

Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER

Your Guide to the Megaverse®

October 2000 Issue

G.M. Tips

Rifts® Phase World®

Heroes Unlimited™

Palladium Fantasy®

Systems Failure™

Fiction, news and more ...



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The Rifter® Number 12

Your guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!

First Printing — October, 2000

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Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER® #12

Your Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®

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Special Thanks to all of our contributors. Our apologies to anybody who got accidentally left out or their name misspelled.

Contents — The Rifter® #12 — October, 2000

Page 6 — Art

A cool illustration of a full conversion cyborg that has survived a devastating bombardment. The illustration is by up and coming artist, *Matt Henegar*, from Portland, Oregon. This same gent did the art on page one too.

Page 7 — From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Rumblings from fans about late books and *Coalition Wars*™ being slotted in when several late books languish, has prompted Palladium's overworked publisher to address the issue again, and try to explain (for the last time?) why books get delayed and rescheduled. If nothing else, this little missive will give the reader a peek behind the scenes and into the mind of Kevin Siembieda (but don't look too close, it's scary in there). By the way, Palladium has been on time with 65% of its new releases this year. And we hope to continue to improve.

Page 8 — Palladium News (12 pt)

A *Rifts*® CCG?! Can it be possible?! Well, not directly from Palladium Books (we'll stick to role-playing), but this late breaking "license" is looking like a done deal. Read all about it.

Other news includes the fate of the *Coalition Wars*™ and a *Gen Con*® report.

Page 10 — Coming Attractions

The *Heroes Unlimited*™ RPG Hardcover is available now (and on time!) and *Gramercy Island*™ for HU2 will be out soon!

If you want to know the when, where and what the next books in the *Coalition Wars*™: *Siege on Tolkeen* series will be about. Here's the entire lowdown! Yeah, baby.

Page 15 — "Fantasy role-playing" is our middle name

Palladium Books' first big role-playing release is the ever-popular *Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game* (now in its *Second Edition*). If you like *Rifts*® and our other games, you'll love *Palladium Fantasy*. And we have all kinds of new sourcebooks coming out for it, starting with *The Eastern Territory* this fall (and followed by *The Northern Hinterlands* and *Land of the Damned*™ series).

Page 18 — 2000 X-Mas Surprise Package

'Tis the season for Christmas cheer and Palladium's annual Christmas Grab-Bag/Surprise Package. How to get yours is all explained right here. Don't miss out on the fun and autographs.

Page 21 — Knights of the Dinner Table™

Jolly Blackburn and the KoDT gang are BACK and as funny as ever. See, we told you KoDT's absence from last issue was a

fluke. Of course, with the ever increasing popularity of the comic book and success of Kenzer & Company (good work guys), some day, Jolly *may* be too busy to continue to do the strip for The Rifter®. With any luck, that'll be years and years away.

Don't forget the KoDT comic books are available from Kenzer & Company, 1935 S. Plum Grove Rd., Suite 194, Palatine, IL, 60067.

Page 23 — Palladium Megaverse®

Questions and Answers

This issue, Rodney Stott and Shawn Merrow focus on questions concerning *practitioners of magic* as it applies to *Rifts*®, *Palladium Fantasy* and our other RPGs. All really helpful material endorsed by Kevin Siembieda.

Artwork on page 28 is by Scott Johnson, page 25 art is by Mike Wilson.

Page 27 — Game Master and Player tips and advice for creating fun and interesting characters

Christina Stiles presents a number of cool ideas and suggestions for building colorful and dynamic characters with personality and history behind them.

Artwork by Wayne Breaux Jr.

Page 29 — The Palladium Fantasy RPG®

Into the Shadows

Jon Thompson presents an in-depth look at the *professional assassin* in *Palladium Fantasy*. Includes the assassin's code, types of assassins and their areas of expertise (along with appropriate bonuses), new assassin skills, new poisons, and a variety of gimmick weapons and magic items perfect for the trade. All source material is optional but sound and fun additions to any fantasy campaign. Check it out!

Artwork by the impeccable Wayne Breaux Jr.

Page 40 — Systems Failure™

The Texas Lone Star Cavalry

Ismael Alvarez offers optional source material, characters and adventure ideas for the bug-invasion RPG, *Systems Failure*™. Includes some new equipment.

Artwork by Scott Johnson.

Page 48 — Heroes Unlimited,™ 2nd Edition

The Geiger Organization (and super squads);

Optional characters, adventure ideas & source material
Carl Syphrett presents *The Geiger Organization* — a dark and secret operation involving superhumans and its own dangerous agenda. Over 18 superbeings (good, misguided and evil), Living Dead Men, and Hook, Line and Sinker™ adventures.

Artwork by Freddie Williams II.

Page 73 — Rifts® RPG

Blueprint of a Dragon

John Courtenay Shera offers an interesting bit of prose and ideas for adventure.

Artwork by newcomer Tyler Walpole.

Page 79 — Rifts® RPG

Phase World® source material

Richard Jenkin presents *Tyrell Industries* for **Phase World®**. Including William Tyrell, Advanced Weapon Tech Division, and new weapons, spaceships, robots and gizmos. Butt-kickin' fun for all Phase World® fans.

An impressive ton of artwork by Apollo Okamura.

Page 103 — Rifts® Phase World®

Hammer of the Forge

The next chapter in James M. G. Cannon's *Phase World™* story.

Artwork by Apollo Okamura.

Page 111 — Rifts® Lone Star Comic Strip

Um ... where the heck is the final chapter in Ramon Perez's exciting Rifts® Comic Strip? This page ... um ... explains things. Sorta.

Sheesh. What's with these creative types anyway? Siembieda's frequently late with his books, last issue there was no KoDT, now Perez's Rifts® Comic Strip is AWOL! You'd think these guys are truly dedicated to their work and just refuse to crap-out something just to be on time. Yeah, yeah, we know the drill, "want to keep quality, blah, blah, blah."

Anyway, the extra long, pulse-pounding conclusion (part seven) by *Ramon Perez* (Penciller, Inker, Letterer, and Writer) WILL appear in **The Rifter® #12**. Now do you guys see what us Editors have to contend with: temperamental writers, artists, and changing schedules from the printer, to name but a few. It's a tough job I've got.

The Cover

The cover to **The Rifter #12** is a gorgeous piece of artwork by **Ramon Perez** and painter **Joachim Gmoser**. It was specifically commissioned as the poster to commemorate Palladium's 20th anniversary! Thus, we thought it made the ideal cover for **The Rifter #12** as it is the last issue of the year, depicts Palladium's last 20 years of accomplishments in role-playing and launches our next twenty years to come. (Yes, we plan to be around for another 20 years, maybe longer. We're like cockroaches, you just can't get rid of us. Hmm, maybe we should change that cockroach analogy?)

Optional and Unofficial Rules & Source Material

Please note that most of the material presented in **The Rifter®** is "unofficial" or "optional" rules and source material. They are alternative ideas and things one can include in his campaign or enjoy reading. They are not "official" to the main games or world settings. As for optional tables and adventures, if they sound cool or fun, use them. If they sound funky, too high-powered or inappropriate for your game, modify them or ignore them completely. All the material in **The Rifter®** has been included for two reasons: One, because we thought it was imaginative and fun, and two, we thought it would stimulate your imagination with fun stuff that you can use (if you want) or which might inspire you to create your own wonders.

Coming Next Issue ...

The Rifter™ #13

- The conclusion of the *Rifts® Lone Star* comic strip. Really!
- *Knights of the Dinner Table®*
- Material for *The Palladium Fantasy RPG®*.
- Material for *Heroes Unlimited™*.
- The next chapter of the *Hammer of the Forge™*.
- Material for *Rifts®*
- The latest news and developments at Palladium.
- Source material for the *Palladium Megaverse®*.
- New contributors and fun.
- So please join us.

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From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Over the last few months a number of fans have continued to ask, “Why do you announce or talk about books like **Wolfen Wars™**, **The Old Kingdom**, **Mechanoid Space®**, **Rifts® China**, **Rifts® Australia 2 & 3**, and others if they can’t come out on time or any time soon?”

Some of those who ask are just curious. Others are disgruntled and disappointed. We are too. We hate disappointing our fans. Moreover, Palladium Books is a *business*, so delays, rescheduling and cancellation of books means lost revenues for us. Nobody wins, but such problems are unavoidable.

The reasons are many and diverse.

One is that we must plan and make schedule announcements months in advance. Some of our distributors and virtually all magazines need to know what’s coming three or four months ahead of time. So, I sit down and try to plot what books are coming out when. Unfortunately, sometimes things change in the interim. What kinds of things? Other, more pressing commitments may get in the way or take their place. Other times the freelance writer drops the ball and the book requires a large amount of rewriting or misses the mark entirely, or never gets done. If I like the idea and I figure I will (eventually) rewrite or do it myself, I put the book on the back-burner. Unfortunately, it can take months or even YEARS for me to get around to writing a project like that (e.g. the two **Old Kingdom** books). It’s a bummer for me and Palladium as much as for gamers, but I’m insanely busy. That’s why Palladium has started to “cancel” books instead of saying they are delayed. We are also trying to avoid announcing anything that may have the hint of being delayed for any reason.

Sometimes a book is delayed a few weeks due to the printer, artists, writer, postal system, sickness, and acts of God. The problem is one delay, say caused by a storm and lost power, might only be a week, but then I may be busy dealing with some business or personal problem which delays the book another week or two. By the time the book goes to the printer, the printer’s schedule may have changed, adding yet another week to the delay, and the next thing we know the darn book is 2-6 weeks late! Likewise, I might lose time trying to negotiate a business deal, dealing with an unexpected business or legal matter, or preparing for and attending a convention. This is part of the business side that gamers don’t see. Remember, Maryann and I own and operate the business, so we must deal with the day to day concerns of doing business along with any trouble that comes our way. *Life* gets in the way too. I mean I do have a wife, kids, a dad, and friends who would like a little bit of my time too. There are just times when friends and family have to come first, and they do.

These kinds of situations cause an even greater amount of delays and problems at Palladium Books because its “chief game designer and writer” (me) is also the owner of the business (um, that’s me again). As a result, everything that pulls me away

from the writing and creative work threatens Palladium’s schedule.

Okay, I can hear it now, “hire some additional writers.” Sounds like the quick and easy answer, but this is very difficult to do. Palladium’s high standards of quality and unique approach to story-telling makes it unbelievably hard to find excellent writers. And this is where our reputation for quality and fun (which we love) causes us problems, because YOU — our loyal fans — expect only the best! As you should. However, the high quality, fun and care we put into our products doesn’t come easy, fast or cheap. It takes time and the right talented people. Unfortunately, guys like Bill Coffin and Erick Wujcik aren’t found standing on every street corner waiting for Palladium to hire them. On the few occasions Palladium has rushed a book or let a writer go in a different direction, the product is weak, and nobody — not you or us — is thrilled with the end result. So we delay.

My own big mouth causes me trouble too. You see, people are always asking me what “I want” to do next or have planned for the future. Like an idiot, I blather on about some idea I’ve been kicking around or I’m dying to do. Great examples of that include, **The Nursery™**, **Wolfen Wars™**, **Beyond the Supernatural™ 2nd Ed.** and **Mechanoid Space®**. The next thing I know, people are begging for the books and I have a zillion other commitments to take care of first. Or worse, I take on too much, plan badly and actually announce such and such (like **The Nursery™**) is coming soon, and wham, I’m in trouble. In an effort to get more product out to our fans, I delay my own projects and work with freelancers to get out other books. That’s why the above titles have been delayed for YEARS.

Please understand that it is difficult (sometimes impossible) for me to clear away enough time to do many of these special projects, because they are very, very time intensive. Taking 3-8 months to conceive, research, write and illustrate (sometimes longer). Months in which there would be no product of any kind when I’m stuck in the role of “chief game designer and writer” at Palladium. That’s where writers like *Bill Coffin* and *Ben Lucas* help by doing books while I am working on long-term projects. (Maybe you’ve noticed our hitting our schedule has been better this year? And *The Rifter®* has always been on time these past three years largely thanks to Wayne “must-hit-my-deadline” Smith.) However, even with books written by other writers, I read, edit and (when necessary) rework these books, as well as handle the art direction, scheduling and final production. Every book published by Palladium goes through my hands on one level or another. This means even a well written book that is trouble free will chew up 2-4 weeks out of “my” time. That’s why I regularly work insane hours (12-18 hours a day, six and seven days a week for months at a time).

There’s one more thing that *may* cause books to be delayed and rescheduled in favor of other projects (like *Coalition*

Wars™) — “creative energy.” Role-playing games and sourcebooks can’t be stamped out by machines. They require human ingenuity, imagination and inspiration just to get started, and hours of hard work to finish a book that is well written, fun and exciting. This means, sometimes I, like other writers, need to put aside the project that was announced, to do something else. That’s what happened with **The Coalition Wars™** series. I had been (quietly) dying to write this series for years. One day around New Year’s, Maryann suggested that the 10th anniversary of **Rifts®** would be the perfect time to finally write the conflict between the CS and Tolkeen (of course she didn’t know I was planning six books). I didn’t need much prodding to do these books and bounced some ideas off Bill Coffin, whose input only got me more excited. At the same time, I was growing tired of working with other writers on joint projects for the last several years. I wanted to do something “I” had dreamed about doing. Something that I could cut loose with all my heart and go wild. A project I would have fun writing and the fans would have a blast playing. Was I being selfish? Perhaps. But you’ve got to understand that sometimes a writer/creator has to express his own ideas or he’ll explode. I “needed” to finally do the *Coalition Wars* (*The Nursery*, *BTS*, and a few other project gnaw at me too) so badly that it was distracting me from my other work. Additionally, getting the opportunity to do a project like this rejuvenates me and renews my energy to work on other projects. Does that make any sense? I hope so.

I hope I haven’t rambled on too long. The role-playing game “business” is more than “fun and games.” I hope this provides a little insight behind the scenes without sounding like a litany of excuses. I just wanted to answer the questions we keep getting about books and projects announced a year or more ago that have yet to see the light of day. Please know that the guys and gals who read and play our games are important to us. We never delay, reschedule or cancel a book unless we feel it is necessary. We strive to make the best (i.e. most fun and imaginative) role-playing games we can create. Unfortunately, delays and some (hopefully small) disappointments come with the territory. Thanks for reading my ranting. Now go out and have some fun role-playing or something.

— Kevin Siembieda, 2000

News

By Kevin Siembieda, the guy who should know

Who will win, the Coalition or Tolkeen?

That’s the question on the minds of most **Rifts®** players right now. We knew the **Coalition Wars™: Siege on Tolkeen** series would raise some eyebrows and cause people to talk, but even we didn’t anticipate the level of excitement and wild speculation that we’ve been seeing. Wow.

People seem to be divided 50/50 as to who will win, the CS or Tolkeen. At Gen Con®, hundreds of people (no kidding) must have asked me who will win, or dropped by to tell me that “they knew” who would win and went on to explain their reasoning with a wink and a nod.

Meanwhile, Palladium has been bombarded with e-mail, letters and questions from fans impassioned about the survival of their favorite side. Some are certain the Coalition is on the verge of being toppled. One e-mail screamed, and I quote:

“WHAT ARE YOU THINKING, DESTROYING THE COALITION!!!!!! I could not believe my eyes when I read *The Siege on Tolkeen* book 2 ...”

At Gen Con®, a pair of gamers chastised me for my “obvious” plan to destroy the Coalition, and went on to tell me about how even the notion of the CS Army falling to Tolkeen was crazy and that I was wrecking **Rifts®**. These fellows wouldn’t even read the first two books in the series — which was pretty funny, because they were completely guessing about what was going on based on hearsay and their own paranoia. Ironically, some of the things they “knew” were about to happen as a certainty, were completely off the mark.

Supporters of Tolkeen and magic are just as impassioned, proclaiming that the Tolkeenites “can” (and should) beat the CS (or at least hold them off or evade the CS invaders), and that the Coalition could never destroy them! Others have speculated that if Tolkeen falls, Lazlo will be targeted next and that I must be “crazy” to do something like that.

Hey, war is hell. Nothing is certain, and there is always tragedy regardless of the outcome. That’s one of the underlying themes of the series. Oh, and I’ve been accused of being “crazy” before.

Personally, I find all of this very rewarding. The series is supposed to evoke strong emotions, and create suspense and excitement. The seesaw action keeping people on the edge of their seats. The strong fan reactions we’ve been getting only confirm that we’re doing a good job.

Who will win?

I’m not telling! That would ruin all the fun. Everybody (except key Palladium staffers) will have to wait and see. Meanwhile, enjoy the story and its drama. Be part of the ever changing events, horror, heroics and action of this war story.

Oh, I will say one thing: One side will be the *decisive winner*. That’s a promise.



***Precedence* to produce a Rifts® Collectable Card Game for 2001**

Palladium has been approached by two different companies interested in “adapting” **Rifts®** into a collectable card game (CCG). After six weeks of discussion among ourselves and **Rifts®** fans on-line, we decide to let **Precedence** do it. (We received, read and considered over 200 e-mails before we decided to let a **Rifts®** CCG be made. Roughly 55% of **Rifts®** fans were for it, 45% against).

Like many of you, Maryann and I don’t, personally, play or like CCGs. Then again, we don’t play pinochle or backgammon either, but we acknowledge that lots of people love these games. Consequently, we thought we’d share **Rifts®** with Card Gamers.

The **Rifts®** CCG is a “license,” meaning somebody other than Palladium Books will be designing the game, doing the art, packaging and marketing of this product. Palladium will have reasonable “approval” and limited input on the CCG, but that’s all. Thus, Palladium can remain focused on what we know and love best, role-playing games and sourcebooks. This “license” should NOT delay or hurt Palladium’s RPG schedule in any way.

We chose **Precedence** because they sound like they really know and like **Rifts®**, and *should* do a good, loyal adaptation of the RPG into the Collectable Card Game format.

What does this mean for **Rifts** fans? It depends. If you like CCGs or like the art on the cards, buy some. If you don’t, keep focused on the RPG books and enjoy. In fact, we have all kinds of cool things planned for **Rifts®**, **Heroes Unlimited™**, **Palladium Fantasy®**, and our other lines. It’s a big a world out there with lots of different likes and dislikes. We think it’s cool that **Rifts®** appeals to role-players and beyond.

It’s not a done deal yet, but things are moving fast now. We’ll keep you posted on developments next issue.

Gen Con® Report

I’m writing this only a couple days after getting back from **Gen Con® 2000** while the memories are fresh.

This was our first Gen Con® under the *Wizards of the Coast®* regime, and was held in the recently built Milwaukee Midwest Express convention center, so we had spanking new facilities.

Loading and unloading for the show was much easier than the past, and the new convention center is attractive and slick. The convention organizers seemed to keep things going smoothly, kept aisles clear and sections for exhibitors and gaming well maintained and distributed. On the other hand, things were also segregated and spread out (one can’t avoid that with a show that gets 20,000+ people attending). For example, the Exhibitors’ area was on the third floor, the art show and panel discussion rooms on the first, and gaming — I’m not sure where it was — the second and first floors, maybe.

Maryann and I were kept so busy selling books, signing autographs, getting our pictures taken and chatting with fans that we only got to completely explore the Exhibitors’ room once, and probably missed more than a few things. The rest of the crew got out a bit more, but they were kept pretty busy too. As a result, I can only talk about the Exhibitors’ room. It was big and glitzy. Over 200 booths, many of which were fancy and slick productions. There were dealers selling miniatures, plaster cast dungeon constructs (the latest thing for use with minis), movie posters, limited edition prints, original art, Japanimation, model kits, DVDs, videotapes, soundtracks, old RPG books, computer games, and, of course, collectable card games and role-playing games. The new (for us) WoTC castle also added to the feeling of glitz and glitter, but in my humble opinion, it doesn’t seem to

use space well, and divides the Exhibitors' hall into fragmented sections, making the area seem smaller than it really is. Worse, it seemed, to me, to create a kind of cold and sterile atmosphere.

For all of us at Palladium, the highlight of the show was meeting a zillion fans all glad to see us back at the show. Except for a few exceptions, everybody we met was extremely polite, friendly and kind — many heaping praise upon us for games that have brought them years and years of enjoyment. We got comments about **Rifts®**, the **Coalition Wars™** series (with many expressing their guess at what will come next and who will win the war), and a lot of praise and excitement about the increased support for our other RPG lines, particularly **Heroes Unlimited™** and **Palladium Fantasy®**.

Most everybody also thanked us for "coming back" (even if it was just for one year) and asked (some practically begged) us to come back again next year. It was both very flattering and gratifying to be welcomed with such open arms. We want to thank EVERYBODY who came by to express their heartfelt good wishes and offered kind words. It is for you that we attend shows like **Gen Con®**, and it is YOU who make it worth all the long hours and hard work making these games and supplements. Thank you so very much.

The most often asked questions were (in no particular order):

- Who will win the war between Tolkeen and the Coalition States? Sorry, that would be telling and I want people to be locked in suspense until the very end.
- When will **Rifts® China** come out? With any luck, the end of 2001 or 2002. Yes, we really do "try" to plan that far ahead.
- What about the **Rifts® Australia Books: Two & Three?** Early 2001.
- Will **Mechanoid Space®** ever be published? Yes. Maryann wants me to have it done and out by next Summer (we'll see).
- Is **Beyond the Supernatural™ 2nd Edition** coming out soon? I'm shooting for next year (2001), but my schedule is insane, as usual. I've been dying to do this book for over a year now, but my schedule hasn't allowed me to do it.
- What's next for **Heroes Unlimited™**? That's an easy one, **Gramercy Island™** — a companion to *Century Station™* that presents a high-tech "super-prison" for "superhumans." Bill Coffin is writing it, John Zeleznik is painting the cover, and it will be out later this year (November?). Then there's **The Aliens Unlimited Galaxy Guide™** (January or February 2001) and the **Atorian Empire™**, plus plans for **Mutant Underground™**, **The Nursery™**, and **After the Bomb® the RPG**.
- What's next for **The Palladium Fantasy RPG®**? **Eastern Territory™** for a November 2000 release. It is my very next project after **Coalition Wars™ Three** requiring a final edit and rework of Steve Edward's manuscript before it can go to the printers! After that, *Bill Coffin* will be working on several Palladium Fantasy books that explore Ophid's Grasslands, parts of the northlands and, most importantly, **The Land of the Damned** (probably at least 3-4 books dedicated to it). I also hope to finally(!) get to the two **Old Kingdom** books and **Wolfen Wars** in 2001. My personal goal for 2001 is to get MANY of the books people have been waiting for out!

- Why do you announce or talk about books like **Wolfen Wars™**, **The Old Kingdom**, **Mechanoid Space®**, **Rifts® China** and others if they can't come out on time or any time soon? There are many reasons — see the editorial on page 7.
- The number one question: "Will Palladium be back at Gen Con® next year?"

Maybe. Maybe not. We haven't decided yet. From a business point of view, Palladium sells enough to make it worthwhile, and we love meeting and talking with people — we mainly attend to meet our fans, chat and make a connection with them. However, going to Gen Con® takes a lot more time and prep work than people think (about 3-4 weeks plus a week for the actual show and travel time). It is rewarding but very tiring, and we wonder if our time would be better spent getting out new product.

Note: Most Palladium fans who regularly attend Gen Con® want us back, but what about other people, please let us know if you think we should go back to Gen Con® in 2001 or whether we should stay home to get out more books (we tend to lean to the latter). By the way, Maryann and I are planning on attending **Marcon** again next year, and *may* be guests at **Dragon Con** in September, 2001. We'll keep you posted.

All in all, our Gen Con® 2000 experience was a good one. We would probably have had more fun if we hadn't worked right up to the day we left for the convention, making us pooped to begin with.

— Kevin Siembieda, 2000

Coming Attractions

Heroes Unlimited™, 2nd Ed. **"Hardcover" Limited Edition**

Out on time and available while supplies last (the limited edition **Rifts® Gold Edition** hardcover has been sold out for years and the new **Palladium Fantasy Crimson Edition** hardcover is down to something like only six copies. We expect the signed and numbered, hardcover, collector's edition of **Heroes Unlimited™, Second Edition** will be a hot Christmas item so get your copy while you can.

- Only 600 signed and numbered copies.
- End sheets featuring a specially commissioned, double-page battle scene illustrated by *Ramon Perez*.
- A classy blue leatherette (imitation leather) cover with gold foil logo.
- Interior pages are sewn and will not fall out.
- Signed and numbered by Kevin Siembieda and Ramon Perez.
- \$40.00 plus \$5.00 for postage and handling.
- Cat. No. 5500 Available while supplies last.



Gramercy Island™ For Heroes Unlimited™ 2nd Edition

Gramercy Island is a penitentiary in the tradition of Alcatraz and Ryker's Island, only it specializes in the containment of "superhumans."

Century Station's and many of America's worst super-criminals find themselves locked away in this foreboding prison.

- The Prison, described and mapped.
- Special mechanisms for holding and controlling superhumans.

- State-of-the-art superhuman containment wing.
- Over 90 new supervillains and criminal masterminds.
- A look at superhuman prison culture.
- Corruption, violence, betrayal and, perhaps for a few, redemption.
- Loads of background, secrets and 101 adventure ideas.
- Cover by John Zeleznik depicting a breakout.
- Interior Art by Breaux, Wilson, Perez, Williams and others.
- Written by Bill Coffin.
- \$20.95 — 200+ pages — Cat. No. 518
- Date of release: November or December, 2000.

Coming for HU2™ starting in 2001

The Aliens Unlimited™ Galaxy Guide™

Atorian Empire™

Hardware Unlimited™

The Mutant Underground™

The Nursery™

After the Bomb® RPG

(not necessarily in this order)

RiftsworkZ™ Two

The art of John Zeleznik — X-Mas release

Another gorgeous art portfolio of John Zeleznik's **Rifts®** covers, plus a little seen **Skraypers™** concept painting of a Blhaze Alien (a black and white version appears on page 56 of *Skraypers™*).

- Six large prints suitable for framing. **Rifts® Sonic Boom™**, **Warlords of Russia™**, **Mystic Russia™**, **Rifts® Australia™**, **Rifts® Canada™**, and **Blhaze™ Alien** (*Skraypers™* concept painting).
 - Each print is a large 11x14 inches.
 - Comes with a signed certificate of authenticity.
 - Signed and numbered by John Zeleznik.
 - Comes in a classy, plastic envelope.
 - Limited to 2000 portfolios. Collector's item!
 - \$29.95 retail.
 - Available November. Great for X-Mas.
-



Coalition Wars™

Magic vs Technology in the ultimate showdown

The **Siege on Tolkeen™** series pits the Coalition Army against the forces of magic at the Kingdom of Tolkeen.

Why six parts? Because the uncertainty and seesaw drama of war could not have been accomplished any other way. Because war is not black and white.

Each sourcebook tells a different part of the story, a different faction or element, as well as depict the ebb and flow of the action.

Coalition Wars™: Siege on Tolkeen™ One: Sedition

The stage is set, with a Crisis Timeline that leads up to the war and helps to fill in gaps about Tolkeen and the Coalition States. Information includes the assassination of Chairman Joseph Prosek the First, the rise of Emperor Karl Prosek, and the Coalition's rationale for war.

- New ley line magic.
- Magic artifacts and Spells of Legend.
- Iron Juggernauts — Tolkeen's Machines of Destruction.
- Techno-Wizard weapons and vehicles.
- Strategies and tactics for both sides.
- Tolkeen's monstrous allies — complete with stats.
- Key locations and targets at the onset of the war.
- Complete spell list from all Rifts® titles to date.
- World information and history for endless adventure ideas.
- Interior Art by Perez, Breaux, Beres, Wilson, Johnson, Burles and Williams.
- Cover by Dave Dorman.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda with Bill Coffin.
- 160 pages, \$16.95 — in stores now!

Coalition Wars™ Two: CS Overkill™

Things heat up as the Coalition Military makes its push into the Kingdom of Tolkeen.

It's all-out war as the Coalition Army clashes head on with the Tolkeen defense force — warriors that include human mercenaries, Juicers, spell casters, alien beings, monsters, demons, elementals and supernatural horrors.

- CS strategies, traps and plots.
- Key Coalition troops and war plans.
- Key Coalition and Tolkeen leaders.

- The Daemonix — Tolkeen's demonic shocktroopers.
- More magic and mayhem from Tolkeen.
- More maps, places and strategic strongholds.
- More world information and background.
- More adventures and ideas galore.
- Interior Art by Perez, Breaux, Wilson, Johnson, Burles and Williams.
- Cover by John Zeleznik.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and Bill Coffin.
- 112 pages — Cat. No. 840
- \$12.95 — Available now.

Coalition Wars™ 3: Sorcerers' Revenge™

The sorcerers of Tolkeen strike back in a murderous fury that stuns and bewilders the mighty Coalition Army. Combat and hatred heats up as both sides escalate the level of war.

The Coalition Wars series is "hot" — keeping fans guessing as to who will be the decisive winner and loser of this dramatic conflict.

- Hints and secrets of the Dragon Kings.
- Shadow Dragons — aggressive, dragon-warriors fighting like demons on the side of Tolkeen.
- Dozens of inhuman and magic wielding villains and NPCs; Tolkeen's most notorious defenders (some would say madmen).
- Iron Juggernauts of the air and water.
- Tolkeen's strategies and tactics.
- More background on the Kingdom of Tolkeen.
- World information, maps and history.
- Adventure ideas galore.
- Cover by Dave Dorman depicting Shadow Dragons locked in combat against SAMAS and Sky Cycles.
- Interior Art by Perez, Breaux, Wilson, Johnson and Williams.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda with Bill Coffin.
- 112 pages — Cat. No. 841
- \$12.95 — In stores the middle of October!

