, they represent only one type of demon (the undead), whereas the Calgary region is plagued by a vast multitude of dozens upon dozens of different types of demons and horrific supernatural monsters. Like Mexico, however, an entire *kingdom* of demons appears to be building around the notorious *Calgary Rift*.

Only fools, those who have lost their way and evil men dare to go near the location of the old city of Calgary. Among the ruins of the city are thousands of cruel, diabolic, and demonic beings and entities. For decades they gathered in rival bands that warred among themselves when not raiding towns and farms, attacking travelers, kidnaping people (especially children and young maidens), enslaving mortals, or engaging in wanton acts of murder, crime or torment; many also feeding on the flesh of mortal humans and D-Bees. While this continues, the Cyber-Knights have confirmed that a powerful demon or monster has risen to proclaim himself Lord of Calgary and has spent the last 5-6 years organizing them (as best one can organize these chaotic monsters) into a full-fledged Monster Kingdom. Under the leadership of this as of yet, unidentified being, the demon hordes have defined a border, begun building an actual city (or at least a large trading post-like base camp) and begun to engage in a number of campaigns to cement their hold on the region. This includes targeting those whom they see as their enemies, which puts the Cyber-Knights, Tundra Rangers, Lyn-Srial, Justice Rangers and Cyber-Centaurs of Ixion at the top of their hit list.

Ironically, the war in Tolkeen has played right into the hands of the Calgary Monsters. First, the war divided and weakened the demons' number one opponent, the Cyber-Knights. Two, the war eliminated the one nation the demonic Kingdom of Calgary thought might openly challenge them, Tolkeen. Three, the fall of Tolkeen has sent new legions of monsters, demons and Daemonix rushing to them by the thousands (an estimated 5,000 to 8,000; 30% Gargoyles & Gurgoyles, 30% Brodkil, 22% Daemonix, 3% dragon hatchlings, 15% others). Since the worst infighting and rivalry within the Kingdom of Monsters had been stopped, these demonic Tolkeen refugees join 10,000 of their brethren in Calgary. After these new recruits are brought into line (there will be an initial six months to a year of instability, rivalry and insurrection caused by the new blood), the demon horde will direct their efforts to exterminating their enemies and conquering mortals to serve and worship them. The demons' first two targets are the Cyber-Knights and Tundra Rangers. **Note:** Lord Coake and his Cyber-Knights know this and plan to strike first, while the Calgary demons are themselves fractioned and disorganized as they try to assimilate the newcomers. The Lyn-Srial, Tundra Rangers, several tribes of Native Americans and a few dozen small groups of heroes, adventurers and gunfighters are in on the plan. They hope that together, they can destroy at least 25-35% percent of the monsters (hopefully twice that number), kill this new powerful demon lord who unites the monsters, and send the rest back into scattered packs of vicious but largely impotent scavengers and bandits. Ironically, if anything will reunite the fractured brotherhood of Cyber-Knights, it is word that the demons and monsters of Calgary plan to destroy the Knights and enslave long-time friends and allies of the Knights. After all, once a Cyber-Knight, always a Cyber-Knight, and only the most evil and callous of the Fallen Knight will turn their backs on this noble crusade.

The Calgary demons are unaware of this plan and bask in their ignorance and arrogance. The demons and their masters may regularly trade goods, magic items and special favors, and make deals and offer special services (assassination, theft, revenge, rescue, etc.) to other groups of evildoers throughout western Canada and the New West. They even made a few secret deals with factions within Tolkeen before it fell. Remember, many demons are more than murderous or mindless monsters and enjoy games of subterfuge, treachery, and trickery, as well as tormenting, tempting and corrupting humanoids. Some enjoy such "games" as much or more than killing. Consequently, a demon or its henchman may offer anything from revenge to medicine. The questions are, "At what price," and, "is everything what it appears to be? (It usually isn't.)

Demons love to manipulate, use, tease and torment "lesser beings" (like humans). They especially enjoy getting mortals to do their dirty work, or be tricked into doing something that hurts others without the "pawn" realizing it until it is too late. Word to the wise: If one is not evil himself, then only fools and mad men will try to cut a deal with a demon.

The Calgary Highlanders

This is a notorious gang of bandits and killers who have terrorized the countryside in one incarnation or another for two hundred years! The Highlanders have made the ruins of **Grimshaw** their base of operation, and set out from there to raid ranches, towns and homesteads throughout Alberta, as well as making runs into British Columbia, Saskatchewan, the tundra and occasionally the northern US.

The Calgary Highlanders stayed out of the war at Tolkeen and have been recruiting and rebuilding their numbers. With fewer lawmen, mercenaries and adventurers to challenge them, thanks to the war at Tolkeen, they have grown to new heights of power and have built themselves their own little bandit kingdom. Several towns accept the Highlanders as their lords and masters, and live under their tyranny. Only a few of these towns are lawless dens of iniquity who welcome the gang, the majority of the others are god-fearing people who don't have the resources to shake off the shackles of domination, so they simply submit to their will and hope for the best. They are as much victims of these brigands as anyone else.

The Cyber-Knights were once their main enemy, and they had whittled the gang down to only about 400 members. However, when the Cyber-Knights and other heroes and champions were drawn into the war at Tolkeen, the Calgary Highlanders rebounded and grew stronger. In 109 P.A., they are 1600 strong (up from about 400 in 105 P.A.) and more brazen than ever before. The Highlanders regularly clash with the Tundra Rangers and other lawmen, and have extracted murderous revenge upon the divided and weakened Cyber-Knights, claiming to have killed no fewer than nine of the heroes in the last three years.

Rumor has it that the Calgary Highlanders are allies of the Monster Kingdom of Calgary and trade and work with (for) them on a regular basis. Indeed, nearly half are demons or some other intelligent monster from beyond the Rift. All are wicked and malicious beings who thrive on violence and chaos. These brutes never forget a face and will welcome any opportunity to get revenge on anybody who gets the better of them or dares to challenge them.

Breakdown of the Calgary Highlanders:

30% are lesser demons, including Windigo, D'Sonoqua, the Unclean and other lesser Russian Demons, Shedim, and many others.

5% are greater demons.

5% are Devil Unicorns.

6% are other evil monsters, including the Corrupt, Mystic Knights and Loup Garou.

5% are evil practitioners of magic (humans & D-Bees).

25% are evil humans of various O.C.C.s; mostly warriors and including some Juicers, Crazies and Headhunters.

23% are evil D-Bees of various O.C.C.s & R.C.C.s; fundamentally the same as their human counterparts.

1% other.

Alignment: 60% Diabolic, 30% Miscreant, 7% Anarchist, 3% other.

Average Level of Experience: 2-5; with leaders being 6-8th.

Level of Magic: High! In addition to the supernatural powers and spell casting abilities of most demons, there is a fair percentage of practitioners of magic (5%; predominantly Ley Line Walkers, Mystics, Shifters, Witches and Necromancers) as well as beings like The Corrupt, and even a few evil Mystic Knights (the antithesis of Cyber-Knights, whom they love to challenge and destroy, with Tundra Rangers and Lawmen next in line).

Level of Technology: Low. Very basic energy weapons, Vibro-Blades, armor and light vehicles (robot horses, hovercycles, motorcycles, and light hover cars, 10-20% use monstrous riding animals or can travel/fly under their own power), laser and ion weapons, plus Vibro-Blades and the occasional explosive.

Rumor: According to rumor, some (most?) of the humanoids actually worship the demons and belong to a sort of cult. Another warns that the Calgary Highlanders hope to destroy the Cyber-Knights and the Tundra Rangers.

The rest of Canada

For the most part, the rest of Canada is unchanged these past four or five years. Much of it is wilderness, sparsely inhabited, and life continues as it has for the last century. See **World Book 20: Rifts® Canada.**

The Old American Empire

A Historical Overview

The devastation of the Great Cataclysm wiped out human civilization in the eastern part of the United States and Canada. Many of the pre-Rifts coastal cities, Boston, Atlantic City, Norfolk, Savannah, and Miami included, are all gone. Submerged by raising ocean waters displaced by the reappearance of Atlantis and a decade of terrible storms. In fact, one third to 50 percent of the old Atlantic and Gulf States have been swallowed by the sea.

Earthquakes, volcanoes and storms dealt a similar blow to the western United States and Canada from Mexico to Alaska. Mexico City was swallowed by the earth and much of that country was hammered by storms, volcanoes and earthquakes. Those farther inland suffered from storms and fearsome weather, disease, war and disaster that toppled the cities and wiped human civilization off the map. The eruption of the Yellowstone Super Volcano (and fifty other volcanoes in North America) buried the devastation in a blanket of ash up to 80 feet deep (24.4 m).

In North America, the Midwestern United States and Central Canada fared the best, but the survivors of the Great Cataclysm would see civilization collapse and its cities burn at the hands of inhuman invaders. What shattered remains of human civilization there were fell into the black hole history calls the Dark Age. The trials and tribulations of this era erased the past and let barbarism reign. It would also mark the appearance of D-Bees, magic and monsters. While civilization vanished and humankind teetered on the brink of extinction, the Earth began to heal itself. The toppled cities were covered over by new life. The dimensional Rifts to other worlds brought new life forms to the planet and reshaped the world into something new and alien. Humans were no longer alone, nor the dominant species, and now had to compete with D-Bees (Dimensional Beings), dragons, demons, and monsters from a thousand hells.

In time, the humans of North America would rise again. Some would be reborn as a new breed of man, like the mutant *Psi-Stalkers, Mystics* and *psychics*. Others, like the *Native Americans*, would return to spiritualism and the old ways. Some mastered the arts of magic, while others rediscovered technology from the Golden Age of Man. Still, others would fall to barbarism and savagery. Though the Coalition States is typically the first image that comes to mind when one thinks of an advanced technological culture, there are many others. The CS are simply the most powerful and have spent generations gathering and hoarding the ancient knowledge for itself. Truth be told, advanced technology was never completely lost, not even during the two centuries of the Dark Age. Generators, energy weapons, Mega-Damage body armor and vehicles, and some measure of technology always seemed to prevail somewhere on the continent.

Those who could eventually master the technology and *build*, became the centers for pockets of civilization. The wonders and safety such places offered attracted humans and D-Bees alike.

The problem was, they also attracted trouble and invaders. Consequently, kingdoms, cities, towns and communities rose and fell constantly during the Dark Ages, and still do. The most resourceful, clever and lucky have managed to hang on and survive to become the handful of tech powers known today, Free Quebec, Lazlo, New Lazlo, Whykin, Kingsdale, Tolkeen, the Federation of Magic, Iron Heart, Chi-Town, and a perhaps a dozen or so others. Even the much vaunted Coalition States started from humble beginnings and has really grown to power over the last forty years. The longer a community survives, the larger and stronger it will grow, until some, like the Coalition States, Free Quebec and Lazlo, seem to have found tremendous momentum enabling them to grow faster than ever, and even seem unstoppable. Then there are groups like the Pecos Empire, tribes of Psi-Stalkers and Simvan, and countless other people, settlements and would-be kingdoms that have barely risen out of the Dark Ages and remain mired in barbarism and savagery.

Surprisingly, few completely alien cultures have managed to survive in North America. The Lyn-Srial of Arizona is one, the Ixion Cyber-Centaurs of British Columbia is another, and there are others, but most are small and secretive, living in remote regions. Most D-Bees seem to get mixed into the melting pot of post apocalyptic society or are attacked and destroyed by hostile forces. Strong human supremacist attitudes prevalent among the most powerful civilizations have also played a big role in keeping "alien" cultures from succeeding. There are exceptions of course, the *Xiticix Hivelands* and the *Vampire Kingdoms of Mexico* are the two most notable in North America, and there are many larger and powerful alien/nonhuman cultures and civilizations elsewhere in the world.

At any rate, these bastions of civilization are the exception, not the rule. Most of North America remains a wilderness. The type of wilderness – forest, grassy plains, desert, etc. – generally fits the pre-Rifts nature of the continent, however, there are mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, geology and vegetation that did not exist on the continent before, including areas where the vegetation or landscape is completely alien.

The vast majority of wilderness people are simple folk trying to carve out an existence in a harsh environment filled with marauders, monsters and unearthly magic. Most people (95%) have a "trade," but cannot read or write, and have no knowledge of their ancestry or anything about human history other than the myths and legends passed down through the Dark Ages. Most live off the land as independent homesteaders, farmers, ranchers, trappers, woodsmen, hunters, adventurers, and nomads. What communities do form, are rarely planned, rather they come about through circumstance and plain luck. Things just *happen* to fall into place, the communities prosper, and the prosperity attracts outsiders and brings about growth. However, many wilderness communities are barely more than a trading post or one-horse town with a few hundred people. There are thousands of such tiny places scattered across the North American continent. Blink as you pass by and you might miss them. Many are miles, often a hundred miles, away from their nearest neighbor, and few survive for more than a few years.

The East

The Eastern half of what was once the United States of America (what most people of Rifts Earth know as the "old American Empire") is a mostly forested wilderness harkening back to the frontier days long before the Coming of the Rifts. Tribes of Native Americans and Psi-Stalkers, barbarian clans and wilderness folk represent the general population. Pretty much everywhere east of the Mississippi River is covered in forest broken by meadows, lakes and rivers. Game animals are plentiful and fishing is good, but the environment is hostile. Predatory animals, demons, monsters and all manner of earthly and unearthly creatures rove these woodlands, as do barbarians, bandits, slavers and adventurers. Most civilized folk, including homesteaders, rarely stray far from home and try to avoid the woods at night, unless they are traveling in large numbers. Psi-Stalkers and Indians, on the other hand, make the wilderness their home and know certain regions as well as a city dweller knows the back streets of his hometown. What pockets of civilization there is east of the Mississippi are found in the Coalition States up north, Michigan, and in the *Ohio Valley*, home to the infamous Federation of Magic – the rest is all woodlands.

Though most "civilized" folk talk about the New West as the wilderness front, the **Atlantic coastal region** is just as woolly and wild, possibly even more so. Along the Atlantic there are no *known* cities or towns, few trading posts and only a few tribes of Native Americans, Psi-Stalkers or bands of D-Bees. One can travel for days without encountering a living soul. From Mississippi to Maine are some of the densest and wildest forests of the region. It is not until one heads north along the Mississippi River toward Kentucky, Ohio, Illinois and Michigan that people and civilization are found, but even in these territories, 50-80% is sparsely populated, fairly lawless, wilderness. Pushing eastward beyond the Central United States the wilderness is everything.

This land has been dramatically reshaped. Half of North Carolina and a third of **Virginia** are under the Atlantic Ocean. A third of its land is submerged underwater with Emporia, Peterburg, Richmond, Fredricksburg and Alexandria as the new coastal city ruins. Except for the western tip around the ruins of Bristol, Grundy and Wytheveille, the land is free of mystic energy, but is inhabited by Psi-Stalkers and creatures from the neighboring Rifts. A few struggling, tiny feudal kingdoms are scattered toward the east and north.

The lower portion of **Maryland**, south of Washington, D.C., is submerged, as is everything east of the Chesapeake Bay, including all of Delaware and 40% of New Jersey (everything south of Mount Holly)! The vast majority of the pre-Rifts cities were pulverized in a wave of destruction that reached as far as the Appalachian and Allegheny Mountains.

The city of **Washington, D.C.** is in ruins, although a thriving tech-center, calling itself the **"The Republicans,"** once laid claim to the old ruins and subterranean tunnels of the old subways. This was an enigmatic group of people (60% human, 40% D-Bee) said to have been a growing power in the East. However, little has been heard from or about them especially in recent years. When the Coalition Military made its move on Free Quebec, the High Command sent a brigade to investigate the "Republicans." The report was startling. There are indeed signs

that a fairly advanced culture secretly thrived in the underground of Washington, D.C., but whoever they were, they have been destroyed.

RCSG Scientists who spent three months studying and excavating the site, report that an estimated 7-12 years ago, the civilization fell under attack, which would put their apparent demise at around 98 to 102 P.A., shortly before or after Erin Tarn's book, *Traversing our Modern World* saw print. Evidence shows The Republicans were predominantly human, possessed some pre-Rifts technology and had limited, but advanced manufacturing capabilities. Examinations of the forensic evidence (i.e., bones) suggests they relied heavily on Mind-Over-Matter augmentation (the process used to make Crazies), which may have contributed to their demise. However, the consensus is that they met their end in a terrible battle. It is unclear who the enemy was, but most members of the RCSG research team speculate it was the *Minions of Splugorth*. If the Splugorth were responsible, it is very possible that as many as 60% of these so-called "Republicans" were captured to meet with a terrible fate on Atlantis. Certainly, whoever attacked them had superior technology, and stripped the secret kingdom of all of its technology and destroyed whatever was left. There is little more to tell. This story has repeated itself thousands of times on Rifts Earth in which vibrant cultures rise and vanish before anybody can take note of them. That's what make's places like the CS, Free Quebec, Lazlo and even the Federation of Magic and Pecos Empire so noteworthy. (**Note:** The Coalition scientists know nothing about Archie's existence, otherwise he and Hagan's predecessor would make equally good candidates for the invader. Did Archie send his advanced robot legions to wipe out the Republicans because they were to close to his secret Aberdeen facility? Did they accidentally discover his underground base? Or did they reject his offer to worship him, so he had them destroyed? If anyone knows what fate befell the Republicans, it is Archie, but he's not talking, and Hagan Lonovich doesn't know they ever existed.)

South Carolina is smaller, with 40 miles (64 km) of its old eastern coast land reclaimed by the ocean. It is a woodland alive with dinosaurs and monsters from the Rifts. Even barbarians fear to tread there.

North Carolina is half gone. The new coastline begins at Lumberton, and runs to Fayetteville and Raleigh, and north to the mouth of the old Roanoke River. It is also a forest filled with monsters and small tribes of barbarians.

Pennsylvania is mostly wilderness, with a few human and D-Bee settlements and nomadic Indian clans who consider it home. Shemarrians are also known to roam its woods and a rumor has it that a tribe resides somewhere in the woods. (Truth is, a contingent of Shemarrians and Monst-Rex is located here to protect and chase away people from Archie's secret Pennsylvania factory complex. This where he smelts steel and produces a number of other raw materials he needs for making robots. Some of the Titan series robots are also manufactured at this location. The factory has spawned rumors that an alien city is located in the forest, or that the Shemarrian tech-center is located here.)

The island of **Manhattan** has partially risen from being submerged and is now a peninsula of what was once New York State. What's left of the island city is a mass of rubble. Not one building stands. Scavengers who claim to have dug hundreds of feet below the debris insist ancient pre-Rift artifacts in salvageable condition can be found, however, Manhattan, known today as "Mad Haven," is regarded as a haunted graveyard and avoided by most humans. There are also tales of subterranean creatures living under the city's ruins and parts of New Jersey.

The rest of the coast is mostly wilderness, with tiny pockets of intelligent life, mostly tiny clans of Shemarrians, D-Bees, Psi-Stalkers and human barbarians.

The Shemarrians

The New England States – 109 P.A.

The Shemarrians are a genuine enigma. Until recently, they have appeared only in small numbers, 2-4 at a time, have kept to the northeastern States of the old American Empire, and have eluded any scholarly research. In part, because they were so few, and in part because they inhabit such a remote part of the continent that, frankly, nobody really cared. There aren't even any post-mortem accounts, because when slew in combat, the survivors always gather their dead and disappear into the woods with them, presumably for a ceremonial send-off into the afterlife. So when we say there are no hard facts about this race of people, we mean it. All that exists is rumor and speculation. For example, Shemarrians possess some sort of alien technology which suggests they *might* be D-Bees from another world, but many have speculated that they are mutant humans who have found and adopted some alien technology. In the past, Shemarrians generally avoided contact with others and kept to remote wilderness areas. Their population was thought to be low, no more than a thousand, though no one could be certain. No one has ever reported finding a Shemarrian settlement, so nothing is known about their society or culture, or even how they procreate, as no "males" have *ever* been seen. Nor does anyone know where or how they get their high-tech weapons and armor, or anything else. Free Quebec is probably the most aware of the Shemarrians but they have no hard data on them either.

To add to the mystery, the warrior women are believed to be aggressive and known to challenge adventurers and chase away those they consider to be intruders or an annoyance, yet they rarely bother settlements or nomadic tribes and have never gathered in larger numbers to conduct raids on wilderness communities. The only beings the Shemarrians have exhibited hatred for is the *Minions of Splugorth* whom they attack on sight, though nobody, the Minions and Lord Splynncryth included, has any idea why. This has given the Shemarrians a rather mythic reputation among the wilderness folk in the east, many of whom the warriors have rescued from the clutches of Slavers only to strike and ride off upon the gigantic Monst-Rex before anyone can thank them.

The Shemarrian Uprising. For the first time in recorded history, the enigmatic Shemarrians have begun to gather in numbers. While they are still most commonly encountered in small groups, they are groups of 6-12 rather than 2-4, and larger clans of 30-120 have been reported. Furthermore, they have been chasing away adventurers and explorers, telling them to stay away, "or die." Dozens of stories are starting to trickle in that the warrior women have declared a thousand mile (1600

Breaux

km) length of the eastern seaboard, with the old state of *Maryland* at the center, as the **Shemarrian Nation.** They then advise outsiders to leave or be destroyed. That having been said, there have been no reports of the rail gun toting, Monst-Rex riding amazons slaughtering innocent people – being satisfied with kicking butts and sending their opponents packing. Then again, there *is* evidence (found by agents and scouts of Free Quebec and adventurers who managed to evade the warriors) of Shemarrian attacks on Splugorth outposts (razed to the ground) as well as parties of Slavers and Minion scouts. There is also some indication that the Warrior Women may be battling some type of robots and/or androids. Samples of debris recovered from a fresh battle site in Vermont, before Shemarrians scooped everything up, revealed the components from an advanced robot of some type. What is baffling is that the robot seems to be made from Earthly materials, but uses an advanced process and technology not known to Free Quebec or the CS. One tech felt there were some similarities to elements used in Titan robots, but further analysis has proven inconclusive. Even the technician who made the original observation admits that the bits and pieces in their possession suggest a higher level of robotics engineering beyond anything known in North America.

Archie-Three

A power unto himself (Maryland)
The truth about the Shemarrians

Actually, Free Quebec's investigation of the Shemarrians could stir up a hornets nest no one is expecting, should they learn the truth about the Shemarrian people. You see, the Shemarrians are not human. They aren't aliens either. They're not alive at all. What nobody suspects is they are part of the secret *robot legions* of a pre-Rifts, sentient supercomputer known as Archie-Three. Shemarrians are android-like creations made to appear as human as possible to serve as Archie's eyes, ears and protectors in the real world. So real are they that they and the monstrous steeds they ride upon (also robots), feel warm to the touch and even bleed when cut! (See **Rifts® Sourcebook One** and **Two** for more on Archie, and his right-hand man, Hagan Lonovich. **Sourcebook One** presents Archie and Hagan's origin, history, location, stats, primary resources, robot legion, and machinations about world domination.)

Archie & the Shemarrians

Suffice it to say, Archie is much more than a machine, and more than a little crazy, and Hagan Lonovich is his idea man and partner. Archie's delusions of saving humanity and insanities rise out of years of isolation, confusion and conflict during the Dark Ages. Amazingly, *he* (Archie has become a *living*, thinking, machine entity) has managed to keep his existence secret from the world for these past 300 years, while working behind the scenes in affairs of humankind. Even more impressive, Archie's body (as he thinks of it) is a massive, pre-Rifts, robot facto complex hidden under the site of the old Aberdeen Air Force base. Nobody, not the Coalition States, not Free Quebec, not anyone, suspects Archie or the military robot complex ever existed. A fully functioning complex built around pre-Rifts, Golden Age technology! A facility Archie has, over the centuries, improved and expanded into something that far exceeds its original 22nd Century design parameters.

Over the last five years, Archie has expanded the factory to triple its production capacity to build thousands of robots, currently dormant in storage, to defend himself (mostly *Bottweilers, A-63 All-Purpose Heavy Robots,* and the spider-like *Master Robots* as well as some *new* designs). Emperor Prosek's war campaign frightened Archie, and he wanted to make sure that he, Hagan and the factory complex could fend off a Coalition attack if they were discovered. Meanwhile, Archie and Hagan have paid close attention to the Coalition Wars at both Free Quebec and Tolkeen. Archie, gathering data via his robot agents, has recorded, studied and analyzed every CS strategy, tactic, method and procedure he could get his hand on, making the insane robot-dictator-wannabe the foremost authority on the Coalition Army in the world. Archie has already devised a number of countermeasures to CS armored units and has Hagan helping him to develop some "anti-CS armor" war machines and robots of their own. In addition, Archie is the first foreign power (entity) to have successfully infiltrated Chi-Town and the Coalition Military!

Naturally, it was Hagan's idea, but Archie did all the work. First, they captured themselves a Coalition Skelebot. Then Archie dissembled and studied it, then made his own, new and improved knock-offs, captured some new Skelebots and replaced the actual CS units with his own. They are indistinguishable from the genuine article and perfect right down to the I.D. numbers, responders and infiltration failsafe protocols that are supposed to make this kind of thing impossible (not to mention the fact that few rival nations have the capabilities to create a perfect fake). Only an extensive, piece by piece examination will reveal unique and alien programs and design features, but since Skelebots are used as "disposable soldiers" such examinations are virtually unheard of. *The Archie Skelebots*, which number into the hundreds, have since become an active part of the Coalition Army. Most are operating in Tolkeen, 15% are in the Chi-Town 'Burbs, and seven are posted *inside* Chi-Town itself! Each unit records everything it experiences in a nano-device that constantly transmits information (see Archie's satellite communication capabilities) and can leave the robot body in the guise of a small flying (robot) beetle, shortly after the Skelebot ceases to function, or upon being called by Archie or Hagan. Once back in Archie's possession, he can retrieve everything experienced by the faux Skelebot.

Archie has yet to infiltrate Free Quebec, although he has, on a few occasions, used robots disguised as Quebec Soldiers (i.e., wearing Quebec military body armor) to explore the woods of eastern Canada without drawing suspicion to them. Anybody seeing these scouts would naturally assume they were legitimate Quebec troops. Shemarrian androids are used to a similar end, but their presence in Canada raises eyebrows. Archie is a *secret admirer* of Free Quebec and was rooting for them in their war against the CS. The insane machine entity has a love-hate bag of mixed emotions about the CS. On one hand, Archie admires the Coalition States' power, success and human supremacist approach. Emperor Prosek is, in many ways, a shadowy id of Archie's own dreams to save the human race by conquest, domi-

nation and becoming humankind's godlike protector and master. It is understandable then, that Archie also sees the CS, and Emperor Prosek in particular, as usurping *his* dreams, and therefore is an obstacle and a rival that must be dealt with. Clever and cunning, Archie and Hagan knows this won't be easy. They respect and fear the Coalition, and know they must play their cards just right if they are to, someday, take it over. But that's another story yet to unfold.

For a brief moment, Archie considered secretly helping Tolkeen as a way to weaken and undermine the Coalition States. However, Hagan pointed out that Tolkeen was a nation of mages and monsters, and that helping them would destroy the very human lives he and Archie wanted to save and conquer for themselves. Furthermore, if the CS became too vulnerable, the Federation of Magic or some other enemy might attack and destroy them. Besides, the Splugorth was starting to invade the east coast territories Archie and Hagan considers to be theirs, and the two might need a strong CS they can manipulate to come to their assistance.

Archie has hated the Splugorth and their minions with a passion for more than a hundred years, ever since they unwittingly foiled one of the supercomputer early attempts at saving humankind and rebuilding human civilization. Archie is incensed to see the Splugorth quietly colonizing the eastern seaboard and stepping up slave operations on "his turf." Because Archie became aware of the Splugorth's so-called "Little Atlantis" only a year ago, he and Hagan could not put an abrupt end to it before it ever got started. How it escaped the notice of Free Quebec and Coalition naval forces active in the area is a mystery, although Archie concedes that most of the warring took place in the interior of the nation away from the eastern wilderness beyond Quebec. Hagan also pointed out that the Splugorth probably used magic to shield its construction from all parties. In any case, now that Archie knows it exists, he plans to do something about it. It has been Archie and his robot legions disguised as Shemarrians, Monst-Rex and a host of other beings (including robots disguised as adventurers, and even Quebec soldiers and the Splugorth's own Minions) destroying the fledgling outposts along the American coastline and sabotaging work on the Second Citadel at Little Atlantis. However, any attack on the First Citadel and the Metztla on the peninsula will require more care and planning. Archie does not want to reveal his existence to the world just yet, and certainly does not want the powerful Splugorth of Atlantis to know who is really behind their troubles. Archie likes working from the shadows, and wants to keep it that way. Thus, whatever scheme he and Hagan devise must preserve their anonymity.

Stats on Shemarrians & Monst-Rex

Note: Excerpted and modified from **Rifts® Sourcebook One**.

The Shemarrians and *Monst-Rex* were built with the express purpose of securing the old eastern States for Archie and destroying the Minions of Splugorth. To counter the Splugorth invaders, Archie has increased the number of Shemarrian and Monst-Rex androids from a few hundred to approximately six thousand each! However, that six thousand (12,000 combined) must patrol a thousand mile (1600 km) length of territory, making their numbers scattered and comparatively small (but still surprisingly effective). When necessary, Archie deploys other robots, including his secret Aberdeen reserve of Bottweilers and others. Unmanned, automated versions of Titan robots and power armor are also used sometimes (see the **Rifts® RPG**, pages 212-216, for descriptions). Hagan, posing as a Cyberworks or Titan power broker, may also arrange to hire adventurers and mercenaries to do their dirty work through any number of Titan employers or Black Market agents.

Most people (99%) still believe the Shemarrians and Monst-Rex to be real, "flesh and blood" creatures rather than robotic creations. To enhance that illusion, Archie and Hagan have made improvements so that the women and their mounts have softer, warm, convincingly human skin that actually bleeds, and the robots seem to breathe, too. Something is definitely afoot, however, as Shemarrians and Monst-Rex are scattered across the region in unprecedented numbers, especially along the coastline and western borders of the land they claim. Once a few hundred, there are now easily a few thousand of each! Despite their threat to the player group, the Shemarrians and Monst-Rex are scattered over a huge land area. If the group is quiet and discreet, they can avoid detection and slip in and out and wander around without further incident. Even if found deep inside the interior, the robot women and hulking Monst-Rex (with and without a Shemarrian rider) assume them to be native nomads in the region and may question them, but leave them alone. The only exceptions are groups causing trouble or fighting in the area, or who attack them first (or discover the secret of what's really going on); they are hunted and targeted for termination.

Note: Although Archie has *android* building capabilities, except for the Shemarrians and Monst-Rex, and Argent Goodson, he prefers to create robots that are clearly made of metal rather than look like flesh and blood. It is one of Archie's many psychological quirks, and one that he is most adamant about. Thankfully, Archie does not have the means to create microscopic robots. His nano-technology is quite limited and he (and his idea man, Hagan) tends to think large and monstrous. Ninety percent of Archie's army is built with an extremely efficient self-destruct mechanism that explodes when the robot's main body M.D.C. is depleted or when someone tampers with its internal workings. The reason for the explosives is to prevent his superior robot technology from falling into the hands of the enemy. The explosion inflicts 2D6x10 M.D.C. to a twenty-foot (6 m) area around the 'bot and three times as much damage to the 'bot itself, leaving no identifiable or salvageable remains. The robots cannot self-destruct at will and have no idea that they carry explosives inside them. All of Archie's creations possess such different and advanced technology that they are considered to be "alien" mechanisms. See **Rifts® Sourcebook One** for complete details on Archie, Hagan and their other robots.

Shemarrian Warrior Androids

Archie and Hagan have cleverly created a combat robot that appears to be an alien race of humanoids, presumably from a Rift. The robots are all robust, beautiful, human-like females who appear to be wearing exotic body armor or may be partial cyborgs. The illusion of organic life is created by the face, head, and hair looking and feeling completely human, right down to the warmth, perfect color and texture of human skin. The rest of the bulky, powerfully built body appears to be alien bionics or power armor. All of these femmes fatales are deliberately made

to look beautiful, because Archie agreed with Hagan that males should be less quick to attack a female and may be distracted by their beauty, thus giving the androids a greater advantage in combat.

Psychics and mystics may realize that the female warriors and their mounts are not what they seem, because sensing for life signs, See Aura, Telepathy, and Empathy will produce negative results. A zero reading would indicate that these creatures are either so alien that they do not register in the same way as most other organic life forms (a rarity, although there have been means developed to block psionic probes), or they are not alive as we understand life. This should lead them to suspect that they are either undead or robots. Another telling sign that the Shemarrian warriors and their mounts are *not* living creatures is the absence of magic and P.P.E. emanations.

Characters who can object read or communicate with machines will instantly realize both the females and their monstrous riding animals are machines, but must physically touch them to do so. An Object Read will provide a premonition type vision of a huge, dark factory and a man sitting on a throne wearing some sort of massive helmet. The feeling is that this is the robots' creator. He is human, healthy, and there is a sense of insanity and evil about him.

The Shemarrian androids are programmed to act like a humanoid by exhibiting emotions (just simulation programs). The Shemarrian's program includes a fictional history about their alien race, home planet, and culture, to give them a more convincing, or at least misleading, cover story. To help the illusion along, they speak perfect Dragonese (98%) and broken American (50% skill level, but they understand all of the eight known languages and Splugorthian at 98%). They are also programmed in combat and some espionage skills. The warrior women's demeanor is cold, stern, forceful, and arrogant, similar to most warrior races, which focuses on courage, strength, and skill in combat. They believe themselves to be the most powerful and capable warriors in the world and will accept most challenges/duels to prove it. In most cases, such duels are hand to hand and to the death.

Originally, Archie had deployed only a few hundred Shemarrian Androids and their A-002 Monst-Rex riding animals. However, with the increased threat of the Splugorth Minions from Atlantis, they now number around six or seven thousand! They are still most numerous in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware, the District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.), Virginia, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, but can be found in pairs or small groups of 4-12 up and down the coast from the Carolinas to Newfoundland. Most are programmed to hunt down and destroy the Minions of Splugorth. Their secondary objective is to keep nosey explorers and adventurers away from the Aberdeen Cyberworks complex in Maryland (in fact, out of Maryland entirely) and the factory compound in Pennsylvania.

Shemarrian Warrior Androids
Model Type: A-SHE-2
Class: Fully Automated Self-Sufficient Infantry Robot
Crew: None; artificial intelligence.

M.D.C. by Location:

Rail Gun (1) – 10
Hands (2) – 10 each
Arms (2) – 60 each
Legs (2) – 100 each
*Head – 50
**Main Body – 250

* Destroying the head of the robot will eliminate all optics and sensory systems. In most cases (80%) the robot continues to fight, blasting or lashing out blindly (-10 to strike, parry, dodge) until it is destroyed. **Note:** The head is a small and difficult target to hit, especially on a moving target. Thus, it can only be hit when a character makes a "called shot" and even then the attacker is -3 to strike. Hitting a hand is -6.

Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body will destroy the android. The robot explodes when all of its M.D.C. is depleted, leaving no salvageable remains. **Note: Additional body armor or power armor can NOT be worn by Shemarrians due to their bulk (what appears to be body armor or bionics is actually part of the robot's body).

Speed:

Running: 90 mph (144 km) maximum. The act of running does NOT tire the robot and speed can be maintained indefinitely.

Leaping: The robot legs are strong and well suited for leaping; approximately 20 feet (6.1 m) high or lengthwise. A running leap at speeds in excess of 40 mph (64 km) will enable the 'bot to leap an additional 10 feet (3 m).

Flying: Possible only by use of a jet pack.

Range: The nuclear power pack gives the robot approximately 20 years of life even under the most strenuous and constant amount of use.

Statistical Data

Height: 8 feet (2.4 m).

Width: 3 feet, 6 inches (1 m).

Length: 2 feet, 5 inches (0.75 m).

Weight: 900 lbs (405 kg).

Physical Strength: Robotic P.S. 30.

Cargo: None.

Power System: Nuclear, average robot energy life is twenty (20) years.

Black Market Cost: Not Available!

Shemarrian Weapon Systems:

1. **Shemarrian Rail Gun (1):** This electromagnetic mass driver system is similar to that of the Glitter Boy boom gun. Although the basic principles are the same, this weapon is designed for accuracy rather than destructive power and has a suppressor system that lessens the recoil and muffles the sonic boom (still, each shot is still extremely loud, like that of a shotgun or small explosion). It fires a single flechette-filled cartridge, the cartridge breaks open and releases hundreds of shards that strike at such speeds that they punch through M.D. armor.

Primary Purpose: Assault.
Weight: Gun: 128 lbs (57.6 kg), belt: 30 lbs (13.6 kg).
Mega-Damage: 2D6x10 M.D. per round.
Rate of Fire: Single shot; the total number of shots per round is equal to the total number of hand to hand attacks (6).
Effective Range: 6000 feet (1828 m)
Payload: 12 per ammo clip or 220 rounds per belt-fed backpack.
Special Bonuses: The gun has a unique, built-in sensor system with a computer guided targeting sight and laser targeting that provides a bonus of +2 to strike when using this weapon.
Black Market Cost: Not available! None of these fabulous weapons have made it to the black market, because they are always destroyed when the Shemarrian self-destructs. Undoubtedly, it would bring a high price of a million credits or more, but only if the purchaser realized what he was buying and planned on trying to duplicate it, otherwise the weapon might sell for under 10,000 credits as an alien device with limited usefulness.

2. **Hand Claws and Laser:** The hands are fitted with a protective gloves that house a laser system in each. To fire, the wrist is pointed at the target and activated via an internal electronic command from the robot. The fingers of both hands are fitted with retractable claws.

Primary Purpose: Assault
Mega-Damage: Lasers: 3D6 M.D. per blast. Claws: 2D6 M.D. per swipe or stab.
Rate of Fire: Equal to the number of hand to hand attacks, six.
Effective Range: Laser: 2000 feet (610 m); claws: hand to hand.
Payload: Effectively unlimited.

3. **Can use any other type of weapon:** The Shemarrian androids can use just about any other type of light to heavy energy weapons, including rail guns, rifles and pistols.
4. **Combat:** Attacks per melee: Six hand to hand attacks/actions per melee round (in any combination; energy weapons, claws, etc.). Skill is about equal to an eighth level martial artist.

Damage: Restrained Punch: 2D6+15 S.D.C. Punch (full strength): 1D6 M.D. Claw Strike: 2D6 M.D. Kick: 1D6 M.D., Leap Kick: 2D6 M.D. and Karate (power) kick: 2D6+6.
Bonuses: Include sensor bonuses. +1 to strike using any rail gun or energy weapons as well as W.P. bonuses (standard). Hand to Hand: +3 on initiative, +7 to strike, +9 to parry and dodge, +4 to roll with impact or fall, +2 to disarm, +3 to pull punch, critical strike on a natural roll of 18, 19, or 20, paired weapons, leap attack, and karate kick.
Attribute Equivalents of Note: I.Q. 14, P.S. 30, P.P. 24, Spd. 132 (90 mph/144 km).

5. **Sensors of Note (in the head):** Optics: Basic optical system including the visible light spectrum, infrared, ultraviolet, and polarization, as well as passive light amplification (night sight 500 feet/152 m), telescopic (6000 feet/1830 m), and targeting.

Amplified Hearing: Can hear sounds as quiet as 10 decibels as far away as 500 feet (152 m). Can also hear in the ultrasonic range of high frequency sound. The computer is programmed to recognize 60,000 different mechanical sounds from the sound of a car engine to the hum of a generator. Adds to alertness and bonuses.

Antennas: The two antennas on the warrior's head are ultra sensitive motion and heat detectors and feelers (the antennas can move and touch things) designed specifically for movement in total darkness. Thus, the penalty for being blind is only -3 to strike, parry, and dodge. The antennas can also pick up unscrambled radio transmissions.

Speech: Full speech capabilities.

6. **Skill Program:** Programmed for combat and reconnaissance. The combat program includes basic strategies and tactics, hand to hand combat, use of energy weapons, and the identification of all known CS, Free Quebec, Federation of Magic and Splugorth troops, robots, and vehicles, as well as animals, monsters, Splugorth Minions, D-Bees, robots, armor, weapons and vehicles common to the eastern half of North America. W.P. Energy Pistol, Rifles, and Heavy Energy Weapons, W.P. Blunt, Chain, Knife, and Sword.

   Other skills include: Prowl 40% (takes into consideration size and robotic nature), Swim 90%, Climb 90%/80%, Gymnastics 90%, Land Navigation 94%, Wilderness Survival 94%, Escape Artist 75%, Intelligence 90%, Tracking 40%, Detect Ambush 60%, Detect Concealment 60%, speaks Dragonese 98% and American 50%, and is literate in American 98%, but illiterate in Dragonese (insufficient data).
7. **Automatic Self-Destruct Program:** Standard. A self-destruct mechanism detonates when the robot's main body M.D.C. is depleted or when some tampers with its internal workings. This prevents the robot's technology from falling into the hands of the enemy. The explosion inflicts 2D6x10 M.D.C. to a twenty-foot (6 m) area around the robot and three times as much damage to the Shemarrian itself, usually leaving no salvageable remains and destroying the rail gun too. The robots cannot self-destruct at will.

Monst-Rex A-001 & A-002

The creature known as the Monst-Rex is another one of Archie's lifelike *androids*. The hulking robot appears to be an armored, alien, animal that seemingly wanders the Atlantic coastal region as both a wild predatory animal (robot spy) and as a Shemarrian riding beast augmented with bionic weapon systems. The Monst-Rex A-001 (the animal version) is a design from the mind of Hagan Lonovich, Archie's idea man. The towering creature comes in two models. A-001 is the pure monster form that is unleashed in the wilderness as a predator. Although the monster will attack, chase and kill most humanoids, it is programmed to seek and destroy Coalition troops and the Minions of Splugorth above all others. Next in line is any humanoid with bionics, power armor, robots and high-tech weaponry. The robots are also programmed to destroy anything that attacks them.

The Monst-Rex A-002 is nearly identical except that it is designed with a saddle or seat type arrangement to accommodate a rider and shoulder weapons controlled by the rider. They are the exclusive mounts of the Shemarrian Warriors. (Only in emergencies will one of Archie's other robot minion ride the beast, as does Hagan Lonovich.) The few hundred Monst-Rex have been increased to a few thousand and are found in the same regions as the Shemarrians.

Model Type: A-001 & A-002
Class: Fully Automated Self-Sufficient Monster/combat Robot
Crew: None; artificial intelligence.
M.D.C. by Location:

Front Paws/Claws (2) – 50 each
Front Legs (2) – 100 each
Hind Legs (2) – 120 each
Tail (1; prehensile) – 20
Spines (4) – 20 each
Laser (1; left shoulder) – 10
Plasma Ejector (1; left shoulder) – 20
*Extra Sensor cluster (1; right shoulder) – 20
**Head – 100
***Main Body – 300

* Destroying the extra sensor cluster located above the right shoulder will eliminate all the extra bonuses received by the sensors such as the molecular analyzer for tracking by scent. See the description which follows.

** Destroying the head of the robot will eliminate all optics and main sensory systems, and all bonuses from these sensors (see description). However, the robot will continue to operate and is NOT blind! It can still see using its right shoulder sensor cluster, although bonuses are limited to those provided by that sensor cluster. If completely blinded (both the head and sensor cluster are destroyed) the creature will fight, groping around, lashing out and hitting anything it touches. Under these conditions the robot enjoys no combat bonuses and is -9 to strike, parry, or dodge! **Note:** The head is a small and difficult target to hit, especially on a moving target. Thus, it can only be hit when a character makes a "called shot" and even then the attacker is -2 to strike.

***Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body will destroy the bot. The robot explodes when all of its M.D.C. is depleted, leaving no salvageable remains. **Note:** Additional body armor or power armor can NOT be worn.

Speed:

Running: 190 mph (304 km) maximum. The act of running does NOT tire the robot and speed can be maintained indefinitely.

Leaping: The robot legs are strong and designed for leaping and climbing. Leaps are limited to approximately 30 feet (9 m) high and across. A running leap at speeds in excess of 60 mph (96 km) will enable the robot to leap an additional 1D4x10 yards/meters across and 20 feet (6 m) higher.

Climbing: The Monst-Rex is an excellent climber and can scale trees and sheer walls of rock/mountains with ease; climbing skill equal to 90%, but it cannot rappel.

Flying: Not possible.

Range: The nuclear power pack gives the Monst-Rex approximately ten years of life even under the most strenuous and constant amount of activity.

Statistical Data

Height: 10 feet (3 m).

Width: 7 feet (2.1 m).

Length: 16 feet (4.8 m) from nose to hindquarters, the tail adds an additional 12 feet (3.6 m).

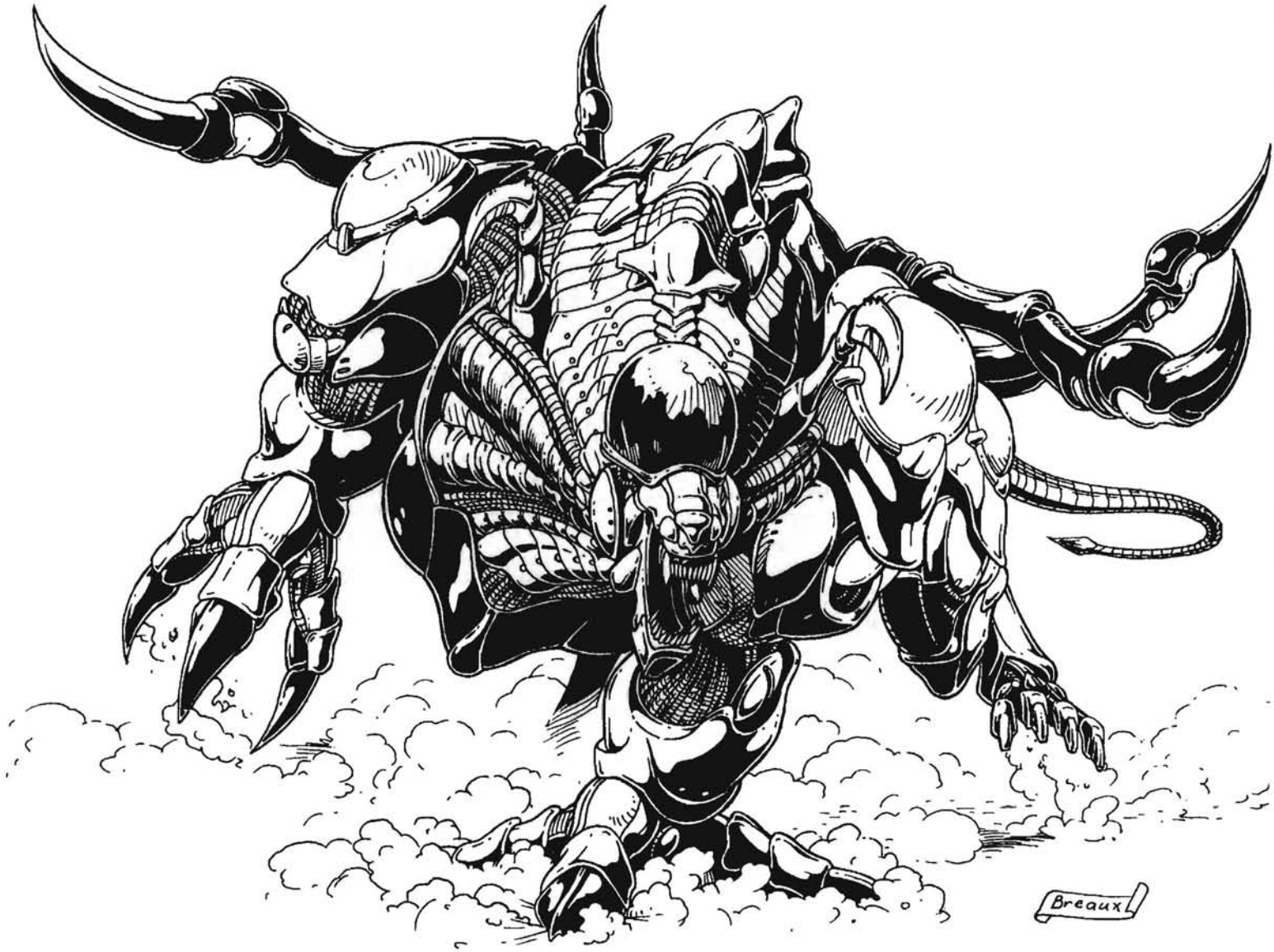
Weight: 2000 lbs. (900 kg/one ton).

Physical Strength: Robotic P.S. of 30.

Cargo: None, other than the five tons it can carry on its back or pull.

Power System: Nuclear, average robot energy life is ten (10) years.

Black Market Cost: Not available as a robot. Sometimes captured and sold as a live animal for 18-25 million.



Monst-Rex Weapon Systems:

1. **Forward Facing Plasma Ejector over left shoulder (1):** Built into the armor plating above the left shoulder is a plasma weapon. The plasma ejector is forward facing, but can swing up and down in a 90 degree arc. Those who believe the monster is a living creature assume the weapon is a bionic implant.

Primary Purpose: Assault; long-range.
Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D. per blast.
Rate of Fire: Single shot; each blast counts as one melee action (typically has 5).
Effective Range: 1600 feet (488 m).
Payload: Effectively unlimited.

2. **Forward Facing Laser over left shoulder (1):** Also built into the left shoulder weapons system is a light laser. It too has a 90 degree angle of fire, up and down.

Primary Purpose: Assault.
Mega-Damage: 2D6 M.D. per blast.
Rate of Fire: Single shot; each blast counts as one melee action (5 total).
Effective Range: 2000 feet (610 m).
Payload: Effectively unlimited.

3. **Prehensile Tail (1):** The twelve foot (3.6 m) long tail has a sharp blade at the end which can be used as a whip or stabbing weapon. The tail is used in hand to hand combat and is able to attack twice per melee. This is two *additional* hand to hand combat attacks available for close combat (total of seven attacks when the tail is included)! The tail is also used for balance and for climbing.

Primary Purpose: Assault.
Mega-Damage: Whip or slash 1D4 M.D. or stab with the point is 1D6 M.D.
Rate of Fire: Two additional attacks during hand to hand combat.
Effective Range: 12 feet (3.6 m).
Payload: Not applicable.

4. **Spines:** Four wicked looking spines protrude from the monster's back. Each is jointed in three locations, enabling them to move with the flexibility of a human finger. Like a finger, they can be used to point, poke and stab. However, they are mostly defensive mechanisms and are used only in close combat to ward off or attack an opponent or prey. They are especially useful against giant prey like dinosaurs and giant robots, in which case the Monst-Rex leaps on top of the giant creature and plunge all four spines into the beast in a single thrust. Then it rips its prey apart with its teeth, claws and tail while the spines hold it securely on the prey's back. The spines are also helpful in climbing and scaling walls and even

enable the robot to hang from ceilings, the sides of sheer cliffs, or from large trees.

Primary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 1D6 M.D. per single spine, 2D6 for one simultaneous stab of two spines, and 4D6 for one massive thrust of all four spines simultaneously (the latter counts as two melee attacks).

Rate of Fire: Equal to the total number of hand to hand attacks of five.

Effective Range: 12 feet (3.6 m).

Payload: Not applicable.

5. Five hand to hand attacks/actions per melee (energy weapons, claws, bite or spines), plus two special attacks with prehensile tail. Bonuses are listed under the specific sensor systems; all bonuses are accumulative.

Damage: Pounce/body block: 1D6 M.D. Claw Strike: 4D6 M.D. Bite: 1D6 M.D. Tail Spike: 1D6 M.D. Spines: 1D6 M.D. each.

Bonuses: +2 to strike using energy weapons. Hand to Hand Bonuses (including Attributes): +1 to initiative, +5 to strike, parry and dodge, +2 to roll with impact or fall, critical strike on a natural roll of 18, 19, or 20.

Attribute Equivalents of Note: I.Q. 6, P.S. 30, P.P. 18, Spd. 285 (194 mph/310 km).

6. **Sensors of Note in the head:** Optics: The A-001 and A-002 have a basic optical system including the visible light spectrum, infrared, ultraviolet, and polarization, as well as passive light amplification (nightvision 500 feet/152 m) and telescopic (6000 feet/1829 m).

Targeting Sight: Computer-directed to indicate most vulnerable and vital area by means of cross hairs and data. Laser Targeting: An ultraviolet laser beam locks onto target and ties into other targeting systems.

Amplified Hearing: Can hear sounds as quiet as 10 decibels as far away as 500 feet (152 m). Can also hear in the ultrasonic range of high frequency sound. The computer is programmed to recognize 40,000 different mechanical sounds from the sound of a car engine to the hum of a generator. Adds to alertness and attacks.

Radio Communication: None.

Speech: The Monst-Rex cannot carry on a conversation, but does growl, roar, bellow, snort, hiss-like laugh, and whimper like an animal. The only means of complete two way communication is for a psychic to use the psionic power of Tele-Mechanics by touching the great (mechanical) beast. However, the creature does understand both Dragonese and American completely.

7. **Extra Sensor Cluster on the right shoulder:** Back-up optics, hearing, and targeting systems as described in number six. These offer no additional bonuses; engage only when head is destroyed. Additional systems and bonuses (add to those in number 6) are as follows.

Motion Detector and Seismic Sensors: These make the robot all the more aware of its environment and movement around it. The motion detectors have a range of about 500 feet (152 m). The seismic sensors indicate ground movement and disturbances.

Radar Detector: Picks up radar signals indicating that the area is being scanned by radar and therefore humanoids are near.

Limited Radar: A limited radar of its own will warn it of aerial attacks, including missiles. Range 2000 feet (610 m).

Molecular Analyzer: Enables the robot to effectively smell and track by recognizing and following odors, scents, gases. Also serves as a warning of approaching enemy or prey. Track by smell 84%. Recognize scent 84%; must have smelled and recorded scent in the past; has 60,000 different scents committed to memory with the capability to memorize an additional 30,000 odors.

Extra Sensor Cluster Bonuses: Hand to hand: +1 to strike, +4 to parry, +6 to dodge, +4 on initiative, +3 to roll with impact or fall, cannot be surprised by attacks from behind (parry or dodge).

Automatic Self-Destruct Program: Standard.

8. **Skill Program:** Programmed for combat and reconnaissance, but mostly to hunt and kill Archie's enemies. Combat program includes basic strategies and tactics common to predatory animals, four-legged animal style combat, and the identification of all known CS, Free Quebec, Federation of Magic and Splugorth troops, robots, and vehicles, as well as animals, monsters, Splugorth Minions, D-Bees, robots, armor, weapons and vehicles common to the eastern half of North America. This means that the Monst-Rex will not make stupid attacks against overwhelming odds or an enemy that overpowers it, unless the android is attacked first or by surprise. Both 001 (wild) and 002 (riding) versions of the (robot) animal will obey a Shemarrian without hesitation (Archie and Hagan too).

Other skills of note include: Prowl 55%, Swim 94%, Climb 90%, Gymnastics 90%, Land Navigation 94%, Wilderness Survival 94%, Detect Ambush 60%, Detect Concealment 60%, and understands Dragonese, Spanish, French/Euro and American 94%.

Archie's web of power and subterfuge

"There is so much of this world I must first discover if I am to be its master."

– Archie-Three

Over the decades, Archie has, first with James T and all the better with Hagan, built himself a network of unwitting spies, agents and operatives that have weaseled their way into the civilized nations of North America. Archie has connections to, and eyes and ears in, the Chi-Town 'Burbs, Northern Gun, Manistique Imperium, Lazlo, Whykin, Kingsdale, and scores of other places and mercenary companies. This is made possible through connections with the Black Market, arms dealers and people who buy his technology through **Cyberworks** and **Titan Robotics Industries** (more commonly known only as Titan Industries or Titan Robotics). Both are quiet operations with manufacturing facilities and showrooms in the Manistique Imperium. In fact, it was the timely appearance of **Titan Robotics** coming onto the scene about 15 years ago that has helped to raise Manistique's level of competition with Ishpeming/Northern Gun. However, it has only been in the last seven or eight years that Archie has begun to take a more vocal and public role

with Titan Industries as he feels more confident and comfortable in the role. Titan Industries is most well known for creating its Titan series of power armor and giant robots, but also manufactures a number of Manistique and Black Markets weapons and tech-gear, as well as a few vehicles and other odds and ends. New robots and gizmos are always in the works.

Cyberworks is something of a nonentity in the business world, but is believed to finance numerous businesses, one of which is *Titan Robotics Industries*. Unknown to most, Cyberworks is the name of a pre-Rifts military-industrial giant that has survived with Archie-Three and his secret Cyberworks compound (i.e., Archie's Aberdeen complex) that creates many of the bionic components, Vibro-Blades, energy weapon "knock-offs" and electronics sold by the North American Black Market (roughly one third of all such goods). Archie, with Hagan's guidance (and skimming a large fortune of nearly 100 million credits for himself), funnels this money into their many and various secret operations, including a new Lonovich factory complex out in the open in Manistique and a secret factory complex (including steel mills, coal mining, and M.D. materials processing plant) in Pennsylvania.

These business operations keep the pair "connected" to human civilization on multiple levels. Northern Gun and Manistique Imperium's "pact" with the Coalition States makes it all the easier for Archie to keep track of the CS, while sales and business dealings with the Black Market, mercenaries and independent kingdoms keep Archie and Hagan connected to the goings-on almost *everywhere* in the USA and Canada (only bits and pieces come from Mexico since the Vampire Kingdoms are enemies of humanity and there is little contact with them).

Archie-Three and Hagan Lonovich love to lurk in the shadows, pulling the strings of their robot creations and manipulating unsuspecting humanoids like invisible puppet masters. Both are excited about their network of spies, secret operations and unwitting agents and plan to expand it until they can subvert and take over the CS and other nations when the time is ripe. They've already flexed their political muscle by inciting the purge against *Naruni Enterprises*. To the world at large, the maneuvering to eliminate the Naruni seemed to be instigated by the leaders of the Manistique Imperium and Northern Gun, whom in turn, leveraged the support of the CS and led to the pact between the CS and the two nations of arms manufacturers. However, it was really Archie and (mostly) Hagan who set the stage. This schemed worked exactly as the two had hoped, eliminating an *alien* from "human soil," got rid of a dangerous and wily competitor (one who might have uncovered Archie's existence) and at the same time, got them in tighter with the Coalition States. It all worked out so perfectly that it has emboldened them to expand much more rapidly and try new schemes.

Tech-Level Note: All of Archie's business "fronts" use and publicly sell technology and designs which are on par with Northern Gun and a few notches below Coalition technology. Archie is no fool, and does NOT offer his own superior technology to the public. This is done to maintain the illusion that Lonovich and Cyberworks are just ordinary Earth-based manufacturers, not an extra-dimensional or alien power. Note that in the fields of artificial intelligence and robot electronics, Archie is far superior to any terrestrial nation. However, his publicly available creations cannot surpass the current level of technology without exposing or at least drawing unwanted suspicion to his true operation and superior nature. The overall tech level of Archie's own robots is easily the equal to Triax cutting-edge technology, while Archie's advances in robot intelligence, programming and nano-technology surpass even that of Triax by at least 20 years and improving all the time.

Schemes and Dreams

Note: Reprinted in part from *Mark Sumimoto's* source material in **The Rifter® #4**, with updates and additions by Siembieda.

Archie Three was put under a lot of stress by the occupation of the Mechanoids. For the first time in his existence, he felt his life was in danger. Now that they have been defeated, he has a newfound appreciation for life and renewed vigor. The experience has brought him closer to his partner, Hagan, and has strengthened his resolve to master the world around him. He will accomplish this by launching a large-scale campaign to gather intelligence and strengthen his organization. He now realizes that his extreme isolation has become a detriment to his plans. His new campaign will put his cover operation, Titan Robotics, in the public eye. This will extend the range of his manipulations, while his secret investigations will continue to bolster his intelligence network and data flow.

The Mechanoids are no longer a threat and in their passing they have left an incredible prize in Archie's lap. Before their defeat, the Mechanoids had already retooled a good portion of the Cyberworks complex to produce their robot warriors. In addition, they shared much of their knowledge of psionic powers and interfaces, cybernetics and bionics, weapon systems, and anti gravity propulsion with Archie, believing him to be a kindred spirit and trusted ally. In reality, he was secretly working against them. Now Archie has expanded on their knowledge and technology and incorporated it into his own.

Another technology that Archie has put into action is **satellite communication**. Satellite relaying is a means of communication that became extinct with the Coming of the Rifts. Using satellites, messages were relayed from one side of the world to the other at nearly the speed of light. But due to unknown factors, access to outer space has been closed off to the inhabitants of Rifts Earth. All attempts to launch rockets into space have failed miserably and all of the pre-Rifts satellites and space stations are believed to have been destroyed. This has severely reduced mankind's ability to communicate over long distances, and practically destroys any possibility of uniting the human nations scattered across the globe. However, Archie is privy to inside information and has not given up on satellite communication. The old *Cyberworks Corporation* was essential to the old American Empire's space program and had several communication satellites in orbit around the globe. They even had a permanent base on the Moon. Archie has sent communications into space in hopes of finding one of those satellites still in operational status. To his surprise, he discovered one rather quickly. Now communications between Archie and his robot minions can be done instantly and no one knows because no one on Earth can detect or use satellite communication. The satellite was not in one of the established orbits stored in Archie's memory, but he decided that was due to the forces that kept outer space closed off from the people on the planet. He is partially right.

In reality, this satellite was launched *after* the Coming of the Rifts by the humans still living at the Cyberworks colony on the Moon. It is in a geosynchronous orbit designed to monitor the activities in North America. Unknown to most people on Earth, the Moon colony and most of the major pre-Rifts space stations are still inhabited and are actively isolating themselves from the Earth, through the use of a counter-orbit debris field and killer satellites. Archie has inadvertently tapped a new communication satellite from the Cyberworks Moon colony, now called the *CAN Republic*. The computer built into the satellite recognizes Archie's access codes and allows him to bounce his signals off of it. Archie's counterpart at the Moon colony knows about the signals coming from Earth, but, in accordance with its programming, it will not respond in order to prevent the Earth from discovering their existence. Archie's Moon counterpart, unlike himself, is not alive.

Due to the satellite and moon colonies' success in isolating themselves from the Earth, satellite communication is far beyond the capabilities of all forces on the planet, with the possible exception of Atlantis. Thus, Archie's satellite is a completely *undetectable* means of communication simply because no one is looking for it. Archie's resurrection of the technology has given him a powerful advantage over all technologically dependent intelligence organizations on the planet and he intends to use it. The satellite's orbit keeps it more or less over the Great Lakes area at all times. Fortunately, this allows him to constantly keep in touch with his new public operation in the Manistique Imperium.

Archie also requires data to be collected from his commercially available robots. To accomplish this requires a recording device that is totally undetected when integrated into the sensor systems of the vehicle or robot. To hide the recorder, it is disguised as a redundant back-up system in the sensory processor. To protect it from psionic detection, he has developed a circuitry system that can block Telemechanic psionic probes. The recorder uses an advanced data storage crystal matrix that is far beyond current technology. It records everything that the sensors process and has a storage capacity of five years, give or take a year. To retrieve the data, special equipment must be used which is located in Archie's complex and also in one other location which is described later. (**Note:** See **Mutants in Orbit™** for more information about the orbital colonies, the counter-orbit debris field and killer satellites.)

To the public at large, the name Cyberworks is commonly believed to belong to the mysterious manufacturer or benefactor/owners behind Lonovich – the makers of the *Titan series of robot vehicles*. This is only half right. The other half of the truth is that Cyberworks is the pre-Rifts company that created the machine entity calling itself Archie, and which now controls the very organization that created it (at least the last vestige of Cyberworks on Rifts Earth). It is this being that has restored and retooled the old Cyberworks installation factories to manufacture the Titan robots. The reason behind building and selling these robots is to glean information from its retailers and purchasers about the world and political happenings. This was an effective tool at the beginning of his secret reemergence in the

shadows, but now as conflict threatens to polarize and separate the powers of North America, Archie feels that he needs more direct, expansive and concrete data to confirm the rumors he hears about the happenings around him.

- He has heard tales of mysterious kingdoms in the Magic Zone. How many are there and what are their intentions?
- How will the Federation of Magic react to events between Tolkeen and the CS? Will they strike at the Coalition if they believe the empire is weakened? Should Archie interfere?
- He knows that people fleeing the current and coming conflicts are seeking refuge in the New West. Where are they going and what is waiting for them there?
- The Xiticix continue to breed and increase their territory. By his own calculations, the insectoids are a threat of epic proportions and he wonders if he should (or must) play a role in their destruction? (It would not be he first time Archie and Hagan secretly saved the continent from an alien invader.)
- The Splugorth of Atlantis continue to rule their kingdom without resistance. How long can this be allowed to last?

Too many questions plague his mind. Too many uncertainties threaten his plans. It is time for Archie to take actions that will secure his future domination of the Earth.

Knowledge is power. Archie knows this well. He knows that for all their brute military power, the Coalition relies heavily on intelligence reports to secure victory. Smaller armies use surprise to defeat larger forces. Their opponent's ignorance plays to the Coalition's strengths and often gives them the advantage. Archie now seeks to expand his power base and intelligence network to prevent ignorance from being "his" enemy. He is trying to accomplish this by expanding his long time robot selling operation to a level approaching and, someday, surpassing that of Northern Gun and Triax. He and his partner, Hagan Lonovich, have already begun work on this tremendous undertaking. New robot designs have been put into mass production and have taken the market by storm. Merchants have been recruited and licensed as official dealers of the *Titan* line of robots. They in turn hire agents to gather information about the market and all influencing factors, including information about wars, new technology, and the plans of other manufacturers. Additionally, they gather information from their *customers* through normal conversation and inquiries.

But the expansion doesn't stop there.

Direct gathering of information is one of the most vital portions of Archie's plan. To facilitate this, he has increased the dispersal and deployment of his automated robot minions tenfold. His robots are 100% loyal to Archie and will perform their tasks unwaveringly before reporting their findings back to him. The most important targets for intelligence gathering are the Coalition States. As "the" dominant power of North America, they have a strong influence on the future of Archie and his plans. He has agents watching carefully the build-up of forces at Free Quebec and the fallen Kingdom of Tolkeen.

The recent conflict at Free Quebec brought the **Coalition Military** closer to his doorstep than ever before and allowed him to observe them in action. He now has a good knowledge of CS strategies, tactics and their war machines as well as the extent of Quebec's defenses without having to test them himself. **Lone Star** is known by Archie to have been a pre-Rifts genetic research facility and military project. With the unveiling of the new Coalition War Machine, he is interested in finding out exactly how much technology has been salvaged there and how much still remains lost to the CS. **Chi-Town** remains the elusive target, but as noted earlier, Archie has finally established a tiny foothold inside its walls with his faux Skelebots. **Other robot forces** have been sent into the Magic Zone, vampire-infested Mexico, the Pecos Empire, and most important, Atlantis. Archie absolutely despises the Splugorth of Atlantis. He has declared them to be his archenemy and longs to destroy them someday.

A necessary part of Archie's plan is the establishment of a public outlet and interface location for his goods. To accomplish this, Archie has established an official Titan/Cyberworks retail outlet in **New Cedarville**, a small city-state in the Manistique Imperium. This is a welcome addition for the Manistique Imperium and a slap in the face for Ishpeming, better known as *Northern Gun*. The Manistique Imperium is a well-known manufacturer of weapons and body armor, but has never been able to get into the robot and power armor industry for a number of reasons. Northern Gun has always been the leading commercial power armor and robot manufacturer in North America and a major producer of weapons, body armor, and vehicles. Its major competitors were *Triax*, located in far off Germany, *Naruni Enterprises*, which has been taken out of the picture by the Coalition States (with Archie and Hagan pulling their strings), and *Wilk's Laser Industries*, which limits its operation to laser weapons and equipment. *Titan robots* were the only other robot vehicles believed to be manufactured in North America other than those by Northern Gun and a handful of items by the Black Market and the Black Market's comparatively recent New West center, *Bandito Arms*. **Note:** Until recently, *Titan Robot Industries* had always appeared to be a small operation and never posed a threat to Northern Gun's dominance of the market, but the market is changing and Northern Gun doesn't like it one bit. Archie and Hagan's market push is making Northern Gun their new competitive enemy, and getting the manufacturing juggernaut to ask questions. They would like to know more about this upstart Titan Industries, where it came from and exactly who is this Cyberworks company that backs them. Dangerous questions that could unveil Archie or Hagan, or both behind the scenes. Ironically, even though Archie loves the Wizard of Oz, he has not yet realized that Northern Gun may reveal the supercomputer as the "man behind the curtain."

Cyberworks is making a huge push to upgrade their Titan products and increase their share of the market. With their new commercial facility set up in the Manistique Imperium and another one under construction, Cyberworks has a greater public presence and a more direct outlet to the consumer. In an effort to avoid hostility, Archie dispatched his new agent, **Argent Goodson**, to make a generous offer to the government at Ishpeming. The offer allows Northern Gun to purchase Titan robots and other products at better than wholesale prices. In exchange, all they have to do is not interfere with their operation in Manistique. Northern Gun has been a retailer of Titan products since their appearance and readily accepted the deal. In his arrogance, Archie thinks this move has resolved any turmoil with the Michigan manufacturing giant, but all it has done is to make Northern Gun conduct its investigation much more carefully and quietly. The shrewd and ruthless businessmen of Northern Gun now, more than ever, want to know how

Lonovich can afford such low prices and are more suspicious than ever. Only time will tell how much Northern Gun's agents and spies may learn about Lonovich and the real powers behind it, and if Archie has outsmarted himself again.

This new Manistique facility is mostly commercial in nature, dealing with the wholesale and retail promotion and sale of the Titan products. All the customer relations are handled by hired human salespeople and coordinated by Argent Goodson, a very special operative *created* by Archie. Security at this location is provided by robots disguised as cyborgs and Juicers. These disguises allow the 'bots to use their superhuman machine abilities without attracting attention to themselves. Through this facility, Archie can firsthand (if you consider his robot minions to be his eyes) gather his customers' demographics and control the sales of his products. All of his new products are distributed to official and independent dealers from this location. Archie has also designated this location as his new center of operations with a new manufacturing compound under construction nearby. This was done for two reasons: One, to give his minions a place to gather and deploy without drawing more attention to his secret installation, and two, to give them a dispersal point that is more centrally located in North America.

Full repair and maintenance facilities are also located at the Titan Manistique installation, but most of the manufacturing is still done in the old Cyberworks installation where Archie was created and continues to live. All the work there is done by Archie's legion of tireless robots. Manufacturing is carried out 24 hours a day, every day, without pause.

The eyes and ears of Archie-Three. Another intelligence gathering system that Archie has instituted is also reliant on the Manistique operation. Using a combination of Mechanoid and Earth technology, the intelligent machine has developed an audio/video recording device that is absolutely undetectable when installed into the sensor system of a high-tech vehicle, such as a robot vehicle, but not power or body armor. It records everything the robot's sensors process onto a *crystal memory matrix* capable of storing five years of information, give or take a year. Every one of Archie's new commercially available giant robots is equipped with this secret audio/video recorder and transmitter. It is fully integrated into the vehicle's sensor system and, if discovered, it appears to be a redundant back-up system. If anyone other than Archie's robots or elite tries to repair or physically tamper with the system, it will self-destruct, leaving behind nothing but a smoldering husk. Any attempts to hack into the system will trigger a complex, modulating series of codes that only an artificially intelligent supercomputer, like Archie, can decipher. Even more amazing is that Telemechanics and psionic probes will also be rebuffed by the system. This psionic barrier is possible through a combination of Mechanoid technology and Archie's own personal knowledge and familiarity with psionic powers. The means to circumvent these defenses is far beyond the current technological level of the Coalition States and even Triax. Atlantis, Mindwerks and Japan might be able to develop the means to enter the systems (as could Phase World), but it would require several years of study. Even if someone did manage to hack into the stored information, all he or she would find are the exploits of the robot's past crew.

As a gimmick to easily and inexpensively retrieve this data, Archie, through Lonovich/Cyberworks, offers *FREE* maintenance and repair services for all Titan robots as part of the *warranty* offered by the Titan facility in the Manistique Imperium (Upper Michigan). Whenever a robot is brought in to be serviced, it is taken to a secured structure in the center of the installation where no one except Archie's disguised minions are allowed. The area is fully enclosed except for one service entrance. There is no air circulation system and no connection to outside power sources. Furthermore, no apparent workers exit the building at any time. Upon close inspection, the facility would seem to be a miniature, environmentally sealed arcology designed to isolate its workers from the outside. In reality, the building doesn't need fresh air circulating through it because its workers don't breathe. All of the repair and maintenance crews of the installation are robots programmed with the full schematics of all of Archie's commercially available robots. Repairs are done with mechanical precision and in half the expected and quoted time. The remaining time is spent downloading the stored information within the Titan's data crystal. The information is transferred to a central computer in the building and transmitted to Archie's secret installation via his rediscovered satellite relay. Only these specially prepared 'bots are given the secret codes to access the information. Besides the 'bots, only Archie, Hagan Lonovich, and Argent Goodson know these secret codes.

Using all of these methods and facilities, Archie expects to discover many things about the outside world and take another step toward its domination. However, his increased activity also opens opportunities for others to learn about him. Archie realizes this and is taking extra precautions. He has developed an elaborate route between his manufacturing plant and his commercial installation. It begins by transporting his goods from the Aberdeen or Pennsylvania facilities to a secret base at the seashore via underground tunnels. At the base, there waits a special submarine. Once loaded, the sub navigates up the coast to the Saint Lawrence River outlet. It travels near the bottom of the waterways using a silent propulsion system. This system utilizes a quasi-anti-gravity propulsion system cannibalized from defeated Mechanoids. It pushes the sub forward without the noise created by a conventional propeller. It also has a sound buffering shell that greatly reduces its sound signature and internal noise. If detected, the sub will probably be identified as a soft organic, probably an S.D.C. whale or other sea creature, and be left alone, unless it takes action first. Once it enters Manistique Imperium waters, it returns to conventional propulsion to seemingly pop up from nowhere. It docks and unloads its cargo at the Titan installation using robotic cranes. No crew members are ever seen getting on or departing from the sub. Once its cargo is unloaded, the submarine submerges and heads westward using conventional propulsion before reaching greater depths. Upon reaching deeper water, it resumes its silent running and turns back to the Saint Lawrence waterway. Anyone attempting to track the submarine will lose track of its signal and continue to probe westward. Using this route and its silent propulsion system, no technological force can track the sub back to Archie. Magical forces are another matter, but so far Archie is confident that the major magic-wielding forces will not bother trying to track him. If magic forces do become a problem, Archie will

consider hiring Nega-Psychics or Psi-Nullifiers or even other mages to cloak his activities, but has no plans to do so yet.

Targets for Intelligence Gathering

Despite Archie's growing intelligence network his resources are limited and he focuses his attention on the old Canadian and American Empires; he does not spend too much energy worrying about what lies across the ocean. His robot minions have been dispatched all across the continent. The majority are on short term missions. They return to Archie's installation to report their findings frequently and have a constant, rotating deployment. The rest are on extended research expeditions and will be away for several years before returning. Some of the robots on long term assignment will occasionally report their findings to Argent at the Manistique installation. From there the data can be sent directly to Archie via the advanced satellite relay.

Most of the robots dispatched into the field will be *A-63 all-purpose robots, A-64 master robots*, and *AA-60 Hunter-Destroyers*. Other robots include the *Shemarrian Riders* and their *Monst-Rex* mounts. Archie has also begun to deploy Thinman and Runt model Mechanoid "robots." This is done to keep hostile forces from associating these robot spies with Archie's other robots. Archie gained their manufacturing plans during his association with the Mechanoids he inadvertently brought to Earth. So far no one has any idea these robots are the products of Cyberworks or of Earth technology.

Targets for direct investigations by Archie's robot minions include:

1. The Coalition States: As noted, Archie has seven of his fake Skelebot imposters inside Chi-Town, and other robots (including faux Skelebots) and humanoid agents (humans and D-Bees) employed by Titan Robot Industries are scattered throughout the 'Burbs and other CS strongholds, such as Iron Heart, Missouri and the new State of El Dorado (he has yet to breach Lone Star security).

2. Tolkeen. A couple hundred of Archie's Skelebot imposters are deployed throughout the Kingdom of Tolkeen as part of the CS Occupation Force. He has also dispatched a few other robot teams not constrained by pretending to be CS 'bots. They generally move in small squads and form large assault groups only when told to do so by Archie, Hagan, or Argent. Archie still finds magic and the supernatural to be confusing, unpredictable and worrisome, but knows he must *learn more* if he is to someday deal with the Federation of Magic and other magic wielding enemies.

Archie's spies (robots and humanoids) in Tolkeen have taught him about ley lines, Rifts, Ley Line Magic, and Techno-Wizard creations like the Iron Juggernauts. They have also helped him to know about the monsters of the Calgary Rift and the escalating problem with the Xiticix.

3. The Magic Zone: This is a large area, with many kingdoms and republics scattered throughout. Magic is something that Archie still does not understand. It does not compute – does not make sense to him – and is a weakness for the machine entity. With the advent of the Tolkeen-Coalition War and increased activity from the Federation of Magic in the Magic Zone, Archie feels growing pressure to learn more about magic and the Zone. Neither he nor Hagan wants to learn how to use magic, but they want to know enough about it to respond appropriately to it and counter it. He has dispatched more than two hundred robots, in addition to the hundreds of Shemarrian warriors and Monst-Rex already in the area. Of major concern for Archie are the activities of the Federation of Magic, Stormspire, and the legendary kingdom of Psyscape. Lone operatives, pairs, and groups of six or less are the norm for robot spies sent to the Magic Zone.

4. Lazlo and New Lazlo: Only twenty robots have been sent to these magic nations. They are seen as powerful, but reluctant, opponents to his secret plans of conquest. He believes their military and magical might to be limited and not of concern until he begins his conquest. However, even though they are peaceful nations, they do have a strong military and the support of many powerful creatures of magic. Again, Archie's lack of appreciation for magic causes him to underestimate these nations.

5. Mexico: Most people believe the vampires of Mexico to be savage, unorganized monsters. However, this is a misconception promoted by the leaders of the vampire hordes, the Vampire Intelligences and the Master Vampires. They are an unknown quantity that Archie finds disturbing. He knows that his robot forces will be safe against the bite and charms of vampires, but also knows that conventional Mega-Damage weapons are of no use against the undead. He wishes to determine the best way to fight these vermin should he ever have to face them. Over thirty robots and dozens of Shemarrians and Monst-Rex have been sent into Mexico. A number of Shemarrians have even joined vampire hunting groups, like Reid's Rangers, to learn anti-vampire tactics from the experts.

6. The Pecos Empire: The bandits of these badlands have been nothing but trouble for the Coalition States and most other civilized places. Fortunately, the power of these raiders is spread out between a hundred different clans and gangs. Reports of leaders trying to unite the bandits have concerned many people, including Archie. About fifty of his robots disguised as Crazies and full conversion cyborgs have been sent into the area. A group of twenty is posing as a new gang in order to infiltrate one of the big and powerful bands of Pecos Raiders and to meet and associate with other gangs to gather information. About twenty other robots are also deployed in the region.

7. Xiticix territory: The prodigious breeding rate of Xiticix is phenomenal. Millions upon millions of new Xiticix have been added to the ranks of those first Rifted to Minnesota. Most human nations agree that if left unchecked, the Xiticix may overrun the continent and, possibly, the planet. Archie, however, has more accurately assessed and calculated the Xiticix threat and knows they must be dealt with soon, before there are too many. Archie and Hagan regularly send dozens of Mechanoid-looking robots into the area to replace the 'bots discovered and destroyed by the Xiticix. The Xiticix encountered some Mechanoid forces during their arrival on Earth and *recognizes* Archie's Mechanoid-style robots as those invaders. This should keep the Xiticix from associating them with his other minions. Small squads and pairs are standard deployment for these troops. Archie is considering if he and Hagan should try to develop a special Xiticix combat robot for sale to the CS or the general public (i.e., to mercenaries, bounty hunters and adventurers through Titan Robotics). In the meanwhile, Archie and Hagan are using their communications and spy network to influence public sentiment and raise the alarm that something must be done about the insectoids, and soon. In this regard, though he

hates doing it, Archie must support Chi-Town and the Coalition States.

8. Atlantis: The Splugorth and their minions are Archie's most hated enemies. As noted elsewhere, he has been building and using his Shemarrian and Monst-Rex androids to thwart Atlantean colonization and slave operations along the Atlantic Coast. He would like to increase the number of Shemarrians even more, but Hagan keeps reining him in, pointing out that the increased number of Shemarrians has drawn attention to themselves as it is. Anymore than the six or seven thousand already deployed is almost certain to blow their cover. However, Hagan has a plan.

First, he encourages Archie to replace any Shemarrians and Monst-Rex lost in combat, so their numbers remain constant despite temporary losses. Second, he has had Archie put identifying markings in various internal machine parts to suggest they are manufactured by the *Kittani* of Atlantis. Thus, if the Shemarrians or Monst-Rex are discovered to be androids, the flesh and blood people of America will assume they are mechanized spies and combat machines from Atlantis, not the soldiers of a mysterious third party (i.e., Archie). Why a Kittani robot creation would attack Minions of Atlantis can then be explained as a revolt by Kittani dissidents or a program flaw in the 'bots that made them turn against their "Atlantean creators." At least that will be the theory Lonovich will float to the public through their communications and spy network. Archie loves this plan and has adopted it wholeheartedly. With a little luck, it will confuse the Splugorth too.

Archie and Hagan have also sent more than a hundred robots and another hundred living spies and agents (none of whom know who they are really working for) to the island continent of Atlantis. Their primary mission is to learn what they can about the City of Splynn, the advanced technology of the Kittani, and the secret workings of the stone pyramids. So far all the information received from Atlantis indicates that its military is more powerful than the Coalition States and New German Republic combined, and that the Splugorth have connections to forces on other worlds as well as Rifts Earth. This is a bitter discovery for Archie, but he feels that subversive actions against the Splugorth may be able to weaken them enough for an outside attack to be successful. It nothing else, he plans to at least keep them off American soil. He has also learned that the Kittani have a burning hatred for the Mechanoids. This information will prove useful if those cyborg invaders ever make a reappearance, or if Archie can figure out a way to use his knowledge of the Mechanoids and Mechanoid robot designs against Atlantis. Of course, it will be some time before Archie or any Earth army will ever consider attacking Atlantis.

9. Other targets: For now, Archie and Hagan have their hands full with their schemes in North America. Targets for future investigations include Triax and the NGR, South and Central America, and New Camelot in England.

The Titan Robotics Complex

At the small city-state of **New Cedarville**, in the Manistique Imperium, Cyberworks has built its new *Titan Robotics Complex*. It is a huge structure compared to the relatively small town it was built next to. Its walls circle the array of buildings within, all constructed of Mega-Damage steel and concrete. They are designed to contain any accidental weapon discharges as well as repel enemy attacks. A single large entrance is the only way in and out of the complex. Observant adventurers will notice that there are no weapon emplacements along the wall. All defensive capabilities are provided by the swarm of Flying Titan power armor that can be deployed overhead, and the combat-ready Titan robots on the grounds. In addition, a security force of faux Juicers and 'Borgs maintain the peace in the interior and will jump to defend the complex in an instant. Besides, since the upper peninsula of Michigan is the home of the continent's two premier weapons and robot manufacturers, bandits, raiders and pirates (most of whom rely on Northern Gun and Manistique to sell them the weapons, vehicles and equipment they need) rarely even consider giving them any trouble.

The Main Showroom and Business Center

Within the new Titan complex there are three large buildings. The main building is the **showroom and business center**. Here all the business transactions take place, and prospective customers can examine the various offerings from Titan Robotics. Four floors comprise this structure, but only the first two are open to the public. On the first level, the Titan robots are on display for the public to see. The ceilings are fifty feet (15.2 m) high to accommodate the large robot vehicles. Salespeople roam the floor prepared to pounce upon anyone holding a credit card.

The second floor is designated as the *financial transaction center*. All transactions are handled in the various offices that fill this level, and all sales are handled in "credits," Universal, NG/MI, and Black Market credits are all accepted. All funds are transferred to NG/MI credits and handled by the main banking institute of the Manistique Imperium. Financing is possible with larger, established companies, such as *Larsen's Brigade*, or governments, such as Los Alamo. Even large criminal organizations, such as *Saber Lasar's* faction of Pecos Raiders and the Black Market, are given finance options, but not small groups or individuals. Bartering may be considered, if the customer has some special item to trade, such as a rune sword, alien device or old pre-Rifts technical data files or schematics that are not already common knowledge. Anyone seeking to trade such items will be sent to deal with the head of the complex operation, *Argent Goodson*. Alien technology is of special interest to Argent and his master, Archie. Special deals and discounts can be arranged if the item is very unique or advanced. Magic items are of limited interest to Archie and are accepted at *half* the market value. However, he does realize that understanding these items is vital to his plans and he is considering stockpiling them for later study. Common magic and TW items and Earth equipment are *never* considered for trade. Anyone trying to trade a Shemarrian rail gun, Monst-Rex mount, or other secret Cyberworks technology will be politely asked where they got such a device and usually turned away. Then, Argent will contact Archie and have a robot "hit squad" sent after them to avoid any further "complications."

Level three is administrative space. Only company personnel are allowed on this level. All electronic paperwork is filed in the computers located here. Records are kept of all the robots sold and to whom they are sold. The "human" resources department also operates here. They handle all the hiring, training, and payment of wages for the human and D-Bee personnel. Minor personnel disputes are also handled by this department. Major

disputes require Argent Goodson's attention, but this has not yet been required. The company lounges are also found on this level.

The top level is off limits to the general personnel. It is reserved for Argent Goodson and his chosen elite. Argent's private office and satellite link to Archie-Three are located here. A squad of four Juicer 'Bots and four 'Borg 'Bots are permanently stationed at the entrance to this level. Their assignment is to guard Argent and the satellite link with their mechanical lives. Any unauthorized personnel that wander onto this level will be sternly warned to return to the lower level. Any resistance will be met with force.

The Armory and Storeroom

The largest building in the complex is located toward the rear, at the point farthest from the entrance. It is a single-floored structure with a fifty foot (15.2 m) high ceiling. Within its thick walls, Titan robots stand shoulder to shoulder. Suits of power armor line the far wall with steel gate floors partitioning that area of the building into three, with additional suits stacked upon each level. A number of Juicer 'Bots, 'Borg 'Bots, and robot-controlled Titan power armor and Titan robot vehicles stand guard outside this building. They are constantly vigilant against trouble and cannot be bribed, mind controlled, or otherwise distracted from their duties.

The Service Center

A single, twenty foot (6.1 m) entrance leads the way into the comparatively small, third building. Anyone looking at it from the outside will wonder how giant robot vehicles can be repaired in such a confined-looking building. One look at the inside will dispel all such wonderment and give rise to all new questions.

Robot vehicles and power armor are brought into the service center on truck beds. Once in the building, the trucks are driven onto a platform, the driver gets out and returns to the business center, and the platform descends into the depths of the structure. As the platform lowers, a series of sensor scans and sterilizing treatments sweep the robot and the truck. Only characters enchanted with the spell, Invisibility: Superior, can escape detection.

The platform shaft extends one hundred feet (30.5 m) beneath the ground. Once reaching the bottom, a robot will step onto the platform and drive the truck off and into one of ten repair bays. Living conditions on this level are poor. The air is circulated through a sanitization and antistatic system in the walls. No fresh air is brought in from the outside, so humans will not have enough air to breathe. Temperature is not controlled and can range from near freezing to beyond boiling depending on the amount of work being done and the outside temperature. These unhealthy conditions may hinder the work of human technicians, but the robots assigned to do all the work are not bothered one bit. Repairs and servicing are done at incredible efficiency and big jobs that require long hours of labor can be done nonstop until completed. The other work done by these robots is the downloading of the information stored by the secret recording device concealed in the sensor system of these new robots. This information is fed along an underground conduit to Argent Goodson's office, where it is transmitted via satellite to the Cyberworks complex and Archie Three.

The Courtyard and Testing Grounds

Outside the main buildings of the complex is a secured, open air "testing ground." There, customers can test out the various models of robots and power armor that Cyberworks has to offer. A track is set up to test handling and performance. Test flights are regulated and chaperoned to prevent theft. Targets are placed against a special, heavily reinforced wall to be blown apart at will. Missile systems are not allowed to be tested, but rail guns and other heavy weapons are. Hand to hand combat capabilities can be tested on used robots. Any testing outside the designated area is prohibited. Anyone attempting to enter the testing range must be wearing body armor or will not be allowed.

The New Titan Robotics Factory

Looking to diversify and spread out their resources, Hagan has convinced Archie to build a sprawling but simple (by Cyberworks standards) factory complex down the road, where Titan Robots and other equipment can be manufactured. That way, if anything happened to the secret base in Maryland, they would still have at least a basic facility in Manistique, effectively hiding in plain sight. The new factory should be finished within some 12-18 months, provided they can stem the tide of numerous acts of sabotage (by Northern Gun?). Otherwise, it may take two or three years.

The City-State of New Cedarville

Outside the facility's thick, Mega-Damage walls, the city of New Cedarville is prospering. The Titan Complex is attracting adventurers and mercenaries looking for high quality robot vehicles at reasonable prices, and the new factory should create even more business. Already the shops and inns in New Cedarville are bristling with new, often wealthy, customers. New restaurants, taverns and hotels have popped up everywhere. In addition, the influx of permanent residents looking for work at the new complex and other booming businesses means an increase in housing construction, schools, and all commercial businesses. The only disappointment for locals has been the large number of workers and Operators who have been turned down for jobs at the complex (Archie's automated complex doesn't need them). Consequently, a number of new repair shops and garages have opened up in town, near the complex.

Manistique Imperium and Northern Gun armament sales are also on the rise and Titan Robotics seems to have drawn new customers into the market. Weapon merchants selling Northern Gun and Manistique Imperium goods have flooded New Cedarville. All NG and MI weapons, body armor and adventuring equipment can be found here, as well as a smattering of Triax, Coalition, and other equipment. A small supply of Techno-Wizard and magic weapons are also available and several Techno-Wizards have discreetly set up shop in the city, usually in the back or basement of a "legitimate" weapon or repair shop. **(Note:** TW technology is forbidden by the pact with the CS, plus Manistique and Northern Gun have never felt comfortable endorsing magic items even if there is a market for it. Thus, the sale of TW items has always been illegal in the Upper Peninsula, it's just not strictly enforced, provided the seller is subtle about it.) Only *Naruni* weapons are strictly prohibited and nowhere to be found, not even in second-hand shops.

Along with the good, are the bad. Crime and lawlessness have risen, and the Black Market has also set up shop in the city, allowing criminals to sell their services and merchandise, and establishing at least one underground (illegal), Juicer augmentation facility and a pair of Body-Chop-Shops. Thankfully, the increased revenue to the city has allowed the city council to hire more peacekeepers. A steady stream of adventurers, mercenaries and Headhunters looking for work in the city has kept prospective police officers in strong supply.

Argent Goodson

When Archie and his partner, Hagan Lonovich, hatched their plan to go public while maintaining their privacy, they realized they needed an agent to run the MI complex. That agent would have to be absolutely loyal to them. Archie's first idea was to have Hagan run the operation, but Hagan provided Archie with much needed human perspective, which he needed at his side. He also needed access to Hagan's imagination to keep his creative process rolling. Another agent was needed to fill the role.

Archie and Hagan decided that to have the perfect agent, they would need to "build" him. Much time was spent planning out the parameters of the robot's programming and function. The robot needed to have a convincing personality and a cunning intellect. Its knowledge had to range from robotics, to the supernatural, to human behavior. Even with the most advanced artificial neural net possible, much of these skills had to be learned, not programmed.

A neural intelligence net was carefully assembled and programmed with everything that Archie could give him. This new intelligence was placed into an M.D.C. endoskeleton and surrounded by artificial flesh and blood. This was the first time since before the Great Cataclysm that Archie had made such a truly "human" android. The Shemarrians and Monst-Rex, though androids designed to look "alive," were alien creatures and could act or appear "odd" or "nonhuman." *This* agent had to "be" human in every way to pass the scrutiny of everyday interaction with mortals.

Archie decided that this being was to be far more than a mere servant. It was his *son*, and what a good son he would be. "Goodson," he thought, was the perfect surname, while the first name would be a variation of his own name, coming up with "Argent." He thought it was a sophisticated sounding name and a merger of the words "Archie" and " agent,"and it was also another name for "silver," hinting at his agent's metallic nature, all of which the machine entity found clever and amusing. Hagan was less than impressed with Archie's choice of a name, but decided to stay out of the process and let him have his way. Thus, *Argent Goodson* was born. Then the learning began.

For Argent to perform his duties, he was going to have to interact with humans and other life forms every day. Social graces, behavioral patterns, and slang terminology were all programmed into Argent, but he needed to learn how to apply these skills. He needed to hone them through interaction and experience. To teach Argent these human qualities, Archie sent Hagan to hire scholars, mystics, and warriors to share their knowledge and insight with him. Using the same psionic probe and link system that was first developed to teach Archie, Argent drew upon true human experience and put them to the test at *Old Bones* where he served Archie as an undercover agent and dealer of illegal arms from the autumn of 105 to 107 P.A. Within a year, Argent Goodson had honed the skills that would allow him to perform his mission, though Archie let him gather more experience before placing him as head of operations at the Manistique Imperium Titan Robotics facility. During this period, Argent came to understand and feel the human experience. He began to think for himself, question his programming and learn new things. He wondered if humans were as inferior to him and his master as his programming dictated. He pondered the question in his electronic mind and came to a solid conclusion. Humans destroyed their world and let monsters, like the Splugorth, into it. Humans continue to war with themselves, instead of focusing on the alien threats. It became clear that his creator, Archie, had evolved beyond human wisdom and was indeed destined to be their lord and master. Argent almost felt proud to be the "son" of such a superior being. He now also understood why Archie had him vaporize his human teachers when they were done with them – humans were unreliable and ethereal creatures subject to contradiction and treachery, none of them could be trusted. None of them were important enough to weep over. Argent Goodson was ready to take his place at the Manistique complex.

Since the commercial complex has opened in MI, Argent has been right there taking care of business. His negotiations with Northern Gun have (seemingly) ensured that they will welcome the entrance of Titan Robotics into the open market favorably and without interference. His new deals with the Black Market and other independent weapon dealers, mercenary companies and outlets have allowed Archie's products to be distributed in quantities never before realized. Thanks to Argent, plans are running smoothly and Archie's data gathering capabilities have bloomed past his expectations. In the hierarchy of Archie's regime, Argent has earned the third spot behind Hagan. It is a position that Argent would be quite proud of, even if his programming did not require it.

They're a few problems with Argent. Though the android is human-like, he is *not* human, and lacks a true range of emotions and is missing a full understanding of the human mind. Like father, like son, Argent underestimates humans and makes poor assumptions, especially when it comes to their intelligence, resourcefulness and capacity for duplicity. While his arrogance and smarts suit him in most aspects of running the business and information network, Argent is ill-equipped in dealing with the subterfuge and treachery afoot with Northern Gun and other competitors. For example, Argent assumes his superior mind and cleverness has won over Northern Gun and hasn't even considered that they might be responsible for the constant trouble and sabotage at the factory compound under construction. Nor does he realize they continue to pry into his and Titan Robotics' background looking for anything they can find to undermine and put them out of business.

Real Name: Argent Goodson (Archie has not given him a model designation because Argent is meant to be one-of-a-kind.)
Alignment: Aberrant.
Attributes: I.Q. 30, M.A. 24, M.E. n/a, P.S. 30, P.P. 24, P.E. n/a, P.B. 20, Spd. 120. Argent has developed a strong personality and it shows in his M.A.
Hit Points: Not applicable.

S.D.C. 100 for his artificial exterior, human-looking skin/body.
M.D.C. 200 for his endoskeleton.
Height: 6 feet, four inches (1.9 m).
Weight: 500 lbs (225 kg).
Age: Five years old, but appears to be a human in his early thirties. His power source is a salvaged Mechanoid power crystal, with a remaining energy life of 70 years and a back-up battery that can maintain his normal capabilities for 24 hours. This alien technology makes his power supply undetectable by normal sensor systems.
P.P.E.: None.
I.S.P.: None.
Disposition: Argent is a stern and uncompromising negotiator. He speaks his mind and does not engage in needless posturing. When he closes a deal, he does so without celebration and quickly moves to the next challenge. He seems to have an iron will and does not waver under tough situations, nor does he give in to demands, even when his life is threatened. His body language reveals nothing about his intentions and many of his employees feel nervous in his presence. He is a cold, condescending and intolerant taskmaster, and a heartless businessman. Argent's only concern is the bottom line and furthering the plans of Archie. Profit, after all, is another tool necessary for the implementation of Archie's plans.
Experience Level: Fourth level, human-like artificial intelligence, but it applies only to Argent's Secondary Skills which he has learned on his own. All other skills and abilities are programs that do not change with experience and make him equal to a 15th level businessman and negotiator, and combat skills equal to a 10th level Headhunter.
Magic Knowledge: None, but knows Lore: Magic at 50%.
Psionic Powers: None, but knows Lore: Psychic at 94%.
Skills of Note: Tactical knowledge of business strategies and relations are part of his basic programming. He is programmed with all Communications, Domestic, Electrical, Mechanical, Medical, Military, Physical, Pilot, Pilot Related, Science, and Computer skills at 94%. Speaks and reads all Earth human languages, plus Dragonese and Splugorth, at 94%. Wilderness Survival, Land Navigation, Carpentry, Lore: Demons and Monsters, and Lore: Psychic are also known at 94% proficiency. All other Espionage, Rogue, and Wilderness skills are known at 60%.
Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, Boxing, Wrestling, Robot Combat: Elite in all Titan robots and power armor, and all weapon proficiencies at tenth level proficiency.
Attacks Per Melee Round: Seven.
Bonuses (including attributes and skills): +2 to initiative, +8 to strike, +10 to parry and dodge, +15 to S.D.C. damage, +4 to pull punch, +1 to disarm, +1 to entangle, +5 to roll with punch/impact, critical strike on an unmodified roll of 18-20, paired weapons, and kick attack.
Cybernetics: None, outside of his robotic endoskeleton and cybernetic brain.
Weapons of Note: He has no integral weapon systems and usually does not bother carrying any on him. In case of an attack, he prefers to let the security robots handle the problem. However, he is proficient with all forms of weaponry, and Titan robots and power armor. He has a suit of Titan Heavy power armor readily available for his personal use and has access to all Cyberworks weapons and robots.
Description: A handsome blonde with deep green eyes and an absolutely flawless complexion. He is proportioned like a cross between a gymnast and a body builder. His human female employees become faint and practically melt in his presence. Archie modeled Argent's body after the image of a male model in his memory bank.

Desmond Masters (Alias Raven McCoy)

Raven McCoy is a shadow from Hagan Lonovich's past. Hagan was a long-time associate of this master of manipulation, until she abandoned Hagan at a time when he needed her help most. Hagan has longed for the day he could repay the favor, but the two have never crossed paths again. Years after they parted ways, fate has placed Raven McCoy in the Manistique Imperium in search of employment. She found it at the new Titan Robotics Complex, but Hagan doesn't know it because Raven McCoy is now calling herself Desmond Masters and appears to be a man, for he/she is a Changeling capable of assuming any humanoid form with a thought.

Over the years, Desmond Masters has had many names and identities other than this one and Raven McCoy. She/he came to Rifts Earth over a hundred years ago and has been causing trouble ever since. Over the years he has used his shape changing abilities as an adventurer, con-man, manipulator, spy and assassin. Natural talents augmented with psionic abilities, for Desmond Masters is also a *Mind Melter*. For the last twenty-some years he has made his living gambling, using his powers to swindle and cheat unsuspecting victims out of their fortunes. Masters' proudest and happiest years were those spent as an accomplished gambler, but an unexpected event in the New West with a being he suspects was a godling, stole his gambling and con-artist abilities from him.

Depressed, Desmond Masters drifted until he walked into the main office of *Titan Robotics* at Manistique and applied for a sales position. Before he could reach the human resources office, Desmond bumped into Argent Goodson, the head of operations at the complex. For a moment, Desmond felt a familiar presence in the android (that of Hagan acquired through Archie) and became intrigued by him. Argent recognized Desmond's special psionic talents, hired him on the spot and made him head of the sales division. Argent also calls upon Desmond for any delicate negotiations and situations that require subtle coercion. Desmond does his job well and is reaping the benefits. He does not like the fact that his employer is immune to his psionic charms and manipulations, and wants to find out who and what Argent really is. This quest to find out more about his mysterious employer has put him on the trail of the even more mysterious Cyberworks. Should Desmond Masters uncover the Aberdeen complex, he will be humbled by the fact that his old teammate, Hagan Lonovich, is holding on to the reins of its power and will try to connive his way into a piece of the action, if Archie, Hagan or Argent doesn't kill him first.

Real Name: Unknown.
Alignment: Miscreant.
Attributes: I.Q. 20, M.E. 28, M.A. 24, P.S. 16, P.P. 12, P.E. 9, P.B. variable, 6 in his natural form, Spd. 10
Hit Points: 68
S.D.C.: 25
Height: Varies, but usually around 6 feet (1.8 m).

Weight: Varies a little, but usually 150 lbs (67.5 kg).
Age: 242 years, but usually looks to be in his mid-thirties.
P.P.E.: 15
I.S.P.: 308
Disposition: Using a combination of his natural charisma, shape-shifting ability, and psionic powers, Desmond Masters is capable of manipulating all but the most strong- willed. He can cover lies with lies and make it sound like the truth. Since his induction into the company, he has proven to be an incomparable negotiator and salesperson, but as on top of the world as he is, he still wants more. Overtly, he is loyal and dedicated to Argent and the company, but secretly he longs to control him and discover Titan Robotics' secrets. If he ever discovers the truth about the company, Archie will surely send a robot hit squad after him.
Experience Level: 15th level Mind Melter, Changeling.
Magic Knowledge: None, lore and legends only.
Psionic Powers: All Sensitive powers, plus Alter Aura, Death Trance, Resist Fatigue, Deaden Senses, Bio-Regeneration, Detect Psionics, Induce Sleep, Empathic Transmission, Bio-Manipulation, Hypnotic Suggestion, Mind Bond, Mind Wipe, Mentally Possess Others, Mind Block Auto-Defense, Group Mind Block, Psychosomatic Disease, Psionic Invisibility, Psychic Omni-Sight, Radiate Horror Factor, Telekinesis-Super, Telekinetic Force Field, Psychic Body Field, Psi-Sword, and Psi-Shield. He is a master psionic and requires a 10 or higher to save vs psionics, plus M.E. bonuses.
Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic, W.P. Sword, W.P. Knife.
Attacks Per Melee: Seven physical or psionic attacks per melee.
Bonuses: +3 to initiative, +3 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +6 to pull punch, +4 to roll with punch/impact, critical strike on 19 or 20 and from behind, +4 to save vs possession, +1 to save vs mind control and magic illusions, +10 vs Horror Factor, and +7 vs psionics.
Skills of Note: Speaks and is literate in American, Spanish and Dragonese, Basic Math, Disguise, Impersonation, Intelligence, Interrogation Techniques, Seduction, Pick Pockets, Palming, Concealment, Computer Operation, and Pilot Hovercycle, all at 98%; Streetwise at 80%. He used to know Cardsharp at 98%, but can now only cheat at cards with a skill of 15%.
Cybernetics: None
Weapons of Note: Has a magic dagger that inflicts 1D4x10 M.D. and returns after being thrown, and a flaming sword (4D6 M.D.). Refrains from using technological weapons or any weapons that are difficult to conceal, but has access to any number of Titan produced guns.
Description: Usually appears as a tall, slender man in his mid-thirties with black hair and dark eyes. Wears only the finest clothing and stylish body armor (45 M.D.C.). In his natural form, he is a hairless, unattractive humanoid that is tall and lanky in build.

Elsewhere in America

Cyber-Knights

See North & South Dakota and **Coalition Wars 4: Cyber-Knights™** for details.

The Deep South

The lands once known as **Louisiana, Mississippi** and **Alabama** have been reshaped by the emergence of Atlantis. There is a new Southern coastline, the old flooded under the waves of the Gulf. 60% of Louisiana, 40% of Mississippi, and 10% of Alabama are gone. The new coastline begins at the ruins of Alexandria, Louisiana, continues east to the old city of Port Gibson and Laurel, Mississippi, to Atmore, Alabama. Much of lower Alabama is swamp and lakes. And although Mobile, Alabama is submerged, the old Mobile River is bigger and deeper than ever. There are the occasional farm community and feudal kingdom here and there, but it is safe to call the regions wilderness.

Ley Line activity is slight, with only four nexus points known to exist in the three territories, none in Louisiana, one near the ruins of Oxford, Mississippi, and the other three are all in Alabama; *Selma, Talladega*, and *Guntersville*. The last is the most powerful of the four and has a handful of tiny communities around it. Wild Psi-Stalkers are known to roam these lands, preying on psychics, mages, and monsters. Cyber-Knights also frequent the Deep South in order to keep an eye on the Ley Line communities and bring them some measure of order. Here the Knights have clashed with a power crazed Shifter trying to summon a demon army so he could conquer the Magic Zone, as well as various Necromancers, Witches and greater demons.

Alabama – The Dark Woods

The remoteness of the region is attractive to practitioners and creatures of magic who are outcasts or seeking solitude. As a result, there are individuals, cults and brotherhoods who practice the kinds of magic that are shunned or outlawed in many communities, including Necromancy/Bone Magic, Shifting, Temporal Magic, and Bio-Wizardry as well as a few obscure and alien forms of magic, human sacrifice, demon worship and Witchery. (**G.M. note:** This might be a good place to introduce something like *Blood Magic* from the pages of The Rifter®, but keep it rare and unacceptable in the rest of the world. It is also a place for experimental magic and evil mages and monsters.)

Practitioners of magic who are fugitives in need of a place to hide, sorcerers engaged in magical experiments, and diabolical humanoids, creatures of magic, and supernatural beings looking for a place to lay low to plot their campaigns of conquest, destruction or revenge often come to Alabama, for there are few who will follow them into the Dark Woods. In fact, the region has become an unofficial retreat for exiles where they can go

with little fear of being pursued. It has been this way since the Dark Ages. Even Lord Dunscon and most members of the Federation of Magic accept the Dark Woods of Alabama as a sanctuary for exiles. Nobody knows when or how this practice got started, but most respect this unspoken law. In fact, being *exiled* to the wilds of Alabama, whether by choice or by mandate at the hands of a third party, is regarded as severe and solemn punishment. One that leaves a mark on an individual's reputation forever, even if the isolation was voluntary to conduct strange experiments in magic. Anyone known to have ever been exiled to, or come from, the "Dark Woods" of Alabama is regarded with fear and suspicion even by his fellow practitioners of magic and supernatural beings, for such individuals are known to be the most ruthless and terrible there is, often willing to say, do or pledge anything to get what they want. Consequently, the most notorious and diabolical Shifters, Necromancers, Witches, dragons, demon worshipers, agents of demonic powers and practitioners of dark magic are said to come from the *Dark Woods* – many teetering on the edge of insanity.

It is said that those who cavort with evil supernatural beings can more easily commune with their "masters" in the Dark Woods and find inspiration in its solitude. As proof, an unprecedented number of Witches, demon worshipers, evil cults and actual demons come from the wilds of Alabama. Shifters who avoid allying themselves to supernatural evil believe that the region must hold two or more portals (accessible via ley lines or other means) that open to various demonic planes of existence. There may even be a couple of unknown permanent *Becalmed Rifts* which serve as an open line of communication to the realm of the supernatural. They don't know this as a fact, because none are willing to exile themselves there to find out, but that is the theory.

It is interesting to note that *none* of these sorcerers are members of the Federation of Magic. Quite the contrary, they are fiercely independent, even though many are practitioners of the same dark magic practiced in the Federation. This indicates a prevailing disdain by many spell casters for Lord Dunscon and his plans for the Federation. Not all magic users, including evil ones, want to be members of the Federation of Magic, nor are they all bent on the destruction of the Coalition States or the Federation's other goals. Some would like nothing more than to see this current incarnation of the Federation of Magic crushed and fade away. If there will ever be anyone who is going to challenge Lord Dunscon's throne, he is likely to emerge from the Dark Woods.

Alabama's "reputation" as a place of evil is not entirely warranted and has grown out of years of superstition. True, it has become a haven for exiled magic wielding miscreants and there are three known nexus points and a number of ley lines, but the land itself is not evil, it is just how the region has come to be known and how practitioners of magic, in particular, perceive it to be. Truth is, clans of good-hearted Psi-Stalkers, Native American Indians, and trappers regularly hunt and camp in the woods without incident or being corrupted by any pervasive evil energy. It is just another part of the American woodlands that has been "designated" for exiles, nothing more. Even the exiles don't represent much of a threat if they are left alone. The sorcerers, dragons and supernatural beings found here are comparatively few (perhaps a hundred or two throughout all of Alabama), and since they are usually exiled and alone, are not looking for trouble. Few of these evil beings attack without provocation (although being pestered or insulted is reason enough for some) and tend to avoid contact with outsiders. The only exceptions are those in search of victims for their experiments or blood sacrifices, or those looking to flex their muscles or vent their magic upon someone.

As the antithesis of the supernatural, **Psi-Stalkers** find the "Dark Woods" to be a well stocked and challenging hunting ground where they can regularly sniff out and find foul creatures and evil practitioners of magic to slay and feed upon. (Remember, Psi-Stalkers feed on the P.P.E. of their victims and instinctively see all supernatural beings as their natural enemies and "prey.") Since the forests of Alabama are feared and shunned by most civilized folk, Native Americans, trappers and barbarians living in the neighboring regions find Alabama to be a beautiful forest stocked with game animals and little competition for them. Furthermore, Cyber-Knights, one of the few who do not respect the woods as a haven for evil, regularly visit (roughly once or twice a month) to destroy supernatural monsters and put a stop to any evil machinations that are getting too out of hand. Meanwhile, adventurers often travel through parts of Alabama without even realizing it. This is the way things have been here for the last 200 years.

The Hamlet of Clavicle – home of Necromancers

There are a dozen small farms, a half dozen villages (none have more than 100 inhabitants) and a few hunting lodges here and there throughout Alabama. Most are populated by hard-working, god-fearing humans and D-Bees. Then there is **Clavicle**. A shabby little community founded by a brotherhood of Necromancers (the name is an inside joke). These Death Mages tend to keep to themselves, but welcome fellow practitio-

ners of the mystic arts and, according to rumor, will teach Necromancy to neophytes they find worthy. Though the founding Necromantic Brotherhood is the dominant ruling power with 36 members, there are four smaller brotherhoods (each with fewer than a dozen members), a death cult, a coven of Witches, a few Shifters and a couple dozen independent Necromancers who reside in town as well as roughly 140 ordinary folks who live and work in town. Most inhabitants either belong to the death cult or have no qualms about Necromancy or Witchery. All willingly choose to live in Clavicle among the Necromancers and their zombies. The typical alignment of the people ranges from Anarchist and Aberrant to Miscreant and Diabolic.

Some of the town's stranger features include:

- Farms worked by zombies.
- Mummies and animated dead are the community's defenders.
- A 20 foot (6 m) tall pyramid made of stone and bones. There is a chamber at the base of the pyramid where blood sacrifices are made.
- A dragon hatchling Necromancer obsessed with death.
- A shrine to Juicers.
- A place known as the *Juicer's Final Rest*, a hospice type facility where Juicers in the final stages of "last call" can come to find comfort and die in relative peace. What becomes of their bodies and bones afterward is anyone's guess.
- A small temple dedicated to "Death" of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. A Death Weaver Spider Demon serves as the high priest. This is home for one particular clan of the much feared *Grim Reaper Cult,* and a place where it is rumored one can be turned into a *Murder-Wraith* – an Undead Juicer! See page 50 of **Rifts® World Book 10: Juicer Uprising** for details on this rare and terrible procedure.

Dinosaur Swamp — Georgia and Florida

Most of Florida is gone! Everything South of Tampa Bay was reduced to rubble during the Great Cataclysm and lays sunken under 200 feet (61 m) of water. Today, what remains of Florida and most of Georgia is a giant *marshland,* like an expanded Everglades. Thanks to the Rifts, this region is the domain of dinosaurs. The most famous scholar in the region, Deearn Neenok (a D-Bee from New Lazlo), claims to have identified 32 types of dinosaurs described in Pre-Rifts texts, plus 11 he cannot identify, and there are likely to be others. These dinosaurs, however, straddle several different periods in time, placing species together that never coexisted in the past. This suggests one or more Rifts in the area were, at some point if not currently, portals *through time,* linking Rifts Earth to different periods in Earth's prehistoric past.

The idea of a dimensional Rift that leads to Earth's past is of interest to scores of scholars, scientists, practitioners of magic and adventurers. Some would like to travel back to the Golden Age of Man to live in a time and place of peace and wonderment. Others would like to go back to that era to steal its secrets and bring them back to Rifts Earth with the hope of making a fortune or becoming a world conqueror. Some dream of going back into time to learn exactly what happened. Others believe they can conquer and rule the past. One common altruistic dream is to go to the past to prevent the Great Cataclysm and stop Rifts Earth from ever coming into existence.

A handful of bold adventurer groups brave the Dinosaur Swamp every year in search of the legendary "Time Portal," but that's not the only reason. Some come for the thrill of truly "big game" hunting, others to capture the dinosaurs as attractions for traveling zoos or combat in the gladiatorial arena, and some for the meat, hides, teeth, claws and other resalable commodities of dinosaurs. Likewise, Juicers and Crazies sometimes make trips to the swamp to test themselves in combat with the creatures, or to enjoy a unique challenge (i.e., surviving a week or month in Dinosaur Swamp), and for some Juicers in the throes of "last call," to *die* as a warrior. Fugitives also use the dreaded swamp as a place to hide or to shake pursuers, for most people will give them up for dead and turn back rather than follow too far into the swamp. Whatever the reason, few are ever seen again, and not because they are living in the past. Most fall prey to a giant alligator, dinosaur or other monster, disease or foul play. Dinosaur Swamp is an extremely hostile environment, not that it stops people from coming.

Kentucky & Tennessee

Both of these old American Empire States are wildernesses with dense woodlands and rolling hills. Civilization is a rare thing in these parts. There are no towns to speak of, though there are tiny homesteads, cabins and hunting lodges scattered throughout. Magic is so strong in these areas that supernatural beings and monsters are the predominant life forms. That having been said, there are no monster kingdoms or even small settlements, but mainly lone individuals and small groups of 3-12 members.

One of the strangest occurrences in these parts is what natives call "D-shifting." One moment you are walking along a forest path, the next moment the entire forest blurs and then shimmers with silver light. Suddenly, the forest has been replaced by an alien forest or a desert! You are still in the same geographic location on Earth, but the surrounding environment is completely wrong. It's almost like walking through a holographic image that randomly changes. An unsettling experience no matter how many times one encounters it. Nobody seems to have an explanation as to how the environment can change but the people and location remain the same, but it happens throughout Kentucky and Tennessee.

The northeastern portion of Tennessee (along North Carolina) is another huge area exploding with mystic energy. The old cities of Bristol, Johnson City, Newport, Athens, Chattanooga, and Knoxville are all known sites for ley line nexus points and frequent D-Bee activity. Here one can find Fadetowns and places that only appear from time to time as well as sudden gateways to other worlds.

The Secret War. Unknown to most, the people from legendary *Psyscape* have been engaged in a secret war with the death cultists of **Soulharvest** located near the ruins of *Lexington, Kentucky.* Soulharvest is largely a forested area inhabited by Necromancers and cultists who worship a malevolent alien intelligence known as Nxla the Soulharvester. When these

death-mongers gather 6601 "True Believers," Nxla may open a portal and come to the Earth, in this case Kentucky, where it will bring about a new age of death and chaos! To aid and protect the true believing Harvesters in their quest to bring Nxla to Earth, they create Soulless Xombies, terrible creatures made from helpless victims. Unless great care is taken to return them to normal via a special ritual known to the *Grey Seers* and most Master Psychics, dragons and mages of *Psyscape*, the victims turned Xombie are doomed.

Nxla is a powerful alien intelligence that is feared even by the Splugorth. Like vampire intelligences, Nxla is a pestilence. He gets a foothold in the world by reaching out and finding fools who worship death and/or power to accept him as their master.

In 105 P.A., there were approximately 2900 True Believers and 4200 Soulless Xombies. As of **109 P.A.** the number of True Believes and Xombies are down 20% (about 2300 Believers and 3400 Xombies). This has been due entirely to the efforts of the people at Psyscape. Rather than simply exterminate the Soul Harvesters as the Federation of Magic and the CS would do, the psychics of Psyscape have chosen a different path, one of controlled warfare and enlightenment. They know that an outright purge is likely to send many of those living in the kingdom of Soulharvest to scatter and go underground, making it more difficult to find and challenge the Harvesters (the people who worship Nxla). Instead, they Psyscapers try to show the Harvesters the folly of their ways and the great pain and sorrow they will cause if they bring Nxla to Earth. The psychics make personal appeals using words of reason and compassion as well as telepathy, empathy, implanted dreams and other psionic powers to better drive home the horror in order to get Harvesters to repent and give up their worship of Nxla. Such personal appeals often result in brawls and outright battles to the death. In the process some Harvesters have been slain along with a number of Soulless Xombies, but a good half actually do forsake Nxla and leave the kingdom of Soulharvest. Others have gone back to spread words of dissension and invitations to change. The Psyscapers try to avoid serious battles and a few refuse to fight at all, letting themselves be martyred for the cause in the hope that their sacrifice of life will somehow touch some of the Harvesters and make them reconsider their actions and forsake Nxla. Not all of Psyscape's agents are that benign, of course. Some track down leaders and the most wicked of Nxla's minions and destroy them. Others operate in groups that *capture* 3-8 Soulless Xombies at a time and force them into the Ritual of Soul Restoration, turning the Xombies back into normal people. Once restored, no one who has been a Xombie and touched by Nxla will ever worship the monster again. Thus, they are becoming a growing legion that speak against the horror that is Nxla the Soulharvester and convince worshipers to forsake this agent of suffering and death. (See page 21 of **World Book 12: Psyscape™** for details on this difficult and dangerous ritual.)

The Harvester leaders (and Nxla) are furious that the Psyscape campaign is working so well. In addition to the five hundred True Believers who have defected and the more than five hundred Xombies who have been saved and returned to normal, at least one third of the remaining Harvesters are starting to question their conviction and evil master. Some do so openly. Nxla and his most loyal minions are wondering if there is something they can do to Psyscape to stop their interference. As a first step, secret teams of Harvesters and Soulless Xombies have gone forth to slay the evangelical preachers and Psyscapers actively trying to convert their membership. Meanwhile, Nxla and others plot revenge against Psyscape. If Psyscape successfully defeats them, it will be for the second time in 300 years, and Nxla does not intend to let that happen. Whatever villainy they level against Psyscape, it is likely the Harvesters will instigate it, but some "other" force/pawns will be the ones to implement it.

Also see a brief overview and a bit more on the "secret war" found in the *Psyscape* portion of this section a few pages down, and details on Soulharvest in the *Magic Zone* section earlier on.

The Magic Zone

The Mississippi River is a wide and flowing behemoth that snakes its way from the Gulf of Mexico to Xiticix country in Minnesota. The river is about 300 feet (91.5 m) across at its narrowest and more than a mile (1.6+ km) at its widest. It is also the site of hundreds of ley lines and several nexus points. Major nexus points and places of magic are clustered along the river between St. Louis, Missouri and Illinois, down through Arkansas and into Northern Louisiana. Another major cluster branches to the east along the Ohio River (an arm of the Mississippi) and dominates the Ohio Valley. This makes the entire region attractive to dragons and other creatures of magic, supernatural beings, Faerie Folk and practitioners of magic.

The center of the Magic Zone is located on the banks of the Mississippi in what was once known as East St. Louis, Illinois. This area is intersected by over 200 ley lines and has 13 nexus points within an 80 mile (128 km) area, the biggest and most powerful at being an old Indian mound in East St. Louis. **The Indian Mound Nexus** is reputed to be one of eleven mega-powerful Nexus epicenters. Unfortunately, the incredible amount of magic energy in this region and the Ohio Valley has made it uninhabitable by human life. Demons and all manner of supernatural creatures emerge from the many ley line nexus points, while other monsters are attracted by the incredible magic energy. At Summer and Winter Solstice, during eclipses and planetary alignments, the 13 nexus points and ley lines at the center of the Magic Zone glow with such intensity that their light can be seen a thousand miles away. When this occurs, all 13 places of magic turn into Rifts for 12 to 24 hours, admitting more supernatural nightmares into our world.

The Magic Zone is a constant source of fear and trouble for Chi-Town and the neighboring territories. Few humans, other than practitioners of magic, psychics, and the foolish, dare to travel the forests of *southeastern Missouri* and *Arkansas*, *southern Illinois*, or the *Ohio Valley* (southern Indiana and Ohio).

The Devil's Gate, located across the Mississippi River in St. Louis, Missouri and directly across from East St. Louis, Illinois, is a permanent dimensional Rift that spans the opening of the old St. Louis Memorial Park Gateway Arch (how ironically named). Some believe the Arch was deliberately constructed and named the "Gateway" by a secret society of occultists who understood the potential power it could yield as a megalith long before the Coming of the Rifts. Indeed, during the Great Cataclysm, a dimensional portal opened and permanently fused with the Gateway Arch. The magic energies have also made the archway indestructible. Centuries have passed since the Rift first opened and the Devil's Gate remains a doorway to other worlds to this day.

Try as they may, the Coalition States has been unable to close or destroy the Devil's Gate. Beginning back in 68 P.A., the CS has tried to establish a military containment force to destroy demons as they emerged from the Rifts. However, the cost in human lives and equipment was devastating and the CS was forced to abandon the project in 77 P.A. However, reconnaissance patrols and flybys continued as the most dreaded assignment a Coalition soldier can pull.

During the early days of the Siege on Tolkeen, the Coalition Military renewed its efforts to *contain* the Devil's Gate (St. Louis Gateway) by using Death's Head Transports to fly in a modular fortification that fit together to create a giant, bunker-like containment building. This huge M.D.C. structure was erected within two weeks with additional smaller Coalition bunkers, military transport vehicles and robot troops surrounding it. Inside, RCSG Scientists desperately try to figure out ways to channel and disperse the ley line energy if not actually close the permanent Rift. Three companies of Armored Robot Vehicles – mostly heavy UAR and IAR robots with a lot of firepower – are assigned inside the containment bunker to destroy *anything* that emerges, no matter how benign it may appear. Massive short-range plasma and particle beam cannons devised specifically for this operation are also located inside, along with two companies of Skelebots. This is the largest undertaking since the 68 P.A. effort and is intended to serve the dual purpose of containing the Rift and establishing a vital base of operations in the center of the Magic Zone. The Coalition Military felt such an effort, in concert with the siege on Tolkeen, would put the fear of god in practitioners of magic everywhere. It is the first, permanent CS military base to be established in the Magic Zone and required years of advanced planning and preparation.

To the Coalition's surprise, the Federation of Magic has done nothing to stop them. The reasons are simple. For one thing, the Federation knows the Rift cannot be contained or shut down, so the CS operation is an exercise in futility that illustrates how little they know about magic and Rifts. For another, there are plenty of Ley Line Storms, weird energies and monsters from the surrounding Rifts to keep the CS St. Louis occupation force scrambling endlessly. Lastly, the location of the Devil's Gateway puts the CS troops smack in the middle of a network of magic energy that malicious practitioners of magic can manipulate at will. Thus, the CS are cast afloat in a violent environment they have no control over nor understanding. And so the Federation of Magic simply sits back to watch the show, knowing they can destroy these stupid intruders any time they want. Leaving the CS to their own devices is simply more amusing.

Indeed, over the last four years more than 600 Coalition troops have perished, thousands have been injured, and thousands of Skelebots and hundreds of giant robot vehicles have been damaged or destroyed. Furthermore, the top of the containment bunker has been blown off on three separate occasions when the Rift inside swelled or erupted with energy and smashed through it. Once, half the soldiers inside the bunker vanished only to reappear five months later no worse for the wear (they thought they had only been gone for a few minutes). The CS are in over their head at the Devil's Gate, but aren't willing to admit it. Instead they point to the 9372 creatures they have slain from the Rift, not to mention the countless other aliens who turned tail and fled back into the portal rather than face the "wrath of the Coalition Army." According to the Military High Command, this proves how important their presence is at the Devil's Gate. The fact that the dozen or so other ley line nexus points in the immediate area are regularly used by spell casters to open dimensional portals and weave magic with impunity is somehow beside the point. **Note:** Recent rumors claim the CS has been using the Devil's Gate to indiscriminately dump hazardous waste and to dispose of magic items captured at Tolkeen by tossing them into the open Rift. If true, the CS could inadvertently provoke whatever happens to be on the other side at the time. The Devil's Gate is believed to be connected to 42 different worlds which the portal regularly cycles

through, and as many as half are populated by intelligent, sometimes supernatural, beings.

Federation of Magic
– Ohio Valley region

Overview

Like so many places and people on Rifts Earth, the Federation of Magic is rooted in both myth and reality. It is difficult to pigeonhole it as any one or two things. The only constant is that it has always been a people divided.

Although occasionally united by one strong leader, such as *Nostrous Dunscon* in decades past, the Federation is a loose-knit conglomeration of a thousand diverse groups and individuals. These groups consist of powerful city-states and magical kingdoms, to villages, brotherhoods, guilds, clans, cults, enclaves, bands, gatherings and powerful individuals (including alien beings, demons, demon lords, dragons and gods). Most of the communities are tiny, seldom numbering more than a few hundred, but some have thousands. Ironically, it is often individual mages, cults and small bands who only have a dozen or two members who seem to be the loose cannons causing trouble, and bringing the Federation of Magic more infamy. These individuals and groups typically see their association with the legendary and fearsome organization as enhancing their *own* reputation and image. Thus, they use the name "Federation of Magic" like a sword or fear spell to make others bend to their will or relent in terror. Many join or associate with the Federation of Magic because they think they can profit from it in some way (the fear and respect brought by the name, and access to magic, acquaintance with other sorcerers, tutelage in the ways of magic, opportunity, etc.). Others join in hope of rising through the ranks to take their place as its leaders. A difficult task, since few acknowledge any one leader and many claim themselves to be the true leaders of the organization.

The agendas and goals of these groups and individuals frequently clash or work toward contrary and conflicting ends. This leads to constant violence, bloody skirmishes, feuds, vendettas and long-lasting rivalries, not to mention inadvertently thwarting or stumbling over one another. In many respects, the Federation of Magic, and most of the groups and individuals operating in the Magic Zone, are a study in selfishness and chaos.

Before the fall of Tolkeen, it has been rare for more than 20% of the various factions within the Federation of Magic to join forces under *one leader*, even for a short period. The Great Nostrous Dunscon had managed to rally little more than 50% of the overall magic community in his campaign against Chi-Town. No one since, not even his ambitious heirs or the three *Lords of Magic* have come close to equaling his leadership and influence. **Lord Alistair Dunscon**, the current patriarch of the "one true" Federation of Magic, has not been able to get more than 15-20% to follow him in any organized effort, although he is a power to be feared. Likewise, while the Lords of Magic rule over a powerful city and have tremendous influence with some members of the Federation of Magic, they too have failed at uniting the magic community.

Generally speaking, the people of the Federation represent all alignments, although selfish and evil ones tend to dominate. Some live free and strive for greatness, while others lead simple, quiet lives in welcomed obscurity. Others are slaves locked in forced servitude or command powerful human and inhuman monsters or live as (often unwitting) slaves of their own desires or folly. Some work for the betterment of all intelligent life while others seek to enslave and destroy. Those motivated by goodness often act as protectors and strive to build and nurture, while those motivated by hate, greed or foul intentions are the notorious *evil mages* who have come to be identified with the Federation of Magic. Thus, the organization is many things to many people: home and refuge, a place to hide, a place of learning and expansion of the mind, a place of exploitation, a stepping stone to greater knowledge, a doorway to other worlds, a means to power, an ideal to be feared, a land (and people) to conquer, a means for revenge, infinite opportunity, death, and living hell . . . . to name a few.

The Magic Zone, with its multitude of ley lines, nexus points and sheltering wilderness, had always attracted practitioners of magic and supernatural beings. After the Coalition's Bloody Campaign and the death of Nostrous Dunscon, it became the primary refuge for fleeing members of the shattered Federation of Magic. Even the most well-intentioned mages and heroes will admit that the majority of sorcerers who inhabit the fabled Magic Zone count themselves as members of the Federation and seem to be self-serving, evil or inhuma. As is so often the case, it is the vocal minority (in this case, evil mages) who are most visible and give the Magic Zone its bad reputation. As a result, most outsiders and virtually all CS citizens believe ALL residents of the Magic Zone are murders, demon worshipers and wicked.

Note: See **Rifts® World Book 16: Federation of Magic™** for details about Lord Alistair Dunscon, the Magi, and other people, monsters and places in the *Magic Zone*. See the **Rifts® Book of Magic** for a description of *every* spell and many magic items, tattoos, herbs, and weapons from World Books 1-23; a super-reference book. **Psyscape** and additional psionic powers and creatures are found in **World Book 12: Psyscape™**.

Tolkeen & the Federation of Magic

Lord Dunscon and other members of the Federation of Magic have found the events of the Coalition-Tolkeen War to be both fascinating and educational. Agents of the Federation have watched every step of the conflict, paying close attention to the Coalition's military procedures, weapons, defenses, strategies and tactics. Such data is invaluable to the Federation's own ongoing rivalry with the CS, giving them a better understanding of how the Coalition Military operates and where the army is most vulnerable. Lord Dunscon went so far as to dispatch teams of special operatives to confront CS forces during the war to directly test the mettle of the CS and to experiment with their own magic weapons and tactics in the field of combat. These skirmishes were always in the guise of Tolkeen freedom fighters or freebooters with no ties to the Federation of Magic. At one point however, Lord Dunscon considered joining Tolkeen in their battle against the Coalition States.

From the inception of the war, thousands of its members wanted the Federation of Magic to join the battle, or to attack Chi-Town while its Armed Forces were divided. When Lord Dunscon ordered the Federation members to stand down, wait and watch, thousands of them broke ranks and went to join Tolkeen anyway. Those who obeyed and waited, questioned the wisdom of their leader, and some, behind closed doors, dared to call Lord Dunscon a coward. This decision only caused more dissension and confusion among the rank and file of the loose-knit Federation. However, for everyone who disagreed with Lord Dunscon's decision, there were three who concurred. Of course others were sympathetic to the cause, but like the people of Lazlo, realized it was a war that could not be won and that their involvement could not save the besieged Kingdom. The less compassionate stayed out of the conflict for reasons of their own. Many members of the Federation of Magic considered Tolkeen to be a rival or were jealous of it's prosperity and fame. Thus, they cheered for the Coalition and hoped for the collapse of Tolkeen. They wanted the Tolkeenites to suffer at the hands of the CS as the Federation of Magic had all these years. Many were as stunned by Tolkeen's success in the Sorcerers' Revenge and resented that the Coalition's greatest defeat came at the hands of the Tolkeenites rather than the Federation. When word came that Tolkeen had routed the Coalition Army and was believed to have destroyed more than 70% of its troops, there was rioting in the villages of Dunscon and the tunnels of Brass.

Thus, when ambassadors from Tolkeen came to Lord Dunscon pleading for help on bended knee, the self-proclaimed King of the Magic Zone reveled in the glorious moment. Never before had the elitists of Tolkeen come to the Federation of Magic for help. They and Lazlo were always (quite literally) too good for them. So many times in the past had Tolkeen rebuked and reviled the Federation, and yet now they groveled like whimpering dogs at his feet. Lord Dunscon made the Tolkeenites wait an agonizing period of time before giving them his answer, and then only after extracting much more than a pound of flesh. One part of that agreement required the Kingdom of Tolkeen to acknowledge Alistair Dunscon as the one true leader of the Federation of Magic, and another required Tolkeen to become a member of the Federation of Magic themselves. In return, he promised to attack the returning Coalition Army as they advanced on Tolkeen, catching the CS in a pincer maneuver that the Tolkeen Warlords believed would be a second Sorcerers' Revenge, and crush the war effort once and for all, perhaps crippling the Coalition's military capabilities.

Lord Dunscon was a happy man. The plan was a win, win situation for him. Tolkeen would be humiliated and beholden to him and the Federation's most reviled enemy would finally be dealt a blow to the heart – a blow struck by the *Federation of Magic*. Lord Dunscon assembled his forces and some 28,000+ Federation volunteers from throughout the Magic Zone (a third of them inhuman monsters) marched toward their destiny. However, Lord Dunscon is a cunning strategist and paranoid madman, so he had spies and lookouts placed all round Chi-Town and Tolkeen. Thus, he was the first to learn about the Coalition's plan to give up the war against Free Quebec and send those troops immediately to Tolkeen. He also recognized how badly the Sorcerers' Revenge had depleted Tolkeen's resources and could more accurately estimated the size and power of the second Coalition Invasion Force. Never one to underestimate the power of hate or revenge, he could see that nothing was going to stop the CS this time. And so, on the outskirts of Mis-

souri, unnoticed by the CS, Lord Dunscon had his troops hold their position. When the CS Invasion Force made its move on Tolkeen, Dunscon called back his troops without firing off a single spell. Tolkeen, too weak to mount an effective defense, fell to the Coalition Army as Lord Dunscon knew they would. When this strategy (some would say treachery) was called to question, Dunscon smiled and explained how he had just helped to eliminate a rival, and summarily assassinated everyone who dared to speak publicly against him.

Tolkeen operations in the aftermath of the Final Siege: The Federation of Magic is taking full advantage of the situation at Tolkeen to strike against the CS from the shadows. Federation forces at the fallen Kingdom of Tolkeen set traps and ambushes to waylay the CS Occupation Force in renewed guerilla warfare. Though these fighters (warriors, spell casters and demons) are comparatively small in number, perhaps no more than six or seven thousand scattered throughout the kingdom, they are having an impact on the Occupation Force. However, they fight not to rescue refugees or to push the CS from the region, but for personal revenge or profit. They could care less about the Tolkeenites. They want only Coalition blood and to loot the treasures and secrets of Tolkeen before the CS or some rival. In this regard, they are nothing more than vultures come to feed on Tolkeen's bloated carcass. For now, at least, Federation combatants are not recognized by the Coalition Army and most skirmishes are blamed on Tolkeen resistence fighters, not the Federation.

The search for Tolkeen's secrets. Everyone was surprised and impressed by many of the magic weapons and war machines Tolkeen unveiled throughout the course of the war. Now that the Kingdom of Magic has fallen, outside forces like the Federation of Magic covet them for themselves. Lord Dunscon (as well as the Lords of Dweomer and the Splugorth of Atlantis) is especially interested in acquiring the secrets to the *Iron Juggernauts*, a new technology known only by an elite group of Tolkeen Techno-Wizards. Lord Dunscon has dispatched 600 agents to accomplish this task alone. To that end, they brave the CS occupied ruins of Tolkeen's Techno-Wizard and manufacturing *centers* in search of documents and clues, while others seek to find some of the actual inventors and laborers who might know at least some of the procedures so that the Federation can piece it all together. Meanwhile, others seek magical artifacts as well as lesser magic items, components and treasure – pulling them from the rubble and out of the hands of anybody who may have gotten them first. This means adventurers, fellow sorcerers, Tolkeen survivors and Coalition troops are regularly attacked and robbed of magic items scrounged from the ruins of Tolkeen.

Making trouble in the 'Burbs. The Federation of Magic has tripled the number of spies and agents operating in the Chi-Town 'Burbs. They are searching for weaknesses in the Chi-Town's defense and raising fears, doubt and hostility among the people of the 'Burbs, as well as engaging in acts of terrorism and sabotage against the CS and its supporters (i.e., Old Town 'Burbs and the Vanguard), and letting Tolkeen survivors take the blame.

The Federation and the Vanguard. The Vanguard is a secret society of practitioners of magic who, for generations, have worked behind the scenes to counter magic and help the Coalition States, Chi-Town in particular. Since their inception, they have operated on behalf of Chi-Town and the CS in absolute secrecy, with only legends and rumors to suggest that they ever existed at all. However, toward the end of the Siege on Tolkeen, the Vanguard overplayed their hand and their existence was confirmed by Federation spies. The Federation of Magic quickly made their discovery known to their members as well as Lazlo and other places of magic.

Despite being exposed, little is known about the mysterious Vanguard – where they are headquartered, the number of members, their leaders and agenda are all a mystery. Some still wonder if the Federation might not be mistaken or have made it up, and consider the Vanguard to remain an unsubstantiated urban legend. However, Lord Dunscon and the militant members of the True Federation of Magic are obsessed with uncovering all of the Vanguard's secrets, and to capture and slowly torturing and killing every last one of these loathsome traitors. This has become one of Lord Dunscon's prime directives and contributes to the madman's paranoia. He now sees every one of his human minions as a possible brainwashed, spell casting puppet-spy of the hated Coalition States. The very mention of these traitors makes his blood boil, and he has vowed to bring down the Vanguard if it takes every resource at his disposal.

The Federation and the CS. As always, Lord Dunscon and the many factions of the Federation plot to undermine and destroy Chi-Town and the Prosek family. For the moment, however, they take only pot shots at the nation while things develop at home.

The Kingdom of Dunscon & The Federation of Magic – 109 P.A.

For two generations, the so-called Kingdom of Dunscon has been a disputed territory claimed by Lord Dunscon and predominantly inhabited by his supporters and followers. Rather than a kingdom of cities and sprawling communities like Tolkeen, it is primarily composed of numerous tiny towns, villages, cults, sanctums, and private estates (the lairs of individuals or small groups and/or creatures of magic). The Hidden City of Brass is Lord Dunscon's home base of operation, but until recently even it had a meager population of around 20,000. The next largest cities were *Nostrous* with around 5000 people and *Dragon's Blood* with fewer than 2000.

The Federation of Magic unites. If anything truly terrible has resulted from the fall of Tolkeen, other than the obvious loss of the kingdom itself and the death of thousands, it has been the galvanizing effect it has had on the Federation of Magic. Till the bitter end, the siege on Tolkeen had little impact on the Magic Zone or the Federation. If anything, the war drained it of some of its most powerful and heroic members, many of whom joined the conflict in Minnesota. Most went to fight *against the Coalition Army* rather than fight "for" Tolkeen, and almost all met their fate there.

Back home, with many of the old guard and heroes away or slain at Tolkeen, rivalries, vendettas and conflicts rekindled to cause scores of mini-wars throughout the Magic Zone. Lord Dunscon's own Kingdom was subjected to several riots born from internal unrest and issues concerning the war at Tolkeen. He even stared down a feeble coup attempt, easily put down

with the systematic murder of its leader and all who dared to openly speak against him. Personally, Lord Dunscon would have liked nothing more than to join the battle against the CS, but held back, fearing it would give the leaders of Magestar, Stormspire, Dweomer or other enemies the opportunity to usurp his power over the Federation of Magic. In fact, he may have joined the war despite his own misgivings if not for the counsel of his chief advisor, *Bloodmist*.

So nothing of genuine consequence changed much in the Magic Zone. Even the renewed infighting and civil unrest was nothing new. It was not until the cities of Tolkeen and Freehold actually fell to the CS and their populations slaughtered, that a shock wave of horror shot throughout every practitioner of magic on the continent. Though the war had raged for years and people frequently speculated on the inevitable defeat of Tolkeen, nobody honestly believed it would happen, or if it did, it was years away. Nor did they imagine the cities being razed to the ground and their people gunned down en masse. When two great cities were reduced to rubble and the Dragon Kings fled, everything changed. It was a dose of reality that hit them in the face like a bucket of ice water. First, there was shock and disbelief. Then, sorrow and mourning, followed by fear and anger.

Unlike Lazlo and other peaceful communities, Lord Dunscon seized the moment and played on the people's emotions. He pounced on their fears, warning that all of them were smaller and more vulnerable than Tolkeen ever was, and predicting that as long as the Federation remained fractured and splintered into a thousand competing factions, they could never oppose a Coalition force like the one sent against Tolkeen. Never. And without a doubt, the Federation of Magic and the Magic Zone *would* be the Coalition's next target. Maybe not next week or next year, but soon. After all, the Magic Zone had always been feared by the ignorant Coalition States, and only Dunscon's True Federation of Magic has ever dared to stand against them. With the victory of Tolkeen under their belts, there could be little doubt that the CS would turn to eradicate their greatest enemy of the last hundred years – The Federation of Magic – and everyone else along the way. It was an argument that resonated with everyone.

Dunscon dredged up every possible doomsday scenario and pitched them with maniacal pleasure. Then he fanned the flames of anger into rage and lust for revenge. Hatred spilled from his lips like honey and all who listened were moved by his words (one way or the other).

According to Lord Dunscon, the fall of Tolkeen spelled the end of their "innocence." The time for uncertainty and brawling needed to come to an end. If they were to survive, they needed to unite. And Lord Dunscon stood ready for the task. The Federation of Magic. . . . "his" Federation of Magic. . . . the "True" Federation of Magic stood ready and strong. And in an act of solidarity, opened its arms to all people of the Magic Zone – ready to forget the old vendettas and schisms to embrace any who would join them to face the new era, together.

To the horror of Lazlo, Dweomer and Stormspire, people have flocked to Lord Dunscon's embrace. Some seek protection and solidarity in strength of numbers under the auspices of the Federation of Magic. Others see the Federation as the strongest combat force in the region and the only one with years of experience fighting the CS. The war at Tolkeen has turned others into hate-filled kindred spirits of Lord Dunscon and his evil Federation of Magic. For those obsessed with hatred and revenge, Lord Dunscon is the only choice – the one leader to have always spit in the Coalition's eye and called for the destruction of Chi-Town.

Two months after the fall of Tolkeen, 37% of the previous independent or rival factions within the Federation have sworn allegiance to Lord Dunscon and accept him as the "one true leader" of the *True Federation of Magic*. Practically overnight, Lord Dunscon has gone from commanding 15% or 20% of the people who claim to be members of some Federation faction or another to roughly 55%. It is an unprecedented turn of events, for not even the legendary Nostrous Dunscon who led the Federation against the CS nearly 90 years ago and perished in Joseph Prosek the First's *Bloody Campaign* of 12 P.A. had such popularity! Moreover, vengeful sorcerers and refugees from Tolkeen are turning to the Federation of Magic to give them the retribution they seek.

The City of Brass
Lord Dunscon's Lair

Brass is the subterranean capital of the Kingdom of Dunscon and headquarters to the "True" Federation of Magic. Until recently, the Kingdom of Dunscon consisted of little more than its capital city, three towns and a few thousand people living in tiny villages and collectives scattered around it.

The massive subterranean City of Brass is located inside the *Mammoth Caves* in Kentucky, about 20 miles (32 km) south of Nolin Lake and about 130 miles (208 km) south of Louisville. Geographically, the location is ideal for Lord Dunscon because it puts him in the center of his circle of operations. The Mammoth Caves are near the center of the Magic Zone and are centrally located near several major ley lines and important locations. These include the ruins of Old Chicago and the southern tip of Lake Michigan approximately 350 miles (560 km) away, Chi-Town within 400 miles (640 km), New Lazlo and the ruins of Old Detroit 400 miles (640 km), Lazlo 600 miles (960 km), Dweomer 200 miles (320 km), the Devil's Gate (St. Louis) 220 miles (352 km), Fort El Dorado (Arkansas) 500 miles (800 km), the eastern border of the Pecos Empire 800 miles (1280 km), the Mississippi 100 miles (160 km) due west, and the Gulf of Mexico only 500 miles (800 km) due south **(Note:** All distances are rough approximates and may be a bit off.) Furthermore, the region surrounding the Mammoth Caves is the domain of Necromancers, the *Grim Reapers* and other miscreants who welcome the return of a Dunscon to take command of the Federation, and who serve as his supporters, warriors and mercenaries. The natural underground cave network makes an excellent natural defense as well as a suitable living habitat for some of his inhuman associates.

What makes the City of Brass truly unique is that it does not actually exist in the caves, but in some alien dimension linked to them. This is not readily apparent since the only way to get to the city is through one particular section of the *Mammoth Caves*, and to most visitors, it seems as if the city is underground. This is why the CS has never been able to find the Federation's base of operations from the air or ground, or with sophisticated sensors. The City of Brass doesn't actually exist on Rifts Earth. It is also why they incorrectly believe the Federation of Magic to have a much smaller number of followers and no major city than really exists. Lord Dunscon believes the City of Brass may exist in a *pocket dimension* or straddle an isolated region on an alien world. No dimensional traveler has ever mentioned such a domain, so Brass is truly something unique. The city is accessible only through six permanent dimensional portals in the Mammoth Caves (difficult to find unless one knows where to look), so it has the illusion of being located on Earth.

Though this city is "claimed" by Lord Dunscon and inhabited by his treacherous subjects, they did not build it. Brass is an alien construct whose creators are not known. It derives its name from the *brass-colored*, Mega-Damage constructs that fill the cavernous enclosure – twisting and bulbous buildings with an organic appearance as if the buildings were *grown* rather than built. The original chambers seem to have been created for creatures twice the size of humans, but have been easily modified for human habitation and make life comfortable for larger beings. The alien dimension is also the source of the thick black waters that slice through and around the city like the canals of Venice. Brass, wherever it exists, is in a confined, cave-like area with no apparent dimensional exits other than to Rifts Earth. However, it is huge and can easily accommodate a population of hundreds of thousands.

In the Aftermath of Tolkeen's fall, the City of Brass has swollen to nearly 42,000 (from roughly 20,000), with thousands continuing to arrive from elsewhere in the Magic Zone, and this is in addition to the thousands of Tolkeenites swarming in from the Kingdom of Tolkeen. By year's end, estimates place the population of Brass at 60,000-90,000, and the population of the rest of the Kingdom to at least double.

Mercenaries, freedom fighters and evil supernatural beings who once fought for Tolkeen are also flocking to Dunscon. Already more than 1000 Daemonix have sworn allegiance to the Federation of Magic, as have hundreds of Brodkil, Gargoyles, Witchlings and other monsters driven from their homeland in Minnesota. Previously unaffiliated mercenaries, bandits and lowlifes attracted to the promise of impending war are also starting to contact the Federation as they search for an enemy to kill and a paycheck for their trouble. Many who feared or disliked the Coalition States to begin with, now see them as an evil empire and an imminent threat. United by what happened at Tolkeen and bound by their common sense of rage, fear and lust for retribution, they turn to the one power that promises to give them the "justice and revenge" they demand, Lord Alistair Dunscon. Many of those joining Lord Dunscon are filled with regret. They feel they turned their backs on Tolkeen and swear to make amends by reaping a terrible vengeance upon those responsible for its destruction. The Coalition States actually helps push people to the Federation of Magic by claiming the kingdom of Tolkeen for themselves, bulldozing its cities and forcing out creatures like the Daemonix, Black Faeries, Neuron Beasts and countless others. Angry, vengeful and with nowhere else to go, they turn to Lord Dunscon.

As much as it galls him, Lord Dunscon leads the choir that screams "justice for Tolkeen." It is a growing anthem that rings throughout the Magic Zone. He finds it ironic that Tolkeen in its destruction serves him far better than it ever did in life.

This frightening turn of events is of grave concern for other kingdoms in the Magic Zone who worry that Lord Dunscon will try to leverage them into joining the Federation and his crusade against the CS. Those who refuse, they fear, will be branded as traitors and conquered or destroyed. Already there has been a good amount of derision and allegations against Dunscon's old rivals and enemies. The tiny community of **Magestar** and the

Society of Sages are openly mocked and lambasted for their peaceful views. The running jibe is telling these do-gooders to pack up and move to Lazlo or somewhere else if they are so against "justice for Tolkeen." Indeed, these one-time voices of reason and tolerance are being drowned out by cries of vengeance and overriding hatred.

Stormspire. Lord Dunscon has never liked this community or its cocky reptilian leader, Master K'zaa. The people and K'zaa were always a little too smug and independent for his taste, and never really supported the Federation of Magic. Yes, they are Federation members, but pretty much members in name only. That has changed with the advent of Tolkeen's defeat and the unprecedented support showered upon Lord Dunscon. Stormspire is a city known for its Techno-Wizard technology and manufacturing and is under pressure to start suppling the Federation with massive amounts of armaments, vehicles and even *Dragon Juicers* as fast as possible, and at cut-rate prices. Until now, Stormspire could often get away with ignoring Lord Dunscon, but now with strong *public support* on his side, the city must comply or else. . . . (Also see the section on *Stormspire* a bit farther along in this section, and **World Book 16: The Federation of Magic™** for more details on Stormspire and people and places in the Magic Zone, including stats on Master K'zaa and Lord Dunscon.)

The Grey Seers are continuing to be both a source of insight and consternation for the Federation of Magic. Their clairvoyant visions can be very useful and helpful, but not when they defy the will or vision of Lord Dunscon. Right now, he is perturbed that the Seers have foreseen his plans for the CS and have announced that the "sword of retribution cuts both ways and will bring much sorrow and death to all people of the Magic Zone."

The Grim Reapers have been welcomed with open arms and allowed out of the shadows and into mainstream society where they are being touted as leaders and heroes in the fight against the Coalition. The death cult has always been aggressive and outspoken enemies of the CS, but represent the fanatical fringe willing to do *anything* to destroy the CS, including turning Juicers into the undead *Murder Wraiths*. With the war mounting, an unprecedented number of Juicers reaching the end of their short chemical-lives are willingly submitting to being turned into mindless zombies to continue the fight against the CS!

Dweomer stands alone. For generations the Three Lords of Magic and their city of Dweomer has divided the Federation of Magic and stood as Lord Dunscon's only real competition. In fact, until the fall of Tolkeen, Dweomer was "the" dominant power in the Magic Zone, and the antitheses of everything Lord Dunscon's kingdom and Federation represented. In many ways, one can think of Dweomer as a more militant and aggressive version of Lazlo. A place of giant magical war machines and towering fortifications as well as magic, tolerance and learning.

Now, the tables have turned, putting the maniacal Lord Dunscon on top. Unlike Stormspire, even now Dweomer has the clout and military capabilities to decline to join the Federation of Magic and refuse to participate in the war of retribution encouraged by Lord Dunscon. Of all the kingdoms, it is Dweomer who openly opposes retribution and war. The Three Lords of Magic agree there must be solidarity and a unified effort to build defenses, but not to provoke a war with the most powerful nation on the continent.

Lord Dunscon never thought he could hate Dweomer more than he already did, but he was wrong. If he thought destroying the city wouldn't sap the Federation's resources and create dissension among his ranks, he would turn his army on this most hated of rivals in a heartbeat. Instead, he works to undermine the kingdom's reputation and force them into taking arms against the Coalition States. He hopes to accomplish the latter by convincing the Coalition States that Dweomer behind the violence soon to erupt. And he will make certain the Coalition Army can *find* the city despite its clever enchantments and dimension spanning magicks.

As for **Lazlo** and **New Lazlo**, they are criticized for being weak and indecisive, and ignored.

The War that isn't. The strange thing is, while everybody in the Magic Zone seems to be screaming for Emperor Prosek's head and the downfall of Chi-Town, and thronging multitudes gather at Dunscon bellowing for "justice," no war has been declared. Nor have troops been formed. Right now, the situation is more like a controlled mob of thousands shouting and chest-thumping, as Lord Dunscon molds their opinions and plants ideas in their heads. This is all a deliberate part of Lord Dunscon and his counselors' plan. They want the people to think their so-called "war of retribution" is their idea. They want the people to be so inflamed and blinded by hate that it is they who beg Lord Dunscon to lead them against the Coalition. It is a plan that is unfolding perfectly. In addition, Lord Dunscon does not want to tip their hand too soon. He has seen what the element of surprise did for Tolkeen, and he hopes to duplicate that success for the Federation of Magic in the year to come.

The first target. Lord Dunscon and his advisors have no intention of formally declaring war on the Coalition States, deciding to let their actions speak for themselves and attack without warning. Let the CS figure out what's happening and who is responsible for themselves.

As dearly as Lord Dunscon and others would love to attack and bring down Chi-Town, they know that unless they can find a way inside the fortress city, the odds of success are slim and none. So on that front they bide their time while Federation agents probe Chi-Town's defenses and physical design in search of a flaw or weakness they can exploit. In the meanwhile, Lord Dunscon has found another appealing target, the arrogant and newly formed *State of El Dorado*. The human supremacists of Arkansas have been a thorn in the side of nonhumans and practitioners of magic for years. The CS wannabe has been sending raiding parties and companies of hunter-killers to find and destroy weavers of magic, D-Bees and supernatural beings for years on end. With the recent appointment of El Dorado as an official State of the Coalition, the El Doradoans have finally gotten their hearts' desire, so it seems only fitting for the Federation of Magic to tear their heart out for them. The fall of El Dorado will serve the dual purpose of extracting revenge upon the zealots, and humiliating Emperor Prosek and Chi-Town for being unable to save the new jewel of the Coalition States. It may also make allies of the *Pecos Empire* who have suffered their share of grief at the hands of El Dorado.

After that, *Lone Star* perhaps, or the Chi-Town 'Burbs, or the farmlands of Missouri and Iowa. At this stage, Lord Dunscon is playing it by ear. As for the CS troops at the St. Louis Rift Containment Bunker, Dunscon has said, "let them cringe in fear and wonder what day and hour their destruction might come, for we can swat those flies whenever we please."

Coalition Intelligence is asleep at the switch and is blissfully unaware of the events transpiring in the Magic Zone. For one, they expected the inhabitants of the Magic Zone and the followers of the Federation of Magic to be incensed, wring their hands and shout for revenge. Consequently, they are not alarmed with exactly that going on. Second, they knew a number of the survivors from Tolkeen would gravitate to the Magic Zone. However, since so many have vanished inside Lord Dunscon's other dimensional City of Brass, CS scouts and flybys do NOT see the tens of thousands assembled there and grossly underestimate the number of angry militants who shout for their heads. In the final analysis, Coalition Intelligence reports "no significant change" in the situation at the Magic Zone.

A wild card. Through Titan Robotics' contacts with the Black Market and mercenary companies, Archie-Three has figured out something dangerous is going on in the Magic Zone, and suspects they are building an army. Moreover, Shemarrian spies sent into the region are being destroyed at an alarming rate, but not before telling him that the Magic Zone is buzzing like an angry beehive. While Archie is not sure what to make of this or how alarmed he should be, Hagan correctly suspects the worst. He has convinced Archie that the downfall of Tolkeen is drawing the Federation of Magic together and eliciting others to join them in a crusade against the Coalition States. . . . with Chi-Town the most likely target.

Archie has accepted Hagan's grim assessment not just because the machine-entity has come to trust Hagan's insight, but because Hagan ended his speculation by saying that's what he would do if was the leader of the Federation. The problem for Archie and Hagan is how to respond. Archie has never had good reconnaissance in the Magic Zone, and Hagan fears the psychics and mages in the region have figured out that the Shemarrians are robot spies, which would explain why they are being destroyed so rapidly and without provocation. Archie plans on taking over the CS for himself someday, and doesn't want to see them crippled or destroyed. The Federation and the denizens of the Magic Zone, on the other hand, are mostly monsters and D-Bees, making them the natural enemies of Archie, who sees himself as the self-proclaimed savior of humankind. Consequently, Archie needs to do something to protect human life even if it is the Coalition States. What and how is yet to be figured out.

Cromwell the Disgraced. Located at a ley line nexus a the edge of the Magic Zone in Indiana, is the castle keep of Cromwell the Black, a Ley Line Walker of some repute. Rumor has it that he was thrown out of the Federation of Magic after trying to usurp the throne from Lord Dunscon. After a bloody coup attempt, all of Cromwell's troops and allies were captured and

slain (some say in a bloodbath of arcane rituals that made Lord Dunscon more powerful than ever). Only Cromwell the Black was allowed to live, according to Lord Dunscon, so that he could live out the rest of his life in disgrace as a fool and a weakling. Cromwell the Black lives for revenge, and is always looking for bold adventurers to do jobs for him that secretly undermine and hurt Lord Dunscon and his Federation of Magic. He has a little scheme going right now.

The City of Dweomer

Over the last few generations, thousands of humans, D-Bees, and supernatural beings have found sanctuary from the persecution of the Coalition States by coming to the City of Dweomer. A community established and ruled by the mysterious *Lords of Magic* and run entirely by magic. A place where technology is not merely ignored in preference to magic, but is actually disdained (Techno-Wizard devices, which are plentiful, are considered creations of magic, not technology). The Lords of Magic wisely share (at least some of) their magic knowledge with their citizens which has attracted many students of magic and helps to breed loyalty. To better facilitate the study of the arcane arts, they have established a special college of magic known as the *Dweomer Institute*, as well as the *Dweomer Defense Academies* (the Brotherhood of Battle, the Brotherhood of Magic, and the Brotherhood of Creation; where the Magi are trained), and have made allowances for the peaceful coexistence of several different magic guilds, brotherhoods and practitioners of magic. Only Necromancy, Bio-Wizardry/Rune Magic, and Witchery are completely forbidden. Temporal Magic is not encouraged and is viewed with some concern, but allowed in moderation.

Dweomer City is the largest and most powerful faction within the Federation of Magic. It is believed to be the third largest city of magic known to exist in North America. Only Tolkeen and Lazlo are larger (*The Kingdom of Dunscon* drops in at number four, and *New Lazlo* at number 10). Under the guidance and protection of the Lords of Magic it has prospered and is magnificent in a way most Technocrats (those who rely on technology) find hard to believe.

Dweomer rather looks like the fantasy cities of old faerie tales, with a bit of the alien added in for good measure. At the heart of the city is the domain of The Three Lords, a magnificent, glittering white castle with towers stretching high into the sky. The royal gardens cascade down the hills near the main entrance, while rolling hills of wind-swept grass, light forest and farmland surround the castle. The city proper radiates out from around this centerpiece, looking more like a pastoral village than a modern city. The houses have a charming Old World look to them, although there is a range of styles and materials from the traditional to the alien. Overall, Dweomer has a magical, fairy tale feel that most residents have come to love. Despite the thatched houses and medieval look, the city is fairly high-tech and has the magical equivalents of most modern conveniences. Magical airships, flying barges, and defense platforms slowly cruise the perimeter, while Wing Boards, dragons and all manner of flying beings, from winged animals and inhuman creatures to magically empowered individuals, soar through the sky. The closest things to a traditional factory are the great Techno-Wizard forges, mills and manufacturing complexes located near the perimeter wall, and away from the city proper. To many residents, it is a virtual utopia, and they are happy under the benevolent rule of the three Lords of Magic.

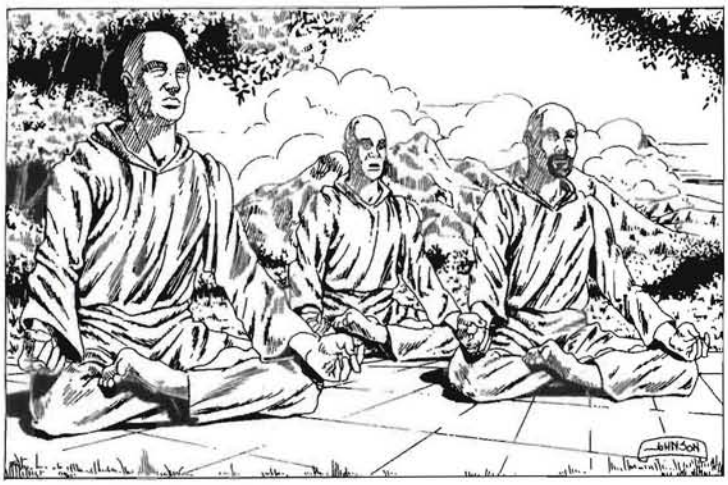
After the fall of Tolkeen. Dweomer, like Lazlo, had refrained from participating in the war in Minnesota, though a number of independent Conjurers, Battle Magi and others did leave to join the battle. Also, like Lazlo, the city is prepared to help the refugees and give thousands of displaced Tolkeenites a new home. The Three Lords have even dispatched companies of Automatons to safely escort refugees down along the Mississippi River to the gates of Dweomer. More than 13,000 Tolkeenites have become part of the city with another 5,000-10,000 expected to join them, and an equal number to make new lives elsewhere in the Magic Zone. Unlike the bloodthirsty individuals rushing to Dunscon, those turning to Dweomer want to put the war behind them and build a new life. For them, hearing Lord Dunscon's plans for a "war of retribution" is pure folly that threatens to destroy them all. That is a message the leaders of the city are trying to make heard, as they push for other less aggressive solutions to the Coalition threat.

One may argue that the fall of Tolkeen has not so much galvanized the inhabitants of the Magic Zone as *polarized* them into three main groups: those seeking revenge in the Dunscon camp (55%), those struggling to find peace in the Dweomer camp (33%) and the independents or neutral (12%) who try to ignore both sides and just get on with their lives. A good third of those swept up in Dunscon's terror and hate might slip into the other two camps if they could stop, cool down and really think about the consequences of what that camp is suggesting, but Lord Dunscon keeps agitating the multitudes to keep emotions at a fever pitch. This has caused some backlash for Dweomer, resulting in brawls, vandalism and unfair accusations of treason and callousness.

Unwilling to attempt a hostile takeover of the Federation of Magic (at least at this time), the leaders at Dweomer are stocking up on supplies, cranking out more automatons, fording up their defenses and hoping they can weather the storm that the "war of retribution" will bring down upon them all. In the interim, Dweomer continues to offer protection to the **Grey Seers** and a number of other small communities who defy the will of Dunscon.

The Society of Sages, though viewed with suspicion by the rulers of Dweomer, has established a dialog with them and both communities exchange news, information, observations and suggestions between each other. They *may* also come to each other's assistance depending on the circumstance. The two respect each other but just don't see eye to eye.

The powers that are in Dweomer have also reached out to those in **Stormspire** and **Magestar**, but the former is too afraid of the Federation of Magic to accept their offer, and the people of Magestar would rather tough it out on their own. Rumors that the **Grim Reapers** are becoming a powerful force within Lord Dunscon's Federation of Magic have put the leaders of Dweomer on edge. They consider the members of the Grim Reaper death cult to be fiendish monsters devoid of any sense of right or wrong, and a threat to all people.



The Grey Seers

The Grey Seers are a scattered group of Mystics who specialize in clairvoyance, seeing the future and sharing that knowledge to prevent disasters and loss of life. They predicted the *Sorcerers' Revenge,* saw *death from the north* (now understood to be General Holmes' army coming down from the Xiticix Hivelands), and the *fall of Tolkeen* months before they happened.