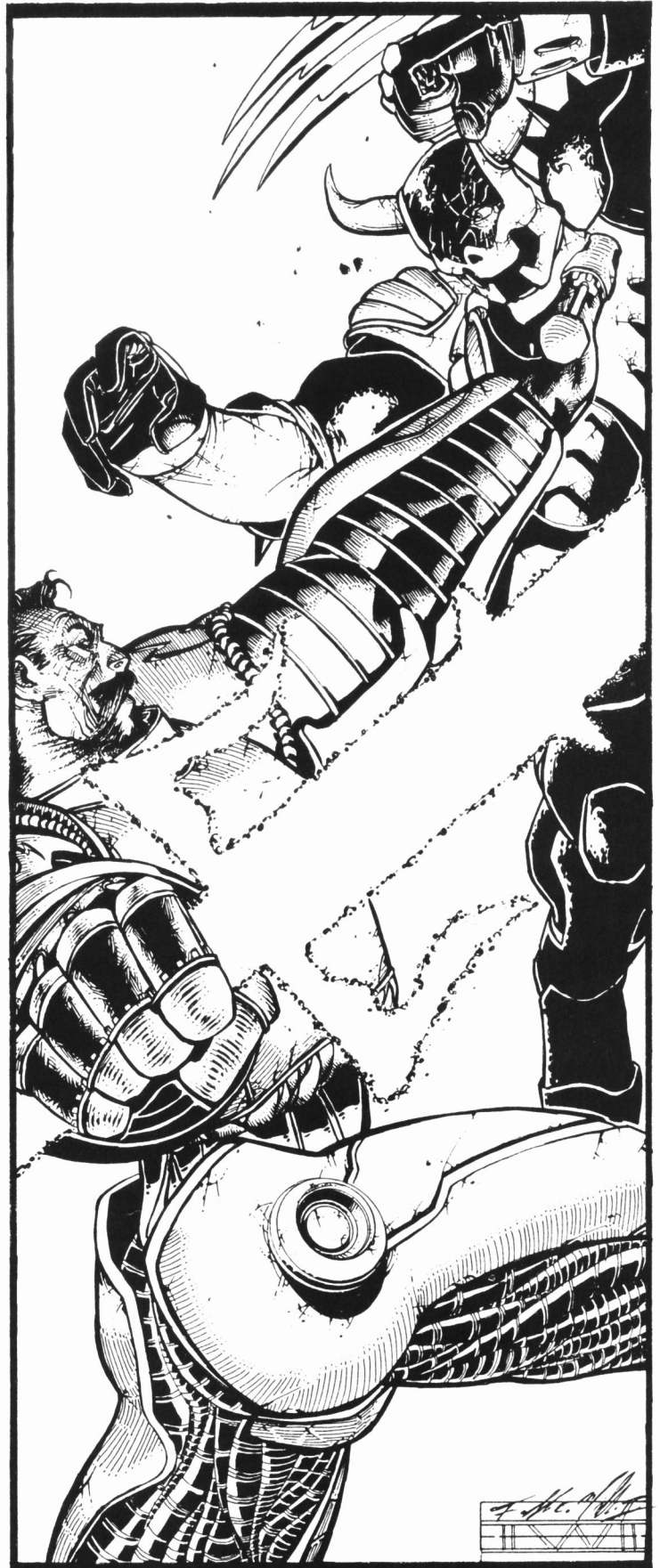
Coalition Wars™ 4: Cyber-Knights™

The Cyber-Knights are divided as half stand by their founder and leader Lord Coake, and half fight at the side of Tolkeen.

This book examines the rifts between these two bands of heroes with a focus on those fighting for Tolkeen.

- Secrets of the Cyber-Knights.
- Key Cyber-Knight leaders, heroes, and villains.
- The knights' place in the war.
- World information, history and surprises.
- Adventure ideas galore.
- Cover by Dave Dorman.

- Interior Art by Perez, Breaux, Wilson, Johnson and Williams.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- 112 pages — Cat. No. 842
- \$12.95 — in stores early November!



Coalition Wars™ 5: Shadows of Evil™

The plot thickens as the war rages on and the Coalition Army proves to be relentless.

This book will present a dramatic turn of events that will change the war!

- Cover by John Zeleznik.
- Interior Art by Perez, Breaux, Wilson, Johnson and Williams.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda
- 112 pages — Cat. No. 843
- \$12.95 — end of November or early December.



Coalition Wars™ 6: Final Siege™ — December 15 (tentative)

In the end, only one will stand triumphant. Winner take all. And the world will tremble.

This big, 200+ page grand finale *may* slide into a January release. So far, we are on time with the Coalition Wars releases, but with the holidays and all, we might miss the mark. Besides, this is one book that can not be rushed.

- Cat. No. 844
- \$20.95 — Page Count 200+ pages.
- Interior art by Perez, Breaux, Wilson, Johnson, Burles and Williams.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and Bill Coffin.
- Cover by John Zeleznik — wrap-around battle scene.
- Date of Release: December in time for Christmas — that's our target date. HOWEVER, this is a big book and the grand finale, so it *might* slip into a January release (sorry).

Coming for Rifts® in 2001

My personal goal is to get out many of the Rifts® supplements we've advertised in the past. That means you can expect the following (not listed in any exact order of release):

Rifts® Australia Two

Rifts® Australia Three

Rifts® Dimension Book: The Anvil Galaxy™

Rifts® Africa Two and others ...

Note: Rifts® Scotland™ has been canceled. This book is likely to be rescheduled, but God only knows when.

Last chance to get Ninja Turtle® books

We only have till the end of 2000 to liquidate our remaining stock. That means after New Year's Eve, Palladium's TMNT role-playing game and sourcebooks are DISCONTINUED. If you want 'em, you need to get 'em now!

TMNT® Blowout Liquidation Sale

Buy the Basic Game and get *any* two sourcebooks free!

\$27 dollars worth of RPG books for only \$11.95 — postage and handling included (if shipped via 4th Class Book rate, other shipping methods available online)!

Available only as long as supplies last.

- Or -

Buy any two "TMNT sourcebooks" and get two free (the big, 96 page *Transdimensional TMNT* counts as "two" sourcebooks).

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® & Other Strangeness (the RPG): \$11.95 — 112 pages, a complete game, art by Eastman & Laird.

TMNT® Adventures: \$7.95 — 48 pages, six adventures and source material.

TMNT® Guide to the Universe: \$7.95 — 48 pages, Triceratons, spaceship creation rules, space combat, adventures and fun.

Transdimensional TMNT®: \$11.95 — 96 pages (counts as "two" sourcebooks), time travel, time magic, mutant dinosaurs, and more.

Truckin' Turtles: \$7.95 — 48 pages of wild adventures.

Turtles Go Hollywood: \$7.95 — 48 pages, the only TMNT adventure book written completely by Kevin Siembieda and Kevin Long. Art by Long. Five adventures.

TMNT® Game Shields & After the Bomb® Adventure Book: \$11.95

Order by telephone, mail, or on-line (www.palladiumbooks.com); credit cards accepted. Offer good while supplies last.

**Palladium Books
Dept. T**

**12455 Universal Drive
Taylor, MI 48180**

“Fantasy Role-Playing” is our middle name

Palladium *Fantasy Role-Playing* Game®

The Palladium Fantasy RPG® is a world of magic. A place where magic has helped to shape an entire world.

Magic is a primordial energy drawn upon by humankind (and others — many others) for good and evil. A power that can be used to create wonders and help the innocent, or to give life and substance to treachery and unspeakable evil.

The Palladium Fantasy RPG® offers a world of diversity and adventure.

A place where humans stand at the pinnacle of power, and where nonhumans, like Wolfen, Coyles, Melech, Gromek, Giants, Ogres, Orcs, Goblins and many of the so-called “monster races,” await their downfall (and the opportunity to dance on their bones).

Meanwhile, races like the multi-limbed Rahu-Men, Giants, Titans, Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes and others have joined forces with humankind in the hope that man may learn from their mistakes.

Then, there are those found on the fringes of human civilization or who seem to have their own agenda. These include the shapeshifting Changelings, Dragons, Faerie Folk, Lizard Men, and Kobolds, among many others.

All available as player characters.

Creatures of evil are also afoot. Vile beings dedicated to the propagation of treachery, sorrow and death — or their own dreams of power.

Heroes. The player characters are the heroes in this expansive world of magic and adventure — be they Knight or Wizard, human or the farthest thing from it. They are adventurers, freebooters, explorers and champions who dare to take a stand and do what's right.

Rules enjoyed by over a million gamers. The core rules to *The Palladium Fantasy RPG®*, and all of Palladium's role-playing games, have been enjoyed and played by over a million gamers.

- Rules that enable the players to create memorable and fun characters that truly come to life in their imaginations. Over 25 different player characters are described in the basic rule

book alone, and over a dozen different races to choose from (many more are available in sourcebooks like **Monsters & Animals**).

- Magic that makes sense with rules that take a plausible approach to magic. Several different types — spell casting, circles, wards, elemental magic, clergy and psionics.
- Over 300 spells, 60 wards (magic symbols), 50 circles plus rune weapons, magic potions, scrolls, and magic items.
- Rules that offer incredible flexibility and diversity.
- Rules for realistic and fast paced combat.
- Rules that are easy to learn.
- Rules that link the player to Palladium's infinite Megaverse®.
- Demons, Giants, Faerie Folk, and world information.
- Game Master and Player tips too.
- Great artwork, a unique world of adventure.
- Everything you need to play, except for dice and imagination.
- And Fun! Lots of fun.
- \$24.95 retail — 320 pages.

Adventure Sourcebooks

Old Ones™, 2nd Edition: Over 50 different cities, towns and forts. The Timiro Kingdom mapped and described, plus adventure galore. \$20.95 — 224 pages.

Adventures on the High Seas™, 2nd Edition: Ship to ship combat rules, the Necromancer, Sailor and many other character classes, six adventures and over 20 islands to explore. \$20.95 — 224 pages.

Monsters & Animals™, 2nd Edition: Over 100 monsters, nearly 200 animals, more world information and details. \$20.95 — 240 pages!

Dragons & Gods™, 2nd Edition: Over 40 gods, 20 demonic lords and their powers, priests and magic. Plus 14 dragons, their habits and history, holy weapons and more. \$20.95 — 232 pages!

The Western Empire™, 2nd Edition: An in-depth look at the "Empire of Sin." 18 cities, 13 provinces, new herbs, magic items and adventure. \$20.95 — 224 pages.

Baalgor Wastelands™, 2nd Edition: The hostile land mapped and described, new monsters, new player races, adventure and adventure ideas. \$20.95; 216 pages.

Mount Nimro™, 2nd Edition: The war between the Giants and the monstrous, winged Gromek. New player characters and monster races, history, world information, and adventure. \$16.95 — 160 pages.

Yin-Sloth Jungles™: The Undead Hunter, Witch Hunter, Beastmaster, jungle tribes, villages, and secrets. Still \$15.95; 160 pages.

Island at the Edge of the World™: Crystal magic, the Ghost Kings, the secret history of Changelings and the Circle of Elemental Magic that threatens the world! Still \$15.95 — 160 pages.

Adventures in the Northern Wilderness: The society and tribes of the Wolfen are described, along with a historical overview. Six adventures in Wolfen Territory. Still only \$9.95 — 96 pages.

"Further" Adventures in the Northern Wilderness: Explore the Bruu-Ga-Belimar mountains and engage in four new adventures (plus source material). Still only \$7.95 — 48 pages.

New Fantasy Sourcebooks

Library at Bletherad™

Bill Coffin explores the secrets and wonders at the legendary *Library at Bletherad*. An island treasure nestled in the troubled seas of the Eastern Territory and Wolfen Empire. A place said to hold clues to ancient and forgotten magic, treasure troves and forbidden knowledge — provided one knows where to look.

- The Library of Bletherad, mapped and described.
- Destroyers of arcane knowledge; throwbacks from the Age of Purification. Secrets and mysteries that lead to adventure.
- Over 50 new spell and 21 legendary rune weapons.
- Demon and Deevil Lords and rare animals.
- Ancient Air Ships, ghosts, siege weapons and the Zealotry.
- Art by Kent Burles, Scott Johnson, and others.
- Written by Bill Coffin.
- \$16.95 — expanded to 160 pages, with loads of maps.
- Available now!

Palladium Books Inc.
12455 Universal Drive
Taylor, MI 48180

The Eastern Territory™ — November 2000

The Eastern Territory is the land of opportunity. A region of forests and unexplored territories rich in fertile land, precious metals and opportunities for those bold enough to seize them. Inevitably where boomtowns explode onto the scene and settlers flock to make their fortunes and build new lives, the scum of the earth is quick to follow. Bandits, bushwhackers, thieves guilds, assassins, mercenaries and monsters also see the Eastern Territory as a land of opportunity. There are land and sea trade routes to plunder, farms and villages to raid, inexperienced settlers and pioneers to fleece and new cities to pillage and raid. Likewise, these new communities represent new places for criminals to establish rackets, thieves' and assassins' guilds, dark cults and rare opportunities for all types of scoundrels.

Then there are the monsters and creatures who call the Eastern Territory their homeland and see the settlers as invaders to be slaughtered and chased away. The Eastern Territory also holds its share of secrets and treachery, at the hand of both humans and nonhumans alike.

All of this makes for a fertile land of adventure. A place where heroes, adventurers and opportunists (even rogues) can carve out a reputation, become famous and/or build a fortune, maybe even their own kingdom!

- Overview of the land and society.
- Key places noted and described.
- New monsters and menaces.
- Adventure, heroics and treachery.
- All kinds of avenues of adventure.
- Cover by Dave Dorman.
- Interior art by Breaux, Burles, Johnson and others.
- Written by Steve Edwards and Kevin Siembieda.
- \$20.95 — 200+ pages — Cat. No. 465
- In stores the end of November.

Coming in 2001

The Northern Hinterlands™

This will be a *prelude* to the **Land of the Damned™** series, and will explore and map the area of the Great Northern Wilderness just outside the mountains that divide the Land of the Damned from the rest of the world.

- Bizantium colonies.
- Revolution and civil war.
- Northern barbarians.
- Ophid's Grasslands and other places of note.
- Maps and adventure ideas.
- Art by Burles, Johnson, Breaux and others.
- Tentatively \$12.95 for a 112 page book.
- Written by Bill Coffin.
- Projected release date: January or February.

The Land of the Damned™

The **Land of the Damned™** series will explore and detail this mysterious, unexplored region of the Palladium World. Each a stand-alone sourcebook written by Bill Coffin.

Between Bill Coffin's contributions to the **Coalition Wars™** series, editing, and other writing — not to mention buying a new house and having a baby! — we decided to hold off on the se-

ries of sourcebooks that will map and describe the fabled **Land of the Damned™**. After all, we want to do this right and don't want to rush things.

Begins Spring 2001. The first of several books to explore the **Land of the Damned** should see release in March or April, with another one following every 2-3 months. Written by Bill Coffin. More details to come next issue.



2000 X-Mas Surprise Package

It's that time of the year again for Palladium Books to spread a little Christmas joy, merriment and surprises with the **2000 X-Mas Surprise Package — Grab Bag**.

How to get your Palladium X-Mas Surprise Package

This offer is only being publicized to readers of **The Rifter™** and on **Palladium's Web Site — www.palladiumbooks.com** — but feel free to spread the news by word of mouth to friends and family.

Deadline for this limited offer: The orders for the *2000 X-Mas Surprise Package* will be accepted starting now and running up to December 22nd. **Note:** Orders received by Palladium after December 10th can not be guaranteed to arrive *before Christmas*. Likewise, Palladium makes no promise that foreign or military base orders will be received before December 25th regardless of when they are placed. The first orders *WILL NOT* be filled until November first.

The Cost: \$25.00 US dollars plus \$3.00 toward the shipping cost and handling. Credit card orders are accepted (Am-X, Visa, Discover and Mastercard).

- All orders are shipped *4th Class Special Book Rate (International Book Rate for Foreign Orders)*, unless ordered via the web site, then you can choose a more expedient method of shipping (UPS, UPS 2nd, 3rd or Next day).

Send Mail Orders to:

**Palladium Books 12455 Universal Drive
Dept. X Taylor, MI 48180**

Or E-Mail using the ordering info on our web page at www.palladiumbooks.com

What you get ...

The rock bottom minimum of \$40.00 US dollars worth of product, probably more.

This year, each X-Mas Surprise will get a poster or two, commemorative 20th Anniversary canvas tote-bag, and one or more "Special Wants" from sourcebooks and role-playing games to dice bags, prints, and maybe even (for a lucky few) original artwork or a surprise or two. In addition, we *may* whip-up a little something extra to go into every grab bag. Multiple orders *will* result in duplication.

Plus most everything is signed by Kevin Siembieda (sometimes other available staff members) especially if the purchaser *requests* autographs.

Ideas for special wants: A bunch of nifty items to consider (in addition to special requests for role-playing books) might include one or more of the following (**Note:** Please give us a "several" wants in order of preference — Santa Kev & Mrs. Claus Maryann are NOT mind readers. If you don't give us a clear ideas of your wants, you *may* be disappointed in what comes in your Grab Bag):

- **New Palladium products or hard to find backstock.** Still need that copy of *Rifts® Canada™* or *Library of Bletherad™*? Always wanted to try *Nightbane®* or *Heroes Unlimited™*? Tell us what books you still need and want and ... well, who knows, maybe they will find their way into your X-Mas surprise package.
- **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles RPG and sourcebooks.** This is your *last chance* to get these great books!!! After X-Mas our license ends and Palladium's TMNT books will be out of print *forever!* Get 'em now or you'll hate yourself later. Also see our buy one, get two free special offer.
- A printer's proof copy (or maybe a signed and numbered copy) of **Heroes Unlimited, 2nd Edition**, Gold, Hardcover Collector's edition (only 600 "signed and numbered" editions were printed, and there is a fraction of that number as printer's proofs — made available special for the X-Mas Surprise Package).
- **Rifts® Silver Hardcover RPG** signed by Palladium's current staff.

- **Zipper Dice Bag!** Rifts® — Palladium Fantasy® — or — “Real Gamers Use Dice™” slogan — three different, sturdy, zipping, belt-clipping dice bags! Our latest “hot” item.
- **T-Shirts (\$16 dollar value) available:**
 Nightbane®
 Palladium Fantasy® Rifts® Logo
 Rifts®: Coalition X-Mas Rifts® Dog Pack
 ... or ... for something truly different: color, “**Decal**” T-Shirts specially created by Maryann Siembieda (note your favorite game line please and see if you get one).
- **The Collected Mechanoid Invasion Trilogy**, only available upon request.
- **The Magic of Palladium Books Collection**, a reprint of the original tabloids, only available upon request.
- **Original artwork** by Kevin Siembieda, Scott Johnson, Wayne Breaux and Ramon Perez — very limited. These are donations by the artists and available only in limited supply. Getting one of these is the luck of the draw, but ask if you are interested.

Note: NO out-of-print books are available! You guys and gals snapped ‘em all up over the last three years. Only the **Revised Heroes Unlimited®** (pre-dates HU2, but is NOT the original 1984 edition) and **Old Ones** (Palladium Fantasy, 1st edition) are available. **Rifts® Gold** and **Palladium Crimson** editions are sold out! Fewer than a dozen (mostly printer’s proofs) are available for the *2000 X-Mas Grab Bag* from Kevin Siembieda’s personal reserve. Super-rare, so only the luckiest people *may* get one. Sorry.

Remember, this is a “surprise package and grab bag.” While Maryann and Kevin Siembieda personally try to make each and every grab bag something special, we can not guarantee satisfaction. Its a “grab bag” surprise package, buyers may not always be satisfied (although we seem to succeed with most).

When ordering Palladium’s 2000 X-Mas Surprise Package, include the following information ...

- Special Wants — list *several* specific books, new and old, or other items like T-Shirts, Rifts miniatures, Rifts Silver Edition Hardbound, Heroes Unlimited Gold Edition, Dice Bags, etc.
- T-Shirt Size (limited to availability).
- Favorite Palladium games.
- Palladium games you have not played but always thought looked fun and interesting.
- Would you like Autographs?
- Comments and suggestions.
- Accurate Mailing address!

Note: Credit Cards are accepted (Visa/Mastercard & American Express). Multiple orders of the 2000 Surprise Package *will* result in the duplication of items.

Orders can be sent to us by mail, thorough our web-site (www.palladiumbooks.com), or telephone (734-946-1156; this is an order line only).

Happy Holidays from all of us at Palladium Books®





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Rifter Subscription

Don't become a slobbering beast driven mad because you're afraid you'll miss an issue of **The Rifter™**. Subscribe and get every issue delivered to your doorstep in a protective cardboard envelope.

One Year (four issues) — Only \$25.00

That's right, only 25 bucks! Postage and handling included. That's over 500 pages of source material, fun and inspiration for an incredible bargain. Of course, every issue should be available from fine stores everywhere — and stores need your support.

Each issue will be 96 to 128 pages (typically the latter).

Published quarterly with a cover price of \$7.95 (a bargain at that price).

Contributing authors will include *Kevin Siembieda*, *Eric Wujcik*, *Wayne Breaux Jr.*, *Jolly Blackburn* and other Palladium notables.

What Exactly is The Rifter™?

Well, flipping through this issue should give you a fairly good idea, but every issue will be different.

Really, there has never been anything like it.

The Rifter is a synthesis of a sourcebook, Game Master's guide, a magazine and talent show — a fan forum.

The Rifter™ is like a sourcebook because it will include a ton of role-playing source material (optional and official). This will include New O.C.C.s, NPC heroes, NPC villains, new powers and abilities, weapons, adventure settings, adventures and adventure ideas, and Hook, Line and Sinkers™.

The Rifter™ is like a G.M.'s guide because it will include special articles and tips on role-playing, how to handle common problems, how to build an adventure and so on.

The Rifter™ is like a magazine because it will come out four or five times a year (we're shooting for a regular quarterly release schedule), and because it will feature Palladium news, advertisements, serial articles and continuing features.

Most importantly, The Rifter™ is a forum for Palladium's Fans. At least half of each issue will be text and material taken (with permission) from the Web, as well as fan contributions made especially for **The Rifter™**. We get tons of fan submissions that are pretty good, but not good enough for publication as an entire sourcebook. In other cases, the submission is something clever and cool, but only a few pages long. There's lots of cool stuff on the Internet, but you must have a computer and Internet access, something a lot of fans just don't have.

The Rifter™ will reprint some of those "Web-Works™" allowing fans (and the world at large) to get a glimpse of their genius. It is one more avenue in which fans and professionals alike can share their visions of role-playing and the Palladium Megaverse with other fans. It's a chance to get published, get a little cash, get your name in lights (well, in print) and have fun.

This also means, more than any RPG publication ever produced, **The Rifter™** is yours. Yours to present and share ideas. Yours to help shape and mold. Yours to share.

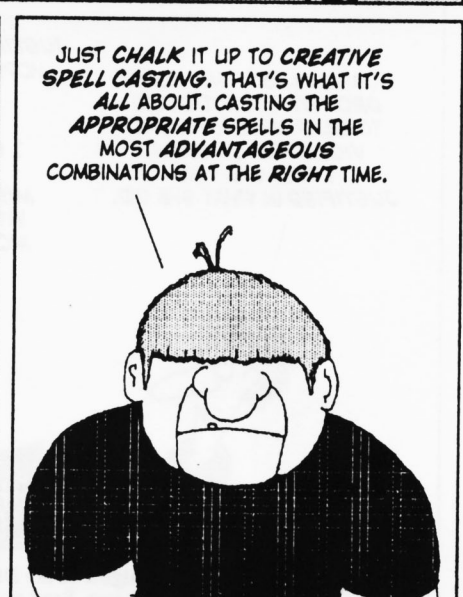
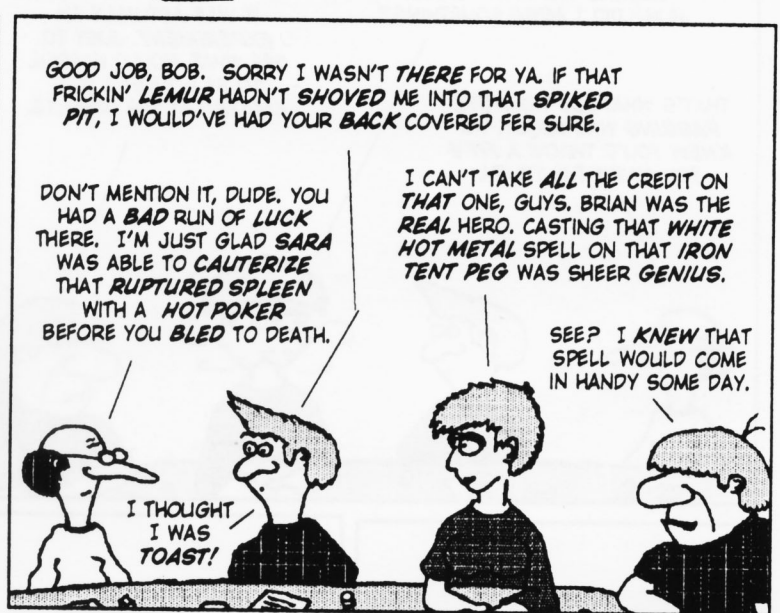
Why call it The Rifter™? Because each issue will span the Palladium Megaverse of games, adventures and ideas. Each issue will publish features from people across the Web and beyond! But mainly because each and every one of us, from game designer and publisher, to Joe Gamer, traverses the Megaverse™ every time they read an RPG or play in a role-playing game. We travel the infinite realm of the imagination, hopping from one world to the next — building one world to the next. Time and space are meaningless in our imaginations as we *Rift* from one place and time to another.

**Palladium Books Inc.
Rifter Dept.**

**12455 Universal Drive
Taylor, MI 48180**

Knights of the Dinner Table™

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN





CASTING THE RIGHT SPELL?
HUH? DID I *MISS* SOMETHING?

THAT'S WHAT ALL THE *NOTE PASSING* WAS ABOUT. WE *KNEW* YOU'D THROW A *FIT* IF YOU *KNEW* THE TRUTH.

IT WAS ACTUALLY AN *EXPERIMENT*. JUST TO SEE WHAT WOULD HAPPEN. TO BE HONEST I WAS *AMAZED* AT THE RESULTS.

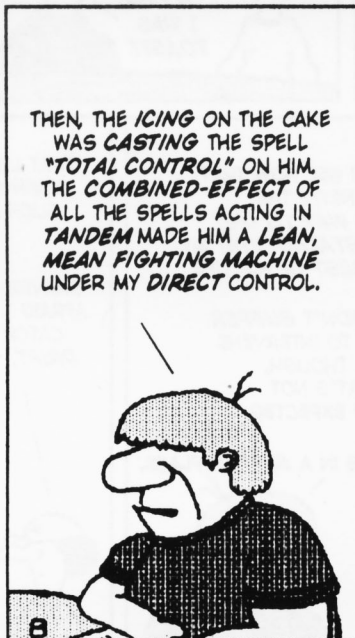


AN EXPERIMENT?

I USED THE NEW *TANDEM SPELL CASTING* RULES THEY PUBLISHED IN *HACKJOURNAL* LAST MONTH.



FIRST I CAST "*NO FEAR*" ON THE LITTLE GUY. THAT MADE HIM *FIERCELY BRAVE*. THEN I CAST "*PERCEIVED MALIGNMENT*" ON HIM WHICH CAUSED HIM TO BELIEVE THE *DRAGON* HAD DONE HIM SOME *TERRIBLE WRONG*.



THEN, THE *ICING* ON THE CAKE WAS *CASTING* THE SPELL "*TOTAL CONTROL*" ON HIM. THE *COMBINED-EFFECT* OF ALL THE SPELLS ACTING IN *TANDEM* MADE HIM A *LEAN, MEAN FIGHTING MACHINE* UNDER MY *DIRECT CONTROL*.

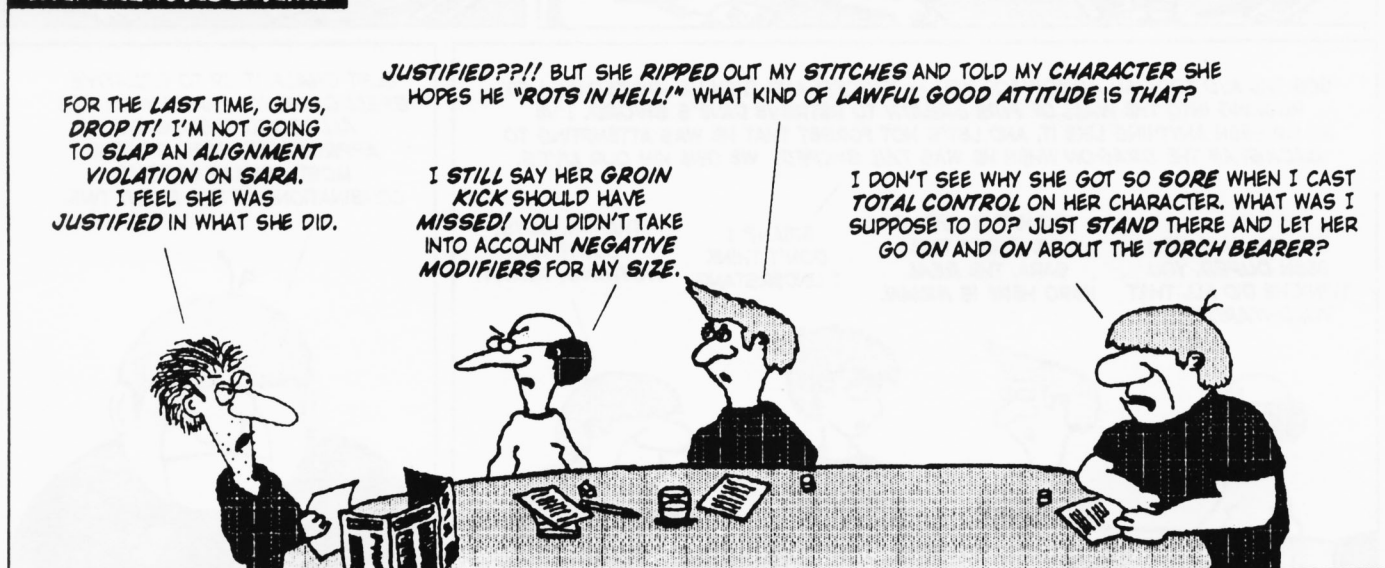


ARE YOU TELLING ME THAT YOU WERE PULLING HIS *STRINGS* AND SENT THAT POOR *CREATURE* TO HIS *DEATH*?

PRETTY KEWL,
HUH?

EASY, SARA. WE *KNEW* AS A TRUE *LAWFUL GOOD* YOU'D *NEVER* LET IT *FLY* IF YOU *KNEW*. SO WE HAD TO DO IT *BEHIND YOUR BACK*. NO HARD FEELINGS. RIGHT?

A FEW MINUTES LATER...



FOR THE *LAST TIME*, GUYS, *DROP IT!* I'M NOT GOING TO *SLAP AN ALIGNMENT VIOLATION* ON SARA. I FEEL SHE WAS *JUSTIFIED* IN WHAT SHE DID.

JUSTIFIED??!! BUT SHE *RIPPED OUT MY STITCHES* AND TOLD MY *CHARACTER* SHE HOPES HE "*ROTS IN HELL!*" WHAT KIND OF *LAWFUL GOOD ATTITUDE* IS THAT?

I *STILL* SAY HER *GROIN KICK* SHOULD HAVE *MISSSED!* YOU DIDN'T TAKE INTO ACCOUNT *NEGATIVE MODIFIERS* FOR MY *SIZE*.

I DON'T SEE WHY SHE GOT SO *SORE* WHEN I CAST *TOTAL CONTROL* ON HER *CHARACTER*. WHAT WAS I SUPPOSE TO DO? JUST *STAND THERE* AND LET HER GO ON AND ON ABOUT THE *TORCH BEARER*?

Questions and Answers



By Rodney Stott and Shawn Merrow

Here it is, the second in the series of Q&A Columns for **The Rifter™**. In this column, the focus is on magic and spell casting, again not just for **Rifts®** but for all games. Following the column will be an example which helps demonstrate some of the answers to the questions.

The next column will have a focus on hand-to-hand combat, where we will attempt to answer the most common questions on the subject.

If you want to ask a question, feel free to send an e-mail to rstott@palladiumbooks.com, or visit the Palladium Books Web Site at www.palladiumbooks.com.

—Rodney Stott & Shawn Merrow

Magic and Spell Casting

How do I combine hand to hand combat with spell casting?

Unless otherwise stated, low level spells generally take half a melee to cast, so each time you cast a spell, it takes up half of the character's number of attacks. E.g. if you have 4 attacks per melee, each spell will count as 2 attacks/actions.

If you have an odd number of attacks, the first spell is rounded up. E.g. if you have 5 attacks, the first spell counts as 3 actions and the second will count as 2 actions.

When casting a spell, when does it go off?

The spell "goes off," or takes effect, during the last action in which it is cast.

I.e. if each spell counts as 2 actions to cast, the spell will not go off until the character's second action comes up.

How can I disrupt someone casting a spell?

The simplest way to disrupt a spell being cast is to injure the spell caster some way, actually causing him to take physical damage, or force him to take defensive action, including dodging.

Depending on the nature of the particular spell being cast, parrying in most cases will also cause a disruption in the spell casting.

Other actions like tackling or knocking over the caster will disrupt the caster. Likewise, any act that causes the loss of initiative or actions will disrupt the spell.

A Ritual is more durable, with interruptions possible, but if the ritual is disrupted for more than 2 melee rounds it needs to be restarted.

What penalties apply to magic and psionics with cybernetics and bionics?

Minor cybernetic/bionic augmentation, such as 2 implants or a single limb, will reduce every aspect of a character's psionic and magic abilities by half, including range, duration, damage, P.P.E., I.S.P., etc. It will also prevent the character from drawing upon other sources of P.P.E. such as ley lines and blood sacrifices. These implants will also reduce the effects of magical healing by half.

Anything more than 2 implants or a single limb will completely negate the character's magic or psionic potential.

Removal of these implants or limbs will completely restore the character's psionic or magic powers.

These characters can instead use Bio-Systems without losing magic or psionic powers.

Are there any spell casting penalties when wearing armor?

Any armor that is made of metal, or other man-made materials like ceramics or plastics, that covers more than 50% of the body, will hamper the sorcerer's ability to channel P.P.E. In this case, they have to spend 20% more P.P.E. to cast a spell and a roll must be made on the following table to see what other effects the armor has on the spell being cast.

01-20 Reduce spell damage or effects by 1D4x10%.

21-40 Reduce spell duration by 1D4x10%.

41-60 Reduce the spell's range by 1D4x10%.

61-80 Reduce both range and duration of the spell by 20%.

81-00 Lucked out, no additional problems.

For this reason, many practitioners of magic prefer natural armors, or magic to provide protection.

This originally saw print in **The Palladium Fantasy RPG® 2nd Edition**, and appears in **Siege on Tolkeen™ Chapter One: Sedition**.

What about power armor, or vehicles/giant robots?

The same considerations that apply to body armor apply to power armor, requiring more P.P.E. to be used, and the roll on the same table.

However, magic cannot penetrate the skin of giant robots, or vehicles. Any spell cast inside will only affect the occupants and the internal systems of the vehicle/robot. Likewise, any spell directed at these vehicles/robots can only affect the outside and cannot affect the occupants.

Are there any special rules for absorbing the P.P.E. from the dying (when P.P.E. is doubled) or while in combat?

In most cases a sorcerer cannot draw on this P.P.E. unless he is prepared for the release of P.P.E. beforehand, such as during a blood sacrifice and being close to the death. During combat or a sudden death, the sorcerer is generally unprepared and cannot draw on the P.P.E. before it has all dissipated.

It says men of magic and also dragons are like living P.P.E. batteries, able to absorb energy from ley lines, etc. What is the limit to the amount they can absorb, and how long can they retain that extra P.P.E.?

Mages (and magical creatures) can absorb up to three times their normal limit in P.P.E. Most borrowed P.P.E. can only be held for a short period (the mage's P.E. attribute in hours) before dissipating.

How can a mage of any kind get enough P.P.E. to cast the really high level spells that require hundreds if not thousands of P.P.E. to cast?

These sorts of spells are generally available as rituals, where several sorcerers and supporters can assist the spell casting by giving their P.P.E. Other sources such as P.P.E. batteries, blood sacrifices and periods of increased energy at ley lines can also provide the power needed to cast these powerful spells. By using all of these resources, enough P.P.E. can be gathered for the most powerful of spells.

The Wizard (in Palladium Fantasy) automatically starts with Cloud of Slumber. The only problem is that Cloud of Slumber is only an Air Warlock spell. What level should the Wizard equivalent be, and how much P.P.E. should it cost?

For a Wizard, a Cloud of Slumber spell is 1st level and costs 4 P.P.E. to cast, but the spell's duration is only half that of its Warlock counterpart.

How long does it take to cast a spell from a scroll?

Reading a scroll requires at least two melee rounds. The higher level spells may require up to four melees. It requires at least a 55% Literacy in the language that the scroll is inscribed in to use it.

Most scrolls will be written in one language, but some scrolls may be written in several different languages. Scrolls like this

would need multiple Literacy rolls, and will take 50-100% longer to read.

Do all spells require words?

No. Most spells can exist in several different forms, and are generally based upon belief to perform.

The common spells (such as those in the various main books and Federation of Magic) tend to be derived from common sources and require words and gestures to cast. However other, rarer versions may not need spoken words or even gestures at all, though they generally require some sort of expression to cast.

Likewise, spells designed by one race may require modifications to be used. For example, the spell Levitation as developed by a race with 8 tentacles and speaking in the ultrasonic range, may not be possible to be learned by a human sorcerer without extensive research and modification to get the spell to work.

Other spells may require other things like props, or components that may or may not be needed in all cases. The individual sorcerer would have to research, or refine and modify such spells to be used in a different form from the way he learned them.

How do you make new spells?

Guidelines for creating and modifying magic can be found in **Nightbane® Book 3: Through the Glass Darkly**. This book, while indented for **Nightbane®**, offers several excellent new magical classes as well as new spells and magically related adventures, and is an excellent resource for all of Palladium's games involving magic.

Do Techno-Wizard devices require the appropriate spell to use or can a mage simply pump in the P.P.E.?

Simply pumping in the appropriate P.P.E. or I.S.P. is required to power a Techno-Wizard item. You do not need to know the spell to be able to power these items, unless the item's description specifically says otherwise.

Who can use Techno-Wizard items?

Anyone who can draw upon mystical forces or tap their own P.P.E., I.S.P. or even Chi can power and use Techno-Wizard devices. Likewise, those who are open to the supernatural or have large amounts of P.P.E. like children may be able to power and use Techno-Wizard items. With children, the ability to power and use these items may disappear with age, or with enough practice may be retained even though they may have low amounts of P.P.E.

I need clarification on healing spells: Do they heal things like broken bones, torn tendons, etc.?

Yes, healing magic can heal such injuries, but it cannot (unless otherwise stated) restore permanent damage like arthritis, stiffness or brain damage. Powerful magic might be able to heal such permanent injuries, but in most cases such relief would be temporary.

Healing magic will also generally leave no scars; however, severe injuries even healed by magic may still be disfiguring.

Scars from old injuries that have reduced the character's P.B. cannot be healed by normal healing magic, but can be healed using specialized magic.

I'm a bit confused on the magic saving throws. Physical Endurance gives you bonuses to save vs magic. In the Palladium Fantasy RPG® does that mean you get that bonus to saving vs all types of magic or just spell magic and rituals?

The general bonus vs magic applies to all saving throws where a saving throw vs magic is required, which includes spell magic, ritual magic, circles, wards, etc. However, some bonuses will only apply to specific saving throws, and they will be marked as only applying to that one saving throw (i.e. "+1 vs Wards").

Are strength-enhancing spells cumulative? Such as Strength of the Whale (Rifts Underseas™, pg 68) and Superhuman Strength?

If a spell gives a bonus to strength, it is cumulative with other spells that give bonuses. If it gives a fixed level, it is not cumulative. If it gives a multiplier, that multiplier is based on the character's normal strength, and does not include other bonuses to strength gained through magic.

Since Strength of the Whale doubles the character's normal strength and makes it Supernatural, it is not cumulative with other strength style spells.

My group is currently running a Palladium Fantasy RPG® game, and some of my players want to use a few of the spells from Federation of Magic. How should I adjust the damage/P.P.E./S.D.C. to fit the PFRPG?

Generally, keep the P.P.E. cost the same in Palladium Fantasy or other S.D.C. settings. Most of the effects, range and duration also remain the same. The main difference comes with changing M.D.C. to S.D.C.

With damage, the simplest method is to just change M.D.C. to S.D.C., so 4D6 M.D. becomes 4D6 S.D.C. damage. Those spells that provide magical protection like armor will need to be given a A.R., generally between 14-18.

I have been trying to find info on the Utgard Loki spell that is listed in the Undead Hunter description in Yin-Sloth Jungles™.

This spell is in 1st Edition Palladium Fantasy and was not reprinted in 2nd Edition. The spell lasts for 2 melees per level of the caster and provides the following bonuses:

- +5 to all saving throws.
- +6 damage.
- +5 dodge.
- P.E. and Spd are raised to 24.
- P.S. raised to 21.
- +1 attack.

Can be cast on self, or one person up to 30 feet (9.1 m) away. It is a level 5 spell.

Can you walk through a ley line, or is it like trying to walk through a wall?

You can easily walk through a ley line. In fact, most people could walk right through one without even noticing it, especially during the day, when its rippling energy is difficult to see.

In the Palladium Fantasy RPG® under the third level Druidic magic powers, it says a Druid gets "Healing Touch," the same as the Wizard spell. Since there is no Healing Touch spell, what is this referring to?

It is the Heal Wounds spell.

How long does it normally take to learn a spell?

If being taught, generally 2 days per level of the spell being taught. E.g. a level 3 spell will take 6 days to teach.

If developing the spell without a teacher, generally 30 days is required. Though this generally does not include the spells gained as the character increases in level. These spells acquired are learned through insight, experimenting in odd hours, and from fundamental knowledge of magic.

Developing "new" and "variant" magic, on the other hand, takes weeks of research per spell level. Again, see **Through the Glass Darkly** for tips on creating magic spells.

How do I use the Spell Learning Rules from the Rifts® Magic and Psionics Screen?

This is an optional set of rules for practitioners of magic who must learn spells to follow. O.C.C.s like the Mystic do not use this table.



Whenever a character learns a spell, generally by himself, or from patchy notes, he will not be sure he has learned it properly. This is where the Difficulty Rating rule may be used, as the character goes through the difficult trial and error phase of learning magic.

An example of spell casting in action.

The following scenario demonstrates in **The Palladium Fantasy RPG®** the following concepts:

- Combining spells and hand to hand actions.
- Casting spells in armor.
- Disrupting spell casting.

Scenario: Two Wizards are involved in a poker game, when one of them plays 4 aces and is accused of cheating by the other Wizard. Both stand up across the table from each other. The other poker players, seeing the mystic symbols on their cloaks, back away.

Tarkyn is a 3rd level Wizard. Hit Points: 21, S.D.C.: 15, P.P.E.: 120. 4 attacks per melee, +4 damage, +2 strike, +3 parry & dodge, +2 roll and pull punch.

Tarkyn is also wearing a half suit of chain under his robes (A.R. 9, S.D.C. 20).

Brik is a 4th level Wizard. Hit Points: 23, S.D.C.: 6, P.P.E.: 134. 5 attacks per melee, +3 strike, +4 parry & dodge, +2 roll and pull punch.

Brik is also wearing armor, but it is a full suit of leather armor (A.R. 11, S.D.C. 30).

Since hostilities are just starting, initiative is rolled.

Tarkyn rolls a 15 for initiative, but Brik rolls a 19, allowing him to go first.

For his first action, Brik decides to cast Fire Bolt, intending to finish off Tarkyn across the card table pretty quickly, and starts his incantation. Brik has 5 attacks per melee, and this means his spell will go off in his 3rd attack.

Realizing his opponent is casting a spell, Tarkyn decides to use his strength to flip the card table over into Brik's face. With his good strength, he flips the table over at Brik. Brik is forced to abandon casting his spell to dodge out of the way of the table. Tarkyn rolls a 16 to strike with bonuses, while Brik rolls a natural 20 to dodge, avoiding the table.

Since he dodged, Brik skips this attack, giving Tarkyn the opportunity to take his second action.

Tarkyn decides to back up away from the remains of the table, and starts casting Armor of Ithan. This spell will go off on his next attack (since Tarkyn has 4 actions, each low level spell takes 2 actions to cast).

Brik, using his 3rd action, also starts to cast a spell. Again, trying to end the fight quickly and decisively, he casts Fire Bolt. It will still cost 3 attacks to cast and will go off on his last action this melee round.

Tarkyn finishes casting Armor of Ithan. It normally costs him 10 P.P.E. to cast, but since he is wearing metal armor that cov-

ers over ½ his body he must spend an additional 2 P.P.E., bringing his new P.P.E. total down to 108. He must also roll on the table for casting spells in armor. Rolling 08, Tarkyn finds out the spell's effects are reduced by 30%, which gives the Armor of Ithan 84 S.D.C. instead of the 120 S.D.C. the armor normally would have.

Brik gets his 4th action for this melee round, and spends it still casting Fire Bolt.

Tarkyn now gets his 4th action, and he picks up a chair to use as a club.

Brik now gets his 5th and last action for the melee round, and his Fire Bolt spell now goes off. It costs him 10 P.P.E. and since he is not wearing metal armor the spell is not impeded. He rolls an 18 to strike, combined with the spell's +4 to strike for a modified 22 to hit. Since Tarkyn is out of attacks he cannot dodge, and the Fire Bolt easily gets past his Armor of Ithan and Chain doing 20 points of S.D.C. damage.

This Fire Bolt eliminates all of Tarkyn's S.D.C. and reduces his Hit Points to 16.

This also ends the combat round.

Both now roll for initiative at the start of the 2nd melee round.

Brik rolls a 7 for initiative, while Tarkyn rolls a 12. Tarkyn gets to go first.

Realizing that Brik hasn't got any magical armor, Tarkyn decides to fight fire with fire and casts a Fire Bolt spell himself.

Brik also decides to cast a second Fire Bolt to finish his opponent off. It will go off on his 3rd action.

Tarkyn's Fire Bolt now goes off, it costs him 12 P.P.E. and he must roll on the armor and spells table again. This time he rolls a 15, for a 40% reduction in damage and effect. In addition, it is just not Tarkyn's day, as his strike roll is a 6, with the +4 to strike for a total of 10. The weakened Fire Bolt smashes into Brik's leather armor as Brik concentrates on casting his Fire Bolt spell. Tarkyn rolls 20 for damage, which is reduced 40% to 12 S.D.C. damage to the armor. Brik's armor can easily withstand this damage, so none of it gets through to Brik; therefore his concentration is not broken, and he can continue casting his spell.

Brik's second action is still taken up with the casting of the Fire Bolt spell, but he steps toward the corner while still casting to provide some cover.

Tarkyn, realizing he seems to be outmatched, turns to run.

Angry with Tarkyn's cheating, Brik finishes off the Fire Bolt spell and hurls it at Tarkyn's back. He rolls a modified 20 to strike, getting past his opponent's armor, and does 21 points of damage, reducing Tarkyn to a smoking mess.

Character Creation 201

Let's break it down, then. We already know that physical traits and proficiencies make up an important aspect of a character, so let's move to the more social, emotional and psychological realms of character creation.

Family

I don't think anyone can deny that their family has had a great deal of influence on their personality (for good or bad). As your G.M. has the whole world and your adventures to worry about, please don't wait for her to give you a family background. You can use any random tables available to assist you in deciding your family's economic status and your birth order, but don't stop there or your character will fall very flat.

Let's put you in the author's creative shoes for awhile. What are your parents' names? What do they look like? How do they make their living? How did they meet? Are they both still alive? How did they treat you when you were growing up? Where are they from? Where do they live now?

Next, tell the G.M. about your siblings (if you have any). Name them, describe them, and give them occupations. Did you get along well with them? Or, does some sibling rivalry exist? Rival siblings could make interesting foes, after all. And the need to destroy or bring to justice an evil brother or sister might not be so cut-and-dry in your character's moral worldview.

Any G.M. would be thrilled for you to design your immediate family (unless, of course, they have entirely too much time on their hands and want to do everything — which doesn't describe any G.M. I've ever known). Anyway, if you want to take it a step further, developing grandparents or aunts and uncles, so be it. Having a wise grandfather who once described his treks through the vast wilderness and the creatures he encountered is one way for a sneaky player to bring into play monster lore that his character shouldn't rightfully know — but, then again, Grandpa might not have encountered the mutated Wolfen!

Friends, Enemies, Mentors and Associates

Your choice of friends says something about your character, too. Remember how much your parents worried about whom you were hanging with? With good reason. People will definitely judge you by whom you associate with.

And if you think this information is a bit too much character creation, just think of Fox Mulder's friends on the *X-Files*, The Lone Gunmen. His association with these strange characters definitely reveals a great deal about his personality.

While your friends may not be as interesting as the Lone Gunmen, they can serve a purpose similar to them: G.M.s can use them to transfer information and/or catalyze new episodes (ah, adventures).

So, are your friends reputable? Troublemakers? Or, merely misunderstood? Give the G.M. a name, physical description, and some idea of how you met and how long you've known each person. Don't use this as an opportunity to insist that you are great friends with the most powerful wizard in the campaign



G.M. and Player Advice

By Christina Stiles

O.K., you've been gaming for awhile and you understand the finer points of O.C.C.s, R.C.C.s, S.D.C., etc. Or maybe you're a newbie that has caught on quickly. At any rate, you can snap out a character sheet in record time, complete with stats, weapons, and physical description. That's the art of Character Creation 101, and no doubt you have mastered it. Now, let's take this one step further.

While your G.M. may know you're the quickest Elf or strongest Wolfen in town, what can she really say about your character? He's good in a fight, tries to walk the straight and narrow, prefers a sword to a halberd, or what have you. She may even know if you're of humble or noble birth, your birth order, your height and weight even, but are these really the sum of the man? If you think so, you may be missing out on a great deal of the game's enjoyment. After all, if your G.M. has a clear understanding of who your character is and what he desires, she can only do a better job of fine-tuning an adventure to suit your character's goals and interests.

So what do I mean by taking it a step further?

world, and therefore, you have access to powerful weapons or magic at your whim. Unless you are extremely reasonable with your created friends and associates, the G.M. may insist upon a collaborative effort in regards to this area of your character's life.

These are people that your character should be able to contact for a few favors (nothing outrageous, of course). But, friendship is a two-way street, so don't be surprised if they come to you for help with something as well. As you can see, this leaves the G.M. with an opening for possible adventures.

Also, who trained and mentored you? This person, if still alive, could be a wonderful non-player character catalyst for the G.M. Seriously, are you going to turn down one-armed Ned, who spent years of his life patiently training you to be a great warrior, when he requests that you travel to Mount Nimrod to defeat the giant that tore off his other arm?

Also, you might want to create several associates with whom you might be in business or do business. And, go ahead and give yourself an enemy or two, and feel free to make your enemy one of the most powerful people in the world — the G.M. won't mind very much here.

Romantic Interests

Is there someone special in your character's life? Maybe your character is married. This could create several interesting complications for one who seeks the explorer's life. Or, maybe the love of your life is part of your motivation for adventuring in the first place: an opportunity to gain fame and fortune to woo your love (or gain his or her parents' approval). Or, you have been trying to eke out a living for your wife and family in a standard career, but you have been unsuccessful, so you hit the street or dungeon in search of fast money.

Occupation (O.C.C. Choice)

Now that you have your familial background under your belt, or at least underway, let's concentrate on your character's career choice. How did you come to the decision that you wanted to be a Witch, for example? Does the choice revert back to family expectation? Perhaps the whole family's been involved in the dark arts for decades, or centuries even. Then again, maybe it was an act of rebellion against an extremely pious family.

Hobbies and Interests

O.K., it's a given that your character is going to have certain skills under his belt, and these do say a great deal about what your character thinks is important. You should give some thought as to how you obtained these skills, from whom, and why. Perhaps one of the skills is directly related to the character's previous career before he became an adventurer.

The average person is more than his skills, however. You have a life outside of your job or school, right? In fact, if you're reading this, it's obvious that one of your interests is gaming. So, what is your character interested in? Tournaments, sports, reading, collecting strange weapons? Rebuilding old ships? Gardening?

Put some thought into it. We all have something we long to get back to while we are at work or school, why should an adventurer be any different?

Tendencies, Quirks and Fears

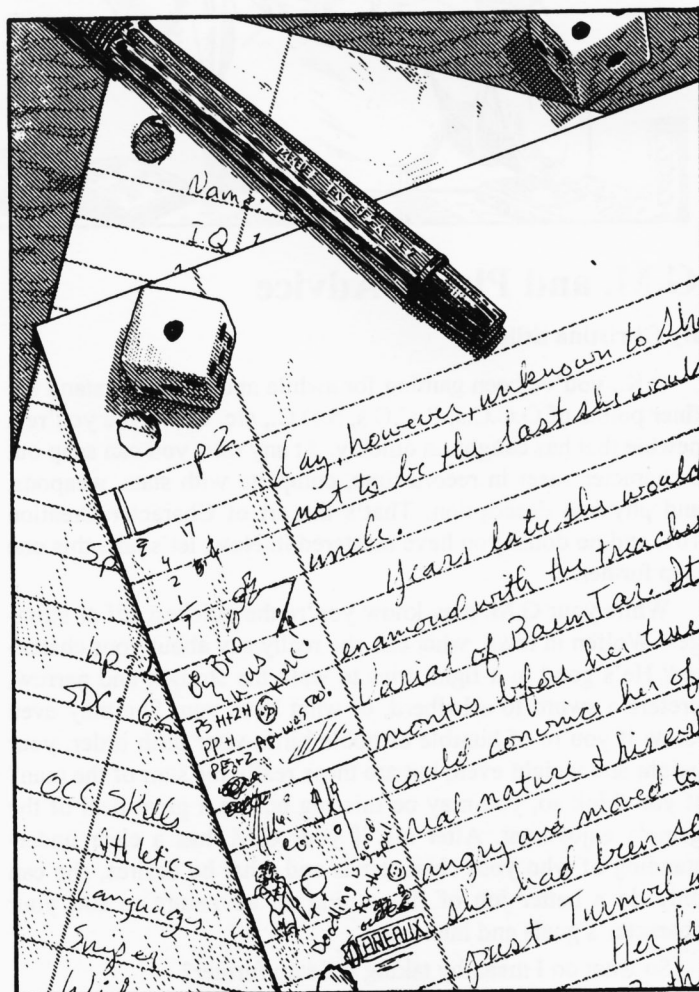
Give some thought to your character's disposition and general tendencies (these shouldn't conflict with your character's alignment). Is he honest, greedy, moody, congenial, etc.? Does he have any personality quirks? For example, is he a clean freak? Does he insist that his back never be to the door? Does he have a fear of ants? Of course, the weirdness factor of your character's quirks and fears should be in line with the level of seriousness present in your G.M.'s campaign.

Religion and Worldview

How does your character relate to the greater world around him? Does he feel he controls his own destiny? Or, does he think that he is just a pawn being played on the chessboard of life by forces greater than himself? Does he outwardly worship any being(s)? Perhaps he believes the gods do not really exist, but they are manifestations created by weak-minded individuals? Does he feel it's his duty to bring "the Faith" (or lack thereof) to others?

Goals and Motivations

This may be the most important information that you can provide for your G.M. Letting her know why you became an adventurer, and what you desire to gain for your character. This doesn't mean that every adventure she creates for you will directly relate to the acquisition of your goals (There are other players to consider — yes, this is the case even if your worldview is solipsistic!), but she will most certainly throw you



a few bones. And, if she better understands what you are expecting from the game in regards to your character, and she wants to keep you as a player, she will create adventures that are more in line with your expectations and goals. In this way, she can make the game more enjoyable for you and any other players — that's why we play these games, right?

Additional Physical Information

In addition to the above-mentioned character building suggestions, give some thought to some physical description besides height, weight, hair color, etc. Is your character right-handed? Does he have any unique scars? If so, how did he acquire them? Does he walk with a limp? Perhaps he's missing an eye. Maybe he's hard of hearing. Maybe he wears some outrageous clothing.

This isn't absolutely necessary, but it can build some interesting facets to your character's personality. If he's missing an eye, maybe he's hellbent on finding the man/monster who tore it from him. If he's hard of hearing, maybe he's been cursed by a

mage and the curse can only be lifted by slaying the mage or performing some great task.

Whether or not you take advantage of the suggestions for character development outlined here, please come away with the understanding that character creation goes much deeper than mere numbers on a page. Very few players take the time to go the extra mile when developing a new character, and that's very sad; you're missing an opportunity to add something to the G.M.'s world and to role-playing in general. After all, when you read fiction, aren't you upset if the author failed to make his characters anything more than cookie-cutter? You wouldn't want to continue reading a novel in which the novelist didn't take the time and care to allow you to see through another's eyes.

Keep in mind that the G.M. is like that novel's reader. If the character is boring, she isn't going to spend much time and effort on him, and her attention will move on to a character who is more interesting and thought out. A little planning here will go along way to increase everyone's enjoyment, so spend the time! You won't regret it.

Palladium Fantasy RPG[®]

Into the Shadows

Optional Source Material For Assassins in the Palladium Fantasy RPG[®]

By Jon Thompson

"...and mighty Osiris fell to the ground,
His body limp and broken.
Over him loomed the treacherous Set,
Once brother to the fallen god.
Mighty Set grinned with the teeth of the Hyena,
And in his hand, dripping with blood,
He held a blade.
Behold... it was the assassin's blade!"

—Third Canticle, The Tale of the Wanderer.

It is the oldest crime and the oldest profession. Murder and assassination. Among every civilized culture they have long been banned as illegal, and the consequences for performing such actions are grave indeed. Those caught seldom escape with their lives. But that obstacle has not stopped the assassin. It never has, and never will.

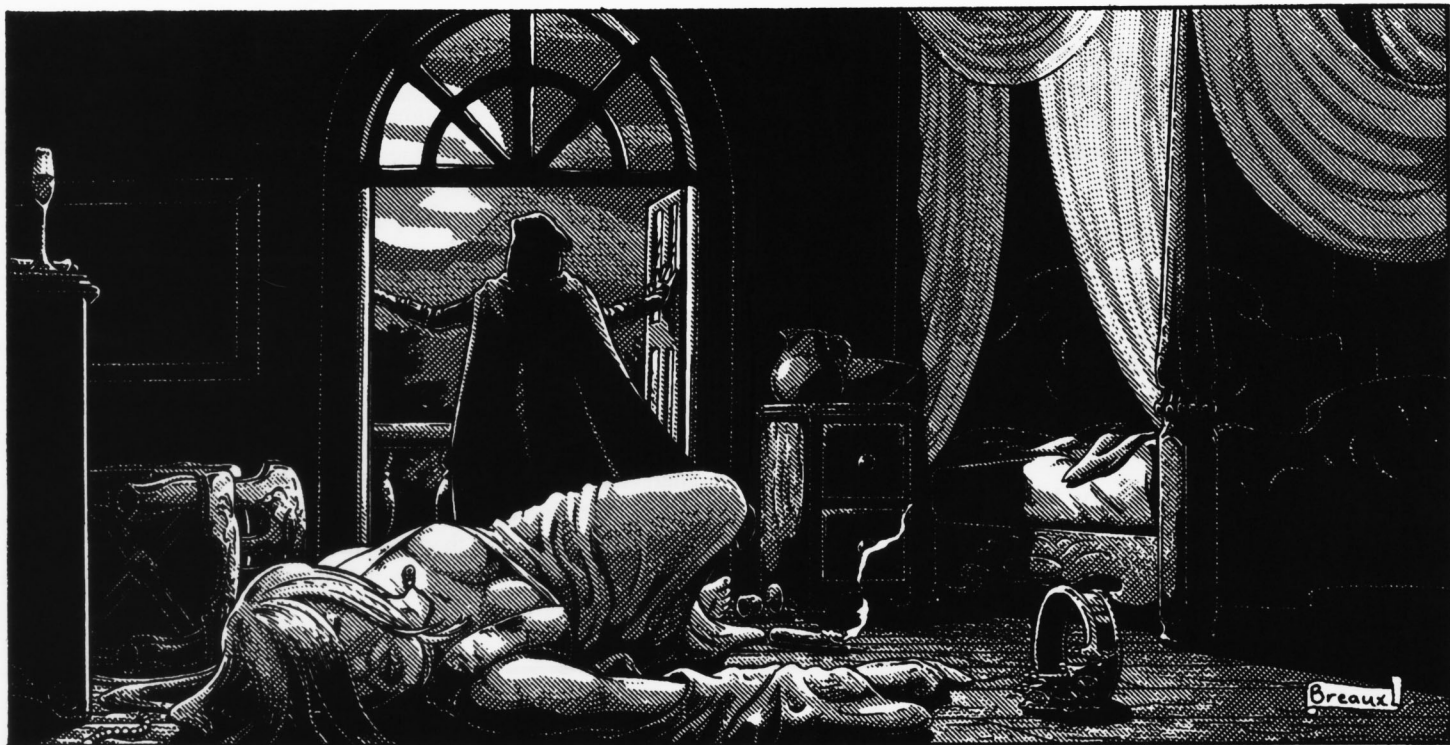
Assassins are a special breed of warrior. They have sacrificed their skills of open and varied combat for those specializing in strictly close quarters and death. The blade of the assassin is regarded universally as the deadliest blade of all. They are killers in the purest, most base form, and they are killers for hire, willing to do the job that no one else will perform. All for a price.

The skills that an assassin must learn are a special and arcane art. They have been passed down from assassin to assassin for centuries. Rarely are these abilities seen by anyone else in the world, and when they are, those who witness them usually don't live to tell about it. Speed, subterfuge, and power. Every assassin lives by them, and to complement them, the assassin has his own brand of special skills and equipment.

Detailed here is just a sampling of the assassin's many surprises, as well as a few considerations for those who might bear assassination in mind as a future occupation. But, as just stated, this is only a sample. The art of the assassin is a mysterious one, and even among assassins those secrets are guarded vigilantly.

The Assassin's Code

One of the most interesting things about assassins is the bizarre code of personal honor that a great many of them adhere to. This is no code like that which knights and palladins call chivalry, nor is it any code of justice that ordinary citizens may



abide by. The code of the assassin is unique. The simple fact that professionals who perform an act so vile could hold to any sort of code is amazing, yet it is done.

In many senses this code is necessary. When you're in a profession so risky, there need to be certain ground rules. These rules do a lot of things. They give the assassins' clientele a sense of security that makes business possible. The code also helps to keep things under control. Murder can be a messy business, and without limitations, the assassins would quickly find local governments clamping down and stomping them out. The code also helps to keep assassins from actively competing against each other. Without limitations, competition in this business would get quite messy.

In short, murder is a tricky business, and without an unspoken set of limitations things would simply get out of hand. The code of the assassin thus becomes not a thing of choice, like the code of chivalry taken by knights, but of necessity. The assassin is a predator in a dangerous world, and his honor is all he truly has to protect himself.

The aspect of this code being unspoken is very important to mention. In no part of the world is this code openly talked of or even acknowledged. Like the assassin himself, the code is never seen nor heard. It is simply obeyed.

Of course, enforcing a code that is never acknowledged or spoken of becomes something of a mysterious business. Simply put, a professional assassin knows how to carry himself. Those assassins who trot about violating the code excessively tend to disappear. What exactly happens to them, no one knows.

This being as it is, there is still a lot of variance as to how this code is carried out. It varies upon the specific type of assassin. Military, court, and religious assassins will all have their own special additions to the code that must be followed. Regional variances occur a great deal as well, as taboos vary from place to place and culture to culture. And, of course, a lot of it will depend on the individual assassin. Those of Aberrant align-

ment might follow a very intricate and elaborate code, while Anarchist characters might follow little code whatsoever.

Below is a general list of provisions commonly covered by an assassin's code.