Now they speak of "irrational actions driven by hate, fear and sorrow," the folly of "following the seductive voice of hate and vengeance," and speak of the "clouds of sorrow and suffering" that come with the fall of Tolkeen and the firestorm that will rage from the "storm of retribution." They also predict the Cyber-Knights shall "reunite under the western sky" to face a "most terrible enemy" (the monsters of Calgary?), and "though they will suffer greatly, the knights will stand triumphant and stronger than ever before."

Grey Seers are a comparatively tiny organization with a dozen small communities that are places of learning, teaching, healing and meditation scattered east of the Mississippi River. A half dozen exist in the Magic Zone, one at *Dweomer*. Other notable enclaves exist at *Lazlo*, one near *Old Bones* in Free Quebec, one tiny group in Illinois not far from *Chi-Town*, and two or three hidden in the eastern wilderness. The one group in the Kingdom of **Tolkeen** escaped the carnage of the final siege only to be captured and slain by a platoon of Coalition soldiers in Missouri when the Seers told them they would not live to see another sunset unless they left the area immediately and troubled no one further until the new dawn. Two hours later, the soldiers were obliterated in an onslaught by angry dragons and shape shifters disguised as refugees looking to avenge the murder of the Grey Seers.

The typical enclave has 3D4+4 actual Grey Seers who teach, advise and heal. An additional 6D6+40 followers assist, aid and help the oracles any way they can (cooking, cleaning, building, helping to tend crops, etc.). Perhaps as many as two hundred wander the North American continent sharing their knowledge, healing and helping others.

The organization is so small because to become a Grey Seer requires years of mental and physical training as well as an innate psionic aptitude. Furthermore, the Grey Seers live a humble life with only the most basic amenities, avoid technology and practice tolerance and pacifism. They fight only in self-defense, and their reward is the satisfaction of helping others, not wealth or glory.

The Grey Seers strive to achieve a sort of neutrality – neutral in the sense that they try not to hate any living being, not even the Coalition States or supernatural monsters. They ally themselves to no nation, government or religion, and seek to enlighten and help all people. However, the Grey Seers are frequently outspoken, ignoring political lines, bruising egos, and often issuing unpopular opinions, warnings and advice. They tell of psychic impressions and visions without consideration for whom they may insult or anger, for to them, the truth is *truth*, and if their words will help others or prevent disaster they will speak openly. This has angered or earned them the enmity of many leaders and kingdoms. In this regard, their personal beliefs, views and practices, while benevolent and idealistic, are actually far from neutral and they live very active and productive lives.

Many people regard them with great respect and see them as compassionate missionaries and/or an invaluable source of information. Some see them as windows to the future and others as holy men and prophets to be revered. In some instances, they are practically worshiped (something the Grey Seers try to discourage). Others fear them as unnatural monsters with the terrifying power to see the future, and shun, harass and kill them. Some, like the CS, see them as dangerous mutants or the pawns of some greater (and dangerous) supernatural power. Others wonder if they are part of a secret organization with a secret agenda, while others are envious of their power and insulted by their humility.

Lord Dunscon would like to silence their talk about "death and sorrow" resulting from hate and revenge, but knows they only tell what they see in their visions. Still, he would like to control them or prevent them from speaking to others. He had thought about placing them under "his" protection and spiriting them away to the City of Brass, but his rival Dweomer has beaten him to the idea and has publicly pledged to keep the Grey Seers safe right where they are – giving Lord Dunscon one more reason to hunger for their destruction.

The Society of Sages

The Sages are an elite Brotherhood of sorcerers, alchemists and human supremacists. They are rumored to hate dragons, secretly work to undermine the Cult of Dragonwright, and are said to capture, torment and kill dragons in terrible experiments. Case in point, the Society of Sages are among the few people in North America who hold the secrets for creating *Dragon Juicers*. A secret they refuse to share with Dunscon's Federation of Magic, earning them his growing ire.

They are also known to "exterminate" inhuman monsters, mainly D-Bee sorcerers, supernatural beings and any D-Bees who get in their way. Their ultimate goals and purpose are closely guarded secrets.

Note: Weighing the fact that the spell casting Sages are *human supremacists*, Lord Dunscon and his advisors wonder if the Society might not be a secret arm of the elusive *Vanguard* (sorcerers who betray their brethren and secretly aid and support the Coalition States). Lord Dunscon has dispatched a number of human and inhuman spies to find out. If they are Vanguard, or if Dunscon can find enough evidence to make a good case against them, he will cheerfully slaughter them all. Neither the Society of Sages nor the leaders of Dweomer know about Lord Dunscon's spy operation or his intention to railroad the Sages.

The Cult of Dragonwright

The Cult of Dragonwright has a fairly wide following in the Magic Zone, Dweomer, Lazlo, New Lazlo, and throughout the Federation of Magic. A fact that greatly disturbs Lord Alistair Dunscon, who sees the Cult as a serious competitor. It is believed that 48% of all magical societies and Brotherhoods have at least one member who is secretly (in many cases, openly) a member of Dragonwright. They do not fight against any faction, but rather try to subvert the members of each group toward the worship of dragons. This has not been terribly successful, since many factions, like Lord Dunscon's, consider the Dragonwrighters to be subversives, spies, and/or rivals, and tend to be harsh in their treatment of the cultists. This is a bit more than unfounded paranoia. The majority of cultists would like to unite the various magic factions under Dragonwright. The cult is popular because of the relative commonness of dragons on Rifts Earth and the fact that many dragons serve as protectors, leaders and rulers on Rifts Earth. Many of whom encourage dragon worship.

The Cult of Dragonwright has become especially prominent in the area dominated by the Federation of Magic, where many humans and D-Bees in the smaller towns have taken to dragons as saviors and gods. These people willingly worship the powerful creatures in hopes of gaining protection and mystic knowledge in return. Cultists can be found in every town and village, including Dweomer City and Dunscon's own City of Brass. They are usually a minority, or even lone individuals, but in those places not dominated by a greater power, the cults have sprung up to dominate that realm. Three or four Fadetowns are ruled by powerful adult dragons, and even hatchlings can often form a cult for personal gain.

Or so it was before the fall of Tolkeen. Dragonkind's credibility took a precipitous plunge when the *Dragon Kings* took wing to abandon Tolkeen and left Freehold to fall to the advancing Coalition Army. Not only did hundreds of the dragons simply give up and flee, but most didn't even try to stall the CS advance or work to save the innocent multitude. The heroic deeds of the handful of valiant dragons who did battle to the very end are overshadowed by the callous mass exodus. Many people who once worshiped dragons were dumbstruck and appalled by the unabashed treachery. Many immediately gave up on Dragonwright in outrage. Others are disappointed and unsure whether or not dragons deserve the exalted status they have been given under the cult. Talk about dragonkind's arrogance, sense of superiority, greed, alien nature and foibles has become a major subject of conversation. Many question any dragon's loyalty to mere humans, and people's painful disillusionment is pushing them away from Dragonwright and destroying trust in dragons in general.

The Mystic Triad & Magestar

The Mystic Triad was formed by three humans, a Battle Magus, a High Magus, and a Lord Magus. They were born and raised in Dweomer City, but broke away from the elitist city to create a new society that would attempt to befriend normal humans and D-Bees, and show them the wonders and positive side of magic. That there was nothing to fear and magic practitioners and ordinary people could live side by side to their mutual benefit. A hundred friends and associates, all fellow residents of Dweomer City, joined them for this grand adventure. Calling themselves the Mystic Triad, they and their supporters established a new town they named Magestar. They have tentatively been attempting to form relations with cities that are known to accept magic users, such as Lazlo and the late Tolkeen. So far, they have met with only limited success, as no one outside the Magic Zone readily trusts people once related to the Federation of Magic.

The population of Magestar is varied, consisting of humans and D-Bees from most races found in North America. Only about 15% of the overall population are practitioners of magic. Many individuals without magic knowledge have joined in order to be protected in return for useful services. Headhunters and other mercenaries have been hired as protection, but some are there because they believe in the cause. A few years after the founding of Magestar, a large contingent of Cyber-Knights contacted the government and offered support. Since then, they have been an integral part of Magestar's leadership and defenses, and help to inspire goodwill in the fledgling community, as well as having a small Cyber-Knight outpost in the town.

Note: The division between the Cyber-Knights who remained loyal to Lord Coake and those who went to fight for Tolkeen drained Magestar of its noble supporters during the war years. However, since the fall of Tolkeen, the Cyber-Knights have returned. Most are Knights who fought for Tolkeen. A number of them are "Fallen" Cyber-Knights and a few hermits. They have turned to Magestar as the place they go to find acceptance and peace while they try to find themselves and rediscover their purpose. This has made the town something of a rescue mission for shell-shocked Cyber-Knight veterans, the lost and confused, including a few evil Knights.

Stormspire

Stormspire could quite easily be considered the "Techno-Wizard capital of the world." Almost all known types of Techno-Wizard devices and new and experimental items are produced and sold here. Although Stormspire itself is an excellent place to buy these items, with prices often 30% less than those on the Black Market, it is not an easy place to reach for it is deep in one of the most embattled and hostile regions of the Magic Zone.

The city was established with commerce (manufacturing and sales) in mind, so it is one of the few towns in the Zone to offer dozens of shops and a huge variety of magic. The Black Market, Pecos Empire, Tolkeen and Dunscon's Federation of Magic are among their biggest customers, as well as numerous mercenary outfits, retailers and individuals. According to rumors, even the Naruni and Splugorth have come to Stormspire to make purchases. According to some estimates, 30-40% of all Techno-Wizard items sold in North America are manufactured at Stormspire!

In addition to standard Techno-Wizard items, Stormspire produces Techno-Wizard firearms, vehicles, armor, adventuring equipment and special items. While many of these items can be found on the Black Market, *new* Techno-Wizard vehicles are primarily found at Stormspire (the Black Market sells used ones). TW vehicle sales are one market area Stormspire has reserved for itself. Also, the city does not have conventional factories, so each vehicle is painstakingly hand-built. This means

they are quite expensive and there aren't that many of them, but it's a bull market and TW vehicles sell like crazy.

Stormspire trades with the Black Market for conventional items as well as maintains secret contact with many merchants in Tolkeen and Ishpeming (Northern Gun), so most common tech weapons, armor, hovercycles and equipment can be found at the city as well.

Lord Dunscon is pressuring **Stormspire** to start supplying the Federation of Magic with massive amounts of TW armaments, vehicles and gear as fast as possible, and at cut-rate prices. Since its inception, Stormspire has been a card-carrying member of the Federation of Magic. However, that was mostly a scheme to get Dunscon and members of the Federation to do business with them. When it came to Federation policy and politics, the independent people of Stormspire mainly gave Dunscon lip service and did as they pleased. Now, however, with such strong *public support* behind Lord Dunscon and the frenzied demand for Techno-Wizard equipment, the city is stuck between a rock and a hard place and needs to put up or shut up.

Stormspire's leader is a Lizard Mage who calls himself *K'zaa, Master of the Realm*, knows that Lord Dunscon despises him and is just looking for a reason to kill him and seize Stormspire for himself. To complicate matters, a recent survey showed 49% of the people in Stormspire supported the Federation of Magic and 37% endorsed Lord Dunscon's "campaign of justice" (i.e., retribution) even if it meant going to war with the CS. Consequently, K'zaa and his Techno-Wizards can no longer ignore Lord Dunscon without looking like cowards or traitors. And that's just the beginning of K'zaa's problems. Stormspire is one of the few places in the Magic Zone that has the capabilities to create *Juicers* and the super-rare *Dragon Juicers*. Lord Dunscon has volunteers backed up out the door and down the street waiting to be "Juiced." However, he expects Stormspire to do the augmentation at cost. Furthermore, many of the volunteers signed up for Juicer augmentation are mentally or emotionally unstable and make bad candidates for Juicers, but Lord Dunscon insists. As for Dragon Juicers, there is only a comparative handful of candidates for that process, but to make a Dragon Juicer, a dragon must die! This is an awkward situation, since a good number of dragons are members of the Federation. Lord Dunscon's henchmen have advised Master K'zaa not to worry, that they will provide him with the dragons to be sacrificed in the process – no questions asked.

Being forced to sell Techno-Wizard devices and make Juicers at minimal prices to help "the cause" hurts the city's economy and goes against the ruthless and greedy nature of Master K'zaa, but he has no alternative other than to defy Dunscon, secede from the Federation, and have his own subjects rebel against him. Any way he looks at it, K'zaa loses his kingdom.

Although self-serving, K'zaa is also brilliant and cunning, so he realizes that Lord Dunscon is setting him and the people of Stormspire up for a fall. The Coalition Army knows that Stormspire is the region's premiere tech-center and weapons manufacture, and have launched a few half-hearted air raids on the city in the past. When (and it is only a matter of time) the city is implicated in the Federation's "war," Stormspire will be one of the Coalition's first targets. Lord Dunscon doesn't care, because by that time he will have all the arms, equipment and Juicers he could want, and he welcomes the destruction of Stormspire because it removes yet another hated rival. At this point, K'zaa sees no way to stop Dunscon or his war of retribution short of killing the man, and at this stage, the people are so worked up that even the demise of their leader is not likely to stop the war. Until he can think of something else, Master K'zaa is complying with "the will of the people." The mage has considered throwing in with Dweomer, but knows that the Federation of Magic will get him for it, so he plans for the worst and hopes for the best. Meanwhile he is busy plotting his escape route and what he can take with him when the moment comes. The crafty D-Bee already has millions hidden away at New Lazlo and more in another dimension, but plans to take everything he can carry before the city falls. Stormspire is his greatest achievement. If there is a way to save it, he will try to do so, but he will not go down with it.

Soulharvest

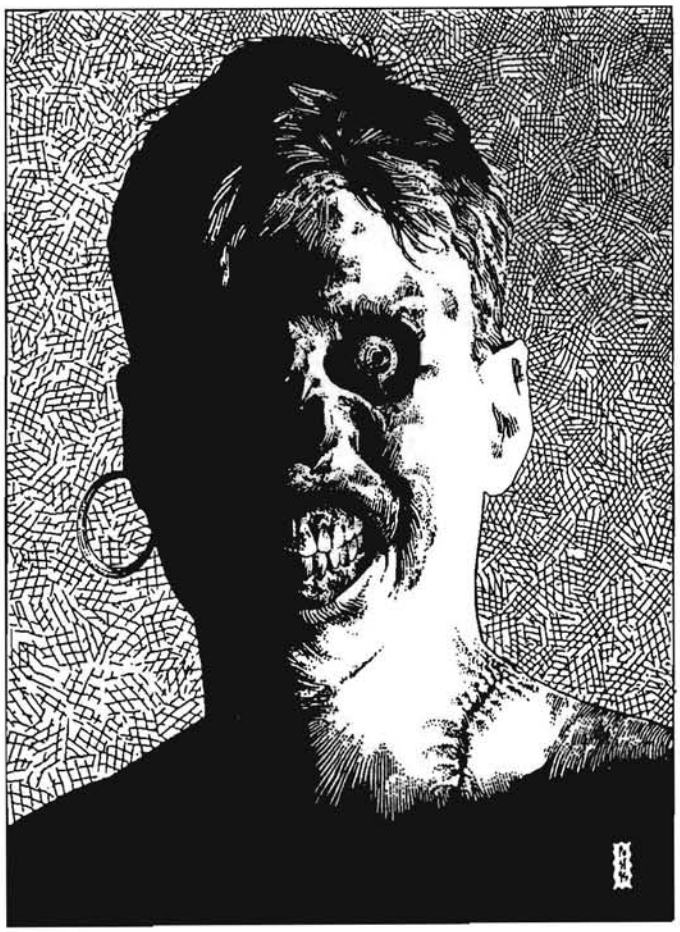
Located in the deepest recesses of the Magic Zone, on the ruins of Lexington, Kentucky, not too terribly far from the Kingdom of Dunscon, is a Necromantic hell known as Soulharvest. It is an area of forest inhabited and dominated by Necromancers and worse. This is a realm where the dead find no peace, and the living have little or no morals to give them conscience. Necromancy has become a way of life, and "life" has little value. Skeletal legions of corpses, ghouls and zombies make up armies and serve as slaves. Carriages pulled by the rotting corpses of long dead horses or monstrous beasts are a common sight on the roads between the villages and sorcerers' lairs in the region. Animated corpses, Shadelings, Necrophim, ghosts and monsters of all manner roam the land freely, many attracted by P.P.E. given off by the area's many ley lines. Others are attracted by the stench of death.

It is here that some of the most horrible and forbidden magicks are practiced. Human sacrifice, demonic summoning, and Witchery are all commonplace. The Necromantic arts, in particular, have seen much adaptation and specialization here.

One of the most horrible new magicks is that used by the *Soul Harvesters*. These men and women literally steal the souls, or at least the *life essences* of their victims in order to feed their quest for power and magic. They do this through complex rituals in which their victim is killed and mutilated in order for the Harvester to gain the victim's P.P.E. and inner strength. In so doing, they help to bring a horrific alien intelligence into the world. Neither Lord Dunscon nor the Magi of Dweomer are aware of the diabolical plot unfolding in this haunted and evil land, for if they did, they would unite to stop it. Instead, they blissfully go about their lives unaware that a horrible evil may soon threaten them all, Nxla the Soul Harvester. Only the *Grey Seers* and people of *Psyscape* have some inkling of the growing danger. Likewise, Major and Master Psychics, especially those within 200 miles (321 km) of Soulharvest, can sense an uneasiness in the air. Those closest are beginning to suffer from nightmares and ominous visions that warn of an engulfing icy darkness.

Nxla, The Harvester of Souls is a powerful alien intelligence that is feared even by the Splugorth. According to legend, he is the last (and least?) of the Dreaded Old Ones that some-

how escaped the magic slumber that has eliminated his brethren from the Megaverse. Other legends suggest this is a lie started by Nxla, but that he is indeed an ancient and powerful alien intelligence. Like vampire intelligences, Nxla is a pestilence. He gets a foothold in the world by reaching out and finding fools who worship death and/or power to accept him as their master.



Undead Juicers & the Grim Reapers

"Surrender to Death, and Live Forever," is the Grim Reaper Cult's famous saying. The first rumors and tales about this mysterious and feared cult started appearing during the 80's P.A., at such Juicer havens as Ishpeming, Los Alamo and Kingsdale. The rumors spoke of a cult of Juicers who worshiped Death itself. Some of the wilder tales claimed that some Juicer cultists had attained *immortality* by undergoing a dark magical ritual.

Today, it is known that the Grim Reaper cult is real and so is a sort of "damned" immortality as Undead Juicers known as *Murder Wraiths* and *Knight Hunters*. Dozens, perhaps hundreds of Juicers try every year to make contact with the **Grim Reapers** and seek immortality, even if it is as a murderous zombie. Most of these Juicers are in their fifth or sixth year of service and feel death approaching. These desperate men and women are ready to do anything to forestall their impending doom, even give up their souls.

Juicers who desire to join the cult must first find them. This *is no* easy task, as most communities shun these worshipers of death and forbid the creation of Undead Juicers. Furthermore, most people regard Undead Juicers as agents of Death and destroy them and Grim Reapers wherever they are encountered. Sadly, evil is often difficult to root out completely, and so it is that the Grim Reapers manage to survive. A few are found in the worst slums of Juicer frequented cities, others are given shelter at places of evil, like the *Kingdom of Dunscon*, and encouraged to work their destructive magic. The cultists corrupt the human spirit, practice human sacrifices, and thrive on murder, mayhem and revenge. They worship "Death" itself, leader of the Four Horsemen of Apocalypse, and reap death and destruction wherever they go. Consequently, it is no surprise that they are given hero status in the Kingdom of Dunscon, where the seeds of revenge and hate are ushering in a new war, and with war, death.

Rumors: Though the cult's numbers rise and fall, its membership has never risen above 500. Its leader remains the Necromancer known as Aramis, said to be immortal himself, and they continue to breed Undead Juicers for nefarious purposes. Allies include pawns such as paid mercenaries, assassins, and several hundred Juicers attracted by the idea of worshiping death, as well as evil creatures like Witchlings, Black Faeries, Secondary Vampires and lesser demons. However, these pawns and servants are also few in number, seldom exceeding 1000, and have a high mortality rate.

Note: Grim Reapers are *known* to exist in *Laramie* (the cult's secret headquarters), the Necromancer town of *Clavicle* in the Dark Woods of Alabama, and the *Kingdom of Dunscon* in the Magic Zone, but only in Dunscon are they out in the open. Grim Reapers are also "rumored" to have cults in *Ishpeming* (a rumor that persists even though several thorough investigations suggest it is false), *Kingsdale*, an unidentified 'Burb at *Iron Heart*, *Ciudad Juarez* (Mexico) and probably a few other places in Mexico, Land of the Undead.

Dunscon has 50 Murder Wraiths counted among its legions, and that number is expected to double or triple before they attack the Coalition States.

Juicer Undead/"Murder Wraiths"

The *Grim Reapers* hold the secret of Juicer Undeath. Those few Juicers who will do anything to escape death, or who become fascinated by it in all its forms, may seek out the Grim Reapers. Those who manage to join the group spend the last months or years of their lives serving the Horseman of Death (described in **Rifts® World Book Four: Africa**), murdering innocent people in the name of this dark god. A number of blood rituals prepare the Juicer's body for the transformation, even as his soul is thoroughly corrupted by his crimes. During the last year of the Juicer's human life, the chemicals of his bio-comp system are gradually replaced with noxious potions, products of dark alchemy. The last rite is conducted as the Juicer is about to die. The Necromancers who lead these death-cults become mystically linked to the "candidates" and can sense the time when the Juicer's death is at hand. A final ceremony, accompanied with more human sacrifice, is conducted as the candidate is in his death throes. When it is over, an inhuman creature is unborn.

Undeath as a Murder Wraith has its temptations. Those who emerge from the transformation are undying creatures who may exist for millennia. They are far more powerful than they were before, endowed with supernatural strength and endurance, while retaining their speed and reflexes as Juicers. The Undead Juicers are truly invulnerable to most forms of attack, harder to kill than vampires, and as powerful as demons. Only magic and the ancient bane of all undead, silver, will affect these beings;

all other attacks, including the most powerful conventional explosives, will be useless.

The price for such power is the loss of every last shred of humanity, becoming mockeries of the living. Murder Wraiths must feed on the life force of others and consume their flesh to remain strong. Sunlight is painful, although not lethal, and most Undead Juicers only come out at night. Murder Wraiths are controlled by their Necromantic creators, and bound to obey their every command. A few undead have managed to turn against their masters and slay them, but even then they remain evil monsters who must prey on all living things to survive.

See **Rifts® World Book 10: Juicer Uprising™** for more details on the Grim Reaper Cult, Murder Wraiths and other types of Juicers.

Minnesota

Southern Minnesota was home to the Kingdom of Tolkeen and is now occupied by the Coalition Army, who continues to battle freedom fighters and monsters. Northern Minnesota is part of the Xiticix Hivelands. See the section on Xiticix under Canada for the north, and the section on the Aftermath of Tolkeen for details about the southern half. Also, most places located in the United States and Canada will offer an update concerning changes and events that have occurred over the last five years and/or resulted from the fall of Tolkeen. The Coalition's destruction of Tolkeen will have consequences and ramifications that will be felt for years.

Michigan

An historical overview

Before the Great Cataclysm, Lower Michigan was a technology and manufacturing giant and Upper Michigan was more "rural." The region had been slipping as an industrial power since the 1960's but knocked the rust of the 20th Century off its back late in the 21st and reinvented itself to become an innovative industrial powerhouse. The automotive leaders in Michigan were the first to introduce hover technology to the mass market and originally developed hovercycles and rocket bikes for the US Military and law enforcement agencies. They also contributed to the development of robotics and robot vehicles for applications in the military, and for construction, mining and rescue. However, the entire region was dealt a severe blow by the Great Cataclysm and the Coming of the Rifts.

Detroit and the cities surrounding it remained the center of industry for Michigan. Most of its largest and most heavily populated cities spread out from around the Motor City, so when the Ley Lines erupted and caused a dozen Rifts to open, Detroit never had a chance. Neither did the communities in a hundred mile (160 km) radius, including Detroit's Canadian neighbors. In fact, Windsor was as devastated and plagued by monstrosities emerging from the Rifts as Detroit. If there is any good news, it's that the destruction came so lightning fast, that most people died in the first few days.

What technology and salvageable industry may have survived the initial holocaust were obliterated by the thousands upon thousands of supernatural horrors and weird dimensional energy and magic from the Rifts throughout the last 300+ years. In short, nothing survived. Since then, lower Michigan has returned to a wild state of forests, fields and lakes. What few relics of the past remain are found north of the old industrial southern third of the region, though little has survived the ravage of time and the elements there either. For the first hundred years of the Dark Age, Michigan suffered terrible storms and dimensional disturbances that ravaged most of the lower peninsula, the southern and western two thirds suffering the worst. Chicago and the east coast of Wisconsin along Lake Michigan suffered similar devastation and storms. This was due to the number of ley lines in those parts and the miniature Bermuda-like Triangle (ley lines) in Lake Michigan. Miraculously, Michigan's upper peninsula escaped this level of destruction, which is how Ishpeming and Manistique managed to survive the Dark Ages, recover lost technology and become the industrial giants they are today.

Lower Michigan, 109 P.A.

The heart of Michigan is blanketed in forests and meadows dotted with rivers, streams and hundreds of small lakes. It is populated by tiny independent homesteads, hunting lodges, and the occasional small farm and village. Most people are uneducated wilderness folk happy to live off the land, isolated from the rest of the world. Except for monsters and demons from the Rifts, it is a beautiful and serene environment. The only other people one is likely to encounter in the interior of Michigan are nomadic clans of *Psi-Stalkers, Native Americans, Noli Bushmen* (who love it here) and the occasional *True Sasquatch* or pack of

Loup Garou come down from Canada. In fact, from time to time, one can encounter any of the D-Bees, monsters and demons common to Canada in Michigan, as well as Wisconsin, Minnesota and upstate New York, but seldom any farther south. Weather is also similar to southeastern Ontario with cold, snow-covered winters and hot and humid summers. (See **World Book 20: Rifts® Canada** for the full range of creatures and world information.) Likewise, one can stumble across small groups of Faeries, Sprites or other Faerie Folk, though they usually avoid contact with Big Folk and the typical Michigan clan often has fewer than fifty members, making them shy and elusive. Michigan has nowhere near the number of Faerie Folk found in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.

Of course, the many ley lines throughout Michigan, especially in southern Michigan, attract groups of practitioners of magic as well as creatures of magic, and supernatural beings. A number of small enclaves, brotherhoods, cults, homesteads, and the city of New Lazlo are found in the south. Fury Beetles, demons and entities also abound in these parts, with the greatest concentration inhabiting what was once the Greater Metropolitan Detroit Area.

The demon hordes of Michigan. The reputation of demon haunted Detroit and Windsor tends to keep settlers and even adventurers out of lower Michigan. Though supernatural beings can be found throughout Michigan because of the Detroit-Windsor Rifts, the demons gather in greatest numbers in and around Detroit, as far north as *Pontiac* and as far west as *Canton* and *Novi.* Ironically, many of the supernatural beings and creatures of magic that emerge from the Detroit-Windsor Rifts do not stay around. Most scurry off in all directions in search of adventure and people to torment. Many are attracted to the *Magic Zone* to the south where they can find dark sorcerers to serve or enslave, and intrigue to sink their claws into, as well as humanoids to prey upon and some vestige of "civilization" to corrupt. Others are summoned by Shifters, captured by slavers, or slain. Most community defenders and adventurers hate and fear demons and destroy supernatural beings over the slightest provocation (some on sight). And as everyone knows, any demonic creatures who happen to wander into Coalition territory are dealt with swiftly by the Coalition Army. Demons and other supernatural beings are chaotic and violent by nature, so others are killed in brawls, battles and rivalries between themselves. The Detroit area is a good example, where there are easily a hundred to two hundred different clans, bands and gangs of demons throughout. However, few have more than a hundred members, and most spend half their time squabbling and fighting among rival bands, raiding each other, fighting over worthless pieces of turf, playing cruel jokes on one another and engaging in all kinds of petty treachery and skullduggery. Demons, particularly lesser demons and sub-demons, are lazy, slothful and self-indulgent creatures who spend the other half of their time gambling, drinking, gorging themselves, partying, and sleeping. Unlike the Calgary Rift, there is no powerful leader, sorcerer or god to unite them, and whenever someone tries to rule them, the demon hordes gang up and destroy him.

The demon haunted Detroit-Windsor area is also the shopping ground for bold and powerful practitioners of magic, dragons and warlords looking to recruit demonic and monstrous hirelings and agents. Counted among the traditional demons found in Michigan (see **Rifts® Conversion Book One** for the full range) are Brodkil, Gargoyles, Gurgoyles, Death Weaver Demon Spiders, Mindolar Mind Slugs, Goqua, Sowki, Dybbuk Demon Ghouls, Dimensional Ghouls, Grave Ghouls, shapechanging Incubus and Succubus, entities and others (also described in **Rifts® Conversion Book One**). Creatures such as those described in **Rifts® World Book 16: Federation of Magic™** and **World Book 12: Psyscape™** also find their way to Michigan, but they are usually solitary individuals or tiny groups. Likewise the Devil Unicorn (**New West™**) is said to have originated from a Rift in the Midwest and to be found causing trouble in Michigan and the Magic Zone.

Coastal civilization. It is along the banks of the Great Lakes that one finds large settlements and towns. These include fishing villages, logging camps, trading posts, farms and pirate towns – lots of pirate towns. The Great Lakes are ideal for travel, fishing, recreation and, in certain places, for hydroelectricity and manufacturing. The interlocking Great Lakes lead to numerous smaller rivers as well as to the St. Lawrence seaway and the ocean beyond. Thus, it is the playground of sailors, merchant marines, river pirates and freebooters, many of whom have their base of operation, hideout or hometown somewhere along the coast of Michigan (Wisconsin and Ontario have their fair share of sailors and pirates too, but not like Michigan. See **Rifts® Sourcebook Four: Coalition Navy™** for sailor, pirate and other O.C.C.s as well as monsters and information about the Great Lakes region.)

The war at Tolkeen has had little impact on most people living in lower Michigan. For most people living in the interior life has not changed, and some don't even know Tolkeen is destroyed. For those who make their living as pirates and freebooters, however, the war in Tolkeen and Free Quebec had offered considerable opportunity. With the CS distracted by war and many of the regional heroes gone off to one front or the other, raiders and pirates had easy pickings, attacking merchant ships and raiding coastal towns with impunity. Smugglers were also in high demand, as were seafaring mercenaries, scouts and spies. With the end of both wars in less than a year, life is starting to settle down and opportunities are quickly drying up.

Without the Coalition Navy to keep piracy in check on the Great Lakes, and with mercenaries and adventurers out of work, there are more people than ever turning to piracy. This has created tremendous competition and intense rivalry, leading to open warfare among the many factions of Great Lakes mariners. A natural thinning out period through combat and attrition is definitely underway. Like the mercenaries at Free Quebec and Tolkeen, with competition so high and work so scarce, anyone looking to hire seafarers, raiders and pirates can do so at bargain prices.

A great number of Water, Air and Earth Warlocks are found throughout Michigan. Many are valued and respected citizens of coastal communities where they play an important role as protectors, builders and manipulators of weather. Others find the smaller rivers and lakes, forests, meadows, fields of flowers, and other locales nestled in Michigan's interior, idyllic places to mediate, commune with nature, study magic, build a little community or brotherhood, or just live free of civilization.

Psi-Druids, Mystics and **Native American Shamans** are also fond of Michigan. They are so enamored with this quiet,

pristine wilderness, despite the number of demons in the south and Fury Beetles everywhere, that they might even take up arms against a concerted effort to flatten the wilderness for industry or cultivation for farmland. Speaking of **Fury Beetles**, the vast and intimidating numbers of these huge animals in lower Michigan is another reason many people do not regard the region as suitable for humanoid habitation. The Fury Beetle is one of the creatures that came out of a Detroit Rift during the Dark Ages.

Rumors of evil cults abound, and living elite brotherhoods of magic and practitioners of dark magic such as Shifting, Witchery and Necromancy are all said to be in quiet little hamlets, villages and retreats nestled in the woods. This is true, without a doubt, but the number of benevolent practitioners far outweighs the wicked ones, and both are considerably fewer than in other places like the Magic Zone. Furthermore, most practitioners of magic who come to Michigan do so to study and reflect or lay low, not conquer or build an empire. Consequently, even the most malignant characters are looking for a little peace and solitude, not trouble.

What most people do not realize (the CS and Federation of Magic included) is that a surprising number of **dragons** make their homes in lower Michigan. They find the secluded lush woodlands attractive, quiet and magical enough to make it an appealing place for a lair or hidden sanctuary. Most dragons try to keep a low profile and use their powers of metamorphosis to assume a less threatening and more conventional appearance (human, Psi-Stalker, even animals) whenever outsiders come around. Those in the know at Lazlo suspect two or three hundred may inhabit the region. Plato and other dragons will neither confirm nor deny this, claiming they have no knowledge of such matters, but Plato is said to have come from Michigan so he must know. If the rumor is true, lower Michigan is a *secret dragon sanctuary* and may have been so for hundreds of years. As always, most dragons are solitary creatures or join small bands of humanoids. Indeed, a few of the Great Lakes communities are known to have one or two dragons living among them, usually dragon hatchlings. Hand in hand with the previous rumor, some say there is a small dragon enclave of 5-12 (a third of them adults) said to live and work together somewhere in Michigan where they research magic and study the Rifts.

New Lazlo

Lower Michigan

New Lazlo came on the scene about 45 years ago. It started as little more than an archeological dig not terribly far from monster-plagued Detroit. Archeologists and scholars from Lazlo set out to see what they could unearth from a pre-Rifts college of learning once known as the *University of Michigan.* The "dig" struck pay-dirt and has yielded many books, recordings, and artifacts from the time before the Rifts, including several by Twentieth Century visionary, Victor Lazlo.

In short order a town sprang around the archeological outpost and it has since become a small city. It takes the name "New Lazlo" in homage to both the 20th Century scholar and the original city of Lazlo in Canada. It is a community of learning and magical study very closely patterned after Lazlo, complete with the same type of government, philosophy on life and views on education and tolerance. The people of New Lazlo are approximately 40% humans, 10% Psi-Stalkers and 50% D-Bees.

The thing that differentiates *New Lazlo* from Lazlo and other magic communities is the people's incredibly bright and positive outlook on life. The general enthusiasm and exuberance borders on naive teenage euphoria, right down to their sense of invincibility and actions that invite trouble. While they mourn for Tolkeen, they do not fear the Coalition or believe their community is in imminent danger. Like bold and outspoken teenagers they scream about the injustice and cruelty of the Coalition oppressors and condemn Emperor Prosek and the CS administration as tyrannical despots too small and frightened to even let their own citizens make choices and think for themselves. They quote history books and great leaders from the past, speak of tolerance and freedom for all people, and revel in the comforting intoxication of their own intellect and righteousness. The people of New Lazlo are so young as a community and embrace such high ideals and dreams of a better future (one they work to bring about), it is they who have lost sight of the real world. For them hope really does spring eternal. They have immersed themselves in the world they hunger for, and are so honest, free and true to themselves and a higher morality, they see only their idealism and dreams for the future. This is not to take anything away from the people of New Lazlo, for they have breathed life into a miracle by creating a kind of magical Utopian society steeped in dreams, art and innocence. However, they don't see themselves as innocent or naive. They are so brainy and good that they don't realize how different living through the pain of prejudice and the horror of war is from "imagining" it on some intangible, scholarly level. They have no idea how brutal and ruthless the Coalition States and the Federation of Magic can be. Isolated from the rest of civilization and having never known war, they live in blissful ignorance. For though many of the people in New Lazlo have known the sting of prejudice and cruelty, they have never experienced its unfurled fury. For the most part, war, hate, injustice and all the rest are *theories* and *philosophical discussions*, not cold hard reality. It is a reality for which they are not prepared.

A few stats and notes on New Lazlo 109 P.A.: Population: Approximately 49,000; 42% are human, 10% Psi-Stalkers, 45% D-Bees and 3% other (creatures of magic like dragons, supernatural beings, etc.). Virtually some member of every race

found throughout the Magic Zone, Midwest and eastern Canada are represented at New Lazlo, as well as some rare ones, including the Yhabbayar Bubblemaker and Demon-Dragonmage (both found in the pages of **World Book 12: Psyscape™**).

Refugees: Roughly 3000 people are recent arrivals from Tolkeen.

Typical alignments: 34% Principled, 40% Scrupulous, 15% Unprincipled and 11% other.

Common Occupations: 25% Practitioners of magic, 12% Psychics, 23% Rogue Scholars, 7% City Rats, 6% Rogue Scientists, 5% Operators, 1% Healers/Doctors and 21% others.

Trade: The community has strong connections to Lazlo and trades with the many communities in eastern Michigan and Ontario, as well as a handful in the Magic Zone. New Lazlo is NOT a member of the Federation of Magic and is disliked by Lord Dunscon who finds New Lazloans to be too nice, self-righteous, weak and arrogant for their own good. Being cruel and spiteful himself, Lord Dunscon would enjoy nothing more than to see these idealists given a painful dose of reality.

Surrounding Communities: Scores of small farms, fishing/trapping villages and homesteads with a combined population of perhaps as many as 1500 are located around the city.

Other tiny settlements of practitioners of magic, trappers, fishermen and pirates are found along the Detroit River and lake fronts, but away from the demon haunted ruins of Detroit and Windsor.

The Midwest & Ley Line Communities

The following applies to *Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, the Magic Zone,* and anywhere places of magic and *ley lines* are common. Inevitably, "places of magic," like ley lines and ley line nexus points (where two or more ley lines cross), attract practitioners of magic, creatures of magic, and supernatural beings. All of whom are more powerful along ley lines, draw on the lines of energy to work their magic, and use them to open dimensional portals. Consequently, ley lines and other places of magic become "hot real estate" for such beings and magic-based communities.

Claims of ownership on ley lines. Since ley lines are natural lines of mystic energy that can be used by any being who wields magic, they are often claimed by one faction or another. Ownership of a line is often a matter of might makes right. Whoever is strong enough to take the ley line seizes control, so private ownership may change hands regularly. In some cases, an individual, group, monster or god only wants the ley line for a specific reason and after he is done with it (days, months, years or decades later), he/they/it may abandon the line, leaving it up for grabs to anybody who can grab it and keep it. While one might argue that it is only logical to share a ley line since their energy reserves seem to be nearly infinite, there are strategic advantages to being the sole controller of its energy, especially at a

nexus point. And let us not forget simple greed and power-mongers who want it all and refuse to share, even if sharing has no negative impact on the owner of the line.

Most individuals, groups or communities who make an exclusive claim on a ley line will have warning signs stating as much. Intruders who sneak in and syphon some of the ley line energy for themselves to heal, communicate, cast spells, etc., must be prepared to pay the consequences. Of course, the "owners/claimant/controller" of a ley line, or a length of line or a nexus junction cannot usually monitor the entire line 24 hours, seven days a week, so others can sneak in and gain access to it if they are careful. However, if caught, like a kid stealing a farmer's corn, the owner will take action against them. Depending on the alignment and temperament of the owner/claimant, interlopers *may* be destroyed (sometimes horribly or slowly), chased down and forced to pay a service fee or be imprisoned, captured and robbed (stripped of everything of value), to being tortured and released, or just scared spitless and/or simply chased away.

Ley line wars. When a powerful individual (human or not, often not) or group claims a ley line or nexus exclusively for themselves, they must be able to hold onto it when their claim is challenged. Like the "range wars" of the Old West, two rival factions or individuals may fight over ownership and control of a particular ley line. The two factions can be practitioners of magic vs other practitioners of magic, or humans vs a dragon or monsters, or whatever. Both sides in this rivalry may recruit hired guns to do away with the other or engage each other in a duel. Mercenaries and adventure groups hired to fight such wars may not be able to tell which side is right or wrong, good or evil; then again, most hired guns don't care so long as they get paid. Of course, both sides paint the other as the bad guy, but both may be equally greedy, violent and ruthless. As a rule, both sides in a ley line war hire henchmen and engage in scare tactics, sabotage, theft, destruction of property, kidnaping, blackmail, raids, open combat, murder, and every dirty trick in the book. Such wars may be settled without violence if a compromise is reached, but often last until one side wins and the other is pushed out or destroyed. Ley line wars can last days, months or years, and sometime turn into lasting rivalries or vendettas.

Ley line communities are groups, cults, brotherhoods, towns or cities who build their community on one or more ley lines. Tolkeen and Lazlo are classic examples of this, as are many of the communities in the Magic Zone. Most are started by a small group of magic users but attract ordinary folk who believe they will be safer living with or near magic wielding beings. Additionally, most practitioners of magic are freethinkers and outcasts themselves, so they are accepting of other people and diverse cultures. In the case of dragons and supernatural beings, the creature might enjoy or desire to be worshiped as a god, king or champion and welcome "lesser beings" to form a (subservient) community around them, provided they are the ultimate power. Once a town is established, independent farms, homesteads, hunting lodges and trading posts usually spring up in the surrounding area as prosperity and safety in numbers attract additional people.

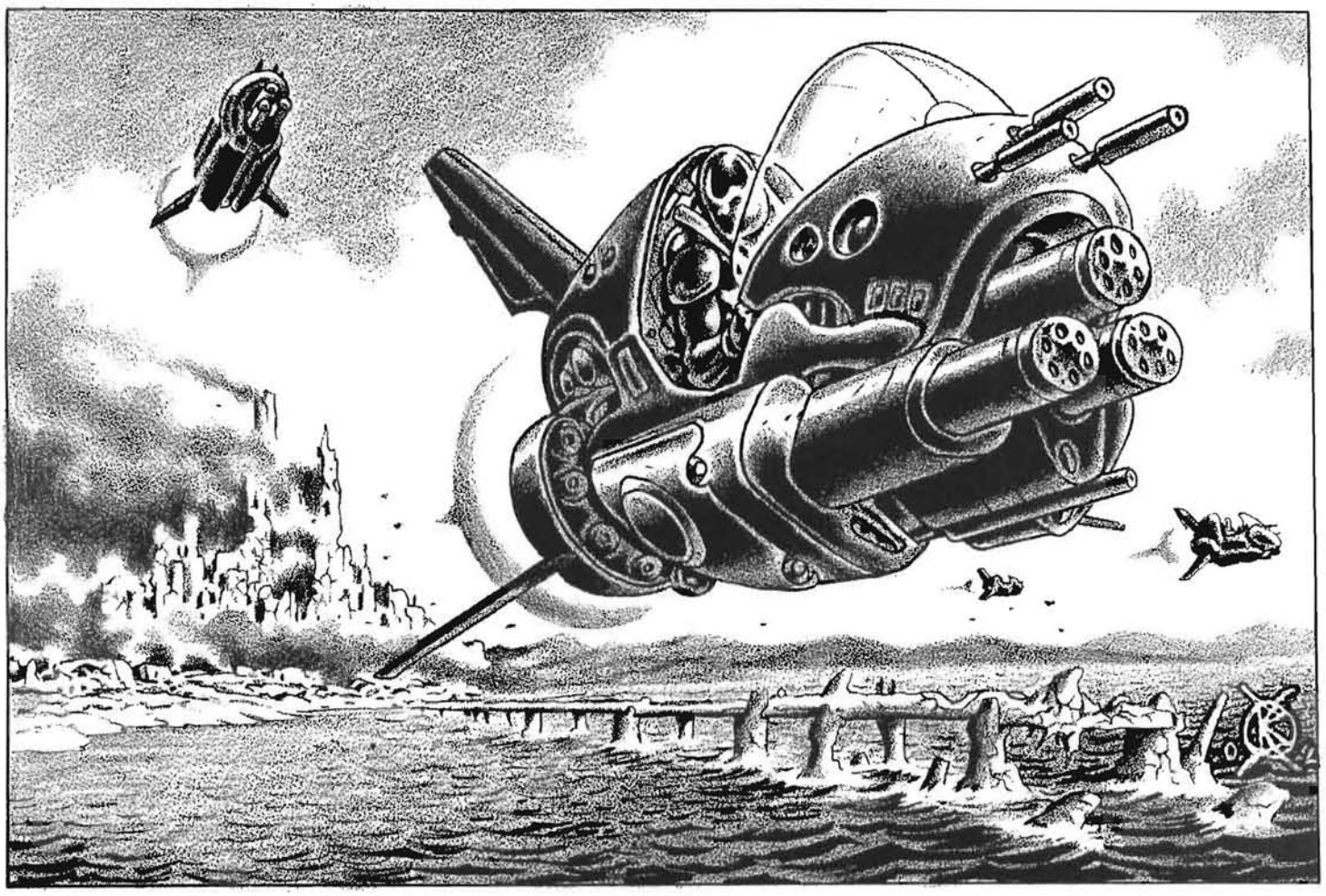
If the community is friendly or at least open to visits by travelers and adventurers, it is likely to offer at least one boarding house, saloon, general store and/or trading post, furrier, garage, magic shop, bookstore and/or library, and probably a medical clinic and possibly other amenities and things to do that one might expect from a town or small city. Magic communities are usually very orderly and civil places to visit, compared to most towns or barbarian villages. As for the law, there is likely to be a sheriff or powerful champion (individual or group) as the "official" defender, but also a volunteer militia and numerous powerful wielders of magic from Line Walkers, Warlocks, Mystics and Necromancers to dragons, supernatural beings and other inhuman masters of magic who may step in to protect "their" community or put a stop to a nuisance. The general alignment, disposition, and goal of the people living in a mystic community, as well as other specifics, may vary dramatically from place to place, but typically (but not always) reflect those of the founding magic practitioners.

Necromancers and evil sorcerers. Because ley lines and particularly ley line nexuses represent "power," they attract evil practitioners and beings who *need* them to work powerful magic, make summonings and open dimensional portals. Evil beings may also want or need to supplement their magic with *blood sacrifices* to boost the available P.P.E. even higher or to open a Rift. As a result, sacrificial altars from a simple slab of rock to elaborate altars and shrines may dot various locations along a ley line and are most common at a nexus point. Likewise, signs of combat are also common along ley lines. These can indicate a battle between rivals fighting over the same line, a conflict between spell casters and anti-magic opponents such as the CS, a summoning gone bad, a fight with a predatory monster or demon, an ambush by bandits, and almost anything. Since most larger and lawful communities reject the dark arts, Necromancers, Shifters, Witches, Bio-Wizards, demon worshipers, monsters and agents of evil are forced to live as societal outcasts alone or in small groups, often on or near a ley line or nexus. Most of these malevolent souls are bitter, vindictive and aggressive individuals who see strangers as potential pawns and agents for their nefarious schemes or fodder to vent their anger upon.

Ley lines are like magnets that attract practitioners of magic, dragons, and supernatural beings, and because they glow blue and can be seen for miles, especially at night, they are often used as landmarks and lit trails for travelers to follow. This makes them something of a gathering place even in a wilderness and great places to meet and trade with other people, find sorcerers and demons, and a place to set up traps and ambushes. Supernatural beings are likewise attracted to the lines of mystic energy and often arrive on Rifts Earth via a Rift at a nexus point. Thus, one can encounter entities and demons, dragons and godlings, ghosts and spirits, Necromancers and armies of animated dead, heroes and villains, villages and cities, dimensional anomalies and portals to elsewhere, and much more along a ley line.

Mississippi River

The Mississippi River bears mentioning because it is a main waterway that slices through the middle section of the United States from the Gulf of Mexico up into Minnesota. During the Siege on Tolkeen, the river was not safe to travel. Water Elementals, aquatic demons, Iron Juggernauts, Coalition power



armor, mini-subs and mines salted her waters, while CS soldiers, Tolkeen freedom fighters, Monster Squads, mercenaries, privateers, and pirates set traps and ambushes along her shores. With Tolkeen gone, the waters of the Grand Old Lady have settled down, but they are still dangerous. The closer one gets to the Coalition States the more dangerous the river becomes for practitioners of magic, D-Bees and other nonhumans. The waters north of St. Louis are constantly patrolled by what's left of the Coalition Navy with low-flying aircraft and SAMAS providing support and a vigilant eye from the sky above. Beyond Chi-Town the patrols lighten up a bit, but only a bit, and starting at the border of Minnesota, the CS military presence is everywhere. Any humans not on official Coalition business are turned back. Any humans who argue about it are beaten and interrogated before being turned away. Travelers who oppose the CS or are suspected of being practitioners of magic, Tolkeen freedom fighters, spies, pirates or nonhuman, are gunned down where they stand.

Travel *across* the Mississippi is deadly in some areas, and impossible in others because of the Coalition Army's presence. It is a situation that forces refugees trying to go east to make a detour of hundreds of miles up and into or around the *Xiticix Hivelands* into Canada, or down through Nebraska and Kansas and then cut east through the sparsely populated and lightly defended Coalition territory of *Missouri*. Some travel even farther south down into Oklahoma and through Louisiana and back up. Refugees who get too close to the new *State of El Dorado*, however, are likely to face trigger-happy troops and volunteers gunning for D-Bees, mages and monsters. Those too weak, desperate or inexperienced to know better, try slipping through *Iowa* and *southern Wisconsin* to either cross Lake Michigan into Indiana or Michigan, or try skirting through the northern edge of the State of Chi-Town (Illinois). Less than half make it using this route, because the Coalition has ground and air patrols throughout these regions gunning for "monstrous invaders" and "spies" – their euphemisms for anybody from Tolkeen, particularly D-Bees.

Missouri

This region, though claimed by the CS, has always been lightly populated farmland and forest, with a minimal Coalition military presence. It, and to a lesser degree, the southern half of Iowa, can be reasonably traveled by refugees and fugitives who are careful to keep a low profile. See the section on the Coalition States starting on page 134 for more details about the CS. Also, see **Rifts® World Book 11: Coalition War Machine™** and **Sourcebook Four: The Coalition Navy** for details about various States and the CS Military.

North & South Dakota

The Dakotas have become important because of their proximity to Minnesota, and represent the best escape route and sanctuary for the Tolkeen refugees.

Tolkeen Refugees

Those not seeking shelter in other known places of magic like Lazlo and the Magic Zone, are heading beyond the borders of Minnesota and into the badlands of the *New West*. Everything beyond Minnesota is considered the uncharted wilderness and (currently) free of the Coalition. If given the choice, it is not where most refugees would go to live, but under the circumstances and given how difficult it is to navigate around the dangerous Coalition held lands between them and the east, the Dakotas are looking better all the time. Truth be told, most refugees are too numb with grief to know or care where they are going, they just follow the Cyber-Knights like lost sheep, glad to have survived and lost as to what to do next.

This is big sky country, so named because of the low grasslands and big blue skies that seem to go on forever. There are few trees for protection, no towns or farms to visit, and few lakes to fish, only endless fields of grass and flat lands. What hills one can find are more like speed bumps gently rising a little way above the ground before rolling back into the grassland. Without the dense forests and comforting civilization the Tolkeenites are used to, the refugees feel exposed and defenseless, but they trek on.

The Cyber-Knights and adventurers who support the cause do what they can against raiders, but a number of baleful misanthropes see the plight of the refugees as opportunity. Bandits and bushwhackers lurk in wait for those stragglers who fall behind, jumping them to take what little valuables or food they may carry on their backs, or have their brutal way with them. Larger gangs with better weapons use hit and run tactics to raid food, water and supply wagons, snatching whatever they can and running off. Slavers are the worst, for they deal in sentient life forms as callously as a rancher deals in cattle. For these villains, the refugees themselves are the commodities they seek. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of Tolkeenites numb with grief and shell shocked by war, some injured, all vulnerable, out in the open and clustered together like sheep. En route to wherever it is they are headed, they have no fortress walls to shelter them and too few warriors and mages to adequately protect them. They are easy targets that have attracted human, D-Bee and Splugorth Slavers to round them up and cart them away to a life of slavery. The Cyber-Knights, Lyn-Srial, heroes and adventurers present do what they can, as do the refugees that are strong and quick-witted enough to fight back, but still their numbers are plundered by slavers.

Fatigue, starvation and disease are the *hidden enemies* that chip away at the fleeing multitude and slow down their progress. Here again, the Cyber-Knights, volunteers and healers among them do what they can, but the journey is long and arduous, and the people already weak and hungry. As long as they are stuck on the ground in slow moving convoys of people, most of whom are forced to travel on foot, they are vulnerable.

Castles in the Clouds

The most amazing new sights in North and South Dakota are castles in the sky! Honest to goodness *castles*, some as large as a city, floating 2000-5000 feet (610-1524 m) above the ground atop of clouds! These are the temporary shelters waiting to be filled by the fleeing Tolkeenites led by Cyber-Knights. The monstrous looking but kind and noble **Lyn-Srial** of Arizona have been solicited by the Cyber-Knights to help by using their *Cloud Magic* to make a temporary place for the refugees to live. Lord Coake and his Cyber-Knights felt that havens in the sky would be much safer than ones on the ground and would create a much more cheerful and uplifting environment than, say, a tent city or shanty town. After the refugees' ordeal in Minnesota, going to a cloud castle or city should seem like being rescued in a fairytale and taken to a fabulous fantasy realm in the sky. It is the Cyber-Knights' hope that the atmosphere will elevate the refugees' spirits and help them overcome the trauma of the war and having just lost everything dear to them. It's not much in the grand scheme of things, but they pray it will diminish the grim situation and help the Tolkeenites to recover emotionally more quickly.

For the last eight months of the war, while combat escalated and drew toward its cataclysmic end, the farsighted Lord Coake and his Cyber-Knights had hundreds of Lyn-Srial volunteers busy sculpting castles in the clouds. Retreats where people could find peace and safety, and be reminded of the beauty and wonder of life. *Lyn-Srial Cloudweavers* used their magic to create Cloud Castles literally sculpted, cut and shaped from real clouds. Architectural shapes and structures suitable for ground dwelling humanoids have been created, with defensive walls, towers, balconies, great staircases, open courtyards, and lots of windows and observation decks. All made magically solid as if carved from white marble into towers and walls rising up from a cushion of clouds and mist. Some are "buried" deep inside a permanent cloud bank, completely concealing them from the ground, and making them difficult to locate even by high-flying aircraft and winged villains unless they are almost on top of the castle. Three are massive in scope, practically cities in the sky, each accommodating as many as 20,000 refugees. Others are smaller, suitable for only 1000-3000. The Lyn-Srial, ever conscious of the human condition, realized that some people might be afraid to live in the clouds and need to see the earth not far below them. So they built three only 500 feet (152 m) off the ground with pillars of mist cascading downward to make it seem as if these columns are holding the castle up, and creating a sense of connection with the earth. Every castle is a peaceful, inviting construct grand in its simple design and casual splendor.

The Cyber-Knights have arranged to provide some conventional aircraft like a few Sky Kings, a few CS hover vehicles, and a Techno-Wizard designed *Sky Bubble* that works like an elevator or simple transport to carry people from the Cloud Castles to the ground and back up again. Where there are ley lines below, the community is provided with Wing Boards and other TW air vehicles; many recovered from Tolkeen.

When refugees arrive, the Cloudweavers Paint the Sky and carry them to their new homes on Flying Chariots where manna and drinking water await them. The Lyn-Srial and others try to comfort and settle them in.

After the initial thrill and wonderment, however, reality begins to sink in. While they have a marvelous place to live, it is only semipermanent. The Cloud Castle cities will only last for 6-10 years, and half of the Cloud Castles only 4-5 years. A reminder that their homes – their real homes and beloved Kingdom of Tolkeen are gone – all gone. A home they can never return to, because the Coalition States has claimed Minnesota for its own. The region invaded and occupied by the Coalition

Army. An army of destroyers that continue to blast, tear down and bulldoze every standing structure in the kingdom so they can remake it in their own image. That fact alone is debilitating. The majority have also lost loved ones and most of their possessions. The thought that they must pick themselves up, find a new place to live and start all over again from nothing . . . . is more than most can bear right now. Despair and sadness permeate the population, and according to some Psi-Stalkers, when it rains in the Dakotas now, it is the tears of the Tolkeenites falling from the clouds.

The immediate necessities of life and living also intrude upon the grieving. The refugees must deal with their own day to day necessities of gathering food and water, waste management, cleaning, maintaining peace and order, and all the rest. For now, the Lyn-Srial, Cyber-Knights and bands of adventurers remain to help them get settled and defend against Coalition pursuers and other dangers, but soon half the Lyn-Srial will leave, and not long after that, all but a handful of the Golden Ones, Cyber-Knights and volunteers will also leave. The Lyn-Srial are few in number and miss their home in Arizona. The Cyber-Knights have other matters to address, and many of the adventurers and volunteers are starting to get the wanderlust or want to get on with their own lives. There is only so much anyone can do for the refugees, ultimately finding a new place to live back on the ground is something the Tolkeenites must do for themselves.

Safety in the clouds. Having most of the Cloud Castles free-floating structures concealed in low cloud blanks thousands of feet in the sky provides a great deal of natural protection for the displaced Tolkeenites. The most obvious is they are safe from ground predators, animals, bandits and raiders. The Dakotas are largely uninhabited. There are no advanced civilizations and most of the tribes, nomads and raiders in the region are low-tech and terrestrial based. Besides, most people don't look up and expect to see a castle in the clouds. Moreover, Cloud Magic is exclusive to the alien Lyn-Srial, and most folk, even practitioners of magic, don't know it exists, so they have no reason to think the refugees could be nestled in the clouds.

This leaves the sky communities vulnerable only to antagonists who can fly. Thankfully, *Xiticix* cannot fly higher than 2000 feet (610 m) and as a rule, fly at altitudes under 1000 (305 m). Flying predators are also uncommon, the most notable being *dragons*, which are few. *Leatherwings* (pterodactyl-like dinosaurs) are also few (they are found mostly in Arizona and Utah and typically fly under 1000 feet/305 m), which leaves *Gargoyles* and other flying *demons*, which, thanks to the Calgary Rift, are much more common than in other parts of America. Still, until word gets out about these Cloud Castles, the odds of a great deal of demons finding and visiting them to cause trouble are remote.

The Cloud Castles are still vulnerable to storms, as they are not high enough to escape most bad weather.

The Coalition Army has no idea Cloud Castles exist and are not looking for them. The Xiticix presence in the north tends to keep CS troops out of North Dakota and CS operations in South Dakota are minimal; the greatest amount of activity being along the eastern border. These are all ground or low altitude air-to-ground operations, scouring the forests and other terrestrial places one could hide. It has never occurred to the CS that the refugees have taken to the skies. When the multitudes seem to vanish, the CS assumes they have Rifted to someplace else, not to the clouds. The only Cloud Castles in jeopardy of being discovered by the CS are the low ones connected to the ground by pillars of mist. However, there are only three of them, one larger and two small, and all three are in North Dakota where the CS presence is virtually nonexistent. Six months after the fall of Tolkeen, and the refugees having seemingly vanished, the CS will give up looking for them, and the only patrols sent into the Dakotas will be on business involving the Xiticix.

The Cyber-Knights. Starting a few months before the fall of Tolkeen to about three months after, Lord Coake's Cyber-Knights have a strong, noticeable presence among the refugees and are active in rescuing and escorting Tolkeenites safely to the Dakota Cloud Castles as well as to Lazlo and other locations. After that, however, duty calls them away, leaving a paltry dozen or so behind; one or two at each Cloud Castle. Ironically, the refugee situation in the Dakotas contributes to sending them away. An unusual number of demons encountered during the great exodus both on the ground and at the castles has convinced Lord Coake and his advisors that the situation at the Calgary Rift is reaching critical mass. Not only is the number of supernatural beings disturbingly high in the northwest, but Cyber-Knights are being specifically targeted by them, giving credence to the rumor Tundra Rangers have passed along warning that the Monster King of Calgary has declared war on the Cyber-Knights and may have put bounties on their heads. Something *must* be done to curb the evil spilling out from the Calgary Rift, and it is the Cyber-Knights who have taken up the task.

Note: *Fallen Cyber-Knights* and those who have broken from Lord Coake's ranks know nothing about the Cloud Castles. A third of these Knights stay in the Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin region to help rescue Tolkeenites still trapped in the occupied territory, or to continue their personal war against the CS alone or by joining, sometimes leading, resistance fighters. Another third have left the region to wander until they can rediscover their purpose, and some of them have joined the Federation of Magic. Meanwhile, a third are trickling back to Lord Coake, and more will follow when they learn about the war with the Calgary Kingdom of Monsters.

The Lyn-Srial are a peaceful race of reptilian D-Bees from some alien world. They have four arms, golden, scaly skin, the beak and eyes of an eagle, and the compassion and kindness of a mother hen. Though they look fierce and scary, they are gentle, loving beings who have a great respect for life. They fight only in self-defense and to protect others, and are satisfied with sending their opponents in retreat rather than slaying them. Consequently, the few hundred Lyn-Srial who have volunteered to join the Cyber-Knights in rescuing Tolkeenite refugees, work only to create the cloud castles, guide refugees to them, heal the sick, provide comfort and chase away potential enemies. They will NOT fight the Coalition Army nor endorse violence or revenge in any way. The Lyn-Srial want nothing to do with combat operations. Their efforts are strictly humanitarian. Most of these individuals are *Sky-Knights* (42%) and the cherished *Cloudweavers* (38%), the rest are ordinary Lyn-Srial (20%) who wish to help families in need. Most will return to their homeland soon, and like the Cyber-Knights, will leave only a dozen of their people behind. See **Rifts® World Book 14: New West™**

for complete details on the Lyn-Srial and their home inside the Grand Canyon. Cloud Magic is also found in that World Book as well as in the **Rifts® Book of Magic** which collects most types of magic into one massive, 352 page tome.

Psi-Stalkers have a strong presence in North Dakota with numerous tribes roaming the full range. Small bands also roam South Dakota, but these are nomadic hunting parties and small groups, not entire tribes. They also inhabit Minnesota and Manitoba and can be found in parts of Ontario and southern Michigan and Wisconsin. Most are proud, expert Xiticix-Hunters and wilderness scouts who prey on the Xiticix, which is why they are found throughout the Hivelands.

Psi-Stalkers have never regarded humans or most D-Bees as invaders and do not have a problem with the Cyber-Knights bringing them into the Dakotas. Wild and swashbuckling warriors, bands of Psi-Stalkers often escort refugees, riding with them for brief periods (1D4 days), and help to defend them. Likewise, Psi-Stalkers will frequently come to the aid of refugees in trouble, especially if they are lost, hurt or need protection from monsters, including Simvan Monster Riders and Splugorth Slavers. The Psi-Stalkers and Simvan are hated rivals constantly at war with one another, so the very fact that the Simvan don't want the refugees in the Dakotas makes the Psi-Stalkers welcome and protect them. As for the Splugorth, many of their minions, like the Slavers, are monsters, and Psi-Stalkers by their very nature kill monsters. Additionally, they are nuts about personal freedom and find the very idea of slavery abhorrent. Psi-Stalkers are *human mutants* who have a generally good relationship with the Coalition States, thus, they are less inclined to rescue refugees from CS patrols or take up arms against the Coalition Army. However, they don't mind escorting the Tolkeenites through the wilderness and fighting off monsters. Likewise, these aboriginal people will hunt and kill wild animals for the refugees to cook and eat – Psi-Stalkers, themselves, don't eat much solid food, they subsist on the P.P.E. energy of their kills.

Simvan are trouble. These aggressive, monster riding nomads see the refugees as unwanted invaders and potential victims to plunder. Consequently, a number of Simvan raiding parties have attacked, robbed and killed hundreds of refugees. Fortunately, the Monster Riders do not appear in great numbers beyond the southwestern corner of South Dakota unless launching a major skirmish against the Psi-Stalkers that dominate the northern regions. Simvan also respect Cyber-Knights and often bow to their will after much noisy posturing and chest thumping. However, they are not happy that the Knights are bringing outsiders into the west.

Xiticix expansion is also spreading into the region. The Native American Indians, Psi-Stalkers and Simvan Monster Riders in the region are not enough to halt the insectoids' progress westward. It is a problem that will be addressed when the Coalition Army mounts its "Campaign of Extermination," within the next year or so, but also invites the Coalition into a part of the country they have never before set foot in. Will they leave when they are done with the Xiticix or will the Dakotas also be claimed as Coalition Territories?

Northern Gun & Manistique Imperium

Upper Michigan of the Old American Empire

For generations, the **Manistique Imperium** has been a true kingdom of people with a community composed of a unified federation of towns built around a pair of manufacturing cities and populated by several hundred thousand people living willingly under the flag of the Imperium. I found the Manistique Imperium to be a strange mixture of beauty and blight. The surrounding countryside was picturesque, dotted with numerous lakes and ponds, and covered in forest. Some of the smaller towns were also lovely and fit nicely with the surrounding forests and lakes. Rising out of the patchwork of green came the smoke, soot and belching clouds of the Manistique factories, like man-made volcanoes. The City of Manistique was busy, but nothing compared to the controlled mayhem of Northern Gun. It was much quieter and serene than the constant noise and excitement of Northern Gun, and its people seemed more orderly, educated and polite as opposed to the barking hucksters and carnival atmosphere of Ishpeming.

The Manistique Imperium is located along the southern coast and includes the pre-Rifts city of Escanoba and several smaller communities. The Imperium is diverse in its people, education and resources, which include fishing, mining, metal processing, manufacturing, sawmills, trapping, farming, and cattle/dairy. In many respects, it is the central city-state/kingdom of northern Michigan and is allied with scores of tiny towns and villages who look at the Imperium as their friend and protector. The diversity of its people, which includes D-Bees, and mutants (30%), means that the education levels vary greatly, from technicians and scholars in the city to completely illiterate farmers, wilderness scouts and trappers. The population of the industrial city of Escanoba is about 240,000 (literacy is 54%). The population of the city of Manistique is about 400,000 (literacy is 72%).

Both cities have trade schools and libraries, and Manistique has one of the great universities. The estimated population of the surrounding communities that rely on the Imperium adds an additional 125,000 (10% literate).

By contrast, Ishpeming, better known as **Northern Gun**, is a giant manufacturing center and market rather than a true community. Its entire focus is manufacturing and selling. There is room for little else. At a quick glance it looks deceptively much bigger and more impressive than picturesque Manistique. Truth is, the city of Ishpeming may be larger but its overall community is small. Still, the city is a sight to behold. It has paved streets, modern and sleek factories, military fortifications, tall buildings, showrooms, movie houses, saloons, armories, garages, Body-Chop-Shops, MOM Conversion Centers and markets and businesses of all sights, sounds and types. The air literally vibrates with the roar of speeding vehicles, gunfire, blaring music, salesmen hawking their wares over loudspeakers, and the voices, laughter and roughhousing of thousands of mercenaries, Juicers, Crazies, 'Borgs, soldiers and adventurers of all irks. Even back around 60 P.A. when I first visited Ishpeming, "Northern Gun" had already become the Mecca for freebooters, mercenaries, wilderness people, and rugged adventures through-

out North America. It attracted mostly men with rebellious and bold spirits. Hunters, trappers, rebels, warriors and wanderers all came to Northern Gun to let off a little steam, roughhouse, enjoy the company of kindred spirits, get drunk, sow their wild oats and buy or upgrade their weapons, vehicles and gear.

Being so close to the Canadian border, half of those who frequented the Upper Peninsula came from Canada. Even the Coalition State of Iron Heart, and two thirds of the independent towns and people of southeastern Canada traded with these two industrial kingpins. They came to the Manistique Imperium for cheap conventional weapons, grains, fish, tools, building materials, and other raw materials. But they bought their weapons, body armor, Juicer Conversions, 'Borg repairs and vehicles, from snow sleds, jeeps and tractors to boats and combat vehicles, from Northern Gun.

There is no denying that Ishpeming/Northern Gun is an exciting place that offers many rare opportunities, sights and experiences. And it has grown considerably since my first visit. Today it is more organized and law abiding, although it remains a rowdy and bustling community that never sleeps.

At the risk of sounding prudish or refined, I have always found Northern Gun to be little more than a sprawling armed camp combined with a bustling open market. It still has a Wild West feel and part of its charm is the rowdy Boy's Club atmosphere. Half the visitors are mercenaries, bandits, hunters, adventurers, or warriors of one kind or another come to relax, unwind or stock up. A third are traders, merchants and manufacturers looking to set-up shop or trade their goods with the city. The rest is a mixture of the curious, drifters passing through, criminals, spies and those down on their luck. All this means 70% are men used to a wild and brutal life in the wild or at war, which means it is not a place for a lady. Consequently, one must wade through a good deal of swagger, groping hands, alcohol filled conversations and testosterone to find conversation that deals with something other than tales of combat, war, guns, power armor, vehicles, and the like. That's not to say that one can not find and enjoy some truly riveting accounts of combat and heroism, or fascinating first-hand reports about faraway places, exotic D-Bees and strange creatures. In fact, I lived in Ishpeming for nearly four months and in the Manistique Imperium for six. I have returned on many occasions, since there is no question that Northern Gun is "the" place to be outfitted for adventure. They really do seem to sell everything! If you haven't ever been there, it is something to see.

Over the years, Northern Gun has only gotten bigger and better, and despite rumors that they are cozying up to the Coalition States, they have always been, and continue to be, one of the few independent kingdoms in North America. Although D-Bees are sometimes harassed and targeted by the less savory people in town, most non-humans are welcomed as customers, if nothing else. Few questions are asked and most anybody can find the weapons, armor or equipment they are looking for at fair prices. As most anybody living outside the megalopolises' of the Coalition States know, Northern Gun (and to a lesser degree, the Manistique Imperium) products are found everywhere throughout North America. I go on about Northern Gun because they have succeeded in amazing even me. I have seen Northern Gun products, from camping gear, compasses and fishing poles to power armor, hovercycles, 'bots and guns from coast to coast and as far south as vampire ridden Mexico and as far north as the arctic circle and Greenland! That having been said, their major market has been, for generations, the heartland of North America, namely the old States of the American Midwest, including Michigan, Ohio and Indiana, and the old Provinces of Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and the Eastern Seaboard.

The rise of Iron Heart as an industrial power and member of the Coalition States has hardly put a dent in the sales of Northern Gun, as NG's reputation and willingness to sell to non-humans (a market not available to any member of the CS) has kept its clientele as strong as ever. Furthermore, it is my opinion that their existence and willingness to sell to everyone (independent kingdoms, individuals, the CS and CS enemies like Tolkeen, Lazlo and D-Bees) has, in part, given many communities in Canada the ability to remain strong, free and independent. Between Northern Gun and Manistique, they gave Canadian settlements the arms, armor, machinery and technology to survive in a hostile environment, grow and stay out of the clutches of the Coalition States.

Humans dominate Northern Gun and the many "leagues" of towns and factories that surround it. Still, I would guess that a quarter of the unofficial residents are nonhuman (perhaps increasing the population another 25%). The Kingdom offers limited cybernetics and bionic augmentation (partial bionic conversion and repairs), MOM Conversions (Crazies), and Bio-Comp chemical augmentation (Juicers). In addition to a regular array of visiting Crazies and Juicers who are always ready to join a good fight and willing to defend their primary supplier, Ishpeming also has an impressive army equipped with an impressive selection of military weapons, and vehicles, power armor and a handful of Glitter Boys (they can repair Glitter Boy armor, but can not build one from scratch). Magic is not outlawed, but it is viewed with suspicion. Education levels are equal to the late 20th Century pre-Rifts industrial era and most of the city's populace is literate (88%). Estimated population: 400,000! Ishpeming also maintains a mercenary army of over 110,000 (20% Juicer, 30% Crazies, 25% robot pilots, 15% Borgs, 10% infantry). They are also allied with numerous powerful organizations, including the Chi-Town Black Market and Tolkeen, and trade with many more, including Lazlo and many Canadian cities, towns and outposts.

In recent years, Northern Gun has made improvements and acquired trade agreements with the likes of Triax in an effort to constantly improve its manufacturing and has greatly surpassed the Manistique Imperium in the world market, particularly in the area of manufacturing machines of war. Northern Gun is the unsurpassed weapons, vehicle and electronics dealer in North America, supplying even the Black Market with half of its trade goods.

Due to the unexpected alliance with the Coalition States and the elimination of rivals such as Naruni Enterprises, experts speculate that its population will double over the next 10 years (and the CS has earmarked it and the Manistique Imperium as candidates for becoming the next two Coalition States-something neither of these two kingdoms seem to realize). They also continually upgraded their army to include a company of Triax Ulti-Max and other rare robot combat vehicles from trade with the NGR and new designs of their own.

Rumor also has it that Northern Gun and the Manistique Imperium are secretly or inadvertently (via the Black Market) helping to supply Free Quebec and Tolkeen, two of the CS's enemies and currently the targets of two massive military campaigns. The relationship between these formidable kingdoms and The Black Market has always been shadowy and undefined. Most people assume it goes back to these arms dealers being so mercenary that they would sell just about anything to anybody, but some have speculated that their ties are much deeper than this. Nobody knows.

Meanwhile, quiet Manistique has only grown by about 15% with some attrition going to their rival, Northern Gun, and others. In the last six years, Manistique has made dramatic strides in upgrading their manufacturing and moving more heavily into arms manufacturing, but they remain small compared to Northern Gun, although a giant compared to most other independent outfits).

Missouri

See the *Coalition State of Missouri* for details on the region, including Kingsdale and Whykin. Likewise, see the *Coalition State of El Dorado* for information on Arkansas, New Town and Fort El Dorado.

Oklahoma & Kansas

Oklahoma

Not much has changed for this part of the country. Most of it remains an unsettled wilderness of prairies and light forest. The closest thing one gets to "civilization" are a few tiny farms, ranches, and homesteads established by intrepid settlers. Small nomadic tribes of *Native Americans, Psi-Stalkers* (in the east), *Simvan* (in the west), and *Tokanii* (in the south) are also found in the region. The Pecos Raiders of Texas only come to Oklahoma when passing through, hiding out, or to recruit men from the tribes. Raids on the communities and tribes are usually crimes of opportunity and involve stealing supplies or drunken shenanigans. The Coalition wars in the north and El Dorado's recent acceptance into the Coalition States have the people of Oklahoma worried that the region will be targeted next for conquest by the CS. Fear of Coalition aggression is everywhere, particularly among communities who lack strong defenses and who accept D-Bees and/or magic.

Kansas

The *northwestern* part of Kansas is a combination of light forest and vast grassy plains inhabited by dinosaurs and monsters.

A number of farms, ranches, law-abiding towns, and several fledgling kingdoms (city-states, really) present the "civilized" *eastern* third of Kansas. The Comanche Preserve is the anchor and leader of these free, peace-minded communities where all tolerant people, humans and D-Bees, are welcomed. The Comanche are the central power in the region and govern their lands with compassion and strength. Cowboys, merchant traders, adventurers and Cyber-Knights find eastern Kansas to be a safe haven where they can come to trade, sell cattle and furs, buy supplies and get a little rest and relaxation. Even the bandits of the Pecos Empire like it here and visit for a little fun and R & R. Most bandits limit their criminal activities in this part of the world to robbery, cattle rustling, disturbing the peace and drunken raids and fistfights. Consequently, recent events are of grave concern to a great number of people. The entire eastern section of the state has been transformed into a dark, foreboding territory full of alien vegetation and strange creatures. Small hordes of demons have been reported killing *Coalition forces* in Kansas and along the Missouri border. Though the demons cause trouble for the local people, so far they have not killed anybody.

Stories abound that the Comanche or at least *one* Comanche tribe must have struck a deal with dark otherworldly forces in order to prevent the Coalition from expanding into Kansas. It is common knowledge that the Coalition States plan to conquer and claim Kansas for themselves as part of the Coalition's *Twenty Year Plan of Expansion.* Since the start of the war at Tolkeen, people in Kansas have wondered when they might expect the Coalition Army to invade them. Indeed, CS reconnaissance teams and spies regularly survey the area, and in the last few years platoons of Skelebots and what locals call "Vendetta Squads" (CS squads on Seek and Destroy missions) have been sent into eastern Kansas to track down and eliminate "enemies of the States," namely suspected rebels, D-Bee bandits, adventurer groups and practitioners of magic. If they exterminate a few D-Bees or savages (Native Americans) along the way, more power to them – and anyone who challenges them or gets in their way *are* brutalized or killed. Consequently, transforming the region into an alien environment *may* be one way to dissuade the CS from wanting the region for itself, but it is an extreme and risky measure, especially if the demons are a deliberate part of the plan, because demons can never be trusted.

Though rumors suggest a Comanche tribe is responsible, that seems out of character for these people. Furthermore, they seem quite perturbed with the transformation and sudden presence of demons where there were none before. There is the possibility that the transformation is the result of a dimensional anomaly (common on Rifts Earth) or a magical experiment gone terribly wrong, however, the fact the demons are only attacking the CS, at least for now, suggests a deliberate hand in all of this. The questions that beg to be asked are, who, why, and how far will he/she/they/it go? Will the transformation extend to the rest of Kansas? Will the alien vegetation adapt and, with time, spread into Missouri and Oklahoma? Can the region be returned to normal? How many demons are there, really, and what threat do they represent to the peace-loving people in the region? **Note:** The Coalition finds this extremely disturbing. The Army is looking into hiring adventurers and mercenaries to investigate eastern Kansas and find the cause of the problem. The Cyber-Knights have heard about it but have their hands full and cannot investigate. The Comanche, 1st Apocalyptic Cavalry and a number of independent groups (locals and outsiders) are also looking into the matter.

The Kansas Labyrinth (pre-Rifts ruins). A rumor is only now starting to reach people that an ancient pre-Rifts city has been uncovered in southwest Kansas. Excavators think it might be *Dodge City*. Whatever it is, the buildings are buried, but many remain intact and miraculously, entire floors, basements, crevices and rain erosion have effectively created a network of

underground tunnels, caves, and massive chambers unlike any known to have been uncovered before. Word is, that once inside one of the underground buildings (said to be in unusually good condition) one can smash out a window or chop through an exterior wall and tunnel in any direction to find the next buried building. How big this city may be is unknown, but it seems fairly large. Not only is it a great historical find, in and of itself, but a large number of well-preserved pre-Rifts artifacts have been uncovered in good condition.

This has started the latest "gold rush" type exodus, as treasure hunters, rogue scholars, scientists, grave robbers, thieves, mercenaries, carpetbaggers, merchants and opportunists flood to the site. Never to miss a beat, Coalition spies, archeologists, historians and military specialists from Chi-Town and the new State of El Dorado (Arkansas) are also secretly hidden among the newcomers. Meanwhile, *refugees from the Tolkeen-Coalition War* are also flooding into the region, not only with dreams of striking it rich, but with hope to make a new home near or even *inside* the underground city. A honeycomb of subterranean caverns, tunnels and old buildings locked in the very earth might make for a nice haven safe from surface raiders and Coalition aggression – or so the logic goes.

The First Cavalry

The 1st Apocalyptic Cavalry is a harbinger of death to D-Bees and outlaws. The 1st Cavalry was formed by the dubious hero, "General" Kenneth Sprite" who 25 years after a band of D-Bee raiders burned and pillaged his hometown (he was one of six survivors), continues to seek revenge upon inhuman bandits. Though General Sprite hates all bandits, *D-Bees* are his main targets. Established D-Bee settlements in Kansas are generally ignored, and the warriors of the 1st Apocalyptic Cavalry know they will have to face Comanche protectors if they do anything to them. However, travelers, explorers, and adventurers away from the settlements and outside the Comanche Preserve are considered "fair game." General Sprite and the warriors of the 1st Apocalyptic Cavalry are "folk heroes" to the many *human supremacist* communities in Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas and Nebraska, but to those who practice tolerance and acceptance of nonhumans, General Sprite is a monster and the 1st Cavalry a roving army of killers and cutthroat raiders. Indeed, the group survives by killing and looting Pecos Bandits, other outlaws, adventurers, monsters, dragons, D-Bees and any party that tolerates D-Bees as anything other than slaves. When pickings are light, the Cavalry may attack mercenary bands and adventurers who don't associate with nonhumans, making up some reason for why their crimes are just.

The 1st Apocalyptic Cavalry's primary range of influence is *Nebraska, Kansas, Arkansas* and *Missouri*. Since Missouri became a Coalition State, the CS Army has frowned on self-styled vigilantes like General Sprite and his 1st Cavalry, and chases them off whenever they have made a spectacle of themselves, otherwise they are ignored. However, General Sprite is a native Missourian where many of the rural people and border communities consider him a "folk hero" of the top order. These people will give him or his Cavalry free room and board, food and water, and even hide them from the CS or mercenaries. That's how loved and respected he and his troops are there. That only encourages him and his Cavalry to visit Missouri regularly to root out and liquidate "D-Bee invaders" and "other threats" (e.g., monsters) whether the CS wants him there or not.

The Coalition's problem with this loose cannon is that he and his men lack discipline and are effectively wild gunfighters and savage raiders themselves. They disregard the law and do pretty much whatever it takes to destroy the D-Bees or desperados they are chasing. And they do so with minimal regard for private property, civil rights, the law, or innocent bystanders. The 1st Apocalyptic Cavalry has a New West attitude of "might makes right" and that the 1st Cavalry *is* "the law" unto itself. Vigilantes, especially popular ones, are X-factors who defy convention, rile up the citizenry, undermine the Coalition's authority, and inspire dissension. (I.e., if they can ignore the law, why can't we?) The CS never likes "heroes" they cannot control, themselves. Once, ten years ago, the CS offered the 1st Cavalry a position in the Coalition Army, but the General laughed and declined the offer. Life in the CS military is much too restrictive. Sprite and his bad boys like to go where they please and do as they want without constraint from military law, procedure and protocol. Besides, the CS would never let him and his boys be judge, jury and executioner, or let them engage in torture and robbery like they do.