The Killer

- Never reveal your identity.
- Never reveal the identity of another assassin.
- Never turn in a fellow assassin.
- Never attack a fellow assassin, unless he is a contracted target (many won't even do this).

The Client

- Never reveal who you work for.
- Never reveal anything about who you work for.
- Never ask why.
- Clients who fail to pay their dues will be killed, tortured, or worse.

The Mark

- Show no mercy.
- Never take a bribe. (I.e. once a mark has been contracted, no amount of payment or negotiation can withhold his death. Only the client can cancel the contract.)
- Never take a mark that is beyond your ability.

The Kill

- Never get caught.
- Exercise discretion at all times.
- Never harm bystanders.
- Leave no incriminating evidence.
- Never do that beyond which your client pays you to do.

Payment

Assassins are renowned for working on credit. The simple reason for this is because they can. If their client later decides that he doesn't want to pay, then he'll be killed. It's that simple, and the clients know it. This credit can be cashed in at anytime

and in any fashion. Sometimes it may mean fronting the full payment for a kill at the drop of a hat, or it might mean harboring a person or an item for a night, lending the assassin an important item, or bestowing a simple favor.

Although assassins in this position have the ability to extort quite a bit from their clients, they never do. A professional assassin will never abuse his credit. In fact, most favors and odd payments taken by assassins will seem deceptively cheap. A foolish client will think he is getting a great deal, while a wise one will realize that his simple action has most likely played an important part in a much grander scheme.

Types of Assassins

Presented below are a series of five sub-classes or specializations available to the assassin O.C.C. Each has its own strengths and weakness and will gain bonuses and penalties accordingly.

Court

Although it is never acknowledged openly, most notable politicians, rulers, and persons of power keep assassins in their permanent employ. These individuals find themselves manipulating powerful forces on a daily basis, and they frequently run into powerful problems. One of the ways to fix those problems is through murder. Most often, the targets of these assassins are less notable individuals than might normally be imagined. World leaders don't often assassinate each other, but they do each assassinate each other's hirelings and other lesser folk foolish enough to stand in their way.

Even with such a workload, these types of assassins usually find themselves less busy than most others. For that reason, their duties are sometimes extended to include things such as kidnapping, robbery, spying, and other dark, shady types of duties, which gives the court assassin a much more rounded-out base of abilities. In addition, due to the usually large budgets of their employers, court assassins tend to sport very fine equipment.

Bonuses: +1 O.C.C. Skill at levels one, five and ten. +1 Secondary Skill at levels two, six, eight and twelve.

Penalties: Must be loyal to and always answer to a specific lord. +200 experience required to gain a level, at levels one through five, +1000 at levels six through ten, and +5,000 at levels eleven through fifteen. Slow advancement is due to lack of activity.

Freelance

In most places of the world, freelance assassins are the most common. These assassins are those bold enough to strike out on their own, selling their services to the highest bidder. The going is usually a lot rougher for a freelance assassin, but the payoffs can be much higher. They have no permanent employers to answer to or guilds to pay tithes to. Being that they are usually less tied down, freelance assassins make the best type for player characters. Their motives for murder are as varied as their techniques of killing.

Bonuses: They are free to do as they please. Answer to no one.

Penalties: Don't necessarily have steady work, resources, or anyone to back them up when things get rough.

Military

Assassins are employed by armies all over the world. In some areas these soldiers are regarded with high honor, while in others they are shunned and kept secret. During peacetime their duties are rather limited, and most will usually have another profession or function that they perform. During wartime, however, the military assassin always has his hands full. These assassins are often times deployed as special forces fighters (like modern day SEALs or Army Rangers). Their duties may vary from time to time, but their primary function is always the same — murder. These assassins also tend to be equipped with very good weaponry.

Bonuses: +3 Weapon Proficiencies, plus any 2 Physical O.C.C. Skills, plus any 1 Military O.C.C. Skill. +1 to strike, parry, dodge, and damage.

Penalties: Domestic Skills: none. Communications: Cryptography and Sign Language only (+10%). Note that Language and Literacy are still available under Scholar/Technical. Player is restricted to Aberrant alignment only. Must be loyal to their army and commanders. Dissension is regarded as highly suspicious and is absolutely NOT tolerated.

Guild

Assassin's guilds are not your typical type of guild. For one, they tend to be very small. The reasoning behind this is very simple. If the guild were large, then they would constantly need to be finding things for their members to do, and by that we mean people to kill. In a brutal world murder is common, but not that common. Just as a predatory animal's population will be determined by the population of its prey, so will the size of an assassin's guild be determined by the size of the city it inhabits.

In practice these tend to be more like professional alliances than guilds. In a given city there will usually be two or three top assassins. These assassins and their apprentices might gather together and operate for each other's betterment under a formal agreement. The advantages of joining an assassin's guild can be great. The member has instant access to the resources of the guild as well as the experience of his superiors, which is not to mention the steady stream of work that the guild fetches. The negatives are that the member must now answer to the guild for everything. For everything he does he will get paid, but he must also pay his dues. In addition, most assassin's guilds don't have an open door policy on leaving the guild. Like the Mafia, there's only one way out of a guild.

Bonuses: -200 total experience required to gain a level, at levels one through five, -1000 at levels six through ten, -5000 at levels eleven through fifteen. Fast advancement is due to intimate training directly under experienced masters.

Penalties: They are absolutely loyal to the guild, and when we say absolutely, we mean *absolutely*. They must answer to the guild for all of their actions, without exception. The penalty for transgressing against the guild's law (no matter how slight) is a very slow and very painful death (and if anyone in the world can make good on this threat it's these guys). Note that this restriction can make this class variation very difficult for players to play.

Religious

In a world where there's a god for nearly every occasion, it's no surprise that there's a god for assassination. Of course, the next logical step will be that this world will also have individuals who worship not only the god of assassination, but assassination itself as well. Religious assassins are renowned as the most deadly in the world. They do not kill for profit or personal gain. They kill because they believe in killing. These assassins will always be willing to lay everything down to score the kill, and absolutely nothing will stop them short of death (and sometimes not even that). And of course that's not to mention the fact that most of these killers will have the blessing of a god on their side.

These sort of assassins vary a great deal, even within individual religions. Among those notable are members of the Church of Darkness, the Cult of Set, worshipers of Panath, worshipers of Tark, and the Cult of Rabdos the Strangler. Individual assassins may be lone killers, acting out by themselves for the will of their god, or they might be a member of a church or cult. Many of these individuals and organizations sell their services out for hire, while others kill strictly for religious purposes. Most do a bit of both.

Bonuses: When performing an assassination they gain all of the bonuses of a Prayer of Strength of the Damned. That's +6 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 on ALL other saving throws, +10% on turn dead (if they already have the ability), +1 to spell strength (if they can cast), +4 to damage, +1 to parry and dodge, and +8% to summon minions of darkness (if they already have the ability). For assassins with a dual O.C.C. that already grants them the prayer ability, this bonus doubles (that's right, doubles) the effects of it. In order to gain the doubled bonus, though, the priest must first use the prayer successfully as a priest ability. Otherwise, the bonus is as normal. **Note:** These bonuses apply on an intended assassination, not just any old strike from behind or similar attack.

Penalties: The assassin must perform sacrifice and penance as per the Priest of Darkness O.C.C. In addition, the assassin is a complete fanatic, and will stop at absolutely nothing to kill a targeted opponent. **Note:** This also applies only to opponents directly targeted for assassination.

Skills and Equipment

One of the most fascinating things about the world of the assassin is the mysterious and deadly array of weapons, skills, and items that they use to kill their targets. The skills and items presented here are deadly and powerful, but to most of the world these things remain completely unknown. The only person an assassin shares his secrets with is his mark, and they seldom live to tell of them. However, the items presented here are only a small sampling of the vast armory that assassins around the world use to complete their tasks.

It is very important to note that this equipment is not normally available to non-assassins. An assassin will NEVER sell or give away his equipment, and he will furthermore never reveal where he got it. The only way a normal person could ever hope to get their hands on some of this stuff would be to kill the assassin and take it, a task much easier said than done.

The same goes for the assassin's skills. The world's assassins have not spent hundreds of years keeping this knowledge secret just to pass it off to any old player character that comes along. These skills are simply never taught to non-assassins.

New Skills

Fast Talking: The fine art of deception. Simply put, this is the skill of getting people to buy in to things that aren't true. As it would be used by other classes, this would involve tricking the victim into a scam that will part him with some of his cash or other hard earned valuables. The assassin, however, uses this skill in its rawest sense — deception. The assassin often times finds himself in positions where he must come up with a story quick or his cover will be blown. Most often, it goes hand in hand with the assassin's mental affinity and skill in acting. **Base Skill:** 20% +4% per level of experience.

Blind Fighting: A very important skill for the assassin, it allows him to fight enemies in complete darkness (or completely blinded). For the assassin this is essential. More often than not, he must fight his opponents in dark and/or crowded spaces. This skill removes all negatives received by being blinded or fighting in darkness. This skill only applies when the assassin is fighting an opponent or opponents in his immediate vicinity (within five feet/1.5 m radius). The assassin receives full negatives against all opponents beyond the five foot (1.5 m) radius. **Base Skill:** 25% +5% per level of experience. A failed skill roll means all negatives are in full effect. The assassin receives a penalty of -30% when fighting alien or unfamiliar opponents.

Listening and Awareness: Sharp ears are important features for an assassin to have. These killers operate in total silence, and doing so gives them an incredibly heightened sense of hearing and awareness. This skill allows them to hear and sense things that other characters cannot. In most instances the assassin must actively use this ability to gain its bonuses, but characters will find that sometimes (like when prowling) they find themselves kicking this ability in almost subconsciously. **Base Skill:** 16% +4% per level of experience.

Security Systems: This skill has a very modern ring to it, but its applications in a fantasy realm are very real. Every castle and medieval keep has some form of security. This skill gives the character a strong sense of the layout and design of such security systems. The assassin will have a better understanding of how traps are laid out, what magical enchantments may be in effect, and how to gain proper entry into a perimeter. **Note:** Though this skill may cross over into the territory of runes and magical wards, it does not give the character the ability to read or interpret them. He only gains a general idea of their purpose and their function as a part of the security system as a whole. This skill also does not give the character the ability to detect traps. He must find them first with the appropriate skill. **Base Skill:** 20% +5% per level of experience.

Backstab: Astute G.M.s will notice that assassins no longer receive the big bonuses to back stab that they used to in the First Edition. As a matter of fact, assassins no longer receive a backstab at all. The reason for this being taken out is quite obvious: game balance. Assassins with big backstabs can tear other characters and NPCs apart. However, some G.M.s may still want this aspect kept in their game (after all, isn't that what assassins

DO?). Thus, it is presented here as an optional skill available to assassins only.

Certain conditions must be met for a backstab to take place. First of all it must take place from behind, and only behind. Only one backstab may be performed per round, and the enemy must be unaware of the assassin's presence or current location. A successful prowling skill must be performed for the backstab to be successful. If the prowling fails, then the attack is considered a normal one. Note that more often than not, an assassin will only be able to use a backstab on any given target once per battle, as the enemy usually becomes quite aware of the assassin's presence after the first attack. A backstab may only be used once on prone opponents.

It is important to make the distinction that the backstab is not just a strike into someone's unprotected rear vital points. This sort of attack is covered by W.P. Vital Points (see below). The backstab is a combination of a critical strike and a surprise attack, which is what gives it such power.

Note again that this skill is ONLY to be used with the G.M.'s permission. **Bonus:** Assassins gain an additional critical attack modifier of x1 to damage at levels three, seven, twelve and fifteen. So, a third level assassin would have a backstab modifier of x2, a seventh level assassin would have a modifier of x3, etc. This modifier applies only on a backstab and is factored in after all other damage has been calculated.



W.P. Vital Points: This deadly skill is restricted to assassins only. It gives the assassin knowledge of all appropriate vital ar-

reas of his opponents. The assassin can use this ability to maim, cripple, or kill his opponents in countless ways. **Bonuses:** +4 to strike on a called strike, knockout/stun on an unmodified roll of 15-20, OR critical strike on an unmodified roll of 18-20. The assassin gains only one of the bonuses listed and must call which type of bonus before he strikes. Please note that the assassin must have the appropriate ability before he can gain a bonus to it (e.g. he must have a critical strike before he can lower his critical strike). **Penalties:** Every time the assassin uses this ability it costs him an extra attack. This skill requires careful analysis, which soaks up extra time.

The Assassin's Arsenal

Poisons

Of all people, assassins are the most knowledgeable of and the most deadly with poison. For them it is a natural means to an end. Being that they use it so widely, the assassin has access to a wider variety of poisons than the common individual. The following poisons display a varied array of effects for the assassin's varied needs. It must be noted that these are poisons for assassins only. Individuals without proper contacts and credentials have absolutely no access to these substances.

Ingestive poison: Somnibus: This poison causes victims to fall into a deep slumber from which they cannot be woken. The sleep lasts 4D6+6 minutes, but victims are groggy for another 1D4 hours afterwards. While groggy they suffer 1/2 normal melee actions per round, -8 to initiative, -6 to strike, parry, and dodge, and -50% on all skills requiring meticulous actions or deep concentration. This poison is also available in a blood derivative, but is less effective as so. Victims of a blood injected dose are at +3 to save. **Cost:** 1000 gold per application. 1200 gold per application for blood derivative.

Ingestive poison: Twister: This poison causes intense nausea and diarrhea in its victims. The vomiting lasts for 1D4x10 minutes, while the diarrhea lasts for 1D4 hours. After all fluids have been expelled, these symptoms turn into dry heaves and false alarms, but penalties are not diminished. At this point, however, the victim is in danger of suffering from dehydration and may suffer penalties as extreme as death if they do not drink fresh liquids. While sick, victims are -5 on initiative, and -2 to strike, parry, and dodge. Vomiting is so intense that while vomiting, victims are all but incapacitated. Victims vomit at fairly regular intervals, averaging 1D4 minutes apart. **Cost:** 500 gold per dose.

Blood poison: Vertigo: This poison is a tranquilizer. Those who fail their saving throw are knocked completely unconscious for 1D4 hours. Those who do save are woozy for 1D4 minutes and suffer -2 to initiative and -1 to strike, parry, and dodge. This poison is more effective on animals, giving humanoid creatures a +2 to save versus it. Supernatural creatures are immune to its effects. **Cost:** 5000 gold per dose; extremely rare.

Blood poison: XX: This poison is by far and wide the deadliest in the world. It is rumored that only two alchemists in all of Palladium know how to produce it, and only a handful of assassins have ever used it. Those unfortunate enough to be injected with it must save versus poison or die. Those who pass their

save are completely unaffected. All victims are -4 to save. Cost: This poison is so rare that it is typically not purchased with mere gold. Its estimated value per dose would be in the hundreds of thousands.

Blood poison: Greaser: Greaser is an additive that is used in conjunction with other poisons. If used properly it raises the effectiveness of any given blood poison, making victims even more susceptible to its effects. The assassin must make a successful Use Poison skill check to see if he can mix it properly, and even then there is a chance that the Greaser will be incompatible with the poison. Compatibility is based on percentage and poison strength. Weak poisons have 80% compatibility, moderate strength poisons have 50% compatibility, and deadly poisons have only a 20% compatibility. When used effectively, the substance's effect is to lower the saving throw of the victim by -3. Cost: 800 per dose.

Ingestive poison: Pauser: This is a poison very similar to Greaser. It is used in conjunction with ingested poisons to delay the onset of their effects. It can delay the effects of the poison from 1 to 8 hours (in increments of a half hour) from the time of ingestion. Success is determined by a Use Poison skill check. The longer the assassin attempts to delay the poison, the more difficult it becomes. Characters suffer a skill penalty of -10% for every hour of delay over four. Like Greaser, the success of Pauser is also based partly on compatibility. All weak poisons are completely compatible, mid-strength poisons are 70% compatible, and deadly poisons are 50% compatible. Cost: 1000 gold per dose; rare.

Note: When using Greaser or Pauser, the assassin mixing the poisons has no idea of his success or failure until he tests the drug on a living target. Also note that Greaser and Pauser are completely incompatible. When mixed together, the two additives essentially cancel each other out, and end up diluting and therefore reducing the effectiveness of the poison.

Items

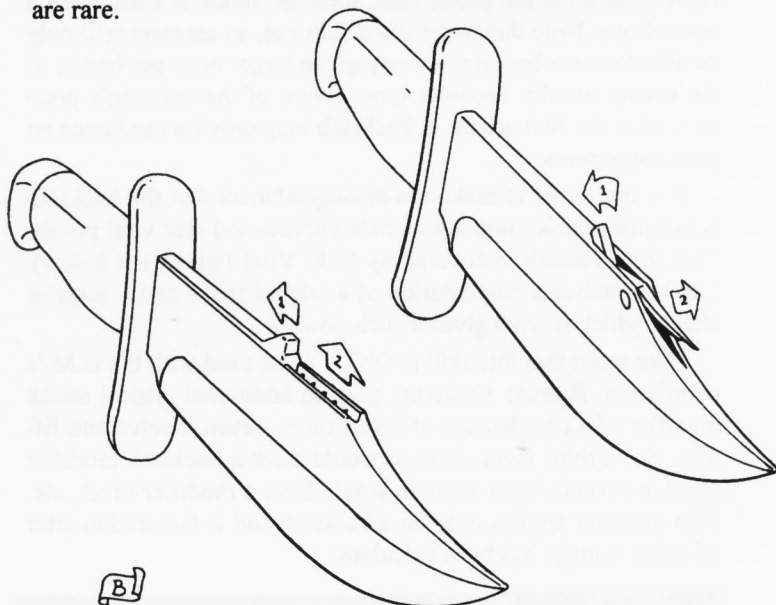
A quick note on the items listed here. Most of these items are extremely powerful (at least in the right hands), and they are not listed for common public use. These are assassins' items, and most of them are only ever available to assassins. Even among assassins, most of these items are only available to those at the top of the chain. No G.M. should allow this stuff to proliferate in his campaign. When a player character sees these items, he shouldn't be sizing them up and speculating on how well they might match his wardrobe. He should be running and figuring out how he will survive the next twenty-four hours.

Venom Dagger: These sort of daggers are available in a wide variety of styles and forms, yet the basic function remains the same. They are daggers which carry a secret store of venom somewhere within the blade that is injected into anyone stabbed by it. They are an excellent means of poisoning a target. Many are magical and contain small magical compartments which open up upon entering a wound to spill their contents, but there are also a wide array of non-magical models. These vary from daggers with a simple groove (like a blood-groove) that will hold a sappy poison, to those that actually contain a loaded syringe imbedded inside the dagger.

Abilities: On a successful attack (i.e. one that draws blood) the victim must save versus poison or fall victim to whatever poison is contained within the knife.

Damage: Varies per the individual knife. Usually standard damage.

Cost: Can vary from 3,000 to 10,000 gold for mechanical types. Usually 15,000 to 20,000 gold for magical varieties. Both are rare.



1. Trigger pushed so blade enters target.
2. Poison enters wound by free flow or injection
3. Trigger is reset as blade leaves wound.

Poison Ring: This is a magical item very similar to a Venom Dagger, except it is not used to poison wounded victims. It is used to stealthily drop poison into an open receptacle, and it can be used by assassins to drop lethal doses of poison into an unsuspecting person's drink or food. These rings come in three prime varieties. The first is a simple mechanical ring, which has a small container with a top that flips open (manually) to deliver it. The second is the same as the first one, except that it is magically enchanted so that the top flips open upon a mental command. The third is a powerful version of the same ring that doesn't even need to flip open. It is able to teleport the contents of the ring into a nearby container. The only catch is that the ring must be physically touched to the container for it to work. All varieties carry only one dose of poison.

Cost: The simple mechanical version runs for about 3,000 gold, while the magically enhanced mechanical one goes for about 40,000 gold. Both are difficult to find. The third version is extremely rare (only a few are believed to exist), and would only ever be available to someone of great power. The estimated cost would be around 1,000,000 to 1,500,000 gold.

Grenades: Grenades are very useful items for assassins. With them the assassin can accomplish all manner of powerful subterfuge tactics, all with a simple one-shot, disposable device. All grenades listed below are magical creations. They are designed to be thrown to the ground and activated upon impact. As such, they can be very sensitive devices, going off if the carrier suffers any large impacts. Some grenades have failsafe devices to prevent this, whereby they are activated by a spoken key word and then detonated by impact, but most assassins prefer

the former type. Calling out magical key words can get one into a lot of trouble when trying to be stealthy. Note that the user of the grenade is in no way immune to its effects. There are five types available.

Smoke: As per the spell Cloud of Smoke, 10th level spell strength. Area of effect: 30 foot (9.1 m) area. Duration: 40 melees. Cost: 500 gold per grenade; uncommon.

Stun: All within the radius must save versus spell or be stunned. Area of effect: 6 foot (1.8 m) radius. Duration: 2D4 melees. Those who save are unaffected. Cost: 1200 per grenade; uncommon.

Silence: As per the spell Globe of Silence, 10th level spell strength. Area of effect: 15 foot (4.6 m) diameter. Duration: 60 melees. Cost: 800 gold per grenade; uncommon.

Blinding Flash: As per the spell Blinding Flash, 10th level spell strength. Area of effect: Immediate area. Duration: 2D4 melees. Cost: 800 gold per grenade; uncommon.

Stasis Field: A large, invisible globe with all of the effects of the spell Immobilize, 10th level spell strength. Area of effect: 15 foot (4.6 m) diameter. Duration: 20 melees. Cost: 8,000 gold per grenade; rare.

Other Items

Blinding Flash Amulet: This is a small gem that is usually mounted into either a necklace or a ring. It is able to cast Blinding Flash five times daily. The effects are as per the wizard spell at eighth level proficiency. Cost: 20,000 gold; uncommon.

Darkness Ring: This is a small, black ring that is able to cast a Globe of Darkness about the wearer with a 6 foot (1.8 m) radius. The user can move about freely in this darkness, but may not leave it without de-activating the ring. The darkness cannot be penetrated by any means of vision. The user's vision is impeded, but only as if by normal darkness (i.e. that which one would encounter at night). The assassin receives a +30% bonus to Prowl in heavy darkness, a +15% bonus in normal shadows, and no bonus in absolute daylight. The user is at +3 to strike, and all who attempt to strike the assassin are at -6 to do so, unless striking with weapons or spells that affect a large area. There is no saving throw versus the darkness, but it may be dispelled by normal means. It saves with a spell strength of +2. Duration: A total of 60 minutes of use per day. May be turned on and off at will. Cost: 80,000 gold; rare.

Poison Caps: Poison caps are capsules filled with poison that are magically implanted in an assassin's body. They contain a lethal poison that can be released at any time at the assassin's will. The effect is a quick and painless death. These are last resort items, used only by captured assassins who fear the worst. The poison is magical and cannot be stopped or prevented by any means, nor can it be triggered by anyone else or against the assassin's will. Neither can the assassin be forced to use them on himself (i.e. via mind control, possession or similar means). The caps can be placed anywhere in the body, but are typically placed near the heart. These items cannot be inserted into supernatural creatures or creatures with heavy regenerating abilities. Cost: The cost for an independent assassin having these implanted would be quite expensive, usually around 300,000 gold, most of which covers the complicated surgery. However, this is only ever rarely performed, and when it is, it is usually at the order of a powerful guild or similar organization.

Boots and Gloves of Climbing: These items are available in two varieties: magical and non-magical. The non-magical sorts are simply boots and gloves with spikes on them that assist a great deal in climbing. They afford a bonus of +5% to Climb/Scale Walls per item worn, to a maximum of +20%. However, wearing spiked boots while walking reduces speed by half, and trying to perform any actions that require full use of the hands while wearing hand spikes reduces the appropriate effectiveness of those actions by 50%. It should be noted, though, that these items are usually tailored to allow quick and easy removal. The magical variety is identical to the first variety, except that the claws are retractable. In the boots the claws retract into the sole, while in the gloves the spikes retract down into the "sleeve" of the glove (along the inner wrist of the wearer). The



magical variety may only ever be worn in their respective pairs (two gloves or two boots, not one), but gloves and boots may be worn together for a cumulative bonus for the two pairs. The bonus received is +15% to Climb/Scale Walls per set worn. Cost: The non-magical type cost around 1000 gold per pair (high cost due to difficult craftsmanship and the fact that they are suspicious items) and are uncommon. The magical variety cost about 20,000 gold per pair (gloves or boots) and are rare.

Cloak of Cold Shadows: This cloak is a variation on a normal Cloak of Shadows. The user receives the normal bonus of +20% to Prowl, but the cloak has the additional effect of hiding any and all heat that emanates from the wearer's body, making him completely invisible to all forms of infra-vision. Cost: 36,000; rare.

Ring of Silent Stalking: This is an item very similar to the Darkness Ring. It is cast in silver with a thin band of black opal running about it. It casts a Globe of Silence in a six foot (1.8 m) diameter about the user, and it comes in two versions. The first version has an effect identical to the wizard spell Globe of Silence. The second variety is identical to the first, except that sounds emitted from outside the globe may pass through and be heard by the user within. Only sounds created directly within the sphere are silenced. The user of either ring receives a +15% to Prowl. There is no saving throw versus either type, but if detected, the globe may be dispelled normally. Both save at +2 spell strength. Duration: A total of 60 minutes of use per day. May be turned on and off at will. Cost: The first variety costs about 50,000 gold and is rare. The second runs for about 250,000 gold and is extremely rare.

The Good Stuff

All of the items that follow are rare to the point of being unique or nearly unique. These extremely powerful tools are things of legend and should be used sparingly and carefully. Some, like the Senshut, are even strictly NPC items. Any one of these could easily be the centerpiece of an epic campaign.

The Daggers of Panath

There are a lot of Daggers of Panath in the world. Some of these items are the real thing, some are fakes, and some are just funny pet names. The title "Dagger of Panath" has been applied to so many weapons, it would seem pointless to try and sort through them. They are starting to become such a nuisance that the phrase, "By the daggers of Panath," has become a common expression in many parts of the world (second only to "By the wits of Thoth"). What is listed here is a version of these weapons that are given to and used by high priests and powerful assassins of Panath. They are considered greater holy weapons.

The appearance of these weapons varies a great deal, to the point where each one is all but unique. However, all bear the holy symbol of Panath somewhere on the hilt.

Abilities: All daggers act as normal daggers, except when in the hands of an assassin or follower of Panath. Under all forms of scrutiny, magical and non, they appear as normal weapons even when in use. A person capable of using it knows what it is by intuition upon picking it up. Each dagger also has the following abilities:

+3 to strike on a back stab.

Critical Strike (triple damage) from behind or an additional x2 to the modifier of any user who already has a backstab.

Critical Strike on a 19-20.

Raise the M.A. of the wielder to 24.

Damage: These daggers do between 3D6 and 6D6 S.D.C.

Cost: Anyone who tries to sell you one of these daggers is selling a fake. They are only ever given to the faithful of Panath and are useless to most others.

Shadow Blades

These dangerous, mystical weapons are swords forged from absolute darkness. They are icons of evil and bane to all creatures of light. Thus, they have become favored weapons among

the wicked, the vile, and the wholly corrupted. No one knows where these terrible weapons came from or how they are made. The prevailing theory is that they were constructed during the Age of a Thousand Magicks by forces of powerful evil long since dead. Today they are quite rare, and only gods, demigods, and other extremely powerful beings of evil have been known to use them.

The blade appears as a deep, black, sword-shaped shadow from which darkness itself seems to ooze, enshrouding the blade when it rests and arcing behind it as it strikes. The blades may only be wielded by evil characters. Good characters who attempt to touch one take 4D6 S.D.C. straight to Hit Points and find that their hands pass straight through the blade. Selfish characters who touch one take no damage, but receive a vicious chill and find that their hands pass through it as well.

Abilities:

Completely invisible in darkness and hard to see in light.

Wielder is +5 to strike in darkness, +3 in deep shadow, and +2 in light shadow.

Eternally sharp and indestructible.

+5 damage to all good creatures. Double damage to all angels and supernatural creatures of light.

Damage ranges from 4D6 S.D.C. to 1D6x10 S.D.C. depending on blade type and individual power.

Cost: Would be in the millions or tens of millions. These items are rare beyond rare and are more likely to be the prizes of epic quests.

Shadow Armor

The Shadow Armor is a powerful item made by means similar to the Shadow Blade. It is a dark, shimmering suit of mail, forged completely of shadow. Like the Shadow Blade, those who look upon it find it difficult to see, as it is constantly oozing shadow from all parts. When visible, the make of the armor may vary from chain mail to plate, and it may cover the torso only or torso, legs, and arms. All suits have a "helmet," so to speak, though the make of this varies as well. All suits magically adjust to fit any wearer.

Also like the Shadow Blade, the origin of this item is unknown, though it is believed (and is most likely correct) that their histories are intertwined.

Abilities:

Shadow Meld: Each suit has the unique ability to allow the wearer to both turn into and travel through shadows. The wearer can turn himself and everything on his person into a single shadow. The shadow bears a mild resemblance to the original self of the wearer, but now seems twisted and distorted in horrid ways. In this form the wearer retains all of his senses, but can perform no actions whatsoever (other than moving about). On the other hand, virtually nothing can affect him. He is impervious to everything (from weapons, to magic, to psionics) except sunlight. Sunlight inflicts 4D6 S.D.C. per round directly to Hit Points. Individuals killed in this state will become trapped in it permanently. The armor itself vanishes into the plane of shadow, where it will drift about until reappears in the physical world, usually at a random and very distant place.

Shadow Pass: The wearer also has the ability to travel between shadows while in this form as if through a Mystic Portal (similar to the "Teleportation" aspect of the spell). The wearer

may travel between all shadows within a 2,000 foot (610 m) radius unimpeded. Beyond that radius, the wearer may travel to any shadowed location within 15 miles (24 km) which he is personally familiar with. This power may be used three times per day.

Each suit of Shadow Armor also has all of the following abilities:

Wearer is completely invisible in darkness. While in darkness, he is impervious to all forms of magical detection.

Turn into shadow (see above).

Travel through shadows (see above).

Wearer can see perfectly in total darkness.

+30% to Prowl.

The effects for good and selfish characters touching the armor are identical to touching a Shadow Blade.

A.R.: 16, plus attackers are -5 to strike the wearer in darkness.

S.D.C.: 400, but the armor is indestructible. When all S.D.C. is depleted all abilities become inert, and it turns into a normal shadow (still worn by and not removable by the character). After eight hours it regenerates all S.D.C. and returns to normal.

Cost: These items are even more rare than the Shadow Blades. They can't be bought with mere gold.

The Hangman's Noose

This weapon finds its origins in an ancient tribe of Ogres, called the Bilyaga. The Bilyaga were an aberrant band of Ogres who had established a safe and orderly tribe in which to live. The law of the tribe was clear and simple, and the penalty for breaking the law was even simpler. All transgressors of tribal law were strangled by the Hangman's Noose. For decades, this tribe had been praised as a hallmark of civilized progression among the Ogre people. They had risen above the chaos and violence that has forever plagued their race. The Hangman's Noose and the law it enforced were what made this short-lived society possible. Unfortunately, the Bilyaga were swept up and destroyed, like so many other innocents, in the events of the Elf-Dwarf War. The only thing that has survived to mark the passage of these people is the Hangman's Noose.