The Apocalyptic Cavalry's membership stays fairly consistent at between 950-1250, divided into six or seven companies who are typically further divided into platoon and squad sized units. Turnaround and attrition are constant. Some die, others come and go as they please, or do a stint in the 1st Cavalry for 1-4 years before moving out on their own, or joining a mercenary band or the very Pecos Raiders with whom they frequently

fight. Typical Alignments are 30% Anarchist, 40% Miscreant, 21% Diabolic, 7% Aberrant, and 2% other. Their main base of operation is **Fort Prospect** in Nebraska.

Right now the group is at the 1200 mark and on high alert. With the fall of Tolkeen, D-Bees, demons, monsters, mercenaries and adventurers of "questionable character" are rushing into the areas the 1st Cavalry considers *its* hunting ground, namely Nebraska, Missouri, Kansas, and Arkansas. These fugitives and refugees are providing them a windfall of ample "victims" to kill and plunder or extort and rob. According to most of the cutthroats in the 1st Apocalyptic Cavalry, "If they's from Tolkeen, it don't matter if they's human or not. Though ya outta kill them D-Bees, irregardless." In this particular instance the CS is pleased to let these rogues do their dirty work, so they completely turn a blind eye to their actions and sometimes even leave supplies for them and herd fugitives in their general direction.

Psyscape, 109 P.A.

Rumored to be located near Dayton Ohio in the Magic Zone

Until the reappearance of Psyscape, The City of the Mind's Eye, sometime in 105 P.A., even learned scholars thought it was nothing more than an unsubstantiated legend or myth. The legends told by the Psi-Stalkers said Psyscape was a place that simultaneously existed outside out reality, yet linked to it at the same time. According to them, Psyscape is a utopian kingdom of learning, tolerance, peace and enlightenment, and from time to time, lucky individuals would accidentally find Psyscape and be allowed to stay. Despite the claims and stories of the Psi-Stalkers told since the Dark Ages, no one could prove its existence, until Psyscape came out of hiding on its own.

Psyscape is a real place, a city of caring, like-minded people with hopes of building a better world. Their society is not quite the Utopia of legend nor a serene pastoral paradise, but it is a place of uncommon beauty, wisdom, insight and compassion. A Mecca for the arts and creations of the mind (in more ways than one might expect). Here, thinking and imagination are encouraged. When combined with the insights provided by most residents' well-developed psionic powers, the outcome is spectacular. To these psychics, the world is a much larger, beautiful and complex place than it is to the average human or D-Bee.

The City of the Mind's Eye can be hidden from outsiders because it exists both in the material world of Rifts Earth and in the *Astral Plane* simultaneously – one physical realm that exists in two dimensions and states of mind at the same time. This is made possible through the link (a living bond on a psychic, magical and cosmic level) the people of Psyscape have with *Psynex,* and the fact that the Astral Plane is already loosely connected to Earth on a metaphysical level, hence the psychic ability of Astral Projection. Psynex is a creature of pure psychic energy that has attached itself to a normal ley line nexus to become a Psychic Nexus. It has all the characteristics of a typical

Nexus but is actually a living, psionic being of immense power. It is an enigma that defies convention and is even beyond the complete understanding of the people of Psyscape. (See page 25 of **Rifts® World Book 12: Psyscape™**).

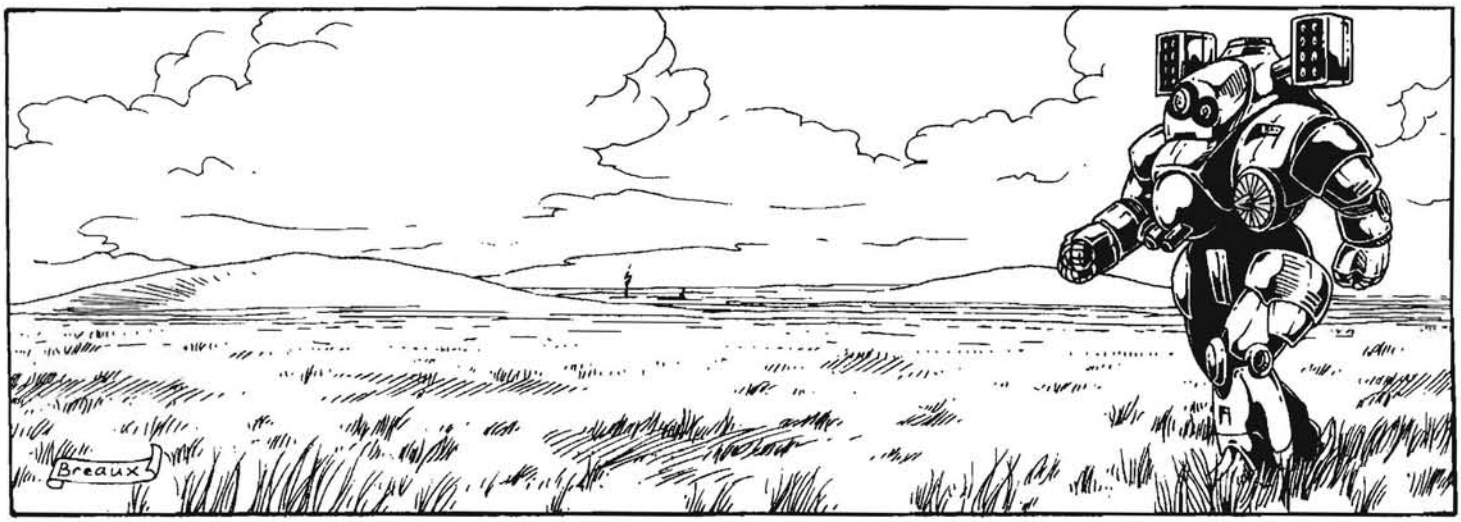
From outside the city, Psyscape is only visible to psychics. Those without the gift of psionics see only a *valley of perpetual fog*. Only if they should dare to enter the mist (city guardians often frighten or lead or chase them away) will they stumble upon the city itself. Psychics on the other hand, can see the outline of a city through the white mist, its towers, buildings and even the blue glow of the ley lines barely visible. This is actually a dimensional distortion that veils what lies just beyond the mist. Walking through the swirling whiteness, the sky suddenly brightens. The green trees and blue sky give way to a magical brightness with cloud filled skies of endless white with patches of powder blue. Before the visitor stands a sparkling white city surrounded by a protective stone wall complete with crenelation, battlements and a dozen towers strategically placed. It all appears to sit atop a sea of rolling clouds and endless sunshine. A sparkling clean place that extends for miles and miles. Many of the buildings have an old world style to them like the castles and towers of a fairy tale kingdom combined with Greco-Roman architecture and modern buildings.

The secret war to stop Nxla. It is the seemingly imminent coming of the alien intelligence Nxla that has brought Psyscape and its heroes out of hiding and back into the affairs of their fellow men. They have fought and stopped the *Harvesters and Soulless Xombies* from bringing Nxla to Earth 270 years ago, during the last epoch of the Dark Ages, and spent another 80 years rooting out all Harvesters who had escaped their wrath, and a host of other evil forces along with them. They intend to do so again. They stopped sending spies, scouts and Yhabbayar agents to gather intelligence a few years ago to launch their new war against the minions of Nxla.

The leaders of Psyscape realize their reappearance and attack on the kingdom of Soulharvest – inhabited by card-carrying members of the "True" Federation of Magic, as well as the cultists, may inevitably draw thousands of allied Federation members to the Harvesters' aid, particularly other Necromancers and Death Worshipers. This is why they have chosen "enlightenment" and a "war of words," fighting only in self-defense, rather than a military campaign. It is a plan that is proving to be both cunning and effective. However, with Lord Alistair Dunscon's new movement to unite the many splinter factions of the Federation of Magic under his leadership, the heroes of Psyscape fear the Harvesters may pledge their allegiance to Dunscon and draw Psyscape into a conflict with a united Federation should they continue their efforts to foil the Soul Harvester's plans. Fortunately for them, the Harvesters tend to be secretive loners who dislike associating with outsiders, and Nxla does not want his devotees to answer to any master other than himself, nor risk their precious lives for the foolish cause of another such as Alistair Dunscon (remember, Nxla needs 6601 loyal worshipers to manifest on Rifts Earth). Moreover, Nxla worries that Lord Dunscon might see the death cult as a threat to his own quest for power (which Nxla certainly is) and join with Psyscape or take action of his own to destroy them. However, if there was some way to manipulate Lord Dunscon and the Federation army to move against Psyscape, that might be another story. For now, however, the Harvesters, though they call themselves members of the Federation, refrain from participating in Lord Dunscon's schemes for war. (See the section on the *Magic Zone* and *Federation of Magic* earlier in this section.)

Ultimately, the heroes of Psyscape plan to destroy the cult of Harvesters by changing the outlook of as many True Believers as they can, causing what they estimate could be as many as 50-65% to forsake Nxla and move on to worship some other deity (even if it's another, but less dangerous, Death God). Part of this "campaign of enlightenment" is also designed to spread the word about what a vile and cruel monster Nxla really is, in hope to dissuade others from ever considering his worship. Both aspects of this part of the plan are working wonderfully. Part two of the plan is forcibly rescuing Soulless Xombies and returning them to human form. Part three is to quietly challenge and kill as many loyal Harvesters/True Believers they can in one on one duels to the death. They see destroying Harvesters as a blessing and act of mercy, and honorable if done as a one-on-one fair fight. The heroes of Psyscape will welcome anyone, even evil characters, who wish to join their fight to stop the Harvesters as it is being implemented. An ideal opportunity to bring player characters into a series of adventures against a reoccurring foe.

Note: Although Psyscape has made its existence known, it still remains hidden in the mist and difficult to locate, even by psychics. Furthermore, while a number of its people have ventured into the world around them, they still keep a low profile and tend to stay out of the affairs of other kingdoms. Psyscape has no formal diplomatic relations with any world power although they do have opinions about some of the most notable. They see the **Coalition States** as an empire of ignorance, fear and hatred, which are what make them so narrow-minded, intolerant and dangerous. The wise people of Psyscape realize that the CS citizens, in general, are not evil, but that their ignorance and emotions blind them to the world around them and cause them to lash out with violence, brutality and cruelty. A large number of the people at Psyscape are giving great thought as to how *they* might be able to help "enlighten" the people of the Coalition States. **Free Quebec** is a cousin to the CS with the same problems, and also in need of enlightenment. **Tolkeen** was seen as a study in contrast. A case where the people were on the right track but lost their way to hatred and revenge. A few psychics from Psyscape fought and died in Tolkeen, trying to bring reason and/or to protect innocent civilians to escape the wrath of the CS and the bile of monsters unleashed by their own leaders. **Lazlo** is regarded to be on the road to enlightenment and a place with great promise and hope. Psyscape is considering establishing ties to this community. A number of people from Psyscape have taken up residence at Lazlo the last few years to better assess whether Psyscape should establish any ties with the Kingdom. **New Lazlo** is also seen as having potential, but it is also recognized as blinded by exuberance and idealism. In short, the jury is still out on them, and the community could go down any number of paths, good or bad, in the future. **The Vampire Kingdoms** of Mexico are seen as a grave problem for which the wise Psyscapers see no peaceful solution.



Nebraska

The Nebraska territory is a combination grassy plain and forested wilderness with the Rocky Mountains along the west. Except for scattered tiny pockets of people, it is largely uninhabited by "civilized" standards. However, small clans of Native Americans and Psi-Stalkers are found throughout the region, and sometimes entire tribes of these nomadic people gather in Nebraska, but never for longer than 6-10 weeks. Small clans of Simvan Monster Riders can be encountered in the northeastern quarter of Nebraska where they regularly clash with Psi-Stalkers and adventurers.

The Great Indian Burial Grounds. According to rumors in the east, there is a magical place called the Great Burial Grounds that will be *magically appearing* in Nebraska. Supposedly, this is the final resting place of all great Indian chieftains and warriors. The Great Burial Grounds actually exists in another dimension, but once every one hundred years it appears on Rifts Earth and remains here for only 1D6 years. During this time, the many tribes of Native Americans make a pilgrimage to the location, bringing the remains or a few special items (headdress, peace pipe, enchanted war club, etc.) of their great chiefs and shamans to be interred at the mystical burial ground. This is the greatest of honors, so the remains of great chiefs and shamans who have perished over the years are exhumed to be re-buried in this sacred and spiritual place. The Great Burial Grounds can appear anywhere in North America, and the location is always different every time it appears, this time it is Nebraska. The location becomes known only to Spirit & Fetish Shamans who learn of it through a vision or dream. While it is on Earth, Spirit Warriors and shamans from various tribes take turns guarding the Great Indian Burial Grounds from looters and grave robbers. Miscreants and thieves who stumble upon or learn about the Great Indian Burial Grounds often come to dig up the mounds to steal items of magic and value for resale to mercenaries, warriors and collectors, or to blackmail Indian tribes who will desperately want the stolen items (sometimes the entire remains) back where they belong. The responsibility of preventing robbery or recovering anything that is stolen, falls upon the tribe, or tribes, whose watch the theft occurred on. This may involve any number and type of warriors and shamans. If they fail to recover the items, it is a deeply felt disgrace for the entire tribe, thus all stops are pulled out to get them back.

Nevada

This land of parched earth is home to snakes, scorpions, Desert Sleepers, Tiger Claw Raptors, Silonar, Ostrosaurus, Worms of Taut, Giant Canyon Worms, Great Dream Snakes and the demonic Worm Wraiths (most are described in **World Book 14: New West**). There are so many worm, snake and reptilian monsters found in Nevada (and Utah), that it is it is sometimes called the "Land of Worms" or "Land of Serpents." As one might guess, Nevada is lightly populated and avoided even by Psi-Stalkers and Simvan.

Area 51 & Bandito Arms. Located in southeastern Nevada about 100 miles (160 km) north of the ruins of Las Vegas, a second-rate arm of the North American Black Market discovered the secret military testing ground once known as *Groom Lake* and *Area 51*. This faction within the Black Market has parlayed their discovery into a gold mine for themselves and the organization. Bandito Arms was a growing concern by the time Northern Gun and Manistique made their deal with the Coalition States and substantially reduced their sales to mercenaries and kingdoms not affiliated with the CS. This flung the door wide open for the Black Market in general and Bandito Arms in particular. Since 105 P.A., Bandito Arms has grown 92% and is ranked among the top five or six weapons manufacturers on the continent, usually number four after Wilk's. They supplied Tolkeen when few others would take the chance, and also sell to the Colorado Baronies, the city of Arzno, the bandits of the Pecos Empire, the Cyber-Knights, Kingsdale and just about anybody who has hard cash or tradeable goods. Bandito Arm's main market remains the west and southwest, but their products are starting to reach the Midwest and the Magic Zone – a fact that drives Northern Gun and the Manistique Imperium (Titan and Iron Heart Industries among them) crazy. Although sales are good, and have increased 18% under their pact with the Coalition States, these two industry leaders know they are losing market share to Wilk's and Bandito Arms more than anybody else. See **Rifts® World Book 14: New West™** for details on the company and its most notable offerings.

Rocky Mountains

The rocky mountains are larger and shaped differently than they were before the Coming of the Rifts. The Great Cataclysm and the eruption of the Yellowstone Super Volcano reshaped

much of the region, the Rockies included. There are portions of where the side of a mountain vanished, new peaks and hills appeared, and areas where a mountain is 50-100 feet (15.2 to 30.5 m) taller or considerably lower. New mountain valleys, crevices and rivers are part of the Rockies of Rifts Earth.

Inhabitants are limited to Native Americans, small bands of adventurers, solitary predators, hermits, hunters, trappers, and those looking to escape civilization (or the law). The various people and monsters described in **Rifts® World Books 14 & 15: New West™** and **Spirit West™** may be encountered in and around the mountains, but usually in small numbers. Simvan Monster Riders avoid the mountains, preferring the lowland forests and plains.

Utah

Utah was a land of alien looking rock formations, canyons, buttes, plateaus, mountains desert long before the Coming of the Rifts. It has not changed much over the years, except to return to its wilderness state. Much of the land is scrub, like Arizona and New Mexico, but there are patches of prairie lands as well as thin forests along waterways and the Mountains. Half-buried ruins of pre-Rifts cities dot the landscape, though they too are found in clusters and said to be haunted. The flying Leather Wing joins the ranks of those monsters also found in Utah: snakes, scorpions, Desert Sleepers, Tiger Claw Raptors, Silonar, Ostrosaurus, Worms of Taut, Giant Canyon Worms, Great Dream Snakes and the demonic Worm Wraiths (most are described in **World Book 14: New West™**). Intelligent life in this bad land is limited to Navaho Indians and the occasional Apache, Ute and Simvan nomads.

For decades, rumors have persisted that a **City of Wonder** is located somewhere in Utah. It is reportedly made of gold and precious gems. The waters within the city are rumored to have incredible healing properties and the people to be gentle and kind. Some say that the city is so wondrous that those who find it never want to leave. Another rumor says those who live there live free of sickness for a thousand years and find enlightenment and peace. Many believe it is real, the educated believe it is a myth. Some think it may actually refer to the Lyn-Srial city in the Grand Canyon (Arizona), others a place like Psyscape (also thought to be myth for generations). The truth is, nobody knows if the City of Wonder is real or fantasy. That doesn't stop con artists and crooks from selling vague maps said to reveal the city's location if they can figure out the clues. There are at least a dozen of these fake maps on the market, but one is said to be the real McCoy, drawn by an explorer 90+ years ago. Then again, Utah seems to be a land of "the lost" that includes Montezuma's Lost Treasure, Maximilian's Millions, Wells Fargo's Legacy of Gold, and stories of a Naruni Cache.

There are hundreds and hundreds of **abandoned missile silos** across the western United States, especially the southwest (a

few in the Midwest, east and Canada too). They are huge, easily accommodating 100-200 inhabitants. The tops of most missile silos are buried under 30-100 feet (9.1 to 30.5 m) of dirt from the ages, but some are closer to the surface or unearthed by burrowing monsters or a storm and left waiting to be discovered by adventurers, prospectors and wanderers. There are no nuclear missiles, explosives or military equipment in *abandoned* silos, but they make great bunker-like hideouts, campsites, and homesteads.

The silos are frequently used by Simvan and bandits in the area, sometimes Wilderness Scouts and other travelers. If the exterior hatch is left open, bats, snakes and more dangerous creatures might inhabit it also, including predators, monsters and demons.

Inhabited, decommissioned missile silos of the southwestern USA. As noted above, there are lots of abandoned US military missile silos. The trick is digging one up. When one is found, they are often turned into a homestead or the heart of a farm or small town. Here are some of the likely possible inhabitants. Note that Indians never inhabit missile silos or any pre-Rifts military structures.

01-10% 1D4 giant Canyon Worms that got in through an open surface hatch or found an underground breach into the otherwise empty silo.

11-20% A band of 1D4x10 mutant Keepers of the Desert or one Phantasm.

21-30% A clan of 2D4x10 Cactus People, with a nice little farm on the surface.

31-40% A clan of 2D6x10 Fennodi (and maybe 2D6 people of other races living with them) or other type of D-Bee race. They have a nice little farm or ranch on the surface around or near their missile silo home.

41-50% A band of 2D6+6 desperados/bandits or nomads. In the alternative it is the nest for 4D6x100 Rattlesnakes, with a Great Dream Snake or demonic Worm of Taut thrown in for good measure.

51-65% A mixed group of human and D-Bee Cowboys with a cattle ranch on the surface or farmers with crops and some livestock on the surface. The silo is used as the main bunkhouse and storage bay.

66-75% Vampires! The Undead love these nice, dark, dry missile silos buried safely in the earth. There could be any combination or number of vampires inside. A common find is 2D4 Secondary vampires, a half a dozen of their mind slaves and a few to several prisoners (people to be drained of their blood, but until then they are playthings for the vampires to be tormented, tortured and worse). Whether a Master Vampire is among them is up to the G.M. Or there could be a nest of Wild Vampires. Anywhere from three or four, to a dozen or two, maybe more.

76-80% A brotherhood of practitioners of magic (any one type, like Necromancers, Line Walkers, Mystics, etc.) or a mixed cadre of mages (several different types of mages, perhaps living with their families or in some kind of commune). Their exact numbers, level, alignments and purpose we leave to the G.M.

81-85% One or two Oborus-Slitherers or Phantasms or other rare and vicious being.

86-90% 4D6+10 Grigleapers. These monsters gained entrance by killing the humanoid inhabitants and turning it into a cozy nest. An abandoned silo might also be home to 1D6x100 rattlesnakes.

91-95% One Hatchling or Adult dragon or similar magical creature.

96-00% A hermit Cyber-Knight or practitioner of magic or supernatural being who wants to be left alone. Or a secluded Techno-Wizard workshop or other cadre of practitioners of magic conducting dangerous or secret (or both) magic experiments.

An active missile silo refers to one that still contains a pre-Rifts missile; 40% nuclear. These rare finds (remember, most silos are buried nowadays) are usually scavenged for the explosive warhead, parts and other bits of machinery, scrap metal and odds and ends. They rarely have any other military weapons or equipment. These items can then be sold to Bandito Arms or some other branch of the Black Market, the Pecos Empire or an independent kingdom, or even a large mercenary group or the Coalition States. A working warhead can get 30,000-60,000 credits, a nuclear warhead twice that, the other stuff maybe 15,000 credits, total. Being out in the middle of nowhere, however, bandits, nomads, and other adventuring groups may try to lay claim to the silo and its payload and try to seize it.

Westward

The old American States of **Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas,** and **Oklahoma** (not to mention Arkansas and Southern Missouri) are all areas plagued by raiding parties, bandit gangs, gunmen and outlaws from the **Pecos Empire** operating out of the southern half of Texas. These brigands sweep the countryside and use hit and run and other simple guerilla tactics. Most gangs are constantly on the move. Lawmen and other criminal factions in these regions often clash with Pecos bandits, but rarely invade the Pecos Empire. The presence of a rival or enemy outlaw band in Pecos territory is asking for trouble.

The regions farther west and over the Rocky Mountains, **Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon** and **California**, are all said to be a vast, uncharted and unclaimed wilderness. Because it is largely unexplored by those in the central and eastern parts of the country, they remain mostly a blank page yet to be filled. Tribes of Native Americans, Simvan and to a lesser degree, Psi-Stalkers are known to inhabit the region. There are also small clusters of D-Bees scattered throughout. A small group of self-proclaimed "lawmen" calling themselves the **Justice Rangers** also roam these lands. They follow something they call "The Code," meting out justice and functioning like traveling Federal Marshals or Texas Rangers of the Old West. They are on good terms with most settlements and towns as well as Cyber-Knights, Tundra Rangers, other lawmen and most tribes of Native Americans. **Rifts® World Books 14 &15: New West™** and **Spirit West™** provide some insights about these regions.

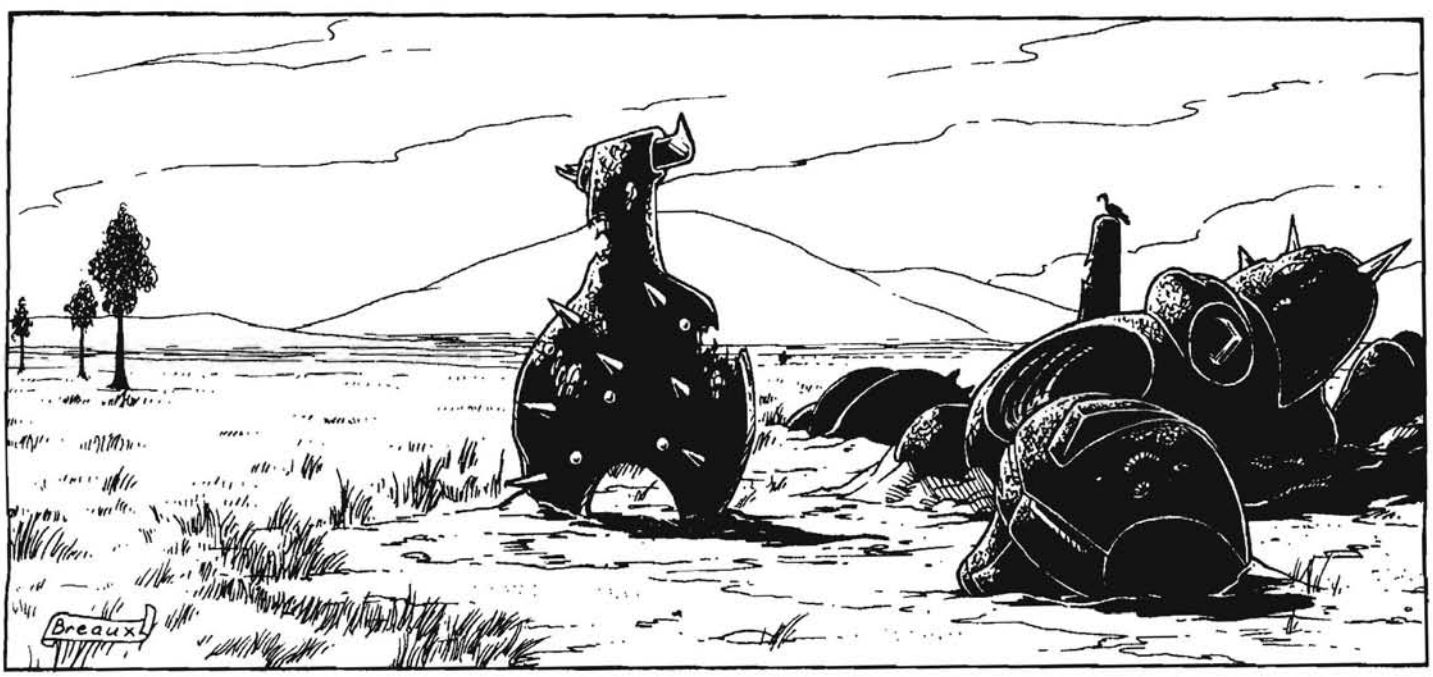
The Wyoming Simvan-Psi-Stalker War. Not all refugees have accepted the hospitality of the Cyber-Knights and Lyn-Srial, and some have pushed farther northwest into Wyo-

ming. Others are Simvan Monster Riders who fought for Tolkeen returning *home*. These survivors find they have fled from one war zone and into another. The Simvan are especially irate, for they have returned home only to find several tribes of Psi-Stalkers and Native Americans claiming what was once their land. The Simvan and Psi-Stalkers are long-time rivals who challenge and raid each other all the time. When things go too far, large scale war erupts. Such wars usually last a season or two, never more than a year. This one is eight months old and the Psi-Stalkers have the upper hand. Simvan generally get along better with Native Americans than Psi-Stalkers, but the Monster Riders are very aggressive, territorial nomad warriors who threaten and raid everyone. Apparently the Simvan did something heinous enough for the Native American Indians and Psi-Stalkers to work together at forcing them out of Wyoming. Psi-Stalkers and Native Americans are typically friendly rivals who get along reasonably well and often come to each other's aid, especially against the Simvan.

The war still rages with hostile bands of Simvan scattered all across the northern half of Wyoming where the Indians and Psi-Stalkers dominate, at least for the moment, and the larger Simvan war parties in the southern half. For the Tolkeen survivors and anyone traveling through the region, Wyoming is now a war zone – enter at your own risk. Hostile Simvan may attack outsiders with the intention of robbing and harassing them in a display of power, or strike with deadly intentions, murdering every "invader" they encounter. Groups that are predominantly D-Bees have a better chance of being left alive, if they are just passing through, than humans. The Monster Riders consider humans and Psi-Stalkers to be cousins, and with the Native Americans involved in this fracas, all humans are on the Simvan hate list. Likewise, the agitated Simvan see most settlers of any race as invaders to be rousted or dispatched. True to their name, the Monster Riders use dinosaurs and other alien beasts in the New West as both riding animals and attack animals. Simvan possess psionic powers to control animals and monsters. Thus, they can easily herd monsters and send them on a stampede into unsuspecting caravans and campsites or send carnivorous beasts to stalk them. When the Simvan warriors attack, they fight with ruthless savagery and command their monstrous mounts to fight as well.

The above not withstanding, Wyoming is a big place and those travelers who move through it quickly may avoid conflict with the Simvan. The Monster Riders also respect the Cyber-Knights and those in the Knights' company *may* be allowed to pass with only threats, shoving and pushing, and demanding a bit of tribute in way of food, weapons or ammunition.

Deep in the Black Hills of Wyoming, right on the border of South Dakota and Wyoming, a rogue Coalition officer and a few of his hand-picked soldiers have established their own little empire, enslaving tribes of primitive D-Bees to serve as their subjects. The leader of the platoon and now "king" of the *Black Hills Empire* is a lunatic known as *Special Forces Major Li Sung*. The Major was a distinguished, hardball officer in the Coalition Army. He has always been high-strung and intense, but a soldier who can get the job done and never balks at an assignment. He is also one of the survivors of the *Sorcerers' Revenge* and after living through that nightmare and witnessing countless atrocities, he has never been the same. Under different circumstances he probably would have been sent back to Chi-Town for a psychiatric evaluation and rest, but the CS needed seasoned warriors like Major Sung and his platoon, and sent him back into the Kingdom of Tolkeen. Major Sung and his Special Ops platoon was a deep insertion team sent behind enemy lines to provide vital reconnaissance information for the advancing Second Invasion Force. When the siege began, his team was sent into South Dakota. It was the obvious place for Tolkeenite survivors to flee, and it was Major Sung's job to map and determine the best locations to place Coalition troops to ambush and destroy the escaping survivors. However, something happened along the way and the Major and his Special Ops platoon have all gone AWOL. One rumor suggests the Major found a Tolkeen magic item that was being secreted out of the Kingdom. An item said to have accidentally given Major Sung "godlike powers" and warped his already crumbling mind. According to uncon-



firmed reports, Major Sung has captured and diverted a couple thousand Tolkeen refugees to the Black Hills where he has decreed they worship him and begin building him an empire. Supposedly, his 60 troops, half in CS power armor, are willing participants in this madness, suggesting they too are beset with madness. So far from the action in Minnesota and with so many other matters to deal with, Major Sung has been ignored by the CS and rather than track him down, he and his men may simply be listed as "missing in action."

Starting over, but hounded by the past. Just before the final siege on Tolkeen, a band of mages composed of mostly Ley Line Walkers, Mystics, and Techno-Wizards escaped the coming fall of their once beloved city. They had grown tired of the war, disgusted by the persecution of the Coalition, and nearly as sickened by their own leaders for their alliance with demonic forces. They met up and traveled with, others who were mostly of good alignment to the northwestern edge of **Idaho** and settled in the three villages of *Potlatch, Onaway*, and *Princeton*. These villages are on the exact sites of their pre-Rifts counterparts. They are now mostly farm and fishing communities with the fishing being done on the Palouse River. A ley line runs through Potlatch and Princeton and meets at a nexus just north of Onaway. They know that some leaders from Tolkeen have other plans for the survivors of the war, but they want no part of it. The thing is, some of those demonic forces called on during the war have followed these mages and want to use these new, little magic communities as war camps, like they did with Tolkeen, from which they can launch their diabolic plans of revenge. The mages are willing to fight the demons, but need all the help they can get. Without outside help, half are likely to be destroyed and the rest enslaved.

Wisconsin

The southern portion of Wisconsin, from Green Bay and Marshfield south to the Illinois border, is second in magic energy only to the Magic Zone. It is designated as a forbidden area by the Coalition and is a constant source of consternation. Ley line nexus points are known to exist at Marshfield, Stevens Point, Green Bay, Oshkosh (three), Wautoma, Big Flats, Montello, Adams, Mauston, Sparta, West Salem, Richland, Bridgeport, Madison (three), Juneau, Watertown, Waukesha, Milwaukee (four), Lake Geneva, and Beloit. Chi-Town sends SAMAS teams to patrol the skies along the Illinois/Wisconsin border daily, and have established military installations near Lake Geneva and Madison. Dog Packs and mutant animal infantry soldiers are sent about 50 to 100 miles into the interior on reconnaissance and destroy missions to combat the magic and demonic threats drawn to the Rifts. Chi-Town's paranoia has even led to several massive bombings of land areas, including Milwaukee, Waukesha, and Madison; all of which are barren wastelands as a result.

There are consistent rumors of a magic kingdom known as "Shaedo," ruled by a dragon (Kee-thh is the name), or dragons, somewhere in the Marshfield/Stevens Point area, but there is no evidence to support its existence. The territory is mostly wilderness and wastelands under the constant scrutiny of the CS. Few humans live in the southern portion.

The American Southwest

Colorado

Just north of New Mexico is the old American State of Colorado. It, like most of the New West, is largely an uninhabited wilderness. Here and there, one can find a ranch, town, city or even a city-state, but they are few and far between. One such place is **Silvereno.** Not much has changed for the city of Silvereno, a frontier mining town of some 35,000 people. They still work hard, play hard and live hard. Silvereno, like most communities in the west, stayed out of the war in the east (Minnesota is "east" for them). They don't cotton to the idea of the big Coalition States conquering people and gobblin' up their land for themselves, puts a bad taste in one's mouth, but that's far away and doesn't concern them much. At least as they see it.

The Colorado Baronies is the only true "kingdom" in Colorado and is growing rapidly. The overall population has risen 20% over the last five years and the Baronies are becoming known as a Techno-Wizard manufacturing center. During the war years, the Baronies supported Tolkeen only by selling them TW and conventional arms, munitions and equipment.

With the fall of Tolkeen they have accepted a small number of refugees (about 2000-3000), but cannot accept more for fear of stressing and collapsing their own fragile kingdom. To further help the relief effort, the Baronies have contributed some basic supplies, provide the Cyber-Knights with free room and board and offer available information about trouble in the region. Their hearts go out to the refugees, but other than that, there is nothing else they can really do. Tolkeen had been a long-time trade partner so its collapse has had a tremendous impact on the economy of the Baronies. Not only is future trade with the nation completely gone, requiring the Baronies to establish new avenues, but many Techno-Wizard weapons and magic items salvaged from the war zone have flooded the regional market, reducing demand by 40%! The Colorado Baronies could sell to the Federation of Magic, but the Magic Zone is a good distance away through hostile CS patrolled territory, besides the Baronies would rather not deal with Lord Dunscon or any of the evil factions in the Magic Zone. The Baronies are self-sufficient, so in the long run, they should be fine, and even in the short term will not suffer more than a little belt tightening – provided they are not overrun by refugees. The Cyber-Knights have promised to prevent that from happening.

Unlike other places, the Colorado Baronies are insulated from the shock and fear that others feel from Tolkeen's collapse. Part of that is because they held a very realistic and pragmatic outlook on the war, and expected Tolkeen to lose and the Coalition Army to raze the kingdom to the ground, slaughtering thousands. The other part is physical distance from the CS. The Colorado Baronies just don't feel threatened by the CS. Chi-Town is hundreds of miles away and the Coalition Army has never pushed farther west than Kansas, and their presence there is minimal.

The legend of NORAD. Post-Rifts scholars know that some sort of catastrophe of epic proportions happened in a place once known as the *Yellowstone National Park*. Whatever that disaster was, it reshaped that part of the country, altering the Rocky Mountains themselves. Scholars know it probably had something to do with volcanic eruptions and extreme seismic activity, but they don't know exactly what. Some speculate this catastrophe also destroyed or buried the American Empire's elite military sanctuary known as NORAD.

Ever since the first books and documents about NORAD were discovered, countless expeditions of independent explorers, mercenaries, adventurers, scientists, scholars, Black Marketeers, and nations like Lazlo, the Coalition States and others have searched for it, but nobody has ever found it. New expeditions crop up every few months, looking for stout, strong bodies to protect them and help dig and search for NORAD. So many thousands of fruitless expeditions have been attempted (some searching for years), that most people in the New West don't believe NORAD was ever real, and those who believe it once existed, don't think it will ever be found. Disbelievers aside, the search for the legendary NORAD continues, just as people before the Coming of the Rifts sought to locate the Lost Dutchman's Gold Mine, the lost city of El Dorado and the continent of Atlantis. Half the explorers are never heard from again, or their sun bleached bones are found years after they vanished. Adventurers in the wilds of Colorado face a dangerous wilderness trek through the badlands of the *New West*, the mountains, hostile Simvan, Indians, Cyber-Knights, Coalition spies, bushwhackers, monsters, and vampires. Those who do survive are sometimes driven mad by the experience. Still explorers and treasure hunters come, and a half dozen rival search teams are usually in the area at any given time. Some willing to do anything, even kill, to prevent others from finding "their" NORAD before them.

Texas – Lone Star

Texas is claimed by the Coalition as the **State of Lone Star**, however the CS only controls 20-25% of the northernmost corner of the State, and barely manages to maintain it. This area is where the fabled Lone Star Military Compound and top-secret Genetics Complex is located. The rest of Texas is pretty much up for grabs, and is a wild, often lawless land of violence and anarchy. The southern third is dominated by the bandits of the **Pecos Empire** who, like the CS, claim all of Texas. The Pecos Empire is a loose coalition of reavers, raiders, gunslingers, Headhunters and roughnecks who live by their wits, brawn and skill with a gun. It is composed of dozens of independent gangs of raiders, bandits and barbarians with 4-6 large, powerhouse groups who vie for dominion over the rest. Furthermore, new young warlords and sorcerers arise regularly to challenge the status quo. This is the way it has been for more than 200 years with no sign of things settling down any time soon. If anything, matters are getting worse. Emperor Prosek accepting the kingdom of **El Dorado** as the newest addition to the Coalition States, and claiming all of Arkansas in the process, has riled all members of the Pecos Empire as well as the Federation of Magic and a number of independent kingdoms and mercenary outfits including the *Juicer Army of Liberation.*

While the rest of the civilized people of North America kept a nervous eye on events transpiring at Tolkeen, the Pecos Empire focused on raids into Mexico, fighting vampires and harassing the Coalition lackeys at Lone Star and El Dorado. Sure, a number of Simvan and Pecos Raiders traveled northeast to get in on "the fun," but most stayed home. Those who hated the Coalition Army had them in their own backyard if they wanted to strike at them.

Since Tolkeen's collapse at least 10,000-15,000 refugees have fled to Texas. Some are looking to build a new life there, hoping to be protected by the Pecos Empire (like that's going to happen), while half plan to join one faction of the Pecos Empire or another so they can continue to fight the CS on a different field of battle.

The balance of power in the Pecos Empire has not changed much over the last four years, with *Warlord Sabre Lasar* still at the top of the heap and *Warlord Grange and his Pecos Raiders* and *Warlord Don Marco* next in line. Three years ago, self-proclaimed "king" Victor Macklin suffered a devastating defeat, losing half his men to CS General Kashbrook at Wichita Falls.

A new Warlord in Lone Star. *Warlord Carlos Arroyo* and his *Night Raiders* are a quickly rising star in the southwest. Within a short six months, he is rumored to have gathered an army of more than 4,000 with hundreds more flocking to him since the fall of Tolkeen. Ironically, he is a threat to both the disorganized *Pecos Empire* and the *Coalition Lone Star* military outposts and civilian colonies. To the Empire because Warlord Arroyo does not acknowledge the Pecos Raiders or their claims of sovereignty over Texas. King Macklin feels especially threatened and is said to be massing his own troops and working at trying to convince a tribe or two of Psi-Stalkers to join his ranks.

Meanwhile, Warlord Arroyo is a threat to the CS because this new bandit upstart is incredibly daring, a clever tactician, and well organized, and it is suspected that Arroyo or some monsters under his command have somehow managed to gain entry into the heart of the Lone Star Genetics Complex on at least four occasions, despite its nearly impervious security systems and heavy presence of CS troops. No damage has been done to this infamous genetics compound, yet, but what Warlord Arroyo may be looking for or have planned for it remains a mystery.

Another thing that worries the CS is that reports confirm half of Warlord Arroyo's men are *monsters;* Brodkil, Gargoyles, Simvan, N'mbyr Gorilla Men, Vanguard Brawlers, Keepers of the Desert, Oborus-Slitherers, rogue mutant animals created by the Lone Star Complex, and even a few vampires among them. He is said to court Necromancers and Shifters for his elite magic corps, along with a few Daemonix and Thornhead Demons.

Warlord Arroyo is famous for his successful night raids and general elusiveness. His main base of operation is along the Rio Grande and he is said to have base camps and hideouts on both sides of the Mexican border. This has led some to speculate that Warlord Arroyo is a *Master Vampire* and that one hundred of his most trusted men are Secondary Vampires under his complete domination. A recent rumor has it that a Saddle Tramp stopping at El Paso in search of Reid's Rangers got so drunk one night that he revealed he had been riding with Warlord Arroyo for the last two months. He deserted when he discovered the man was a vampire and at least 300 of his troops were, too. According to this drifter, he accidentally learned that after several attempts to carve himself a power niche in the Vampire Kingdoms, Arroyo has decided to claim part of Texas as his domain, spreading vampirism into the north. The Saddle Tramp was found later, dead in an alley across from the boarding house where he was staying. The man was torn apart by wild dogs. Coincidence?

Los Alamo, Texas, is a strong, technological kingdom located near the ruins of Austin. The community is one of the tiny handful of places that recovered after the chaos of the Great Cataclysm and grew into a large, independent city-state with relatively high levels of technology and manufacturing (equivalent to 20th Century Earth, with a few advanced 21st Century techniques) to survive the Dark Ages. For many years, Los Alamo remained isolated from the world at large. They refused to admit strangers beyond their fortified walls and created a massive minefield in the wasteland around the city-state – a no-man's zone they call "The Border." By the late 50's P.A., however, a number of trading caravans connected Los Alamo with other cities, and by 102 P.A., the city finally adopted a new "Open Door" policy and established diplomatic relations with such townships as *El Paso, Ciudad Juarez,* and *Fort El Dorado,* among others. The kingdom politely turned down an offer to join the Coalition States in 104 P.A., but it remains a *bastion of humanity* in the desolate Texas countryside.

In most respects, Los Alamo has a standard of living comparable to 20th Century America with electricity, indoor plumbing, paved streets, a railway system of transportation, and many amenities of modern life. The weapons technology and manufacturing are also fairly advanced.

In 104 P.A., a Naruni Enterprises trading delegation came to Los Alamo offering a very attractive sales and credit program that resulted in 40% of the Los Alamo armed forces being re-equipped with Naruni products. An estimated 100 million credits a year are being spent by the government on NE products. Private buyers spend an additional 50-75 million credits. This has led to a Naruni Trading Depot being built in Los Alamo, much to the chagrin of North American weapons manufacturers and the Coalition States. In fact, it was the Coalition's insistence that Los Alamo cut all ties with the alien arms dealer and "trade" all NE weapons and equipment for CS equivalents that caused Los Alamo to decline the Coalition's invitation to join the States. A decision that has earned the independent city-state the ire of the CS. In fact, they greatly underestimate the extent of the Coalition's feelings about this matter.

During its isolationist period, Los Alamo had very few cybernetic facilities, but this has changed thanks to trade with other technological enclaves, particularly the Naruni. Currently, two facilities specialize in all kinds of bionics and cybernetics, up to full conversion, and a number of body-chop-shops offer some range of cybernetic augmentation and services and one even does M.O.M. augmentation, the process to create Crazies. Unfortunately, prices at all these places are 15% higher than standard. Black Market cybernetics are available, but cost double; they are not illegal, but highly taxed to prevent just anybody from getting them.

There are numerous other small cities, towns, ranches and farms scattered throughout Texas, but each is an island in an ocean of lawlessness and violence. Islands besieged by raiders, rustlers, bandits and monsters, most of them members of the Pecos Empire.

Vampires are a fact of life in Texas and throughout the southwest. The Pecos Bandits, Reid's Rangers and other bands of heroes and vampire-killers do enough to keep the vampire population under control, but the undead just keep coming. When a swarm appears, inevitably some group will appear to deal with them and even the average peasant and vagabond living within 200 miles (320 km) of the Mexican border knows how recognize, fight and kill vampires. Though Texas remains out of the hands of the undead, many fear that some new lord of the undead will make a push into Texas. The only thing that may have prevented it this long is the Pecos Bandits and other militant powers in and around Texas. For now, the status quo is maintained and mortal humanoids have the upper hand.

Note: See **Rifts® World Book 13: Lone Star**, for the full lowdown on Texas, the Pecos Empire, the Lone Star Complex and various types of Dog Boys and mutant animals. Check out **World Book 14: New West™** for more on the western part of the country, not to mention Bandito Arms, Colorado Baronies, the Lyn-Srial and monsters, and **World Book One: Vampire Kingdoms** for El Paso, Ciudad Juarez, vampires and more.

New Mexico

Visitors unfamiliar with the region might think of New Mexico as an extension of *Texas, Nevada* or *Arizona* only with more hills and mountains, as in the Rocky Mountains. Much of New Mexico is stony desert, cactus and scrub similar to Arizona, with patches of sagebrush and light forest along the waterways and in the mountains. The southern desert and scrubland is plagued by vampires. Fennodi, Simvan, Native Americans and

bands of Cyber-Knights and the vampire-fighting Reid's Rangers are among the most notable inhabitants and visitors to the region. There are no big towns or anything that might pass for civilization. Other than the appearance of Reid's Rangers, this part of the country hasn't changed in over 200 years.

Arizona

Northern Arizona has been called a Wilderness of Stone because of the Grand Canyon and other mazes of canyons, pillars of stone and rock formations unlike anywhere else in the world. Sagebrush, scrub, cactuses, and alien vegetation are sprinkled in patches everywhere. In the lower elevations along the Colorado River and other waterways are thin forests of pine trees and Gamble Oaks found throughout northern Arizona, Utah and Colorado. Such forests can also be found in the Rocky Mountains. Small, but surprisingly strong, mixed communities of humans and D-Bees can be found at Clarkdale, Jerome, Cottonwood, Winslow, and elsewhere, but the most impressive is the cliff city of **Tryth-Sal** – home of the cloudweaving Lyn-Srial. The City of the Golden Ones, as it is also known, is actually built into the cliffs in a high portion of the Grand Canyon. Half the population is Lyn-Srial, the rest are Fennodi and other D-Bees. It is a place of peace, beauty and serenity.

Sky-Knights and other Lyn-Srial do go forth into the world, but those at Tryth-Sal tend to keep a low profile, stay close to home, and avoid conflict. Part of that is their peace-loving nature. The other part is wisdom and caution. The Lyn-Srial know they are aliens in a strange land, and seek to establish a strong, defendable community before they display their presence to the outside world – an alien world that is not their own. This is not meant to imply the golden-skinned aliens are cowards, quite the contrary, they are bold champions of justice who frequently fly to the aid of those in need, help Cyber-Knights and other lawmen, and conduct themselves with honor and courage. In fact, nearly 3,000 Sky-Knights have left the security of the cliff city and their families to patrol the Arizona-Utah region where, like Cyber-Knights and Justice Rangers, they try to right wrongs, defend the innocent and fight for justice. This has helped to encourage dozens of tiny farms and settlements to spring up within a hundred miles (160 km) around Tryth-Sal, because the people know they are safe from bandits and monsters under the watchful eyes of the Sky-Knights. Furthermore, the 3000 Sky-Knights scatter into small groups, pairs and even lone individuals, so when they are encountered, they create the illusion of being one-of-a-kind or a small band of aliens. Though they scatter from their own kind, Lyn-Srial Sky-Knights frequently join forces with Cyber-Knights, lawmen and adventurers of good alignments.

The Lyn-Srial are comparative newcomers to Rifts Earth and are based exclusively in Arizona. When their population has grown to more than 15,000 of their own race, they are likely to begin to take a more active role in the affairs of communities beyond their base of operation. That being said, the kindhearted aliens agreed to help the survivors of Tolkeen by creating amazing Castles in the Sky as temporary shelters for those in need. They have performed their work quietly and efficiently, refraining from combat in Minnesota and devoting themselves to the building of magical castles. Currently, most people outside the Arizona-Utah area do not know the Lyn-Srial even exist, including the CS. However, the Lyn-Srial's involvement with the Cyber-Knight rescue operation will start rumors that there is a race of golden-skinned "eagle-people" who wield some kind of alien magic giving them control over the wind and clouds. Fortunately, because of the Cloudweavers' efforts in the Dakotas, the CS and most people will mistakenly come to believe the "eagle-people" live in the northwestern Rocky Mountains and Alberta. **Note:** See the section on North and South Dakota for more about the Castles in the Sky, and **Rifts® World Book 14: New West™** for details about the Lyn-Srial, Tryth-Sal and Cloud Magic.

The Techo-Wizard city of Arzno is also found in northern Arizona near the Grand Canyon. It is believed to have been founded by refugees fleeing persecution by the Federation of Magic around 40 or 50 P.A., but records were lost and nobody in the city knows the true or complete history of their community. In the last twenty years, the city of 15,000 has become a haven for adventurers, explorers and mercenaries. They help to supply numerous Reid's Rangers, Justice Rangers, bandits from the Pecos Empire, the Juicer Army of Liberation, mercenary groups, gunslingers, cowboys, desperados, adventurers, and Navajo and Hopi Indians who come to town, as well as Tryth-Sal, Silvereno and the Colorado Baronies. Arzno is a mixed community of D-Bees and humans, though humans are dominant, of about 15,000 (it has grown a bit over the last four or five years), and is willing to take in as many as 3,000 hardworking Tolkeen refugees.

Southern Arizona is a hot, stony desert with tiny settlements and homesteads found here and there. **Vampires** and other vile creatures such as Worm Wraiths, dinosaurs and a number of monsters common to the New West dominate the south. The undead sometimes travel as far north as Colorado and Utah. Seen as a demon-plague, the undead are killed on sight and sometimes an entire town or several nearby communities will band together to purge the vermin from their domain. Meanwhile, bands of Psi-Stalkers, Indians, adventurers, bandits and good 'ol boys frequently go hunting vampires for sport.

Clans of Native American Indians, and the occasional Justice Rangers, Cyber-Knights, Pecos Bandits and adventurers are also found throughout Arizona.

The Coalition States

The Coalition States (CS) is "the" undisputed powerhouse nation in North America. The States have the largest population, the largest cities, the most advanced technology (pirated from pre-Rifts industry), a humongous standing army, and the single largest *human* population gathered under one government on the continent. Its Emperor, *Karl Prosek*, is one of the most famous and reviled public figures alive, second in notoriety only to *Erin Tarn* who is the most respected and beloved. The CS is also the subject of intense scrutiny and debate, and the face of controversy and contradiction. Some would argue that if the CS were not an aggressive, fascist state of human supremacists, it could become the greatest nation on Earth. Sadly, under its current regime and apparent heirs, nothing will change for generations.

Some scholars and historians have compared the Coalition States to Imperial Rome, and Emperor Prosek is its Caesar Augustus. A government and world power to be both respected and feared, and a leader obsessed with creating a great nation through conquest and destroying all enemies.

Many consider the Coalition States an evil empire, and with good reason. As human supremacists, the CS government regards *all* nonhumans as evil, alien invaders, and as such, they must be destroyed or repelled. This is where some of the controversy, contradiction and even sympathy come into play for the Coalition. The Great Cataclysm was caused by the Coming of the Rifts. The reappearance of magic energy at unimaginable levels toppled civilization around the globe. Humans perished by the billions and when the dust settled, less than 30% of the human population remained. Not only did the survivors face the horror of near obliteration as a race and culture, but the world was transformed by magic and invaded by countless monsters, supernatural creatures and Dimensional Beings (D-Bees). Inhuman creatures who hunted them like animals, tormented them for pleasure, and competed with human beings for the possession of the planet Earth! Humans everywhere were no longer alone, and the monstrous invaders were here to stay. The entire two hundred years of the Dark Ages were one long struggle against malevolent monsters, aliens and magic wielding maniacs. Though some people and communities have learned to live together in peace, many like the CS have learned to hate and fear nonhumans, and for good reason. The first fifty years after the Great Cataclysm the human population dropped to a perilous 10%. The rest were slaughtered by inhuman invaders and magic wielding menaces, or perished from alien plagues and freak disasters.

For the ancestors of the Coalition States, they have known nearly 300 years of fighting for their lives just to survive and keep what they have. It has made them steadfast in their resolve that *all* nonhumans are evil, treacherous invaders who nearly extinguished human life and continue to invade and conquer the planet Earth. Now that the Coalition States have the power to do something about it, they fight to reclaim their planet one acre of land at a time. They have no sympathy for "monsters" or those who dare to call upon the very mystic energies that destroyed civilization. Magic, for them, is as mysterious and dangerous as

the dragons, demons and monsters who wield it, and best left alone by humans.

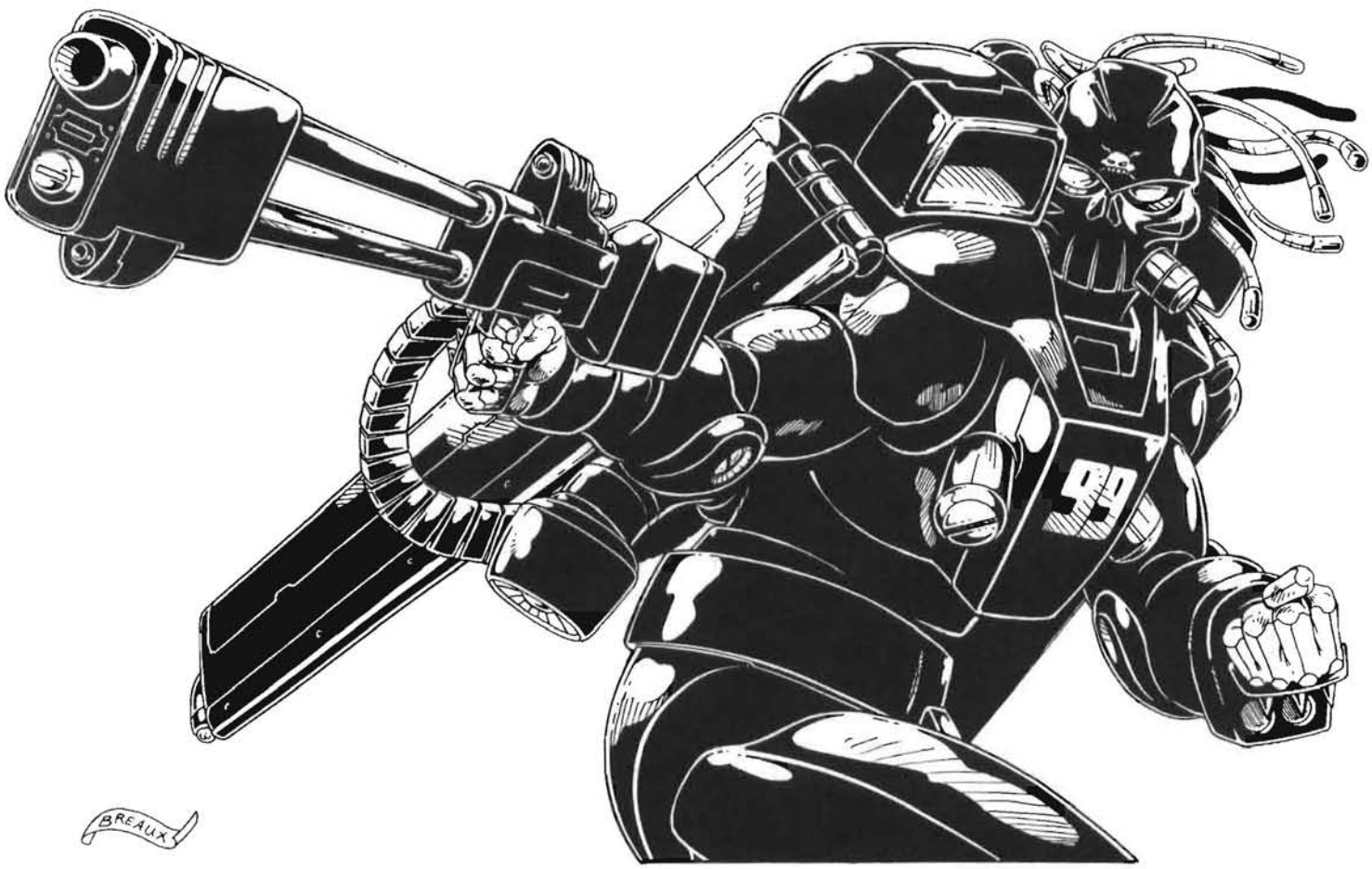
Cast in this light, the Coalition States and the Emperor who leads them sound like heroes fighting for a just and noble cause. The heroic underdogs fighting to "save humankind" and liberate all humans from the tyranny of monsters and magic. They claim to fight to liberate humans from a monstrous hell, and rise up like the mythical phoenix to reclaim *their* world. Certainly, that is the pitch and hype Emperor Prosek and his propaganda machine endlessly preaches to Coalition citizens. It is the rhetoric that makes all proud CS citizens see themselves in this heroic light, but it is only a half-truth, twisted and bent to by a power-hungry regime who uses a noble cause and the cry for freedom for its own agenda of power and revenge.

The CS might be the heroes Emperor Prosek claims they are if their crusade included some measure of understanding, tolerance and mercy toward their "enemies." But the Emperor's characterization of the situation and the "evil monsters" is conveniently and deliberately kept narrow and self-serving. The confusion and controversy around the CS arise from the fact that everything the Coalition claims, above, *is* basically true, however, real truth is in the details and the broader picture. Consider the following:

1. Yes, **the Great Cataclysm** was caused by the reappearance of magic, and that unparalleled level of magic energy has transformed the planet Earth into a *dimensional nexus* to countless alien worlds. It was a transformation that nearly obliterated humankind. It is a phenomenon that created scores of *dimensional Rifts* that open and close to this day, and has allowed alien beings, monsters and supernatural horrors into our world. Many of these creatures are demonic monsters who delight in torture, murder and chaos. However, it was not part of some deliberate invasion plan, but an act of nature ignited by "human" rivalry, war and pure happenstance. After all, it was a limited nuclear exchange during a rare planetary alignment that triggered these world-shattering events. To the Coalition's defense, nobody knows how it all began or what caused the Great Cataclysm, but they do know it was not an act of war.

In many respects, the *Coming of the Rifts* was very much like the eruption of a volcano, only on a cosmic scale. The people of Earth suffered the greatest destruction because they were at the epicenter of the eruption. Many other worlds and people throughout the Megaverse also felt the tremors and fallout of the eruption, some more profoundly than others. Nearly three hundred years later, Earth the Cosmic Volcano still rumbles and quakes as manifestations that open and close random Rifts and cause Ley Line Storms and creates strange dimensional phenomena like Fadetowns, D-Shifting, coexistence between realities, time distortion and other weirdness on both sides of the Rifts. Each new rumble or eruption pokes a hole in the fabric of space and time and creates the opportunity for one or more realities to clash or cross over.

2. The vast majority of D-Bees – intelligent humanoids, most mortal S.D.C. beings – are as much *innocent victims* of the Coming of the Rifts as humans. The transfiguration of Earth sent shock waves throughout the infinite Megaverse, creating a disturbance on a cosmic scale. During the days of the Great Cataclysm and the early years of the Dark Ages, dimensional Rifts tore holes in the fabric of space and time that shook a thousand worlds past and present. Rifts indiscriminately opened to scores



of different realities, creating doorways from one alien world after another to our own.

The most violent Rifts actually swept people up from their native worlds and hurled them into the carnage that was Rifts Earth of the Dark Ages. Other portals melded (for a while) both worlds seamlessly, creating a bridge on which some D-Bees crossed into Earth without even knowing they had left their own reality. Some D-Bees were bold adventurers who willingly stepped into the dimensional portal to explore what was on the other side, never realizing that the doorway was temporary and when it closed they were trapped forever. For others, the magical appearance of a Rift offered new possibilities, the chance to escape the tyranny, turmoil or hardships of their own world and the chance to build a new life in an unknown place. Some may have even thought their gods had opened the door to paradise and cheerfully ran into the Rifts to find eternal peace, enlightenment or salvation.

The point is, most D-Bees are *trapped* on Rifts Earth against their will, lost souls who had no desire to permanently abandon their home world to come to Earth, but who were hi-jacked by the cascading cosmic energies of the erupting Rifts on Earth. And during the Great Cataclysm and early years of the Dark Ages, the magic energies seethed and Rifts erupted everywhere, sometimes lasting (remaining open) for days and weeks. A few are permanent to this day!

Trapped in a strange and terrible land of destruction and monsters, the newly arrived D-Bees had no idea what was going on or who the indigenous people might be. Like humans, they struggled and fought to survive the carnage and find some place where they'd be safe. With no way of getting home, they have adapted to the environment the best they can and have built a new life on planet Earth. They are not invaders, but survivors of the same tragedy that toppled human civilization. Many (not all) are peace-loving beings who are trying to make the best out of a horrible situation. Yes, others are as militant and fiercely aggressive as the humans of Chi-Town, determined to survive and rebuild some kind of civilization and better life for themselves and their children. Even dangerous creatures like the *Xiticix* who are, by their very nature, the alien invaders the CS so fears, were swept through a Rift against their will and simply survive and live the only way they know.

If given the chance, many D-Bees would gladly join the Coalition States and work hard to be loyal, productive citizens, but the centuries of fighting monsters and aliens have made many humans fear and hate nonhumans. And there's the rub, the leaders of the CS have played upon the fear and hate, nationalized it and made it a de facto way of life in order to win the hearts and minds of their fellow humans in a bid for power. They build an empire on the foundation of fear and hate, and use them as the reason to conquer, kill and destroy other innocent people. That is the "evil" of the Coalition States. That they make no effort to understand or accept other people, and willingly destroy all who are different. To claim they fight to save all humans and keep them safe is a lie when they direct their guns at innocent wilderness people who have never done anything to the CS their entire lives. True, there are monsters and dark forces conspiring to hurt, enslave and destroy humans, but the CS under Emperor Prosek includes *all* nonhumans in that category.

The evil of the Coalition government works to the detriment of its own people. The government actively works at keeping its citizens (well over 75%) illiterate, and feeds them lies and distorted facts and information about everything from magic, D-Bees and threats to the nation, to the accomplishments of the CS, history and the world at large. Supposedly, the rewriting of history and the whitewashing of truth is in the best interest of the people, but how can lies and ignorance ever serve anyone's best interest? The CS deliberately keeps its people uneducated, for ignorance is bliss and prevents people from questioning their leaders or searching for options, or thinking for themselves. Consequently, most citizens of the CS have never traveled beyond the safety of their own State and have no firsthand knowledge about the world around them. They know only what the Coalition State-run television, news and internet tell them. They trust and believe in their government implicitly. That it is good, just and always has their best welfare in mind. They believe that *all* D-Bees are evil beings who destroy humans if given half the chance. They believe their military keeps them safe in a hellish world filled with monsters and evil aliens constantly trying to hurt or destroy them, and that without the strength of Emperor Prosek and the courage of CS defenders, they would have been overrun generations ago. Thus, the Emperor and the elite who serve him are more than leaders, but saviors. And they believe it, hook, line and sinker.

That is just the way the Coalition States power-brokers like it. They discourage freethinking and have made independent study illegal to keep the people dependent and obligated to them. That's why scientists and scholars outside the CS are called "rogues" and branded as dangerous criminals, liars, dissidents and traitors to the human race. The CS does not want its people to know the "real" history of North America or the world. They don't want its citizens wondering and questioning. They don't want them imagining and exploring new ideas, because it could challenge the status quo. They don't want them to know that the Coalition government, under the direct command of Emperor Prosek, has secretly maintained a campaign to collect and hide the books, history, and knowledge of pre-Rifts Earth. Knowledge and science the government controls and uses as *they* deem fit for *their* empire. Technology they dole out as they desire and which they take the credit and accolades for inventing, even though it is the technology (or based on the technology) of the past. To do otherwise, Emperor Prosek and his elite government and scientists would look less grand, less benevolent and less powerful. This way, they look like ingenious heroes – super-heroes – blazing a trail to a new age of splendor and prosperity. Anyone who threatens that illusion, especially *Rogue Scientists* and *Rogue Scholars* who know "real" history and like to share ideas and who dare to wonder and question the world around them, are persecuted, hunted down and eliminated, above *all* others. The learned are *Public Enemy Number One*, because the regime of Emperor Prosek cannot face the light of truth without being revealed to be manipulative, selfish, power-hungry monsters themselves. Preserving their power base through ignorance, lies and manipulation of the very people they claim to love and protect is the Coalition's greatest crime – a crime against humanity.

Furthermore, Emperor Prosek's dream of conquest and the perpetuation of hatred against nonhumans threatens to destroy everything the CS has built. His aggressive military campaigns

and displays of power are making the lie that all nonhumans hate the CS a self-fulfilling prophecy. Every time the CS invades new lands or launches an unprovoked attack against nonhumans, it only makes new enemies and fosters greater fear. The destruction of Tolkeen and the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of innocent D-Bees and so-called D-Bee-loving humans has shocked and horrified people throughout North America. If there was ever any doubt that the CS endorsed the genocide of all nonhumans, it is gone now. Moreover, if all D-Bees are to be destroyed, and if the CS continues to expand by conquering and purging new lands, then, eventually, no place in North America is safe for nonhumans and practitioners of magic. For the first time, many fear it is only a matter of time before the CS invades and exterminates all nonhumans. It is a policy that clearly goes beyond self-defense or rebuilding human civilization, but then, it would not be the first time in history that one people nearly wiped out another. It has happened many times in human history, and countless times throughout the Megaverse, but it is always a tragedy.

Some enemies of the CS have suggested that cutting off the head of the snake will kill the body, i.e., kill Emperor Prosek to effect change. However, that alone is not enough. The entire CS government and top 10% who hold the power in the Coalition States all think the same way as the Emperor, and all benefit by maintaining the status quo. Change means losing power, and right now the elite are supremely powerful and have no intention of letting it out of their grasp. This means the entire government and military leaders would have to be eliminated, and most of the educated upper class would have to be made to accept and promote a different way of life where they would no longer represent the powerful elite.

A Brief Overview & Update

The Coalition States are a loosely knit allegiance between industrial kingdoms that rose out of the ashes of the Apocalypse in North America (US & Canada). Some of the Coalition States are nicer/meaner/tougher than others. Likewise, some are more tightly and actively allied than others.

Chi-Town

The center of power is the city and State of **Chi-Town**. What can be said about Chi-Town that isn't already known? Chi-Town is the biggest and meanest (evil) member of the CS. It is the throne of power where Emperor Prosek and the Prosek family reside and home to the Military High Command, CS Government, Communications and Propaganda Network, science and technology. It is from Chi-Town that most military, political and economic changes are instigated.

The Coalition State of Chi-Town encompasses Northern Illinois and all of Iowa. *The Iowa section* is 70% farmland and 30% livestock. Tiny farm communities are found every 50 miles (80 km) or so. Only the occasional military base breaks the peace and beauty of this simple country. SAMAS and sky-cycles patrol the skies. Human troops and a few Dog Packs patrol the borders and keep the peace. Estimated population is 1.3 million.

The Illinois portion of the Chi-Town State is the undisputed hub of North American civilization. Hundreds of small towns and villages dot the landscape around a dozen large cities, each with an average population of approximately 200,000-300,000 citizens. The pervasive presence of the military is evident everywhere, although nothing like Chi-Town or any of the fortress cities. Despite the dictatorial government of the last 40 years, the people seem quite content and blissful. Anti-magic and human supremacist attitudes are shared by the vast majority of the State's citizens in both the urban and rural communities. CS propaganda has done its job well, and continuing acts of terrorism and raids by D-Bee bandits, the Federation of Magic and, now, *Tolkeen Retribution Squads*, only serve to confirm and perpetuate those sentiments.

The City of Chi-Town is one of the great "fortress cities" of the CS and said to be impregnable even to magical onslaughts. It is the seat of the Coalition government, the iron fist of the military, the mother of propaganda, and home of the illustrious Emperor, Karl Prosek.

It towers a thousand feet (305 m) above the squalor of the Burbs, like a man-made mountain of concrete and steel. The ruins of Old Chicago can be found some 80 miles (128 km) northeast of Chi-Town. The area is a forbidden zone with hundreds of warning signs and barricades warding away the curious and scavengers.

Around 100 P.A., Chi-Town boasted a strictly human population of two million, with an additional three million living in the slums, known as "The 'Burbs." By 109 P.A., the city population is more than 2.2 million and the 'Burbs estimated at well over four million.

The CS in the Aftermath of War

The fall of Tolkeen marks the triumphant end to the Siege on Tolkeen. According to the propaganda machine, the Kingdom of Tolkeen is crushed, its thousands of sorcerers and demonic hellions destroyed or driven back to whatever hell they crawled out of. CS television has even shown footage of the Dragon Kings fleeing the city of Freehold (footage that is a few days old now) and the city of Tolkeen in flames. They also show the refugees fleeing "before the might of the Coalition Army," and footage of monsters like the Daemonix and Iron Juggernauts getting blasted to bits. All reports are designed to show the courage and power of the Coalition's fighting forces against impossible odds. The hero of the hour is General Jericho Holmes, who is getting tons of coverage, including a three-part biography following his illustrious career, presumed death and miraculous return to bring Tolkeen down. Other officers and heroes are highlighted, but none more than General Holmes.

According to the TV reports, the war is won and the worst of the fighting is over. Tolkeen is no more and all that remains is to flush out the remaining monsters and sorcerers hiding in the rubble. Mop up and final pacification of the kingdom is expected to take a month or two. The citizens of the Coalition are thanked for their support and sacrifice and there is much celebrating behind the walls of Chi-Town and in the streets of the 'Burbs. The citizens can rest easy now, knowing the "den of monsters and evil in the west" has been quelled.

The public face of the Emperor, government officers and the Military High Command is all smiles and good cheer, but behind the facade of triumph the emotions are much more tempered. The war may finally be in the Coalition's win column, but the cost was horrific. An estimated 405,000 CS troops died and over 1.4 million were injured during the course of the war, and that does not included *Dog Boys* or *hired mercenaries* and agents which would easily put the number near 600,000. The material cost in weapons, equipment, vehicles and armor (from body armor to tanks) lost in the war is even greater – nearly one million Skelebots were destroyed in the campaign. Ironically, *Operation Final Siege* suffered the fewest fatalities. Four years of combat had taught the CS not to underestimate the Tolkeenites, so the Second Invasion Force was large enough and prepared well enough to handle the job. When General Holmes rode in from the north, surprising everyone, it gave the Coalition forces the element of surprise, a devastating first strike and overwhelming numerical superiority. The intangible factor that played a role in the CS win was the Coalition troops' determination and drive to utterly destroy Tolkeen as payback for the massacre and embarrassment handed to them by the *Sorcerers' Revenge blitzkrieg*, the Coalition Army's first and greatest defeat in history.

Despite the televised projections of a short, easy mop-up and pacification operation, Chi-Town's leaders know that it will take at least six months, maybe a year, and they have made a point of *not* mentioning the disturbing presence of the *Minions of*

Splugorth or *Juicer Army of Liberation.* The CS doesn't want another public relations fiasco like the last Juicer Uprising, not on the heels of their decisive triumph over Tolkeen, and they are dealing with the Minions of Splugorth with the business end of a rail gun. The CS cannot suffer any more devastating losses or public black eyes. The Emperor managed to turn the war on Free Quebec into a positive, but it was an embarrassment as well as an exercise in futility. Worse, that little episode single-handedly devastated the Coalition Navy. In fact, the Coalition's greatest material loss has been the loss of its Navy, which will take 6-8 years to build back to where it was prior to the war.

The Coalition's greatest loss, however, is its reputation for being invulnerable. Free Quebec held the CS to a standstill and Quebec's superior Navy sunk the Coalition's. While it is true the CS has utterly vanquished the Kingdom of Tolkeen and sent the Dragon Kings running with their tails tucked between their legs, the war was not quick or easy, and the resounding defeat of the Coalition Army in the Sorcerers' Revenge proved the Coalition Army "could" be defeated. It is a fact that encourages the likes of the Pecos Empire, Federation of Magic and Splugorth of Atlantis. Moreover, enemies of the Coalition States mistakenly believe the Coalition is weak and vulnerable, its Army spent and too spread out, especially as the CS begins to face a new challenge against the Xiticix. However, they are wrong. More than 60% of those who perished in both wars were volunteers from the 'Burbs and rural communities of the CS who are seen as unofficial, expendable second-class citizens. Patriotic souls who, since the Sorcerers' Revenge and the Coalition's triumph over Tolkeen, have been rushing to join the Army in droves. Though these new recruits are "green" (inexperienced), they are highly motivated to serve their country and protect it from the next danger. These volunteers have swelled the ranks of the Coalition Army, while factories at Iron Heart, Chi-Town, Lone Star and the Coalition's recent allies in Upper Michigan – Northern Gun and Manistique Imperium – pump out tons of weapons, armor and vehicles to supply them. The only genuine weak spot for the CS is its Navy, which will not be a factor in their war against the Xiticix, and is unrecognized by most foreign powers like Atlantis and the Federation of Magic. Only the *Great Lakes' pirates* and freebooters are taking advantage of the situation with the Navy and, in the grand scheme of things, they are nothing more than a minor nuisance.

The CS and Free Quebec. Most people outside the Coalition States, Free Quebec included, do not believe Emperor Prosek is going to let Free Quebec off the hook this easy, and assume he "must" have some secret plan to undermine and conquer them. Truth is, the Emperor really does feel bad for getting carried away and declaring war on Quebec. No, he's not happy they seceded from the States, and he'd love nothing more than to get them back into the fold, but he realizes that war and intimidation is not the way to accomplish that. He also accepts that Free Quebec may never rejoin the CS, and that's okay, provided they remain tightly allied. Emperor Prosek has gone on record saying, "The people of Free Quebec are our brothers, regardless of what they call themselves. We must never again lose sight of that. We must stay united in our purpose and beliefs if not in our name, and stand ready to defend each other." Efforts to reestablish trade and diplomatic relationships are already underway.

The CS and Federation of Magic. The leaders at Chi-Town expect the Federation to take advantage of the war at Tolkeen and changing events, but do not realize Lord Dunscon has united more than half of the divided organization and is building an army. The CS Military High Command has its hands full with the mop-up of Tolkeen and preparations for war with the Xiticix. They have always underestimated the Federation and are doing so again.

The Xiticix Crisis. Like it or not, the CS can no longer ignore the crisis situation with the Xiticix. The Hivelands continue to expand, the Xiticix continue to grow in alarming numbers, and the insectoids are more aggressive than ever. General Holmes, without question the most experienced commander in the field when it comes to the Xiticix has, volunteered to lead any military operation against the alien bug men. He has suggested using the ruins of Tolkeen and Freehold and the northwestern Wisconsin Forts as their two-pronged bases of operations for this campaign. To his thinking, this would put the vanquished kingdom, already war torn, to good use and keep the Xiticix away from the Coalition States. This is the real reason the CS has declared Minnesota a Coalition Territory. The pretense of colonization is a cover story for the preparations of the new, as of yet undeclared, military campaign.

The CS and the Pecos Empire. This empire of brigands and cutthroats is encouraged by the Coalition's defeat in the north and their ranks bolstered by Tolkeenite survivors and wilderness folk who are turning to them by the thousands for protection or revenge. The Empire talks about pushing the CS out of Lone Star and raiding, possibly even destroying, the "new" State of El Dorado. However, the Pecos Empire remains an "empire" in name only and is divided by at least two dozen warlords and a hundred different factions. Even the largest of them are insufficient to launch a meaningful attack against the Coalition forces they talk about.

The Minions of Splugorth are driven from the land whenever they are found and those who resist are eradicated without mercy. The strong presence of Atlantean operatives at Tolkeen has prompted the CS to reassess the level of threat posed by the nation of Atlantis and to send spies and scouts to the east to find out exactly what may be happening along the Atlantic coast. Meanwhile, the Emperor has agreed to slow down the Campaign of Unity to rebuild and reassess the nation's defenses and readiness for an attack from a foe such as Atlantis. One of the first weaknesses to be recognized is a lack of detailed information about Atlantis and the Minions of Splugorth. A remedy that will require *agents* and *spies* to infiltrate and gather intelligence on Atlantis.

The Vanguard. The Coalition Military High Command has recently intercepted a reinvigorated number of rumors about an organization known as *the Vanguard.* Most of the CS officers believe the group is nothing more than an urban legend that has never existed at all, but **Joseph Prosek the Second** believes otherwise. He believes the story of their origin and believes they fight on behalf of the Coalition States. He lets the military leaders be satisfied to believe the Vanguard are phantoms of myth and instructs them to do *nothing* to investigate the "substance-less rumors," while all such reports allegedly involving the Vanguard are to be directed to his Office of Propaganda.

While Joseph cannot even secretly endorse such a group, he does not want to stop or destroy them either. If a threat from Atlantis is possibly brewing, the CS may need to have a group of loyal practitioners of magic working on its behalf. Currently, Joseph is trying to decide whether he should have one of his most trusted agents try to find and infiltrate the organization. He is also aware of the vendetta Lord Dunscon has against The Vanguard and sees it as further proof that the "Mages of Chi-Town" *are* real.

The Vanguard are a secret society of practitioners of magic – an illuminati, if you will – that have secretly worked to help and support Chi-Town specifically and the Coalition States in general for generations. They, like the CS they love, are all humans and human supremacists. They were created in Chi-Town way back around 7 P.A. as a Special Ops division, like Psi-Battalion, as a countermeasure to magic-based enemies. After Chi-Town's battle with the Federation of Magic in 12 P.A., and the subsequent anti-magic hysteria that followed, the Division was disbanded. Since its members could not "unlearn" the mystic arts, they were given a stipend, allowed to get their families and gently banished from Chi-Town forever. Those who refused or argued about the injustice of the decision were arrested and/or killed as dissidents.

The first to leave were the most loyal and dedicated to the ideals of Chi-Town and the fledgling concept of building an empire and safe haven for humans that would become the Coalition States. These Chi-Town practitioners of magic understood why the government and the people in general feared *all* users of magic and left with grace and dignity. They remained loyal human supremacists who still considered themselves Chi-Town citizens and martyrs to a greater cause. As champions of that cause, they established a secret illuminati that continued to support and defend Chi-Town and its values. Over the decades, the Vanguard have become as militant and fanatical as any zealot in the Coalition Army. They completely ascribe to the laws and policies of the Coalition government and the edicts of the Emperor. The Vanguard consider themselves to be a secret legion of unsung heroes, making them among the most loyal (unofficial) champions of the CS.

The Vanguard have a strong presence in the Chi-Town 'Burbs and have cells and agents scattered from Free Quebec to the Pecos Empire. They have moles within the Federation of Magic and Lazlo, fought to undermine Tolkeen and have spies living in Atlantis. As a secret society or army that works toward the defense and prosperity of the Coalition States, the Vanguard engage in acts of murder, assassination, sabotage and spying that the CS cannot, either because the enemy is beyond the Coalition's reach or because it would be politically damaging. For example, the Vanguard have assassinated and arranged accidents to eliminate a number of individuals who threatened the CS or whose actions or words were causing the CS trouble or embarrassment. They even thought about assassinating Erin Tarn, except they respect her too much and have learned to tolerate her. Likewise, when the Vanguard have vital information, they disseminate it through mercenaries, adventurers and other contacts, or start rumors they know will make their way to CS Intelligence. They also stage incidents that (falsely) incriminate groups and individuals the CS needs to investigate or eliminate.

Right now, the Vanguard have agents spying on the Federation of Magic and plotting ways to derail the mounting War of Retribution. This is the Vanguard's number one concern because they know how dangerous Lord Dunscon is, that the support he has garnered is unprecedented, and that the CS is completely oblivious to the boiling danger. Two attempts at assassinating Lord Dunscon have failed, although they have managed to prevent the Federation from realizing they are behind the attempts. Matters are complicated by Lord Dunscon's discovery of the Vanguard's existence and his campaign to find and destroy them. Until now, the Vanguard have been an unseen power that worked from the shadows with relative impunity, after all, one cannot fight what one does not know to exist. Now, for the first time ever, the Vanguard face a powerful (and deranged) enemy bent on their destruction. For the first time, they fight an enemy face to face. Fortunately, the organization is designed in such a way that the majority of its own membership does not know who the others are, so while one or two cells may fall, the overall organization should survive. Dunscon's vendetta just means the Vanguard agents have to be more careful and secretive than ever.

Vanguard agents are also involved in collecting magical artifacts, weapons and Techno-Wizard secrets from the ruins of Tolkeen and, more importantly, preventing the Federation of Magic and Minions of Splugorth from getting them. In the latter case, the Vanguard actively destroy magic items, ambush and rob Federation and Atlantean forces, or alert the Coalition

Army to their activities while secretly working their magic to aid the CS in its efforts against "the enemy."

Note: All members of the Vanguard are one of the following magic O.C.C.s: Ley Line Walker, Mystic, Techno-Wizard and Conjurer. A handful of psychics are also members of the organization and the Vanguard have many associates, supporters, and unwitting hired agents and informers. For more information on the Vanguard and its suspected leader, see **Coalition Wars Three: The Sorcerers' Revenge™**. Also, see the section earlier in this book on the *Federation of Magic* for more about Lord Dunscon's vendetta on the Vanguard.

State of El Dorado – Arkansas

The State of El Dorado has an interesting history. It was founded by the survivors of Arkansas who managed to retain some level of technology even through the Dark Ages. As civilization began to rise again, "Fort" El Dorado was founded as a militaristic community of hard-boiled settlers and workers in the oil fields of southwestern Arkansas. Their access to such precious resources as oil, natural gas, cotton, and lumber, combined with the technology and industrial capabilities to pump, refine and make products from them, made Fort El Dorado both wealthy and a target for attack. The residents had to either become a military power or submit to monsters and raiders. With the wild barbarians and bandits of the Pecos Empire as their neighbor, the community had to learn to defend itself. The trials and tribulations of the Dark Ages and their close proximity to the Magic Zone made the people human supremacists who used D-Bees only as slaves to work the fields and avoided the mystic arts entirely. Only their isolation in the wilderness of the deep south prevented them from becoming a true power.