Unfortunately, these days the Hangman's Noose has fallen to a far less noble purpose. It has become a legendary choice weapon among assassins. The noose still bears the same appearance it did so long ago. It looks like a common noose, made of normal rope with about three and a half feet of slack extending off of it. The only distinguishing mark it bears is the tribal logo of the Bilyaga, inscribed upon the coil of the noose.

Abilities: The noose's effects are very simple and very powerful. The noose strangles anyone whose neck it wraps itself about. There is no saving throw, and the only way it may be stopped is to kill or seriously wound the attacker, a task much easier said than done. The noose will magically widen or shorten to fit any neck, and it will never constrict about any other body part. All attacks made by victims are at a -9 penalty, and spell casting is impossible. The attacker must maintain his hold on the noose for the entire duration of the strangulation. However, the noose magically bonds to the attacker, so the attacker may not be shaken off, though he may let go intentionally. The noose will release itself once the victim dies, and it

cannot be fooled by victims who attempt to play dead. The rope itself is completely indestructible.

Damage: Victims will suffer 3D6 points of damage per round for the first four rounds, 6D6 per round after the fourth, and 1D4x10 per round after the eighth round. All damage goes straight to Hit Points.

Cost: This item has an uncanny knack for finding its way onto the black market. When its function is known, the weapon will usually sell for several million dollars, however the rope has been bought and sold several times in the past as a normal noose. It is a unique item.

Cloak of Impersonation

The Cloak of Impersonation is an artifact of legend. It is believed by most that it is an ancient item forged from the skin of thirteen Changelings by a skilled assassin and mage during the climax of the Changeling Inquisition. When not in use, it looks like a normal blue cloak of typical construction. Under absolutely all forms of detection it appears as a normal garment whether in use or not.

Abilities: It has one special and unique ability. It allows the user to transform himself into the last person who wore the cloak. The visible transformation is flawless, and the wearer is able to impersonate the victim absolutely perfectly. This is done even to the extent that the wearer finds himself knowing all pertinent details of the impersonated person's life, mentioning and using them without even being aware of it. The cloak will transform every detail of the body and can shape itself into any suit of clothing necessary. Thus, the impersonation is absolutely seamless.

There is only one catch. The person impersonated by the wearer cannot be killed or harmed by the wearer in any way. In fact, the wearer finds himself completely incapable of taking any action against the impersonated (aside from acting in self defense if necessary). If the impersonated is killed, then the cloak immediately returns to normal, and the jig is up.

While the cloak is active, the impersonated individual suffers from complete amnesia. In addition, the person impersonated is completely immune to the cloak's effects of disguise. This means that he's the only person who can see through the illusion. His amnesia will keep him from understanding the situation, but upon seeing the impersonator, the impersonated will immediately know that something is wrong with that individual and that everyone else is oblivious to it.

The enchantment ends when either the wearer of the cloak wills it or when one of the two individuals dies. The wearer of the cloak will remember absolutely nothing of the impersonated individual's life after the spell is over (the knowledge the cloak had instilled is gone).

The cloak is completely indestructible, yet offers no protection as armor. All damage done to it mends itself within one hour.

Cost: This item is unique and simply can't be bought.



Danz, the Mesmerizer

This ancient weapon is believed to have been first created by Braxis, a Syvan assassin and mage during the Elf-Dwarf Wars. Braxis is renowned throughout history as one of the greatest assassins of all time, so great that some believe him only to be an incarnation of Panath. This, however, is most likely not true. Braxis was a key figure in the Elf-Dwarf War, playing both sides for what they were worth and leaving a massive trail of bloody victims behind him. It is believed that he created this weapon for his personal use during the war, however this cannot be confirmed. In fact, some believe that the weapon may have been created as early as the latter portion of the Age of a Thousand Magicks, as Braxis is known to have lived for a great span of time. There are numerous passages in ancient texts, the Tristine Chronicles included, that cite Braxis' involvement in events that occurred as much as thousands of years apart. The Syvan's final death and disappearance are a complete mystery. In fact, he may still be alive today.

The weapon appears as a grey short sword covered in runes. Its hilt is nondescript except for a set of three black gems embedded within it that appear similar to onyx. The style of the blade is simple yet strange, apparently of a unique or alien design. When the blade is used in battle it becomes shimmering and translucent, dancing about the wielder like a shadow.

Unlike most rune weapons, Danz does not have an overtly manifested personality. As a matter of fact, no one who has ever used it has seen its personality fully manifested. By the same token, no one has ever been able to bond with the sword for a substantial amount of time. The blade becomes fickle before too long with most hosts and finds a way to have itself removed from its master.

Abilities:

The Taint of Deception: The only definite thing that wielders of the blade find themselves feeling is an irresistible urge towards deception. After more than a week, they will find themselves lying, cheating, and using underhanded tactics in all that they do. Those individuals who have already steeped themselves in deception will find their lies and scams spinning well beyond their own control. These effects manifest themselves slowly and gradually, with the wielder seldom being aware of them happening.

This effectively causes a shift in alignment of all wielders. Characters of Principled alignment find their alignment shifted to Scrupulous, characters of Unscrupulous alignment shift towards Anarchist, while Aberrant and Miscreant characters shift towards Diabolic. This change is not as permanent as Braeknaer's (see below). Most victims find themselves cured after several months of separation, however some are never cured. This ability affects all wielders of the blade, whether they bond with it or not, though those who are successful in bonding with it are far more strongly affected.

Mesmerism: Anyone who attacks the wielder of the blade must save versus magic or become dumb struck with mesmerism. Victims of the mesmerism are completely helpless and will stand motionless, taking absolutely no actions to do anything, not even to defend themselves. All victims may make one additional save each round to break free from the mesmerism. Creatures who are normally immune to the effects of mesmerism or similar enchantments still suffer the full effects of this ability. Note: This only applies to those who openly attack the wielder or actively counterattack one of the wielder's attacks. Those who flee or who strictly defend themselves are not susceptible.

Spells: Danz can cast all of the following: Charismatic Aura, Charm, Domination, Compulsion, Words of Truth, Wisps of Confusion, Havoc, and Fear.

Communication: As with all rune weapons, Danz may communicate at will via limited telepathy, but it chooses to communicate solely through Empathetic Transmission, as per the psionic ability. It may do so at will.

A note on abilities: Being that Danz has never fully manifested his personality to any wielder, all of the sword's abilities are used by the sword independently. The wielder will rarely be aware of any of these abilities, and even if he is, they can only be used at the sword's discretion.

P.P.E.: 1102. Regenerates 1D6x10 P.P.E. per hour.

Damage: 1D4x10 S.D.C.

Combat Bonuses: +2 to initiative, +4 to strike and parry, plus one attack per round, +3 to save versus psionics and mind affecting spells and abilities.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Bonds With: Danz can only fully bond with other selfish characters, although good and evil characters that attempt to wield the blade do not take damage and suffer no penalties other than being unable to use the sword's abilities. Oddly enough, it is believed that Danz does not like bonding with selfish characters and often times attempts to bond with good or evil characters, yet never successfully.

Cost: This item is unique and cannot be purchased.

Braeknaer, the Corruptor

Braeknaer is the companion sword to Danz. It was made by Braxis, probably around the same time that he made the first sword. Its make is identical, except that the blade is a deep, faint maroon color. The gems in its hilt are deep red bloodstones. Braeknaer performs no visual illusions while in battle.

Whereas Danz chooses to mesmerize its opponents and fool its wielders into lives of deception, Braeknaer chooses to fully corrupt its wielders into evil, malicious beings. The sword is able to bond with both good and selfish characters, though it prefers good ones. Like Danz, Braeknaer is subtle and crafty,

but Braeknaer is in no way fickle. It will choose a victim, bond with him, and slowly corrupt his entire being. This corruption is extremely subtle and well planned out, often times taking years and years to fully unwind. In fact, the longer it takes, and the more complicated the scheme, the more Braeknaer seems to enjoy himself.

Danz and Braeknaer have a twisted and sorted past. They currently avoid each other and refuse to work together. This is not the result of anything like hatred, but more like brotherly rivalry. Neither knows what happened to Braxis.

Abilities:

Corruption: Those who bond with Braeknaer suffer two primary effects. The first is a slow shift in alignment. Anyone bonded with the sword will find his alignment shifting, step by step, until he becomes fully Diabolical. The amount of time it takes for the change to take place varies for each victim, but none receive any sort of saving throw. Aside from attempting to get rid of the sword, nothing short of divine intervention can stop the process once it has begun. And Braeknaer is very skilled at convincing his wielders (subconsciously, of course) that he is well worth keeping around, despite any changes.

Usually Braeknaer will leave its victims once the full transformation has occurred. More often than not it tries to make its victims aware of the horrible change they've undergone before he leaves, leaving them even more tormented.

At the G.M.'s discretion this corruption may be curable, but it will take something very powerful, usually along the lines of extremely rare magic or another divine miracle.

Psionics: Braeknaer is a very powerful psychic with all of the following abilities: Bio-Regeneration (wielder), Induce Sleep, Suppress Fear, Alter Aura, Mind Block, Telekinesis, Clairvoyance, Empathy, See Aura, Total Recall, Cause Insanity, Empathic Transmission, Hypnotic Suggestion, Induce Nightmare, Insert Memory, Mental Illusion, Mentally Possess Others, Mind Wipe, and Mind Bolt. It is a master psionic and may even have additional powers, which it seldom uses. All psionics are used at 15th level proficiency.

I.S.P.: 1265. Regenerates 1D6X10 I.S.P. per hour.

Damage: 6D6 S.D.C.

Combat Bonuses: +1 to initiative, +3 to strike and parry, +2 to all saving throws, and immune to all forms of mental possession by other beings.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Bonds With: Selfish or good aligned characters, preferably good. Evil characters who attempt to use the blade will experience a horrid revulsion to it and will be unable to wield it whatsoever.

The Senshut

These mysterious suits of armor are items of incredible power and legend. The Senshut (pronounced Sen-Shoot) are of an utterly alien design and creation, unlike anything else normally encountered on Palladium. The armor appears as a mass of black, garrotte-like, tiny wires that wrap around the wearer, completely enshrouding him. The wires are able to flow and expand about the wearer's body like thousands of prehensile tentacles.

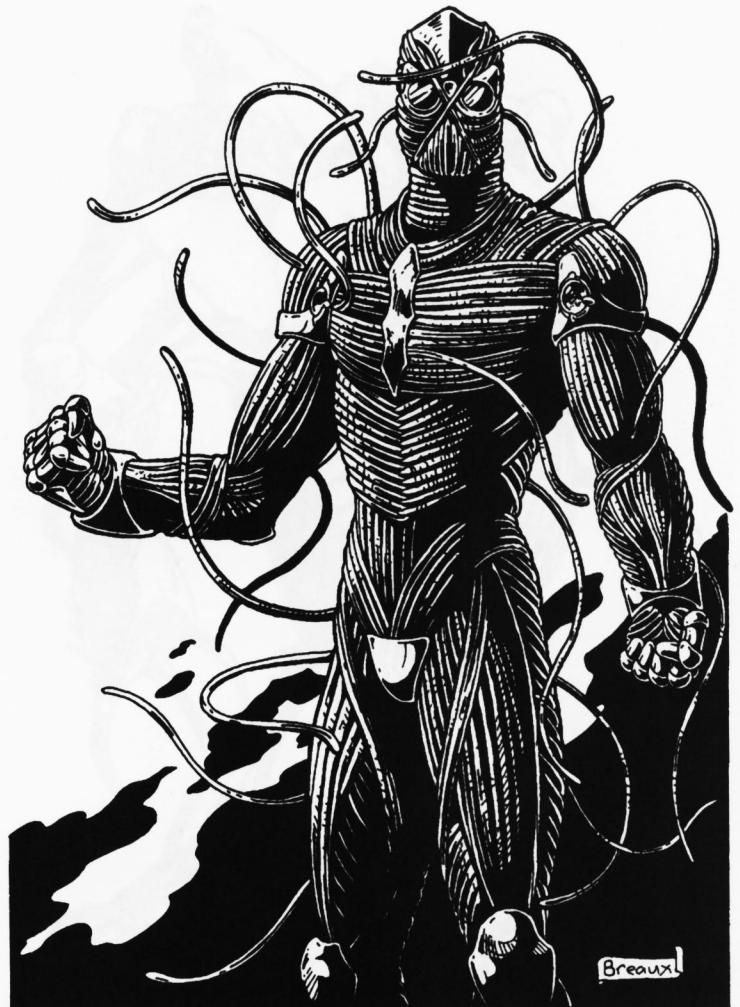
The origin of the Senshut is unknown. More than likely they are the spawn of another dimension, come to Palladium by unknown means. Only two things are known about these suits of armor. They are evil, and they are powerful. So little is known because no one who has ever seen the Senshut has lived to tell about them. In fact, it is suspected that they are not even suits of armor at all, but demonic creatures that possess and corrupt their wearers. Indeed, no one who has ever worn this armor has ever been seen or heard from again.

If viewed as a race, the Senshut are still hard to understand. They live life in utter seclusion and darkness. Their supernatural abilities make them superb assassins, but to what extent these skills are used is unknown. No known race is known to have openly interacted with them, and they've never been known to interact with any beings likewise.

Abilities:

Movement: The Senshut may use its tentacles to climb all but the sheerest of surfaces with perfect ability. Their speed while climbing is 32. While climbing, the armor is utterly silent.

Entangle and Strangle Opponents: The armor is able to ensnare and strangle its enemies. The tentacles have a supernatural strength of 40. Opponents with lower strength are overpowered. Opponents with higher strength may break free by rolling under their strength on a roll of 1D20+40. Opponents with a strength over 60 are not effected. Victims of strangulation suffer 3D6 S.D.C. per round for the first four rounds. After four rounds,



they suffer 6D6 S.D.C. per round. After eight rounds they suffer 1D4x10 S.D.C. per round until death or escape. All damage due to strangulation goes straight to Hit Points. Victims too weak to break free may escape by causing 200 S.D.C. in damage to the attacker within a time span of two rounds. However, victims are -8 to strike. Spell casting is impossible.

Additional Abilities: The armor is absolutely invisible in darkness, and it is impervious to absolutely all forms of detection, magical and otherwise. The wearer is able to see perfectly in darkness and can see the invisible. The armor is impervious to all normal weapons, fire, cold, and electricity. Magical fire,

cold, and electricity do half damage. Direct sunlight does 3D6 S.D.C. per round of exposure.

Penalties: It is believed that this armor is sentient and extremely evil. It is thought that anyone who wears the armor runs the risk of being permanently possessed by it.

A.R.: 19.

S.D.C.: 1000. Regenerates 1D6x10 S.D.C. per every ten rounds. If reduced to 0 S.D.C. the armor becomes inert, but does not "die." It will regenerate back to full S.D.C. within three hours. There is no known way of destroying/killing the armor.

Cost: This item simply can't be bought.

SYSTEMS FAILURE™

The Texas Lone Star Cavalry



Optional Source Material for Systems Failure™

By Ismael Alvarez

"Those Humans will pay for their defiance. What do they call themselves again?" said the giant Lightning Bug.

"What did they say they called themselves? Tttechzzassss Lowwwwnnnn SStaaarrrrr Cavvvalriiii....." The giant insectoid rolled the words around in his mouth. The pests were a big thorn in his side. How could such a small team of upstarts be causing so much trouble in such a short amount of time? It took NORAD a long time to recover from The Meltdown, and the Wyoming Free Irregulars were not made overnight. Yet in a few days, the Lone Star Cavalry had botched many plans and had rescued what few free-minded humans were left in El Paso. What was their game? The Lightning Bug blasted an Army Ant underling out of sheer rage and frustration.

"These humans have escaped detection, use means of power we cannot override, and use our own power against us. Already we may have to start pulling out Beetles because they are such a target... Even Killer Bees are a target to these humans. We will have to crush them! Forget Sortie McAulife! The one who brings me the head of Alexander the Great will personally get to flay 200 human slaves! Alexander must be stopped!" The big Bug punctuated his words by flaring into energy, and melting his throne into a slag of anger and heated rage. The Lone Star Cavalry was doing its job...

"Well Doc? It looks like another successful mission. We have already rescued 70 people, and we have hit some major Bug in-

stallations, as well as taken supplies from a nearby military depot... I think it's party time, don't you?" said Alexander the Great, self titled leader of the Lone Star Cavalry.

"Not yet, we still have work to do. I still have my Organitech projects to work on." said Julius, the resident Egghead, and long-time friend of Alexander.

"Dang it! Not that garbage again. Don't be like the Bugs, it's not right to use their energy against them. Those Bug reactors I can handle, but Organitech... yuck, it's like holding a cockroach that shoots. Can't you come up with something more useful, like an antitank rifle I can put in a holster?" said the pragmatic Alexander.

"Look, if we are to get through this war, we will need every advantage we can get. The only problem with Organitech is that NORAD will soon be breathing down our neck. Your job is to lead our men into battle so we can use these things to our advantage. Mine is making them. No questions asked. You may also have to fend off NORAD, leader." retorted Julius.

"All in a day's work... I think I need my Miller now...." said Alexander with slumped shoulders. Being the leader of a large militia in Texas was harder than he thought.

Texas Lone Star Cavalry

This is a Texas group that was created by a few friends that had known each other since before The Meltdown. Successfully bolstering their size and equipment through some small successful raids and a little sponsorship from some friends near El Paso, they have established a small yet effective team dedicated to retaking their home-town from the Bug threat, and after that, contributing to helping in the Great North American Bug Hunt.

So far, they have raided Fort Bliss, and have a large amount of weapons and artillery for their size. They also had the luck of stumbling onto a small bunker, and have expanded it into a base suitable for their guerilla warfare against the city Bugs. The Lone Star Cavalry has made a name for itself by having a 100% success ratio, which, frankly, has bloated their heads a little. The success may hurt them considering they are not prepared for defeat. They have high ambitions, and may very well take back El Paso if they play their cards right.

Currently ranked 3rd (some consider 2nd) on the Bugs' hit list, they trail the Wyoming Free Irregulars in irritating the Bugs. Aside from the Free American Air Cavalry, the Lone Star Cavalry are the only ones that have successfully waged urban war against the Bugs and lived to tell about it. This especially annoys the Bugs to no end, considering they are so close to the city itself and have gone undetected. The Cavalry grows in reputation day by day, and may soon rival the Wyoming Free Irregulars in sheer power, especially if they take El Paso back. Another achievement of the Lone Star Cavalry is the fact that they have the ability to produce Organitech, albeit at a small pace. This has put them on NORAD's list of enemies, considering that NORAD has asked them on several occasions to stop their use of it. The Lone Star Cavalry has given them an ultimatum: "What do we get out of it?" NORAD does not like the Cavalry very much.

Their leader, Alexander the Great, is a Grease Monkey who has a knack for tactics and leadership. He goes into the field, tests his pet projects, and commands what little troops he has.

Some say it was he who came up with the "Beetle Generator" idea, but he neither confirms nor denies this rumor, and Julius the Egghead is the one who takes most of the credit for this. Needless to say, Julius and Alexander both have the honor of having public death threats put on them by the Bugs, ranking them up there with Sortie herself.

Julius Caesar is another mentionable, considering he is third in command, is the Cavalry's greatest mind, and that he is credited with coming up with the ingenious Beetle Generator project. He is working on many other projects, including creating actual energy rifles independent of Organitech, steam-powered vehicles, and even a hush-hush operation including the creation of power armor and exoskeletons as all-terrain vehicles and fighting machines (both in conjunction with Alexander).

One of the last mentionables is Artie. He is the resident survivalist, and was the one who provided the team with a base. He is second in command and is a master tactician. Artie has led several successful raids, and some put him above Alexander when it comes to warfare. His only weakness is Guerilla tactics. Artie tends to be trigger happy, but curbs his violent tendencies until Bugs are around, and then lets loose with everything he has. The Bugs have no price on his head, and have made no death treats, afraid that they cannot contain him, and worried about what he may do if he ever finds out they have threatened him.

Lone Star Cavalry Statistics

Leader: Alexander the Great, a.k.a. Ish, a.k.a. Sovereign.

Group Membership: 500 and growing (40% combat ready, 60% support personnel).

Supplies: Gauss rifles (experimental), machineguns, rifles (especially McMillans), and any other conventional weapon you might think of. Includes a few Stingers retrieved from Fort Bliss, some artillery, some armored vehicles and 3 attack choppers.

Alexander the Great

Leader of the Texas Lone Star Cavalry

"Okay, we're hitting this installation, and we are hitting it hard. Artie, get me a layout of Bugs in the area. Julius, get together your projects, finalize them, and get them ready to squash. There are Bugs to kill and humans to free. Our work ain't over yet." — Alexander the Great, right before the first siege on Ft. Bliss.

Alexander, as most people know him, was a wanderer that went back to his home town after many years of learning how to be a Grease Monkey. He found a few of his comrades while scrounging around his old neighborhood, and ran into an old high school teacher who offered him work, not only souping up cars and such, but infiltrating Bug territory, something Alexander had always dreamt of. His old high school mentor, Brother Sunshine, had a small base just outside of El Paso, and was constantly launching raids on Bug outposts, especially any with free-minded human slaves. However, Old Brother Sunshine was too manipulative, and less caring for the individual soldier than the mission. After a while, Alexander and his friends split from what was known as the Horizon Kingdom, and formed a small, yet still affiliated outpost within his friend Artie's neatly placed bunker. From there, everything started.



Alexander's first job was to free some people that were trapped in an old high school. A nearby Stink facility was found, and with limited manpower, guerilla tactics, and command from Alexander, the rescue went well, and all the people were saved. After that, Alexander and his friends formed the small but growing group known as the Texas Lone Star Cavalry. Slowly usurping Bug control over painfully small areas of influence over the Bugs of El Paso, he built a small organization from the ground up. With Julius as his brain, and Artie as his brawn, he set up one of the Bugs' most hated groups within an actual Bug town.

Alexander himself is a very compassionate man who somewhat fills the shoes of a Grease Monkey. He is hostile towards Organitech, but tolerates it in understanding that it is for the better good. He is always calm, often cold, and cares a great deal about human life, unless it's human scum. Alexander has been known to bring the Bugs' attention to Splatterpunks and Warlord Gangs, mostly out of the excuse of "one less problem." He is a very confident, tactful, and intimidating leader. Under his rule, he may very well be able to make a difference in El Paso.

Alexander the Great (self titled)

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q.: 12, M.A.: 19, M.E.: 13, P.S.: 17, P.P.: 15, P.E.: 16, P.B.: 14, Spd: 28

S.D.C.: 60, **H.P.:** 45, **I.S.P.:** 45.

Height: 5 feet, 11 inches (1.8 m), **Weight:** 175 lbs (78.7 kg).

Age: 27.

Gender: Male.

O.C.C.: Grease Monkey.

Level: 5.

Appearance: Mostly mundane, short and rugged man. No facial hair, and short, cropped hair. Always looks concerned.

Hand to Hand Combat: Expert.

Attacks per Melee: 5

Bonuses: +2 to Damage, +3 to Strike, +7 to Parry, +7 to Dodge, +4 to Roll, +4 to Pull Punch, +2 to save vs Psionics. Critical on a roll of natural 20, KO/Stun on a natural 20, +1 to save vs Poison.

Equipment: Old Jeep, portable tool kit, large tool kit, acetylene torch, flashlight, utility belt, overalls, and \$1200 worth of other equipment.

Weapons: McMillan M87R Rifle (1D4X10 damage, 660 foot/201 m range), and 100 rounds, Automag Pistol (6D6 damage, 165 foot/50 m range) with 100 rounds, and other odds and ends.

Money: Barter for what he needs, and usually takes what he wants from his enemies.

Scholastic/O.C.C./Other Skills: Jury Rigging (+15% to Mechanics and Electronics while stockpiled with spare parts, and General Repair 85%) Scrounge 60% (chance of finding something worth 1D6X\$100, or spare part needed), Electrical Engineer 60%, Basic Mechanics 65%, Computer Operation 70%, Advanced Electronics 60%, Basic Electronics 75%, Locksmith 65%, Mechanical Engineer 65%, Auto Mechanics 55%, Aircraft Mechanics 55%, Weapons Engineer 55%, W.P. Automatic Rifle, W.P. Pistol, W.P. Heavy, Intelligence 40%, Urban Combat 31%, Pilot Automobile 75%, Language and Literacy in American 98%, Basic Math 70%, Boxing, and Athletics, Trust and Intimidate 55%, Body Building,

Language and Literacy: Spanish 75%, Art 35%, Cook 35%, Writing 50%, Psychology 35%, Running, Sniper.

Secondary Skills: W.P. Sword.

Psionics: Total Recall (2), Speed Reading (2), Sixth Sense (2), Object Read (6), Clairvoyance (4), and Sense Evil (2).

Artie

Second in Command of the Lone Star Cavalry

Leader of the Texas Ranger Team

Artie is the second in command of the Cavalry, and an expert tactician. His contribution to the Cavalry is great, and he has been an instrumental member right from the beginning. His bunker, which he maintained since before The Meltdown, was the first, and last base needed by the Cavalry. In the heart of Bug territory, and hidden in plain sight, the base has been an excellent place to stage attacks, and hit Bugs hard. Expanded from the small base once able to house only a few people, Artie's base now accommodates more than 500 people, and is a small complex able to withstand bombardment!

Artie is a strange character. On the battlefield, he goes into frenzies, laughing maniacally, and killing Bugs indiscriminately. Not quite mentally sound, Artie is quite fit for the job of exterminating Bugs, and leading his men into the thick of battle. He takes little time off for personal agendas, but keeps himself down to Earth by hanging around with his friends, Alexander and Julius.

When he is not fighting Bugs, or talking battle plans, he is practicing with his guns. It is rumored that Bugs fear Artie for his marksmanship, and many people can vouch for his deadly accuracy. Soon, he will test the mettle of everyone in the complex however, including his own, because he has big plans for the Cavalry, as well as the Bugs...

Artie

Real Name: Evan Santos.

Call Sign: "Arty" or "Dark Star"

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q.: 19, M.A.: 12, M.E.: 17, P.S.: 22, P.P.: 20, P.E.: 21, P.B.: 16, Spd: 25

Hit Points: 37, S.D.C.: 68, I.S.P.: 68.

Height: 6 feet, 2 inches (1.8 m), **Weight:** 235 lbs (105.7 kg).

Age: 26.

Gender: Male.

O.C.C.: Military Specialist.

Level: 2.

Bonuses: +4 to strike, +6 to parry, +6 to dodge, and +2 to initiative.

Attacks: 6

Skills: Radio: Basic 60%, Radio: Scramblers 50%, Pilot Automobile 90%, Pilot Motorcycle 78%, Pilot Jet 85%, Pilot Tanks 75%, Pilot Helicopter 70%, Land Navigation 65%, Weapon Systems 85%, Read Sensory Instruments 65%, Wilderness Survival 50%, Language & Literacy: American 81/81%, Japanese 43%/43%, and Philippine 93%/60%, Paramedic 45%, Military Etiquette 50%, Demolitions 63%, Demolitions Disposal 63%, Weapons Engineer 45%, Boxing, Running, Acrobatics, Athletics, Body Building, Swimming 63%, Climbing 63%, and Prowl 40%, W.P. Sword, W.P.

Knife, W.P. Rifle, W.P. Pistol, W.P. Heavy, W.P. Sub-machinegun, W.P. Shotgun, W.P. Energy Rifle and W.P. Energy Pistol.

Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

Money: 21,000 Dollars.

Vehicles of Note: "Humvee," X-1200 "Longbow" Apache Attack Chopper. **Weapons of Note:** APR-03 Pulse Rifle, 90mm Recoilless Rifle (14 rounds), H&K MP-5 Sub-machinegun (1000 rounds), M-16A3 Assault Rifle (100 rounds), Desert Eagle Pistol (1000 rounds), VB-1 AGR-02a Gauss Rifle, H&K G-3 Battle Rifle (1000 rounds). 5 HE Grenades, .50 caliber Rifle (1000 rounds). 1911 Government Pistol (100 rounds), 2 Thermite Plasma Grenades.

Armor: Kevlar Hard Vest (120 S.D.C.), LS-20S EBA (500 S.D.C.).

Vehicle: Has access to any equipment available to the Lone Star Cavalry.

Items: None in particular.

Special Abilities: Sense Bugs: 300 feet (91.4 m). Crack Shot: +3 to strike with an aimed shot, and +1 to bursts.

Psionics: Sixth Sense (2), Object Read (6), Telepathy (4).





Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar is the premier Egghead at the Lone Star Complex. His ideas have spawned a new generation of Bug fighting weapons and tools. It was he who first came up with the idea of the "Beetle Generator," the way to drain Bugs for "un-Buggable" energy.

Julius, as he is known to the average Joe, is as smart as they come! Even NORAD recognizes his genius, and has made him several offers. His heart, however, is with the cavalry in Texas, and he remains to be their best technician. Churning out ideas by the minute, he has his aides working day and night just to keep up with him. Having developed much of the modern arsenal in use by the Lone Star Cavalry, Julius is credited with keeping the army afloat; an honor shared only with Artie and Alexander, his two friends.

While Julius has no official rank among the cavalry, most would peg him at third in command. And his logistics theories help improve upon the best strategies Artie and Alexander can come up with. The brains of the Lone Star Cavalry, Julius makes up for all the brawn, and then some.

Julius Caesar

Real Name: Jim Gattoc

Alignment: Unprincipled

Attributes: I.Q.: 29 M.E.: 16 M.A.: 13 P.S.: 16 P.P.: 21 P.E.: 25 P.B.: 13 Spd: 36

Hit Points: 36, S.D.C.: 38.

Height: 5 feet, 9 inches (1.75 m). **Weight:** 165 lbs (74.2 kg).

Age: 25.

Gender: Male.

O.C.C.: Egghead.

Level: 3.

Bonuses: +1 to save vs psionics and insanity, +3 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +5 to save vs poison/magic, +20% save vs coma/death.

Skills: Computer Operation 95%, Computer Repair 60%, Computer Hacking 70%, Computer Programming 80%, Basic Mathematics 98%, Advanced Mathematics 98%, Chemistry 85%, Analytical Chemistry 85%, Astrophysics 65%, Electrical Engineer 60%, Basic Electronics 60%, Advanced Electronics 60%, Mechanical Engineer 60%, Basic Mechanics 65%, Weapons Engineer 60%, Weapon Systems 70%, Biology 90%, Botany 90%, Nuclear Chemical and Biological Warfare 65%, Locksmith 65%, Pick Locks 65%, Surveillance System 70%, Guitar 98%, Fishing 65%, Cook 60%, Paramedic 75%, Pilot Automobile 85%, Literacy: American 98%, Locate Secret Compartments 45%, Athletics, Body Building and Weight Lifting, Running, W.P. Automatic and Semiautomatic Rifles, W.P. Shotgun, W.P. Heavy, Hand to Hand: Expert, W.P. Sword.

Equipment: He has a lab fully equipped with anything he might need, including a super computer! Among his personal items, he has a shotgun he scrounged when The Meltdown occurred, and he has access to anything the Cavalry can offer him. His favorite vehicle is a Sports Utility Vehicle he souped-up himself, with armor plating and mounted weapons.