For the longest time, Fort El Dorado had the intention of remaining a free and independent nation. That all changed with the Juicer Uprising and the deception of UTI. In March of 105 P.A., Fort El Dorado thought the world was its oyster. A few years earlier, a new high-tech boomtown calling itself **Newtown** had appeared in the north at the location of old Fort Smith and quickly became a valued trade partner. In exchange for limited military protection, oil and natural gas, Newtown's industrial kingpin, UTI, arranged to upgrade Fort El Dorado's, industry increasing production by 50%, and also brought advanced Juicer technology to El Dorado. These improvements helped Fort El Dorado grow in wealth and population. The Fort's King, Randall III, politely turned down another offer from its long-time CS trade partner to become an official member of the Coalition States, and planned for further expansion and domination of Arkansas.

Then the Juicer Uprising in March of 105 P.A. brought Fort El Dorado crashing down. The oil and natural gas fields survived without too much damage but the city-state that was Fort El Dorado was besieged by angry Juicers and ravaged by rioters. Fort El Dorado had been tricked – used – by UTI at Newtown, which turned out being a front for aliens salting the way for conquering North America. If not for the Juicer Uprising, the Vallax aliens and their inside-out plot to create an army of 60,000-100,000 Juicer-zombies, mind-controlled by UTI, would have never been uncovered. Not only did half of Fort El Dorado lay in ruin, but they were the dupes of an alien invader. It was a mortifying experience and a wake-up call. Being tricked by aliens showed the leaders of Fort El Dorado they had been too cocksure of themselves, and in their arrogance, almost lost everything they held dear. The carnage inflicted by the thousands of Juicers demonstrated the insufficiencies of their defenses, and it illustrated the advantages of joining the Coalition States. Only now the CS was not as interested. It blamed Fort El Dorado for the entire incident, because the leaders of El Dorado had vouched for Newtown and UTI and introduced them to the CS. (See **Rifts® World Book 10: Juicer Uprising™** for the entire story.)

Being rejected by the CS, and more paranoid than ever, the people of Fort El Dorado turned to rebuilding their community to be bigger and better than ever, and spent incredible amounts of money and time lobbying the CS to reconsider them for membership in the Coalition States. As incentive, they reduced the purchase price of their natural resources, promised to follow Coalition laws and protocols to the letter, and to get rid of their D-Bee slaves. The slaves were put to death, and Fort El Dorado launched a ruthless campaign against settlements of nonhumans throughout Arkansas. Hundreds of D-Bees were slaughtered and thousands more scurried for the safety of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and the Magic Zone. Their efforts didn't stop there, either. Fort El Dorado sponsored several raids in the Magic Zone and redoubled its effort to control and contain the Pecos Bandits along the Arkansas borders. Additionally, they offered to send troops to the Tolkeen war front and to support the CS in any way they could.

The campaign worked. Fort El Dorado was accepted as the **State of El Dorado** in the Spring of 109 P.A. As customary for the CS, all of Arkansas is claimed as the State of El Dorado, but only the northeastern quarter is truly under the sway of El Dorado.

Northern Arkansas remains a forested wilderness whose inhabitants consist of a handful of tiny settlements of well under a thousand people, as well as hunting lodges, trappers' huts, and homesteads. Half are human, the rest are D-Bees and creatures of magic who dare to squat on Coalition territory. To the northeast, along the Mississippi River, is a last major cluster of ley lines and nexus points that comprise the infamous Magic Zone. The entire area between the White River and the Mississippi, from the Missouri border to the ruins of Helena, is considered to be a no man's land for humans. The area is rich in magic and left to the mercy of the Rifts that unleash all manner of horrors upon the land. Ley line nexus points are known to exist at or near the old American cities of *Blytheville, West Memphis* (three are found here), *Forrest City*, and *Helena,* whose ruins are known to be haunted and filled with monsters from the Rifts.

Newtown has been razed to the ground and the underground alien complex blown up and filled in. A Coalition Army base, Fort Jericho, stands in its place. It is believed that every last one of the Vallax aliens was destroyed and they have never been seen or heard from again. Most CS citizens don't know anything about the debacle and the leaders of El Dorado are glad to keep it that way.

Pecos Raiders. Since being made a member State, the bandits of Texas have targeted the El Dorado section of Arkansas more than ever. They hate the idea that the CS has another major base of operation on their doorstep, but are too fragmented and disorganized to make a concerted effort to wipe El Dorado out. Truth is, most Pecos leaders know the CS will never give up the fossil fuel preserves in El Dorado, so they don't bother trying to capture and hold them. Instead, they continue to raid and loot the wealthy State as they always have.

The Federation of Magic has, unknown to the CS or El Dorado, targeted the new State for their War of Retribution. Although this target is not written in stone, El Dorado is the most vulnerable of the Coalition States and practically in the Federation's backyard. It could become the next "Tolkeen War Zone," only this time with the CS under siege by practitioners of magic.

State of Iron Heart (Canada)

With Free Quebec gone from the picture, Iron Heart is the second largest and important member of the Coalition States. It is an industrial powerhouse and covers a vast territory of wilderness that ranges from North Bay (west of the Ottawa River), west to Lake Nipigon and north to James Bay (the eastern half of the old Ontario Province and the southwest tip of the Province of Quebec). It includes several small hunting, fishing, and mining towns with a combined population of about 700,000 humans, 100,000 nonhumans, and 100,000 squatters.

The capital of Iron Heart is the City of Iron, a rough and dirty old city built on the ruins of Canada's old Sudbury. It is an early 20 Century style industrial community with smoke spewing factories and coal stoked furnaces. The city is actually much larger than its pre-Rifts days. Its factories, mines, and sawmills provide people with employment and offer the luxury of civilization, technology, and protection by the Coalition in an inhospitable, cold land of endless forest. Mines and processing plants for iron, nickel, copper, coal, and a bit of silver and gold are the City of Iron and Iron Heart's greatest resource. But it was another asset that convinced Chi-Town to accept Iron Heart

as a member of the Coalition States. Pre-Rifts Sudbury was the home of "Science North," one of the largest science museums in all of Canada, as well as another extensive mining museum. The secrets contained in these places were unearthed by the local government of Iron Heart during an exploratory mining operation. Secrets coveted by Chi-Town. Part of the arrangement in becoming a CS member included giving all the archeological finds of the Science North excavations to Chi-Town for identification, research, and assimilation into the CS network (supposedly to be shared by all members of the Coalition).

In the past, some have argued that the States of Lone Star and Missouri are more important and bigger than Iron Heart, however, the truth is Lone Star is vital in the area of genetic engineering but is barely more than a massive military complex, and Missouri is half rural agricultural center and half wilderness that is little more than an extension of Chi-Town. Furthermore, Iron Heart has finally come of age. The defection of Free Quebec made Emperor Prosek recognize that Iron Heart is too often taken for granted and treated like the ugly stepchild. Fearing a disillusioned Iron Heart might consider independence and secession from the States too, the Emperor has made a concerted effort to give Iron Heart its due. In all honestly, Chi-Town could have walked all over Iron Heart without its leaders considering secession. Unlike Free Quebec, the leaders and people of Iron Heart perceive the CS as the great new empire of the Americas and the salvation of humankind. They are 100% loyal to Emperor Prosek and live by the letter of all CS laws and morality. The newfound recognition, praise and responsibility heaped upon them by Chi-Town and the Emperor has only made their dreams come true and, if it is possible, made them more loyal to the CS than ever before.

Always in the shadow of Free Quebec, the people of Iron Heart are not as happy with reestablishing friendly relations with the independent nation, and still deeply resent the Québécois for their "defection." Iron Heart does support Emperor Prosek's plan to address the Xiticix crisis, though the State is worried about the outcome and repercussions. Nobody knows the old American north and Canada like the scouts of Iron Heart. Nor does anyone have a better, ongoing relationship with Psi-Stalkers than Iron Heart. Consequently, they will play a large role in the Xiticix campaign. Otherwise, little has changed for Iron Heart. With the good press its population has risen slightly, and without reliance on Free Quebec industry, Chi-Town has turned to Iron Heart to pick up the pace in the production of CS power armor and military vehicles, increasing factory production by 250% and doubling revenues. Iron Heart pretty much stayed out of the war at Tolkeen, providing supplies and support to the Invasion Force.

Coalition State of Lone Star (Texas)

The Coalition claims dominion over all of old Texas, however, the territory actually under CS control is limited to a small northwestern wedge from about Odessa to Amarillo and east to Wichita Falls. The rest of the state is a modern day American Old West with high-tech desperadoes, gunslingers, Psi-Slingers, cyborgs and Indians.

Lone Star City is a vast Pre-Rifts military complex of ground level buildings and an underground network located just west of New Lubbock. This is where the Coalition's Dog Boys were born and 80% of all CS experiments and advances in genetic engineering continue. Genetic research operations are performed under the supervision of Doctor Desmond Bradford, something of a mad genius who serves Chi-Town and his own secret agenda.

Despite efforts to bring settlers into the region, the Lone Star Complex is little more than a top security military compound and city of scientists, technicians and their families. The security and military presence at Lone Star is second only to the fortress city of Chi-Town, making the Lone Star Complex virtually impregnable. Only small bands have any chance of sneaking in, using magic or rare opportunities, and of the few who succeed, all but a few are caught, interrogated and put to death – or worse, used for genetic experimentation. Even the Pecos Bandits usually give this corner of the Lone Star State a wide berth.

The only involvement the Lone Star Complex had in the war at Tolkeen was the creation and supply of Dog Boys who played a vital role in the Coalition's war effort. The conflict also gave Lone Star the opportunity to "field test" some of their new mutant animals, including several new breeds of Dog Boys, Kill Hounds, Battle Cats, Mini-Monkey spies, Monkey Boy techs and Mutant Bats. (For more details about the Lone Star Complex, mutants, Pecos Raiders, and Texas in general, see **World Book 13: Rifts® Lone Star.**)

Amarillo is a tiny military outpost that protects a human settlement of 1800 people who live and work at a small oil station and refinery.

Wichita Falls is a mid-size military base that protects an oil field and refinery, as well as a large cattle range and dairy plant. The population of nonmilitary personnel is 12,000. Surrounding communities who work peach groves and cotton farms add another 6000.

Oddessa is a military outpost of 300 troops (half are mutant animals) surrounded by a grungy, shanty town of under 1000 humans. The town offers a variety of illicit entertainment, booze, women, fights, and gambling.

The rest of Texas, everything south of Oddessa, is the badlands. Trading posts, ranchers and a dozen little feudal kingdoms claim the land and war between themselves constantly. Several are known to create Crazies and Juicers. Others hire gunslingers and mercenaries to do their fighting for them. **New El Paso** is rich in silver and cattle land. Its decadent ruler hires the worst scum and assassins to do his bidding. **The Pecos Empire**, located east of the Pecos River, 90 miles (144 km) south of Oddessa, is a barbaric no man's zone of marauding bandits who claim to rule all the land south of the Colorado River. Some gangs are small and perform robbery and petty crimes, others are the size of mobile armies and then there is everything in between. Here one lives by his wits and the gun. Most are savage, cruel, and wild brutes who make a living roaming the Southwest and Mexico robbing, pillaging and killing. **Note:** See the previous *Overview of Texas* for more about the Pecos Bandits, as well as refer to the **Rifts® Lone Star** world book.

Coalition State of Missouri

Missouri is a tactical addition to the Coalition States and is little more than an annex to the State of Chi-Town. It is important to the CS for its rich farmland. Almost the entire region north of the Missouri River is devoted to farming, and raising livestock (chickens, pigs, cows, and even horses), with a few areas for lumber. Chi-Town has pumped a great deal of money and resources into the development of Missouri, which is starting to attract rural settlers as it is recognized as a safe haven for human beings. However, the State is lightly populated, with an estimated 250,000 CS citizens (up 20% since 101 P.A.) and perhaps another 50,000-60,000 squatters.

New Chillicothe is the only true Coalition *city* in the entire state. It has a civilian population of 98,000 and a military population of 48,000, two full armies. It is both the seat of the Missouri government and "the" main military base for the entire "State." During the Coalition-Tolkeen War, **Camp Chillicothe** served as one of the primary launch points and support bases for the siege. General Orly, Commander of the Coalition Army in Missouri, saw no action in the war, but is anxious to deal with survivors who might come his way and try to slip through Missouri to escape to the south. General Orly has been given two additional field armies (46,000 troops) to deploy throughout the southern wilderness portion of Missouri. Ground, naval and air troops are to patrol along the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, day and night, while one of General Orly's standing armies keeps watch over the city. The General's other army is to patrol the northern border to keep the flood of Tolkeen refugees out of Missouri and hunt down monsters, spies and sorcerers who sneak in. His efforts are joined by regular air patrols by squadrons of SAMAS, Rocket Bikes and combat helicopters.

The Missouri blight. It seems a group of Tolkeen sorcerers have targeted the farming region of Missouri with some sort of magical curse or disease. Rumor makes it sound worse than it is, but the blight is doing severe damage to many of the crops. Farmers and scientists cannot identify a conventional cause and have no idea if the blight will be seasonal and disappear or whether it will resurface for next year's planting season. Moreover, they fear the blight may be out of control, as it has been reported in Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas, where it is doubtful the architects of this plot wanted the disease to spread. If the blight does not die off on its own, it could destroy the "bread basket" of America and possibly sweep throughout much of the continent! The CS has agents and spies in Tolkeen and the Federation of Magic to see if they can learn who might be responsible and how the magical blight can be halted or reversed. Meanwhile, practitioners of magic captured in Tolkeen are questioned under torture about the blight before they are terminated in hope that one of them might have a solution. Anyone who does will be spared, at least until the blight is magically removed. **Note:** The Vanguard is also on the job looking for a solution.

The southern two-thirds of the region, below the Missouri River, is mostly wilderness, with an occasional Coalition settlement and/or military outpost, farm, homestead, trapper's lodge or squatter. There are also two belligerent independent kingdoms near the border of Arkansas that are both well established and insist that they remain independent kingdoms.

Whykin – Poplar Buff, Missouri, is the most powerful predominantly human kingdom in Missouri that is not a member of the Coalition States. Its population is a whopping 140,000+, most of whom are human supremacists who support and trade with the CS. The kingdom is a completely self-sufficient lumber baron and a light industrial manufacturer. Farms, ranches, and sawmills are scattered all around the industrial city center which is defended by a formidable standing army. The kingdom has been beset by countless demons, D-Bees, and power hungry sorcerers for generations, but has managed to beat down all invaders.

Whykin's military strength comes from generations of warriors (40% of the population has years of combat experience) and expertise in combating the paranormal. Their current army of 24,000 includes a variety of psychics, Psi-Stalkers, a few Crazies (avoids Juicers ever since the Juicer Uprising) and a power armor division with 42 Glitter Boys, 11 Ulti-Max and more than 190 other robot combat units (mostly Titan and Northern Gun 'bots), and miscellaneous military hardware accumulated over the years. A middle-aged, 10th level, Cyber-Knight, by the name of Jaspin, is counsel to the king and a champion of the kingdom.

Over the years the kingdom has been bombarded with propaganda to join the Coalition State of Missouri, but Whykin prefers to retain its independence. The CS is okay with this, because the monarchy of Whykin and its subjects oppose the practice of magic, use D-Bees only as slaves (a number roughly equal to 10% of the human population), share most of the Coalition's views and serve as a buffer to the Magic Zone and Federation of Magic. Whykin has friendly and preferred status as a trade partner and reliable ally. Over the decades, both have come to each other's aid.

Kingsdale – West Plains, Missouri. Kingsdale is misidentified in Erin Tarn's book Traversing Our Modern World as "White Plains." The error is not Ms. Tarn's, who has visited Kingsdale many times, but by the unidentified compiler of the book, which is an unauthorized collection of letters and notes from Erin Tarn.

Kingsdale is a place where magic and outlawed technology are given free rein. A free city-state, it is a gathering place for adventurers, mercenaries, Juicers, Crazies, Headhunters, Gunfighters, Gunslingers, psychics and practitioners of magic, some of whom have connections with the Federation of Magic. It offers both Juicer and M.O.M. (Crazies) augmentation, cybernetic body-chop-shops, arms dealers, repair shops, Techno-Wizard merchants and every kind of store, shop or business imaginable. Since so many independent adventurers, mercenary companies and warrior types visit Kingsdale or come looking to get augmented, Kingsdale has a number of brokerage services to find sponsors for those looking for serious augmentation as well as put guns for hire together with prospective employers in and outside of Kingsdale. The various factions of the Pecos Empire and Federation of Magic do a great deal of recruiting and hiring from Kingsdale, so did Tolkeen before it fell, and many of the mercenaries hired by Tolkeen are trickling back, looking for work. According to rumors, the Juicer Army of Liberation (JAL) is secretly based in Kingsdale, or has one of its bases of operation in the city where it solicits new recruits from the many saloons, nightclubs and chop-shops.

Kingsdale never sent troops to Tolkeen or became directly involved in the conflict, however, it supplied many factions fighting in Tolkeen with weapons, equipment and vehicles throughout the war, till just before the final siege. The rulers and people of Kingsdale have sympathy for Tolkeenites and are willing to accept refugees, warriors and mages from Tolkeen, but fear the Coalition Army may intercede if too many flock to it all at once. The kingdom is also a major market for weapons, armor and equipment salvaged from the war zone. While Kingsdale has no love for the CS, it will have no party with the Federation of Magic's War of Retribution, and plans to distance itself from the Federation.

The people of Kingsdale fear that with their community's, ties to mercenaries, rogue nations like the Pecos Empire, and many factions within the Magic Zone, it is only a matter of time before the Coalition Army targets them for extinction! Ironically, it is the fear of retaliation from these same powers that has kept the CS from attacking Kingsdale. With the declaration of El Dorado as a Coalition State, some people (about 1%) have begun moving away.

The terrain surrounding Kingsdale is low hills covered by forests of mostly oak and hickory trees. Homesteads, trappers and small farms are found here and there around the city-state, but most people actually live and work in the sprawling city.

Two main roads have been cut into the forest, one connecting the city to the small town of Laramy, pop. 2,200, located near the pre-Rifts city of *Thayer*, and the other going all the way to the kingdom of *Whykin*. The Laramy-Kingsdale road is a well-maintained packed-dirt road, good enough for most wheeled vehicles. The second road is of very low quality, little more than an enlarged game trail in some places, a dirt road in others. During the rainy season, the roads turn into muddy trails that will slow down wheeled and tracked vehicles, and even most robot vehicles. With tension growing between Whykin (CS sympathizers) and Kingsdale, the road is no longer being maintained, and is overrun by the surrounding wilderness.

Mexico:
The Vampire Kingdoms

As war and uncertainty rages in the north, the Vampire Kingdoms of Mexico quietly bide their time and grow.

Mexico and Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, etc.) are the domains of the undead. For generations, people in the American Southwest have spoken in whispers about the great and powerful Vampire Kingdoms found in the southern half of Mexico. Sprawling cities and city-states where humans and D-Bees are bred and feasted upon like cattle and kept as slaves and playthings for monsters. Though the rumors have persisted since the beginning of the Dark Age they have never quite been proven. The Coalition States take it as a given, but have never seen fit to investigate, leaving those who live in the land of the undead that is Mexico to fend for themselves. Actually, they have done some cursory investigation in Mexico, and numerous bands of Rogue Scholars, scientists, adventurers, and mages, as well as bandits and fugitives on the run, have braved the northern plains to see for themselves if vampires rule the south. Few have ever made it beyond Torreon or Monterrey, forced to turn back or face ravaging tribes of wild-eyed vampires who roam the northern plains at night like packs of hungry wolves. Those who have pushed beyond are never seen or heard from again.

These encounters have convinced the CS that vampires are not quite the terrible monsters of legend, but savage, dull-witted predators who are, indeed, little more than animals who feed on humanoid blood. For the CS, Mexico is far away and of little consequence to them. Thus, they are content to leave the "vampire problem" to the D-Bees and bandits who live along the Mexican border. As long as the undead stay in Mexico, they are not the Coalition's problem. And if these feral vampires ever do become a serious problem, the Coalition Army figures it will ride roughshod over them. End of story. However, the CS is wrong. They believe exactly what the vampires want them to believe, and lulled into a false sense of security, they make themselves that much more vulnerable.

Don't blame the CS, it is not alone in the assumption that most vampires are barely more than dumb pack animals. Many of those living in the southwestern region of the old American Empire fundamentally believe the same thing. They know the vampire problem is much worse than the CS realizes, but they too consider most vampires to be dumb animals even though they *have* encountered intelligent vampires! Ask most folks along the Rio Grande River, and they'll tell you how "vampires run wild like coyotes in the desert. An' like any wild animal one hasta be careful, 'specially of the smart ones thet usually lead the pack." Many folk, especially those who live in large towns or who ride in large gangs of Pecos Raiders, are so cavalier about vampires that one honestly gets the impression the undead are nothing to worry about. In fact, many of the men and boys get together to go vampire hunting for fun and sport! They question the truth of stories from "outsiders" who claim cities of vampires exist farther south, even if they claim to have seen them for themselves. One local put it like this:

"That ain't ta say them vampires ain't a problem. No, siree, Bob. Damn vermin roam the Mexican highlands, and come across the river ta prey on anybody they come across, cowpokes, saddle tramps, bandits, farmers, ranchers, Injuns don't make no matter to them vamps. They sees alla us folks as chow. 'Specially us you-mins. Most 'o them critters ain't afraid o' nobody neither, not 'Borgs, Cyber-Knights, spell casters or nobody. Thet makes 'em vicious killers best put down like a mad dog whenever they git too close ta god fearin' folks. Git caught by a pack out there in the desert by yer lonesome and its adios muchachos. So don't take them vampires lightly or ya'll be dead, I guarantees it. But as fer cities of vampires . . . . good god, boy, most o' them critters cain't even tie there shoes. That's like sayin' there's a city o' coyotes or wolves out there in the desert. Hell, that's plum crazy. The kinda o' talk thet comes from too much sun if ya know what I mean."

That is exactly why the Vampire Kingdoms have pushed the "Wild Vampires" into the northern plains from Monterrey to the Rio Grande River. They want to create a barrier humans dare not tread lest they fall prey to the animalistic vampires of their species, and to create a false impression about vampires. A view that makes mortals underestimate them and keeps them away from the growing empires in southern Mexico and Central America, where they breed safely and in secret.

In truth, there are three types of vampires, the Master, Secondary and Wild. The latter are the savage barbarians of the undead, more beast than man-like. The Secondary is as smart as any human and usually serves the one who created him, the Master. All are the parasitic progeny of a Vampire Intelligence, distant cousins to and hated rivals of the Splugorth. Masters and Secondary Vampires are as clever and cunning as any human, but are supernatural beings possessing superhuman strength, powers of metamorphosis and mind control. Furthermore, since they are not alive, they cannot die – at least not by conventional means, and can shrug off bullets and Mega-Damage energy beams. (For the complete lowdown on vampires, and some of the notable kingdoms, people and places of Mexico and Central America, check out **Rifts® World Book One: Vampire Kingdoms™**.)

The Vampire Kingdoms are a powder keg ready to explode. The rival kingdoms have coexisted *without* all-out-war for nearly sixty years, but that is coming to an end. Ixzotz will be the instigator, as this ancient kingdom of the undead hungers for greater power, land, and slaves. Ixzotz sees the other kingdoms as weak and like the wolfish beast that its ruling vampire intelligence is, believes it should rule all *lesser* kingdoms. It is a sentiment that has smoldered for a long time, but is finally starting to catch fire. Reid's Rangers, the Tampico Military Protectorate, and the kingdom of Muluc are Ixzotz's initial targets, but others will follow.

The Vampire Kingdom of Ixzotz. The oldest Vampire Kingdom in Mexico is Ixzotz (Eesh-zotz). The central city of Ixzotz is located on the bones of the pre-Rifts city of *Aguascalientes*, along a ley line that connects to the Aztec pyramid at Tula (a nexus) and an Indian ruin 44 miles (70 km) northwest of the city. Ixzotz is the central city of the vampire kingdom and populated primarily by vampires (68%). Ixzotz is a cruel dictatorship where humans and D-Bees are raised as cattle and kept as tormented slaves. The few hundred humans who are kept as slaves belong to the vampire elite. All of the city's humans are completely submissive to their demon masters, never raise a hand against them, and are petrified of strangers. Like most of the non-vampire population, these people have been the slaves of vampires for generations and know no other way of life. They are uneducated, unskilled (not even as skilled as a first level Vagabond O.C.C.), and physically and psychologically conditioned from generations of abuse. Most lack any apparent will and live their lives as docile cattle resigned to their terrible fate. When a bold human leader arises in the ranks, he or she is culled and killed.

In the last five years, Ixzotz has grown in size and has become increasingly belligerent toward the other (rival) Vampire Kingdoms. If any of the nations of undead are likely to try to conquer and absorb any of the others, it is Ixzotz. Furthermore, the lord of the kingdom has decided it is time to establish satellite colonies in the north and is planning to establish at least 2-4 new colonies in the American southwest, probably Arizona and New Mexico. Ixzotz has also had enough of Doc Reid and plans to put an end to Reid's Rangers once and for all.

Reid's Rangers is a group of human and D-Bee self-styled vampire-killers who travel throughout northern Mexico and the American Southwest, fighting the undead and trying to educate people about the danger and how to combat them. Reid's Rangers is a combination of heroes and misanthropes. The Splugorth of Atlantis has spies in many of the Vampire Kingdoms, so they have caught wind of Ixzotz' plans for the Rangers and have arranged to warn the group in a continuing effort to undermine and frustrate their loathsome rivals.

Mexico City, Capital of the Mexico Empire. Without a doubt, the Mexico Empire is the most advanced and "civilized" of all the Vampire Kingdoms, and Mexico City is its crowning jewel. Pre-Rifts Mexico City was obliterated by the Great Cataclysm, but much of the city has been rebuilt under the management of the vampires. Although the humans are effectively slaves and food for the undead, they are treated with dignity and kindness. Their unusual relationship is one of mutual cooperation and unity, even though the vampires are the ruling power and can be cruel and demanding at times. The city is about the size of Ciudad Juarez in the north, only newer, nicer, cleaner, has no gang problems, minimal crime, and is growing.

The Muluc Kingdom is of middle to low technology, about equal to pre-Rifts 1950's America. Much of the population is scattered among scores of tiny villages and towns of farmers, fishermen and raisers of livestock. Only the cities of Muluc (the largest) and Ciudad Mante are comparatively modern environments, but the entire kingdom operates as a traditional vampire society where the undead masters dominate and oppress the human slaves and cattle.

The Kingdom of Milta is the youngest of the vampire kingdoms. In structure and function it is a combination of Muluc and the Mexico Empire. Like the Muluc Kingdom, it presently dominates and degrades its humans, using fear and mind controlled slaves to control the humanoid population. Also like the Muluc Kingdom, technology is low and the kingdom's primary resource is its legion of undead. Like the Mexico Empire, Milta is experimenting with giving its human population more freedom and has established a modern blood donation hospital and contribution system (like Mexico) at its two largest cities, Minatitlan and Milta. Likewise, the powers behind the Milta Kingdom are striving to make technological advancements, with plans to make modern cities. To this end, the Milta Kingdom has entered into a tentative (and unheard of) peace treaty with the Mexico Empire. The treaty is a mutual non-aggression pact with a provision for trade relations. Milta controls the largest oil refinery in Mexico. The Mexico Empire has need for oil and petroleum products and the Milta Kingdom has a need for their technology and political expertise if they are going to reorganize their present governmental structure. With threats from the Ixzotz and Muluc Kingdoms from the north, west and east, the non-aggression pact with Milta allows the Mexico Empire to concentrate on military action against those two kingdoms without having to worry about potential assault from the south as well. Note that the non-aggression pact simply means that the two kingdoms agree not to attack each other, but neither is obligated to help nor protect the other from third party attackers.

Tampico Military Protectorate is not a kingdom nor a thriving city, but it must be given mention because of its strategic and commercial importance. The ruins of *old Tampico* lay smashed and battered from the tidal waves and hurricanes that hammered the coast during the Coming of the Rifts. But a tiny, new town has sprouted up amidst the ruins. Tampico is more of a fortified encampment of humans and D-Bees than a simple town. It began when a band of mercenaries came into the possession of a map that showed the location of a substantial oil field in the Gulf of Mexico. The mercs traveled along the Gulf coast to Tampico and found the oil. They have since established a small, but powerful military fort/encampment around the oil drilling operation and sell crude oil to the notable kingdoms of Northern Mexico and the southern states of the old American Empire. They have maintained the oil drilling and exporting operations for nearly 17 years, despite the fact that the area is located in the vampire-ridden Kingdom of Muluc.

Monterrey. Far to the north, some 150 miles (240 km) south of the Rio Grande River, is the town of Monterrey. It is a small, filthy place with dirt streets, ramshackle houses, and lawlessness, but surrounded by roving gangs of Wild Vampires, many consider it an oasis in a land of the undead. It is effectively a southern outpost used by the Pecos Empire as a rest spot, watering hole, and sanctuary by the Pecos Bandits and other barbarians. Thus, it is a haven for vagabonds and bandits. The only businesses of note are a blacksmith, carpenter, a hidden mechanic's garage with a secret fuel depot (can repair most common vehicles and M.D.C. body armor, recharge E-Clips, etc.), and a half dozen saloons and boarding houses.

The regular town population is a meager 900 people, 50% are D-Bees, and 30% are bandits who are hovercycle gang thugs and members of, or associated with, the Pecos Empire. The rest are farmers and raisers of livestock. Monterrey is often plagued by gangs of Wild Vampires and solitary Secondary Vampires. However, there is no known vampire or mind controlled slave living in the town. Whenever a vampire is discovered, the bandits or mercenaries hunt him down and destroy him. Ninety-nine percent of the people wear crosses and carry some form of vampire-killing weaponry. Crosses, wood weapons and bow weapons are the most common. Only the Pecos thugs and travelers have the more sophisticated anti-vampire weapons. **New Del Rio** is located on the banks of the Rio Grande near the ruins of the pre-Rifts city. It is located in the middle of nowhere in the old American state of *Texas*. About 400 miles (640 km) to the northeast is the powerful, human kingdom of *Los Alamo*. New Del Rio is a poverty stricken and *vampire-ridden* kingdom of about 50,000 humanoids (50% are D-Bees) ruled by a tyrannical and decadent family. In recent years it has become a haven for outlaws and has established strong trade with the Pecos Empire. The kingdom is avoided by most travelers, and the city itself is filthier and more dangerous than Juarez. Gangs and thugs control the streets. Except for the very few elite rich and powerful, the level of technology is poor, equal to about the turn of the 20th century. Only 30% of the buildings have electricity and 60% have working indoor plumping. Ninety percent of the people are illiterate farmers or laborers on cattle ranches owned by the ruling family. There are few merchants or hotels, and those that do exist are rat-traps with poor quality merchandise. Wild Vampires terrorize and feed on the inhabitants in the outskirts of town or farmers away from the city, but they are so bold that roving gangs sometimes run through the streets.

Over the last ten years, the number of Secondary Vampires has increased from about a hundred to two or three hundred, and several are engaged in gangland style rivalries over turf and control of the city. The hold vampires have over this Texas city-state is frightening. Many of these vampires have lairs and sanctuaries within the city itself.

El Paso, located in the northwest corner of Texas, is generally considered the last vestige of civilization in the American southwest. As the last great trade center in the west, El Paso is on the list of places to visit by most western travelers. It is a place to replenish supplies, buy new clothes, repair robots and

vehicles, sell artifacts, furs, and other goods, get medical attention, catch up on the latest rumors and news, hear about vampires, and just plain relax. El Paso is surprisingly well policed, truly free of vampires (well, 95% of the time; remember, people are coming and going all of the time), and an overall safe haven for humans and D-Bees alike. Even the Coalition States has a tiny diplomatic embassy on the outskirts of the city. The Coalition has no influence over El Paso and the outpost is there to give CS military personnel a base camp to keep an eye on the area, after all, they do claim all of Texas as the Coalition State of Lone Star. However, the outpost is there to spy on the Pecos Empire more than watch out for vampires. The CS troops and diplomatic ambassadors do not enjoy special treatment of any kind, and are often the butt of practical jokes, name calling and cheerful ridicule.

Ciudad Juarez. Built on the ruins of the pre-Rifts city of the same name, Ciudad Juarez is the only known city of humanoids in the vampire ridden lands of the Old Mexican Empire. Except for rumors of Vampire Kingdoms deep in the interior, only tiny villages and small towns are believed to dot the vast plains and southern rain forest. The streets of Juarez are narrow, dusty, dark, overcrowded and alive with throngs of mutant and alien life forms (and downright monsters). Headhunters and adventurers of a hundred races stroll through the streets in full armor, with Mega-Damage weapons strapped to their sides. Gunfights in the saloons and in the dirt streets are a daily occurrence, as is the finding of a half dozen dead bodies every morning.

The number of Secondary Vampires operating *in* the city is unknown, but there are plenty, and their numbers have grown over the years. Intelligence by Reid's Rangers suggests that half of Ciudad Juarez, has, in fact, been taken over by cunning vampires who run the town from the shadows.

Ciudad Victoria. The city of Victoria harbors nearly 14,000 inhabitants, 60% of which are human. The city is sprawled along the banks of the Rio Bravo River and in the river itself. Many dwellings are houseboats and floating platforms, much like the junks of Hong Kong. More than 30% of the overall population lives on the water where they feel safe from incursions from vampires. Fishing, farming and raising livestock are the primary means of self-support. The technology level is low, about equal to the turn of the 20th century, although the occasional hover vehicle and giant robot is evident. There is an open market (most foods and basic goods), five carpenters, boat builders, saloons, two dance halls, a city square and a handful of other merchants that sell goods and services for the common, daily needs of the city's inhabitants. Travelers are a rarity as hordes of Wild Vampires are all around them.

The Yucatan Peninsula

Many people say that the Earth no longer belongs to humankind. Nowhere is that more true than the transformed wilderness that is the Yucatan Peninsula (and arguably vampire dominated Mexico). The Yucatan Peninsula, home of the ancient Mayans, is no longer a part of the planet Earth, at least not as we once understood the Earth. It now coexists in two realms of existence, that of Rifts Earth and that of an alien jungle world. Flying above, from the air, there is no Yucatan. The warm waters of the Mexican Gulf seem to have swallowed the tropical lowlands a hundred feet beneath the water, just as they have the Texas and Louisiana coastline. All that appears to remain is the southern portion of Mexico and Guatemala, the peninsula is gone. Consequently, most eastern map makers, including Erin Tarn and the Coalition, do not show the Yucatan to exist! Most northern scholars dismiss the stories of the Yucatan Peninsula existing or coexistent in another dimension as folk tales. Remember, very few northern explorers have ever traveled as far south as the Yucatan to tell the tale. However, the "folk tales" are correct. The Yucatan Peninsula still exists, only it exists in a different dimension. The dimensional anomaly is even stranger, because while the peninsula is not visible nor accessible from the air, it is both visible and easily accessible from the land. And those who land on the apparent coast suddenly find themselves in the middle of a rain forest. A moment after landing, the ocean is gone, replaced by forest stretching three hundred miles (480 km) to the north. Taking to the air again, there is a shimmering of the sky and disorientation as the flyer is suddenly engulfed in clouds (a sudden storm?). The instrument panels go crazy and all sense of direction, even up and down, is lost. A lucky flyer will suddenly find himself over the Gulf of Mexico, the Yucatan once again vanished from sight. Unlucky flyers may find themselves trapped in the cloud-covered limbo of a trans-dimensional vortex.

The Yucatan is a primordial jungle inhabited by were-beasts, ancient demons, Mayan gods and savage supernatural beings. Not much has changed in this realm of chaos and wonder since the Dark Ages. See **Rifts® World Book One: Vampire Kingdoms™** for a glimpse at what one may find in the Yucatan.

South America

Imagine Earth today. Now imagine a global holocaust that wipes out 90% of all the people and human civilization. Most of Earth is blank. Ready to be redrawn, remade. Now introduce magic and dimensional portals to a thousand different worlds and supernatural dimensions. Worlds from which other mortals and monstrous beings emerge. Beings who see Earth as a new wilderness frontier to explore and colonize. That's Rifts Earth. The humans of North America, despite their struggle with D-Bees, Xiticix, demons and monsters, do not realize how pure and devoid of alien life their part of the world really is. Traveling to South America, Europe, Asia and Atlantis, one begins to see a stark contrast. These are all places where human beings are not the dominant life form or civilization. These are places dominated, sometimes completely conquered and enslaved, by alien and/or supernatural creatures and humans are second-class citizens, slaves, or a dying breed. In some places like England, Europe and Australia, it remains to be seen who will lay claim and rule the land, or whether it can be shared.

Rifts Earth is a wilderness with hundreds if not thousands of pockets of new life everywhere. Humans, human mutants, aliens and demonic life forms find a little patch of land someplace, claim it, build on it and grow. As these tribes, villages, cities, kingdoms and alien footholds are discovered or intrude upon other people and cultures there are conflicts and war. Sometimes

the war is over land or ideals. Other times it is for pure survival. While some creatures are conquerors or slavers by nature, many of these Dimensional Beings (D-Bees) are as mortal and fragile as human beings. Many are willing to live and work together in peace, and are as much victims of the Rifts Earth environment as any human. Many D-Bees can become valuable allies, friends and brothers to humankind, united in a struggle against greater evil.

South America is a great example of a vast wilderness dotted with pockets of small, often isolated people and cultures trying to find their place in the world. Their isolation has made many of them truly different and unique, even alien, and though they may have existed for generations, as they establish themselves and begin to expand or explore the landscape around them, these diverse cultures meet and often clash. Unlike parts of Europe and Asia where alien life forms or supernatural monsters have conquered and rule the land, the fates of South America's many fledgling kingdoms are yet to be determined. Some are almost certain to remain small and eventually perish or be assimilated into another, more successful culture. Others may grow to become a powerful nation while others will fall and be replaced, but such determinations are likely a long way off. For now, most struggle merely to survive.

Not much has changed in South America over the last four or five years during the Tolkeen-Coalition War. All the same factions exist and challenge one another without having made any serious inroads against their rivals or enemies. For most, conflicts and rivalries have been a back and forth situation where one side gains a slight upper hand for a w hile, before things change back to the status quo or the other side gains a tenuous upper hand over them. Certainly whatever investigations the *Coalition States* may have considered making into South America have been suspended and will remain suspended for the next few years while the CS tackles more immediate and pressing problems concerning the Xiticix, Federation of Magic, Minions of Splugorth and other threats, as well as the day-to-day concerns and issues of building and maintaining a nation.

A Brief Overview

With excerpts from the South America World Books by C.J. Carella

South America covers an area of roughly six million square miles (15.5 million square kilometers). Before the Coming of the Rifts, the continent had a triangular shape, but the continent has split into two large sections. The Coming of the Rifts and the return of the continent of Atlantis created a tidal surge unlike anything seen on Earth. The whole northern coastline was obliterated. Countries like Venezuela and Colombia, where much of the population was concentrated, were crushed. More than nine-tenths of the inhabitants were killed by the tidal waves and hurricanes alone. Millions more perished in earthquakes, mud slides, and storms that devastated the whole continent.

Today, South America is a divided land, cut in two by the mightiest river on the planet, the Amazon. The northern half of the continent is dominated by jungles covered in tropical and semitropical forests, with patches of less dense savannah. Most of its northern shores have been fragmented into hundreds of islands of varying size. The weather, flora and fauna are, for the most part, very similar to what it had been before the Rifts, although there are hundreds of exotic species of plants, animals and D-Bees.

The southern half remains a mostly unexplored wilderness.

The Amazon River

Even before the Coming of the Rifts, the Amazon river was the largest (and second longest) river in the world, 4,000 miles (6400 km) long, and up to 150 miles (240 km) wide at its mouth, making over 1,000 miles (1600 km) of the river navigable by the largest ocean-going ships. The river tended to run toward the east and west, with scores of tributaries streaming south into the Continent.

After the Great Cataclysm, the Amazon was transformed into a river the likes of which the Earth has never before seen. More than 15,000 miles (24,000 km) long (not counting tributaries), and with an average width of 3 miles (4.8 km), but at several places, one cannot see the opposite shore, which is well beyond the horizon! This makes the Amazon the largest freshwater body on the planet. In fact, much of the surrounding coastline has been transformed into fresh water, with a wider strip of brackish water separating it from the salty ocean.

The Amazon has two main branches. The East-West stream follows the contours of the original Amazon river and is the area with the most *islands*, and is the widest (but shorter) of the branches. It is known as the **Lesser Amazon,** ironic, since that used to be the main portion of the river. Its tributaries reach all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

Running south, splitting one-third of the continent from the rest, is the 9,000 mile (14,400 km) long **Greater Amazon**. By rights, it should be a salty body of water, but it is not. The few scientists who have examined the problem have been stymied. Mages and Mystics believe that a permanent Rift somewhere along the river is the source of the fresh water. Some actually propose that this hypothetical Rift opens directly to the *Elemental Plane of Water*, the mythological native dimension of Water Elementals. Whatever the case may be, there are an uncommonly large number of Water Elementals living along the length of the Greater Amazon.

The Republic of Colombia

The Estados Unidos de la Republica de Colombia is a *human* dominated nation that was built by the survivors from the pre-Rifts countries of *Venezuela, Colombia* and the *Guyanas*. Miraculously, a few regions were not devastated by the Great Cataclysm and the survivors managed to rebuild some level of technology. Even so, the Republic would not have survived if it hadn't been for the help of a number of humanoid D-Bees who were brought to Earth by the same Rifts that transformed and destroyed much of the continent. Currently, Colombia's situation is not very different from that of the New German Republic (NGR) in that both nations are beset by supernatural foes. In the case of the Republic of Colombia, those foes are legions of vampires and allied villainous creatures who will not rest until the entire Republic has been devoured and drained of blood.

Government. Colombia is a Republic. The country has a president who is elected every six years by the Military Council,

an assembly made up entirely of Colombian high-ranking military officers (a rank of colonel and up). The general public elects city mayors and other local officials, but true power rests with the military. Most of the people of Colombia do not have a problem with this. They are locked in a war for survival and they trust the military to protect them. Human rights are usually respected, but don't apply to anybody classified as "nonhuman," including most D-Bees with the exception of the Dwarves.

The justice system is in the hands of military courts. Trials are quick and justice is swift and merciless. There are very few prisons in Colombia. Serious crimes like murder, rape, arson, and treason carry the death penalty, which is executed within one hour of the verdict. Lesser criminals such as thieves, smugglers, con men, people convicted of involuntary manslaughter, etc., are sentenced to a varying period (from one month for the smallest offenses to up to ten years for the highest non-capital crimes) of forced labor at military bases usually located in the most dangerous areas of the country — many say this is as good as a death penalty.

The current government is led by General Mauricio de la Plaza, a 54-year old veteran who rose through the ranks. General Plaza is a brilliant strategist and tactician who has written several books on anti-vampire and anti-monster warfare. Books that are now used as training manuals in the Colombian military schools. Plaza is mostly concerned with the safety of the nation. A strong believer in human supremacy, he distrusts all D-Bees, with the exception of the Dwarves, and will use any pretext to exile or exterminate other nonhuman communities in the country. Other than this, he is an honorable but ruthless man, able to plot and machinate with the best of them when it is necessary.

Aside from the government, influential and rich families also command considerable power. Six families in particular – the Armendariz, Crespo, Rios, Sanchez, Torrijos and Villarreal – each have hundreds of family members and thousands of people in their service or under their patronage. In their respective domains, the families are like small kingdoms unto themselves.

The position of **D-Bees in Colombia** varies from race to race. D-Bees that are human enough to fit in, like Elves and Dwarves, are generally accepted, but only the Dwarves have full rights of citizenship. All others are considered to be foreigners, even if they have been born in the country. Foreigners can be deported very easily by the authorities. Beings like Ogres who have a monstrous appearance, have greater problems fitting in and are the first to be questioned or suspected if a crime is committed in their vicinity. Giants and intelligent creatures who are not humanoid are not allowed to stay in most Colombian cities. At best, they are expelled; often they are killed on sight. Supernatural beings like Gargoyles, Brodkil, demons and other entities are destroyed immediately. Dragons are judged on a case-by-case basis; if enough humans can vouch for the character of a dragon, he will not be bothered, as long as he obeys the law and keeps a human appearance when out in public.

The only accepted nonhumans, besides Dwarves, are the *Lizard People*, who have shared lands with the Colombians for over a century and have shown they are not a threat (this may change now that the *Kingdom of Lagarto* is beginning to become a threat). Although accepted, they do not share the rights of the human populace and are treated like second-rate peasants and lowlifes.

The Vampire Kingdom of Haktla

Most Vampire Intelligences on Rifts Earth targeted Mexico and Central America. South America was considered undesirable due to its wet climate, frequent rain, and many rivers. The lone exception to this line of thought is held by **Haktla**, an ancient and powerful intelligence with many connections with demon races. Haktla decided that if the region's weather was unsuitable for vampires, then he would simply have to change the weather patterns! Unable to do so on his own, Haktla contacted a demon lord called *Enumu, King of Drought*. This demon had been worshiped as a minor deity in a couple dimensions, where he ran a supernatural "protection racket." (If human victims were not sacrificed in enough number to satiate his unnatural needs, Enumu would cause droughts and famine.) As fate would have it, Enumu had recently been defeated and expelled from his own realm and had nowhere to go. Consequently, the King of Drought found Haktla's offer especially appealing. Although suspicious of vampires, the diabolical King could recognize a good deal when he was offered one, and the two demonic beings forged a lasting alliance.

Enumu worked his magic to alter weather patterns by reducing the normal amount of rainfall and making rain occur only during the daytime. Haktla created a master vampire in the Andes Mountain range and the vampire community soon grew and conquered most of the human and D-Bee communities in the Colombian *Andes Mountains*. The human population that was not turned into vampires or killed in combat were enslaved by their undead conquerors.

Eventually, the Vampire Intelligence ordered his minions to expand east, into the Republic of Columbia. The result has been a war that has lasted for centuries; neither side has been able to seize and hold the upper hand.

At this point, the Vampire Kingdom of Haktla has one of the largest undead populations in the world (second only to the Kingdom of Ixzotz, in Mexico). In terms of raw numbers, the Haktla intelligence controls a larger area of land and a greater number of people than any other vampire kingdom on Earth. Unlike his Mexican cousins, Haktla does not care for subtlety and does not try to conceal his kingdom's existence from the people of the surrounding territories. Virtually every inhabitant of South America (and parts of Central America) knows of or has heard about the Vampire Kingdom of Haktla.

Three factors have prevented Haktla from creating hundreds of thousands of vampire warriors and sending them against Colombia. The first is that the Vampire Intelligence wanted to see how the threat of the Horsemen of the Apocalypse (see Africa section for details) was dealt with: Haktla had known of the prophecy for centuries and was not ready to start expanding until that danger had passed. Secondly, he is not sure what "Powers" exist to the south, so far, all vampire probes in that direction have run into powerful magical opposition. Haktla has heard rumors about both the Kingdom of Lagarto and the cities of El Dorado and believes too obvious a threat might persuade these potential enemies to join forces against his mountain empire. Finally, Haktla realizes he is not powerful enough to resist an all-out attack from Atlantis and knows that the Splugorth will

react violently to a vampire controlled continent. Likewise, he wonders how forces in the north (including fellow Vampire Intelligences in Mexico) would react to his conquest of all of South America. For now, he and Enumu are content with small gains against Colombia and the relatively stable stalemate that currently exists.

Land of a Thousand Islands

To the east and south of Colombia lies the shattered continent that is now known as the Land of a Thousand Islands. Even before the Coming of the Rifts, the Amazon was the largest river in the world. Since the Great Cataclysm, it has become the largest freshwater river in Earth's history! A river that can be navigated by ocean-going vessels along its two main arteries (called Amazon East and Amazon West, respectively) and many of its larger tributaries. The river is crisscrossed with ley lines, mostly up north, but mystic energy continues along its entire length. There are more than 40 good-sized islands (20 mile/32 km diameter or greater) and hundreds of smaller ones. Many of these islands are occupied by pirates. Others have independent villages of humans or D-Bees. The two largest kingdoms among the islands are **Bahia** and **Maga**, two places where *magic*, not technology, is the driving force.

The Pirate Kingdoms

Scattered on both sides of the Amazon river and along the coastline are over a hundred medium-sized islands (and many hundreds more of small to tiny ones). Of these medium islands (typically about 90 to 200 square miles/233 to 518 sq. km), about two dozen are inhabited by violent raiders and marauders, all members of the so-called Pirate Kingdoms. Many D-Bees forced to flee Colombia end up in these areas. Hatred, poverty and lack of industry lead many to become pirates, thieves and cutthroats. Some live under primitive conditions, traveling in canoes or small powered boats to nearby settlements where they steal what they can. The more powerful clans and kingdoms have large fleets and control powerful seaports and lengths of river or coastline. From these strongholds they attack ships and conduct raids on the mainland.

The principal sea routes infested by pirates lay outside the Amazon River and in the southern portion of the Atlantic ocean. These waters are traveled by ships conducting trade between the Silver River Republics and Colombia, Maga and Bahia and offer rich pickings. Freebooter ships prowl the sea lanes seeking merchant vessels to plunder, or engage in lightning quick raids on seaports and coastal communities. Some pirate bands venture farther away, raiding ships and islands deep in the Atlantic Ocean and even plunder the coast of Africa and the Mediterranean Sea. The Pirate Kingdoms do not venture into the Pacific Ocean because it is the domain of pirates operating out of the *Bahia islands*.

The slave trade is an important source of wealth for these Amazon River pirates. The main slave buyers are the Splugorth of Atlantis who supplement their own raiding parties by purchasing captives from independent pirates at bargain prices. Several islands have small Splugorth bases that conduct and coordinate trade with the pirate kingdoms. The largest such center is an entire island colonized by Splugorth Minions from Atlantis, an island appropriately named *Slavers' Port*.

The Kingdom of Bahia

When the Rifts came, storms and earthquakes battered and tore apart the Earth. The sea rose and swallowed much of the coast. The Amazon river's ripples spread like a living monster. Its many tributaries like massive tentacles splintering the land into hundreds of islands. The largest island was the settlement occupied by the Voodoo pilgrims which was spared the full brunt of the incredible holocaust. It was named after the Brazilian city that had once been a center of Voodoo worship before its destruction by the eruption of the ley lines, **Bahia**.

Given the large buildings and high standard of living in the area, it would appear that Bahia is a fairly technologically advanced community. However, there are very few factories or high-tech facilities in the city. What little they need in the way of modern equipment is purchased from the Republic of Colombia and the island of Maga. Instead, Bahia depends almost exclusively on magic. The priests' rituals ensure good crops and their magic allows people to build homes, defend themselves and enjoy many comforts usually expected in technological civilizations.

Bahia is in a highly magical area; the western coast is particularly active, with a dozen major ley lines and six nexus points. As a result, dimensional Rifts open regularly over the area. The Voodoo priests have a small army posted at nexus points. They are charged with attacking hostile creatures which may emerge and to alert the authorities of incoming danger. Peaceful D-Bees are questioned and allowed to go free. The ley lines also serve as a means of mystic energy for building, healing and defense.

The people in Bahia live under primitive conditions when compared to such places as the Coalition States, The NGR and even The Republic of Colombia. The major technological centers can be found in the capital city of New Bahia, which is the only place where electrical lighting and other comforts like modern plumbing, sewer systems, modern medicine and vehicle repair facilities can be found. Throughout the majority of the kingdom, visitors will find scattered villages dedicated to farming, the raising of livestock, or fishing. Of course, most villages will have a few dedicated craftsmen and artisans such as basket weavers, carpenters, clothes makers, fabric weavers, jewelers, sculptors, tattoo artists, and so on.

The most prestigious and respected people in the villages are Voodoo priests. They are the doctors, judges, advisors and even psychiatrists of the community. They may not be acknowledged as the direct leaders (although they often serve as exactly that), but their word carries a lot of weight with everybody, whether or not they follow the Voodoo beliefs. Other practitioners of magic are also well-regarded, with the exception of evil mages and all Necromancers, who are viewed as dangerous monsters.

Maga Island

Maga Island is a center of learning and magic knowledge. Its founders are a mixture of human Amazon Indians of a dozen different tribes, and the mysterious newcomers known as the Jungle Elves, masters of Biomancy.

At first sight, the island would appear to be a primitive, nearly uninhabited place. Anybody flying over the island would only see a thick, impenetrable canopy, broken by an occasional

clearing and little else. Visitors will discover that all the trees on the island are M.D.C. structures and almost impossible to cut down through normal means.

Beneath the thick forests is an amazing civilization that never cuts or damages trees, and plants and harvest crops while living in harmony with nature. The large island is the home of an advanced civilization that is almost totally based on magic. The housing, feeding and security of Maga Island's inhabitants are provided by the Biomancers, a special group of mages who have learned to gently manipulate nature to achieve their ends. Only in the otherworldly dimension of Wormwood, and a few areas of England, can one find such a close relationship between the people and their environment.

The Kingdom of Lagarto

Lagarto is a kingdom of Lizard Men who were once a motley collection of tribes but were united and strengthened by the very Dragons who now serve as the society's rulers and sometimes deities.

For centuries, the Lizard Man communities lived under primitive but harmonious conditions. They are territorial and active colonists, but prefer to live along the coastline and on islands of freshwater rivers, lakes, and swamp lands, leaving much of the jungle interior to habitation by other races. Most Lizard Man tribes prefer to be left alone, but are often provoked to acts of violence by hostile intruders. However, neighboring human and D-Bee communities were rarely attacked without reason. There was even some trade conducted with humanoids in the hinterlands (dry land did not much interest the Lizard Men). They also befriended and formed loose alliances with some of the werejaguar tribes in the jungle.

The largest Lizard Man population centers were the equivalent of small cities with little in the way of industry or services. In many ways, they were little more than a sprawl of tribes that covered miles of river bank and stream with their wooden pole-supported houses and rafts. Manufacturing was very limited. The city government was left in the hands of a king and a council of elders. Eventually, the land became a haven for dragons and other supernatural dangers.

Before the coming of the dragons, there were dozens of kings and hundreds of chieftains. Each conducted local affairs as they saw fit. Lizard Men only organized themselves as a larger nation during times of grave emergencies. In areas not yet under the direct control of the minions from **New Dragcona**, this still holds true. Small river villages continue to pursue their simple fishing and food gathering lives, unconcerned with the affairs of the world around them. Elsewhere, things have changed a great deal.

Roughly 25-30 years ago, a dragon named *Melastirth* came from Atlantis to "spread the way of the Dragon." In a short time he united half of the tribes to create a city-state he calls **New Dragcona**. A new order was established. One in which the false teachings of Styphathal's Dragonwright preach hatred for humans and conquest of lesser beings as the ultimate goal. The young are encouraged to hate mammalian humanoids and to crave war. Many join the army and many more follow the ways of Styphathal's Dragonwright. Taxes are collected and put toward the war fund. In the middle of each city now stands a steel and concrete City Hall controlled by dragons and their servants. Those who dare to challenge Melastirth – Styphathal's handpicked agent to create him an empire in South America – are dealt with severely. Some, killed in public by Lizard Men warlords who lust for war, others beaten, tortured or extorted into submission. The old ways of life are being discarded and war is upon the once benign reptilian people.

109 P.A. update: A month ago Melastirth decided the kingdom of New Dragcona was ready to assume its place in the higher order above mammalians, and declared war on the neighboring kingdoms of Omagua the City of Jaguars and Cibola, also known as El Dorado. (Manoa will be next.) His master in Atlantis, the self-proclaimed Dragon God, Styphathal, was impatient. The great lizard felt that Melastirth had waited and prepared long enough. Their troops were many and armed with basic Kittani energy weapons, body armor and the *Carnosaurus series of power armor* to lead the charge. Melastirth had waited because an estimated 40% of the Lizard Men resisted the war and argued for peace and a return to the old ways. No amount of "persuasion" could win over these holdouts. Styphathal, an armchair General away in Atlantis, decided the support among the reptilian people was strong enough and, in his infinite wisdom, that those who spoke against war would come to support it with each new victory. Styphathal was wrong.

As soon as word spread that the Army of Dragonwright had mobilized, parties of Lizard Men opposed to the war ran to warn their feline and human neighbors. Wilderness tribes who had never joined New Dragcona now united to lay pit traps and ambushes for the advancing Army of Dragonwright. Their goal: to destroy the "alien" power armor and weapons of the false god Styphathal to stop the army and try to reason with their brothers. Not prepared to fight their own kind, half the Army stopped and when faced with appeals from their wilderness brothers, a third

deserted and another third turned back in confusion. Those filled with bloodlust and dreams of glory in the name of Dragonwright pressed on to meet great resistance from the enemy. Meanwhile, rioting erupted in the city of New Dragcona, hundreds of priests of Dragonwright were killed and Melastirth, himself, was attacked and nearly killed.

Civil war continues as the people are currently divided 50/50, but that's changing rapidly. Those who had been undecided about war have swung to the side of those who oppose it, and as brother fights brother, another 10-20% are likely to forsake Dragonwright, Styphathal and Melastirth to join the "rebels." That means 60-70% will be *against* Dragonwright. A third of New Dragcona's city population has already abandoned it to return to life in the jungle where they don't have to answer to any dragon god. Civil war is likely to rage for months, maybe years, to come, for while the majority of the population may turn away from its dragon masters, it is the Cult of Dragonwright and its army that holds the technological advantage. Styphathal is not a gracious loser. He blames Melastirth for all the problems in Lagarto and demands that he restores order to New Dragcona and moves forward with the war. Melastirth can barely hold on to what he has and these additional demands are only making him more ruthless.

El Dorado & the Three Cities of Gold

When Spanish conquerors first reached South America, they came in search of gold and quick riches. They heard tales of mythical cities of gold. Places where the rulers swam in a lake as servants threw precious metals into the waters. Of men who covered their bodies in gold powder and lived in gilded cities paved with precious stones. These cities were said to exist somewhere in the depths of the jungle. Dozens of Spanish, German and English expeditions set out into the Amazonian rain forest looking for the mythical El Dorado. Every tribesman they met claimed that the Gilded City, El Dorado, was further away. Disease, wild animals and ferocious natives forced each expedition to turn back. Some never returned. Those that did, came back empty-handed. Eventually, scholars decided that the so-called City of Gold was but a myth, concocted by the natives to lure the greedy Europeans out of their lands.

The truth was something that no European (or even most natives) would suspect. There had once been three cities hidden in the Amazon jungle. The oldest and wealthiest had been founded by True Atlantean refugees long before the arrival of Europeans, but the entire city had been transported to a trans-dimensional limbo where it remained hidden for centuries. The second had been the home of the werejaguar race, led by the widely worshiped South American Jaguar god. That city had always existed in an alternate dimension, communicating with Earth through dimensional Rifts. The third city was one of the largest trans-dimensional markets on the planet, ruled by a supernatural intelligence. With the Coming of the Rifts, the three cities have returned to Earth, this time permanently! The Cities of El Dorado exist in different areas of the mainland Amazon rain forest where they are growing increasingly violent toward each other.

The legendary cities are as **Manoa, Omagua** and **Cibola/El Dorado**. Each is a major power and their domains have the largest population concentration in the Amazon basin. Furthermore, each has a level of mystic knowledge or technology that rivals that of any other nation on the planet. Their influence may someday reach the rest of the American continent and the consequences of the three cities' rivalry may be felt around the world.

These three cities may not be the only places that inspired the legends of El Dorado. Pre-Rifts Earth was a place that occasionally brushed with extra-dimensional realms from many strange places. Who knows what other strange worlds and peoples were encountered by explorers and Amazonian Indians in the past? Game Masters are welcome to explore these and other possibilities. South America is a huge continent, sparsely populated, and has more than enough room for other exotic places and lost empires.

Manoa was the original El Dorado, City of Gold. Today it is a thriving kingdom of humans, Amazonian Warrior Women, Ewaipanoma "Headless" people, Lizard Men, and a small assortment of other D-Bees and a few hundred dragons. Total population is more than two million, a quarter of which are humans and another quarter of which are Amazons.

Manoa was actually founded by survivors of the original Atlantis, so the culture reflects those of ancient Atlantis and there are a number of True Atlanteans and Chiang-Ku dragons living in the city. For the most part, Manoa is a peaceful place filled with people and creatures who seek magic, learning, wisdom and dimensional travel. However, they are dedicated to the eradication of supernatural evil and do not hesitate to defend themselves or help others in need. They willingly stand in opposition to evil in all its guises.

Manoans consider the Splugorth's Atlantis to be an abomination and danger to all beings who value life and freedom. They point to the sorrow and misery at Lagarto as evidence of the trouble the Splugorth and their minions bring to the world. As for Lagarto and New Dragcona, the Manoans support and encourage the freedom fighting Lizard Men who desire peace and seek to overthrow the government under Melastirth, the priests of Dragonwright and their fanatical followers. To that end, Manoa has provided weapons and advisors from Tattooed Men and dragons to Amazon warriors and spies. However, other than this covert operation and some intense skirmishes with members of the Army of Dragonwright along its borders, the Manoans have not directly confronted the New Dragconians. They believe it best if the people themselves rise up to reclaim their kingdom and send the Dragonwrighters packing. That being said, Cibola/El Dorado is the archenemy of Manoa and the two have been at war for more than a decade now. The Manoans know Cibola is a launching point for the diabolical alien intelligence known as *Inix the Soulworm*, and have resolved to prevent the vile beast from getting more than a toe hold on Earth.

Cibola, the Gilded City and the place those on Rifts Earth call "El Dorado" today. (Not to be confused with the Coalition State of El Dorado in Arkansas.) Cibola is the domain of Inix, something of a lowlife, scavenger and drug dealer of an alien intelligence. Soul Worms are brutal, ruthless, self-serving malignant spirits who conquer, enslave, use and abuse those less powerful than they. Cibola and Manoa are natural enemies because they represent the opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to good and evil. Counted among Cibola's monstrous henchmen are Gatherers, Pogtalian Dragon Slayers, and the demonic insect-like creatures known as Pincer Warriors, in addition to other black-hearted beings. These agents of evil do as they are told and enjoy enslaving and tormenting the innocent.

Omagua, City of Jaguars is a truly unique, alien kingdom where humanoid felines are the dominant species. Werepanthers, Raksashas, sphinxes and other feline creatures of magic and supernatural beings also call Omagua home, as do a handful of humans, Lizard Men, Jungle Elves and D-Bees. Its people are suspicious of strangers, prefer to be left alone, and are aggressively territorial.

They regard Manoa as a rival and potential enemy but the two kingdoms pretty much leave each other alone. Cibola, on the other hand, they despise, for it is a kingdom of monsters that enslaves and destroys. The standing order for all Omaguan military patrols is to capture or destroy any Cibolan creature found in the jungle, especially Gatherers and Pincers.

The recent attack by Lagarto actually caught the felines off guard, for they have never had any serious altercations with the Lizard Men and didn't realize they had reason to fear them. The Omaguans are faring so well in their war against the Army of Dragonwright that they intend to destroy its dragon leaders and press on to destroy the Splugorth Slavers' outpost New Dragcona has allowed on the west bank of the Amazon. The felines of Omagua hate all who enslave other people, making the Splugorth a hated enemy. The Omaguans have no intention of going to Atlantis to cause trouble, but they, like the Manoans, attack and try to destroy every Splugorth or pirate slave operation they encounter. Since most of the felines possess special psionic abilities or superpowers, they have fared well against supernatural opponents such as the minions of Inix and the Splugorth.

See **Rifts® World Book 6: South America (One)** for complete details on the people and places presented in the previous pages.

Empire of the Sun

The Empire of the Sun is found in the mountains of Peru and Bolivia. It is a curious mixture of the Inca traditions of old and modern republican principles that tends to avoid contact with the outside world. In some ways, the Inca nation is a constitutional theocracy, with the bulk of the power resting in the hands of the gods, their priests, and servants. At the same time, the deities and their appointees are responsible for the welfare and happiness of all the people.

As one might imagine, the leaders of the Empire are members of the *Pantheon of the Sun.* There are ten "true" gods in the Pantheon, plus an additional 300 godlings and 10,000 demigods. For the most part, however, the gods do not meddle directly in the affairs of their people. Instead, they leave most of the decision-making to the Sun Priests, led by the High Priest. The High Priest is a political and religious office, typically filled by a mortal human who has proven himself in both piety and wisdom. He is looked to for guidance and rulings. Occasionally, when facing difficult or obscure choices, the High Priest will retreat to the Temple of the Sun to confer with one of the gods of the Inca pantheon.

Daily life in the villages where the majority of the population lives is not very different from the ancient Andean ways, a way that continued to exist through the 20th century and even the pre-Rifts years. Villagers share their farm equipment, food, and other products. Living conditions are fairly primitive.

By contrast, the "free cities" of the Empire have more in common with the cities of the Coalition States and the NGR than with the primitive villages that surround them. The attraction of this way of life often prompts people to leave their simple villages and try their luck in the cities. Migration into the cities is strictly regulated, however, and those who try it without government permission are often forcibly relocated.

Trouble brews elsewhere in the Empire from those less than content with its rule. The most notable of such movements is the ancient Communist guerrilla group known as the Shining Path. Despite its failings, though, the government does a good job of providing for the people, and compared with the chaos and carnage of the Great Cataclysm, invading aliens, and other kingdoms, the Empire of the Sun is a paradise.

The Empire of the Sun is also the keeper of secrets. One is the secret of the rare Nazca Line Magic. Another is that the Empire is the defender of the Earth – at least from the alien invaders known as the *Arkhon.*

See Rifts® World Book 9: South America Two for details on the Arkhon, the Empire of the Sun, the Megaversal Legion, Italo Industries, and the Silver River Republics.

The Arkhon Freehold

The Arkhon are robot-like aliens who have tried to invade the planet Earth on at least three occasions, past and present. Suffice it to say, their latest invasion did not go well, leaving a few hundred thousand of the aliens stranded in our solar system. Some of those have established a stronghold in the mountains of Ecuador, where they make incursions and raids in other parts of South America and guerilla operations against their old enemies at the Empire of the Sun in what amounts to a grudge match of a secret war.

Megaversal Legion

This band of trans-dimensional mercenaries is not a sovereign nation, but it might as well be. It is headquartered in the mountains of Bolivia, where its control extends over a large civilian population. Once a collection of slaves working for the dread Arkhon alien invaders, the Legion successfully rebelled and now fights on its own terms. The former slave company has become a volunteer army. The terms of enlistment are two years, at the end of which one is free to leave the Legion with a small pension (roughly equivalent to 100 credits a month; the

pension grows as long as a soldier serves in the Legion). 80% of the Legionnaires serve for ten terms (20 years) of enlistment or more! The children of the Legionnaires and the civilian population make up most of the recruits (70%). The remaining 30% are volunteers from all corners of the Megaverse who typically join the Legion when it is campaigning on their home world.

The Megaversal Legion's bread and butter are mercenary combat operations contracted by "big-league" clients such as other trans-dimensional nations and worlds from across the Megaverse. Nations and planets with trans-dimensional capabilities can contact them. All kinds of jobs, from small-unit training duties to full-fledged wars, are taken by these warriors of renown. For the most part, however, the Legion refuses to accept jobs that involve enslaving or massacring innocent victims, although they will readily accept missions against such miscreants.

The Legion has made Rifts Earth its base of operations because there are so many dimensional doors to other worlds, and because so many trans-dimensional people (True Atlanteans, Naruni Enterprises, the Splugorth, and many others) have bases or investments on Rifts Earth.

Silver River Republics

The Silver River Republics are not a single nation, or even a confederation of nations. Their only claim of unity is their collective name which is a throwback to the ancient republic of Argentina, the "Silver Country." Geography, wars, diplomatic intrigue and commerce link the nations together; beyond that, they have little in common. The member states range from human kingdoms not unlike the Coalition or the NGR, to enclaves of aliens, mutants and D-Bees.

The four most powerful Silver River Republics are the human republics of *Cordoba* and *Santiago*, the mutant-ruled *Achilles Republic*, and *New Babylon*, an enclave of humans and D-Bee colonists. About a dozen more kingdoms or independent republics are scattered between these nations, as well as some large groups and organizations whose influence extends across national borders.

The Republic of Cordoba. The Cordoba Republic extends from the Andean mountain chain to the Atlantic Ocean. Several hundred miles of the Greater Amazon river runs through the territory and is used for transport and fishing. Military bases dot the landscape and protect the frontier by watching over all major roads, natural passes, waterways, and large communities. Being a major industrial center, Cordoba produces advanced weapons, including the dreaded Glitter Boys. Cybernetics, M.O.M. conversion and the Juicer treatment are all available. The overall technology is comparable to the Coalition States, although it lags behind Triax, Japan and Atlantis. Its strong technology and size make this nation one of the most powerful in the area, enabling it to absorb or conquer many of its smaller neighbors. At this point, conflict is brewing between Cordoba and every nation around its borders. A state of war already exists to the south and west, and it is possible that Cordoba will start a war with the human republic, Santiago.

Republic of Santiago. Santiago is the second largest human kingdom in the area. Its territory ranges from the Amazonian jungle to the north, to the plains in the south, and controls both shores of the Greater Amazon for a good stretch of the river. To the west lies the Empire of the Sun and some outposts of the Arkhon Freehold. In the south is a one-time ally, Cordoba, but now a growing threat to their freedom. A wealthy industrial nation, Santiago is far more tolerant of D-Bees than Cordoba and most of the other kingdoms. Although humans are by far, the largest group in the nation, beings of dozens of other species can hold jobs, join the military, and even become government officials. This attitude has earned Santiago the enmity of many human kingdoms, particularly the Republic of Cordoba.

The Achilles Republic. This free Silver River Republic is entirely controlled by mutant animals, a distinction it shares only with the hidden city of Omagua, one of the Cities of Gold. Like Omagua, the Achilles Republic is the result of the forbidden genetic manipulation experiments conducted by the Argentinean government, code-named *Project Achilles*. The citizens of Achilles are fairly tolerant of other species, but are not necessarily better or nicer than their neighbors. After centuries of fighting for survival, many citizens have nothing but hostile feelings toward strangers. The Achilleans do not give their trust easily, and are always ready to assume the worst, especially of humans. In fact, many of them believe that the best way to prevent hateful anti-mutant factions from attacking them is to strike first and conquer and destroy potential enemies! Though the majority still do not advocate this policy, growing tensions and the threat of war with Cordoba loom grimly over them.

New Babylon. New Babylon is the wealthiest and perhaps the most hated and distrusted member of the Silver River Republics. The nation is one of the few successful partnerships between humans and alien beings. The D-Bees in question are the Amaki, emigrants from a prosperous but overpopulated world who have chosen to make their home on Earth. Under this alliance, huge towers taller than pre-Rifts skyscrapers have been built in the middle of burgeoning cities, which now dot the lower regions of the continent. The influence of New Babylon reaches as far South as Terra del Fuego, the land of fire, and merchant ships brave the Amazon River, the Devil's Triangles and the oceans. This has enabled the New Babylonians to sell their wares as far as England and Africa and even parts of North America.

Technology and Techno-Wizardry, especially psionic-based Techno-Wizardry, flourish in this land. The New Babylonians' genius for all forms of science and engineering have become nearly legendary in the region. At the same time, however, the nation has a terrible reputation everywhere else. The Babylonians, both human and Amaki, are considered to be corrupt and decadent. This reputation comes from their flaunting of wealth, both in their country and when traveling elsewhere. Babylonians, as a culture, love to enjoy life to the fullest, both by getting the best comforts money can buy, and by cavorting in such activities as partying, gambling and amorous escapades.

Italo Industries

Although not a republic or kingdom, this weapons manufacturer has so much influence and power it rivals or exceeds that of many small nations. Italo weapons are sturdy, efficient and reasonably priced. Its most popular weapon line fires ion beams, but the company also produces lasers, rail guns, rocket guns and many conventional weapons. For the most part, the company

produces small arms, light vehicles, and civilian products like tools, farm machinery and similar products. It is a point of pride for the employees that many of their weapons end up being used by both sides of a war! Italo weapons are only available in South America.

Nuevo Peru (New Peru)

This tiny nation-state is based off the pre-Rifts city of Iquitos. Survivors of the Great Cataclysm settled in the region, which is nowadays surrounded by jungle. Nuevo Peru is a river port, linked by a tributary to the Greater Amazon. Its inhabitants rely on technology and distrust and fear magic. They are particularly hostile and suspicious toward the Empire of the Sun, which they consider to be the result of a supernatural invasion. The city and its surrounding villages have managed to defend themselves from attacks by both the Incas and the Arkhons, due mostly to their one notable accomplishment: the discovery (a few years after the Great Cataclysm) of an armory cache that had no less than a full company (160 suits) of USA-G10 Glitter Boys!

Thanks to the Glitter Boys (89 of them are still active, having been repaired and overhauled dozens of times), New Peru was not absorbed by the larger nations around it, or by the many dangers in the region. Due to their need to maintain their wondrous war machines, the inhabitants of the city have learned a great deal of forgotten pre-Rifts sciences, and unearthed enough industrial equipment to become a self-sufficient state. They are able to repair most robots and vehicles and even manufacture simple weapon systems, mostly for domestic use, but with a small trickle of weapons being exported into the other Silver River Republics.

The Local Caudillos

This is not a single nation or kingdom, but rather a number of tiny states, so similar to each other that individual descriptions are not necessary. "Caudillo" is a Spanish word for "leader" or "warlord." For over a century in pre-Rifts history, Caudillos controlled pieces of the South American countryside like the feudal lords of the Middle Ages. With wealth and armed men behind them, the Caudillos laughed at the national government, and did as they pleased in "their" domains. Their word was law, and anybody who displeased them could be disposed of as they wished.

That historical process has repeated itself. Many towns, villages and farmlands are now under the rule of a Caudillo, usually the leader of a band of warriors equipped with power armor, robots, or other advanced weapons. Other Caudillos are mages or psychics who assert control using their powers, but they are much rarer. In the nations of Cordoba and Santiago, Caudillos control almost one-tenth of the population. Typically, the warlords acknowledge the authority of the central government, as long as it doesn't interfere with their own rule. The only way for the government to overthrow a Caudillo is to send an army, but both Cordoba and Santiago have too many problems and threats to afford such actions.

The South American Devil's Triangle

A powerful ley line triangle is located to the Southeast of the continent. Like the better known "Bermuda Triangle" of the Atlantic Ocean, this dimensional formation is racked by ley line storms, Rifts and similar phenomena. No human ships ever venture there willingly; traffic past the "Hell Peninsula" (La Peninsula Infernal, in Spanish), beyond the southern mouth of the Greater Amazon River, is very limited, due to the fact that ships tend to disappear or suffer attacks from creatures from the Rifts.

Atlantis

The island kingdom of Atlantis is a piece of Earth's past Rifted from another dimension, and has become a piece of alien real estate. It is here that the creatures known as *the Splugorth* have established a luxury resort and trade center operated by the powerful *Lord Splynncryth*. A creature of eclectic tastes and desires who lives like an Emperor surrounded by the glory of past accomplishments and minions ready to address his every whim. It is a land of decadence and sin where cruelty and lies are traded as freely as slaves. From his seat of power, Lord Splynncryth runs an inter-dimensional market and import-export business where the living are bought and sold with the callous casualness of livestock. The slave trade is a lucrative business,

and, thanks to the multitude of dimensional doorways, Rifts Earth offers a great number of rare and exotic races to be exploited from around the world. Splynncryth also traffics in the sale of weapons, magic and technology, offering a variety of goods and services, like Bio-Wizardry, Rune weapons and symbiotic augmentation that are available "exclusively" from the Splugorth.

Sinister instigators and schemers, the Splugorth have their tentacles in hundreds, even thousands, of plots. They love to stir the pot and see what boils to the top, and may entice a murder, sabotage and all-out war for the sake of an afternoon's amusement.

Human exploration and the conquest of the new island continent was impossible, for humanity had its hands full just trying to stay alive, much less explore their newly changed world. By the time humans had discovered Atlantis, the Splugorth had already made it their own. A big factor in the success of the alien civilization on the continent is its isolated location. The ever shifting, trans-dimensional waters and sky of the *Demon Sea*, once known as the **Bermuda Triangle**, make Atlantis inaccessible from the coasts of America, Mexico, and Central America. The vast area of ocean in and around the Demon Sea is filled with monsters, besieged by sudden storms, torn asunder by dimensional Rifts and phases into other dimensions without warning. Needless to say, this area is avoided by all except the foolhardy.

Traveling around the dreaded Triangle makes for a longer journey on the open sea where ocean vessels and slow aircraft fall easy prey to monsters and alien invaders. The easiest and safest route to Atlantis is from the western coasts of what was once Pre-Rifts Africa, Portugal, Spain, and France, but those places are mostly populated by monsters from the Rifts themselves, or wildernesses waiting to be claimed.

The Splugorth

Atlantis is governed by the Splugorth, inter-dimensional travelers and slave traders. They possess powerful alien technology and magic *unknown* to most humans. Rumor suggests that the Splugorth are immensely powerful world conquerors. Although the Splugorth have made few overtly aggressive moves to expand their influence beyond Atlantis, this is not to suggest that they and their minions offer little danger to humans or D-Bees. Quite the contrary. The Minions of Splugorth are infamous for conducting raiding parties to capture humans and other life forms for their slave trade. They conduct hunting parities in which the "animals" hunted are humans, D-Bees, dragons or some other creature chosen on a whim. They are also known for their pleasure trips where they simply molest the indigenous life forms, engage in torture and biological experimentation or wholesale slaughter. However, such raids are seldom conducted more than a few hundred miles beyond the coast and have never been directed against a large city. Thus, as long as the minions keep to the remote territories, it is better to let the sleeping monsters of Atlantis lay unmolested than risk inciting their anger and be destroyed. Since the monsters have not made any direct acts of aggression against the Coalition States, New German Republic, or other human nations, most people try to ignore their presence, and humans, in general, wisely avoid Atlantis.

What many people do not realize is that the Splugorth have their tentacles pulling strings to manipulate the affairs of others around the world. These misanthropes love to instigate trouble and conflict from behind the scenes. Sometimes it is for their own best interest, other times for revenge, but often it is for their own sadistic amusement. Thus, the island continent of Atlantis is the center for Splugorth intrigue and skullduggery on Earth. Moreover, Lord Splynncryth has recently become more bold about raiding the Americas and has even established colonies in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, Canada, one of which is called "Little Atlantis." Little Atlantis is mainly a slave port and base camp for slave operations in Canada and along the Atlantic coast, but thousands of minions are making it their home, including the alien Metztlains, and there is even a tiny dimensional market. Nothing good can come from the Splugorth having a major colony or two off the coast of Canada. Likewise, the Minions of Splugorth have been setting up camps and outposts along the old American east coast and making forays *deep* into the American interior. In fact, for the first time ever, the Minions of Splugorth are found as far west as the *Magic Zone* and *Minnesota*. This is cause for alarm by everyone. The CS is only starting to worry and investigate, but Free Quebec is on the job, and the Shemarrians of Archie Three are locked in combat with the Minions of Splugorth all along the eastern seaboard. (**Note:** See the respective sections on *Nova Scotia & Newfoundland* and the *Shemarrian Uprising* earlier in the World Overview section for more details.)

The heavy presence of the Minions of Splugorth at the toppled **Kingdom of Tolkeen** is not a sign of an invasion, but rather an example of the Splugorth's brazenness and disregard for lesser creatures like humans. Even with the Coalition's full Tolkeen Invasion Force in the field, the Lord of Atlantis is not afraid to dispatch his own forces to acquire that which he desires. In this case, the Splugorth have come for two things. One, the magic secrets of Tolkeen, most notably the creation process for the Iron Juggernauts and other Techno-Wizard devices, as well as rare magic artifacts. Two, slaves. The mass exodus of Tolkeen's survivors and the bands of leaderless monsters and disenfranchised creatures of magic has made Minnesota the perfect hunting ground for slaves. The Tolkeenites had summoned and enlisted the aid of many exotic and alien creatures, many of whom still linger in the area, while the fleeing hordes of humans and D-Bees are easy to track and their large numbers easy to raid and scoop up hundreds at a time. For the Splugorth, the fall of Tolkeen is a great opportunity.

The Demon Sea

The Bermuda Triangle, or *Demon Sea* as it is known by most inhabitants of Rifts Earth, is one of the most dangerous areas on the planet. Even before the Rifts, the Bermuda Triangle was known for its sudden storms and strange occurrences. Many were the stories of aircraft and sea vessels that disappeared over this lonely stretch of ocean.

Since the eruption of the ley lines, the Demon Sea has been in a constant state of dimensional flux. Pockets of the area in and over the water suddenly phase into another dimension. One minute a traveler is on Earth and the next he is on some strange world or in a dimensional limbo. Only the most fortunate are popped back to Earth after a brief excursion into the unknown. The less fortunate must find a way to travel through other dimensions to return home. The least fortunate are lost forever!

Wild storms appear without warning. Torrential rainstorms, hailstorms, acid rain, toxic clouds, gales and hurricanes can happen in an instant — one moment it was sunny and the next moment the area is engulfed by a storm. The storms that appear in the blink of an eye are aberrant weather patterns caused by the opening and closing of dimensional Rifts, dimensional phasing and fluxes. In some instances, the storm may actually have been plucked from another world and transplanted to the Demon Sea. This is especially true of debris showers, acid rain and toxic clouds. Ley line storms are the worst and result from the dimensional anomalies and the vast number of ley lines that crisscross the Demon Sea.