Hillary Sinclair

Hillary is a cute girl who was saved in one of the Cavalry's initial raids to save human captives. She was eternally grateful to them, and joined as support personnel. Wanting to do more, she took some time off to study to become a Sawbones, and came back. When she returned, everyone was glad to see her, especially Alexander the Great. He has been carrying on a long courtship with Hillary, and their romance is the source of much news. If you hear about the Cavalry, chances are you have heard the latest dirt on Hillary and Alex. It seems she really cares about him, but to his dismay, her job takes first priority. Alex has resigned himself to the fate that one day he may never see her again, for whatever reason. This has made him appreciate her all the more.

Hillary is a kind soul, and as a Sawbones, she cares for people like a mother. Many people request her specifically when they need medical attention (just watch her blush), and she has gotten a reputation around Texas. She has seen some bad stuff, but for the most part, her simple spirit remains untainted.

Hillary Sinclair

Alignment: Scrupulous

Attributes: I.Q.: 14, M.A.: 13, M.E.: 13, P.S.: 6, P.P.: 21, P.E.: 17, P.B.: 18, Spd: 31

Hit Points: 29, S.D.C.: 51, I.S.P.: 33

Height: 5 feet 3 inches (1.6 m), **Weight:** 115 lbs (51.7 kg).

Age: 19.

Gender: Female.

O.C.C.: Sawbones.

Level: 3.

Appearance: A cheerful young girl with deep eyes that always convey her emotions. Ever bright, her smile is near permanent, and her cheeks are always full of rosy color.

Hand to Hand Combat: Expert

Attacks per Melee: 4

Bonuses: +5 to Strike, +7 to Parry, +7 to Dodge, +6 to Roll, +3 to Pull Punch. Critical on a natural 20, KO/Stun on a natural 20, +1 to save vs Poison.

Equipment: Medical equipment, surgical mask, 40 boxes of 100 surgical gloves, knife, hand axe, pistol of choice, and 100 rounds of ammo.

Money: Supported by the Lone Star Cavalry, she needs no money, but has \$1000 saved.

Scholastic/O.C.C./Other Skills: Biology 75%, Chemistry 75%, Pathology 75%, M.D. 95%/85%, Business and Finance 60%,



Computer Operation 75%, Paramedic 65%, W.P. Sword, W.P. Pistol, Advanced Math 60%, Basic Math 65%, Analytical Chemistry 40%, Botany 40%, Anthropology 35%, Dance 65%, Navigation 65%, and Spanish 75%.

Background Skills: Athletics, Body Building, Running, Fencing, Gymnastics, Cook 35%, and Sing 35%.

Secondary Skills: Sniper.

Psionics: Healing Touch (6), Increased Healing (10), Psychic Surgery (14), and Psychic Diagnosis (4).

Project "Beetle Generator"

"You're telling me my ATV is gonna run off of Bug energy?" said Alexander, leader of the Lone Star Cavalry. Scratching his head, and thinking hard, he wondered how risky it might be.

"Yes, it is completely safe. If you think of it this way, it's like using a Bug motel that powers things, instead of blowing up. The Bug is kept in a containment unit, and will suffer torment

and boredom from being trapped, and will provide not only power, but soon enough, an energy weapon for your use on your ATV. Sound good?" Julius told Alexander while typing data into his laptop.

"Sound good? All I have to say is how soon can we start trapping more Bugs? I want all the officers with one of these things within a month!"

When the Texas Lone Star Cavalry decided the Egghead back at base wanted something to study, they found a Beetle, and thought it would be funny to shoot its arms and legs off and haul it back. It was kind of like pulling the legs off of a Bug and putting it in a glass jar to see how long it would live. The Egghead had himself a big Bug to study, and came up with a brilliant idea during a brainstorm. Bugs can turn into energy. Energy is hard to come by, especially energy that is Bug proof. Hmmm... Bug motels trap Bugs, and use their own energy against them... hmmm...

That was it! If he could build a containment unit that could store a Bug, and feed off of his energy, then he could create a Bug-proof form of energy that was portable. It would also use Bugs the way they used humans.

Psychological war as well as physical. That's it. So work was done, a Bug Motel was modified, and the Beetle was put inside. Instant power source! Considering that Beetles are large, can produce energy bombs, and cannot perform machine union, they are the preferred candidates for powering one of these generators (though Stink Bugs and Killer Bees are also being considered for this treatment).

End result? A nice power source, especially for vehicles (or power armor, as the Lone Star Cavalry is working on).

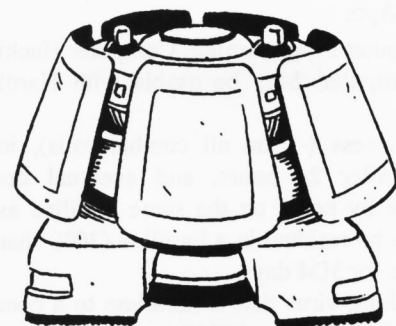
PK-1 Bug Reactor

Weight: 20 lbs (9 kg).

Life Span: 5 years (2 if it sees heavy use). Can power a vehicle, or act as an electrical generator, 20 KW from Beetles, 15 KW from Killer Bees, and 10 KW from Stink Bugs.

Range: Cannot take more than 10 hours of constant use without 10 minute break periods; using the reactor for 12+ hours straight may burn the Bug out and kill it, with a 20% chance of explosion (same as suicide attack of a Bug, to a 50 foot/15.2 m radius). In a vehicle, the range before needing a break is 500 miles (800 km). Can also work in conjunction with a gasoline engine, and require a break only at every 1000 miles (1600 km).

Note: Smaller Beetle-powered Bug Reactors are being researched for the possibility that they may be able to fit a semi-Organitech weapon capable of storing and firing bio-energy bombs.



Steam Power

"Good old steam.... so you say they had robots run off steam in that some old cartoon?" said Julius.

"Yeah, steam power was all they had. Theoretically it should work." said Artie.

"Fine, steam research it is. Does that mean we get saunas?" Julius thought out loud.

In a world where electricity is not an option, people need to go back to good old steam. Steam could run most things, and though bulky, the fuel was efficient. Mini locomotives dotting the landscape would benefit many people. Eventually, the people at Lone Star designed it, and soon after that NORAD was emulating the design and idea.

Though range is limited, this is perfect for those on the hit and run. Favored among bandits, freedom fighters, Grease Monkeys, and Freebooters.

Power Output: 10 KW, barely enough to power a car.

Range: 60 miles/96 km (per full load of water, 150 Gallons/568 liters).

Cost: \$2000

Note: Needless to say, this weighs the car down. Fully loaded, the steam power increases the weight of a vehicle by 200 lbs (90 kg), and decreases maximum speed by 30%, unless it's a heavy vehicle to begin with. Research is being done with pneumatics to create a steam robot which could hold a considerable amount of water, and be more effective than a vehicle.

Bug Tech

This is stuff used to combat Bugs. Most of it is technology created by the Lone Star Cavalry, or NORAD (more often Lone Star).

Bug Virus

A Computer Virus designed to kill Bugs!

Bugs are somehow electrical in nature (even if it is Bio-energy), and have a strange connection to machines and hardlines. Biological agents don't work against them, so it's just natural to think computer viruses might work. Think of this: Bugs travel through hardlines, and take over computers. Developed to stop Bugs like a roach motel, Bug viruses infect a few Army Ants, and spread the disease to kill off a maximum number of Bugs, including Tier 2 Bugs (Tier 3 are apparently immune). Viruses must be contracted through a computer (usually set as a trap), and must be spread by hardlines (like many Army Ants traveling on the same line). While Bugs are smart, and able to quarantine those infected, this can keep Bugs out of certain areas known to be virused, and may be a stepping stone to the Killer App.

Needs: Computer Programming, Computer Hacking, and an adequate computer. May be usable with Hardline Surge devices.

Effects: Dizziness (-2 on all combat rolls), inability to use hardlines after 24 hours, and eventual death for Bugs. Spreadable by being on the same hardline as another Bug. Virus may be residual in a hardline (30% chance), rendering it unusable for 3D4 days.

Cost: A working virus that is harmless to a computer is worth anywhere from \$200 to \$5000.

Bug Sensors — Bug Radar

Will they catch you off guard?

Do you have trouble with Bugs getting you by surprise? No Survivalists to tell you when they are coming? Try a Bug radar. They check to see when Bugs are coming, and let you know how far and how many. You usually need something about the size of a breadbox to do it. Mix in a little Organitech, and you have your Bug sensor. Sure, it's a little more complicated than that, but basically, this thing tells you where the Bugs are at, and you can have it in a mobile base, or a small bunker. Useful for anyone on the run.

Needs: Organitech knowledge (usually an Egghead), Computer Programming, Surveillance skill, the proper electronics, and room to put the sucker.

Effects: Senses Bugs for about 2 miles (3.2 km) on a good day (1/4 that in bad weather). An additional option has it beep when it senses a Bug within range.

Cost: \$2000

Shrieker Dog Tags

A novel way to keep Bugs away, including Silkworms.

This beauty is a great way to keep Bugs away. A small grade Shrieker is put into a dog tag, activating on a vocal command, and making a concentrated wail which keeps Bugs away like a cross to a vampire. However, this usually means that a person wearing a Shrieker who is waiting to be Bugged will be killed, considering that they cannot be converted (Silkworms will not go into a human with a Shrieker dog tag. A healthy alternative to being Bugged.

Needs: Organitech skills, and Advanced Electronics.

Effects: Not as powerful as a Shrieker. No combat penalties, but it keeps any and all Bugs at bay at a range of 100 feet/30.5 m (but they can still use their bio-weapons).

Cost: \$500

Hardline Surge Devices

Bugs getting to you through hardlines? Fret no more, because these things will put them in their place.

The hardline surge devices are often one-time use machines put into either a socket or electrical component, that sends a continual energy surge through a hardline. This slams any Bugs back to their point of origin. It can be placed on any socket or place of Bug entry, to ensure your place stays Bug free.

Needs: Advanced Electronics and Electrical Engineer.

Effects: Will push Bugs off of a certain hardline. Usually a one-time use, but some are intended to last a long time, and/or be re-usable (de-attaches from socket, and needs re-charging. Ironically, it plugs into an electrical source to re-charge). Short term use lasts 10 minutes, long term lasts 1-2 hours (for those long missions).

Cost: \$500 for short-term, one-time use. Add \$300 for long-term use, and an additional \$1000 for a re-usable type.



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Hardware Unlimited™ Sourcebook
The Mutant Underground™ Sourcebook
The Nursery™ Adventure Sourcebook
After the Bomb® Role-Playing Game
 (not necessarily in this order)

Ninjas & Superspies™ RPG

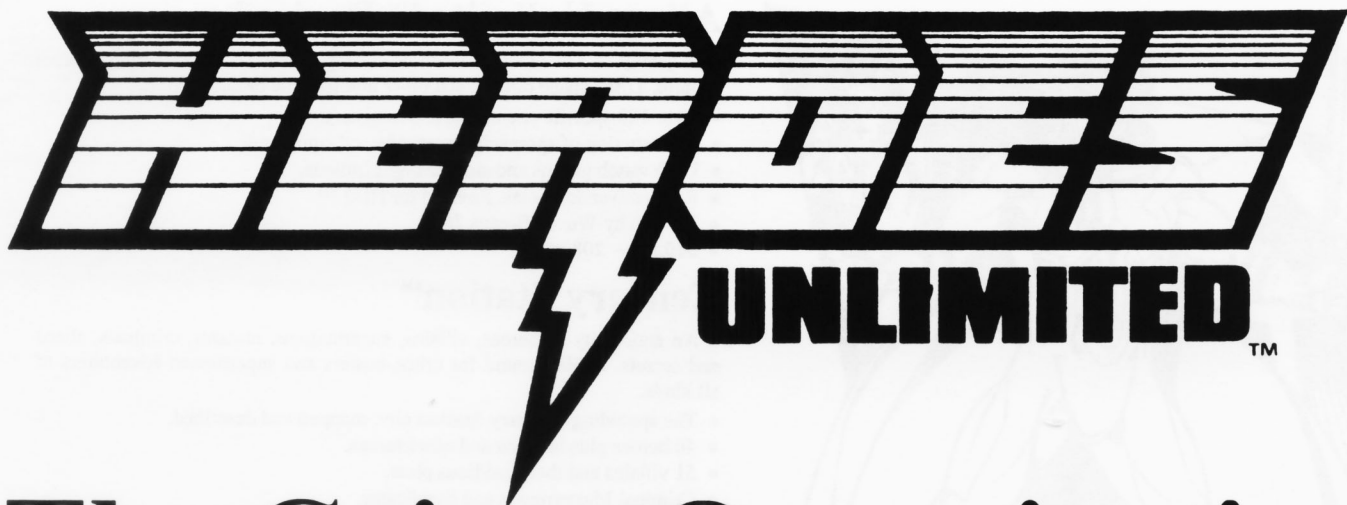
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The Geiger Organization

Optional Source Material and Adventures for Heroes Unlimited™ 2nd Edition

By Carl Syphrett

RRRIINNNGGG. RRRIINNNGGG. RRRIINNNGGG.

Kirby Rogers leapt to grab the phone off the hook.

"Hello?" Kirby said.

"Don't talk, Captain," said a whispering voice on the other end. "Listen."

"Who is this?" demanded Kirby.

"Listen," commanded the voice. "In one hour, the Sons of Osiris will attack the Federal Building."

"Why are you telling me this?" asked Kirby, eyeing the neon green and orange costume, and gold shield hanging in his closet.

"One hour," said the voice. The line went dead.

Kirby tried to use caller identification to no avail. He changed clothes quickly. He strapped his golden shield on his back. Kirby exited his apartment through a skylight.

Captain Manhattan walked the night.

The Geiger Organization

— The Shadow Agency

Agency Features

A. Outfits: #1 none. All agents and support staff must provide their own clothes. 0 points.

B. Equipment: #6 unlimited. Any equipment can be provided upon request. 50 points.

C. Weapons: #6 unlimited. Any weapons can be provided upon request. 50 points.

D. Bionics and Robotics: #3 cyber-agents. The agency is not interested in making bionic or robotic agents, but does provide services for repairs and replacements. 25 points.

E. Vehicles: #4 spy cars. The agency provides a fleet of high quality vehicles as well as one customized vehicle for each strike force. 25 points.

F. Communications: #5 satellite networks. The agency provides instant contact from anywhere in the world. 30 points.

G. Offices, Hideouts, and Distribution: #6 ubiquitous. Every major city has an agent in place, as well as ordinary safe houses for strike operations. Two major bases are used by the strike teams. One is in New Mexico. The other is in England just outside of London. 50 points.

H. Military Power: #3 militia. The Geiger Organization can illegally mobilize a military platoon in the case of an emergency. 15 points.

I. Super Powered Operatives: #4 super strike force. The agency employs two teams of super operatives. 80 points.

J. Sponsorship: #1 secret. Only Vincent Herald knows who the real brain behind the organization is. All other staff members believe they work for the government. 0 points.

K. Special Budget: #5 big bucks. The agency can put up \$100 million for special projects beyond its normal operating budget. 35 points.

L. Administrative Control: #5 license to kill. The strike forces are allowed to conduct operations any way they can, as long as secrecy is maintained and collateral damage is kept to a minimum. 35 points.

M. Internal Security: #5 impregnable. All support staff and security are constantly checked and double-checked while under contract to the agency. 50 points.

N. External Infiltration: #5 general infiltration. The agency's informants are in every walk of life, but they are not used for agent purposes. 25 points.

O. Research and Information Gathering: #6 unlimited connections. The agency has a vast network of computer shunting and research from most legal and illegal operations as well as key satellite information. 50 points.

P. Agency Credentials: #2 unknown. The strike teams give the impression they are agents for the F.B.I., N.S.A., S.C.R.E.T.,

or any other agency with jurisdictional authority in some other agency's bailiwick. 3 points.

Q. Agency Salary: #4 good. All support staff and security are paid 10% better than others in comparable positions. The strike teams are low paid but are trying to make the world a better place. They are not in it for the money. 20 points.

The Geiger Organization is a megalithic, faceless agency. It has attained access to numerous other agencies through illegal conduits of information and infiltration. Only one man knows all the secrets of the organization. That man is the invisible mastermind known only as Darius Geiger.

The organization is divided into layers. Each layer works independently of each other. Each layer is also unaware of other agents in the same layer or who is actually their employer.

The first layer is made up of various vigilantes and heroes who are kept ignorant of the Organization's existence. Contact is frequently kept to untraceable phone calls to the hero's civilian identity. An ad hoc team can be formed by calling several operators to the scene against a single foe.

The second layer consists of a network of informants. The informants are placed in every enemy agency and law enforcement group. The informants believe they are working for known enemies of their employers. Example: A mafia bag man reports the earnings of his boss over the phone. The bag man will believe he is reporting to the F.B.I. He will also be led to believe that he can enter the Witness Protection Program, or some other protection will be provided, when his boss is arrested. This sometimes happens, most times not.

A trained corps of private investigators makes up the third layer. These detectives are on a regular retainer. Geiger uses these men and women to substantiate reports from his informants and other illicit information he has culled from his computer taps. Geiger tries to minimize their involvement because they are obvious targets if discovered.

The fourth, and the last, layer of the Organization is the active arm of the agency. This includes two strike teams, a training facility, a pool of recruits, and support staff. The chief of staff is a man named Vincent Herald. He is the only one that knows who is actually behind the hidden base. No one else knows the truth.

Team One and Team Two

The fourth layer of The Geiger Organization came about from a desire by Geiger to take a more active stand against the growing population of criminals and superpowered terrorists and villains. He asked an old friend, Vincent Herald, to be the creative force behind the project. Herald readily agreed. Herald will die before revealing the real leader of the agency. Furthermore, no one else at the base knows Geiger caused the facility to come about.

Herald launched his project by culling an abandoned Air Force base from the lists of inactive government facilities around the world. The site was located in the New Mexican desert. He used the same method to garner a security force, equipment, engineers, and a crew of on-site personnel. Everyone

thinks Vincent Herald is a government agent, and that they work for the Air Force, S.C.R.E.T., or some other United States agency. Herald has chosen not to disillusion them.

It took four years to upgrade the facility and establish its operating guidelines. The threats it was readying to face had quadrupled in that time. Herald had to choose to recruit veteran superhumans, or try to train new heroes to make up the two strike teams in a short amount of time. Herald chose to recruit already operating agents to save time.

Herald did a thorough search for two contact men he could use to funnel support for his new teams. He found Smith Six, a former intelligence analyst for the NSA, and Sir Thomas Channing, a retired British soldier and statesman. He negotiated with the two men until all parties were satisfied with the resulting agreement.

Smith Six started by finding and recruiting Robert MacGregor, an ex-marine and mercenary, as Team One's field commander. They found the demonic El Diablo and Manitou operating just fifty miles (80 km) away from the facility. Death Mask was gathered from Chicago where she was on the run from the Faustian Court. The team recruited Renkar from New York, where she was battling a local syndicate leader. MacGregor defeated Dust Dervish in single combat. Defender was recruited by the team in the middle of a mission, after it had been in operation for two years.

Team One was nicknamed the **Rat Squad** after MacGregor's vicious style of engagement with enemy operations.

Sir Thomas Channing decided to entrust the assembling of Team Two to his daughter, Guinevere. Guinevere Channing, a powerful psionic, was already operating as the hero known as the Gold Unicorn. Channing saw this as an opportunity to give her some assistance and protection that operating solo would not give her. Guinevere accepted her father's proposal.

Guinevere quietly and quickly gathered her team together. She found the mystic La Una Mysteria in Venezuela. She grabbed Flag in Washington, D.C. Miss Power was recruited from a life of burglary in Ohio. Fire Devil hails from Houston. Guinevere hired Kenshi to work for her on a long term basis in Tokyo, Japan.

A small base was built on the Channing Estate so that Team Two could operate independently from the training facility in New Mexico.

Team Two has been labeled the **Dark Riders** due to the length and speed of their air travel on missions.

The Rat Squad operates in the Western Hemisphere exclusively. The Dark Riders operate everywhere but in the continental United States.

Team One: The Rat Squad

The **Rat Squad** is made of seven individuals plus a contact and resource provider. **Smith Six** is the contact and never takes part in the actual operations. The seven field operators are **Parsifal** — Weapon Smith, **El Diablo** — Lybokja, **Manitou** — Haunting Tectonic Entity, **Renkar** — Godling, **Death Mask** — Gold Mask Wielder, **Dust Dervish** — Mutant, and **Defender** — Enchanted Object user.



The Rat Squad usually works in two man squads, with either Manitou or Parsifal operating alone. Renkar and Death Mask are paired because of their long-range abilities. Defender and Dust Dervish have limited offensive capabilities and are used for close range assaults. El Diablo either operates with Parsifal or Manitou depending on what the operation calls for. The three have been known to work as solo cavalry/reserves for the other two squads in the middle of assaults.

Smith Six

Smith Six had always loved to tinker with machinery as a boy. He had a knack for picking up skills he wanted to know in that regard. He made himself an excellent engineer in the two years he went to college. His scholarship was pulled when Six did not show the same interest in any of his other classes. His family could not help support his tuition, so Six dropped out of school and joined the U.S. Army.

Six underwent basic training before joining the Army's engineering corps. He found himself being sent to other countries and setting up various covert installations. He enjoyed his work very much.

On assignment in Central America, Six's squad of engineers was wiped out by rebels and drug smugglers. Only he survived the assault. He had been able to get away from the fighting by running into the jungle. The listening post being constructed by his unit was burned to the ground by the rebels.

Six's flight was halted by Robert MacGregor, a Marine sniper. MacGregor calmed the engineer down before starting his

pursuit of the assault force. Six tagged along as MacGregor tracked the men to a secret base and drug factory hidden in the jungle. The two men mounted an attack and razed the place to the ground. MacGregor led Six to his extraction point. The two were separated at MacGregor's base for debriefing. After that, they went down different paths but still kept in touch.

Six was transferred to Army Intelligence. He was often assigned covert duties behind enemy lines. He worked his way out of the Army, and onto the staff for the NSA as an analyst of incoming information. He retired early from his desk three years later.

Six found that he was bored without the challenges to his skills his work had given him. He leaped at the chance Vincent gave him. He located his friend MacGregor and recruited him to be the new team's commander. The partners quickly filled out the rest of their roster.

Smith Six

Real Name: Smith Six.

Aliases: Six regularly uses the name Remo Bolan.

Alignment: Scrupulous. **Level:** 8th.

Attributes: I.Q. 26, M.E. 13, M.A. 10, P.S. 19, P.P. 29, P.E. 23, P.B. 18, Spd. 54.

Hit Points: 63. **S.D.C.:** 33.

Height: 5 feet, 11 inches (1.8 m). **Weight:** 180 lbs (81 kg). **Age:** 38.

Disposition: Smith Six is an extremely secretive person, bordering on paranoid. He is very serious about his responsibility as the team's source of information and arranger. He gets along well with most of the team, with two exceptions. One is the

Godling Renkar. The other is Dust Dervish. Both of these arrogant people cause Six no end of trouble.

Six has become adept at letting people think he belongs on the scene, especially when he doesn't. This allows Six to act as an inside man within the local authorities in the Pack's area of operation.

O.C.C.: Mutant.

Major Abilities: Natural Genius.

Minor Abilities: Extraordinary Physical Prowess and Extraordinary Physical Endurance.

Unusual Physical Characteristic: Ambidextrous.

Educational Level: Two years of college.

Scholastic Skills: Mechanical Engineer 98%, Locksmith 98%, Automotive Repairs 98%, Robot Mechanics 98%, Electrical Engineer 98%, Surveillance Systems 98%, Computer Repair 98%, Robot Electronics 98%.

Secondary Skills: First Aid 98%, Computer Operation 98%, Navigation 98%, Read Sensory Instruments 98%, Cook 98%, Forgery 98%, Wilderness Survival 98%, Running, Prowl 98%, Pilot Automobile 98%, W.P. Blunt, W.P. Sub-machinegun, W.P. Pistol.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Attacks per Melee: 8

Bonuses: +6 to damage, +12 to strike, +16 to parry, +17 to dodge, +6 to roll with punch, +12 to initiative, +3 to pull punch, paired weapons, body throw/flip (1D6 damage and the victim loses initiative and two attacks), entangle.

Other Bonuses: +4 versus poison/magic, +16% versus coma/death, +40% to charm and impress, +12% to skill percentages.

Occupation: Smith Six is the contact man for a group of vigilantes.

Appearance: Six dresses in conservative, black suits with sunglasses and gloves. His dark hair is streaked with gray. He has undergone plastic surgery to change his facial appearance.

Weapons: Six typically carries a modified .45 Colt Government Model 1911 (1D6x10 +1D6 per round) while on a mission.

Vehicles: Six usually rents anything he may need in the performance of his duties.

Body Armor: Six wears a modified bulletproof vest with an A.R. of 14 and an S.D.C. of 190. Any other armor needed can be requested from the Organization by him.

Salary: Six is paid 65,000 dollars a year for his role as a resource provider.

Parsifal

Robert MacGregor had always wanted to be a Marine in his family's tradition. He couldn't wait to meet the age restriction so that he could sign up. When finally old enough, he excelled in Basic Training at Parris Island.

MacGregor found that weapons and mechanical equipment came naturally to him like breathing. There was no weapon he could not use or equipment failure he could not fix. In addition, his strength improved under the constant physical conditioning he was undergoing.

A drill instructor stuck MacGregor with the name Parsifal, and it has followed him the rest of his career.

MacGregor spent the first two years of his career learning everything he could. Then he applied to Force Recon, the Marine elite force. He easily passed the additional training required of him. His natural inclination for weapons allowed him to take on the role of the unit armorer.

MacGregor eventually tired of having to depend on other people for support. He was going to allow his tour to run out, when he was assigned as a spotter for sniper missions in Central America. He reenlisted so that he could become a sniper in the war on drugs.

MacGregor was following a target when the enemy attacked an American Army unit in the jungle. He instantly began firing into the attackers in the confusion but could not prevent a slaughter. He hastily trailed the lone survivor of the group and caught up with him. He calmed down the engineer before deciding to trail his targets until he had an opportunity. The engineer came along.

MacGregor and the engineer followed the group back to a hidden drug factory. They came up with a plan. The two men caused the chemicals inside the place to explode with chemicals on the site. MacGregor made sure his target was dead before leaving the scene. The two men used MacGregor's extraction helicopter to escape the country.

MacGregor was reprimanded for disobeying orders to only kill the leader of the group. MacGregor resigned in disgust.

MacGregor began using his skills as a bounty hunter. He found quiet satisfaction at being his own man again. He also liked stopping criminals.

Then came the offer to lead Team One. MacGregor signed on after being guaranteed autonomy in the field.

Parsifal

Real Name: Robert MacGregor.

Aliases: Parsifal, Robert Royce, Marlin Rodentia.

Alignment: Aberrant. **Level:** 7th.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 26, M.A. 12, P.S. 28, P.P. 22, P.E. 14, P.B. 10, Spd. 30.

Hit Points: 44. **S.D.C.:** 65.

Height: 5 feet, 8 inches (1.7 m). **Weight:** 200 lbs (90 kg). **Age:** 35.

Disposition: Parsifal is a human weapon who will stop at nothing to complete any assignment. He is a ruthless adversary who will always try to inflict the maximum amount of damage upon his target. He works on his combat skills extensively between assignments. His team respects his decisions because he won't order them to do things he wouldn't do. On the other hand, the team also understands he will sacrifice them to accomplish the assignment if he has to do so. Only El Diablo is comfortable around his driven commander. The rest of the team avoids him when possible.

O.C.C.: Mutant Operator.

Major Abilities: Mechano-link, weapon structuring (increase/decrease weapon damage by 1D6 per level, increase/decrease armor S.D.C. by 1D6x10 +5 per level, +2 to strike and parry with ancient weapons, +4 with modern weapons. **Rifts note:** S.D.C. armor can be converted to one-half the S.D.C. number in M.D.C., or M.D.C. armor can be converted to twice the M.D.C. number in S.D.C.).

Minor Abilities: Extraordinary Mental Endurance, Extraordinary Physical Strength, Extraordinary Physical Prowess.

Unusual Physical Characteristic: Stocky.

O.C.C. Skills: Basic Math 98%, Electrical Engineer 98%, Mechanical Engineer 95%, Weapons Engineer 98%, Computer Repair 90%, Radio: Basic 98%, Read Sensory Equipment 98%, Pilot Automobile 98%, Pilot Hovercraft 98%, Pilot Robots and Power Armor 98%.

Other Skills: Robot Mechanics 85%, Locksmith 90%, Weapon Systems 95%, Boxing, Athletics, Climbing 85/65%, Literacy 65%, Bodybuilding, Demolitions 98%, Demolitions Disposal 98%, Pilot Trucks 98%, Pick Pockets 40%, Navigation 80%, Computer Operation 75%, Computer Programming 65%.

Secondary Skills: Wilderness Survival 65%, Chemistry 65%, Analytical Chemistry 60%, Paramedic 70%, Prowl 70%.

Combat Skill: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Attacks per Melee: 7.

Bonuses: +5 to strike, +9 to parry, +9 to dodge, +4 to roll with a punch, +15 to damage, critical strike on a natural 19-20, kick (1D6), +2 to strike with any ancient weapons, +4 with any modern weapon.

Other Bonuses: +4 versus Horror Factor, +6 versus psionics, can carry 100 x his P.S., can lift 200 x his P.S.

Appearance: Parsifal is a very muscular man with premature gray hair. He typically wears gray overalls, dark gray armor, face mask, and his personal arsenal on missions. The unit patch, a red silhouette of a rat in a red circle, is on the shoulder of the overalls.

Occupation: Parsifal is the leader of the Rat Squad.

Weapons: Parsifal's favorite weapon is a modified M-60 light machinegun (1D6x10 +4D6 per round.). He carries a small arsenal with him on every mission. Each weapon will be altered to do 7D6 more damage than usual.

Vehicles: He will use any vehicle appropriate for the mission.

Body Armor: Parsifal's body armor has an A.R. of 16 and an S.D.C. of 250.

Salary: Parsifal is paid 60,000 dollars per year by the Organization.

El Diablo and Manitou

Tony and Maria Jamieson were driving cross-country on their vacation. They had entered the New Mexican desert on the night of their deaths and rebirths.

The Jamiesons were traveling at night to avoid the heat of the day. Suddenly, blue strips of lightning marched along the ground. A pattern seemed visible and apparent to Tony. He stopped the car to take a closer look and pictures.

The Jamiesons climbed a nearby hill. Down below them, two hideous creatures were battling over a glowing design drawn in the ground. The couple were frozen by the sight. A stray energy bolt struck the hill, causing the ground to collapse under them. They slid into the pattern on the ground. Tony Jamieson suffered a column of energy ripping through his chest. Maria was torn apart by the magical forces. The magicians paused their combat at the sight. Then one fled with the other in pursuit.

Tony lay still for many hours. Blue energy altered his body as he lay there. He awakened with the touch of a new day. He had no memory of his life before his awakening. He investigated the nearby car, but found his appearance was radically different from the license he had found. He abandoned the automobile to start walking into the desert.

An invisible spirit joined him on his trek. After an introduction, the revived corpse and ghostly visitor discovered they had feelings for each other, even though they didn't remember each other before they met that day. They have been constant companions since their meeting.

Robert MacGregor found the pair using sightings from people who happened to notice the heavily scarred revenant. Some were calling the creature "El Diablo." MacGregor tracked them down and asked them to join his team. After much discussion, they did.

El Diablo

Real Name: El Diablo.