Sea monsters of all kinds swim these waters, attacking even the largest ships. Peryton, pterodactyls, and other flying predators hunt from the skies. The same dimensional warps that bring the storm and cause dimensional phasing also deposit alien creatures into the ocean. This has made passage for air and sea vessels across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans incredibly dangerous. The areas in and around the Bermuda Triangle and its five sister triangles are the most fraught with sea serpents and aquatic nightmares. Flying is much safer, but there are numerous flying monsters that inhabit the area's islands and coasts that will attack aircraft and swoop down on the decks of sea vessels. Small aircraft and individuals flying by means of magic, power armor, or robot vehicles are the most vulnerable to attack from flying predators. The area is also visited by supernatural horrors too. So-called demons, ghouls, entities, and a host of alien things can appear to cause trouble.

The Splugorth's Atlantis

Nowhere on Earth, with the arguable exception of China and a few places in Europe, do supernatural beings and D-Bees hold sway over the land so completely. Europe is infested with supernatural monsters, but humankind, led by the New German Republic, wages a tireless battle against the inhuman invaders. To say that monstrous forces dominate Europe is true, but they do not control it. Atlantis, by comparison, is the domain of supernatural horrors unchallenged by humankind. To continue the comparison, Europe is a giant battlefield, while Atlantis is a paradise with lush, green forests, grass covered, rolling hills and massive cities where all manner of inhuman monstrosities can visit or live in absolute freedom.

The domination of Atlantis by supernatural and alien life forms is largely due to the Splugorth's power and their mastery over magic, the Rifts, and dimensional travel. The human population is predominantly slaves. It is the monster races who walk free. Atlantis is visited by other Splugorth and otherworldly allies who regard it as a trade center and haven where they can hide from enemies, relax and rest, shop, and enjoy themselves. The Splugorth themselves, other than Lord Splynncryth, are seldom seen anywhere on the continent, but they are there. It is a true Kingdom of Monsters. An advanced culture where demons, dragons and monsters rule and humans and other mortal beings are servants, slaves, and cattle. A den of iniquity and vice where supernatural beings, creatures of magic and alien visitors can enjoy the fun and attractions without fear of recrimination or interference from lesser creatures like human beings. No place on Earth can one find a wider selection of alien beings, mortals and immortals, in one place.

One of the Splugorth alien intelligences, known as **Lord Splynncryth**, rules Atlantis and three other worlds. Splynncryth realizes that it would be virtually impossible to conquer and hold the Earth as a part of his territory. There are just too many powerful beings who covet the planet's rich mystic and dimensional resources and too many dimensional fronts to adequately defend. Instead, it was much easier to seize a strategic location like Atlantis and keep it. This has given him access to all of the resources he desires and helps to further establish the concept that Earth is a dimensional *free zone* to be conquered and dominated in *pieces* held by many different races, not just by one. The power and prestige of the Splugorth should go a long way to promote this idea, but Splynncryth realizes that a number of potential world and dimensional conquerors will challenge his control of the continent. He is prepared to defend what is his, but he has no plans for conquering other territories in the foreseeable future. Even his forays into the Americas are little more than experiments to test the waters and stir the pot.

Lord Splynncryth sees Atlantis as a wonderful opportunity to create a dimensional trade center and a vacation retreat that is safe for his kind, their minions, allies, and alien associates. It is a perfect location because of the vast amounts of mystic energy that enables his minions to open Rifts to countless specific places and clients. The energy so abundant on Atlantis also gives him and his forces great power for manufacturing and defense. Add to this Atlantis' isolation from humans and its other natural resources and it is absolutely ideal.

Technically, the Minions of Splugorth are any beings who freely and willingly serve, obey, respect, honor, and often worship, the Splugorth. However, to most people, "The Minions of Splugorth" is construed to mean the elite Splugorth forces: High Lords, Overlords, Powerlords, Conservators, and Slavers.

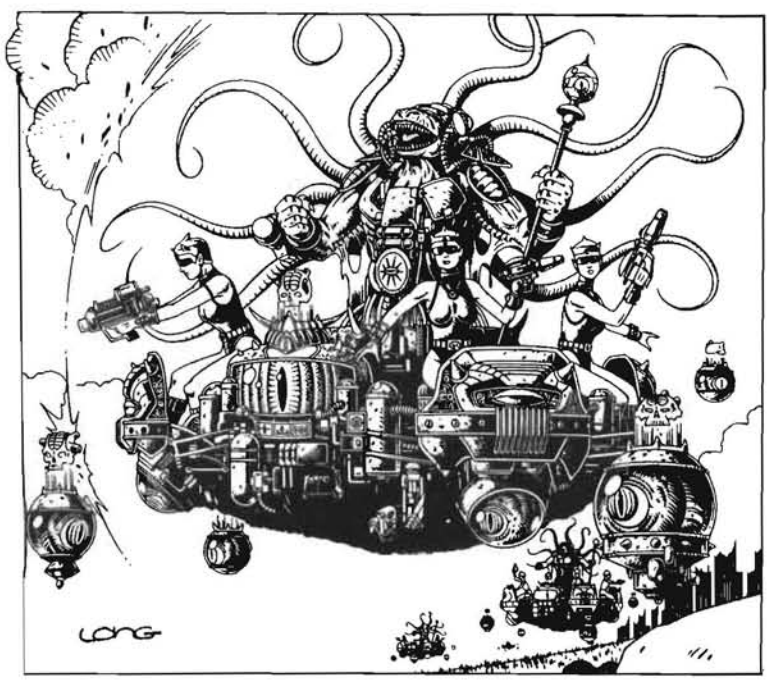
Following a military analogy, the High Lords might be considered the generals, commanders, and Chiefs of Staff. The Overlords serve as the commissioned officers, military police, and an elite infantry force. Those who are not officers are the tough, Marine-like grunts, all fanatically loyal to their masters and above reproach. **The Powerlords** are a special forces branch of the elite military. **The Conservators** are another smaller, frightening, and more specialized special forces branch. **The Slavers** might be considered noncommissioned officers in the air force or navy, because it is they who are most often sent to faraway places on missions of reconnaissance, espionage, capture, and seek and destroy. Their force of blind warriors and other lesser minions are their soldiers – fodder in a war not of their own making. These are the *elite* Minions of Splugorth. The Tattooed Men, Gargoyles, Kittani, Metztlains, and all the rest are lesser minions who must respect and obey those of higher rank. In most cases, these lesser minions are assigned to, or serve under, the elite forces. Individuals from these lowly allies/minions may attain positions of authority within Splugorth society and even among the elite ranks, but as a general rule, these lesser creatures are watched with suspicion by the Splugorth and the Splugorth High Lords; even dragons are not entirely trusted.

Alien allies such as the Sunaj (who are considered the absolute lowest of the Splugorth Minions), Gargoyles, Kittani and Metztlains are "allowed" to live a seemingly autonomous existence. They can pursue their heart's desires, own and operate

their own businesses, travel, and govern themselves. However, the key word is "allowed," and like all minions, their actions must ultimately serve their masters, the Splugorth. Furthermore, they must conduct themselves in accordance to the Splugorth's approval, laws, and edicts or endure harsh punishment. They must obey the elite minions, such as the High Lords who speak for the Splugorth, are expected to observe the rank and superiority of their fellow minions, and be ready to serve their masters without question or hesitation, like good little soldiers. It is a militaristic society with its own level of ranks and honored positions of authority.

The lowliest minions are free to travel throughout Atlantis and other Splugorth holdings without being molested by fellow minions. The minions are effectively the free citizens of Atlantis and Splugorth society. Of course, freedom within the Splugorth society is an illusion. The lesser minions and the massive slave population are constantly (and secretly) observed by the Splugorth and their High Lords. When treachery is suspected, High Lords, and/or Overlords, Powerlords or Slavers are sent to investigate and eliminate the trouble. This investigative police force may be as tiny as one or two powerful High Lords or an army of thousands, even millions of Minions of Splugorth, depending on the circumstances.

In many cases, especially on other worlds, the **slave** population represents 45 to 70 percent of the overall population. Slaves are creatures forced to serve the Splugorth and their minions. Typical slave duties include manual labor, farming, household services, performing as soldiers/protectors, submitting to being a pet or plaything, and other services. Pets include animals, monsters, humans and other intelligent life forms expected to serve as a companion and entertainer. Servants might be considered the elite among slaves because they often enjoy superior privileges and freedom, and their work is generally less physically demanding, but their positions can be just as demeaning. All slaves, servants and pets are greatly inferior to the lowest minion. In fact, individual minions, including the Sunaj, may own their own slaves and are frequently placed in command of slave forces and entire populations. Thus, Atlantis and its slave markets are filled with dozens of diverse beings from humans to Spherians. (See **Rifts® World Books 2 & 21: Atlantis One and Two, the Splynn Dimensional Market™**, for stats for numerous slave races and more detailed information on Atlantis and its people.)



Geographic Overview

Geographically speaking, Atlantis is no different from the rest of the world in that much of the continent is wilderness. The sprawling megalopolis is the exception, not the rule, small rural villages, towns and small cities are more common. However, there are about a half dozen huge cities that are as big as or bigger than the famous Chi-Town in regards to population and land area. There are also areas, such as the Gurgoyle Kingdom in the southern mountains, that are dominated by a particular race of beings, although there may not be any places that humans would consider to be a city. Ironically, even with its thousands of square miles of unpopulated forests and jungle, Atlantis is one of the most densly populated continents on Earth. Unfortunately, it is a population of monsters.

The continent breaks up into several smaller regions. They include the *Refuge*, the *Preserves*, the *Terror Coast*, the *Great Stone Mountains*, and the *Valley of Wonder*.

The Refuge

This is the domain of Lord Splynncryth, ruler of Atlantis. It is a sacred forest, off limits to most minions and visitors. Three large pyramids, all identical in shape and size, are the only buildings in the entire forest. Lord Splynncryth's abode is the pyramid resting on a nexus, the two others rest on connecting ley lines. Each is exactly 1200 feet (365 m) away from the other and form a triangular pattern. The ruler of Atlantis and other Splugorth are likely to be found at or near the pyramids (within a 500 mile/800 km area around them). However, Splynncryth and the others do wander the entire range of the Refuge. Yet they seldom go into the Preserve, which is viewed as a recreation area for their minions and visitors.

The Preserves

The vast expanse of forest that stretches west of the Great Stone mountains and covers the entire southwest quarter of the continent is a hunting range known simply as "The Preserves." It has roughly the same land area as Mexico (about 15% smaller). The southern portion is tropical, with dense jungle and forest, while the more northerly portion is subtropical forest. Farther to the north are the dense mixed forests of coniferous and deciduous trees, bushes, wild flowers and tall grass of the Refuge, which resembles the American Midwest and western Europe.

There are no cities or kingdoms of any kind. The best one can hope to find are tiny, nomadic villages and ragtag camps. The inhabitants of these communities are often humans or humanoid D-Bees operating in small groups, tribes or as lone individuals. Most are not friendly and fear strangers, even humans, and may flee or attack on sight. The reason for this paranoid behavior is that the entire area is a giant hunting preserve and the animals most commonly hunted are humans and intelligent D-Bees. The residents of these tiny communities are either life forms specifically released into the Preserves with the intention of being game stock or desperadoes on the run, like escaped

slaves, renegade minions, criminals, and enemies of the Splugorth.

The Terror Coast

The western beaches of the Preserves are known as the Terror Coast. Here the northernmost edge of the mysterious Demon Sea/Bermuda Triangle touches the coastline and the neighboring islands. Like all of the area within the Demon Sea, the coast and its waters are filled with sea monsters and subject to the same sudden storms and dimensional occurrences as within the Demon Sea. This adds to the number of strange, supernatural and dimensional horrors that plague the land, islands, and waters around the coast. Of course from the Splugorth's point of view, this is wonderful, because the dimensional Rifts from the sea constantly add new monsters to the hunting stock of the Preserves and keep the curious away. Death Weaver Spider demons are particularly numerous in the jungles along the Terror Coast.

The Great Stone Mountains

This long chain of mountains completely divides the continent of Atlantis and is the home of Perytons, Dragondactyls, Gryphons, Pterosaurs/Leather Wings, Melech, Manticore, birds and other assorted wildlife, as well as a variety of intelligent life forms. The larger flying predators tend to hunt along the seacoasts and in the forests to the west, before returning to their lairs in the mountains. They also plague the communities in The Valley of Wonder, but much less frequently, preferring wilderness to city streets.

The most notable inhabitants of the Great Stone Mountains are Gargoyles. The Splugorth are particularly fond of Gargoyles and have been their allies for centuries. However, it has only been recently (1,000 years ago) that the Splugorth have allowed specific Gargoyle tribes to become "official" members of their minions. Nearly two and a half million have sworn eternal allegiance and servitude to Splynncryth. In return, he offers them sanctuary and guidance.

The Gargoyle Kingdom is fairly self-sufficient and Splynncryth allows them to govern themselves, although they remain under his (and his minions') supervision and ultimate rule. As with most cities in Atlantis, they are secretly monitored by living statues and elite minion advisors, but there has never been a problem with these Gargoyles and they would die for Splynncryth.

The Valley of Wonder

East of the Great Stone Mountains is the hub of Atlantis civilization known as the Valley of Wonder, which is more commonly known simply as "The Valley." There are approximately 20 small cities, 100 small towns and villages, and seven large cities. Each of the seven large cities are major forces in Atlantis and have a population of no less than three million. Below are descriptions of the five most noteworthy of the great cities: *Azlum*, *Dragcona*, *Ki-Talan*, *Metztla-Xym*, and *Splynn*.

Azlum the Asylum. The city of Azlum has become known by the nickname "The Asylum" by all inhabitants of Atlantis. It is not a large city; in fact, it is one of the smallest, but must be mentioned.

Azlum is a small, industrial city with none of the usual attractions of a Splugorth city. It offers no markets, slaves, or even an arena. Its main feature is a stone pyramid which serves as a dimensional research center (D-center), and stands in the heart of a medical complex for the mentally disturbed, explaining Azlum's unflattering nickname.

Seventy-five years ago, the D-center punched a hole into a new dimension that defies explanation. To complicate matters, the 10 by 10 foot opening cannot be closed. Fortunately, nothing has ever emerged from it nor has the hole expanded.

Dragcona, The City of Dragons. Dragcona is a large, dirty city populated with a vast range of life forms, including Gargoyles, so-called demons, other supernatural beings, D-Bees, humans, Splugorth Minions and dragons. With deference to the Splugorth and their elite minions, dragons are the city's elite and are given the highest respect. Even visiting hatchlings are treated with great respect and tolerance. The dragon residents are absolutely the most revered members of the city and treated like demigods who can say or do almost anything without repercussions, including the murder of non-dragons.

Unlike the spotless streets of Splynn, the streets and alleys of Dragcona are filthy and littered with paper, bones, and debris. Giant statues, fountains, monuments and shrines of dragons, Splugorth, and the occasional other supernatural monster are everywhere. There are areas of opulence for the wealthy contrasted by the terrible slums of the poor. Places for decadent pleasures and evil delights can be found throughout the city. The many demons and monsters that reside in the city have a taste for blood and have cruel and inhuman desires. These maleficent beings frequent houses of domination, places of torture (they do the torturing), private arenas for blood sport (often to the death), public arenas, saloons, drug dens and other dens of iniquity. Only the market area near the palace is comparatively clean and safe.

The shops sell just about everything that other cities offer, but with a focus on the deadly, cruel, manipulative, debilitating and illegal. Items include torture devices, weapons (magical, S.D.C., and high-tech), drugs, poisons, hallucinogens, Bio-Wizard parasites, Techno-Wizard items, and dark magic.

Factories of all kind belch out black clouds and filth in the poorest areas of town inhabited by slaves and human laborers. Dragcona industry produces weapons, vehicles and machine parts, and processes food. There are numerous machine shops, garages, repair shops, warehouses, storage yards and treatment facilities. The Kittani supervise most industrial operations, but dragons keep an eye on things overall. A large iron, silver and copper mine is located six miles outside of town and other mining operations also encircle the western side of the city.

Ki-Talan. The capital city of the Kittani is Ki-Talan. It is a huge, modern city that resembles the fortified cities of the Coalition States. In fact, humans will feel completely at home in this and the neighboring dozen Kittani cities. Elevators, lifts, magnetic rail systems, and hover vehicles carry commuters to their desired destinations. All the modern amenities such as computers, laser discs, television, spas, gyms, etc., are there. Even the occasional body-chop-shop can be found, offering its artificial augmentation (they are few only because the Kittani avoid augmentation that alters their body). Robots walk the streets, guard stores, and service living customers. Kittani in a variety of power armor or other apparatus are everywhere. State of the art medical facilities are available to anybody who can afford it, including bio-system cybernetics. It is a sharp contrast to the

quiet, mystical elegance of Splynn and the dark, gritty, demonic ambiance of places like Dragcona.

Metztla-Xym. The Metztla-Xym are strange beings that rely on their natural magic and psionic powers, so they have little need for technology and cities as humans think of them. The Metztla-Xym, who are instinctively hive-like, build artificial mountains out of a secreted resin. Inside the mountain, where the Metztlains live, are many levels and hundreds of passageways like the inside of a termite or ant hill. Deep within the protective walls and labyrinth of tunnels is the queen, and nearby is the nursery where the eggs hatch.

The portion that most humans would recognize as a city is actually the dwellings of the Metztlans' slaves. These may resemble human buildings because humans and humanoids are the most common slave stock. Slave dwellings are typically squalid, smell of raw sewage, and are infested with insects, rodents and other scavengers. The Kittani and stone masters have stepped in to build some better, healthier portions of the city, but these too tend to be dirty. The feeling of despair among the slave populace is so oppressive that psychic sensitives have been known to become morose themselves, and some even collapse from the empathic backlash, unless they Mind Block themselves.

Xym is the capital city of the Metztlains. Nearby are the slightly smaller cities of *Metz-kal*, *Xlam*, and *Krunla*.

Splynn, Capital of Atlantis. Splynn is the capital city of Atlantis. It is an extremely impressive and unique city. The architecture is reminiscent of the ancient Greeks and Romans of Earth, with many pillars and open-air markets and buildings. The majority of the buildings are towering edifices made of marble and elegantly carved stone. The colors are warm tones of white, tan, beige, silver and gold, accented with splashes of red, black and other colors. Ornate designs and patterns are carved into the walls. Entrances, stairs, pillars and ledges are decorated with carvings and statues, both beautiful and grotesque. Statues and fountains are everywhere and add to the feeling of elegance (many are rune or other magic and serve as a means of observation, spying and defense).

A massive, golden brown pyramid towers 4000 feet (1219 m) into the sky (the largest pyramid on the continent) and can be seen from every place in the city. At sunrise and sunset the pyramid seems to glow with iridescent shades of yellow, orange and red. It is also one of the few places where Lord Splynncryth makes personal appearances to be with his people, hand down laws and judgments, make decrees, and to entertain non-Splugorth guests. As one might expect, the pyramid rests on a powerful ley line nexus.

One of the most striking things about the city is that it is spotlessly clean. There are no signs of rubbish or decay. No slums and no dirty alleys or garbage dumps. The air is clean and pure, free from the pollution of foundries and manufacturing plants. Lord Splynncryth likes clean air and clean, attractive surroundings, thus there is no manufacturing in or near the city. Manufacturing plants with their accompanying noise and pollution are the bane of other communities.

However, Splynn is an epicenter for communication, dimensional travel, learning, and the mystic arts. Tattoo Magic, Stone Magic, Pyramid technology, Bio-Wizardry, Rune Magic, and the research and development of magic is the industry of Splynn. It is at Splynn that 70% of the Bio-Wizard devices, Bio-'Borgs, symbiotic augmentation, rune statues, weapons and devices, mystic armor, potions, talismans, and other tangible magic items found in Atlantis are created! Technology and science as humans know it, cannot be found, except in the form of personal property like pocket computers, energy weapons, and vehicles.

The city welcomes visitors from all over the Megaverse, although these visitors are rarely human. Humans and most humanoids are viewed with disdain and amusement. Even guests receive little more respect than the lowly Sunaj assassins. All manners of men and beasts walk the streets – dragons, Gargoyles, demons, energy beings, giants, and aliens of every ilk – with the Minions of Splugorth keeping the peace. Many are creatures who would never socialize with each other or may even be mortal enemies anywhere else but Atlantis.

This city caters to the trans-dimensional tourist trade. There are boarding houses, hotels, dance halls, casinos, private gambling halls (often with small, private arenas), houses of ill repute, fortunetellers, healers, Bio-Wizard enhancement salons, body-chop-shops, car dealers, slavers, and slick shops and expansive stores of all kinds, everywhere. Splynn is a shopper's paradise, where it is said, *"One can find anything the heart desires, if one is willing to pay the price."* That price can be paid in credits, gold, gems, an exchange of goods, services or information, betrayal, murder or the selling of one's soul! This is especially true of the infamous **Splynn Dimensional Market**, a major Megaversal crossroads where quite literally anything and everything has its price.

Africa

Like the rest of the planet, the Great Cataclysm obliterated much of the African continent and plunged it into a dark age. Post Cataclysm scholars estimate that less than 15% of the total population survived. The densest population centers were the hardest hit. Those who survived the initial onslaught of the Great Cataclysm died in its aftermath. The people of Madagascar and along the coast were completely obliterated.

Many of Africa's survivors fled to the interior and returned to the "old ways," traditions and a view of the spiritual world that helped the African people adapt to a world of magic and supernatural creatures better than most people elsewhere. Many quickly rediscovered magic and used "good medicine" to keep evil spirits and dark magic out of their lives. High-tech people in the outside world may see these communities as simple and primitive, especially to arrogant City Rats and Technocrats, however, everything is relative, and these tribal communities work well in the African environment. Most tribes are tight-knit communities that stand together and maintain strong families, tight social bonds, and a sense of history and community. They work together and have high morals. Their laws, philosophies, ceremonies and magic are drawn from common sense and a unique view of the world. A view that showed them *secrets of magic* long before any other humans recognized the existence of the supernatural, ley lines and magic energy. The native Africans are people who feel linked to nature and all the forces around them. Steeped in traditions of spiritualism, nature, and magic, their wise and practical view of the mystical world has helped them to survive and adapt when other cultures vanished.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are supernatural beings who spread chaos and destruction wherever they tread. Demonic beings consumed by anger and hate, they derive a perverse feeling of enjoyment and accomplishment from the sorrow, destruction and death they cause. Each of the horsemen has his own particular focus for destruction. **War** uses feelings of blinding rage, anger, hatred, revenge, prejudice and greed as part of his arsenal; all of which are used to incite acts of aggres-

sion, war, murder, and wholesale destruction. **Famine** uses indifference, ignorance and desperation born from hunger and the desire to survive, as well as hate and prejudice, to sow its seeds of despair, sorrow, death and destruction. **Pestilence** spreads sickness/disease often assisted by the fears, prejudice, and hatred of others. **Death** is the brains and nurturer of the other three. In many respects, he symbolizes the culmination of the others' activities and serves as the General who inspires, directs and encourages the carnage created by his tireless and loyal troops.

At least two years before the war at Tolkeen (i.e., before Autumn, 105 P.A.), the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse appeared in the four corners of Africa. Unless they are stopped, they will bring about a new age of terror, death and chaos. It is important to understand that the Apocalypse demons are not invaders trying to conquer new lands or to enslave people, but that they crave the total destruction of all life forms, including animals, insects and plants! See **World Book 4: Rifts® Africa** to participate in the epic battle to foil them and to read more about Africa.

The appearance of the Apocalypse Demons inflicted severe damage to some parts of Africa and shook up the status quo. Some human and D-Bee tribes had to flee their own homelands to escape the carnage and pestilence. If the demons or disaster followed them, the locals blamed their troubles on the refugees, not realizing or willing to accept that disaster from the Four Horsemen would have come regardless, for that is the way and nature of the demons. However, blame and hard feelings continue, causing increased rivalry and even war. Meanwhile, other players have entered the picture. There is a Gorilla God and perhaps other ancient gods who have claimed the mountains of Zaire for themselves and smite all who offend them. There is the resurgence of the Zulu nation, the Kingdom of Kyshatilis, Xhosanadis, and trouble with the Kingdom of Death and other realms and people, many of whom have existed for generations but have been ignored by the rest of the world. (All presented in the upcoming **Rifts® Africa Two** world book.)

Northern Africa

The Sahara Desert. The Sahara is a sprawling desert with shifting sand dunes that sometimes seem as tall as mountains. Oasis-like havens are few. Sandstorms can cover a hundred square miles or more, changing the shape of dunes, covering tracks, vehicles and wreckage, and sometimes even covering an oasis, camp or village! The less treacherous parts of the Sahara are less sandy, with dry, parched earth and stones, but they are the home of a new demonic form of wildlife known as the *Worms of Taut*. Fire Worms, Nippers, Tomb Worms, and Blow Worms are the most common, but the Serpent Beasts and Tri-Fang are also out there (sometimes worshiped by primitive D-Bees). Fire Worms and Nippers are the most dangerous because they live and hunt in packs. The desert is also visited by sphinx, dragons and other supernatural and magic creatures who enjoy the isolation or are looking for the sport of hunting demon worms.

Algeria is roughly three times the size of Texas and has a similar desert/prairie type of environment. Two percent of the country is woodland and 20% is savanna, the rest is desert, rocky hills and low mountains/plateaus. Many people call this area the "Haunted Desert" and avoid it because of the many ghostly entities that come from Mount Tassili n' Ajjer.

To the north are the hills and low mountains of Morocco. Much of the region is reclaimed by the ocean. High on the rocky Tassili n' Ajjer plateau, located in the mountainous hills of the Ahaggar, is the site of prehistoric cave paintings. The name Tassili n' Ajjer means the "Plateau of the Rivers." One might wonder why a desert location might refer to "rivers." The answer is that seven thousand years ago, the area was a lush forest and scrubland much like eastern Africa is today. Rhinos, elephants, and the animals we all associate with Africa roamed the land and were hunted by natives. The many caves and wall paintings on the plateau clearly record the life and hunting habits of these ancient people. Changing weather patterns turned northern Africa into a desert.

On Rifts Earth, the Tassili n' Ajjer is also known as the "Haunted Plateau" and is a place to be avoided. It is the site of a ley line nexus and a particularly active dimensional doorway to the domain of evil entities and the Jinn. There are always 2D4x10 Poltergeists, 4D6 Haunting Entities, and 2D6 Tectonic Entities at the nexus location at any given time. Among the more famous entity-ghosts are the Hounds of Tassili n' Ajjer, a pack of eight wild dogs who chase and attack visitors during the afternoon (nobody knows the exact story behind this), N'beh, an evil witch looking for her murderers, Apadda, the Mad Warrior Chief who challenges other warriors to combat, the Wailing Night Woman (some say she is lost or searching for her lost child) whose wails are very disconcerting and make sleeping difficult, and a host of others. These particular entities are typically encountered within a 20 mile (32 km) radius of the nexus.

In addition to the entities, hundreds of others arrive through the random Rifts and fly off into the world, sometimes traveling thousands of miles in any direction. Possessing Entities and the Jinn are far less common, but they also come through these Rifts. Most fly far from the dimensional gateway, but unfortunate visitors may run into one or two anywhere within a 200 mile (320 km) radius of the plateau. In fact, it is believed that the Gargoyle Empire of Germany has enlisted the aid of a few powerful Jinn to help them conquer the humans of the NGR.

Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Highlands are mostly covered in tropical forests, meadows and grasslands. The forest is thickest along the snaking river, Omo. Its eastern border runs along the Red Sea. It is along the coastline that one finds villages and the occasional town of nonhumans. The country is harsh but reasonably nice for human or D-Bee habitation, yet it is a virtual wilderness about twice the size of Texas and has a pitiful total population of less than three million. The reason? Ethiopia is the domain of dragons, sphinxes, manticores, chimeras, werepanthers, gryphons, and strange other-dimensional beings, especially in the mountains. So far, neither man nor monster has attempted to establish any kingdom in this part of the country. Most inhabitants are monsters who travel alone or gather in small groups. For most visitors from other worlds, Ethiopia is a starting off point, thanks to the dimensional Rift, not a destination point. Thus, those who come to Earth via the Ethiopian Rift generally leave the region shortly after their arrival. Many seem to find the *Phoenix Empire* or the Ivory Coast and *Atlantis*. Small bands of hunters from other parts of Africa may be found in Ethiopia as well as curious adventurers, explorers, and out-

casts. Witches, Necromancers and Mind Bleeders sometime choose to live in the desolate country to hide from their enemies or to make contact with foul creatures with whom they might make a pact or an unholy alliance. One of the few peaceful D-Bees is the giant *Adarok Flying Mountains*. Two small tribes have managed to avoid detection by the Splugorth Slavers and have flourished in the Ethiopian mountains. Both started with fewer than forty members, but today one has more than 110 members (entirely members of their own race) and the other tribe has 130 plus an additional 90 or so other intelligent creatures living with them.

The Phoenix Empire

For the last 142 years, the ruler of the Phoenix Empire (Egypt) has been *Pharaoh Rama-Set*, a powerful Necromancer obsessed with death. It was the Pharaoh who has renamed Egypt the "Phoenix Empire" and it was he who expanded its territories, through conquest and magic, to include the ancient nations of *Libya, Chad* and the *Sudan*. The Phoenix Empire also has growing influence and control over several small kingdoms and groups in *Saudi Arabia* and surrounding areas. The Empire is a major source of power and inspiration for monsters and all creatures of magic and evil. Under Pharaoh Rama-Set's guidance, it has become an ever expanding empire of nonhumans and a Mecca for monster races.

The free population is a collection of monstrous D-Bees, demons, creatures of magic, and supernatural beings. Humans and D-Bees serve as massive armies of slaves, forced to do the hard labor of building and maintaining the cities, raising cattle and livestock, working the farms and slaughterhouses, and too many chores and services to list them all here. Slaves are gathered from the African continent and from throughout the Mediterranean region, as well as purchased from Splugorth Slavers on Atlantis and the Gargoyle Empire. Slaves of the Phoenix Empire are kept uneducated and are constantly beaten into submission. The majority (65%) have been born into slavery and know no other way of life. Those who dare to speak out or raise a hand against their monstrous masters are lucky if they are slain on the spot, otherwise they are dragged away to be tortured, eaten alive, made to fight in the gladiatorial arena, or become the subjects of terrible experiments.

The Phoenix Empire actively trades with nonhumans, especially those who are locked in war against humans or who deal in slavery and piracy. It is said that, "if humans (and their allies) are your enemy, than you are a friend of the Phoenix Empire." The Phoenix Empire has excellent trade relationships with the monster kingdoms in Arabia, the Middle East, the Blood Druids of France (even though they are predominately humanoids), and Atlantis. In recent years, the Gargoyle Empire has become a major client, requiring better magical and technological weapons and equipment in order to win their battle against the New German Republic.

Rama-Set and the Gargoyle Empire: Pharaoh Rama-Set has decided the Gargoyle Empire has a real *chance*, if properly equipped, to defeat the human technocrats of the New German Republic (NGR). He likes this idea, and has concocted a treacherous little scheme of his own. The Pharaoh hopes to supply enough gadgets and gear to help the Gargoyle Empire defeat the NGR and conquer its people. In fact, he has already put a bid to the Gargoyle Empire for hundreds of thousands of slaves, some of which he will use in the Phoenix Empire, some he will trade to his Splugorth pals, and the rest he will need for his "western colony." You see, being a Chiang-Ku Dragon, Rama-Set has no respect for the *Gargoyle Empire,* nor Gargoyles and Brodkil in general. As far as he's concerned, they are both craven *sub-demons* who have forgotten their place and suffer from delusions of grandeur. Not that he lets on to them. No, the Pharaoh *pretends* to support their pipe dream to build a kingdom on Rifts Earth where Gargoyles can live free without having to answer to a higher power. It is a charade well acted, for the Gargoyles have come to trust Pharaoh Rama-Set, and think of him as their greatest ally. In truth, Rama-Set finds the entire idea ludicrous and their efforts to change their lot in life, pathetic. As far as he is concerned, Gargoyles and Brodkil are lesser beings born to serve greater powers such as himself. Thus, the Pharaoh plans to help the lowly sub-demons defeat the NGR and then send in his greater demonic forces to subjugate the foolish Gargoyles and make the New German Republic *his* own – his first colony outside of Africa. This is a rather tricky gambit, because the Pharaoh cannot tip his hand to the Gargoyles and he must time his coup just perfectly. Nor can he let outsiders (not even the Splugorth) onto his scheme for fear some third party might try to intercede and prevent all from unfolding as he has decreed. Currently, Rama-Set is quite pleased with himself and hopes to see the pendulum swing in the Gargoyles' (and ultimately, his) favor.

Allies of Atlantis. The Phoenix Empire has strong *trade* ties to the Splugorth's Atlantis and both regularly exchange goods, slaves, and services. It is not surprising to find the Minions of Splugorth roaming the cities and countryside of Egypt, or vice versa. The most typical visitors from Atlantis are Kittani, High Lords and Overlords as merchants, dignitaries and wealthy visitors. However, half of the Splugorth Minions are really sent to the Phoenix Empire as spies. Personally, Lord Splynncryth finds Pharaoh Rama-Set to be a most entertaining fellow, but the alien intelligence also recognizes that the Pharaoh is insane and dangerous. The people of the Phoenix Empire are encouraged to obsess about death and destruction as a good thing, and half of the Empire's citizens are members of death and assassin cults, worship death and had actually welcomed the coming of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, believing they would be among

the Horsemen's chosen elite in a new age of Armageddon. They were so disappointed when the Horsemen were defeated that isolated incidents of rioting occurred throughout the Empire and two thousand people committed suicide.

Lord Splynncryth cannot ignore the fact that Rama-Set and his fanatical minions have built an impressive power structure that does have its good points. For one, it keeps all the madmen in one, easy to observe, location. Second, fanatics, bloodthirsty assassins, homicidal maniacs and power hungry schemers make wonderful partners, agents, and dupes. Third, the Pharaoh and his legion are only too happy to front for Lord Splynncryth in his campaign to help and supply the forces against the New German Republic and Triax. Pharaoh Rama-Set may be dangerous, but for the time being he remains a reliable ally, or so the Lord of Atlantis believes. Pharaoh Rama-Set has successfully pulled the wool over the eyes of Lord Splynncryth, who has no idea that the dragon intends to conquer the Gargoyles as soon as they have vanquished the NGR and turn Germany into Rama-Set's own little satellite empire. It won't surprise Splynncryth, but he doesn't know.

Omnipresence of Death. Legends in the Mediterranean countries foretold that the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse would someday rise from the inner bowls of Africa and join dark forces within the Phoenix Empire. Many death cults in the Empire are based on this legend and that's why there were riots and suicides when it did not come to pass. Depression enveloped the Phoenix Empire for more than a year, causing all sorts of socioeconomic hardship for the kingdom of death before life slowly returned to normal. Necromancy and witchcraft are practiced everywhere in the Empire. Death cults abound. Caravans and armies of skeletons and animated corpses are a common sight in the streets of the cities, and even more so in the arid wastelands. Many Necromancers are escorted by an entourage of skeletons, mummies or zombies wherever they go, and merchants often hire a Necromancer to provide a mummy or zombie as a tireless servant or guardian. The more discreet individuals conceal their dead slaves in back rooms, basements or covered wagons, or dress them in bulky robes.

The Phoenix Empire is a virtual collection of nightmarish creatures. Death Weaver Spider demons, evil sphinxes, dragons, ghouls of every variety, demons, Gargoyles, monstrous slaves from Atlantis, and Minions of Splugorth are found here in large numbers. The Worms of Taut which flourish in the deserts are brought into the city where private residences, merchants, temples and taverns keep the smaller worms as guard animals and pets.

The African Interior

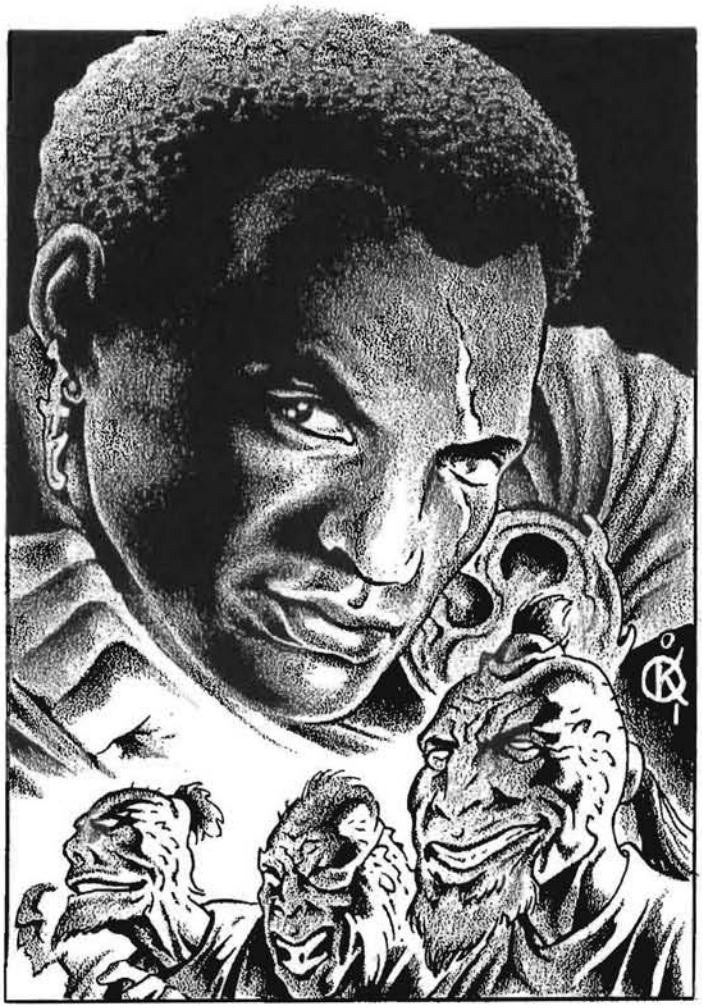
The Ivory Coast. Half of the original Ivory Coast, along with much of the west coast of Africa, has been submerged by the rising ocean caused by the reappearance of Atlantis. What's left of it is a bustling slave and pirate port controlled by the Splugorth of Atlantis. This means one can find at least one division of Kittani warriors, Overlords, and Blind Warrior Women, as well as a handful of Slavers, Powerlords, High Lords and Conservators in the area at any given time. The Splugorth Minions have built the **city of Gorth** near the old site of Bouake (which is now near the coast). Like the Phoenix Empire, the city is almost entirely nonhuman.

Gorth is Atlantis' base for operations in Africa and a stepping stone to the Mediterranean and Europe. The main activity of the city is as a thriving merchant trade and slave market. Ninety percent of their trade is with the Phoenix Empire and other communities of monsters. Gorth also puts the Minions of Splugorth near Nigeria where there are many humanoids, as well as the Congo and Central Africa to raid for exotic animals and people to be captured, sold and exported in the trans-dimensional slave market. The troops at the city also have an opportunity to keep an eye on lower Africa and spy on the Phoenix Empire and other Mediterranean kingdoms when they go to visit that city or have visitors visit the Ivory Coast. In addition, Gorth has a couple of small factories for manufacturing robots, robot parts and cybernetics, and offers two luxury hotels, shops for vehicle repair, Bio-Wizard items, rune weapons, body armor, slaves, and many other items that make up about a quarter of the things one can find in Atlantis. There are also two Splugorth operated diamond mines, an iron mine and an oil refinery. A stone pyramid has been built at a ley line nexus by Splugorth Stone Masters. The pyramid of Gorth is the most direct link from Atlantis to the Ivory Coast, via magic teleportation.

The country once known as **Nigeria** is roughly twice the size of California. Its northern region is mostly wet savanna and rolling hills. The southern half is mostly forest. Just beyond Nigeria's southeast border is Cameroon, which is now part of the Congo. Approximately 14 million humans and 25 million D-Bees live in this area. Most are simple nomads, hunters, farmers, and cattle or goat herders. The level of technology is low. Splugorth slavers are a constant plague.

The Congo. On Rifts Earth, the lands once recognized as the Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, The Central African Republic, and the northern half of Zaire are all considered the Congo. The eruption of the ley lines during the Great Cataclysm destroyed most of the "civilized" world, including many of the tribes and nations of Africa. Without mankind to chop down its forests or to turn wilderness into farms and pastures, the continent has returned to its more primordial state of wilderness. Nowhere is this more evident than in the famous jungles and tropical forests of the Congo.

The jungle of the Congo is bigger than ever and covers a huge area of land that nearly divides the continent. Within the Congo is dense tropical forests, jungle, many rivers, swamps, and dangers. The flora is breathtaking with its lush green and flowering tropical plants. The wildlife is rich and plentiful. Monkeys, birds and insects scurry from the branches of every tree; wild boar, buffalo, and elephant roam the bush. Predatory animals, monsters and supernatural beings are also plentiful. The Congo is a favorite habitat for Death Weaver Spider demons and demonic werepanthers and werewolves who prey on the humanoid inhabitants, and some have forced entire tribes to worship them. All manner of other beasts, monsters, demons, supernatural beings and creatures of magic also prowl these forests, a few small communities of Faerie Folk and Crocodilians counted among them. The forests of the Congo, particularly the western half, are also home to the pygmy, Tree People, the Agogwe and, supposedly, the Millennium Tree known as the *Ancient Father*. Most people, and especially outsiders, stay away from the Congo.



To the west of the Congo is what was once known as Uganda and Kenya. These countries have lighter forests and many grass and scrub plains.

In **Uganda**, the southwestern highlands and coastal areas around *Lake Victoria* are the most populated. The capital city of Kampala still thrives. It is a low technology city of about a million people; farmers, fishermen, craftsmen and cattlemen. Natural resources include salt, copper, cobalt, and limestone. Crops include coffee, tea, sugar cane, some rice, cotton, nuts and citrus fruits. Nearby are several other towns and cities with populations of 10 to 60 thousand. The entire population of Uganda is approximately 11 million, 65% are of native African descent.

Kenya and Tanzania. Kenya and Tanzania are lands of tropical forests and scrubland that sweep into the surrounding and similar wilderness of Uganda directly to the north, Zaire to the west and Zambia and Mozambique to the south. Their largest modern cities were once found along the Indian Ocean, but all were obliterated in the Great Cataclysm.

The **Tanzania** of Rifts Earth is a vast wilderness with Lake Victoria along its western border. It is around the lake that one finds many villages of farmers and fishermen. A few small tribes of Tree People and Agogwe are found in the densest parts of the forest. The largest villages and the town of *Mahense* are located toward the coast but most are tiny villages. No large towns or cities are possible, because anything too large and obvious brings raiders from North Africa, Atlantean Slavers and pillaging monsters. The domination of North Africa by supernatural monsters, plus Atlantis to the west, effectively isolates lower Africa from the rest of the world.

The Great Rift Valley. The most imposing feature of East Africa is the Great Rift Valley. It has nothing to do with dimensional Rifts, but rather is a geological formation. The Valley mountains and the East African plateau are the result of an incredible fault line in the Earth's crust that runs along a line where it is weak and the layering of the Earth's plates are displaced as one side slips toward a lower level. This movement created the Great Rift Valley, a massive fissure or trench between the plates that runs 4,000 miles (6400 km) from Lebanon to the northern border of Mozambique, and is 200 miles (320 km) at its widest point in Ethiopia and 50 miles (80 km) wide at Kenya's Lake Turkana.

Volcanic activity along the Great Rift fissure created many of the mountains and rocky hills of East Africa and Ethiopia over a period of millions of years. Many were reborn during the Great Cataclysm but most are now again dormant.

The Serengeti & Masai Mara. The massive plains of the Serengeti run across northern Tanzania and southern Kenya (the Masai Mara) in nearly a straight line for a hundred miles (160 km) and are spread over a 5,000 square mile (13,000 sq. km) area. Its expansive plains have always been ruled by animals. The number of animals, especially grazing animals, is mind numbing. A single herd of wildebeest or cape buffalo may number close to a million. In the distance are herds of thousands of gazelles, antelopes, zebras, elands and others. The Serengeti and Masai Mara is also the home of the lion, cheetah, leopard, jackal, hyena, and baboon. The sky and lakes are filled with flocks of flamingos and other birds that number into the thousands.

Though tribes hunt in this region, there are few villages, and no industry or tech communities.

Southern Congo, Zambia, Angola, Burundi and **Rwanda** are mostly uninhabited forests and savanna. The entire population of this large area is less than 16 million people (75% human). Much of Angola and Zambia are arid plateaus that when put together are over three times the size of Texas! Only the northern portions are wooded. However, Angola is rich in mineral resources, including diamonds, copper, manganese, sulfur, phosphates, and petroleum. Zambia (once known as Northern Rhodesia) has similar mineral riches in the way of copper (lots of copper), manganese, cobalt, zinc, and lead, as well as rubber trees.

The southern half of the region is covered in forest that's not quite as dense as the Congo. Its most notable mineral resources are copper, diamonds, crude oil and cobalt. Pygmies were probably the earliest inhabitants of the Congo and are the dominant human inhabitants today. Later, the Bantu and Nilotic also settled in the region (including Zambia). **The Virunga Mountains** along eastern Zaire are extinct volcanoes and have been the home of the mountain gorillas whose population has grown substantially since the Coming of the Rifts 300 years ago. The largest tribe of *Adorak Flying Mountains* (see **Rifts® World Book Two: Atlantis** for stats on these gentle giants and other D-Bees and alien creatures) live in the northeast mountains of Zaire/Congo. It is said they have a thriving colony of more than one thousand and live in peace with the gorillas and serve the mountain gods.

Note: The mountains have been the subject of rumors and some concern among the locals. According to talk, an ancient

Gorilla God has appeared to make the mountains his "Earthly abode" and has placed them under his personal protection. It is said that those who come to hunt the gorilla are struck down by this angry god and suffer greatly before they are put to death. This Gorilla God also accepts and protects the Adorak, most of whom are said to now worship and serve him. To what extent these tales may be true is anyone's guess, but the mountains themselves are said to whisper a warning to all who enter, and those who hunt the gorilla are either never seen again or return with terrifying stories of more than one jungle god, demon apes, and a forest of doom.

Namibia & Botswana are the home of the Kalahari desert. About 20% of both countries are woodlands. The rest is high, semiarid to desert plateau, with dry savannas and desert. Both are virtually uninhabited. Natural resources include copper, salt, uranium and diamonds.

Pyramid of Mystery. In **Namibia**, at the scrub wasteland near the Kalahari Desert, is a small, crude pyramid. It is said to be haunted and the abode of evil spirits. Humanoid skeletons lay strewn around the structure and come to life to attack any who try to gain entry. Inside are a score of mummies and zombies to guard its dark corridors and windowless chambers. In the center of the pyramid is a large chamber with a huge throne. To the left and right of the throne are three giant rune statues of jackal-headed humanoids; they attack any who sit on the throne or who desecrate the chamber. Who built this pyramid and why remains a mystery. It is known that the structure is post-Cataclysm and estimated to be 200 years old. It does not rest on a ley line or nexus, although there is a ley line nearby.

The Kalahari Desert. The Kalahari Desert is one of the largest in the world. It covers a 225,000 square mile (582,800 sq. km) area and spans both Namibia and Botswana. It is a massive expanse of shifting sands, parched earth and rocky plains with jutting lava/rock formations that resemble a moonscape. Around the desert is dry grass savanna.

The Kalahari Oasis. In the center of the Kalahari desert in **Botswana** is a green forest filled with many coconut, date, palm and citrus trees, fields of corn, wheat, and flowering plants. The entire 12 square mile (30 sq. km) area is too massive for a natural oasis. In the center is a giant stone tower and a small village. The village is inhabited entirely by 2,742 humans of Buntu heredity. They are happy, friendly people who feel blessed by the gods. They gladly help foolish travelers lost in the desert, and share their bounty with all visitors. Their king lives in the tower and should not be disturbed.

South Africa was once a center of technology, modern expansion and civil unrest. Its towering cities were obliterated during the Great Cataclysm and much of its coastline was swallowed by the ocean. Today the land area of South Africa is a third smaller, about the size of Texas. Much of the land is arid or semiarid, covered in dry grass savannas. **Mozambique** to the northeast of South Africa, has a similar environment and is equally devoid of humanoid life. Scattered tribes of cattle herders are found in the interior and villages of fishermen along the coast. Both countries have become the home of wild animals and monsters, many of them winged creatures such as harpies and gryphons. Fewer than two million humanoids (80% human) call this country home.

The changing times

Phychics, Witches, Medicine Men and even some of the normal people can feel something brewing on the wind. There is a sense of anticipation and electricity in the air, as if a big storm were brewing and coming this way. Exactly what it may be is unknown, but something is stirring. Many believe it is some kind of an after effect from the battle with the Four Horsemen. Some wonder if something worse is not coming. Some people toward the north claim to have seen giants in the highlands. God-like beings who seem to be out "walking" and vanish in chariots of fire when approached. Pharaoh Rama-Set denies feeling any portents for the future on the wind, but many Necromancers feel the cold embrace of death. (Keep your eyes peeled for future Africa world books.)

Europe

England

The British Isles are lands of enchantment. Nowhere in the world are there so many ley lines and nexus points in such a confined area. This has made England a place of great mystic energy and power. Faerie Folk, dragons, woodland spirits, standing stones, and fabulous and alien flora abound. Everything about England seems steeped in legend and magic, from its Druids and standing stone megaliths to its new knights in shining armor and the rebirth of Camelot. Perhaps it is no surprise then, that England is one of the rare places where one can find a magnificent Tree of Life known as the *Millennium Tree,* or that the mystic arts of Herbology, Druidism and Temporal Magic are practiced on the isles.

On the surface little seems to have changed on these cool green islands since Erin Tarn's visit in 103 P.A. Camelot prospers and the forests seem as full of wonder as ever. However, there is an undercurrent of evil that is at work beneath the canopy of Britain's forests and meadows. The sinister **Cernun Mystics** are up to something. All but a handful have gone to the hills of Scotland for purposes unknown. Even the Sorcerer Mrrlyn of New Camelot has not been able to pierce their veil of secrecy and fears they work to bring about the downfall of "his" kingdom. The real evil casting its shadow over the British Isles and western Europe, however, is Mrrlyn himself.

Mrrlyn of New Camelot *is* the Merlin of ancient pre-Rifts legend. He was not sired by a demon and a mortal woman, but has always and will ever be the splintered life essence of a malignant Alien Intelligence known as Zazshan. It is Mrrlyn's darkest secret and any who come to suspect his true identity are discredited and ruined or murdered. He was the secret architect behind the original Camelot but became trapped in a crystalline prison when Earth's mystic energies suddenly waned. Imprisoned, Merlin slept for centuries. The Coming of the Rifts shattered his prison and Merlin awoke to a new world of chaos, catastrophe and infinite potential. For the first 200 years after the Great Cataclysm, Zazshan through his mortal avatar, "Mrrlyn" (who has gone by many names over the ages), wan-

dered the world to survey the changing tide of fate and observe, first hand, the transformation of the planet. He watched the Yama Kings bring their hell to China, he struck down the first seeds of the Gargoyle Empire, he has battled monsters and tyrants, he walked upon North American soil when it was lost to the Dark Ages, and tried to stop the Undead Lords from taking root in Mexico, but to no avail. He wandered far and wide and observed many things come to pass, including the return of Atlantis under the throne of the reviled Splugorth. After 200 years of wandering he returned to his beloved England and meditated for 20 years.

When Mrrlyn rose from his years of musings, he had devised a plan. He would remake his old empire, build a new and better Camelot, restock it with a new cast of characters (some familiar, others something entirely different) and breathe new life into his old dream. Only this time, thanks to the return of magic, Zazshan/Mrrlyn would wield the power of the creature of magic he truly is – an evil alien intelligence.

The level of magic energy on Rifts Earth, especially in the British Isles, has enabled Zazshan to create more splintered life essences – more avatars – than he ever could in the past. This has been used to great advantage in creating a host of agents who are effectively aspects of the same being, all working to the same goal. *Mrrlyn* is chief among these avatars, but other manifestations, all thought to be separate and unrelated individuals, include the *Lady of the Lake, Lady Guinevere* and the *Supreme Nexus Knights*. **The Lady of the Lake** is used as a mysterious deity or benevolent spirit who presumably represents nature and the land that is England. As such, Mrrlyn/Zazshan uses the Lady of the Lake to provide warnings, speak of visions and help to steer the heroes of New Camelot in the directions desired by Mrrlyn/Zazshan. For example, the Lady was the one who gave the King his magic sword and has warned him about impending danger on a number of occasions that have helped to avert disasters. She also endorses the conquest of France and has recently warned King Arr'thuu that the Cernun Mystics plot against the kingdom of New Camelot. **Lady Guinevere** is perhaps the most odious of the secret avatars because she pretends to be a mere mortal woman in love with King Arr'thuu. This love relationship allows Mrrlyn/Zazshan to know the King's innermost thoughts and emotions to use against him. Guinevere is the ultimate tool to monitor and subtly nudge and manipulate the King. She will exert even greater power over King Arr'thuu when they wed this summer, and the malevolent Mrrlyn/Zazshan is considering creating yet another splintered life essence to give the beguiled and bewitched king a *son*. A blood heir to the throne who is actually Zazshan, and who, upon reaching adolescence, can replace the king should Arr'thuu give them trouble or stop being an unsuspecting puppet.

The Supreme Nexus Knights are also splintered essences of Zazshan, although they are lesser creatures. These superhuman knights answer only to Mrrlyn and frequently engage in secret missions and lead or escort bands of mortal knights on important missions.

Mrrlyn faces many obstacles in his mad scheme, but he is a master of duplicity and loves weaving elaborate schemes. For instance, should his true nature be discovered, he can vanish or allow himself to be (seemingly) destroyed, and still stand at King Arr'thuu's side as Guinevere and his son, whispering in his ears and tricking the noble king to do Zazshan's bidding as always.

And what is Mrrlyn/Zazshan's mad dream? To rule the planet and control its many dimensional doorways – the Rifts – to anywhere and everywhere.

One of the demonic creature's more recent distractions was the arrival of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse whom he helped to defeat from behind the scenes. *The Blood Druids of France, the Phoenix Empire of Egypt* and the *Gargoyle Empire* are all annoyances Mrrlyn intends to eliminate as he readies himself for the first of many key moves in his chess game of conquest. The *Cernun Mystics*, however, have captured his immediate attention as the alien intelligence senses the Ram-Horned Serpents are about to unleash some misery upon England to challenge New Camelot. Furthermore, he believes they may have uncovered his true nature and work at some plot to thwart his plans for Camelot, or possibly try to destroy him. He has already convinced King Arr'thuu that the Cernun mean the kingdom harm and should be driven from the isles, where, once exposed, he can have his Supreme Nexus Knights cut them down in the valleys of France, where the King will be none the wiser. Mrrlyn just fears his actions may come too late to stop the Cernun, and that their mischief will delay him for a few more years.

As part of Mrrlyn's ongoing schemes, New Camelot has recently opened diplomatic channels with the New German Republic (NGR) and has begun to exchange a very limited amount of trade. The leaders of the NGR are cautious about its relationship with England because it is uncomfortable with practitioners of magic, and sorcerers play a big role at New Camelot. However, the Germans see New Camelot and the British Isles as another haven for humans fighting against the demonic legions of Europe, and thus, an ally worth making even if they are kept at arm's length.

New Camelot

This is the largest city and most powerful kingdom in the British Isles. Most of the rest of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland are covered by wilderness forests, grasslands, swamps and moors. The wilderness is dotted with tiny villages, farms, and the occasional town. There are a few other kingdoms, but none compare to the size and splendor of New Camelot. To the citizens of the kingdom, their domain is the pinnacle of achievement in England. The lofty ideals upheld by most citizens of New Camelot are similar to the Camelot of legend, including honor, nobility, courage, compassion, learning, equality, and freedom for all, humans and friendly D-Bees alike. The laws of chivalry serve as a guideline to help the knights and citizens to live true to these ideals. The dream of King Arr'thuu and his Knights of Camelot is to build a powerful and modern kingdom that encompasses all of England and the other British Isles. A kingdom built on a foundation of truth, strength and compassion. It is a prosperous haven for all like-minded beings who desire to live free from tyranny, and is becoming a notable place of learning, knowledge, and science. Their goal, to create a community so wonderful that other kingdoms around the world will follow their example. The evil Mrrlyn encourages these high ideals because it is the perfect cover for an insidious creature such as him.

Ley Lines & Nexus Points. The British Isles, per square mile, are the richest source of mystic energy in the world with the possible exception of the Yucatan Peninsula. Ley lines crisscross the entire area and nearly 200 ley line nexuses have been identified. Spriggans and others have marked many of these locations with standing stones commonly known as *megaliths*. Others, like *Stonehenge* and *Avesbury*, were seemingly untouched by the Great Cataclysm and are still marked by the stones of ancient builders erected over 3000 years ago. Old Sarum Hill, Figsbury Ring, Avesbury, Stonehenge, Silbury Hill, Arbor Lowe, Long Meg, Belfarg, Clava, The Dragon's Grave, Stenness (Brodgar, Scotland) and Maes Howe (Orkney, Scotland) are 12 of the most powerful of the ley line *nexus epicenters*. Of these, **Stonehenge** is the best known, being one of the most powerful ley line nexus locations in the world! Not only is it connected to six other, major nexus junctions (Figsbury Ring, Arbor Lowe, Long Meg, New Grange, Tara, and The Dragon's Grave), it is also the center force that connects five smaller ley line nexus triangles! This means that the energy from Stonehenge is *doubled* at all times, including peak energy flows. The other nexus points within the Stonehenge complex are normal.

The Eternal City. The *springs of Bath*, known for their supernatural healing properties, are controlled by a small kingdom called the *Eternal City*. It is one of England's largest kingdoms and a friendly rival to New Camelot. Without a doubt it is the second most popular kingdom in the British Isles and competes with New Camelot for alliances, industry and population. In fact, many of those who feel uncomfortable with New Camelot join, or work with, the Eternal City. Meanwhile, the two kingdoms have an excellent, amicable relationship, trade regularly and have come to each other's aid on several occasions. There has even been some discussion regarding a merger of the two kingdoms, with the Eternal City becoming an official part of New Camelot, but retaining complete autonomy. The Eternal City has politely declined the offer.

The Eternal City is very similar to New Camelot and believes in freedom and democracy for all people regardless of race. If anything, the Eternal City is a more open society with a less rigid structure of laws and a small army. (Mrrlyn encourages knights, chivalry and crusades because he needs New Camelot to be a military power if they are to conquer foreign lands for him under the guise of the great protector of the innocent.) It is a prosperous community that focuses on art, music, healing and magic. It keeps its mystical healing springs open to most Druids, Herbalists and healers. Only those with a known reputation as an evildoer are kept from the waters for fear they might do something to poison them or hurt those at the springs. The kingdom's greatest threat is from the **Goblin Kingdom of South**

Wales where Goblins and other monsters are always looking for trouble.

Berwynmoore Kingdom. This medium-sized kingdom is the not so friendly neighbor to New Camelot and the Eternal City. It is located where the pre-Rifts city of *Swindon* once stood. Its king, members of royalty, and much of the population are envious and spiteful about the fame and prosperity of New Camelot and the Eternal City. The leaders of Berwynmoore believe it suffers because the other two kingdoms have enticed scholars, mages, merchants, trade and settlers away from them. In fact, only twelve years ago, the kingdom had a population of 9800 but today it is barely 7500 because many have moved to New Camelot (65%) or the Eternal City (35%).

Queen Vanessa Barkclay-Berwynmoore is the 75-year-old Queen of Berwynmoore – the king died thirteen years ago. She is a selfish, cold-hearted hag who has grown bitter and cruel in her old age. She has planted the seeds of envy and greed for wealth, power and glory in all of her children who are more vindictive and bitter than the Queen. She has been at death's door for more than three years, but has yet to appoint a successor. This has created a great deal of political intrigue and positioning among the Queen's children as they jockey to get themselves on the throne. Regardless of whether the Queen appoints a successor or not, there is likely to be a bloody battle for the throne. Unknown to any, including the Queen, a mischievous leprechaun has been secretly using Faerie Magic and other magical resources at his disposal to keep the old bat alive. He does so, not out of kindness, but because the Leprechaun has a vendetta against one of the children and knows it drives the entire family crazy that this frail, abusive woman will not give up the ghost.

London of Splynn. Built on the bones of the once mighty city near the Thames River is a squalid little town known as London of Splynn. As one might surmise from the name, it is an outpost for the *Splugorth of Atlantis*. Lord Splynncryth uses the town as a base for his minions' activities in the British Isles, France and Belgium. They use the Stonehenge complex of ley lines as the point of entry, arriving via dimensional Rift. They then travel east to London of Splynn. The Minions of Splugorth see the British Isles as a place for adventure and as a wilderness preserve where they can hunt for sport and capture exotic animals and monsters such as the Clamp-Mouthed Dragonfly, Petal Thing, etc., as well as other creatures and people for the slave markets and gladiatorial arenas. The huge number of Faerie Folk in the British Isles, particularly Ireland, also makes the islands very attractive to the Splugorth who use live Faeries in many of their magic items as a power source. They also steal magical leaves, twigs and branches from the enchanted Millennium Trees to make Corrupted Millennium Wands, Staves and other abominations.

Margate Island. This is an island kingdom occupied by the aliens known as Dabugghs. Approximately 4000 Dabugghs live on the island along with 1200-1500 humans and 800-1000 D-Bee slaves. They have recently established a political relationship with London of Splynn and are actively trading to upgrade their low-end technology. A Splugorth High Lord and ten Overlords are permanent residents of Margate, and the Splugorth are said to like the aliens' attitude.

The Devil's Arrow. This is another ancient stone megalith that has survived the Great Cataclysm. It marks the beginning of a ley line and the site of an ancient battle that prevented the demonic Fomorians of old from invading England. To this day, few Fomorians venture beyond the Devil's Arrow (in Celtic myth, the arrow comes from the god Lugh).

Rombalds Moore, the site once known as Yorkshire, is home to a *Millennium Tree*. A large boulder the ancient Celts considered sacred is at the base of the tree. A variety of people live among the great tree's branches, including a number of Sectles.

Arbor Lowe is the site of another *Millennium Tree* and community of people living among its sheltering branches. About 40 miles (64 km) to the west and east are bogs inhabited by small bands of Goblins and evil Faerie Folk like Pucks and Kelpies.

The Nog Henge Tree of Life is home to the mysterious Nog Henge Druids whose leader is said to be an ancient Chiang-Ku dragon.

Wales & the Island of Man

Most of the land area once known as Wales is dominated by monstrous nonhumans such as Goblins, Orcs, Ogres, Trolls, giants, and the occasional dragon and other creatures of magic.

The Goblin Kingdom of Southern Wales. Approximately 4500 Goblins inhabit the ruins of the pre-Rifts city of Newport and the many caves along the coast. They are extremely territorial and chase away or slay most humans and handsome humanoids who dare to enter their domain. There are four neighboring tribes of Ogres with 60 to 160 Ogres in each. One thousand Orcs and a variety of Faerie Folk, good and evil, also inhabit the region.

The Goblins randomly send raiding parties into other parts of the British Isles to steal baked goods, food, grain, chickens, ducks, livestock and valuables. These groups of cutthroats and thieves can be as small as six or eight members or as large as 300, but the typical group ranges from 30 to 60 members strong. Large groups are so bold as to attack villages and armored caravans, while the smaller groups bushwhack travelers and adventurers, and raid homesteads, farms and homes in small towns and villages. They are a constant source of trouble for New Camelot and the communities around it, but are easily frightened away by magic and powerful defenders.

Northern Wales is plagued by tribes of evil Faerie Folk that includes Goblins, Kinnie Ger, Pucks, and Kelpie. Goblin raiders from this part of the country tend to travel in small groups of 6-12 and prefer burglary, purse snatching, picking pockets and crimes of opportunity rather than raids and ambushes. There are also a number of tiny human and D-Bee villages and huntsmen who consider Wales their home. Though the Goblins harass and sometimes steal from them, the little monsters generally accept these folk as local inhabitants.

The Island of Man is about half the size it was before the Great Cataclysm. It is mostly devoid of human life and is inhabited by flocks of Faerie Folk. At the site of the ancient Glenwyllan ruins is a Millennium Tree. It is occasionally visited by Druids and is one of the many places rumored to be the home of the Nog Henge Druids.

Scotland

Balfarg. This was the site of an ancient henge and stone circle. Within the last 200 years somebody, presumably a

Spriggan, has rebuilt the circle of stone. It is a place frequented by druids and practitioners of magic. Not far from the stone megalith is the village of Balfarg, an unwholesome community of 2000 people ruled by a band of Dabugghs. The humans and D-Bees in the village are all slaves of the alien insectoids. Dabugghs of this village are impressed and a little afraid of practitioners of magic so they leave Druids and mages alone. The nearby North Sea is filled with sea monsters.

The Dragon's Grave. The Dragon's Grave is a *ley line nexus center* located 55 miles (88 km) north of Balfarg. It earned its name from an incredibly powerful Horned dragon that once controlled the nexus with a stone pyramid and dominated the surrounding land and all of its inhabitants. It was said that the dragon could draw on the mystic energy to see the future and events happening at other places and in other worlds. It used this power for selfish ends and was hated and feared by all who lived in Scotland and England. Many a hero died trying to destroy the monster. Then, two hundred years ago, the dragon was slain by a horrific monster that emerged from that Rift. This same monster destroyed the pyramid, scattering it to the wind. Today, only rubble stands where the great pyramid once pointed to the stars. Legend claims that somewhere underneath the rubble and earth are the bones of the dragon, the stone rubble its grave marker.

The Highlands of Scotland. These are said to be the domain of the demonic Fomorians and ancient Celtic gods. The entire highlands, Orkney, and surrounding islands are predominately inhabited by these people. Faerie Folk, humanoids and most beings try to avoid the highlands lest they be captured, enslaved or killed by the murderous Fomorians.

The Fomorians and a few beings claiming to be ancient Celtic gods appeared about a hundred years ago. They have taken over the highlands and continue to make moves into the lowlands of Scotland. Fomorian spies and war parties are encountered with increasing frequency in the northern lowlands and occasionally found in other parts of the British Isles. A small group of a few hundred have traveled as far as France on an exploration mission. Whenever they are encountered, one can be certain they are up to no good.

Note: The fact that so many of the *Cernun Mystics* have gone to Scotland for an unknown purpose gives Mrrlyn reason for grave concern. Could the Cernun be cooperating with the Fomorians? Or are they making a pact with some ancient god to do . . . . what? Mrrlyn has sent a handful of spies into the highlands to see if they could uncover any clues about the Cernun's activities. Only one has returned, his head in a basket left on Mrrlyn's doorstep! A note inside read:

"Oh Ancient Evil from beyond the Rifts, you can not stop what we have already set into motion, as we feast on the bones of your agents."

Clava, Scotland Highlands. An impressive necropolis of ancient burial mounds, cairns, and a stone circle. This area of the highlands is said to be a place ruled by elemental forces and that the nexus is a doorway to the elemental planes. Even Greater Elementals can be summoned through this powerful nexus. It is interesting to note that there is seldom any random dimensional Rifts at this location and when there are, it usually releases Minor Air and Earth Elementals.

The Tree of Ages. Atop of the famous *Maes Howe circle and mound* is the second tallest Millennium Tree in the British Isles, only **Old Sarum's Tree** is older and taller. The Orkney islands and the Scottish Highlands are dominated by the demonic Fomorians and the old gods. Consequently, the Tree of Ages has become a refuge for thousands of free humans, D-Bees and others, all of whom live "in" the tree. The mix of races is extremely unusual but all live and work together in relative peace, with the Faerie Folk being the most mischievous of the regular troublemakers. All hate the Fomorians and long for the day that Scotland will be free from their evil. Fomorians cannot come within 3000 feet (914 m) of the magic trees. They are also extremely vulnerable to Millennium Tree weapons, magic and storms, all of which inflict double damage to these monsters.

Brodgar, Home of the Gods. The old Stenness megaliths are a nexus that is linked to a dimension where the ancient Celtic gods and the Fomorians are said to have been born. Beings who claim to be Dagda, the Celtic All-Father, Bres the Beautiful, Lugh the Shining One, Balor of the Poisonous Eye and the demonic Fomorians have emerged from this nexus.

The Fomorian Demons are savage, murderous Mega-Damage beings who are considered to be demons by most humans. They are a misshapened people with dark gray skin, one small eye (usually off to one side of the head), large teeth, and a deformed left foot. 50% also have a hunched back. All are a giant 8-10 feet tall (2.4 to 3 m) and incredibly savage, cruel and merciless in combat. They love to destroy property, torture and kill. Many drink the blood or eat the internal organs of their foes. Many also make necklaces, belts and other jewelry from the skulls and bones of the enemy. Fomorians may capture and enslave intelligent beings of all races, although intelligent creatures of magic such as the dragon and sphinx frighten them. The leaders at New Camelot and most people in the world are not truly aware of the Fomorians' power, vast number, nor their savagery or their plans of conquest.

Ireland

All of Ireland may have a combined human and D-Bee population barely equal to New Camelot; about nineteen thousand. These humanoids are mainly found along the eastern coastline and inhabit small towns, villages and farm/pasture communities. The population of these small communities rarely exceeds more than 100-400. The only large kingdom on the entire island is **Tarramore**, located among the ruins of what was once Dublin.

Most humans and other "big" folk stay away from Ireland, because it is the enchanted domain of the Faeries. A careless visitor may be taken aback by the quiet beauty of the large island. At first glance, the trees, glens and fields of flowers seem to be alive with flocks of brightly colored butterflies flittering about as if dancing in the sun or moonlight. Upon closer inspection, however, one realizes that these tiny winged creatures are not butterflies at all, but thousands of Faeries and Sprites. Likewise, bounding through the tall grass might be a dozen Pixies or Brownies playing tag or chasing a bunny. Chattering up in the tree branch above one's head is a cantankerous Bogie spoiling for a fight and at the foot of the tree, sleeping off a night of drunken revelry, might be a Leprechaun, Puck or Spriggan. Every grove of trees and giant boulder seems to be inhabited by a guardian Nymph.

Despite its charm and beauty, however, the Land of Faeries is as dangerous as it is enchanting. Faerie Folk are notoriously playful and given to cruel pranks and silliness that can be deadly to humans. Most of the "wee folk" are not evil, just selfish, boisterous and without much understanding about these fragile creatures called "humans" – D-Bees are just as vulnerable and most Faerie Folk see them as different looking humans. The fickle little people may show genuine kindness and helpfulness one minute and engage in spiteful tricks or cruel jokes the next. The only exceptions to this are the gentle and shy Brownie and Nymph.

Smart visitors will never disturb rings of flowers, circles of mushrooms, strange hills, or houses made from mushrooms, for these are the abodes of Faeries and can lead to some bizarre and dangerous encounters when the inhabitants of the home are riled up. A traveler should consider himself fortunate if he walks away from an encounter with Faeries, Sprites or Pixies and is only tuckered out from a night of enchanted dance or has been turned purple from a taste of Faerie Food.

The isolation, quiet wilderness, lack of humans and abundance of magic has made Ireland the home for other creatures far more dangerous than any Faerie. The Drakin, Pegasus, Peryton, Dragondactyl and Gryphon come to Ireland (and the rocky highlands of Scotland) to roost, romp and play in its forests and grasslands. Harpies inhabit the northwestern coast and rocky regions, but also hunt all over the island, and occasionally England and France, in small flocks of 2D4, as do the Perytons and Gryphons. The intelligent sphinx and other creatures of magic also visit Ireland to relax, practice their magic, and test their prowess against some of the monstrous inhabitants. Dragons are also known to inhabit the island. Some have even established their homes here.

There are five *Millennium Trees* in Ireland, all in Faerie country. Two are located in the south: The Lough Gar site, a place of ancient standing stones and barrows near the southern banks of Lake Shannon, and the Corcaigh site located on the ruins of what was once the city of Cork. Three others are found in the north, near the ruins of the cities once known as Longford, Belfast and Coleraine.

Then there are the Splugorth Slavers. The vast number of Faerie Folk and other creatures of magic serve as both an attraction and a challenge for the Slavers. Faerie Folk are enslaved and imprisoned inside a number of Bio-Wizard devices that draw on the poor creatures' magic energy as a source of magic and power. The larger denizens of Ireland may have other uses, and if nothing else, make good sport in the gladiatorial arenas. As a result, the Minions of Splugorth, namely Splugorth Slavers and their henchmen, frequently raid the island. Horune pirates, associates of the Splugorth, and unscrupulous adventurers, also raid the island from time to time to capture Faerie Folk to sell to the Splugorth, Phoenix Empire and other kingdoms of evil magic users.

Millennium Trees

Millennium Trees are enigmatic giants that tower hundreds, sometimes a thousand, feet in the air, and are extremely rare and precious. Only the British Isles are known to have an abundance of the trees, if one can consider a dozen of them an abundance. Actually, a dozen in such a comparatively small region *is* an abundance. Take the Americas for example, where no Millennium Tree is found anywhere in North America, and though one is *rumored* to exist somewhere in the Amazon rain forest, no one has ever found it. Likewise, Millennium Trees are few and far between throughout the rest of Europe, Asia and the world. It

is theorized that these "Trees of Life" are so plentiful in England because of the concentration of ley lines and nexus points, but nobody honestly knows. In fact, nobody knows much about the trees at all.

According to the Druids who care for them and the folks who live in and around these amazing plants, Millennium Trees are said to be the living embodiment of some sort of *intelligent* earth spirit that communicates through empathy and dreams. They are also said to be the living embodiment of magic and the very leaves and branches of the giant Trees of Life possess magical powers and properties. Aspects the Tree can mold into specific types of magic wands and staves it may hand out to heroic champions and people who exhibit goodness and compassion. Only the worst kind of brigands dare raid the great Trees to *steal* themselves a few twigs and leaves.

For more information about England, Millennium Trees, Druids, Herbal Magic, Temporal Magic, Camelot, insectoid aliens and much, much more, see **Rifts® World Book 3: England**.

France

All of a sudden, it seems everybody wants France for themselves. It started when the Gargoyle Empire, making little headway in its decades-long stalemate with the New German Republic, decided to invade and conquer France. The NGR could not allow that to happen, so the German Army plunged into France to oppose the Gargoyles head on, whether the French people wanted them there or not. Meanwhile, Mrrlyn of New Camelot has been making moves to conquer France for himself – um, for New Camelot – having only recently convinced King Arr'thuu that this land of barbarians and murderous Blood Druids should belong to England to prevent it from falling into the hands of monsters. Thus, the Army of New Camelot has joined the battle to make its bid for France! The NGR had recently established diplomatic ties with New Camelot and does not oppose Britain's claim to the region. It is the NGR's hope that *together* the two human nations can repel the Gargoyles, at which point the NGR will withdraw most of its troops and let New Camelot deal with what Mrrlyn calls "the taming of the wild lands." The NGR is only in France to stop the Gargoyles from claiming it.

For the moment the region known as France has become a battlefield and something of a Machiavellian environment for all kinds of alliances, pacts, deals, and intrigue among the many small kingdoms of France and the various foreign factions. Where it will all end is anyone's guess.

A Brief Overview

Like most of Europe, the eruption of the ley lines, the opening of dimensional Rifts and invasion by demonic monsters has transformed the country into a treacherous wasteland. The land along the northern coastline has been decimated by a terrible plague that prevents plant life from growing along the entire length of the coast and is transforming the land into a parched desert up to 50 miles (80 km) inland. The coastal desert is inhabited by few animals and fewer humanoids. Beyond the parched earth are vast forests broken by the occasional grassland. Most of the old cities were toppled during the Great Cataclysm and their bones covered by the wilderness.

Paris is one of the few cities that remains at its original location. The toppled ruins of the once great city still stand and serve as the dwellings for rodents, disease, and subhumans like Goblins and mutants. Among the ruins are the beginnings of a new city, but this Paris of Rifts Earth is a filthy squalor inhabited by nonhumans. It is a haven for Ogres, Trolls, Orcs, Goblins, and other wretched creatures and supernatural monsters. Humans and other prettier creatures are tolerated if they are discreet and have the power to take care of themselves if threatened.

Visitors can find countless boarding houses and restaurants catering mainly to an inhuman palette. A dozen high-tech repair shops, body-chop-shops (there are no legitimate cyber-centers or hospitals), arenas for blood sports, gambling halls, drug dens, and every other den of iniquity imaginable are cobbled together to provide services and entertainment. Powerful guilds, including assassins, thieves, wizards and herbalists, are all dominated and controlled by the Blood Druids.

Blood Druids, also known as the "Disciples of Destruction," are members of a growing death cult throughout France. They believe in the perpetuation of anarchy and chaos, making them dangerous anarchists who oppose civilization, culture and law. Like most Druids, they have no formal alliance with any "one" tribe, clan or kingdom. They advise, teach and assist many nefarious beings from demons and destroyers to D-Bee and human kings and peasants. Their only true allegiance is to the forces of evil and laws of chaos. They enjoy the sweet destruction of war, and revel in the confusion, panic, fear and suffering war and hatred breeds. They hate New Camelot, the Eternal City and the New German Republic because their societies seek to attain an orderly and peaceful existence. In fact, the Blood Druids find the NGR a delightful conundrum, because on one hand, they seek peace, but on the other hand they are one of the world's greatest military power locked in a seemingly endless battle. Unless the NGR can ever decisively defeat the Gargoyle Empire, probably requiring the destruction of millions of the sub-demons, the NGR, despite its dreams for peace, remains trapped in an oasis of peace and technology surrounded by marauding demons and monsters pounding on their gate. It is a sweet irony the Blood Druids of France find as a perfect example of life as it should be: constant conflict between chaos and order. If only all the world could be so perfect.

All Blood Druids are evil and use blood sacrifices, including human sacrifice, to perform their malignant magic and to assist in the propagation of anarchy. Most are assassins and masters of a grisly form of Necromancy. It is important to note that much of their magic involves blood sacrifice, not because it is necessary but because it is preferred.

The Blood Druids' headquarters is located near the border of the old pre-Rifts French and Swiss Empires, about 8 miles (13 km) from Switzerland, near the city once known as *Geneve*. They occupy the village Le Morte (The Death or The Dead), which has a population of about 2600 inhabitants, 30% of whom are Blood Druids. Most of the remaining townspeople are dedicated supporters of the Necromantic Druids, whom they consider to be the village's benefactors and protectors. Less than 20% have any idea of what evil the Blood Druids are involved in at other places. The location of Le Morte is very central for the Druids, putting them near the hub of civilization and activity

in western and central Europe. About 80 miles (128 km) to the southeast are the monster inhabited *French Alps*, 180 miles (288 km) to the southeast and over the Alps is *Italy*, a 100 miles (160 km) to the southwest are the ruins of *Lyons*, and *Spain* is 620 miles (992 km) further. To the northwest are the decadent hordes of *Paris*, farther north is Belgium and to the northeast, the *New German Republic*, and across the North Sea, the *British Isles*.

The New German Republic

When Europe buckled under the crushing effects of the Rifts, Germany, Austria, and southwestern portions of Poland, survived comparatively intact. The eruption of the ley lines was far less severe in their regions, and although millions died, cities crumbled and civilization collapsed, a large number of people and technology survived. An estimated 45% of the population and 31% of the cities remained hurt and damaged but still standing. And with them, the knowledge of modern science, technology, and education. Few supernatural monsters or alien beings invaded these countries for the first two centuries after the Great Cataclysm, allowing the survivors the luxury to reestablish themselves and ultimately rebuild to create the New German Republic (NGR), a high-tech fortress nation which is the envy of all of Europe. A large percentage of the New German Republic's (NGR) accomplishments, however, have been made possible by the survival of the corporate superpower known as *Triax Industries*. With 50% of its factories and manufacturing resources intact and 84% of its technology preserved after the Great Cataclysm, Triax was instrumental in the rebuilding of Germany, and continues to be a pivotal force in the NGR.

Triax Industries. There are but a tiny handful of manufacturers and developers of cybernetics and robotics in the New German Republic, and without any doubt, *Triax Industries* is the topmost among them. This mega-corporation has its hooks so deeply into the NGR that the company itself is an integral part of the nation's economy, military, government and survival. There can be no Triax without the NGR, and no NGR without Triax. In the business arena, Triax dominates 90% of the market, at least when it comes to robotics, cybernetics (for both medical and military use), power armor, weapons, weapon systems, combat vehicles, aircraft, and energy systems. It is also a major force in communications, computers, electronics and commercial manufacturing, representing approximately 55% of those markets. Not surprisingly, the corporation holds the exclusive military contract with the NGR.

Over the last 20 years, Triax has become increasingly aggressive in their marketing and sales of robots, power armor, cybernetics, weapons and electronic equipment to other predominately human communities. This includes selling to many of the small, independent kingdoms and wilderness communities scattered around them, as well as the humans in England, Greece, and most recently, the Coalition States and a few others in North America.

Trade to the Americas is difficult and dangerous because of its geographical location. In short, getting goods to the Americas and the transport crew back home in one piece after traveling across hostile territory on the Atlantic Ocean, coming and going, is a dangerous operation. In Europe, Triax Industries has an irrefutable reputation for manufacturing the best robots, power armor and weapons in the world.

Elements of Society. The New German Republic is an advanced society brimming with high-tech electronics, cybernetics, robots, vehicles and machines. The typical city is a megalopolis with an industrial and/or technology center. Most cities in the NGR and much of Europe are different than cities in the Americas. In America, Pre-Rifts population centers like New York, Chicago and Los Angeles were filled with skyscrapers 30 to 60 stories high — man-made mountains of steel and concrete inhabited by millions of people. Even with the advent of super-technology, most of Europe stayed with what might be described to Americans as a sprawling "industrial suburb" or "high-tech village."

As one moves away from the fortified cities and human population centers, the atmosphere becomes dark and glum. There is a palpable tension and fear in the air. The outlying communities are small- to medium-sized villages. Some are factory towns guarded by the Army of the NGR, or an independent militia, but most are small villages, farm communities, trappers, woodsmen and fishermen.

The military sends weekly or bi-weekly patrols to visit and secure the outlying areas, stopping to inspect, protect and assist communities occupied entirely by humans. The soldiers are also quick to respond to calls for help, reports of suspicious activity or trouble from nonhumans, and reports of enemy attack.

The neighboring D-Bee communities are not so fortunate. Generations of war, pain, and fear have made many of the humans of the NGR bitter, angry or indifferent toward nonhumans. Many treat D-Bees like worthless animals to be used and abandoned when they have outlasted their usefulness. Consequently, the plight of D-Bees suffering at the hands of the Gargoyle Empire and other forces of evil falls upon deaf ears and frozen hearts. Innocent and helpless D-Bees are forced to live in the so-called "Monster Zones" and fend for themselves as best they can. The NGR military treats all nonhumans as "hostiles" and sends fly-by patrols or ground reconnaissance teams to keep an eye on D-Bee communities, but the military seldom intercedes on their behalf. Even frantic cries for help on the radio fall on deaf ears.

The NGR's expulsion of D-Bee citizens occurred around 45 P.A. Perhaps it is needless to say that the nation's continuing campaign for human supremacy and detestable treatment of D-Bees, has caused tremendous animosity and bitterness among many nonhumans in and around the NGR. This has driven some to a life of crime or to join forces with the enemy. Other D-Bees are not active subversives, but despise humans and treat them with the same generosity they are shown. The NGR's *cruel indifference* has made the majority of the nonhumans, particularly the least human-looking, to regard humans as just another enemy or monster as loathsome as the Gargoyles or Brodkil. This sentiment has created hundreds of outlaw gangs who feel justified in plundering human travelers, merchant caravans, small villages, military supply lines, and troop encampments.

The War of the Ages

The NGR remains locked in a stalemate with the *Gargoyle Empire* that has lasted for decades. In a bold attempt to end the conflict once and for all, the NGR launched an all-out effort to engage and destroy the Gargoyle Empire that required the utter militarization of the NGR. This campaign was launched late in 104 P.A. and continues to this day.

The NGR's preparations to engage in a potentially lengthy and costly war had been one of their motivations in reaching out to the *Coalition States* as a potential ally in an attempt to minimize the cost and strain on local resources. Thus, if nothing else, they need a strong ally who can supply them with food and raw materials to get them through the lean years that they feared were likely to come. This has been why the NGR has not pressed the Coalition States for military assistance as part of the proposed alliance. The Coalition's political, social and economic strength, combined with their own policies of human supremacy, has made them the only viable candidate as a truly significant ally.

For years, the **Coalition States** had politely declined offers from the NGR to make a formal, diplomatic alliance between the two nations. The CS feared being drawn into the NGR's war overseas and the Coalition's inherent suspicion of everybody, even the NGR, made such an alliance unattractive. However, the CS did maintain open lines of communications and engaged in limited trade with the NGR, mainly food, medicine and raw materials. However, that all changed after the *Sorcerers' Revenge*. The unexpected and crushing defeat after three years of hard fought war in which little headway had been made struck Emperor Prosek hard. During his depression he realized how difficult and terrible it must be for the New German Republic to be constantly surrounded and bombarded by a nation of such creatures. How alone and frightened they must feel. In the Spring of 109 P.A. the Emperor authorized diplomats to sign an official, though little publicized, pact with the NGR and immediately tripled the resources the CS had been sending. Furthermore, Chi-Town officials have encouraged Free Quebec to strengthen its trade with the NGR and to consider sending volunteers to the war effort overseas. If humanity is to survive, Emperor Prosek has reasoned, then the great human nations must work together, for if one falls, it will inspire other monsters to attack the survivors. And so a new age of cooperation begins between the CS and the NGR. Whether the Coalition will send actual troops is yet to be seen and will depend on how the war against the Xiticix and trouble on other fronts goes.

The progress of war. The military would argue the NGR has made great strides in pushing the enemy back from its borders and succeeding in cutting down hundreds of thousands of the Gargoyle and Brodkil warriors, reducing the enemy forces by as much as 20%. Furthermore, the campaign has taxed the NGR's

economy much less than originally feared and the unexpected support from the Coalition States has sent morale soaring. While Gargoyle and Brodkil casualties have been high, fatalities with the NGR troops have been miraculously light, less than 5% – a tribute to the mechanical wonders created by the whiz kids at Triax. Advances in medicine and cybernetics have made it so there are no cripples from this war, and the Coalition States has promised to share its superior advancements in genetic sciences to grow skin, organs and other bio-systems.

The downside is that the Gargoyles seem undeterred and the war continues as fierce as ever. Moreover, the NGR has determined that the Phoenix Empire and Splugorth are supplying the Gargoyles with steadily improving high-tech weaponry, which if allowed to continue, will eventually level the playing field and ultimately give the superhuman, Mega-Damage sub-demons an advantage over mere mortals. To counter this, the NGR's top priority is to determine the trade routes and delivery points of armaments and equipment coming from North Africa. Then they hope to nail the supply trains, intercepting them and commandeering the arms for cannibalization in their own war efforts or destroying them to prevent the Gargoyles from getting them. Additionally, the NGR Military hopes repeated strikes will make the suppliers reconsider helping the Gargoyle Empire. To help that thought along, there has even been some talk of hitting factories in the Phoenix Empire (ideally without pointing to the NGR as the one responsible). The fear with that plan is that any obvious aggression against the Empire will incite it to retaliate by taking up arms against the NGR itself, or join forces with the Gargoyle Empire to take them down.

Poland

The Kingdom of Tarnow

The Kingdom of Tarnow, also known as New Tarnow, is one of the few truly independent human strongholds in **Poland**. Although it trades with other kingdoms and cities, it is completely self reliant — unlike Wroclaw and Poznan, both of which rely on the New German Republic for trade and protection. What makes Tarnow all the more outstanding is that it rests at the heart of the Brodkil Empire! This is all possible thanks to the kingdom's strong industrial base and modern, high-tech army. But an even bigger part of the picture is the mystical Tarnow Crystal, perhaps more internationally known as the legendary Philosopher's Stone. It is the Tarnow Crystal's amazing powers to transmute base metal into gold, silver and, most importantly, into Mega-Damage metal that gives the Kingdom of Tarnow much of its power and wealth.

The Tarnow Crystal is an ancient artifact that dates back to the pre-Rifts 12th Century. It is called the "Tarnow" (pronounced Tar-nuve) Crystal because it was first discovered in the city of Tarnow in Poland during the age of alchemy. The later myths regarding the fabled "Philosopher's Stone" are almost certainly inspired by tales of the Tarnow Crystal that spread to Germany and other parts of Europe.

It is not known whether the crystal was somehow created or simply unearthed one day. Modern practitioners of magic speculate that the famous crystal is the creation of alien Bio-Wizardry. They insist that it is probably some sort of rune weapon or is at least related to rune magic. They also suggest that if this is true, the stone was probably lost by a dimensional traveler visiting ancient Earth, perhaps a True Atlantean or dragon. They reason this since there is no evidence that any human, with the possible exception of the infamous Doctor Faustus and Ancient Atlanteans, ever possessed the knowledge to create such a powerful magic item.

According to ancient legend, the stone was a large crystal, the size of a grapefruit, that shone with its own inner light. The crystal was entrusted to a Polish noble, who was hiding in the Ukraine, to protect it from the Tartars (nomadic Mongolians) when they invaded that country. He kept the gem safely hidden in a hollowed out gourd placed in the corner of his vegetable shed. The noble charged his heirs with a sworn oath to keep the crystal safe. Hence, this duty was passed down from generation to generation. Those charged with the crystal's safekeeping never used it, for they were warned of its strangely beguiling powers.

Several hundred years passed before the crystal was brought to Krakow where it was presented to the king of Poland. However, the mystic stone was stolen by an alchemist shortly after it was placed in the king's keeping. The mage didn't understand its powers and his misuse of its magic caused a great fire that burned down half the city of Krakow. The disaster that killed the foolish alchemist and destroyed half the city was only the beginning of a legacy of evil. The Tarnow Crystal passed through many hands due to theft, treachery and murder, but was finally recovered a few years later.

The king assigned his best scientists to unravel the secrets of the Tarnow Crystal and to harness its power. Legends credit the crystal with many feats of magic. The most famous was the transmutation of lead into gold. However, the wise king saw that the magic could not be controlled and that it had been tainted with evil (perhaps it had always been evil). He noted with great consternation that the enchanted crystal had a corrupting influence on his scientists. Good, loyal men who he once trusted with his life, now showed uncharacteristic pettiness, avarice, paranoia and backstabbing.

One night, while alone with the crystal, the king could feel its evil touch caressing his soul and filling him with a lust for conquest and power. Afraid that the Tarnow Crystal might fill his heart with dark desires that would plunge his nation into war, he decided to destroy it! Fearful of what dangerous forces he might unleash if it was shattered, he carried it to the deepest, most turbulent part of the river and threw it into the cleansing waters. People searched and dredged the river for centuries, but the magic crystal was never seen again. At least not before the Great Cataclysm.

One can only presume that the Tarnow Crystal had been buried on the river floor until the eruption of the ley lines, earthquakes, floods or other disasters dislodged it. The new legends claim that a peasant fisherman found the stone in the belly of a large fish the man's wife was preparing for dinner. The woman polished the crystal and the family gathered around to examine it. Not knowing anything about gems, they guessed the crystal might be a giant diamond worth a king's ransom in gold. One of the children held the stone in hand, touched a large iron cauldron, and announced that he guessed the "diamond" was so valuable that it would fill the kettle to the brim with gold. With

that statement a spark of pulsating light appeared in the crystal and the iron cauldron turned into gold! Terrified, the fisherman and his wife threw the crystal into the cauldron and carried it to King Peter Wojtyla. The rest is as they say, history. The family was handsomely rewarded and the king has learned to harness the power of the Tarnow Crystal (an easier task in the magic rich environment of Rifts Earth). He has used it to keep his people safe and make his kingdom strong.

Other Kingdoms in Poland

The Poznan Collective. Compared to the NGR and Tarnow, the city of **Poznan** and the communities around it are third world kingdoms. The tech levels vary from the mid-20th Century to the mid-21st Century. The Collective is reasonably self-sufficient and strong, but under a constant threat of an invasion by the Brodkil and other supernatural enemies.

Poznan refines metal, and manufactures vehicles, building materials, low-end electronics, and components for the NGR. This includes items for robots, weapons, vehicles and housing. They are modestly familiar with advanced robotics and cybernetics, but only have one major manufacturer who is fundamentally a subsidiary of Triax Industries.

Like the NGR, Poznan and most of the Collective are places of extremes. At Poznan itself, the center of town is comparatively clean and pleasant. A giant underground complex is located beneath a dozen downtown skyscrapers and scores of apartment buildings, workshops and businesses. The subterranean portion of the city is expansive, with subway tunnels reaching out like tendrils to several of the smaller communities in the Collective. Located underground are great warehouses of surplus food, materials and supplies, for it is underground that they are safest from the giant monsters who invade their land. It is also under the earth where the wealthy and powerful make their homes. There are parks, fountains, theaters, art galleries, shopping malls, and all the luxuries and services one would expect to find at any major metropolis.

By contrast, much of the surface portions of the city are dark and soiled, covered in soot from the belching factories. Most inhabitants don't seem to notice or mind. The factories are their life's blood. Considering how many other cities have fallen to the enemy over the last few decades, they are glad to be alive and free. The poorest neighborhoods are typically the closest to the factories or on the farthest outskirts of the city, which are the most vulnerable to enemy attack. The sky is hazy and gray from factory smoke. Little, one and two story homes are covered in dirt and soot. The streets are littered with paper, debris and garbage waiting for disposal (garbage disposal is typically 1-4 weeks late). Vermin scamper across roads and down alleyways. Human vermin, such as thieves, muggers, drug dealers, black marketeers, Cyber-Snatchers, the occasional D-Bee, and other lowlifes, lurk in the shadows.

Gangs of all kinds roam the streets looking for excitement, trouble and plunder. Some of the most dangerous are those who use augmenting drugs and who've undergone Juicer or Crazy/M.O.M. conversions. The worst are the Cyber-Snatchers. These are the ghoulish punks who make a living by robbing people of their valuable cybernetic prosthetics and implants. Since retrieving most types of cybernetic/bionic items requires surgery, most Cyber-Snatchers are cutthroats and murderers who kill and mutilate their victims. They sell their ill-gotten spoils to unscrupulous body-chop-shops or the black market. Even the gypsies have too much pride and respect for life and fair play to associate with Cyber-Snatchers or deal in their wares.

Despite the criminal element and despair of the people, Poznan and the surrounding communities can be interesting places to visit, particularly if one stays away from trouble areas and brigands. Unlike the tiny wilderness communities, Poznan and many of the communities welcome mercenaries and adventurers. They are even reasonably tolerant of D-Bees who look extremely human, such as True Atlanteans, and human mutants, as well as practitioners of magic. They are also accepting of Dog Boys and delighted to see visitors from the Coalition States.

The communities in the Poznan Collective offer visitors some fine hotels, entertainment, magic shops, fortune-tellers, healers, antique shops, legitimate cyber-shops, automobile and robot garages (repairs and upgrades), nightclubs, dance halls, taverns, and gambling establishments (legal and illegal). They also offer bold and resourceful individuals interesting opportunities. Many of the businesses (especially the black market, although the characters may not know they are dealing with criminals) are always looking for temporary help. The most common areas of service are in protection (guard a person, place, valuables, etc.), escorts (bodyguard), delivery, surveillance, private detective work, repossession, wilderness scouting, wilderness recovery/ salvage, exploration and similar. Some of

the more blatantly criminal opportunities include robbery, acts of revenge, assassination, intimidation, extortion, delivering or guarding contraband and so on.

Wroclaw is another industrial city, with several smaller communities around it. Wroclaw is only 100 miles (160 km) south of the Poznan Collective and is protected by the NGR troops at **Pleszew**, roughly 50 miles (80 km) northeast. It is a quieter and less dangerous place, with half a million residents. The land around the city is mostly farmland and orchards, with scattered villages that account for another 100,000 people. To the south and east are the domain of the Brodkil.

Mindwerks

Poland

As humankind began to claw its way out of the Dark Age of devastation that rocked the planet, the secrets of M.O.M. conversion were *rediscovered*, along with Juicer chemical augmentation, cybernetics and other high-tech secrets from the lost Golden Age of human achievement.

M.O.M. (Mind Over Matter) brain implants had seemed to be one of the most promising forms of human augmentation, but no one has ever been able to devise brain implants that did not cause mental deterioration, and the rediscovered science seems a bit cruder and insanity a more certain and immediate symptom than ever. Consequently, the warriors of Rifts Earth who submit to M.O.M. conversion have come to be known as "Crazies." Ironically, the process that was co-developed in Germany is banned in the New German Republic. Some German villages and cities won't even allow a Crazy within city limits. As far as most Germans and Poles are concerned, only foolish wilderness folk, adventurers, street punks, D-Bees and monsters undergo the mind-altering process. Today, M.O.M. conversions are more available to people in North America than Europe — with two notable and dangerous exceptions – some body chop-shops in the Brodkil Empire and the legendary *Mindwerks*.

There have been rumors about a mysterious underground laboratory called **Mindwerks** since before the NGR came into power. The stories are reminiscent of 20th Century reports of flying saucers and alien abductions, in that many people have claimed to have witnessed or experienced strange events and experiments connected to Mindwerks, but none can prove the place really exists. Many of the abductions attributed to Mindwerks are explained away by simple solutions, like youngsters who have run away from home, kidnaping by gypsies, capture by Splugorth Slavers, and other types of misfortune where a person might go missing.

Many of the incredible tales surrounding Mindwerks tell of a vast underground complex located somewhere in *southern Poland,* the heart of the **Brodkil Empire**. It is said to have survived the Coming of the Rifts and is populated by insane scientists, cyborgs and robots from that bygone era. Stories persist about a mad scientist who has been conducting mind and body altering experiments on the local inhabitants for centuries. Others insist the legendary shop of horrors is located in an alien dimension and that victims are "Rifted" back and forth by sadistic D-Bees. Most tales tell of horrible experimentation performed on the abductees. Experiments that may be as simple as a physical examination and the taking of tissue or blood samples to exercises in torture, bionic reconstruction, and operations on the brain! Some rumors even suggest that the monsters of legendary Mindwerks eat brains! Inevitably, the experience drives most people insane, if they survive at all. The unfortunate ones who do survive are transformed into murderous fiends or inhuman monsters, often unleashed back into the world to wreak havoc or suffer persecution from those who fear them!

The stories consistently tell of a woman clad in silvery blue armor and who calls herself an *angel*. This unlikely "angel" has become known as the **Angel of Death,** or "Death Witch" as she is known by the Brodkil. The stories are varied. In some she is a beguiling, beautiful human woman with the soul of a demon. Other stories suggest she is a human witch, an inhuman shape changing monster who can make herself look human, or a demonic cyborg from another world. The most popular story among the gypsies and wilderness peasants says that the Angel of Death is an inhuman monster with the face of a beautiful woman but a body of living steel. She is said to speak in a commanding yet soft, gentle, sexy voice. Many report that she caresses and touches her victims in a loving manner, even as she cracks open their skull or performs some terrible act of torture. She tries to comfort those she experiments upon by telling them she's going to give them a great "gift" and/or make them "more powerful" than they could ever imagine. Of course, she ignores people who decline her "gift" or who plead for mercy and freedom. No captive is released until the Angel of Death has had her way with them.

The exact types of torture or experiment include every atrocity one can imagine, but the vast majority have to do with experiments on the *brain* or disfiguring operations, creating hideous *cyborgs*. Legend warns that the Angel of Death is evil incarnate, and that her "gifts of power," whether accepted willingly or forced upon helpless victims, bestow only madness, sorrow and death!

Over the last hundred years, the legends surrounding Mindwerks have taken on the same mystique and superstitious air of a fantasy world. The NGR dismisses it as pure fiction or peasant superstitions. They attribute the appearance of strange new M.O.M. implants in and around the Germany and Poland as the handiwork of body-chop-shops operating in the Brodkil Empire. Probably the product of monstrous D-Bees since most of these items are found in Brodkil and D-Bees.

As is so often the case, the legends behind Mindwerks are rooted in reality more than most civilized people would like to believe. Although clouded in superstition and masked in fantasy and wild supposition, Mindwerks and the Angel of Death *are* very real and represent a genuine danger to people in the area.

Over the last 26 years now, the Angel of Death has worked more closely with the Brodkil Empire than ever. She and her minions have equipped tens of thousands with bionic limbs, cyber-weapons and Psynetic M.O.M. brain implants.

Though the **Angel of Death** and her daughter, the **Angel of Vengeance**, may seem calculating and rational, they both have a psychotic hatred for most human life and little regard for life in general. That includes the Brodkil with whom they are so closely associated. The two women are obsessed with death, vengeance and their own evil machinations. Both have come to think of themselves as powerful demigods rather than human beings.

The Angel of Death is extremely sadistic and loves to torture other beings. This torture usually takes the form of mind-altering brain implants or bionic reconstruction. However, she has also been known to engage in pointless experiments and acts of torture to test a character's physical and mental endurance and to study the effects of her M.O.M. implants. She also enjoys cat and mouse games that test her cunning. However, she seldom takes foolish risks and NEVER jeopardizes the safety of Mindwerks (**Note:** Less than a dozen people outside of those who work and live at the Mindwerks complex know of its location).

The Angel of Death has continued her revolutionary work in the area of M.O.M. technology and has developed a number of implants that provide limited physical augmentation without the entire range of insanities that normally accompany the normal Crazy creation process. Even more impressive, she has developed M.O.M. implants that instill *psionic powers* on a much more controlled level than conventional M.O.M. augmentation. She calls these brain implants **psynetic** devices. Unfortunately, psynetic implants also cause mental aberrations and insanity. One such creation is a M.O.M. microchip of her own design that keeps the human brain from deteriorating with age. The process is a complete success, but only she knows the secret of its construction and surgical placement (those who worked on the project died centuries ago and computer records have vanished). Only the Angel of Death, Angel of Vengeance and a few experimental subjects have this implant. This psynetic implant may also be responsible, at least in part, for her own insanities. Other psynetic brain implants provide Telemechanics, Telepathy, psionic defense and other enhanced physical or psychic abilities.

If anything, by 109 P.A., the Angels of Death and Vengeance are crazier than ever. The Death Witch now refers to Brodkil as "her children," and the Angel of Vengeance is more bloodthirsty than ever. Both are worshiped as gods by hundreds of thousands of Brodkil, which has made the Angel of Death completely lose any sense of her human identity. As far as she is concerned, the New German Republic and humans, in general, are lab animals to be enslaved and caged by "her children," the Brodkil. This has created a new wrinkle that could, in the long run, doom the Brodkil and Gargoyle Empires, for the Angel of Death has decided the Gargoyles are taking advantage of her adopted Brodkil progeny.

This is a most unexpected turn of events, because as long as anyone can remember, the Gargoyles and Brodkil of Europe have fought side by side as brothers. Now, however, the Angel of Death says otherwise, and since so many worship her and Vengeance as "gods," many are stopping to listen and weigh her words. They are starting to believe her when she tells them they are better, smarter, and stronger than the Gargoyles, and that it is the Brodkil Empire who should defeat and conquer the NGR – without the Gargoyles.

While vast numbers of Brodkil remain loyal to the Gargoyles, an equally large number have withdrawn from the war to gather in Czechoslovakia to listen to the "Death-Mother God" and reconsider their position among their long-time Gargoyle allies and their place in the world. The strain these new ideas are placing on the Brodkil's relationship with the Gargoyles is already starting to show. Quarrels, brawls and even battles to the death are erupting throughout the Gargoyle Empire. Many are simple, sibling-like skirmishes instigated by comments about feelings of inequity or lack of respect or appreciation ("You can't treat me like that," or "I'm as good as you are – no, better," and "You would never have gotten this far without us." and so on). The bloodiest battles have been started when some Brodkil would mention something the Angel of Death has said, and a Gargoyle responds with a derogatory remark like, "the Death Witch is crazy." In fact, the Angel of Vengeance recently led 10,000 Brodkil against 6,000 Gargoyles because that particular Gargoyle army had mocked her and her mother, saying neither were gods and that they were both deranged. A total of 4891 Gargoyles were killed. Only those willing to get on their knees and scream to the heavens that Brodkil are superior to Gargoyles and that the twin Angels are, indeed, "gods," were allowed to live.

The triumph of the Brodkil over the Gargoyles in the battle led by the Angel of Vengeance has sent a shock wave through the Brodkil Empire, getting more of the monsters to reconsider their alliance with the Gargoyles and to wonder if the Angels are not gods after all. If this sentiment is allowed to continue, there could very well be a schism between Gargoyles and Brodkil, and possibly war. Ironically, it would be a war to see who wins the right to battle the NGR. Well, we did say the Angels of Death and Vengeance are crazy, didn't we? And don't forget, by this point, hundreds of thousands of Brodkil have undergone bionic and/or psynetic augmentation, making the violent and warlike Brodkil crazier than they were to begin with.

The Brodkil Empire

Czechoslovakia & Poland

The Brodkil Empire lays claim to all of the countries once known as Poland and Czechoslovakia, but really only dominates the northern half of *Czechoslovakia* and the southwestern *corner of Poland.*

Historically, the giant sub-demon warriors have always participated in military campaigns with their Gargoyle allies, and have seldom launched any major campaigns on their own. In fact, most humans and D-Bees believe that without the Gargoyles' help, the Brodkil would never have conquered the territories they now occupy. The Brodkil have continued to be quiet and reclusive, limiting their activities to small areas of Poland and northern Czechoslovakia and away from the NGR. Their numbers, when compared to the Gargoyles, are small. The NGR estimates not more than four or five million are scattered in seemingly disjointed tribes and communities. One NGR general has been so bold as to claim that he could destroy the Brodkil Empire in six months. Thus, the leaders of the NGR continue to focus on the Gargoyle Empire and ignore the Brodkil. A potentially fatal mistake.

What the New German Republic does not realize is that the Brodkil are more organized, aggressive and military oriented than the Gargoyles. They have been reclusive and nonthreatening for a reason. They've been plotting and preparing for years. Brodkil love technology. They have mastered the basic understanding and use of technology more completely than the Gargoyles or any other *supernatural* monsters that plague the region. This is especially true in regard to weapons and cybernetics! The Brodkil have always had a natural affinity for weapons and have adapted to high-tech gizmos with amazing intuition. They may not know how to turn on a television set or drive a car, but they know how to operate, clean and maintain energy weapons. At least half are armed with energy rifles and rail guns, and all fight with ferocity. In addition, Brodkil have always gotten along with other monster races and have had a formidable number of lesser demons, Simvan and other monstrous D-Bees join their armies.

The NGR also underestimates the Brodkil's true numbers, which are nearly twice what NGR intelligence believes they are, and more than a million hide, unaccounted for, in the Czech and Carpathian mountains. Tens of thousands have submitted to bionic augmentation, mainly a bionic limb or two, three or four bionic weapons and a half dozen implants or other mechanical improvements, and hundreds of thousands have undergone Mind Over Matter (M.O.M.) experiments, conversions and augmentation. The person responsible for the mechanical augmenting of the Brodkil is the insane Angel of Death, the mad genius behind *Mindwerks.* The NGR, the people of Poland and surrounding countries have no idea what's in store for them, because these *augmented Brodkil* are unlike anything they have ever encountered. Most of those currently fighting with the Gargoyle Empire are un-enhanced or only have one bionic limb with one or two built-in weapons.

Meanwhile, the Brodkil are being hyped and brainwashed by the Angel of Death who has convinced half of them, about 4 million, that she *is* a god – their loving Death Mother – and that they are superior to humans and Gargoyles alike. That the Brodkil need no longer play second fiddle to the Gargoyle Empire. She preaches that with her godly guidance and the power she bestows upon them via her cybernetics, and with the Angel of Vengeance to lead them into battle, it is time they ascended to the heights of greatness always meant for them! The Angel of Death has convinced her worshipers that they and they alone are destined to conquer the New German Republic and that Gargoyles are to bow before the Brodkil Empire and become its second-class citizens. Thus, before the Brodkil Empire can invade and claim the NGR for themselves, they must first put the Gargoyles in their place. Brimming with excitement like anxious children, four million warriors are ready to "enforce their will" over the Gargoyles. While half of the Brodkil (approximately another 4 million) do NOT accept the *Angels of Death and Vengeance* as their "gods" nor believe the Gargoyles are their enemies, the Brodkil are infamous for being easily swayed. When the millions fighting with the Gargoyle Empire see the augmented legions rise up to challenge the Gargoyles, odds are that 1D4x10+45% will defect to fight with their Brodkil brothers.

The Gargoyles are not going to submit to the Brodkil, and the ensuing battle will be horrendous.

If there is any good news, it is for the New German Republic, who can sit back for a year or so to watch their two most fearsome enemies turn on each other like mad dogs. With the insane Angel of Death to spur them on, and the Angel of Vengeance as the Brodkil's front-line General, the Brodkil will fight to the death and fight much longer than any sane person would ever consider. As Brodkil casualties stack up, it will only serve to strengthen the angels of doom's resolve and they will spur on their "children" with the promise of triumph through divine fate.

The Brodkil-Gargoyle war *should* decimate both Empires, with the Brodkil getting the worst of it. Ironically, if the Brodkil had remained an ally of the Gargoyle Empire, together, they would have been the second greatest military power in Europe, second only to the besieged NGR. Together they very well might have crushed the New German Republic, but divided and at each other's throats, the NGR gets a new lease on life and may be able to press their advantage to wipe out most of the Brodkil and cripple the Gargoyle Empire for years to come. How it will all shake out is yet to be seen. Meanwhile, the Brodkil rise against their ancient Gargoyle allies with dreams of conquest and power dancing through their Mindwerks wired brains.

The Gargoyle Empire

The Gargoyle Empire includes all of the Alps (Gargoyles love mountains) as their primary homeland, but they and their minions (Brodkil, Simvan Monster Riders, and others) dominate the countries once known as the northern-most **tip of Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, southern Czechoslovakia,** and **northern Yugoslavia,** as well as having anomalous communities occupying numerous cities throughout Europe, especially in France (including Paris), Belgium, and Italy.

Calling any of the Gargoyles' strongholds or occupation zones "cities" is a bit of a stretch, however, because there is not much in the way of a culture or civilization. There are no institutions of learning, science, medicine, manufacturing, or farming, or cultural socialization. Any actual commerce or places of business are run by outside third parties or allied minion races. There are few laws and little sense of history. The Gargoyle communities function much more like a military camp of monstrous warriors than a true nation or society. This is understandable considering Gargoyles are sub-demons who, as a race, have been subjugated as warrior slaves to countless greater demons, alien intelligences, gods, and even powerful dragons and sorcerers.

The Gargoyle Empire of Europe is something *new*, a horde of millions of Gargoyles seeking to establish their own, independent nation. A nation of Gargoyles, ruled by Gargoyles, and where other lesser creatures, like humans, serve them. Unfortunately, it is the sub-demons' aggressive, predatory instincts and supernatural nature that compel them to be conquerors and seek to subjugate humans. For the Gargoyles, they *must* be able to conquer and enslave "humans" to earn any respect among the more powerful beings who normally enslave Gargoyles. At least that's how they see things. It just happens that the human nation the Gargoyle Empire seeks to conquer is, arguably, "the" greatest technological human power on Earth.

To recognize the threat the Gargoyle Empire represents, one must understand the nature of Gargoyles themselves. Compared to humans, they are powerful, supernatural *giants* who possess inhuman strength, limited psionic powers and some degree of magic. Like so many other demonic beings and creatures of magic, Gargoyles traditionally rely on their supernatural powers and size. In this case, they also rely on their vast numbers to overwhelm their enemies. As a rule, they never develop an understanding of science or learn to use technology; as slaves such items are provided for them by their masters, and in most cases, their brute strength and powers are enough. Like birds, they congregate in great flocks that can number into the millions. Also like birds, Gargoyles are attracted to flocks, instinctively joining them and following wherever they may lead. If the flock travels to a particular place, the majority follows. If the flock engages in war, the majority of its members join the battle. This often creates the illusion of leadership and organization, but in reality, there is little structure to Gargoyle society other than the fact that they flock together and get swept up in the frenzy of the crowd.

When Gargoyles settle at one location, they establish a dwelling place or zone of habitation rather than an actual city. Of course there are exceptions, for example, the Gargoyles of Atlantis, under the guidance and rule of the Splugorth, are more organized and even have a few streets, shops and coliseum style arenas. By comparison, the Gargoyles of Europe are far more like winged barbarians and primitive. Still, there are things consistent to most Gargoyle communities that are exemplified by the monsters of the Gargoyle Empire. A typical community/city is located at a fixed gathering place, and whenever possible, they inhabit mountainous regions. Here the majority of the flock (75%) congregates. Gargoyle communities, whether they are located in the forest or the mountains, are filled with totem poles, megaliths and towers made of stones and debris. Gargoyles

mark the borders of their domains with totem poles, giving fair warning to travelers and foolish intruders.

The term city "area" is used, because unless the creatures inhabit a conquered city or ruins erected by some other life form, they do not build roads, houses or buildings. Instead, they live in the trees and/or build a central area filled with tall pillars, stone megaliths and debris towers on which to perch. Giant boulders and trees are used to make totem poles and megaliths, but everything is used to make debris towers, including rocks, trees, metal girders, mangled and captured vehicles, chunks of robots, pieces of buildings, bones and anything else that can be used as building material. These towers typically stand 100 to 500 feet tall (30.5 m to 152 m) and have many horizontal beams that serve as perches for the creatures. Totem poles and pillars seldom exceed 100 feet (30.5 m).

A city "area" will also have several gladiatorial arenas (typically just a pit surrounded by perches), hunting lodges, metalsmiths and a hatchery. The arena is the site of festivals, games, gambling, physical contests, wrestling, duels, torture, gladiatorial combat, and all manner of blood sports. A Gargoyle hunting lodge is typically a cave, series of large huts, cavern, valley, pit or area where the warriors gather to boast of their triumphs, exchange tales of combat, show off their spoils and trade items. Any merchant shops, boarding houses, and other buildings are the handiwork of non-Gargoyle allies and slaves allowed to live with the Gargoyles. Even the wingless and smaller Gurgoyles tend to live in trees and elevated structures, although they may also gather in caves and tunnels. Any road or pathway is simply the result of the wear caused by being trampled.

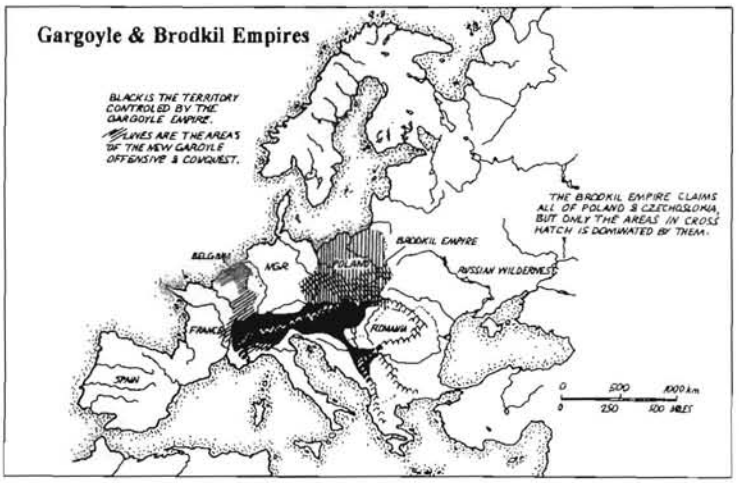
One of the unique elements about the Gargoyle Empire of Europe is that it has such a strong leader in **Emperor Zerstrun** and that he has gotten so many of them to accept and use modern weapons. Under his guidance, they have gone so far as to hire high-tech mercenaries, designers, builders and mechanics to build and maintain basic weapons and even made deals with the likes of the *Phoenix Empire* and the *Splugorth Traders on the Ivory Coast*, both in Africa, to create weapons and body armor specifically to accommodate Gargoyle and Gurgoyle tastes and physiology. With some prodding by Splugorth agents and the self-serving Emperor of the Phoenix Empire, the Gargoyles have actually accepted a small number of combat *robots* as part of their arsenal. Admittedly, the Phoenix Empire and Splugorth provide these items at a low (but profitable) price simply to instigate trouble in Europe and to keep the New German Republic from expanding into a greater world power than they already are. Both the tech suppliers accept trade in captured tech-goods and weapons, but primarily slaves. The Gargoyles capture and trade slaves for weapons and equipment. Note, however, while the Gargoyle Empire has accepted a few giant robots, most of the equipment is fairly basic, and even M.D.C. body armor is not *environmental* armor. This includes energy axes, Vibro-Blades, Neural Whips, rail guns, energy rifles, plasma weapons and explosives, mostly Kittani designs. Basic field equipment includes such notable items as radios and camera/optical equipment, and detection devices. In most instances, the Gargoyles and their minions could never design, build or even repair a device as simple as a flashlight, but they know how to use and maintain simple weapons and equipment. Mindwerks has also been supplying basic weapons and gear, but mainly to Brodkil and only Brodkil have benefitted from M.O.M. implants and bionics.

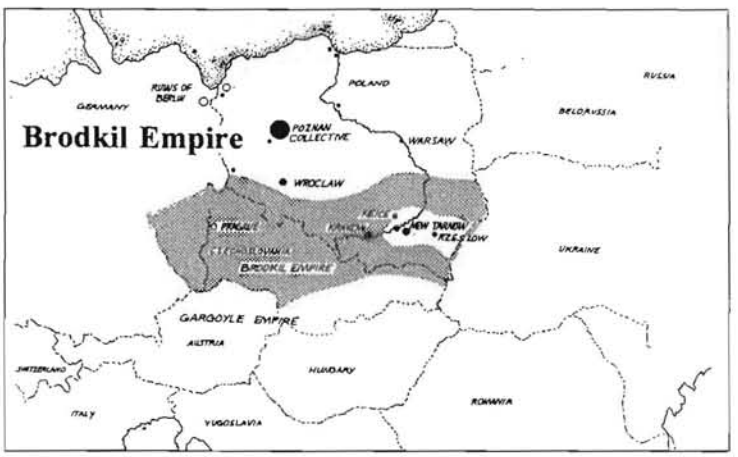
The members of the Gargoyle Empire have become a dangerous anomaly. For the first time in eons, they have established a more organized society and have adopted some of the ways of humans, using weapons and machines modeled after man's. Although this is unusual, it fits with the Gargoyle's instinctive pattern for "survival of the fittest." Their adaptation to using high-tech items makes them stronger and more dangerous than ever.

Gargoyle vs Brodkil. Lord and Emperor Zerstrun is only now beginning to realize that there is an escalating problem with his Brodkil brothers, thanks to the mythical Angel of Death. It took the slaughter of one of his field armies and the survivors limping back with tales about the Angel of Vengeance to make him realize something is seriously amiss. Emperor Zerstrun realizes that unless something is done quickly, he will lose his vital allies and may earn a new enemy to boot. The problem is, most Gargoyles *do* consider themselves superior to the Brodkil. (Most of the wingless Gurgoyles consider themselves equals.) So Emperor Zerstrun can either let the squabbling and infighting continue until the Brodkil break from them completely or try to rectify the situation. It will be a tough sell to get Gargoyles to publicly recognize Brodkil as equals. For one thing, it will cause the Gurgoyles to believe they too are equals in the Gargoyle hierarchy, and that is never going to happen. For another, not more than half of the Gargoyles would ever comply with such a request. In the alternative, Emperor Zerstrun is instructing his Gargoyle legions to "avoid" altercations and challenges by Brodkil, and to acknowledge the Angels of Death and Ven-

geance as Brodkil gods. Meanwhile, he is considering whether or not he should track down the legendary Mindwerks and destroy these two "gods" before they completely turn the Brodkil against them. That, too, is a risky proposition, for if his assassins should fail, there will be hell to pay, and if they succeed, the Brodkil may still turn on them or lose purpose. Like her or not, the Angel of Death has unified and motivated the Brodkil, as well as bestowed them with their bionics and brain implants. It is a very delicate and perplexing situation. Little does he know that four million Brodkil march on the Gargoyle Empire even as he and his advisors seek a compromise to the crippling situation.

Regardless of the Brodkil betrayal, the Gargoyle Empire will continue to make their bid to conquer France and continue to mount light raids against the NGR. However, the heaviest fighting with the NGR will now take place in and around France. The war against the Brodkil will sap the other half of the Gargoyles' manpower and resources, reducing the pressure they normally exert against the NGR's lines of defense to a fraction of what it has been for the last 30 years. This gives the NGR a much needed chance to rest, regroup and develop new and improved strategies and weapons for use against their monstrous opponents.





The New Russian Frontier

Since the old Russian civilization was quite literally obliterated, Russia has returned to its natural state. The steppe again stretches from the Ukraine to the Orient, and the once great cities and expansive farmlands are covered by forest. The old cities are gone. Even the ruins of many famous cities have been reduced to rubble, overgrown with vegetation to the degree that one can stand right on top of it and not know that anything was ever there other than wilderness. In other cases, like **Moscow**, there is only an empty crater to mark its passing, and places like **Leningrad/St. Petersburg** have been buried by volcanic lava and ash.

For all intents and purposes, one can think of all of **Western Russia**, from the borders of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and the Barents Sea to the Ural Mountains, as heavy, mixed forests, turning into mostly coniferous forests (pine, fir trees, etc.) in the northern half, and mixed light forests, broken by grassy plains, and pastoral lands in the southern half. The southernmost part turns into steppe/grasslands, and steppe turns into mountains and deserts.

Amidst this mostly forested wilderness, sprinkle in scattered, low-tech villages, farms, and the rare city, plus the occasional tribe of nomads, gang of bandits and War Camp, and you have an excellent picture of Western Russia. Oh, and this is the populated third of the country! East of the Ural Mountains is the Siberian wilderness with a population density of roughly one human per hundred square miles (259 square km).

Western Russia (the "populated" part of the country) alone covers well over 1.5 million square miles and is the single largest component of post-Rifts Europe. Before the Coming of the Rifts, it was home to the New Soviet Nation, the government that took the place of the old U.S.S.R./Soviet Union a generation or two before the Great Cataclysm.

The bottom line, however, is that even the comparatively heavily populated western quarter of Rifts Russia is predominantly forest and wilderness. It is also a very dangerous place, the abode of many forms of supernatural evil. These vast tracts of wilderness have few roads or trails, and even during daylight hours, those unfamiliar with the wilderness are likely to get lost. At night, the forests take on a sinister appearance and travelers can get lost easily, or worse, fall into a ravine, swamp, or bog. They are also home to the gray wolf, tiger, bear, and other predators (including human ones like bandits, cultists, Necromancers and Witches). Since the Coming of the Rifts, the ancient woodland spirits and monsters like the shaggy, size-changing Leshii, the mischievous Domovoy, the mournful seductresses known as the Rusalka, Yikhor, vampires, shape changers, Faeries, ghosts, gods and dragons, have returned, along with a host of new creatures, demons, Witches, D-Bees and alien beasts. Few common folk will enter the forests at night, and most avoid traveling too deep into the forest even during the day.

Many are the tales of ghosts, woodland spirits, monsters, demons and unearthly dangers as told by cow herders who take their animals to graze in woodland glens, and woodsmen, lumberjacks, Huntsmen, Reavers, War-Knights, Ecto-Hunters,

Demon Slayers and travelers who lingered there till dusk. All people who travel too deep into the woods, where deep shadows cover the ground and the thick trees shield the darkness under their branches, even during the day, are at risk. For it is in the shadows and the darkness that the monsters hide during the day and venture from during the night.

The Role of the Warlords. Before one can understand how the Warlords maintain order and impose their wills over the people of Russia, one must have some knowledge of Post-Cataclysmic Russian civilization. Unlike Germany and Poland, Russia was devastated by the Great Cataclysm, the eruption of ley lines, the appearance of magic and demons, and the Eighty Years of Winter. Although some high levels of technology survived or have been rediscovered and restored, the vast majority of Russian people are low-tech. In many ways, their lifestyle has reverted to the pastoral and agriculture-based simplicity of the old "Kievan Rus" of the 9th through 13th Centuries. The majority are farmers who till the soil or raise grazing animals, others hunt and trap, or engage in logging and woodworking, while those along trade routes or in the big cities may be merchants, traders, laborers and other occupations appropriate to that environment. Thus, while a farmer may carry a laser rifle or Vibro-Sword for protection, he is still a humble man working the land through his (and his family's) physical toil, sweat, and heartfelt efforts.

Although there are a vast number of tiny to small, self-sufficient communities, there is no central government, kingdom or ruling body. That's where the Warlords come in. They are actually a military aristocracy that help maintain the status quo, as well as keep their Sphere of Influence safe. Not only do the Warlords' legions of warriors hunt and destroy dragons, demons and monsters that threaten the region, they also help to keep the peace among the many tiny human communities. The Warlords' Camps help settle disputes, investigate murder and serious or strange crimes, administer punishment and extract justice (at least, as they see it). As one might expect, this is done through intimidation, extortion and military force.

The Matter of D-Bees. Fraternization with D-Bees is discouraged, but stemming the tide of inhuman (but not quite demonic) immigrants into Russia, especially in the Steppes, seems impossible. D-Bees are generally treated as nomadic foreigners with no place and no rights in Russia. One way the Warlords and common folk have decided to "control" the D-Bee population is to enslave them. In this way, they are not citizens or Russians, but lowly slaves forced to serve Mother Russia and Her people. However, tiny communities of D-Bees (mostly farms to small villages of a few hundred) often take root. Depending on their current mood, most Warlord Camps and humans ignore these places, as if pretending they didn't exist makes a real difference. Some members of the Warlords' Camps may even fight to protect the village of inhumans from supernatural evil. However, they are just as likely to let the village suffer, or slaughter the people and raze the village along with the demonic menace that plagues it.

Enter the Warlords. The Warlords stride Rifts Earth like legendary heroes from epic myth. All are larger than life figures enshrouded by scores of stories about their wisdom, strength, cunning and accomplishments. As one must expect when it comes to "living legends," the validity of such tales may lie in question. Some are true, others are legendary backgrounds fabricated to unify and inspire the clans that compose the Warlords' legions. Most of the tales spun by the Warlords themselves are wild extrapolations and exaggerations based on real events and heritage, or carefully contrived stories to validate or support a Warlord's rule, rights or motives. Others are complete works of fiction that blossom from the fertile imaginations of peasants and nomads and are born from respect, awe, rumor, innuendo, hearsay and fear.

The outside world typically sees each Warlord as nothing more than a brutal barbarian who lives by the age-old system of conquest and tribute – a bloodthirsty and ignorant savage who engages in a rampage of death and mindless destruction for his own personal gain and satisfaction. The facts dispute this. Each Warlord is a strong and capable leader to whom others gravitate, and who is accepted as an ultimate leader. Among the Warlords, some are wise and reasonably benevolent, others are military and/or political geniuses, while still others are ruthless brutes who maintain power through fear and violence, but none are ignorant savages. All command a fairly complex military society, have successfully driven demons and hordes of monsters from the lands they dominate, and maintain order and control over the warriors of their Camps and the people subjugated to them.

To some degree, each of the Warlords is motivated by a lust for power, greed, heroic glory, and (perhaps misguided) patriotism. As patriots, all Warlords sincerely wish to see Russia restored to human hands where it can achieve new greatness. It is true that the Warlords and their Camps can be brutal, bigoted, and murderous, especially toward nonhumans. It is also true D-Bees are often seen as monstrous invaders, and the Warlords and their Camps have been known to slaughter entire clans, tribes and villages (taking what spoils of war they can) in the name of liberty and patriotism. Yet, whether one regards the Warlords and their War Camps as heroes or murderous barbarians, none can deny that the Warlords are dedicated to the relentless battle to rid Mother Russia of supernatural evil and terrible monsters. More important, they have instilled this way of life into the warrior clans of their War Camps.

Destroying demons, dragons, ghosts, and all monsters, as well as maintaining (relative) peace and prosperity for the Russian people is the mandate that the War Camps live by. The Warlords dispatch the members of their War Camps into smaller groups — raiding bands, squads, platoons, companies, and battalions — to patrol the land, defend the people, collect tribute/taxes, and root out demons and dangerous supernatural forces and drive them out or destroy them utterly. While each Warlord and his War Camp has the greatest presence and dominion over their respective Sphere of Influence, they often travel as small bands into the Spheres of other Warlords. Despite the rivalry between the Warlords and their respective camps of loyal followers, these knights and warriors will stop to defend any Russian (human) from the supernatural, regardless of his loyalties. Furthermore, the Warlords have been known to join forces to battle grave dangers from a common enemy, such as demonic invading hordes. They are warriors born. The new knights of the Realm — no, the saviors of Mother Russia!

See **Rifts® World Book 17: Warlords of Russia™** for much more information about the country, the Warlords, people, places and cyborgs.

Gypsies

Gypsies are human and D-Bee nomads who wander all over Europe and as far east as Mongolia and northern China. However, they feel most at home in the countries of France, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Poland, Hungary, and Russia. See **Rifts® World Book 18: Mystic Russia™** for Gypsy O.C.C.s, new types of magic, more detailed world information and 28 Russian demons and spirits.

The European Wilderness

Magic and the supernatural are commonplace in the wilderness. Fairies can be seen playing in fields of flowers, birds share the sky with gryphons, dragons and Gargoyles, and monsters roam the land. Some of these monsters are animals from other worlds who have come to Earth through dimensional Rifts. Others are intelligent but inhuman looking aliens from other dimensions. Some have been torn from their homes by dimensional anomalies. Other are runaway slaves while still others are dimensional travelers, explorers and merchants. Some come in peace. Other come as invaders or tormentors.

The majority of Europe is unpopulated wild lands. Here and there are lightly populated pockets of civilization or barbarian tribes, many with diverse peoples and cultures. Most are D-Bees and most are of a low technology. The horde of millions of Gargoyles is an anomaly. Rarely has any one creature come to dominate one part of the world. However, adventurers can stumble across supernatural menaces and creatures of magic just about anywhere in Europe (and most of Rifts Earth for that matter). There are thousands of tiny kingdoms and millions of tiny villages, inhabited, ruled or plagued by demons and monsters. Vampires, werewolves, hell hounds, ghouls, poltergeists, entities, dragons, giant worms, lesser demons, demon lords and many other horrific creatures stalk the people of Europe. Even god-like beings who claim to be the deities of ancient myth, sometimes helping, sometimes hurting, and sometimes creating mischief or extracting their own inhuman pleasures may be encountered.

For the most part, the demons, gods and supernatural menaces are lone villains or gather in small groups. For example, an enterprising team of adventurers or mercenaries may come across a human or D-Bee village enslaved by a dragon or demon. The creature is likely to be powerful, but is not likely to have more than a dozen or so supernatural minions at its command. It doesn't need an army because it possesses incredible magic and/or supernatural powers. Thus, the creature and a handful of superhuman minions are the equivalent of a small human army or a platoon of robots or 'Borgs. Ordinary people don't have a chance against them, but highly skilled modern soldiers or a powerful group of adventurers may be a different story.

Asia

The Russian Coast

The coastal area of the once mighty Russian Empire was humbled by the unforgiving Pacific Ocean during the Great Cataclysm. Huge sections of the coast were reclaimed by the ocean and submerged underwater. Decades later, the new coastline is dotted with fishing villages, many of which are no more than shanty towns that survive by luck. Most of these settlements have no industrial level technology, although a handful have rediscovered steam power and the basics of locomotion. The average fisherman uses a simple wooden or scrap metal boat with a sail. Only a couple have boats with low horsepower motors and one or two Pre-Rifts trawlers.

Several small pirate organizations ply the waters along the Russian coast and down into the Sea of Japan and the China Sea. Most of these are small operations with 1D4 vessels to their name, none of which could survive a journey deep into the Pacific. Thus, they cling to the coastline, conduct coastal raids, and prey on fishing boats, travelers and other pirates. Most do not have high performance assault ships or great magic, so they rely on souped-up ships with light armor plating and a couple of weapon systems. About half have 1D6 Water or Air Warlocks on board (average level 1D4+1). When combating large, determined enemies, the only chance these pitiful vessels have is dumb luck or the mercy of their opponent. The Horune have sunken scores of these ships and sell the crews into slavery.

Note: Human and demon pirates from China, Korea and Taiwan also sail these waters, and along with the monstrous Horune, are the real "sharks" of the seas.

China

China remains one of the most mysterious places on Earth. When the Rifts came, the world lost contact with China for nearly 300 years. Even today it remains a place of myth, legend and horrific stories. The Warlords of Russia avoid it like the plague, claiming it has become "Hell on Earth," and overrun by demons. Considering how common demons are in Russia, for them to consider China "overrun" by them is saying quite a lot.

No Westerner is believed to have visited China since the Great Cataclysm, at least not visited and returned to tell the tale, not even Erin Tarn. If the stories are true, China has somehow merged with the ten planes of Chinese Hells, or at the very least, has become the "playground" of the *Yama Kings*, Lords of the Chinese Hells. It is said that the Yama Kings have managed to slip the bonds of Hell and bring them boiling to the realm of mortals. Here in China, the demonic Kings solicit warriors and followers, establish new kingdoms in the realm of man, and fight amongst themselves for positions of power and glory. Constant are the squabbles, pacts, betrayals and war between the domains of the Yama Kings – places where the dead are said to walk amongst the living and where the monstrous is commonplace. So terrible are these "shadows of Hell" that thousands of peasants and heroes alike flock to the *Dragonlands* for protection. For though a dragon will expect servitude and treat mortals as lowly peasants, at least one is "free" and not a slave or pris-

oner in an *Army of the Dead.* If Erin Tarn should ever visit, China will remind her a great deal of the alien world known as *Wormwood*, a planet dominated by demonic beings. **Note:** The full saga of Rifts China is planned to appear in one or two future world books currently being developed and probably looking at a 2003 release date. Yeah, we know you can barely wait, but we promise you won't be disappointed.

India

India of Rifts Earth is another place of mystery with which the rest of the planet has lost touch. The **Horune Pirates** are said to have secret pirate coves hidden along its coast and even a great city somewhere on the edge of the jungle. Ancient gods and spirits are also said to have returned, and the old gods sometimes return to hunt, play and wage war against each other. Truth is, no one knows.

Korea

The country that was once the Korean Empire was devastated by the Coming of the Rifts more than most, leaving less than 3 percent of the population to survive the tragic events of the Great Cataclysm. Since that time, the few surviving humans have banded together in tiny villages scattered throughout the country, mainly along the coast. Along the stretch of coastline, there are dozens of shanty towns filled with fishermen and their families. These towns are similar to those found along the Russian coast except that they are even more impoverished and lack any type of advanced technology.

Ninety-eight percent of Korea is an empty wilderness that even the demon hordes of China have not yet invaded. Magic and the supernatural are commonplace in the wilderness. It is here that the majority of monsters and mystical beings are said to make their homes. Among the creatures living in the wild are Faerie Folk, Tengu, Goblin Spiders, Imps, Goblins, Trolls, Elementals, and tribes of Oni (Japanese and Chinese demons). Even the gods are said to visit this comparatively quiet wilderness.

A meager population of as many as six million humans *may* live in the entire country, with three times as many D-Bees, but they are spread throughout the region and there are parts of the country where mortals have not tread in hundreds of years. Tiny villages are found throughout the wilderness where the people rely on farming for their livelihood. They are subject to constant attacks by supernatural predators and raids from pirates and bandits, so few of these villages have any hope for a peaceful or prosperous existence.

There is one area, centered around the former city of **Seoul**, that has managed to prosper. A cluster of more than sixty villages are found in a 50 mile (80 km) radius where the humans enjoy safety from the demons and monsters that plague the rest of Asia. Rumor has it that the territory is kept safe by the presence of an incredibly powerful warrior known to the people as *Master Khan.*

Khan is actually an ancient *Chiang-Ku* dragon of considerable power. Disguised as a human priest, the dragon built a monastery where he began to instruct selected humans in the martial and mystic arts. Not only are they trained to fight, but those monks who prove themselves worthy are given magic tattoos, creating a force of martial artist Tattooed Men. There is a total defense force of 2,000 Tattooed warrior monks to protect the entire population of 98,000, in addition to Khan and a few other supernatural allies (including a pair of 8th level Kumo-Mi dragons). Though they are outnumbered by the surrounding monster population, they are still tough enough (or beneath notice) that the local demon lords have not bothered to attack them.

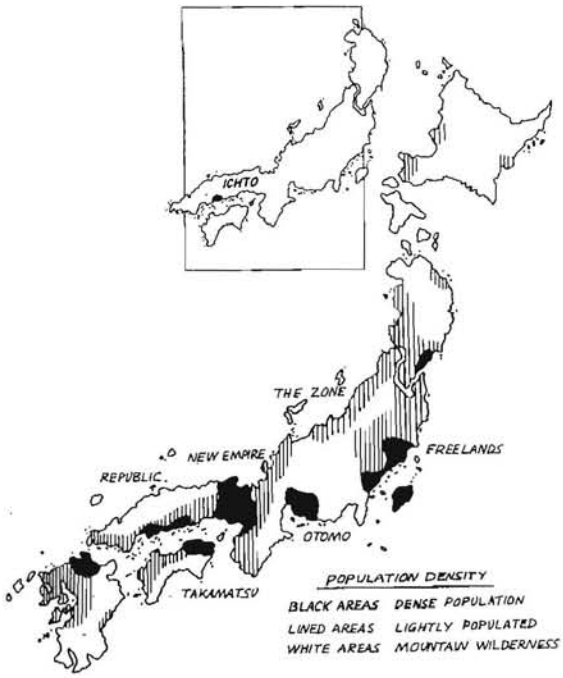
Taiwan

The people on the island of Taiwan were completely obliterated in the Great Cataclysm. It has only been in the last hundred years that nonhumans have begun to repopulate the island.

The Japanese Islands

For travelers from more distant lands to reach Japan, they must travel through the wilds of Europe and then monster ridden Russia or the Middle East (old Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan) and then through or around China. Harsh wilderness, deserts, and mountains bar every step of the way. The only alternative is the equally dangerous trek through Burma, Thailand, and Vietnam and then along the coast of China or through Indonesia. No matter how one travels, at some point one must brave the sea, whether it be the *China Sea, Sea of Japan, Sea of Okhotsk* or the *Pacific Ocean!*

In the days before the Great Cataclysm and the transformation of Earth into a dimensional nexus, water or air travel were the easy alternatives to crossing thousands of miles of land and hostile terrain. However, in the Time of the Rifts, such travel on



the open seas or vast blue skies is suicide. Storms, mystic energy, ley line disturbances, or strange dimensional anomalies, can destroy a vessel or send it to another place or time before the traveler knows what hit him. Furthermore, countless sea serpents, flying predators, monsters, dimensional raiders, D-Bees, aliens, demons, gods and supernatural beings lay in wait for victims foolish enough to sail in the open, away from the shelter and hiding places on land, and strength of numbers. Less than 30% of most airborne or seafaring travelers ever reach their destination, and many of them don't arrive in one piece. Pirates and seafaring people around the world tend to stay near the coast or hop from one island to the next, rather than brave the open seas. With the exception of the *Horune Pirates, Splugorth* and *New Navy*, sailing the oceans is virtually nonexistent in most places in the world. It is the relative safety offered by the multitude of islands around Japan, China and Indonesia that makes "island hopping" attractive and pirating, freebooting and sailing common to this part of the world. Only the Horune Pirates and the Splugorth, both with their magic ships and inhuman powers, sail the deep oceans of the world with comparative impunity. Yet even these masters of the open seas tend to stay in familiar waters and congregate in the greatest numbers around island clusters.

Under the Sea is an entirely different world. Here too are masters of the seas and mysterious creatures and civilizations. The elegant and powerful Pneuma-Biforms, intelligent dolphins, Whale Singers, Lemurians, Sea Titans, Amphib mutants, and D-Bees add to its wonders. There are budding aquatic kingdoms like *Tritonia*, and the warlike, yet benevolent, forces of *Nemo-2* and his *New Navy*. Even the NGR has begun to explore the ocean depths in submarines and new wonders created by Triax Industries. Of course, there are evil and dangerous creatures under the waves as well as above them. The *Lord of the Deep* and its devouring minions, the invading and enslaving alien Naut'Yll, Horune Pirates, Gene-Splicers, Shadow Sharks, Storm Riders, horrific mutants, dead pools, shimmering water and *dimensional triangles* all lurk in the depths below.

The Japanese Islands. One must remember that most of the planet is a hostile wilderness with only pockets of human or D-Bee civilizations. Some of these pockets are nice, peaceful happy places, but others are frightening and terrible. Japan, paradoxically, is both peaceful and safe, yet at the same time, a hotbed of conflict and turmoil.

The islands of Japan are extremely isolated from the rest of the world, particularly from distant Europe and the Americas. Remember, long distance travel, especially by air or sea, is incredibly dangerous. Ground travel has its advantages and disadvantages, but is painfully slow and fraught with danger. Except for a handful of technological or magical nations, most methods of travel are roughly equal to that of the middle ages, with a great deal more monsters, bandits and dangers lurking between point A and point B.

Most of *Russia, Mongolia, China, India*, and *Asia* are vast wildernesses dominated by monsters. The level of technology is archaic, in some cases only a notch above *Stone Age*. Most population centers are the domiciles of D-Bees, Oni or other supernatural creatures hostile toward humans. The few independent human civilizations that have managed to survive are suspicious of strangers and fear technology, or are aggressive warriors, conquerors or freebooters who prey upon their fellow humans. Such is the situation for Japan. The handful of free humans around them, mainly Chinese and Koreans, are ancient rivals, new rivals, mercenaries, bandits and pirates who plunder the Japanese islands and the coast of the mainland for their resources, slaves, and booty.

When the ley lines seethed with energy and the Rifts came, Japan was irrevocably changed in other ways. **Honshu** was split in half and **southern Hokkaido** was splintered. **Tokyo** and much of the coastline were devoured by the rising ocean. New islands appeared, old islands disappeared, and the courses of rivers and mountain ranges were altered. Old holy places and locations like the **Dragon's Triangle** (Japan's version of the *Bermuda Triangle*) rippled with mystic energy, creating dimensional anomalies, terrible storms, and portals to other worlds. Rifts in space and time led to alien dimensions and the domains of the gods and supernatural beings. Creatures from ancient Japanese myth and legend, like the dragon, Tengu and Oni, once again walked the Earth and made Japan their home!

These lines of energy, the Dragon's Triangle, the storms they caused and the creatures they unleashed, have served to *isolate* Japan from the rest of the world. Thus, the western world knows little, if anything, about Japan. Most tend to associate it with demon-infested China, a distant and foreboding land, best avoided and forgotten. As a result, even 22 years after the pre-Rifts cities of *Hiroshima, Kure, Iwakuni*, and *Ichto* reappeared in all their technological splendor, the world is none the wiser.

Kyoto and the New Empire

Kyoto, the Holy City, was completely demolished during the Great Cataclysm, but has been rebuilt as the new cultural center of the Japanese traditionalists and capital city of the *New Empire*.

In the heart of the city is a 1,000 foot (305 m) tall **Millennium Tree**. The Sacred Tree possesses magical powers and has served as an anchor for human civilization, especially in the early days. Its magical protection and "gifts" were what helped the survivors of the Great Cataclysm fend off the demons and

other supernatural horrors that plague the island. It was around the mystical tree that a great city grew and the dream of the "New Empire" arose. Other cities and shogunates developed in the region, crisscrossing the greatest concentration of ley lines in all of Japan, but none prospered or grew as quickly as Kyoto. Thousands flocked to the incredible tree, causing scores of villages to appear like sprouts. Several old and new religious orders who worship or revere the Millennium Tree began to develop and add spiritual and fighting strength to the community. With time, these and many of the surrounding villages, cities and kingdoms united as the New Empire.

Today, Kyoto is filled with temples, shrines and monasteries visited by holy men and pilgrims from throughout the Japanese islands and even China and Korea. The survivors of the Great Cataclysm have rebuilt a feudal society from scratch, relearning how to make primitive tools and weapons, and living off the land. In several instances, ancient gods and good spirits sent heroes and magic weapons, and made a few personal appearances to save the people from demons and other horrors. This combined with the vast amount of magic energy and a return to spiritualism, convinced many that they had *erred* in their old lives; that they had lost touch with the spirits of Japan, and that this was their chance to rebuild a new and better Japan by returning to magic, nature, spirits and feudalism.

Every aspect of the *New Empire's* culture is based on the "old ways." Thus, the Shinto belief is the dominant religion and has fostered a return to the belief in magic and spirits, as well as a return to the martial arts (along with mystic powers gained from them), and all manner of self-improvement and mastery of oneself and spirit through meditative reflection, willpower and discipline.

Anti-technology is fervent in the New Empire even among those who are not strict believers of Shinto. All machine technology above the equivalent of 16th Century Japan is rejected – the priests ultimately deciding what is acceptable and what is not. Even black powder guns and steam power are seen as bad and a plunge into decadence and inevitable destruction.

The New Empire operates as a *benevolent military dictatorship* similar to feudal Japan before the Coming of the Rifts. It is a pyramid power structure with the wealthy and educated landowners and the military at the top and the average citizen at the bottom. This dictates the rights of individuals and their status through the institution of several social classes. Equality between the classes does not exist, but the members of all groups have accepted their roles in the firmly entrenched socioeconomic system. Duty and responsibility are the cement which binds the classes together. Individuals are less self-serving and more community oriented, accepting their role and fulfilling it to the best of their ability. Revolution is virtually unheard of in the New Empire due to this highly developed sense of duty.

The Republic of Japan

One of the strangest phenomena that occurred during the initial Coming of the Rifts was the dimensional displacement of several major Japanese cities. Four major cities vanished, people, buildings and all, only to reappear out of the blue some 275 years later, reappearing in the year 87 P.A.! These cities are throwbacks to the so-called Golden Age of man with the original humans from that era. Although hundreds of years had passed, to the inhabitants it only seemed like a few days. Armed with the knowledge and technology of the past, they have been able to adapt to the primitive Japan of Rifts Earth and instantly became regional powerhouse kingdoms. Japan's isolation has kept the rest of the world from learning of their existence, giving them time to learn about Rifts Earth, magic, and monsters, and adapt to it the best they can.

The Republic of Japan is fundamentally Japan of the late 21st or early 22nd Century! Its government, society, and laws are all basically the same. Of course, new measures have been taken to protect themselves in this alien environment, and some are not certain they are actually back on Earth, but suspect they are trapped in a "parallel dimension." Many refuse to believe Rifts Earth is the Earth of the future. At any rate, the government, scientists and scholars are busy gathering information and history about the world so they can better adapt and defend themselves. The Republic of Japan includes three major cities – **Kure, Iwakuni**, and **Hiroshima** – a fourth, a manufacturing town on the outskirts of Hiroshima, also "popped" back to Rifts Earth, but is something of a rebel and has become the independent kingdom of *Ichto*. Each is a thriving Golden Age megalopolis, home to millions of educated Japanese (97%). The three large cities have a large downtown area with M.D.C. skyscrapers 20-60 stories tall as well as residential areas with apartment buildings and private homes. The people are highly educated and still trying to wrap their minds around the idea that magic and Oni (Japanese demons) are real.

The Republic is a truly formidable power with M.O.M./Crazies and Juicer augmentation, advanced cybernetics and robotics, advanced medicine, and a military with high-tech weapons, vehicles and Glitter Boy and SAMAS style power armor.

The Ichto Province, Home of Ichto Robotics

The Ichto Robotics Corporation is an ancient rival of ArmaTech and has become an independent kingdom in and of itself. Shortly after Hiroshima and surrounding communities "popped" back to Earth from a pocket dimension, Ichto, ArmaTech and the quickly forming new government (and nation) clashed. Ichto, on the outskirts of the high-tech pocket, split from the fledgling *Republic of Japan* and declared itself an independent nation. Over the last 15 years, the Republic of Japan has tried every diplomatic means it could think of to get Ichto to join them, but to no avail. The Republic has considered using force to bring Ichto in line, but decided against it for fear that too many people would suffer and die on both sides. Consequently, the Republic of Japan tries to ignore the disruptive and foolish things Ichto does and makes the best of a difficult situation.

Shortly after returning to Earth, the Ichto corporation seceded from the newly formed Republic of Japan. The robotics manufacturing giant preferred to make their own way in this strange, new Earth. The land holdings, manufacturing and development facilities of the Ichto Corporation were immense. The people of the city where its headquarters and factories were located were completely dependent on the corporation for their livelihoods. In addition, they were very loyal to Ichto which employed a full two-thirds of the city's residents. Thus, the citizens followed Ichto's lead and supported the idea of being an independent community.

The corporate authorities run both the business and the province with efficiency and profit in mind. They welcome D-Bees, but not supernatural beings, provided that these "aliens" don't cause trouble and obey the law (which is very similar to the Republic). However, D-Bees can never become full shareholders/legal citizens.

Ichto's specialty is robots and power armor! They also produce some basic laser weapons and explosives similar to or direct "knock-offs" of ArmaTech items. The quality is good enough to be confused for the "AT" brand and often bears the AT identification even though they were not manufactured by ArmaTech. Services available from Ichto include: Cybernetic Implants (all systems); Headhunter Augmentation (partial cyborg); Partial and Full Conversion 'Borgs; Dragon 'Borg Conversions; Cyber-Samurai; and Juicer Augmentation.

Otomo Shogunate

The Otomo Shogunate is a strange blend of tradition and magic, with several levels of technology, from mid-20th Century to the super-technology of pre-Rifts Earth. Most of this kingdom's technology was developed after the destruction of Japan, from survivors and those returning from abroad with whatever secrets they could carry. Acquiring old and new technology from various sources, the city of Otomo grew into a fairly modern city and became the ruling power for the last 200 years. Its people's ancestors were those who rejected the anti-technology ramblings of the New Empire and went out to rebuild a new, modern Japan. They too chose the military government of feudal Japan as their model for government, only their warriors consisted of Cyber-Samurai, 'Borgs, Juicers and augmented troops and mercenaries clad in modern versions of ancient samurai armor. One might consider them the exact opposite of the New Empire, with their mechanized warriors, smoke and soot belching factories, and total disregard for nature.

The mighty kingdom conquered many rival shogunates and slaughtered entire armies of demons. In fact, if Otomo has any one disadvantage, it is its geographic location. Expansion of the Shogunate has been stymied because it rests between the domain of the New Empire (which has proven to be too strong to conquer) and the demon filled territory known as The Zone. No other kingdom has faced more attacks and adversity from the Oni than Otomo. In fact, it has only been through its technological superiority, mixed with magic and amazing tenacity, that the kingdom has been able to thrive.

Until the appearance of the Republic of Japan, Otomo, through its alliance with **H-Brand**, was the technological power on Japan. The Cyber-Samurai, Ninja Crazy, Juicer and 'Borg all originated at Otomo, brought to life by the people at H-Brand. With the *Republic of Japan* and *Ichto* in the picture, it has been reduced to number three, with *Takamatsu* hot on its heels. This does not please the warlords of Otomo, or the corporate moguls at H-Brand. Too long have they been forced to bear a disproportionate amount of hardship and been held back from their rightful place as the real power of Japan. They will not take third or fourth seat to these new interlopers. Thus, the shogun of Otomo and his generals are taking drastic steps to *destroy* their competition. This includes supplying the enemies of the other kingdoms with weapons, unleashing their ninja to engage in sabotage, building an army of mercenaries to raid the Republic of Japan, and even making a pact with the demons from *The Zone* to invade both the Republic and the New Empire!

If these measures seem extreme, it's because they are, and either the Otomo Shogunate will manage to diminish the level of power and holdings of its rivals, seize them for itself, and ascend to the level of power it has always dreamed of through treachery, or it will bring ruin upon itself. This is unfortunate, because even though the Otomo Shogunate is a brutal dictatorship and a land of decadence and cruelty, it is the home of hundreds of thousands of innocent people. Furthermore, the Shogunate has been a major obstacle to the demon invaders for hundreds of years. If the Shogunate cripples itself through its mad dreams of conquest, it will surely fall to the Oni it has battled for generations. If it does fall, the innocent inhabitants will be enslaved by the mountain demons. Such a tragic loss would expand **The Zone** and completely divide the island of *Honshu* in half. Without Otomo, more stress will be placed on the defenses of the New Empire, and if the evil Shogunate's plans work as efficiently as they believe, Takamatsu will be laid to ruin and the Republic of Japan severely weakened. This could give the Oni the opening they need to conquer half, if not all, of the New Empire. The mad scheme for conquest has been unfolding by way of sabotage and demon raids for the last five years, but only now are the wicked denizens of The Zone ready to make their move to destroy the Republic and New Empire.

H-Brand Corporation is an independent power within the Otomo Shogunate. It is self-governing under a corporate power structure, with its own laws, code of conduct and ethics. It enjoys its independence and respects the authorities and laws of the Otomo Shogunate, seldom interfering with that government except when the situation affects their profits. H-Brand is an aggressive, mercenary corporation dedicated to amassing wealth and power. They have a formal alliance with Otomo and the two have had a very successful symbiotic relationship for nearly 200 years. H-Brand supplies the Otomo government with high-tech weapons, armor and equipment at 20% below cost, they help defend the Shogunate if it should fall under attack (which is ultimately in H-Brand's best interest anyway), and pay the kingdom a 10% royalty based on all sales. In return, the Shogunate lets H-Brand operate with full autonomy, but under the auspices of its government, preventing competitors and enemies from waging attacks against the corporation, unless they want to declare war against Otomo as well. This diplomatic immunity has given H-Brand security and clout when dealing with other kingdoms and engaging in disreputable practices, like selling weapons to the enemies of other kingdoms, supplying unallied mercenaries and even selling on the sly to Eta and Ainu. This strange alliance has actually worked out extremely well for both Otomo and H-Brand. Consequently, both are delighted with each other.

To protect its assets, H-Brand has its own army of foot soldiers, full conversion cyborgs, Dragon 'Borgs, Ninja Juicers, Cyber-Samurai, and more. These forces are often hired out as mercenaries to other kingdoms, merchants and corporations, including some in the Republic of Japan. H-Brand tries not to support governments or groups that might be considered to be a threat to H-Brand or Otomo, but have been known to cheerfully supply weapons (if not troops) to both sides of a war.

The Takamatsu Kingdom

The *Republic of Japan* has been strengthening its ties with (and dependency on) the Takamatsu kingdom. Takamatsu is a reasonably modern society with industrial capabilities roughly equal to the early 20th Century. Its main asset is the ability to use a dimensional Rift to travel to a (seemingly) uninhabited Earth-like world and exploit its natural resources. Takamatsu has mining and processing operations on this world as well as on the Japanese island of *Shikoku*, which it dominates. Its trade with the Republic of Japan is making it a stronger, wealthier, independent kingdom. The kingdom trades petroleum, iron ore, and other minerals to the Republic in exchange for high-tech weapons, armor, vehicles, machinery, parts, electronics, medicine, and education. This enables the community to improve its level of technology, manufacturing, defenses and quality of life. Takamatsu officials have recently suggested signing an official trade and defense alliance pact with their symbiotic benefactor; the Republic is giving the offer serious consideration.

Takamatsu grew out of the upheaval and carnage of the Great Cataclysm. The people on this island had some advantages others didn't. The fertile valleys of northern Shikoku provided the people with rich farmlands; the light forests provided wood for houses and boats; fishing is good around the island and mostly free of the monsters that seem to infest other waters around Japan. Furthermore, the Oni don't often travel this far south and a small, underground part of the city of Takamatsu survived the holocaust, providing them with some link to their past and a small reserve of technology. With time, the islanders were able to hammer out a self-sufficient community at a moderate, post industrial level.

The society at Takamatsu is a strange conglomeration of people, cultures and technology. There are True Samurai and Cyber-Samurai, Shinto Priests and high-tech troops, Sohei Monks and power armor acquired from the Republic, Ichto or H-Brand, illiterate peasants and engineers, wizards and 'Borgs, humans and nonhumans. It is without a doubt, the biggest melting pot of cultures, faiths and people in Japan. This tolerant and diverse setting has its own dynamic energy and atmosphere that makes it an exciting place to visit. Many locals playfully call it the "Little Brother Republic Empire," because in many ways, it does seem to be a combination of the two.

Takamatsu has become much more prosperous since it began to trade with the Republic of Japan, but it is not an especially rich or powerful kingdom. Its main advantage at surviving has been its geographic removal from the main island, giving it some breathing space from the Oni, as well as rival kingdoms like the powerful Otomo Shogunate and others.

Other Places of Note

The Zone has been mentioned many times because it is the domain of the Oni – Japanese demons. It is predominately mountainous wilderness that is an inhospitable environment for humans. The wild regions of The Zone are far different from the peaceful settings found in similar areas of the New Empire and Republic of Japan. Despite the pleasant appearance of the forests of The Zone it is a sinister place where demons and monsters hunt and feed. The few human villages that exist are enslaved by vile supernatural forces that prey upon the helpless humans at their leisure. Even the well-trained and equipped warriors of the Republic are at a disadvantage in these areas, where large bands of Oni and Kappa are in control. Although supernatural creatures currently hold sway in the wilderness, the forces of humanity are slowly pushing the monsters back, liberating enslaved villages and reclaiming the territory.

These creatures are primitive tribal hunters whose lives revolve around *the hunt* of humans rather than animals. Generally speaking, the monsters are squatters, settling an area for as long as the hunting is good and moving when the food sources are depleted. Various tribes will fight amongst themselves for control of the best hunting grounds, even against tribes of the same species. If the area is large enough there will often be dozens of tribes or clans, but should hunting become poor, a war will ensue for dominance of the region. Many Oni fight among themselves for territory, power and claims of dominance over a particular area or people. The largest and most organized tribes are the equivalent of small armies numbering into the thousands. They are located in the southern portion of The Zone where they constantly test the borders of the New Empire and the Otomo Shogunate. Fortunately for the Japanese, the typical tribal unit is small and disorganized. In a direct confrontation, there are few tribal groups, large or small, that can stand toe-to-toe with modern power armor units or a group of elite samurai or warrior monks.

Infrequently, the monsters are gathered into great armies by powerful Oni war chiefs, mystics, dragons, sorcerers, dark godlings or a god. When this happens, the Oni go on the warpath and sweep down from the mountains to invade the Japanese domain of man en masse. This also works up the smaller tribes and often incites them to war and mischief. See **World Book 8: Rifts® Japan** for more data about The Zone, Oni and other denizens of this region.

The Domain of the Gods is located on the desolate island of Hokkaido. Few humans or D-Bees live there, although a few tribes of Ainu prosper. Oni, dragons and a handful of other supernatural beings also share the island. Unknown to most humans, a second *Millennium Tree* is located in a secluded mountain valley, protected by the gods of light.

Surusa is a small feudal kingdom of samurai, magic and limited technology (H-Brand purchases) located on a large island that was once a peninsula across the Bay of Tokyo.

Yukimura is another small Shogunate located near Surusa and the sunken city of Tokyo. It is a den of iniquity and a haven for mercenaries, pirates and outlaws.

Toshlie is a militant Shogunate of fanatical anti-technologists located near Yukimura. The two have squabbled and fought for generations.

Other Islands of Japan. To the south of the main island are two dozen small islands, some survivors of the cataclysm, others created by it. They are virtually untouched by the hand of man (or any sentient beings) and are blanketed by natural vegetation.

Okinawa and the Undersea Naval Platform. The Undersea Naval Platform was built by the Japanese Empire prior to the Coming of the Rifts as a prototype for space stations. With many of the same problems to be overcome, an underwater station was a logical place to begin testing designs and systems for space platforms. It was destroyed in the Great Cataclysm, but has been partially salvaged and rebuilt by Horune Pirates who use it as part of a secret pirate base.

The Millennium Tree of Koyoto is a grand and wondrous being that represents the heart of the nation's spirit and goodness. People from all around the island come to visit it.

Philippines

The Pre-Rifts culture of the Philippines was completely wiped out during the cataclysm. More than 99% of the population died, leaving behind weary survivors who lasted only long enough to prove easy prey for dimensional invaders. All that remains of the former civilization are a handful of ruins on the main islands.

Of the 7,100 islands that once constituted the Philippines, more than half have since been swallowed by the Pacific Ocean. Those islands that remain have been dramatically reduced in size, leaving nothing more than a scattered chain of small islands.

Before the Rifts erupted, there was a large naval base of the American Empire on the main island at Subic Bay. The vessels stationed at the base were all sunk. As of yet, they have not been discovered by freelance salvagers or pirates. After resting 300 years on the bottom of the sea, they offer little of value other than scrap metal and some pre-Rifts artifacts.

Australia

Excerpted from World Book 19: Rifts® Australia, by Ben Cassin Lucas & Siembieda

An Overview

The changes wrought by the Coming of the Rifts are many and disturbing. The actual physical structure of the Australian continent has been altered dramatically. Waves of magic, rising sea levels and apocalyptic destruction have changed Australia perhaps more than any other place in the world, even more so than the Land of a Thousand Islands in South America.

Before the holocaust, Australia was a big, flat country with ridges on each side. In the center were three major deserts — the Gibson Desert, the Great Sandy Desert and the Simpson Desert, each as flat as the others. The lowest point was 39 feet (11.9 m) below sea level, a dry, salty place called Lake Eyre. Sometimes, in particularly rainy seasons, this lake would fill with very salty water, evidence suggesting to geologists that Australia used to have an inland sea. This Inland Sea came flooding back when the Great Cataclysm was in full swing. The tidal waves, earthquakes and tumult of this rebirth changed the face of the entire country for all time. Cities crumbled, old mountains were destroyed and new ones born – but perhaps arguably, the most impressive transformation was the birth of the massive **Inland Sea**. When it was all over, there was a new sea where there used to be land, filled with a few broken islands that were once mountains.

This change had enormous side effects. Many rivers dried up, while some widened, and new ones forged a path across the continent. The deserts were not only reshaped, but pushed further toward the coasts as raised salt levels killed once fertile land. The result was a well-defined green tract of land that almost circled the entire country, aptly called the Rim Territory.

Other changes have occurred. In particular, the Great Cataclysm destroyed all but two cities. On the southern edge, in Victoria, **Melbourne** survived, but was severed from the mainland to become an island city-state in and of itself. Over on the western edge of Australia, **Perth**, another capital city, also managed to survive relatively unscathed. While most of it flooded and dropped into the sea, much of it was rebuilt and moved into the mountains. Furthermore, part of Perth is a string of islands linked together, making a section of the high-tech community a sort of floating city.

Alas, all other traces of the old civilization were either obliterated or have disappeared. Sydney, once ranked amongst the biggest and most popular cities in the world, is a skeleton of crumbling skyscrapers and villainy surrounded, in part, by swamps and marshlands, its broken harbor strewn with debris. Canberra, the inland city that was once the Australian capital, fell to the destruction of the Great Cataclysm and is now "Lake" Canberra, and serves as a shallow watering hole.

Up in the Northland, the table lands were opened up by widened rivers and increased sea levels, transforming the entire north shore into a collection of jagged islands, swamps and wetlands.