Alignment: Unprincipled. **Level:** 8th.

Attributes: I.Q. 22, M.E. 22, M.A. 19, P.S. 24, P.P. 25, P.E. 22, P.B. 2, Spd. 25. **Note:** El Diablo's attributes are considered supernatural.

Hit Points: 1300. **S.D.C.:** 6000. **P.P.E.:** 3000.

Horror Factor (optional): 12.

Height: 7 feet, 4 inches (2.2 m). **Weight:** 510 lbs (230 kg).

Disposition: El Diablo is a cheerful being, with a word of encouragement or a flip remark always on his lips. His cool head and imposing presence has earned him his place as the team's second in command. The only thing he seems to take seriously is combat, especially versus magic users, and his word of honor.

El Diablo can use his P.P.E. to fuel spells, but he cannot recover it. He instinctively knows that when he runs out of P.P.E., he will cease to exist. No one else knows this fact.

R.C.C.: Lybokja (see below), a demonic revenant.

Natural Abilities: Hellfire blast (1D6x10 with one hand, 2D6x10 with both hands), +12 to strike with the blast, burning even normally immune characters. He instinctively knows all common magic equal to his level. He regenerates 1D6x10 S.D.C./Hit Points per melee, and will even lost limbs. He does not age, fatigue, eat, sleep, or breathe. He is immune to normal toxins, and he can see the invisible.

R.C.C. Skills: Research 98%, History 98%, Computer Operation 98%, Basic Electronics 98%, Basic Mechanics 98%, First Aid 98%, W.P. Blunt (+ 3 to Strike and Parry), Prowl 98%, Athletics, Astronomy 98%, Pilot Airplane 90%, W.P. Pistol, Pilot Helicopter 72%, Pilot Automobile 80%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

Attacks per Melee: 9.

Bonuses: +7 to strike, +1 to block/tackle, +9 to parry, +9 to dodge, +4 to pull punch/roll with punch, snap kick (1D8), jump kick, entangle, paired weapons, leap attack, critical strike on a natural 19-20, 2D4 restrained punch, 3D6 regular punch, 6D6 power punch, +9 to damage.

Other Bonuses: +4 versus psionics, +55% to trust/intimidate, +4 versus poison/magic, +6 versus Horror Factor.

Appearance: El Diablo is a large, bald humanoid that appears to be covered with third degree burns and a wide, sharp-toothed smile. He usually wears jeans and a western style decorated shirt. Sunglasses hide the fire glowing in his eye sockets. He wears the unit insignia engraved on a large, silver belt buckle.

Occupation: El Diablo is a member of a group of covert vigilantes.

Vehicles: He uses whatever is needed for a mission.

Weapons: El Diablo uses his natural abilities, and a magic club that does 1D6x10 damage and ignores Armor Rating.

Body Armor: El Diablo does not wear any type of armor.

Salary: El Diablo earns 50,000 dollars a year, most of which he gives away to worthy charities. He may carry 1D6x1000 dollars as spending money.

Manitou

Real Name: Manitou.

Aliases: None.

Alignment: Scrupulous. **Level:** 8th.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 14, M.A. 9, P.S. 40, P.P. 33, P.E. NA, P.B. 6, Spd. 7/fly at 50 mph (80 km). **Note:** Manitou's physical characteristics only apply when she has created, or is inhabiting, a body.

Hit Points: 138. **S.D.C.:** Varies based on body — leaves and rags: 60, twigs: 170, dirt: 260, dirt and rock: 300, plastic and tin cans: 250, miscellaneous trash: 250, stuffed doll: 50, puppet: 75, mannequin: 120, stone statue: 200, animated mass: 1D6x100.

Height: Varies between 3 feet and 8 feet (.9-2.4 m). **Weight:** Varies with body.

Horror Factor (optional): 7.

I.S.P.: 180.

Disposition: Manitou is a subdued personality on the team. She rarely communicates with anyone other than El Diablo, or Parsifal during a mission. She is the team's scout and saboteur. She has been known to fly into a berserker fury if El Diablo is seriously hurt. She tends to target enemy psychics and magic users first in combat.

O.C.C.: Haunting Tectonic Entity.

Natural Abilities: Invisible, intangible, see the invisible, impervious to drugs and toxins, impervious to normal weapons, flight (50 mph/80 km), can create a body out of trash and rubble, can animate a mannequin or statue. She can draw on others' P.P.E. to power her own psionics. One P.P.E. point equals 4 I.S.P.

Special: Manitou can shape a body out of a solid mass of material like asphalt. The body always has an Armor Rating of 16 and 1D6x100 S.D.C.

Psionics: Manitou possesses the following abilities at eighth level: Telepathy (4), Telekinesis (varies), Empathic Transmission (6), Sixth Sense (2), See Aura (6), Mind Block (4), Detect Psionics (6).

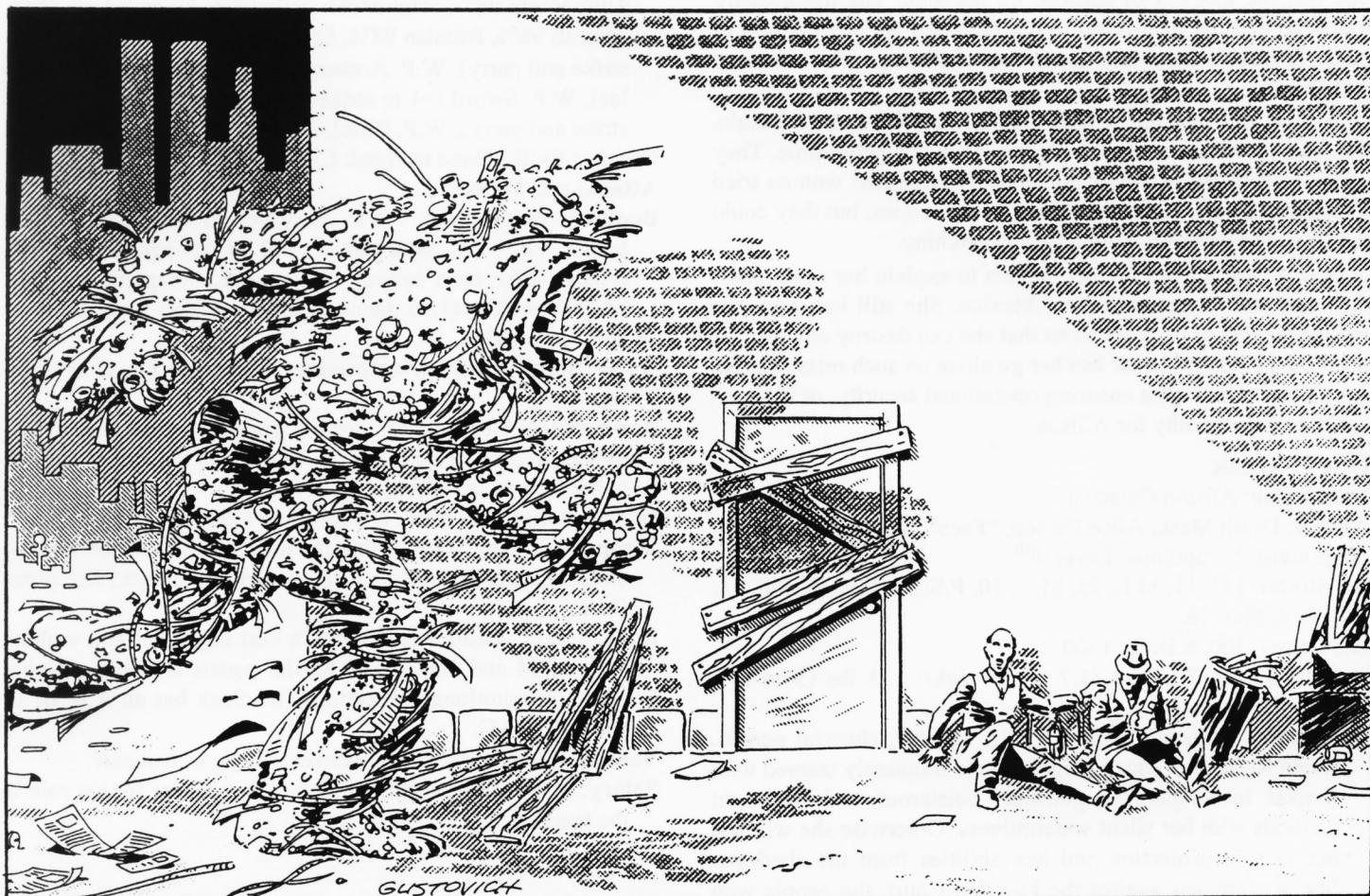
Skills: Radio: Satellite 98%, Astrophysics 98%, Laser Communications 98%, Chemistry 98%, Advanced Mathematics 98%, Paramedic 98%, Pathology 98%, Boxing, Read Sensory Equipment 98%, Computer Operation 98%, Navigation 98%, W.P. Pistol, Basic Mechanics 98%, Basic Electronics 98%, Pilot Automobile 98%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic with a created or animated body.

Attacks per Melee: 6.

Bonuses with a body: +25 to damage, +10 to strike, +13 to parry, +13 to dodge, +4 to roll with punch, +2 to pull punch, critical strike on a natural 18-20, kick (1D6), body flip/throw (does 1D6 and victim loses initiative and two attacks), entangle, paired weapons.

Other Bonuses: +6 versus Horror Factor.



Appearance: Manitou spends most of her time as an invisible, intangible globe. Her bodies are female in shape, with long strands where hair would be on a normal woman.

Occupation: Manitou is a member of a secret group of vigilantes.

Weapons: Manitou never uses anything but her natural abilities.

Vehicles: None.

Body Armor: She never uses armor.

Salary: Manitou is paid 50,000 dollars a year, but she gives that to El Diablo to give away.

Death Mask

Allison Carstairs had joined the Army reserve to get enough money to pay for college. She passed through basic training easily, and then returned home to Chicago upon graduation. She planned to enter a school near her home so that she could live with her parents.

One evening, Allison was abducted off the street while she was jogging. Two men forced her into the back of a van. They drove her to a portion of the underground city under Chicago, where she was held prisoner until the time was right. She was taken to a large chamber and chained to a wooden column. Allison underwent days of ritual torture as they applied a gold mask to her face. The mask was permanently affixed by a magic binding. Allison was taken to a room to recover after the ordeal. The mask should have forced Allison to be more compliant to orders given by the mask's creator. Instead, she resolved to escape her confinement and extract a measure of revenge.

Allison used the mask's abilities to escape from her captors. She had the element of surprise on her side. The mask easily overwhelmed the guards and other defenses her captors had in place. She made it out into the surface of Chicago with assassins on her trail.

Allison ran into the strange duo of Parsifal and El Diablo. The pair could not have come to the scene at a better time. They easily dispatched Allison's pursuers. The masked woman tried to lead them back to the rest of her new enemies, but they could not find the place even after days of searching.

Allison left a letter for her parents to explain her new condition, and she relocated to New Mexico. She still keeps an eye out for the rest of her captors so that she can destroy any of their operations. Parsifal never lets her go alone on such missions. No one knows if he is just ensuring operational security, or if he actually feels sympathy for Allison.

Death Mask

Real Name: Allison Carstairs.

Aliases: Death Mask, Alice Carson, "Face" Moran.

Alignment: Scrupulous. **Level:** 8th.

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 25, M.A. 10, P.S. 25, P.P. 18, P.E. 26, P.B. 4, Spd. 16.

Hit Points: 300. **S.D.C.:** 1300.

Height: 5 feet, 7 inches (1.7 m). **Weight:** 121 lbs (54.4 kg). **Age:** 25.

Disposition: Allison Carstairs was a friendly, cheerful person. Death Mask is a grim avenger. She is frequently teamed with Renkar to temper the goddess' boisterous and forthright methods with her silent watchfulness. Otherwise she will use her mask's projection and hex abilities from the shadows. She is merciless against the Faustian Court, the people who bonded her to her mask, in any dealings.

O.C.C.: Gold Mask Wielder.

Gold Mask Natural Abilities: It cannot be removed. It has an S.D.C. of 25,000 (1D6x5,000), and regenerates 1D6x100 every melee.

Gold Mask Psionics: The mask grants the following psionics without I.S.P. cost or conscious control of the wielder: Automatic Mind Block, See the Invisible, Alter Aura, Breathe Without Air, Impervious to Toxins and Drugs, Bio-Regeneration 1D6x10 per melee.

Other Gold Mask Powers: The mask allows the wielder to use two powers at will: Multiple Projection (This power allows the character to shoot the following one at a time at a target: ice, fire, water, stone, sonic booms, kinetic force, lightning, light, acid. All are 10D6 for damage and +3 to strike. Various effects can be found in the **Heroes Unlimited™** rule book), and Projectile Hexing. (This power allows the user to put a "hex" on a target, altering reality to cause something bad to happen to the victim. Examples include failing in an attack, tripping and falling, having a weapon jam, etc. Never anything horribly damaging in and of itself; the G.M. should use discretion with this power. First, the character must strike the target. The target must roll a natural 18 without bonuses to defeat the Projectile Hex. If the target cannot save, the hex thrower can choose the outcome 33% of the time; roll percentiles. Any roll over 33%, and the outcome is still bad for the target. It's just not what the character wanted.)

Skills of Note: Radio: Basic 98%, Radio: Scramblers 98%, Detect Ambush 98%, Detect Concealment 98%, Tracking 98%, Land Navigation 98%, Weapon Systems 98%, Read Sensory Equipment 98%, Pilot Jet Pack 98%, Pilot Tank 98%, Pilot Automobile 98%, Pilot Motorcycle 98%, Demon Lore 98%, Spanish 98%, Russian 98%, Chinese 98%, W.P. Blunt (+2 to strike and parry), W.P. Archery (+2 to strike, 4 shots per melee), W.P. Sword (+1 to strike and parry), W.P. Chain (+1 to strike and parry), W.P. Pistol.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Expert.

Attacks per Melee: 5.

Bonuses: +4 to strike, +5 to parry, +5 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with punch, +10 to damage, kick (1D6), critical strike on a natural 18-20, paired weapons, entangle, body throw/flip (1D6 damage, and the victim loses initiative and 2 attacks).

Other Bonuses: +5 versus psionics, +6 versus magic and poison.

Appearance: Death Mask wears a gray suit, cloak, scarf, hat, gloves, and boots on missions. She wears the unit symbol as collar tabs on her cloak.

Occupation: Death Mask is a full-time vigilante.

Weapons: Death Mask primarily uses the powers of her enchanted mask. She also carries a modified Beretta 92F pistol (9D6).

Body Armor: Death Mask wears a vest under her suit with an A.R. of 14 and 200 S.D.C. Kevlar panels are sewn into her cloak for additional protection. The cloak has an A.R. of 12 and 150 S.D.C.

Vehicle: Death Mask uses whatever vehicle is available.

Salary: Death Mask is paid 40,000 dollars a year for her role in the team.

Renkar

Athena Thermopolous grew up in a series of foster homes in New York City. She was always a little stronger and faster than the other kids. That made her a natural bully and arrogant beyond belief. When the other kids fled from her, she took that as proof of her natural superiority.

Athena ran away from her latest home on her sixteenth birthday. She felt a call to travel north, away from the city. She crossed into Canada and kept going. The wilderness awakened something in her blood. Psionics and magic awoke in her as she learned how to live off the land. That was forty years ago.

When Athena felt she had learned enough about her new abilities, she returned to her childhood home. She was immediately accosted by muggers when she arrived at her destination. She demonstrated her intolerance for others with bone breaking zeal. Athena decided to dispense street justice to the vermin she saw everywhere.

Athena's activities drew the attention of the local crime lord, Hermes Thanatos. He decided this upstart was to be punished for her interference, and challenged Athena to a private contest. The arrogant Goddess took up the gauntlet.

The two met in a street fighting arena under New York. Athena discovered that Thanatos had more power and control than she did, and realized he was going to kill her. She set a fire and used the smoke to escape her predicament. It was her first serious defeat, and a blow to her ego.

Athena and Thanatos engaged in a secret war for several months. She acquired her magic sword and armor during this time from an ambush of one of his operations. Eventually she would have been hunted down and killed by Thanatos' group. Only fate and unseen hands changed the outcome.

Athena's plight caught the eye of several people interested in the havoc she was causing among the city's criminals. One of them passed the information back to Geiger. The fledgling Team One spotted a potential recruit. Parsifal located Athena in her place in Central Park. He proposed a deal where she would come work for Team One in exchange for his dealing permanently with Hermes Thanatos. She agreed to the deal.

Yet, she wondered, if she couldn't deal with Thanatos, how would this gunman do it?

Parsifal sent a challenge to Thanatos to meet in combat to decide Athena's fate. He selected the street fighting arena as the place. Thanatos agreed to the place, eager to be rid of his antagonist. Parsifal "prepared" the arena before the meeting. When the two met, Parsifal used explosives to kill Thanatos with a ton of concrete and steel.

Athena Thermopolous has been on Team One ever since, with the name Renkar.

Renkar

Real Name: Athena Thermopolous.

Aliases: Renkar, Tina Cook.

Alignment: Aberrant. **Level:** 8th.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 18, M.A. 11, P.S. 44, P.P. 17, P.E. 19, P.B. 25, Spd. 19. **Note:** All attributes are considered supernatural.

Hit Points: 57. **S.D.C.:** 265.

P.P.E.: 256. **I.S.P.:** 110.

Horror/Awe Factor (optional): 9.

Height: 6 feet, 1 inch (1.8 m). **Weight:** 200 lbs (90 kg). **Age:** 57.

Disposition: Renkar is arrogant and disdainful to anyone she perceives is at a lower level of physical power than she possesses. She has learned a grudging respect for Parsifal and El Diablo, and tolerates her frequent partner, Death Mask. Only her oath keeps her from dashing Dust Dervish's brain out of his skull. She ignores everyone else to the best of her ability. Except for Parsifal, she is the most ruthless team member in combat. She abides by her word of honor in letter, if not spirit.

O.C.C.: Godling.

Natural Abilities: See the invisible, resistant to drugs and poisons (one-half duration, damage, effect), nightvision (200 feet/61 meters), resistant to fire and cold (one-half damage), regenerates 1D6x5 S.D.C. per minute (4 melees).

Magic: Renkar knows all spells between level one and eight.

Psionics: Renkar possesses all the sensitive psionics, and five super psionic powers: Pyrokinesis (varies), Electrokinetics (varies), Telekinesis: Super (10+), Telekinetic Force Field (30), and Hydrokinesis (varies). All abilities are at eighth level.

O.C.C. Skills: Spanish 98%, English 98%, Greek 98%, German 98%, French 98%, Basic Math 98%, Demon Lore 98%, Land Navigation 98%, W.P. Sword, W.P. Pistol, W.P. Heavy.

Other Skills: W.P. Rifle, Wilderness Survival 98%, Detect Ambush 98%, Detect Concealment 98%, Pilot Motorcycle 98%, Tracking 98%, Acrobatics (all skills are at 98%), Boxing, Running, Body Building, Writing 98%.

Secondary Skills: Track Animals 98%, Hunting, Preserve Food 98%, Identify Plants and Fruits 98%, Carpentry 98%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

Attacks per Melee: 9 physical or psionic, 4 magical.

Bonuses: +29 to damage, +4 to strike, +8 to parry, +8 to dodge, +4 to initiative, paired weapons, entangle, jump kick, leap attack, +1 to body block/tackle, +3 to pull punch, +8 to roll with punch, kick (1D8), critical strike on a natural 18-20.

Other Bonuses: +2 versus poison, +4 versus magic, +8% versus coma/death, 75% to charm/impress, +6 versus Horror Factor, +2 versus psionics. Her base saving throw versus psionics is a 10.

Appearance: Renkar is a tall, beautiful brunette who keeps her long hair braided. She usually wears Western style clothes with the unit patch on the shoulder of the shirts.

Occupation: Renkar is a full-time member of a secret vigilante group.

Weapons: Renkar uses two weapons primarily; a Spas-12 semi-automatic shotgun (12D6 with shot, 13D6 with solid slugs), and a minor magical sword (1D6x10, +6 to strike, +4 to parry, returns when thrown, 5D6 energy bolt that can be fired twice per melee), which she frequently carries. Sometimes Renkar will use something heavier like a Vulcan Gatling gun, depending on the mission.

Vehicles: Renkar keeps a motorcycle at the facility to ride in the desert so that she can commune with nature.

Body Armor: Renkar possesses a suit of magic armor she liberated from Hermes Thanatos. The armor has an A.R. of 18 and 900 S.D.C., and is as light as cloth. She typically uses this armor when expecting heavy combat.

Otherwise she uses her natural magic and psionics.

Salary: Renkar is paid 30,000 dollars a year. Additionally, she has stolen almost \$300,000 from Thanatos' drug dealers and other enterprises.

Dust Dervish

Winston Redding has always been able to spin at high velocity. He just became more powerful as he grew older. Redding was a classic bully who became worse as he aged. The whole town learned to fear the volatile speedster and his ability to create miniature tornadoes.

An investigator found Redding's fiefdom by accident while on vacation. He didn't know exactly what was going on, but realized the whole town was living in fear. He reported his assessment by calling a number he had been given. The voice on the other end had ordered him to leave the situation and get back on the road.

Team One arrived in the next town the next day. Parsifal sent Manitou in as a scout and advance element. A few hours of invisible snooping and Manitou had a clear picture of everything. Parsifal requested an energy weapon to use against Redding. He went into town and picked a fight. Redding took the bait. One particle blast later and Redding was on his way to the facility. The town never missed him.

Redding was given a choice. He could go to work for the Organization, or he could feed the worms. Redding decided to be a team player.

Dust Dervish

Real Name: Winston Redding.

Aliases: Dust Dervish, Eric Reid, "Tornado" Thompson, Bill Barker.

Alignment: Miscreant. **Level:** 8th.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 12, M.A. 11, P.S. 33, P.P. 30, P.E. 27, P.B. 16, Spd. 53/340 RPM.

Hit Points: 57. **S.D.C.:** 102.

Height: 5 feet, 8 inches (1.7 m). **Weight:** 180 lbs (81 kg). **Age:** 28.

Disposition: Dust Dervish thinks of himself as better than anyone else. Men and women are to follow his commands or suffer. This attitude coupled with Dust Dervish's short temper has caused a lot of friction among the team and the facility's support staff. Making the situation worse is the fact that Redding is prone to making bad decisions in combat, which has made him something of a laughingstock. This drives him to prove himself, which leads to more bad decisions, which leads to more laughter at his expense.

The only thing that has kept Dust Dervish from betraying the others on the team is the certain knowledge that any survivors would hunt him down like a rabid animal.

O.C.C.: Mutant.

Major Ability: Spin at High Velocity.

Minor Abilities: Healing Factor, Extraordinary Physical Strength, and Extraordinary Physical Prowess.

Unusual Physical Characteristic: Ambidextrous.

Level of Education: One year of community college.

Scholastic Skills: Computer Operation 98%, Advanced Mathematics 98%, Analytical Chemistry 98%, Biology 98%, Botany 98%, Mechanical Engineering 98%, Locksmith 98%, Computer Repair 98%, Robot Mechanics 98%.

Secondary Skills: General Athletics, Body Building, Climbing 98%/95%, Running, Wilderness Survival 98%, First Aid 98%, Land Navigation 98%, W.P. Blunt (+1 to strike and parry).

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

Attacks per Melee: 7.

Bonuses: +18 (+24 spinning) to damage, +10 (+11 spinning) to strike, +12 (+13 spinning) to parry, +12 (+14 spinning) to dodge, +3 to initiative while spinning, +1 body block, +3 to pull punch, +4 to roll with punch, kick (1D8), jump kick, entangle, paired weapons, leap attack, critical strike on a natural 18-20.

Other Bonuses: +9 versus poison, +9 versus magic, +44% versus coma/death, +3 versus psionics, automatic sense of balance 88%, fire/cold/drugs/toxins only inflict one-half normal damage, regenerates 3 S.D.C. every ten minutes and one Hit Point every 15 minutes, can super regenerate 2D6 Hit Points/S.D.C. twice in a 24 hour period, can carry 100 times his P.S., can lift 200 times his P.S.

Appearance: Dust Dervish is a heavysset man of average height. He wears a yellow and brown costume on missions. Three black arrows cross the torso of the costume diagonally. He is the only team member who does not wear the red rat unit patch.

Occupation: Dust Dervish is a full-time member of a secret vigilante squad, whether he wants to be or not.

Weapons: Dust Dervish likes to use two sets of vibrating claws (1D6x10 plus P.S. bonuses) built into his gloves. The claws retract into the gauntlets of the gloves.

Vehicles: Dust Dervish is not allowed to drive.

Body Armor: Dust Dervish does not wear body armor. He says it slows him down.

Salary: Dust Dervish is paid 20,000 dollars a year. He is the lowest paid member on the team. It's a fact he constantly gripes about.

Defender

James Overby, Defender, is the latest hero in a family of heroes descended from the court of King James I. An Overby has fought in every war involving Great Britain from that time to the modern day. James Overby is no exception, having joined the Royal Marines when he reached the sign up age. He has won numerous medals and a knighthood for his exploits.

Overby was summoned home by his father after many years away. The elder Overby was on his deathbed and had one special bequest to give to his son in person. The gift was a circular shield that had been in the family for centuries. Overby was told to use the power of the shield to uphold the common good as his forefathers had done.

After his father had passed away, Overby did some research. He discovered two previous users of the shield. One was definitely his father. Overby recognized him, even in a mask, from an old photo. Overby altered some body armor to resemble the costume worn by his father. Then he began a solo career to fulfill his father's dying wish.

Defender met the Rat Squad on a solo investigation after being seriously wounded. He took El Diablo's offer to join, even though he is not fond of their methods or some of the members. He is hoping to temper the team's ruthlessness with alternate

methods of attack. He is having success in minor ways, and he hopes to do better.

Defender

Real Name: Sir James Overby.

Aliases: Defender, Jimmy Overton.

Alignment: Scrupulous. **Level:** 4th.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 9/32, M.A. 12, P.S. 26, P.P. 19/23, P.E. 19, P.B. 11, Spd. 22. **Note:** The secondary numbers are Defender's attributes after assuming his heroic identity.

Hit Points: 32. **S.D.C.:** 90/100.

Height: 5 feet, 11 inches (1.8 m). **Weight:** 175 lbs (78.7 kg). **Age:** 24.

Disposition: Defender is courteous, loyal, kind, and honest. It bothers him that his chosen teammates are, for the most part, as ruthless as they are. The only ones he feels completely comfortable with are the inhuman El Diablo and Manitou. Defender also feels guilty for wishing harm on his regular partner, Dust Dervish. The two men hate each other. He hopes something will happen to modify this attitude, though he doesn't see his feelings changing anytime soon.

O.C.C.: Enchanted Object User.

Major Abilities: Spirit Force Control: Create Force Field power based on mental endurance (3200), 50 mph (80 km) Flight, 8D6 (1D6 per every 2 M.E. points above 16) Force Bolt.

Minor Abilities: Extraordinary M.E.

Educational Level: Trade School.

Scholastic Skills: Boxing, Wrestling, Gymnastics, Acrobatics (all skills but Prowl are at 98%), Pilot Tank 86%, Demolitions 92%, Demolitions Disposal 92%, Read Sensory Equipment 80%.

Secondary Skills: Pilot Automobile 96%, W.P. Pistol, First Aid 70%, Wilderness Survival 60%, Athletics, Body Building, Running, Climbing 82/50%, Escape Artist 40%, Pick Locks 45%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Attacks per Melee: 5.

Bonuses: +11 to damage, +2/4 to strike, +7/9 to parry and dodge, +1 to body block, kick (1D6), +2 to pull punch, +10 to roll with punch.

Other Bonuses: +2 versus poison, +2/4 versus magic, and +8 versus psionics only when using his shield.

Appearance: James Overby dresses casually in jogging suits, or loose shirts and pants. Defender wears brown and dark green, hardened body armor (A.R. 18, S.D.C. 200) which does not restrict his movements in combat. The unit patch is displayed prominently on the breastplate of the armor. In either case, he always has his shield close at hand.

Occupation: James Overby is a solo vigilante and a member of a secret strike force.

Weapons: Defender only uses the powers granted by his magic shield and his own natural abilities.

Body Armor: Defender wears his armored costume on missions. He typically wears a bulletproof vest (A.R. 14, S.D.C. 120) off duty.

Vehicle: Defender uses his own Jaguar when operating solo.

Salary: Defender has a small trust fund from his father which gives him 1000 dollars a month. He is paid 30,000 dollars a year by the Organization.

Team Two: The Dark Riders

The Dark Riders consist of **Guinevere** — team leader and Mind Melter, **La Una Mysteria** — Mystic, **Flag** — super patriot, **Fire Devil** — demonic Mutant, **Miss Power** — Duo-Sider, **Kenshi** — Weapons Expert. **Sir Thomas Channing** acts as their field contact man.

The team usually assaults a target together, with Fire Devil acting as scout. Kenshi is usually used as a reserve and a sniper. Guinevere and La Una Mysteria act as artillery with their long-range psionics and magic. Flag and Miss Power are the Riders' close assault team.

Sir Thomas Channing

Sir Thomas Channing started his long career as simply Tom Channing on the eve of World War II. He had always had accurate hunches. Other things also happened around him when he was a child. On the day before the Battle of Britain, Channing was taking a last tour of his father's estate before joining the Royal Navy. He stumbled into an unfamiliar glade under peaceful trees.

A black unicorn appeared on the other side of the glade and approached the young man slowly. Channing was in too much awe at the sight of the beautiful creature to run away.

"Do you wish to uphold the good?" the creature asked, fire dancing in its eyes.

"Yes," Channing said without stopping to think. He was more than half convinced he was hallucinating.

"Receive my blessing," said the unicorn. A flash of light erupted from the creature's horn and struck Channing in the chest. Awful pain and heat became his world for precious moments. The mystical place faded away as Channing pulled himself together.

Channing was left with a triangular scar on his chest. He dragged himself back to his father's mansion to recover. The next morning, Channing felt better than he ever had. He went to catch his train to report for duty. He did not know the powers he possessed at the time. He found out later.

The black unicorn had given him enormous psionic potential. Channing used his powers to protect himself at sea on his boat, and to flush out saboteurs and spies on leave. He fashioned a secret identity behind the mask of the Unicorn to help preserve his privacy as well as and Guinevere Barrington's, his fiancée. During this time, he met and worked with an American adventurer named Geiger and his aide, Vincent Herald.

Many years later, the same Vincent Herald approached the now retired Sir Thomas Channing to be a contact for a new strike force. Channing agreed out of consideration for his daughter, Guinevere, who was operating as a lone hero. He took the position, asking for a secondary base to be built under his estate away from the main facility. Herald agreed to the condition.

That was the beginning of the Dark Riders.

Sir Thomas Channing

Real Name: Sir Thomas Channing.

Aliases: Tom Caine, The Unicorn.

Alignment: Scrupulous. **Level:** 20th.

Attributes: I.Q. 16, M.E. 30, M.A. 20, P.S. 30, P.P. 30, P.E. 30, P.B. 18, Spd. 24.

Hit Points: 97. **S.D.C.:** 89. **I.S.P.:** 359.

Height: 5 feet, 10 inches (1.8 m). **Weight:** 155 lbs (69.7 m).
Age: 71.