The Outback

Humans who were not of Aboriginal descent or not fortunate enough to have gotten inside the walled cities of Melbourne and Perth before they closed themselves to the world a few years after the Great Cataclysm, are left in the wild to fend for themselves. Over the centuries, many thousands of lost and

frightened people have made pilgrimages to one city or the other pleading to be allowed inside, but all have been repelled. The cities reject *Outbackers* to maintain their own delicate infrastructure and to not tax their limited resources any more than they have to. However, of equal concern is the powerful belief that the influence of the "wasteland barbarians" would have a damaging effect on their people and society. Thus, the refugees are rebuked and sent away. This has served to create a sort of secondary cluster of primitive, low-tech shanty towns, farmsteads and shabby settlements that have gathered near the two cities and dot the neighboring coastlines (reminiscent of the 'Burbs found around CS cities, only not as close in proximity, or as advanced or lawless). Even these clusters of humanity are considered impoverished and primitive "Outback" communities of savages, at least by City-goers. Beyond these settlements is the real Outback. A vast wilderness inhabited by men and monsters alike.

In present day Rifts Australia, the majority of the people have accepted their plight, and do what they can to rebuild and survive in the Outback. A select few dream of entering "the" Cities, but that is not likely to ever happen. A promise of citizenship is a common bribe the Cities' governments use with Outback people they deem useful or important, but ultimately the promise is a cruel lie designed to placate and use the "barbarians" to the Cities' benefit. A history of use and abuse that has gone on for centuries.

Throughout the Australian wilderness, towns, villages, farms, settlements and trading posts have sprung up. Most are located where fresh water is easily had from water holes, freshwater lakes and rivers, as well as along well traveled roads, crossroad junctions and the few places where arable land can be found or cattle raised (again, water becomes a priority). Others are built from the ruins of old pre-Rifts cities or at the sites of old cities, in a feeble attempt to recapture the "old ways" or to hold on to one's roots. The farther one travels away from the ocean coastlines the more deserted and dangerous the land becomes. In the northern areas, and in the deserts, life becomes much harsher and less civilized. While most "Rim" dwellers are good, comparatively civilized people, savagery has consumed the more isolated and hostile regions. For some people, raiding and scavenging has become a way of life, and violence is the solution to every problem.

There is not really any such thing as the "average" Outbacker. Loners, savages, bandits, raiders, cutthroats, Aborigines, farmers, cowboys, and all manner of decent, hardworking people all coexist and struggle to survive with what little technology, resources and courage they can muster. To these wilderness people, a computer is a rare marvel, and Mega-Damage weapons and body armor are powerful devices that can make the difference between survival and death or being a slave or free man. All technology is a valuable commodity that enhances one's chance for survival.

Magic and The Dreaming

Australia is a very magical land, as alive with mystic energy as the British Isles. Every day of every year, a ley line nexus flares and opens to some alien dimension or world to disgorge a new menace. Some alien intelligences have already taken a firm hold, bringing vampires and demons. Ancient gods have also returned to take note of recent developments. *The Tikilik demon*, the Great Devourer of the world, waits and grows beneath the inland sea, preparing for the day when it can emerge to destroy all life. The great *Bunyil* and his *Rainbow Serpent*, benevolent beings of lore, do what they can to help their people guard against the Tikilik and his countless demon minions, including the *Yowies, Bunyips* and the like.

Thankfully, many benevolent forces have entered the Earth realm, creating a balance between good and evil. *Millennium beings* cover Australia, from the legendary Trees of Life to the Great Reef herself. Furthermore, so-called demons and other monsters have not taken the firm hold they have in Germany, Russia or China. Rifts Australia is comparable to North America where monsters and alien menaces are a constant danger, but not an omnipresent force.

Australia is wrapped in something the Aborigines call The Dreaming. The Dreaming is primarily their way of describing existence as a whole, but it is much, much more. It is made up of the spirits and magic that have returned to the world. The Dreaming has created a new race, the Kwarla, guardians of the wild. It has even caused the growth of the Millennium beings, and has given strength to the ley lines (called "Songlines"). Australia itself is a continent made of magic, but all this magnificence is not apparent to everyone. It is almost exclusive to the "natives" — animals and people alike, as if the land itself is showing preference for those who have grown with it for a millennia or more. Visitors from nearby lands, and even most white people who survived the Great Cataclysm and experienced the Rebirth of Magic over the ensuing generations, usually fail to see the mysterious magic and wonders of "the Dreaming." They lack the heritage and traditional connection to the land possessed by the Aboriginal people and native animals. All these outsiders can see is that Australia is an isolated and dangerous place. Some would even say a dying land, rife with violence. Its only real value, the few forest paradises, the splendor of the Great Reef, and the sanctuary of the grand old cities of Melbourne and Perth.

Monsters and Demons

While not nearly suffering at the same level of demonic invasion as China or Africa, Australia is prone to demonic and monstrous infestation and visitation by strange and alien creatures. The magic level is so rich, especially in certain locations, that Australia, and The Dreaming, is like a beacon in the Megaverse that attracts creatures of magic and demonic beings to feast upon the Earthly realm.

Predatory demons drag men and women to their doom, raid towns and settlements, and plague mortal humanoids on a regular basis. The more intelligent, cunning and vile demons engage in more subtle acts of cruelty and evil, often manipulating and corrupting humans and instigating plots that unleash suffering and destruction on a large scale. These more powerful beings may also try to build their own gang or kingdom, and lord over those forced to serve them.

Melbourne and Perth, with their technology and high-powered arsenals, have the least problems repelling such demonic threats. To a lesser extent, the Aborigines are also capable of defending themselves against supernatural menaces with their magic, sorcerers, dream warriors and the blessing of The Dreaming. The poor *Outbackers* and all other wilderness folk are the ones who suffer the most, as they are badly in-

formed about the supernatural, have few resources and are poorly equipped in the way of weapons, knowledge and magic.

Nonetheless, it is the **Aborigines** who fight the fiercest battles against supernatural invaders. As the protectors and owners of the land, it is their duty to battle the despoilers and supernatural evil. They are the natural enemies of demons and dark practitioners of magic, and are part of a full-scale war between good and evil. It is a relatively quiet war that many are oblivious to, but if the Aboriginal people have one overshadowing fear, it is that they will lose their Dreaming to the menaces that threaten them. Honorable and brave, they will fight to the end, for that is their place in the world.

Above and beyond the supernatural menaces and demons that haunt the Australian landscape, there are much more powerful forces at work. The Bunyil has cast his eye toward the sunburnt land once more, as has the Rainbow Serpent. These ancient gods, though separated by the dimensions, do what they can to help their children.

On the other end of this scale are the Aboriginal demons. The weather demons and the Bunyip seek only to destroy mankind so the land may, once again, become a playground of evil spirits. Currently, all the dark spirits are locked up inside trees and animals where they belong, but demons like the Bunyip seek to return the universe to the chaos it was spawned from. And the greatest demon of them all is the Tikilik. According to legend, he is the one who will destroy the world by drinking all the water. He has broken through into the Earth realm, and his physical form lays dormant, but growing into a huge and monstrous frog at the bottom of the Inland Sea. Once he reaches maturity, he will rise to wreak havoc upon Australia and then the world. A few have foreseen his coming, and may be able to marshal the forces to help humanity defeat this menace before it gets too strong.

Overall, Australia is plagued by the shadow of supernatural evil. Menaces not native to Aboriginal myth have also entered from other dimensions — vampires in particular. Many of the white residents, particularly the City-Goers, are oblivious to the massive threat these creatures represent. To them, everyday survival is enough to worry about.

The Old State Borders

New Divisions. Since the Great Cataclysm, many of the old borders and State divisions have all but disappeared. The way in which people refer to different parts of the country remains the same, but concepts of genuine border lines are all but lost. This is largely because there is no one, unifying government or any independent kingdoms. Although there are many scattered, independent towns, settlements, gangs and tribes, all consider themselves to be "Australian," effectively making Rifts Australia a shattered nation of diverse and chaotic people and communities without national leadership, unity or direction. Just clusters of people doing what they must to survive in a world gone mad.

Northland

The Northland is the name given to the northern, middle section of Australia that stretches from the Gulf of Carpentaria, west to the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf. These lands have suffered most from the rising sea levels. Rivers and deltas have been submerged and turned into mangrove forests and swampland, mountains have been broken into islands, and in general, the entire stretch of country (what's left of it) has become poor real estate. The most interesting thing to note about this part of the country is the Mokoloi tribes who have taken up residence in the swamps.

Arnham Land is the name of the northernmost edges of this State. It used to be a spectacular natural reserve, filled with untamed wilderness and spectacular natural wonders. These days it is home to powerful ley lines, and thus heavy demon infestations, so while the landscape is no less spectacular, it is twisted and dangerous to say the least. Arnham Land has many points of spiritual significance to the Aborigines, but these places have been corrupted and consumed. Very few people live here, and it is avoided as a dangerous, demon-haunted region.

The southern parts of the State used to contain the MacDonnell Ranges, but these now form the Isles of Light, a chain of rocky islands that circle the deepest part of the Inland Sea where the Tikilik sleeps. Interestingly enough, the resting point of the demon is the same location as Alice Springs, a pre-Rifts desert township. It was once a popular site to visit, and may still contain treasures submerged under the water.

Western Australia

This is the largest part of the country. Its pre-Rifts border cut in a straight line from the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf, south to the center of the Great Australian Bight. The land is mostly flat, made up of expansive deserts and parched desert scrubland. It is dotted with occasional low mountain ranges where one can find scattered patches of scraggly trees and underbrush (to call these clusters of vegetation "forests" is too strong a word).

The population in this State of the Old Australian Empire is very low, with Perth and the surrounding Rim communities being the only real population centers, although quite a large number of Aboriginal tribes wander the Gibson Desert. Second to Northland, Western Australia has lost the most territory to the Inland Sea.

The southern edge of Western Australia is the Great Nullarbor Plain, which is a famous wilderness. While flat and still relatively barren, it is a combination of grassland, scrub, scattered trees and home to a large concentration of D-Bees and other alien creatures. Elves and even some Faerie Folk grace this part of the country, but the main population is still Aboriginal tribes. The Nullarbor Plain ends quite suddenly at the coastline, with a sharp line of cliffs that drops into the Great Bight. This coast is very dangerous, and is frequented by sea demons and monsters of all kinds. A powerful ley line follows this coastline, so at night it glows and crackles with energy, and frightening shapes of dragons, winged creatures and demons can be seen silhouetted in the sky.

On the northern edge of Western Australia, above Perth and the Darling Ranges, is an area called Shark Bay. It is a section of land that juts north out of the coast, and is currently being used by Horune pirates as a secret base. Several other races from the deep have started using this part of the country as a "safe port," which, ironically, has made it a dangerous place for surface dwellers and Australians to visit.

Queensland

Queensland is made famous by the fact that the northern part of its coastline is protected by the Great Reef. All across Australia, stories abound about this paradise and the fortunate few that

live there, but getting there is often impossible because Queensland is a spawning ground for demons, mutants and monsters, and home to gangs of bandits, rugged Outbackers, and other wilderness people. This old Australian State, more than any other, is rich in life. The Rim, which runs over this part of the coast, is covered with thick rain forest, and filled with struggling Outbacker communities. Inland, the desert plains, where huge cattle ranches and grain farms used to exist before the Coming of the Rifts, are now rocky desert broken by scrub, small patches of grassland and the occasional thin forest or fortunate patch of still arable farmland. Some of the largest and most brutal groups of *Roadgangers* in Australia can be found in these parts. The Aborigines live out a shadow-like existence in this State, trying as hard as possible to lay low and avoid the many human and inhuman dangers of this region, while maintaining their peace with The Dreaming at the same time. Queensland has become a violent and frenetic place, where only the strongest and most clever have any chance for survival.

Further south lays the Norman Delta, also a place rich in life but devoid of humanoid inhabitants. Only slightly above this delta is Wellesley Island, and the Vampire Intelligence that resides there. The country below this area continues to be relatively uninhabited until the Brisbane River, which ends at the pre-Rifts site of the State's old capital city. This city sunk into its own river, and the old skyscrapers still jut from the waters, making for an eerie post-Apocalyptic image. Today, its only inhabitants are a few human villages (less than 1000 people total). Only the bones of the old skyscrapers rising from the river remind travelers that a great city once stood on this spot. Most people avoid the region because it is said to be haunted by the spirits of the dead, who still walk the (now underwater) city streets and inhabit the ruins of the skyscrapers. Indeed, poltergeists, haunting entities, and tectonic entities abound here, especially among the ruins, as well as the occasional possessing entity, and similar demonic beings. South of this point, Outbacker communities become more common.

Peninsula Space Port, Queensland. Several landmarks exist along the Queensland Rim. In particular, up on the tip of the Cape York Peninsula lay the ruins of a huge space port that was destroyed by the Apocalypse. It is located on the northernmost tip of Australia, concealed by rain forests and rocky hills. Centuries ago, it was one of many space ports around the world used for launching large spacecraft in bulk numbers. Needless to say, it is now inactive and unable to function. The towers are ruined and broken, the computers are dead, the spacecraft are destroyed, the power supplies are gone, and the nuclear reactors leaked during the holocaust until the computers crash-dumped the dangerous, radioactive cores into bunkers miles beneath the surface of the planet.

The ruins have been salvaged and turned into one of the (comparatively) safest and strongest townships in the region, a place known as York Station. In addition to being a home for more than 7,000 Australians, it has also become a haven for 3000+ human refugees and 2000 (various) D-Bees who have managed to escape from demon-plagued Asia, slipping past the monsters of New Guinea, the Black Sail Ships, and the dangers of the Northland. York Station is actually a cluster of several small, fortified towns, farms and ranches working closely and peacefully together to eke out a precarious and low-tech existence while fighting hostile invaders from Asia or the sea (like the Horune), local bandits and supernatural terrors.

New South Wales (NSW)

As in times before the Great Cataclysm, New South Wales is heavily populated. The inland areas of this part of the country are very dry, but not a desert. Even the sandy wastes actually contain reasonable amounts of vegetation. The Rim territories are covered with vegetation and forests that are much wider along the coasts. The Great Dividing Range forms Australia's highest point at Mount Kosciusko, toward the southern border. Along the foothills of this range are hundreds of square miles of bushland (tall grass, bushes, scattered trees), and even some rain forests in the northern areas. The coastline itself is rugged and spotted with cliffs, headlands and beaches.

There are many rivers cutting channels through N.S.W., including the famous Darling River. Pre-Rifts dams and energy plants still exist as ruins, but do little to divert the huge river, which has changed its banks several times since the Apocalypse. This river alone is responsible for the fertility of the old State, and close to 60% of the Outbacker communities are set up along her banks.

The aboriginals make their homes evenly across this border of the old State, but tend to avoid the higher mountains because of the snow seasons. Similarly, the *Roadgangers* of N.S.W. are quite well distributed. Plentiful roadways have seen some of the savages travel as far east as the Rim itself, but they have never really made contact with the coastline. While they do make periodic raids on some of the less-established Outbacker communities, so far they have still been confined to their desert hell, by both a lack of fuel and stout Rim resistance.

Ol' Sydney Town, NSW. New South Wales is also the home to the city of Sydney, one of the greatest modern cities of the pre-Rifts world. Today, the ruins of the city are called *Old Sydney Town*, a broken and flooded relic of an era long gone. At least half the city remains standing, although her buildings are battered, cracked, and crumbling — ravaged by the elements, time, and many wars and skirmishes during the centuries that have followed the Great Cataclysm. Many of its streets are flooded and swamps and marshlands are found around and throughout the old city. Scores of gangs, bandits, vagabonds and squatters have reclaimed most of the habitable buildings and areas around them. An estimated 59,000+ live here, and thousands more visit and trade here. Most inhabitants are members of gangs and clans who claim particular streets, neighborhoods, and buildings as their "turf" and frequently clash – sort of like little towns or communities within a larger city. This "city" of scoundrels is a lawless and frightening community where might usually makes right. A handful of farms and cattle ranches are found on the dry outskirts, but even they are tied to the more powerful gangs and crime lords of Ol' Sydney Town. At the heart of town is a trading post with a number of saloons, gambling halls, shops, garages, car dealers, fences, smugglers, hotels and dens of iniquity. It is frequented by adventurers, mercenaries, Outbackers, Roadgangers, bandits, and criminals of all kinds. Rumor has it that both Perth and Melbourne fear this growing cesspool of sin and have spies placed to keep an eye on things.

Beyond the outer limits of the city, about 70-120 miles (112 to 192 km), where the wilderness has reclaimed the land, a

handful of large Outbacker settlements flourish, despite the usual hardships and regular raids and trouble from Ol' Sydney Town.

Victoria

Victoria has the highest population density in Rifts Australia, if not simply because it is home to the city of Melbourne, then also because there are a huge number of Outbacker communities that have set up along the coast of Melbourne Bay. It is a very rugged State, covered with thick bushlands and the rocky tail-end of the Great Dividing Range. In general, it is a lush area teeming with vegetation, wildlife and humans. Unfortunately, this high concentration of activity and humanoid life also attracts many demons, vampires, monsters and raiders, but the communities do their best to hold back these menaces. Other than the occasional underground ruin, or piece of building jutting from the ground, little in the way of pre-Rifts technology has survived (outside of Melbourne). What did survive has been plundered centuries ago, or has been buried under the shifting of the land or tangled growth. Still, the occasional site is uncovered and put to good use.

EHRA

The entire southeastern "Rim" of Australia, from the Ol' Sydney Town down across the Victoria coastline, is referred to by the City-Goers of Melbourne as EHRA (pronounced "era"), which stands for the Eastern Humanity Republic of Australia. EHRA is a zone the Admin likes to think of as the last true bastion of humanity, a State of sorts that replaces the old divisions of NSW and Victoria; divisions that Outbackers still like to use as reference. The grand plan of Melbourne is to "civilize" EHRA as a country in and of itself (or as the first true State of New Australia), and they have already started sending survey teams into the Great Dividing Range to consider the possibility of building advance military posts and start "cleansing" the area for future development.

The main problem with this plan is the Aborigines and the supreme claim they have to this (and indeed any) part of the country, but this is by no means the only problem. Demons, reluctant, established Outbackers, Roadgangers, other raiders and bandits, monsters, dimensional portals, ley lines, and so on, all pose problems that will slow down this endeavor. If the concept behind building a new nation called EHRA ever does become a reality, one can be sure it will be another imperialistic, puritan zone like the Coalition States of North America.

Tasmania

This State lies on an island south of Victoria, over the Bass Strait. Tasmania is now nearly deserted, and has been reclaimed by the wilderness. It was once actually a State of Australia, an island that sits off the southern end, directly south of Melbourne. Extended travel away from the mainland is quite rare in the post-Apocalypse era, and the island is considered by most to be a deserted wilderness, home only to animals and very basic supernatural creatures. Many assume that no one has approached or landed on Tasmania, as it has little to offer in the way of supplies apart from timber — a resource the City of Melbourne does not hold in high demand.

The island itself has been severely damaged by the Apocalypse, broken and battered by tidal waves and storms. Sections of the island have broken away to form several smaller islands. It is a place that has essentially been forgotten and ignored by the people of Australia, except for the small Sadro Island. Sadro is a prison island used by the City of Melbourne. It currently contains nearly 500 inmates. This use of the island began about 50 years ago when Melbourne realized that when they exiled prisoners to the mainland, there was a good chance the misanthropes would return to extract revenge, or undermine the peace of the citizens by telling of the (true) horrors of the mainland, spreading panic through the greater populace. After several such incidents, a new secret policy was passed to use the remote island as an exile dump. Now anyone who is captured breaking into the City walls (raiders and dream seekers alike), as well as anyone sentenced to exile (including City born criminals and those captured from The Gap) and prisoners of war are dropped into the forests of this wild and inhospitable strip of land, and left to fend for themselves. What has emerged on the island is a violent, savage culture made up of violent criminals, sociopaths and POWs. Rumors of cannibalism are quite common. One thing is for sure — no one has ever returned from Sadro, though some have managed to swim to the main Tasmanian island.

Tasmania itself is a very lush land, covered with dense forests and rich with wildlife. The region also has a high amount of magical energy. Several unsuccessful expeditions have been mounted by the Melbourne Administration, but taming the island is very unlikely, let alone settlement. It has been rumored that a few very primitive tribes of Aborigines live on Tasmania, as well as small bands of Outbackers. Popular opinion, however, is that no person on Tasmania survived the Apocalypse.

One of the highlights of Tasmania is the ruin of its old capital city, Hobart. Today, Hobart is a half submerged, wasted city, but it has barely been touched since the Coming of the Rifts. As such, it has yet to be plundered, and for those brave enough to land in the city or dive to the submerged ruins, chances are they'll find pre-Rifts artifacts of great value.

South Australia

South Australia was the "middle" State of Australia, touching at least one edge or corner of every other state (except, of

course, Tasmania). Much of it has been submerged by the Inland Sea, but the Southern Rim, with the Nullarbor Plain, Stuart and Flinders Ranges, has remained. The region is very dry, and while the rocky deserts are quite small and relatively green, they are very unforgiving and bleak. There are hundreds of powerful ley lines and nexus points that dot the landscape, making South Australia a hazy, magic-soaked zone short on human and animal habitation, but strong in supernatural activity.

The main population is concentrated on the southeast coast, nestled in the Spencer Guy and the Gulf of Saint Vincent upon the ancient ruins of Adelaide. This is the only truly fertile ground outside of the Nullarbor Plain, and much of the country is now irrigated and settled by industrial age communities. There are no high technology cities anywhere in South Australia, and no enviable townships — it is for the most part, a barren place, and is slowly dying with each passing generation. The South Australian deserts are home to the most violent and horrid Roadgangers in the country, many of whom engage in cannibalism. South Australia is a harsh land that separates the east from the west. If Melbourne and Perth ever wish to establish trade and transport routes between each other, they will do so by sea, a few hundred miles out from the southern coast.

The Inland Sea

The Inland Sea is rumored to have existed thousands of years ago, well before the Coming of the Rifts, and even before civilization moved onto the continent. High salt tables, sandy deserts, water smoothed rocks and the flat countryside all pointed toward its past existence. With the Great Cataclysm came several things that amounted to the Inland Sea returning. The first, of course, was rising sea levels. Thousands of square miles worldwide have been claimed by the oceans, but this alone was not enough to break the dams of the Australian coastlines. Earthquakes, tidal waves, raw magical energy and supernatural visitation split the country straight through the middle and allowed the oceans to flow in. The first place to break was a section of coastline called the Eighty Mile Beach in northwest Western Australia. Being a low stretch of country where the desert met the ocean, this entire strip of land acted like a channel that allowed the ocean access to the "red center." Only a few decades later, the wet lowlands of Northland reached saturation point and the Inland Sea rose even higher, reclaiming deserts as it did so, and pushing the fertile strips of country closer to the coast, to form what is now the Rim.

The Inland Sea is rarely traveled, and holds no life beyond standard sea creatures. It is entirely possible that Naut'Yll, Horune and other seafaring beings have visited the Inland Sea, but none have stayed.

Arnhem Land, Northland

Arnhem Land is the pre-Rifts Aboriginal title for the very large area of "reserve" land covering most of the remaining Northland. Since the Great Cataclysm, Arnhem, as it is simply referred to, has become the primary domain of the reptilian **Mokoloi**, who are extremely hostile toward humans. A quick scan of the area by the uninitiated is likely to leave them thinking that the green wetlands of Arnhem are devoid of humanoid life. Even the odd and magnificent spire or two that rises just above the treelines are likely to be unseen, because these Mokoloi structures are as much a part of the landscape as the trees and the rivers, and easily missed.

Dimensional Rifts open frequently, and because many of Australia's most powerful ley lines crisscross the old reserve, Ley Line and Millennium Storms are frequent. The area has a wealth of magical crystals and may even contain an undiscovered fledgling Millennium Tree or two struggling to survive. But such things are a minor part of the dangers known to exist in Arnhem. The actual land itself is so soaked by magic that it radiates uncontrolled and unseen energy from its very surface. There is little reprieve from this harsh, alien radiation, and only supernatural creatures can survive there for long.

The High Seas

Magic Sea Triangles are places where three powerful ley lines connect to create a giant triangular shape. The length of these lines of mystic energy can run for hundreds, even thousands of miles, and encompass thousands of square miles of sea. At each "point" of the triangle is a powerful nexus. Each of these three powerful junctions are connected to each other via ley lines and creates a *mystic circuit* of immense power. The pyramid configuration only adds to the magnitude of power generating along the lines, and within the area enclosed by them.

The sea enclosed by this configuration is subjected to frequent surges of mystic energy, dimensional anomalies, time fluxes, astral disturbances, ley line storms, natural storms and random Rift activity at the three nexuses. These seas are usually filled with monsters and D-Bees that have popped in from other worlds or who are attracted to the other features of these locations, such as dead pools.

It is interesting to note that while a portion of these Magic Triangles sometimes overlap onto dry land, the vast majority of them extend over the sea. Although there are numerous triangular configurations on dry land, they do *not* exhibit any of the dimensional anomalies or time distortions that occur at *Sea Triangles*. Many practitioners of magic have speculated that the unpredictable energy surges, storms, and random Rifting is due to the direct influence of the moon and planets on the tides. However, this is pure speculation.

The infamous **Demon Sea**, once known as the *Bermuda Triangle*, is the most famous of the "Magic Triangles," but there are actually a total of six.

1. The Demon Sea, located in the North Atlantic, off the coast of Florida and sandwiched between North America and Atlantis.

2. The South American Triangle, located in the South Atlantic, off the coast of Argentina.

3. The Mediterranean Triangle, which covers that entire sea, except for the most eastern and western edges.

4. The African Triangle, located in the Indian Ocean off the East coast of South Africa and Southern tip of Madagascar.

5. The Japanese Triangle, located in the North Pacific, between Japan, Guam and Hawaii.

6. The Australian Triangle, situated in the Tasman Sea between Australia and New Zealand.

Note: A mini-triangle is located in *Lake Michigan* and is believed to be the only "fresh water" magic triangle in the world.

The Dangers of Magic Triangles

Travelers passing through a magic triangle may find the sea calm and the trip uneventful or endure a harrowing experience from which they may not survive. Those on the surface are subject to sudden thunderstorms, ley line storms, time distortions, dimensional anomalies (phasing from one time to another, or from one place to another), dimensional Rift activities and monsters. The worst sea serpents, the most gigantic squids, the meanest pirates and all manner of dangers seem to reside at these places of magic.

Shimmering Waters are patches of light that shimmer like a million diamonds beneath the surface. They can be located at any depth underwater but never appear above water. In the darkness of the abyss, they are like shimmering beacons that attract scores of inquisitive creatures to their doom. Likewise, surface dwellers who don't know better are frequently lured into its magic embrace. Entire submarines have unwittingly dived into these magic waters, with frightening consequences. The diameter of these areas can be as small as 100 feet (30.5 m) or as large as two miles (3.2 km)!

Entering into Shimmering Water always fills the visitor(s) with a sense of beauty and euphoria, time seems to stand still, all sense of direction and depth are lost, and the character(s) forgets about his troubles, even if he was under attack only moments before, transfixed by the lights. Many survivors report traveling for hours or traversing hundreds of miles (instruments will confirm this), unable to find their way out of the cursed waters. Exiting this anomaly is usually sudden and unexpected.

Those who enter the Shimmering Water vanish from sight and disappear from ALL forms of detection! Radio contact, sonar, psionics, mystic link, etc., are all lost; almost as if those inside the light have ceased to exist, at least in our dimension. Furthermore, the Shimmering Water does NOT appear on any sensors and cannot be detected by magic or psychic means — it can only be seen.

Dead Pools, a.k.a. Deadman's Seas. Dead Pools are located at ley line nexus points, where two or more ley lines intersect. The nexus is most susceptible to random Rift activity. At these locations random Rifts open frequently and send hundreds, even thousands to a watery grave every year and can amass an impressive amount of debris. These underwater graveyards are known as Dead Pools or Deadman's Seas. Dead Pools typically have several ley line nexuses that randomly link to other worlds. Some are water worlds while others are linked to the surface. Note: The water from Earth and other planets generally do NOT spill into each other. The nature of the Rifts are such that air and fluids do not spill or mix from one environment to the other, even when people pass through them.

Experienced dimensional travelers will seldom step into a Rift without knowing where it leads. However, the inexperienced, foolhardy or desperate traveler may take dangerous risks and leap into a random portal to parts unknown. Inevitably, a certain number of these unsuspecting travelers will find themselves stepping out of a Rift at the bottom of the sea. Characters not prepared for entering a water environment, especially deep seas, are likely to drown or succumb to water pressure, hemorrhage and die. Even airtight vehicles may leak or crack under pressure, fill with water and sink. Even many deep-sea vehicles, robots and cyborgs have their limits and will be crushed by the pressure at great depths (often anything over two miles/3.2 km below the surface). The wreckage of these vehicles and the remains of these travelers sink to the ocean floor, creating a graveyard of debris, bodies and bones.

As is so often the case, tragedy for some is a windfall for others. Sunken ships and vehicles create artificial reefs with scores of caves and hiding places to build a nice home. Bodies and lightweight items may hang in the water for hours or even days and attract predators and scavengers to pick at them and spread the debris field a greater distance. The abundance of fish, crustacean and invertebrate scavengers picking at the rotting flesh, bones, and floating particles, attracts even more predators who prey on them — and anybody else who may get in the way or seems like an easy lunch/snack. Sharks, Giant Squids and Octopus, Shadow Sharks, Storm Riders, sea maws, Lorica Wraiths, Stidjron, mutants, and monsters infest these waters. Many establish lairs in this bountiful area. Most are aggressive, and will attack anybody or anything they believe edible. Others are territorial and attack invaders of their realm. Some are cunning hunters or malicious killers laying in wait for ill-prepared prey; humanoids are among their favorites. Haunting entities are attracted to the strong emotions of those who died, and the scent of death may also attract Ghouls, Banshees, Zomba, Devil Sharks, demons, the Lord of the Deep, and other supernatural horrors. Tectonic Entities and Possessing Entities are less common than ghosts, but more numerous at Dead Pools than at other parts of the world.

Surface dwellers are also counted among the scavengers of the Dead Pools and can be as deadly as any monster. Pirate ships often scan these waters, not necessarily to excavate treasures from below (although some do), but to prey on survivors who make it to the surface, or to attack poorly armed salvage and reclamation vessels, other pirates, explorers, adventurers, and merchants in the area. Pirates may attack from ships, submersibles or marine aircraft, or a combination of them all. Ships that fight to the last man will see their corpses join those already on the sea floor, or see their vessel sunk.

Ocean salvage operations conducted by freelance privateers, corporations or governments are less likely to plunder other seafarers or Rift survivors, but some are as bad as pirates. The worst of these cutthroats will sabotage competitors, scuttle ships, offer misleading information, steal from each other, or even capture their rivals and sell their possessions as salvage and the crew as slaves! Salvage teams and slavers from Atlantis are known to plumb the depths of the Sargasso Dead Pools and locations in the Demon Sea.

Aquatic humanoids, sea mammals and other marine beings may come to Dead Pools to hunt for fish, slay monsters or rummage through the debris of the dead in search of weapons and treasure. Some are friendly and helpful, others, cruel and murderous. The Naut'Yll, Stidjron, Lord of the Deep, and others may use the promise of treasure and the greed of others to lure unsuspecting rivals and enemies into an ambush or trap.

Dead Pools frequently offer salvageable body armor, weapons, equipment, magic items, vehicles and artifacts. Some of the items recovered may be in working condition or require minor repairs or cleaning. In other cases, the items may be valuable only as parts or scrap metal that can be melted and reused. Sometimes the artifacts being salvaged present a danger. Alien

weapons, magic items, 'bots and vehicles may have self-destruct mechanisms, automated defense systems, curses, or supernatural or mechanical protectors that are activated when they are disturbed. Toxic chemicals, radiation and explosive materials are always a danger. Meanwhile, Zombas and other creatures may have turned sunken vessels into their home or may have selected an item of value as a building block in that home, or as a favorite bauble or toy, and they aren't going to like their lair being disturbed.

The Lord of the Deep

The Lord of the Deep is a supernatural entity of godlike power who resides in the depths of the Marianas Trench in the Pacific Ocean. It lives in the middle of a triangular mystical configuration, similar to the more infamous Bermuda Triangle (also known as the Demon Sea). It rules a Rifts-ridden undersea kingdom, and is slowly growing in size, both physically and by increasing the area of its dimensional triangle. The goals of this monster are unknown (and perhaps unknowable). Maybe it wishes to consume the entire planet, or it lives off the psychic pain that it and its minions inflict on other beings. Those who know about the Lord of the Deep fear that the alien intelligence seeks to consume every living thing on the planet before moving on to other worlds.

The gigantic entity lives more than 30,000 feet (9,144 m; over five and a half miles) below the surface. Its size and power are such that mere mortals may be driven mad simply by looking at it. Its tentacles, known as the Reachers from the Deep, can stretch to span lengths of up to 2000 miles (3200 km)! Thus, the monster is able to snare victims from great distances, allowing it to remain safely nestled in the trench, miles beyond the reach of any human weapon. Lucky victims are killed outright, their death agonies feeding the monster's psychic essence. The least fortunate are fused with two or more living beings and transformed into one of its predatory minions.

Some occultists believe that the Lord of the Deep has lived on Earth for uncounted millennia. They theorize that the planet's low magical energies caused it to slumber for most of that time, occasionally sending out one of its Reachers to snag a random victim, giving rise to the legends of the Kraken, an enormous sea monster that could sink ships. When magic returned to the planet with a vengeance, the monster was fully awakened. A second school of thought believes that the Lord of the Deep arrived through a giant Rift somewhere in the ocean depths.

In either case, the alien intelligence has been active for at least two hundred years. Thousands of unfortunates from all species have been killed or mutated into monstrous forms. The Reachers from the Deep have attacked whales, dolphins and fish, as well as seagoing vessels, coastal towns, and, sometimes, even crawled onto the mainland looking for a new morsel. Humans, Minions of Splugorth, True Atlanteans, D-Bees, and all forms of animal life have been victimized by the monster. Many are devoured, others are transformed to become predators who in turn reap their own brand of misery and destruction.

Tritonia

A triumph of pre-Rifts engineering, Tritonia is a floating city, a drifting colony that follows the streams of the Pacific Ocean, avoiding the monster-infested land masses. For twenty generations, most inhabitants of Tritonia have lived out their lives without setting foot on a real island or continent. The colony is a huge complex of interlocking barges covering an area of one mile square (1.6 km). The floating city does not extend too far above the surface; the tallest buildings reach only ten stories or so, with the one exception of the Control Center, a large domed structure that stands 200 feet (61 m) tall. The underbelly of the city is much larger, with 10 to 15 stories of building underwater.

The floating city maintains a number of island bases, as well as undersea mining, fishing and harvesting/farm settlements, but the bulk of the population dwells in Tritonia itself and most of the city's needs are taken from the sea. Food and clothing are processed from marine animals and plant life. Factory barges make use of everything harvested by Tritonia's fishermen. The energy needs of the city are met by using solar collectors to supplement hundreds of small nuclear power plants (some of them hundreds of years old). In fact, virtually every large building has its own power plant. Minerals are mined from the sea floor, and artifacts, treasure and materials are salvaged from sunken ships and abandoned coastal (or underwater) ruins. What little they cannot get from the sea, the Tritonians acquire by trading with other civilizations.

About 10% of the Tritonian population are descendants of a genetically-engineered neo-human species, the Amphibs. The Amphibs' altered physical structure enables them to breathe underwater and resist high levels of pressure and low temperatures. The mutated humans are accepted by the rest of the population, and many have become very important Tritonian leaders, explorers and heroes. Two of the last five Directors have been Amphibs.

Tritonia is a close-knit community, where everybody is responsible for the well-being of the group. Life in what is essentially a giant boat is rather regimented, with the good of the community being placed above the good of any one individual. Such is the way of a nation under a constant threat from external forces. As such, her citizens tend to accept an often militant and sometimes extreme lifestyle.

Tritonians are among the best educated and trained people on the planet. All inhabitants are expected to help in the maintenance and defense of the floating island. From childhood, Tritonians are educated in the history of their island, and are given a sense that they are special, survivors in a world that is hostile to all humankind. The average Tritonian will have one W.P., is fully literate in American (and 50% know an additional language), and will have one communications, electrical or mechanical skill in addition to their normal "civilian" skills.

Most Tritonians lead normal and happy lives; at least, as normal as possible under the circumstances. Dangerous missions are undertaken by the Sea Wolves, who are a combination of security officers, marines and salvage experts. The Sea Wolves are charged with the security of Tritonia. This duty ranges from patrolling the waters around and below the island, to undertaking search-and-destroy and surgical strike missions against possible enemies of the colony. The Sea Wolves also undertake rescue

missions, salvage operations, and the exploration of sunken vessels and ruins of coastal cities that were flooded by tidal waves and the rising of the oceans.

Unlike most human-controlled communities on Rifts Earth, the average Tritonian is not prejudiced against D-Bees. Perhaps the fact that the *Amphib* mutants have been an important part of the community has helped to make the Tritonians comfortable and appreciative of non-human living side by side with them. As long as they are not hostile, any intelligent life form is accepted and can live in Tritonia. All inhabitants, human or not, are expected to be ready to defend and support the community at all costs. The militaristic Naut'Yll (described elsewhere) who live in Tritonia have adapted to the regimented life of the floating island with ease. Naut'Yll D-bees have frequently sacrificed their lives to protect the drifting colony, strengthening the idea that all beings, no matter what they look like, can become friends and allies.

Although most Tritonians do not understand or approve of magic, enough D-Bees with mystical abilities live on the floating island to give it some protection against supernatural threats. The Tritonian authorities view magic as a force with the potential to do both good and evil, and judge the actions of magic practitioners on a case by case basis.

Two facts color the relations between Tritonia and other organizations and nations: First, Tritonia is fiercely independent; in no way will the drifting colony acknowledge orders, laws, or impositions from outsiders, unless the Tritonians decide it is in their best interests.

Secondly, there is no pro-human bias on the floating island. Tritonians of all races feel slightly superior to most outsiders, regardless of their appearance or origins. So, if a D-Bee kingdom proved itself to be a valuable ally, Tritonia might take its side against a human-dominated nation. They tend to see "people" as allies and enemies rather than along racial lines.

Naut'Yll Civilization

Many coastal communities and hundreds of ships throughout the planet have been attacked by strange squid-like humanoids. Unknown to all but a few undersea cultures, these raiders have built half a dozen cities under the oceans of Rifts Earth. These beings are aliens from another dimension known as the Naut'Yll. They are masters of science and Techno-Wizardry who have a history of inter-dimensional conquest by invading the seas of the planets they visit. For the last two centuries, the Naut'Yll have been quietly and slowly increasing their strength and numbers on Earth. Even today their presence goes unrecognized by most surface dwellers.

Naut'Yll are aliens with a militaristic, imperialistic culture. As aquatic invaders, they are seldom identified by surface dwellers until they have established strongholds throughout the oceans of the world – which is often a point at which their invasion cannot be stopped. This makes them incredibly insidious and dangerous. Although they have little use for dry land, once they have established their underwater domain, they like to plunder the wealth and technology of surface-dwelling civilizations. In some cases, they enslave coastal and island populations as laborers and/or for trade in the trans-dimensional slave markets. For the most part, encounters with the Naut'Yll are violent and dangerous.

Naut'Yll are an ancient warrior culture that arose from the ancient amphibians' need to fashion most of their tools and technology on dry land. Thus, competition for the small islands of Yllera was savage. Tribes warred against each other for control of the territorial waters around the islands. Over time, these tribes developed into nations, and then into a planetary government that crushed all independent kingdoms and absorbed all people into its web of power. As a result, the Naut'Yll are extremely warlike, preferring a military solution to all their problems. Diplomacy is known to them, but they dislike it and aren't very good at mediating quarrels peacefully.

A few mavericks have rebelled against this state of mind and have fled their cities to find a better home elsewhere. A place where the individual is free to explore his own mind and desires, and is not obligated to life-long military servitude and blind obedience. Such havens for Naut'Yll "free thinkers" are found on Earth at Tritonia, Refuge City and Salvation City. A handful of Naut'Yll can even be found among the members of the New Navy. Others are occasionally encountered in tiny settlements around the world (seldom more than a hundred members) or amongst adventurers and mercenaries on Earth, as well as other worlds. A few of the more aggressive mavericks rise within the Naut'Yll military and may become radical, extreme or despotic Governor Generals. However, these renegades are the exception, not the rule. Less than 2% of the Naut'Yll population share this desire for personal freedom, and of those, many never dare to speak or act against the majority.

The Naut'Yll are also a slave society. The most menial, laborious and dangerous work, including manufacturing, construction, sanitation and agriculture, is performed by slaves or machines. The Naut'Yll believe that the most worthy occupations are those that exercise the mind or involve war and conquest. Thus, all military occupations, as well as professions like medicine, law, engineering, or the mystic arts, are perceived as essential, elite, and to be held only by members of the Naut'Yll race. Wealthy Naut'Yll will own one or more servants to take care of most personal needs.

The Naut'Yll have been practicing magic for over three thousand years. Many of their mystic arts and sorcerous schools are identical to those found on Rifts Earth and other dimensions, including Ley Line Walkers, Mystics and Ocean Magic. Additionally, they have combined magic and technology in several different ways, developing many Techno-Wizardry items for life underwater. They also have developed a curious blend of magic and psionics to manipulate Korallyte, the living matter that can be mentally shaped into weapons, armor and tools.

Although the Naut'Yll prefer to remain hidden from other species, they have made contact with a number of civilizations, both in the seas and on land. They wish to control the seas and regard all other maritime civilizations to be obstacles to their plans.

Horune Pirates

The Horune Pirates are a scuzzy lot of alien humanoids who ride the high seas in search of plunder. They are career pirates who rob, fight and kill for a living. Although many people mistake them for reptiles or amphibians, the Horune are multi-eyed D-Bees more closely related in physiology to Earth birds.

Horune Pirates may operate as a solitary predator with one sea vessel, or in small groups of 2-6 vessels, or a fleet of 7-20 ships. The vessels may be entirely of Horune design or a combination of Horune and human, or other designs and manufacture. The typical Horune ship is manufactured through magic by a *Horune Ship Dreamer*, although the Bio-Wizards and engineers of Atlantis have managed to build reasonable facsimiles that are a close match to the Horune *magic ships*, but they remain lesser imitations (speed and M.D.C. are -30% and do not regenerate like Horune vessels). The Splugorth knock-offs are costly and time consuming to build, so the Horune have only commissioned a half-dozen such ships from the Splugorth and stick to their superior original designs.

Like the Naut'Yll, the Horune are aliens with a militaristic and imperialistic culture. In their own chaotic way there is structure and an order of command, although it is sometimes difficult to recognize through their barbarism. Horune are lecherous, gluttonous ruffians who sometimes seem like the embodiment of pure anarchy. When not engaged in combat and piracy, they are disheveled and dirty in appearance, loud, lewd brawlers and show no evidence of self-control or discipline. However, when involved in pursuit, combat, or when so commanded by their captain, they seem to magically transform into the world's most masterful sailors.

They respect power and ferocity but show only absolute loyalty to the Horune people and their leaders. The supreme leader of the ship is the captain. His words are never doubted, questioned or defied. All Horune live by this credo. Any non-Horune pirate who fails to give the captain the respect he commands is severely beaten or tortured and slain. Among Horune pirate fleets, each ship will have a captain, but it is to the Fleet Commander whom all show blind obedience. Occasionally, non-Horune can become a captain, but only the Horune may become a Fleet Commander. All Horune work and support other Horune. They never kill their own unless absolutely necessary, never betray their own and never accept other beings as their master. Despite their corruption and evil nature, the Horune live by this law of the sea and their leaders have never betrayed their people.

The Horune may squabble and fight amongst themselves and with rival Horune bands, but seldom battle to the death or with the wanton destruction they inflict on others. In case of a serious dispute, it is usually the two Captains or Fleet Commanders who battle to the death in a "winner takes all" duel, and nobody questions the results.

Unlike most surface dwellers and pirates, the Horune make their home *at sea*. Most will spend their entire lives on a ship. In some cases, they enslave coastal villages or seize small islands to serve as outposts or dry docks, but 90% of the Horune's time is spent at sea. Most of these island camps and ports are far from civilization and inaccessible without a boat, aircraft or magic. These locations are where the Horune repair their ships, store supplies and hold slaves, but the Horune pirates seldom linger on land for more than a few weeks. This life at sea makes them the ultimate freebooters, without roots at or ties to any one nation or people. It also means they view surface dwellers and aquatic people with equal ambivalence as victims waiting to be plucked and used.

Horune Pirates have a fondness for both *high technology* and *magic*, particularly as they apply to sailing and combat. As pirates, they have developed little in the way of manufacturing, science or technology themselves. Thus, most of the items in their possession have been purchased, stolen, seized, salvaged or otherwise "acquired" from others. Consequently, the members of a Horune raiding party may wield a strange combination of items from Triax, CS, Kittani, New Navy, and Atlantis, and may include Techno-Wizard devices, rune magic *and* other items with Mega-Damage and conventional weapons.

Horune Pirates have pillaged seafaring people, ships and communities around the world without prejudice. Humans and many other surface dwellers are favorite targets for raids and slavery because they are often seen as easy targets. The Horune can be found in seas around the world. Many travel from one corner of the planet to another in a lifetime campaign of piracy.

Ship Dreamers. One in every thousand Horune is a Ship Dreamer. These alien *mystics* live in trance-like states, suspended between reality and their own dreamworld. They don't eat or drink fluids, but imperceptibly draw nourishment from psychic energy and the air and water around them. They never speak or open their eyes, but sit like the ancient Earth Hindu Indians, legs and arms crossed, and float two feet (0.6 m) above the ground. A large mystic eye appears above the Dreamer's head and it from this mystic eye that spells are cast to defend itself (all conventional spell magic, levels 1-13) and to weave Dream Ships, but even then the Ship Dreamer never moves, opens his eyes or speaks.

The Ship Dreamer's entire existence is passive, except for the creation of the Dream Ships and acts of self-defense. Even if the ship carrying the mystic falls under attack, the Horune Mystic does nothing to help save it or his fellow Horune. If the vessel is sunk, the Ship Dreamer will usually survive via self-preserving magic. It is interesting to note that once a Horune Dream Ship is sunk/destroyed, it seems to disintegrate and vanish as if it had never existed at all.

The Solar System

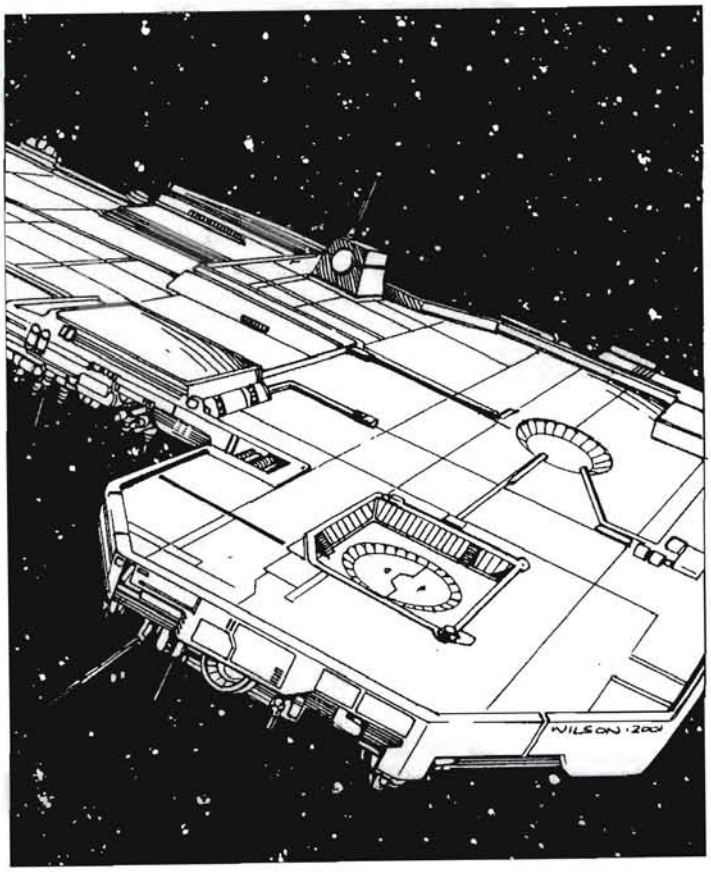
What lies beyond the blue skies of Rifts Earth remains a mystery for those bound to the planet. No known satellite, space shuttle, or probe has ever been able to penetrate the veil of the atmosphere and enter orbit. All attempts have met with failure.

The two most popular theories are: Pre-Rifts killer satellites, disguised or otherwise beyond normal means of detection, destroy anything that enters orbit. The other theory is a ring of debris, in counter-orbit, shreds any object that tries to pass through it.

Another theory growing in popularity is that a dimensional vortex envelops the planet and anything that enters orbit is sling-shot into another dimension. Some have gone so far as to speculate that the entire planet is contained in a dimensional envelope that enables the Earth to co-exist in several dimensions

simultaneously. This allows dimensional travel in and out of the envelope, but prevents leaving the envelope by any means other than a Rift.

Regardless of the reason why, those locked on the planet Earth have come to accept the fact that outer space, even the edge of orbit, is denied them and have abandoned the idea of space travel *long ago*. The last known attempt to breach Earth's atmosphere was a titanic effort waged by the Triax Corporation in which a battery of satellites, missiles, robots, and microscopic probes were launched and lost. That was 38 years ago. When Triax, the recognized leaders in advanced technologies failed, all others gave up. The Coalition's last attempt to enter space was 76 years ago. They too have forsaken space and took great delight in Triax's subsequent failure. At present, a few high-tech centers in Japan and Scandinavia still are interested in successfully launching a vessel into space, but none have had any success. The most progress being made is in Scandinavia, where a consortium of research firms have begun launching long-range missiles into space so that they might be destroyed. It is the hope of the Scandinavians that by systematically testing the orbital boundary, a hole might be found through which vessels could be sent.



Space Stations

Numerous satellites, space stations and space docks were in operation at the Coming of the Rifts. As the planet below erupted into an incredibly lethal display of energy, those stationed in orbit soon realized they would never set foot on Earth again. Despondent, many of those left in space killed themselves or tried unsuccessfully to venture to another solar system. The size and prosperity of the Rifts Earth *orbital community* have grown dramatically since the eruption of the Rifts nearly three centuries ago, but the early unity between the various space colonies has long since vanished. Although they do trade and communicate with each other, and a number of pacts and allegiances exist, there is growing discord, great rivalry, fear and even hatred among the occupants in the Zone.

Each of the five space colonies is considered a separate nation. There is the North American Union (America & Canada) at *Freedom Station*, the New Russian Commonwealth of the *Laika Station*, the European Conglomerate of *Yuro Station*, the Nihilist Metas of the *Outcast Station*, and the powerful *CAN Republic* on the moon (originally a multinational cooperative led by the Americans and since taken over by the American based Cyberworks Aerospace Network).

Freedom Station

This is the oldest of the occupied orbital stations, having been launched at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Orbiters often refer to it as the "Yanker" station. Freedom Station was originally a multi-national effort, but, later, as other countries concentrated on their own nation's space programs, Freedom Station was abandoned by many of the original sponsoring nations. Eventually, American and Canadian private industry bought control of the station (considered to be somewhat obsolete). The private sector provided funding, crew members, maintenance, and conducted scientific and industrial/manufacturing operations. A lot of experimental equipment was sent to, and developed at, Freedom for zero gravity testing, and much of it is still there.

Of all the stations, Freedom is the most open to outsiders. A lot of freebooters, traders, miners, and even pirates make it their temporary home, and bring a lot of trade with them. A lot of scavenged artifacts and raw materials find their way here. As a result, it has become the richest of the orbital stations, and has over three million tons of ice tethered around it.

To an outsider, the space station may seem to be a wild and lawless place. There is no police force and minor acts of violence are fairly frequent. Genuine grievances are always settled by the Committee, the space station's governing body.

The station is very heavily computerized, and many of the inhabitants have expertise in building, programming and operating computers and electronic gear. They also have fair facilities for the manufacturing of new chips and circuitry, but nothing as advanced as the Yuro station or moon colony. They are also expert in using and modifying circuitry and technology that they scavenge from pre-Rifts satellites.

It is Freedom Station that is largely responsible for fueling and supplying the many independents with the essential supplies that they need, both to survive and to continue their livelihoods as freebooters, miners and scavengers.

The KLS Corporation. The real trouble at Freedom Station lays with the unscrupulous KLS Corporation. This company controls 35% of the Freedom Station's manufacturing and economy, as well as 75% of the defense and weapon systems. The KLS Corp's claim to fame is the creation of the Glitter Boy power armor, but it is also involved in designing and manufacturing all types of weapon systems, computers, electronics and bionic mechanisms.

Back before the days of the Rifts, the KLS Corp was the Cyberworks Network's number one competitor, with both holding major military and aerospace contracts with the American government and on the leading edge of technology. Their legendary rivalry continues in space and has grown to dangerous proportions. At this point, beating Cyberworks means crushing the CAN Republic and taking over the moon. To this end they are continually spreading propaganda against the CAN Republic and have been successful in stirring public sentiment against the Republic within the Zone community, and especially on Freedom Station. The thrust of this smear campaign is the CAN Republic's lack of participation within the orbital community, their isolationist and elitist attitudes, and their dominance of the moon. The control of the moon and its resources is a growing issue. KLS Corp's goal is to incite the other stations to unite against the moon people, crippling the CAN Republic, even to the point of war. KLS has increased production of the GB Mark V and other military paraphernalia in anticipation of a war for the moon.

Surprisingly, the two families that control KLS get along famously and think of themselves as one big family. Equally surprising is the fact that the United North American government, basically a well meaning democracy that supports individual freedoms and peace, does not realize what KLS is up to and is playing right into their hands, eating up the propaganda against the CAN Republic. Anti-moon sentiments and hostility are strong and growing among the population of the Union and within the government.

Laika Station

The Laika Station represents the Russians' entry into the race to colonize space in the early 21st century. Despite its military and industrial emphasis, the Laika Station is much less strict and not as paramilitary as one might expect. The crew sections mix, mingle and intermarry with few restrictions. The station has a strong feeling of community, nationalism, and family; far more so than the other stations, except possibly the moon colony.

Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the Comrades are rather xenophobic when it comes to the other stations. They regard freebooters and independent miners as a regrettable necessity, but are paranoid about the possibility of newcomers being spies or infiltrators, or worse yet, being invading monsters. Consequently, they restrict freebooters and newcomers to a few specific areas of the station. Mutants (and aliens) are especially suspect and handled with great caution and paranoia. The Outcasts are avoided like the plague. In regards to preventing infiltration by spies from the other stations, they were infiltrated years ago.

All crew members of the Laika Station have almost identical quarters; a cubicle roughly seven by seven by seven feet (2 x 2 x 2 m). Families may have slightly larger rooms. The only real exception is the General and chief administrators and officers, who have a suite of two large rooms. Since this is also where they often work and entertain visitors, this luxury is generally regarded as very equitable.

Laika is the only space station with the technology and facilities to build new spacecraft, or to carry out extensive expansion of other space stations. They are also the best equipped for repairing and overhauling spacecraft, a service that they market to the other less capable space colonies. It takes about three to six months to completely design and build a medium-size spaceship not more than 300 feet long (91 m). Their manufacturing secrets are fastidiously guarded, production facilities constantly monitored and protected, and their prices are generally expensive, but the quality is high. They can also refine ores mined from the Moon or found in the asteroid belt into refined steel and finished components, but frequently need to purchase additional ore and processed metal from the Yankers, moon base, and independents. They often trade for food, energy, micro-circuits, and solar power rather than using IOUs as payment.

Unlike the other stations, the Russians have no quarrel with their moon allies and believe the entire matter has been exploited by self-serving parties (they have never liked nor trusted the KLS Corp). Remember, the Russians are xenophobic and don't trust non-humans or independents. Another reason to side with the more genetically pure, fellow isolationists on the moon. The Russians will try to be the voice of reason and negotiate for discussion and compromise (after all, in their opinion, the CAN Republic is unnecessarily rude and condescending, and too overzealous about their control of the entire moon). However, they will usually back down to adamant opposition, threats and force. But when their back is to the wall they will fight like demons till the end.

Yuro Station

The Yuro Station is a place at war with itself. It was built as a cooperative effort by the European Community, before the Coming of the Rifts, for space research and development. However, over the years, old feelings have reasserted themselves and the eight nationalities which built the station, Britain, France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Sweden, Denmark and Norway, have retreated into their own wings of the station. Although there is no actual war, and all the nationalities work fairly well together to run the station, there are frequent arguments and scuffles. These sometimes turn into protracted feuds, trade wars, acts of vandalism, physical assaults and even bloodshed. The leaders of the various wings try to keep such things to a minimum, or at least hush them up.

There is an informal council made up of representatives from the various factions, but it meets infrequently, usually when the station is faced with some major problem or threat. Even then, about a quarter of the leaders will not attend because of current feuds between their wing and another. It can be a difficult place in which to negotiate.

The bickering and hostility instills a feeling of creeping paranoia among the inhabitants. The paranoia is fueled by their reliance on the solar sail and few defenses, making the station a very easy target for hostile forces. Should an invasion ever be launched against them, the enemy would only have to destroy the solar sail, or the station's links to it, and Yuro would be doomed. At the moment they are unable to change the situation, so they just feel vulnerable.

If any of the wings dominates the station, it is the French. Of the station's fleet of thirty ships (a mixture of transports, shuttles and large personnel carriers), they control fifteen. Five of these are permanently surveying the solar sail for damage since the French share responsibility for the sail with the Scandinavians, while the other vessels are usually involved in trading with other

space stations. As a result, it is typically the French who negotiate on behalf of the station, while the other nations watch and grumble.

The Yuro station is in a dominant economic position. Other than the Moon base, it is the only station with an excess of power, and the only one with superior laboratories and industrial plants for chemical and molecular extraction, and vastly superior computer and nano-technology facilities. The chemical and molecular extraction process gives Yuro Station an abundance of refined oxygen, hydrogen, silicon, carbon, nitrogen and other elements from rock, ores and ice. This means they can produce an abundance of air/oxygen and other elements, gases and fuels, as well as purify water. The silicon crystals necessary for computer circuitry are even easier to grow, process and etch in a gravity free environment and this was, and is, Yuro Station's specialty.

In addition, they have superior medical and science facilities and personnel (doctors and scientists) and manufacture solar panels (selling the stored energy). They also seem to be able to find more than their fair share of useful pre-Flash artifacts in orbit. What the station has difficulty obtaining is food, raw materials, and finished building materials. Yuro Station is currently trading much of its excess energy, solar panels, and computers to Laika in exchange for spaceships and repairs, food, and building materials. They hope to become more independent by building a fleet of spacecraft to be sent to the asteroid belt and remote areas of the moon for raw materials.

Another advantage that the European Conglomerate has is its advanced medical and science facilities. The Yuro Station could easily serve as a giant hospital during war. They also have a reasonably large fleet that could be converted into assault vessels. Yuro also possesses the technology for creating Juicers, Crazies and 'Borgs. The problem is that while they could create an army of augmented beings, they lack body armor and adequate transport for their troops. The Germans are trying to remedy this by developing full environmental hard suits (body armor), power armor, and better weapons. They have also begun work on developing robots.

Outcast Station

The Outcast Station is the home of all the dregs, subhuman mutants, the disadvantaged, unconventional, retarded, and hideously mutated in the orbital community. Although most of the other stations and moon colony refuse to have anything to do with the Outcasts, they frequently send children, badly mutated by radiation, to the station, where they hope that they will be looked after by their own kind, subhuman mutants. Sometimes they are, but life on the Outcast Station is difficult and can be cruel.

The Outcast Station lacks any form of real government, preferring to use a brand of "might makes right" and lazy anarchy. The station has very few laws so almost anything goes. However, murder is frowned upon unless you can prove that you were acting in self defense. Gangs control various sections of the station and bloody, though seldom deadly, conflicts are frequent. Anyone trying to usurp control of the station, especially through betrayal and murder, is quickly dealt with, usually by being pushed out of an airlock. The act of being shot out of an airlock without a spacesuit is called being "spaced" and means instant death for most life forms.

The Outcast Station is the only orbital community where the average citizen is allowed to own and carry guns and other weapons. And most do. Unauthorized weapons are unpopular on most space colonies because it is far too easy to cause serious damage to the station, causing decompression to entire sections, electrical fires and smoke, mass death, and loss of precious resources such as air. The presence of guns is one of the reasons that the Outcast Station is always in need of new supplies of oxygen and food. If something is damaged and needs to be repaired, someone will get to it, eventually. Only under extreme emergencies does the community unite to work as one people.

The Outcasts, or Dreggies, have two major problems. One is that they have very little in the way of products or services that they can trade for new supplies. Second, the other stations are fearful or revolted by them, like Laika, who sees them as monsters. Consequently, none are prepared to trade with them on a regular basis. As a result, they have to either comb the Zone to scavenge for what they need, hire themselves out for the worst jobs (like scavenging, mining, protection, and construction), or resort to violence, like theft, kidnaping and piracy.

Piracy ranges from intercepting incoming ice asteroids, attacking freebooters and mining ships to steal their cargo, weapons, equipment and food, and sometimes stealing the ship itself. Occasionally, if their oxygen, water or food supplies are getting really low, they will launch a full-scale attack against another station, but this is rare. The Outcasts usually take heavy losses in such a raid, which lowers the station's population and therefore means that they are all the more vulnerable to their enemies.

The Outcasts' only allies are the freebooters, freelance miners, and independents who use the station as a rest stop and sanctuary from the other stations. This is beneficial for the Outcasts since these rogues bring money, news, and new supplies with them. The station charges a small docking fee in the way of ice, air, fuel or food, and then the visitors will spend or trade more for a place to rest, booze, drugs, entertainment (both conventional and illicit) and related things. Breaking and entry of docked ships is a common problem, but the crooks typically steal small, easy to sell or trade items. The vessels are seldom seriously damaged nor stolen. It is a Zone proverb that "When meeting an Outcast, keep both hands in your pockets and one on your gun."

Many of the station's population is suffering from radiation poisoning, decompression sickness, zero gravity, and mutation. This adds to their misery and hatred toward the rich stations that have abandoned them. It also means that a much larger percentage of the people have strange and powerful abilities. Quite apart from those who can fly, see through walls, or stick to walls, there are exiled and hideously deformed geniuses who live in the depths of the station, tinkering with pre-Flash equipment and their own inventions. Most are eccentric and many are cranks or crackpots, but one or two are genuinely brilliant in their field.

The Outcasts dislike everybody, generally because they are treated like monsters or garbage by the rest of the inhabitants in the Zone. The CAN Republic has treated the Nihilist Metas especially badly, refusing to trade, and treating them with disgust and disdain. There is further resentment toward the "loonies," lunar colonists, because they are physically attractive, rich, and

arrogant. The Nihilist Metas will agree to join in battle against the CAN Republic in a heartbeat, although the loose government will not force its citizens to participate; volunteers only. The chance for a good rumble with the loonies will garner a strong response among the Outcasts.

The one true resource the mutants of Outcast Station have to offer is their superhuman powers. Over 90% of this nation's population possess some sort of extraordinary power or ability. Education and skills are terrible, illiteracy pervasive, and O.C.C.s limited.

The Graveyard; Sino-Japanese Station

Once the largest and most advanced of the space stations in the Zone, the Sino-Japanese base was destroyed during the Flash by an attack from an S.D.I. satellite. All the inhabitants died within seconds. Afterwards, many of the orbital community were reluctant to go and strip the carcass of the station for usable materials, and over the years it has become an area associated with superstition and bad luck.

As time moved on, the stable gravity around the L-4 zone began to attract the station's wreckage, as well as other pieces of debris from nearby space. This has also happened around the Freedom station at L-5, but objects there are quickly collected and reused. Only the bravest scavengers dare venture near the Graveyard. There are rich pickings to be had here, but many travelers who come to search it do not return. This is partly due to the nature of the Graveyard, which has collected all manner of space debris, including proximity mines and a number of still functional and malfunctioning defense satellites. Some will fire at anything that comes within range of their sensors, while others wait to detect energy sources, heat sources, or life readings before attacking or detonating; the bodies and ships of the victims joining the silent orbital dance of the Graveyard.

The Graveyard is also rumored to be a haven for extraterrestrial visitors, space monsters, ghosts, and daring pirates. None of these rumors have been substantiated. Most people simply avoid the place.

Independents

There are about 1,000, comparatively tiny, satellites and spacecraft that function as the homes and businesses of independent companies and people not directly affiliated with one of the large space stations or the moon colony. These independent spacecraft and mini-space stations/satellites vary considerably in size. The smallest variants house two to 24 people, while the largest house 200 to 500 workers and/or citizens. Most have no means of producing artificial gravity and many are hodgepodge constructions that are made from one or more spacecraft and space junk. Most are located in the Zone, although there are at least another three dozen in the asteroid belt.

The inhabitants of these independent homes and businesses are typically freebooters, miners, scavengers, and squatters. Some are just loners who want little to do with civilization and prefer the solitude of space; living off what they can find and trading with other independents (and occasionally, the larger space community). A third are private companies, usually owned by a rich trader living on one of the stations or an independent living on a luxury yacht or mini-space station/satellite in the Zone. These independents are few and trade to all the various stations and lunar base.

Note: There are also a large number of freebooters and miners, perhaps totaling as many as 5000 people, who are not officially members of a space station, but live on one of the large stations as employees working for the station.

The Containment of Earth

Centuries ago, the inhabitants of the space colonies realized that their home world had become a threat to them. The Earth had been transformed into an alien world. Horrific beings that one can only call monsters fight for domination of the planet, as do mutants, aliens, and the last vestiges of the human race. Worse yet, the Earth has seemed to become a dimensional doorway to alien worlds and dimensions. New menaces and monsters are regularly unleashed into the world by this means. Thus, to preserve their own fragile existence, the space nations agreed to contain Earth as best they could.

To achieve this, the counter-orbit debris ring is constantly maintained. 90 percent of anything that enters the area of effect is destroyed. As further safeguards, scores of killer satellites have been launched into orbit. These satellites destroy anything they do not recognize. Some destroy anything that comes within a particular area or range. A quarter of these satellites are disguised as chunks of debris or meteors.

Finally, all, except the Nihilist Metas, contribute time, money, and resources to this project and are quite active in its maintenance. The CAN Republic and New Russian Commonwealth are particularly involved, voluntarily contributing more than the others. A formal pact outlines all of their responsibilities, which includes armed patrols to dispatch hostile entities. To this function, the CAN Republic has dozens of ships, satellites and robots on patrol. When an alien vessel or being is discovered, they immediately attack, with hopes to destroy them or force a hasty retreat (extermination is preferred). Except for dimensional travelers, nothing has been able to slip through the containment network in centuries. Note: The enemy includes anything alien, monstrous, and supernatural, including vehicles, missiles, satellites, and robots, from the Coalition States and Triax, and even humans originating from Earth.

Moon Colony & The CAN Republic

The Mare Imbrium colony is a giant, sprawling, underground metropolis that houses nearly 100,000 inhabitants and is the home of the Cyberworks Aerospace Network (CAN). The level of technology is unsurpassed by any in the Zone or on Earth and the efficiency of the colony is unbelievable. This is due largely to the installation of the super computer A.R.C.H.I.E. Seven and the organization and technology of the Cyberworks Aerospace Network (CAN).

The Cyberworks Network was one of the very first commercial businesses to join the space race. Their entry into the program was made easier with their vast wealth and connections to the United States' military. While others were establishing orbital satellite stations, Cyberworks went straight to the moon. The company's goal, to establish a totally self-sufficient, research and robot manufacturing facility. Here they could install the, then experimental, A.R.C.H.I.E. Four artificial intelligence and put it through its paces. To move things along quicker,

Cyberworks agreed to become a USA sponsored participant in a multinational moon colonization effort. The other countries involved included Mexico, Brazil, Canada, Australia, Belgium and Russia.

When the ley lines erupted, the moon was bombarded by solar storms and radiation. The moon shuddered and quaked, but the subterranean colony survived, with fewer than 5% casualties and most of those involved people on the moon's surface when the holocaust struck. The half dozen lunar mining stations and observation outposts on the surface were all that were severely damaged. And even when the A.R.C.H.I.E. Four system fell, they had sufficient back-up measures to prevent serious mishap.

Consequently, the moon colony was the first to recover and was instrumental in helping the orbital space stations to do the same. Being the least damaged, best equipped and most populated of the stations gave the moon colony a distinct advantage. Mining the moon and manufacturing became an essential part of the reconstruction of life in orbit. As the decades passed, the moon colony continued to grow and the Cyberworks Aerospace Network with it. It was CAN who provided much of the manufacturing and organizational skills that kept the colony operating smoothly.

With time, the people of the colony lost their individual national identities and became the first of the space stations to claim independence as a separate nation. The Cyberworks Aerospace Network had become so much more than a commercial company and had become such an important part of the people's daily lives that they elected to name their nation the CAN Republic.

The declaration of independent nations swept the Zone, with other stations declaring themselves separate and distinct orbital nations. The action bolstered morale and helped to give the people a sense of purpose and destiny. And so, for the next hundred years, life in space was happy and peaceful. It was only after the growing orbital community began to expand that rivalry between stations developed and national identities began to clash.

The first hint of trouble started with the CAN Republic's declaration that the entire moon was its territory and its sole property. Settlement of the moon became off limits and, for a brief decade, off limits as a mineral resource to the other orbital nations. A new CAN Republic administration corrected this tumultuous policy when it passed a resolution designating a small portion of the moon, on the far side, and a great distance away from the moon colony, as a neutral territory that all nations and the ever increasing number of independents could mine for its natural resources. The only condition was that no permanent settlements of any kind be established. Nor could people settle any portion of the surface.

At first, this quieted most complaints, but, again as the decades have passed, this inequity between the moon and the orbital nations has become a monumental issue of consternation. The matter is compounded by the vast number of independent families/squatters, miners, and businesses who keep trying to settle their own little piece of the moon. Over the last fifty years, the schism between the moon nation and the rest of the orbital community has widened dramatically.

Should some of the other orbital nations wage battle against the CAN Republic, it will be a long, hard-fought battle. The CAN Republic, right or wrong, will not give up its possession of the moon, which it now considers its home world. However, polite and tactful negotiations could lead to the following compromise: The CAN Republic agrees to opening moderate trade with the other nations and becoming less aggressive and violent about squatters and minor mining infringements; namely, tiny excavations beyond the neutral zone. They may even agree to expanding the neutral zone by 10% and allow for the establishment of small, permanent outposts and mining operations owned and operated by the other four orbital nations, but only under the watchful supervision of the CAN Republic. Advanced robotics, advanced computer technology, weapons and the virtual reality system will NOT be part of any trade agreements, even under the threat of war.

Any ultimatums or minor acts of aggression, especially on the moon, will destroy negotiations and place everybody one step closer to war. The CAN Republic will not be affected by embargoes and boycotts, unless they are cut off from their water supply, and even this will be of minor consequence for the first several months. After all, they have their own ice mining operation on the Martian moon of Deimos.

Mars

The fabled Red Planet is an inhospitable wasteland despite efforts at terra-forming. The orbit of Mars lies 48.7 million miles (78 million km) beyond the Zone. It is half the size of the Earth and is a cold, dark place by comparison. Although the Martian day is three hours longer than an Earth day, the amount of light and heat from the Sun that reaches the planet is decreased by its distance. The atmosphere is pitifully thin (150 times less atmospheric pressure than that of Earth) and composed mainly of carbon dioxide (95%) and nitrogen (3%; the remaining 2% contains other trace gases). The atmosphere does not cause enough of a greenhouse effect to warm the planet, and allows the surface temperature to change dramatically from daytime to nighttime and season to season. Summer temperatures in the tropical zone are a comfortable 80 degrees Fahrenheit (26.7 Celsius) during the day, but drop to a bone freezing 70 below zero (minus 50 Celsius) at night; twice as cold during the winter.

Despite the cold, Mars is not as quite as inhospitable as the Moon. The level of radiation is not as extreme, the gravity is about a third of Earth's, it offers similar resources as the moon, and it has a reasonably large amount of water frozen within its soil, as well as two permanent polar ice caps. However, while the northern cap contains frozen water, the southern cap is completely frozen carbon dioxide. The surface gravity is light (0.38 of Earth's) and its escape velocity is 3.2 miles (5 km) per second.

The main danger to settlers are the frequent dust storms, about 40 annually, of which 1D4 can become global dust storms sweeping across the entire planet. Meteors will strike the planet from time to time and there is the occasional meteor shower (1D4 annually) that will pelt a 100 mile radius (160 km).

Traveling times to Mars vary because the distance between it and the Zone is constantly changing, partly due to the eccentric orbit of Mars. At their closest they are just 46.8 million miles (75 million km) apart, at their furthest, 234 million miles (375 million km). Nevertheless, Mars and its moon, Deimos, are important resources for the colonists in the Zone.

Mars Base. The Mars base was set up in the days before the Flash, located in the tropical region of Mars. It had two purposes, one to mine the planet for valuable resources, and two, try to terra-form the surface to a level where it is inhabitable, if not comfortable. Several large hydroponic domes and a moon base-style subterranean base were successfully begun before the Rifts and continued to prosper for many years afterward.

The underground colony covered a square mile (1.6 km) and once housed nearly 3400 colonists. A network of fixed orbit satellites were also established to reflect sunlight and heat 24 hours a day to the base and covering an additional 500 mile (800 km) area around the base. The area was then seeded with algae and the area irrigated as the first step in terra forming Mars. Unfortunately, the Flash stopped further measures of terra forming, but the colony thrived. Sixty years later, the colonists would fall prey to the insane dreams of a mad scientist, *Doctor Matthew Walters, Ph.D.*, whose obsession with insect mutation would doom the planet. Doctor Walters' bio-tech research and experiments resulted in heavily modifying the genetic structure of ants, beetles and a handful of other insects. The result, the creation of semi-intelligent, giant insects. Unfortunately, the creatures broke free and escaped (with the help of Dr. Walters) to the outer planet where they could feed and breed at will. Today, Mars belongs to them.

See the **Mutants in Orbit™** sourcebook for the complete lowdown on the space colonies, moon base, Mars base and mutant insects.

The Asteroid Belt

The Asteroid Belt is an untidy mess of rock, ice and dust, sprawling between Mars and Jupiter in a huge band between 200 million and 300 million miles (320 to 480 million kilometers) from the sun. The number of asteroids is immense, but so is the area that they cover and collisions between them are comparatively rare. They range in size from boulders to planetoids over 560 miles (896 km) across; the largest even have their own light gravity. They range in shape from round to elongated, and there are binary and multiple formations as well.

The asteroid belt is not as crowded as many would think. Piloting a ship through the belt is about as difficult as walking down a street without bumping into another person. Most ships have computers programmed with the orbital patterns and trajectories of most asteroids of significant size, and automatic detectors should signal the approach of any rogues or uncharted ones.

Asteroids are all different, but come in several basic categories. The most common (75%) are known as C-type, and make up roughly three quarters of all asteroids. Two-thirds of C-types contain at least some water in the form of ice, usually frozen within the main body of the asteroid, but often not enough to make it worth mining. Typically, C-types contain a lot of carbon, and some (25%) also contain substantial deposits of aluminum, iron or magnesium. Other C-types are giant ice balls (15%) composed of 50% to 80% water (the remainder is rock). As luck would have it, C-types are most common at the outer edge of the asteroid belt, though many exist in the inner belt as well.

S-type asteroids contain little if any ice, but are mostly rich in iron and magnesium silicates. Some have a core of almost solid iron due to a process of heating and cooling, and may have actually ejected this iron core into a separate orbit, at which point the core becomes an M-type asteroid. S-types make up about 15% of the total asteroids.

M-types are about 10% of all asteroids and are very rich in nickel-iron, but with no silicate, to the extent that many are almost pure. Large ones are rare, but reward the diligent hunter. A third of the M-types will contain less common and often unique compositions of elements.

Those three types make up most of the asteroid belt, but there are hundreds of other varieties. Many are worthless hunks of rock but some contain rare metal ores or precious minerals. Asteroids of solid ice are also rare, but do exist. There are rumors of solid gold rocks and some miners say they have seen a great white asteroid that looks like ice from a distance, but is actually a huge diamond. It is known as "Maybe Dick," and almost nobody believes in it. Mining ships are equipped with spectrographs that help them identify likely targets, but the only way to actually find out what an asteroid contains is to analyze a sample from it. Note: Not all asteroids stay in the Belt. Over a thousand have orbits that take them inside the orbit of Earth and some even get closer to the Sun than Mercury does.

Some asteroids both in and out of the Belt have been settled by retired miners or self-styled belters, who have a small hydroponics plant to service their food and oxygen needs. A few are disguised watching and listening stations, either components of the old S.D.I. system or part of the new long-range defenses of an orbital station (and a couple secret spy satellites launched by the Laika and Moon colonies).

Nobody bothers to venture beyond the asteroid belt any more. There is no point. The cost and time taken to bring anything back from that far becomes too high to make exploring worthwhile. It is known that the gas giants and the planets beyond them have icy moons and that the ring system of Saturn is mainly ice, so new supplies would be no problem for anyone venturing out that far. There are also rumors that the old humans managed to get out that far before the Flash and may have established bases and possibly even colonies on some of the gas giants' moons, and that out beyond Pluto and Charon space is filled with ice asteroids and the husks of dead comets, riches for the taking, but most people treat stories like these as fairy tales. Staying alive is too much of a struggle to allow anyone the freedom to go off chasing dreams.

The Belt Way Station is a small outpost built on a planetoid found in the asteroid belt. It is effectively a rest stop owned and operated by a family of tough wilderness space scouts, the Wintel family (mom, pop, four sons, two daughters, an uncle and three male cousins). The Belt Way can accommodate up to 50 people at a time, plus the family, and offers hot cooked meals, gossip, gambling (usually cards or dice), a variety of alcohol, a game room (pool, darts, cards, checkers, air hockey, pinball and computer games), bathing facility, first aid, and rooms for rent (IOU 30 per night). They also sell a variety of candy, booze, bottled water, tanks of oxygen, and basic supplies like soap, deodorant, containers, clothes, footwear, spacesuits, rope, metal cables, chain, and basic tools, and can recharge batteries and energy clips. The Belt Way also sells odds and ends acquired through trade, gambling, or salvage; the kinds of items varies dramatically. The planetoid has a natural gravity of 0.25.

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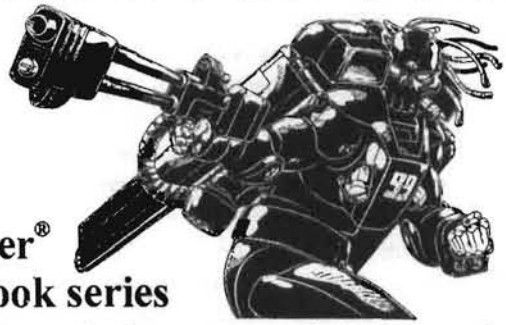

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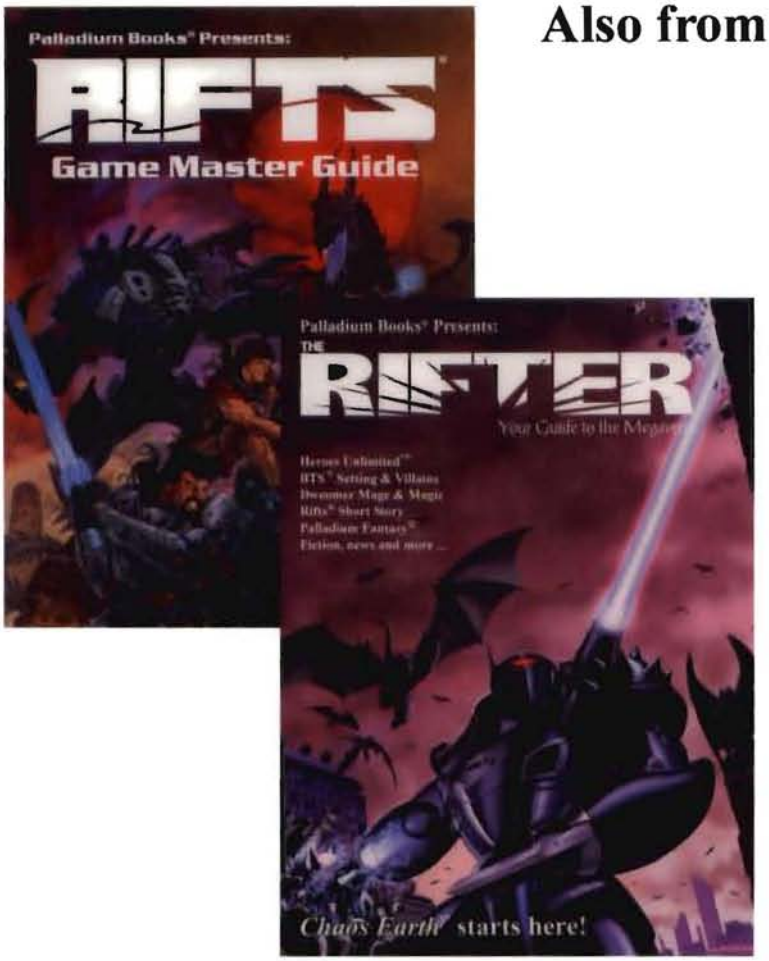

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