Disposition: Sir Thomas Channing is never surprised. The Unicorn's blessing has preserved him from age to some degree, and has also made him one of the most powerful psionics in the world. He looks on the Dark Riders as an adopted family and tries to ensure they are as well insulated from danger as possible without actually participating in missions. Occasionally, he has actually taken it upon himself to do solo work in the field. Everyone disapproves of him doing this, but no one knows how to tell him not to do that kind of thing.

O.C.C.: Mind Melter.

Psionics: Alter Aura (2), See Aura (6), Sixth Sense (2), Mind Block (4), Bio-Regeneration (Lesser; 6), Healing Touch (6), Induce Sleep (4), Telekinesis (varies), Impervious to Fire (4), Telekinetic Acceleration Attack (10-20), Presence Sense (4), Sense Evil (2), Object Read (6), Mind Bolt (6 I.S.P. per every 1D6 points of damage), Telekinetic Force Field (30), Telekinesis: Super (10+), Telepathy (4), Astral Projection (8), Intuitive Combat (10), Bio-Regeneration (Super) (20), See the Invisible (4), Impervious to Cold (2), Impervious to Poison (4), Psionic Invisibility (10), Psi-Sword (30), Psi-Shield (30), Mind Block Auto Defense (special), Psychic Omni Sight (15), Psychic Surgery (14), Exorcism (10), Ectoplasm (Varies), Ectoplasmic Disguise (12), Nightvision (4), Deaden Pain (4), Increased Healing (10), Radiate Horror Factor (8), Telemechanics (10), Telemechanic Mental Operation (12), Telemechanic Paralysis (20), Telemechanic Possession (50), Psychic Body Field (30), Pyrokinesis (varies), Electrokinetics (varies), Hydrokinesis (varies), Bio-Manipulation (10), Clairvoyance (4), Sense Dimensional Anomaly (4), Read Dimensional Portal (6), Sense Time (2), Speed Reading (2), Total Recall (2), Telekinetic Lift (6), Telekinetic Leap (8), Telekinetic Punch (6), Telekinetic Push (4), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Mentally Possess Others (30), Group Mind Block (22).

Educational Level: Military Specialist.

Scholastic Skills: Running, Climbing, Military Etiquette, Basic Radio, W.P. Rifle, Basic Electronics, Basic Mechanics, Demolitions, Demolitions Disposal, Underwater Demolitions, Detect Ambush, Intelligence, Wilderness Survival, Tracking, Sniper, W.P. Pistol, W.P. Sub-machinegun, W.P. Heavy Weapons, Boxing, Gymnastics, Acrobatics, Wrestling. All skills are at 98%.

Secondary Skills: Athletics, W.P. Sword (+5 to strike and parry), W.P. Paired Weapons (Sword), Swimming 98%, German 98%, French 98%, Prowl 98%, Cooking 98%, W.P. Archery and Targeting (can shoot 8 times a melee for 320 feet/97.5 meters with a +6 to strike), Pilot Motorcycle 98%, Pilot Truck 98%, Pick Locks 98%, Body Building, Astronomy 50%, Research 75%, General Repair/Maintenance 50%, Carpentry 40%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

Attacks per Melee: 8 physical, 4 psionic.

Bonuses: +19 to damage, +11 to strike, +16 to parry, +16 to dodge, +10 to roll with punch, automatic knockout on a natural 20, +5 to pull punch, +6 to initiative, +5 to disarm, all jump kicks, tripping hook kick, wheel kick, roundhouse kick, snap kick, paired weapons, critical strike on a natural 18-20, leap attack, body flip, KO/stun on a natural 18-20, death blow.

Other Bonuses: +2% to skill percentages, +8 versus psionics, +13 versus insanity, +60% to trust/intimidate, +8 versus magic, +30% versus coma/death, 40% to charm and impress, +4 versus possession, +10 versus Horror Factor, +1 versus mind control, +1 versus magical illusions.

Special: Sir Thomas also possesses the Unicorn's Blessing. This means that his normally invisible powers are plainly visible to the naked eye. However, all I.S.P. use is divided by 10. (Example: Sir Thomas uses a Mind Bolt on an unlucky villain. At full power, he could fire off a 59D6 Mind Bolt, costing 354 of his 359 total I.S.P. points. Because of the Unicorn's blessing, the I.S.P. cost is divided by 10, so that attack would only cost him 36 I.S.P., rounding up.) I.S.P. is recovered 10 times faster than normal. Additionally, Sir Thomas gains 1D6 to divide amongst his attributes every level.

Appearance: Sir Thomas Channing is a slender man with white hair. He appears to be 20 years younger than his actual age. He wears whatever is appropriate for the occasion.

Occupation: Sir Thomas is a retired soldier, statesman, and adventurer. He is the contact and resource man for Team Two.

Weapons: Sir Thomas rarely uses any weapons, preferring his natural psionics and skills.

Vehicles: Sir Thomas owns a small fleet of personal vehicles but rarely leaves his estate.

Body Armor: Sir Thomas does not wear body armor.

Salary: The Channing Estate reaps a 10 million dollar a year profit from various holdings. Consequently, Sir Thomas anonymously gives his salary to worthy charities.

Guinevere

Guinevere Channing, like her father before her, was going to leave her childhood home for the outside world of a university, such as Oxford. She decided to have one last look around the estate before she left for good. She stumbled upon a peaceful grove of trees she had never seen before. A large, black unicorn trotted up to her.

"Will you accept my blessing?" the unicorn asked Guinevere.

"Yes," said Guinevere.

A flash of light struck her, awakening her latent abilities just as it did her father those many years ago.

Guinevere went away to school without telling her parents what had happened. She had felt overprotected at home, and this was exciting and new to her. Her new abilities allowed her to earn a Master's degree at school. She also crafted a heroic identity as the Gold Unicorn. Sir Thomas instantly knew what had happened when he saw news accounts of the new heroine. He said nothing about it. He knew he could not dissuade her from her choice.

Vincent Herald approached Sir Thomas on behalf of the Geiger Organization about the time of Guinevere's graduation. Sir

Thomas was asked to pick out members for the Organization's second response team. Sir Thomas asked Guinevere to assist him in his recruiting drive. Guinevere agreed, personally select-



ing Team Two's members from reports provided by Herald's nascent support staff. She even went to gather the recruits in person.

Guinevere was selected as team leader, not by her father or Herald, but by the people she had gone to recruit for the strike force. She has earned that trust many times over with her cool head and ability to reverse any setback.

Guinevere

Real Name: Guinevere Channing.

Aliases: Guin Caine, Gold Unicorn, Chance.

Alignment: Scrupulous. **Level:** 10th.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 21, M.A. 15, P.S. 24, P.P. 26, P.E. 20, P.B. 14, Spd. 32.

Hit Points: 62. **S.D.C.:** 84. **I.S.P.:** 185.

Height: 5 feet, 5 inches (1.65 m). **Weight:** 120 lbs (54 kg). **Age:** 28.

Disposition: Guinevere is cool under pressure. She makes up her lack of formal training with an instinctive grasp of tactics and the knowledge of her team's capabilities. She values quiet stealth to accomplish her missions' objectives. She is looked upon with respect for this attitude. Guinevere is also the team medic due to her early concentration on healing psionics, and she tries not to kill her opponents. The other Dark Riders try to follow this guideline when possible. Otherwise, they have varying feelings on the subject.

O.C.C.: Mind Melter.

Psionics: Alter Aura (2), See Aura (6), Sixth Sense (2), Mind Block (4), Deaden Pain (4), Healing Touch (6), Increased Healing (10), Resist Fatigue (4), Resist Hunger (2), Resist Thirst (6), Speed Reading (2), Total Recall (2), Object Read (6), Bio-Regeneration (Super) (20), Psychic Omni-Sight (15), Bio-Manipulation (10), Psychic Surgery (14), Psychic Diagnosis (4), Induce Sleep (4), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Detect Psionics (6), Exorcism (10), Psychic Purification (8), Psychosomatic Disease (30), Pyrokinesis (varies), Hydrokinesis (varies), Ectoplasm (varies), Ectoplasmic Disguise (12), Telekinesis (Lesser; varies), Telekinesis (Super) (10+), Impervious to Fire (4), Impervious to Cold (2), Impervious to Poison (4), Astral Projection (8), Intuitive Combat (10), See the Invisible (4), Electrokinetics (varies), Telemechanics (10).

Educational Level: Master's Degree.

Scholastic Skills: Biology 98%, Chemistry 98%, Pathology 98%, Medical Doctor 98%, Computer Operation 98%, Advanced Mathematics 98%, Botany 98%, Anthropology 98%, Archeology 95%, Paired Weapons, W.P. Sword (+3 to strike and parry), W.P. Blunt (+3 to strike and parry), W.P. Archery and Targeting (+200 feet/61 meters, +1 to parry, +4 to strike, 7 shots), Boxing, Athletics, Gymnastics, Acrobatics (all Gymnastics and Acrobatics secondary skills are at 98%).

Secondary Skills: Radio: Basic 95%, Basic Electronics 80%, Basic Mechanics 80%, Auto Mechanics 75%, Wilderness Survival 80%, Running, Swimming 98%, Climbing 90/80%, Body Building, Pilot Motorboat 85%, Pilot Truck 56%, Land Navigation 52%, Carpentry 30%, Boat Building 40%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Expert.

Attacks per Melee: 6 physical, 3 psionic.

Bonuses: +12 to damage, +8 to strike, +12 to parry, +12 to dodge, +8 to roll with punch, +4 to pull punch, automatic knockout on a natural 20, critical strike on a natural 18-20, body flip/throw, +2 on initiative, kick (2D4), axe kick, snap kick, tripping hook kick, +2 to disarm.

Other Bonuses: +3 versus psionics, +4 versus insanity, +3 versus magic/poison, +10% versus coma/death.

Special: Guinevere possesses the Unicorn's Blessing. Her invisible psionic powers are plainly visible, and all I.S.P. use is divided by 10. Recovers I.S.P. 10 times as fast as normal, +1D6 to her attributes per level.

Appearance: Guinevere is a striking woman with long, blond hair slowly turning white. She wears a black and gold armored costume and golden helmet on missions. Her personal symbol, a black silhouette of a unicorn's head, has become the team symbol just as the furious rat is for Team One.

Occupation: Guinevere is the field commander for the Dark Riders.

Weapons: Guinevere carries an expanding baton (1D6), a pair of swords (3D6 each), her medic kit, and a bow and a quiver of trick arrows (G.M.'s choice).

Vehicles: Guinevere has access to her father's fleet of cars as well as whatever the Organization can supply.

Body Armor: Guinevere's costume is armored. The armor has an A.R. of 14 and 200 S.D.C.

Salary: Guinevere is paid 60,000 per year as the field commander of the Dark Riders.

La Una Mysteria

Maria Vasquez was born, and lived most of her life, in the jungles along a border in Venezuela. The area was a natural route for contraband smuggling. Maria learned to defend herself at an early age, as her village suffered numerous attacks from the various factions fighting in the countryside.

Maria began raiding the smugglers when she felt it was time to stand up to the evil ones. She discovered she had a natural gift for her chosen occupation. Many of her enemies suffered huge losses from her activities, and she became bolder with every success.

Eventually Maria picked the wrong time for a raid and was wounded severely. She made it into the surrounding jungle before collapsing. She spent weeks in a coma from the almost lethal bullet. Eventually she awakened.

A shaman named Juanita Varela had found her where she had fallen. She had nursed Maria back to health. Maria found she had acquired a new sense of the world around her from her near death experience. She underwent training under Juanita Varela in her new talents. At the end of her training, Juanita gave Maria a ceremonial robe and hooded cloak. The area residents named their new heroine La Una Mysteria when tales of her exploits began to circulate.

Guinevere found out about Maria Vasquez's new public identity through a computer search of possible candidates for Geiger's Team Two. La Una Mysteria's mystical abilities would match well with her own psionics. Guinevere air-dropped into the jungles of Venezuela to look for and recruit the Mystic.

Guinevere's arrival coincided with a massive search being conducted by the drug barons for La Una Mysteria. The two heroes met in the middle of this manhunt. After comparing notes, Maria Vasquez agreed to be a founding member of the Dark Riders.

She still returns to her home occasionally to remind her countrymen she still fights for them.

La Una Mysteria

Real Name: Maria Vasquez.

Aliases: La Una Mysteria, The Mysterious One, Maggie Johansson.

Alignment: Scrupulous. **Level:** 8th.

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 21, M.A. 11, P.S. 15, P.P. 14, P.E. 16, P.B. 10, Spd. 21.

Hit Points: 47. **S.D.C.:** 50. **P.P.E.:** 143. **I.S.P.:** 84.

Height: 5 feet, 8 inches (1.7 m). **Weight:** 135 lbs (60.7 kg).

Age: 27.

Disposition: Maria Vasquez displays two different personalities. Her "Maria" side is sunny and personable. She is given to wearing bright colors. On the other hand, the "La Una" side is dark and grim. The others think this is a bit schizophrenic since each side talks about the other in third person. Maria attributes it to the influence of her teacher, Juanita Varela.

Maria targets opposition psionics and magic users on missions. She also stays in the background whenever possible. This allows her to infiltrate the enemy more easily.

O.C.C.: Mystic.

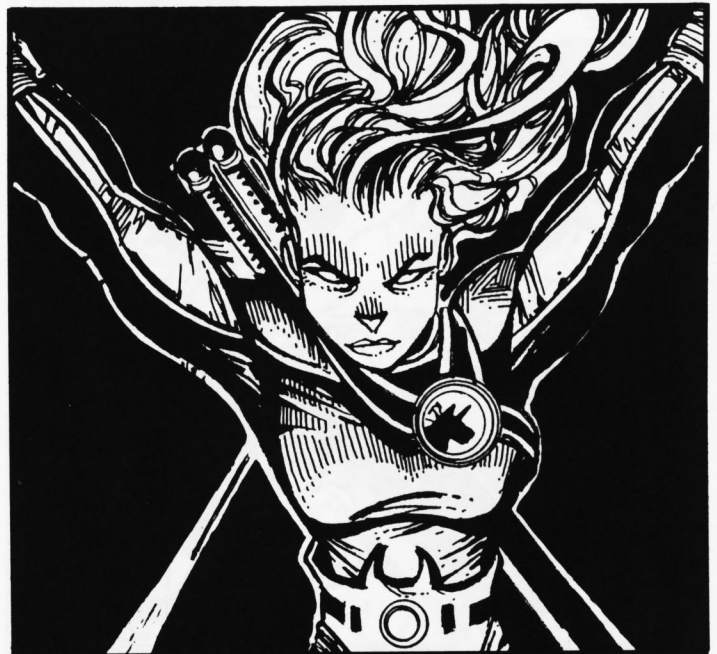
O.C.C. Abilities: Sense the supernatural at a range of 380 feet (116 meters), sense possession/recognize enchantment at 90%, open oneself up to the supernatural (90% invisibility with a +8 versus psionics and a +4 versus magic).

Psionics: Clairvoyance (4), Sixth Sense (2), Exorcism (10), Astral Projection (8), Object Read (6), Presence Sense (4), Bio-Regeneration: Self (6), Healing Touch (6), Psi-Sword (30).

Magic: Blinding Flash (1), See the Invisible (4), Chameleon (6), Globe of Daylight (2), Levitation (5), Fear (5), Energy Bolt (5), Negate Poison (5), Armor of Ithan (10), Breathe Without Air (5), Shadow Meld (10), Fire Bolt (7), Life Drain (25), Multiple Image (7), Luck Curse (40), Teleport: Lesser (15), Energy Disruption (12), Oracle (30), Heal Wounds (10), Words of Truth (15), Invisibility: Superior (20), Negate Magic (30), Fly as an Eagle (25).

Educational Level: Military Specialist.

Scholastic Skills: Running, Climbing 98%/90%, Military Etiquette 95%, Radio: Basic 98%, W.P. Rifle, Detect Ambush



90%, Intelligence 84%, Wilderness Survival 90%, Tracking 85%, Sniper, Detect Concealment 80%, Disguise 80%, Pick Locks 85%, Escape Artist 85%, W.P. Pistol, W.P. Sub-machinegun, W.P. Heavy Weapons, Land Navigation 78%, Identify Plants and Fruits 75%, Preserve Food 75%, Track Animals 70%, Skin and Prepare Animal Hides 80%.

Secondary Skills: Prowl 65%, Athletics, Body Building, Cooking 75%, English 90%, Basic Electronics 70%, W.P. Archery and Targeting (+40 feet/12.2 meters to distance, +1 to strike and parry, can shoot 4 times per melee), Carpentry 35%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

Attacks per Melee: 5 physical or psionic, or 2 spells.

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +4 to parry, +4 to dodge, +2 to disarm, +2 to initiative, +4 to roll with punch, +3 to pull punch, kick (2D4), all jump kicks, roundhouse kick (3D6), tripping leg hook, backward sweep, wheel kick (2D6), leap attack, paired weapons, critical strike on a natural 18-20.

Other Bonuses: +3 versus psionics (only needs a 10 to begin with), +4 versus insanity, +4% versus coma/death, +3 versus magic, +1 versus poison, +2 versus Horror Factor, +2 to spell strength.

Appearance: Maria Vasquez is an attractive woman of Spanish and Indian descent with a smile for everyone she meets. She wears brightly colored dresses and casual suits. La Una Mysteria is a grim figure wearing a dark blue robe and hooded cloak. Her face is concealed by war paint on mis-

Occupation: Maria is a member of a vigilante team and active environmentalist.

Weapons: La Una Mysteria uses a magic war club which does 2D6 points of damage and ignores Armor Rating. She also uses a Beretta 92f 9mm pistol (2D6) and an automatic rifle (5D6), along with her skills and powers.

Vehicles: Maria uses a Land Rover on her trips away from the Channing Estate.

Body Armor: La Una Mysteria's robe has the spell Invulnerability built into it. She also uses the Armor of Ithan spell for protection.

Salary: Maria is paid 55,000 dollars a year for her participation in the Dark Riders.

Flag

His name is Robert Kent Flagg, and he became a hero by a deal. It granted him indestructibility and great strength. It also turned him into a target for his predecessor's enemies.

Harmon Walker was Flagg's first contact with the unusual. Walker had received his powers in the forties and made a name for himself as the human tank named Lincoln. After the war, Walker became involved with the fledgling Central Intelligence Agency. He was a top operator for them until the 60s.

He became aware of several different conspiracies working against each other and the legal American government. He began to oppose these different cabals at every turn. Soon his identity was exposed and he was a fugitive from justice.

Flagg and Walker met in the city of Washington. Walker had become disillusioned with his battle but could see no way clear of his situation. He had started living in an apartment complex in the city, and Flagg was his neighbor in the apartment across

from him. A group of Walker's enemies located him and attacked the building. A huge battle ensued, and Walker was captured by these operatives. He decided not to let his power fall into the hands of his foes. He bequeathed his power to the nearest witness, who happened to be a watching Flagg. Walker died before he was pulled from the scene.

Flagg later discovered Harmon Walker's journal, detailing his entire career until just a few days before his final battle. He confirmed as much of the diaries as he could through public resources. Then he noticed some people were constantly following him around the city. Flagg felt it was only a matter of time before his shadowy enemies came to get him. Using information from the journals, Flagg disguised himself and attacked several of his enemies' operational command centers, and took all the information he could get away with. Then he began making that knowledge known through anonymous tips and direct intervention.

Flagg quickly became just as big a fugitive as Walker. He struck at the conspiracies whenever possible while living on the run. Still he had to fight several very public battles with superhumans empowered by the cabals.

That is what attracted The Geiger Organization's attention, and eventually Guinevere's. She tracked Flagg down as he was fighting a super team outside of Fairfax, Virginia. Her psionics and surprise intervention turned the tide on the covert operatives.

Guinevere offered Flagg a place on Team Two as a means to battle his foes and hide from them when necessary. It appealed to him to join one secret society to fight other secret societies. He accepted the offer.

Flag

Real Name: Robert Kent Flagg.

Aliases: Flag, George Washington, Ted Rose.

Alignment: Unprincipled. **Level:** 8th.

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 11, M.A. 18, P.S. 56, P.P. 19, P.E. 28, P.B. 11, Spd. 30/360 mph (576 km).

Hit Points: 57. **S.D.C.:** 249.

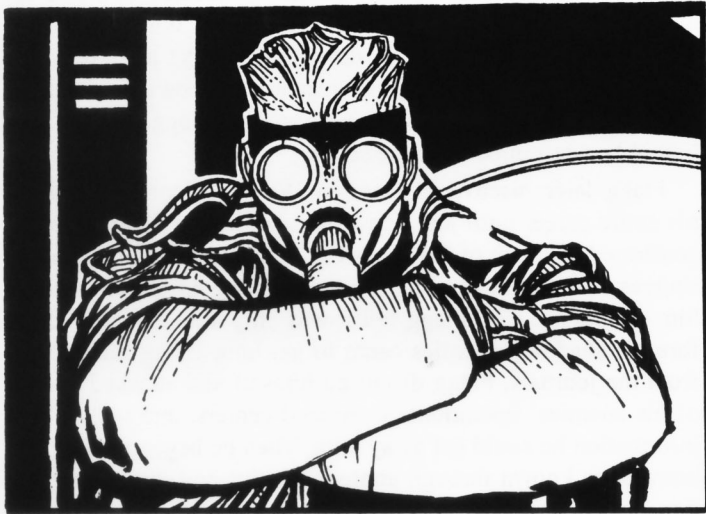
Height: 6 feet, 2 inches (1.8 m). **Weight:** 320 lbs (144 kg). **Age:** 22.

Disposition: Flag is, for the most part, cheerful and very optimistic. He tries to put the best face on any situation no matter how bad it looks. No one knows if that is his natural attitude, or if it came with the bestowment of his powers. He is like a brother to everyone on the team.

Flagg knows exactly what he can do. He likes to pretend he's a dumb muscle man while actually trying to out-think any foe. He has used many surprise tactics no one else thought of, or could carry out.

Flagg has also spent personal time working with the Rat Squad. They typically act as an escort while Flagg is investigating his old foes. He is constantly on the lookout for anti-American activities on both sides of the Atlantic. Unfortunately, only El Diablo and Defender work well with him on these personal missions.

Flagg keeps one thing from his team. He does not know if Walker died from his wounds after he gave up his power, or if he died because he gave it up. He feels he will go on as long as there is a United States, or until he gives the power to someone else, whichever comes first.



O.C.C.: Mystically Bestowed.

Major Ability: Indestructibility. Flag is impervious to all harm except by certain abilities, psionics, and magic such as Bio-Manipulation or Mind Control. He can not be transformed, or metamorphed in any way. He does not age, eat, or need to breathe. He can still be restrained or sidetracked like a normal human.

Minor Abilities: Superhuman Strength, Extraordinary Physical Prowess, Extraordinary Speed.

Educational Level: One year of college.

Scholastic Skills: Mechanical Engineering 75%, Basic Electronics 80%, Locksmith 75%, Acrobatics, Gymnastics, Boxing, Wrestling.

Secondary Skills: Wilderness Survival 70%, W.P. Pistol, First Aid 98%, Athletics, Body Building, Pilot Airplane 82%, Pilot Motorcycle 80%, Prowl 50%, Running, Pilot Helicopter 50%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Attacks per Melee: 8.

Bonuses: +43 to damage, +4 to damage per every 20 mph (32 km), +5 to strike, +10 to parry, +13 to dodge, +7 to automatic dodge, +6 to initiative, +6 to roll with punch, +4 to pull punch, body flip/throw (1D6, victim loses two attacks and initiative), +1 to disarm, automatic KO on a natural 20, critical strike on a natural 19-20, kick (2D4), snap kick (1D6).

Other Bonuses: 50% to trust/intimidate, +8 versus magic, +30% versus coma/death, +10% to physical skills, fatigues at one-half the normal rate, can lift 300 times his P.S., can carry 200 times his P.S.

Appearance: Flag is a quick, big man in his twenties with dark brown hair and eyes. He dresses in jeans and plaid shirts when he is not in the field. He wears a costume composed of various historical U.S. Army styles when he is on a mission. He wears a World War I type gas mask to conceal his face, for example.

Occupation: Flag is a member of a global conspiracy intent on protecting humanity.

Weapons: Flag does not use any weapons except for his natural skills and powers.

Vehicles: Flag uses a motorcycle to travel off the Channing Estate's grounds when he is relaxing. He has picked up some piloting skills to help Kenshi on missions.

Body Armor: Flag does not wear body armor because of his natural indestructibility.

Salary: Flag is paid 50,000 dollars a year by the Geiger Organization.

Fire Devil

Cameron Skinner could always teleport, even as a child. This ability came in handy to escape the local bullies. Worse, Cameron was a natural prankster and paid his foes terrible tricks in revenge for perceived wrongs. He was soon left in peace.

Cameron found he could change shape at the end of puberty. This other shape allowed Cameron to become living fire. This oni shape was hideous and he rarely used it.

In Skinner's second year of college, a fire broke out in his dormitory building. He became his other form to combat the flames with his powers. His appearance led him to be blamed and used as a scapegoat by the authorities. Calling himself Fire Devil, Cameron investigated and cleared himself of any wrongdoing. He decided to make a hobby of looking into things that seemed wrong and blamed on any convenient target.

Cameron's efforts led him to be noticed and marked by the Geiger Organization as a recruit. Guinevere flew to Houston to meet Fire Devil and offer him a spot on her new team. Cameron agreed after several hours of consideration.

Cameron has become the point man for the team with his teleportation and fiery alter ego.

Fire Devil

Real Name: Cameron Skinner.

Aliases: Fire Devil, Myron Kenner, Bob Black.

Alignment: Scrupulous. **Level:** 8th.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 12, M.A. 10, P.S. 26/34, P.P. 23, P.E. 24, P.B. 13/2, Spd. 27/360 miles per hour (576 km). **Note:** The numbers after the slashes are present only when he is in his "oni shape."

Hit Points: 57. **S.D.C.:** 60/180.

Height: 5 feet, 10 inches (1.8 m). **Weight:** 167 lbs (75 kg). **Age:** 24.

Disposition: Cameron Skinner has a black and white view of the world. He operates without any doubts when everything is clear cut. He tends to hesitate when dealing with any type of gray morality. In those cases, he gathers as much information as possible so that he can determine a course of action.

Cameron is often the first team member on the mission site. He is responsible for gathering information about the objective before a plan is devised. His cunning and teleportation allow him to sow confusion before any assault by the rest of the Dark Riders.

O.C.C.: Mutant.

Major Abilities: Teleportation and "Oni Shape" (Alter Physical Structure: Fire and Extraordinary Speed; the two powers are tied together somehow).

Educational Level: Two years of college.

Scholastics Skills: Boxing, Acrobatics, Gymnastics, Wrestling, Computer Operation 95%, Research 98%, Surveillance Systems 85%, Writing 80%.

Secondary Skills: Basic Electronics 70%, First Aid 85%, Running, Athletics, Climbing 85%/75%, Prowl 70%, Wilderness Survival 70%, Basic Mechanics 70%, Photography 75%, Land Navigation 56%, Radio: Basic 60%, Streetwise 32%, TV/Video 37%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Attacks per Melee: 6 (7 in "oni" form).

Bonuses as Skinner: +13 to damage, +5 to strike, +9 to parry, +9 to dodge, +1 to initiative, +8 to roll with the punch, automatic knockout on a natural 20, critical strike on a natural 19-20, body throw/flip (1D6 and victim loses initiative and two attacks), +1 to disarm, +2 to pull punch, kick (2D4), snap kick (1D6).

Bonuses as Fire Devil: +5 to initiative, +21 to damage, +4 to damage per 20 mph (32 km), +7 to strike, +12 to parry, +15 to dodge, +11 to automatic dodge, +6 to pull punch, automatic knockout on a natural 20, critical strike on a natural 19-20, body throw/flip (1D6 and the victim loses initiative and two attacks), +1 to disarm, kick (2D4), snap kick (2D6).

Other Bonuses: +18% versus coma/death, +5 versus magic, +5 versus poison.

Appearance: Cameron Skinner is a normal looking young man who wears casual clothes that will fit in anywhere he goes. The Fire Devil is an ugly, pointy-eared, scaly creature with long, dark red hair and small horns. The Fire Devil also possesses a five foot (1.5 m) long tail. Flames pour across the exposed parts of his body.

Occupation: Cameron Skinner is a former student turned professional vigilante.

Weapons: Skinner prefers to use his own natural abilities and skills.

Vehicles: Cameron owns a ten year old Chevy Duster he drives on his own time, otherwise he uses a team vehicle when on a job.

Body Armor: Fire Devil does not wear any armor.

Salary: Skinner is paid 45,000 dollars a year for his services.

Miss Power

Miss Power is a Duo-Sider (see below), with the ability to tap into the enigmatic energy force known as "The Grid." This makes her a shape changer like her teammate Fire Devil. It also makes her an almost unstoppable juggernaut for the few minutes she possesses to use her powers.

Melissa Powers is an orphan. Both of her parents were killed during a freak electrical storm in the usually quiet town of Barland, Ohio, just south of Cincinnati. Melissa was taken in by the child welfare people and placed in the Roberta Yancy School for Orphaned Children. Melissa fell in with a group of disciplinary problems led by a boy named Gig O'Brien. She learned how to steal from the school from her new cohorts.

The group found a machine of some type under the main building of the orphanage, while hiding from punishment for an unplanned redecoration of the director's office. The mechanism was encased in stone, with only a few bits of its metal skin showing its true nature at the end of a maze-like underground crawl way. It might have been waiting for them a thousand years before the orphans discovered it.

O'Brien led the group in uncovering the buried machine. They broke the rock away with makeshift tools and carried it out of the crawlspace. They suffered through their punishments, while digging at night. Eventually the bulk of the device was free and easily examined by the twelve- and thirteen-year-olds.

They didn't know what to make of it, but were certainly not going to give it to the orphanage staff.

One of the children accidentally pressed a button while examining it. A jet of blue lightning poured over the kids, linking them to the dimensional energy source known as The Grid. Melissa found that her body had become stronger and she was able to move in any direction at the speed of thought.

Melissa punched through the crawl space and orphanage building and escaped to the streets of Cincinnati.

Melissa lived on the streets for two years after running away from the Yancy Home. She supported herself as a burglar with her other self's powers. Her success attracted the notice of Guinevere. After a pitched battle with Flag, she decided to lend her strength to the team's cause.

Miss Power

Real Name: Melissa Powers.

Aliases: Miss Power, Midnight Eagle, Missy Owens, Agatha Sayers.

Alignment: Unprincipled. **Level:** 7th.

Attributes: I.Q. 12/25, M.E. 10/21, M.A. 10/22, P.S. 22/35 (considered supernatural in her adult form), P.P. 22/33, P.E. 19/42, P.B. 13/25, Spd. 27/equivalent to light speed. All secondary numbers are Melissa's second, more adult form.

Hit Points: 57. **S.D.C.:** 100/2100.

Height: 4 feet, 8 inches/5 feet, 10 inches (1.4 m/1.8 m).

Weight: 80 lbs/165 lbs (36 kg/74.2 kg). **Age:** 14.

Disposition: Melissa Powers is a quiet child who can be headstrong and stubborn, but also surprisingly resourceful in the face of adversity. She has learned a degree of caution since joining the team. Flag is perhaps the first person to defeat her after her empowerment, and she has learned a valuable lesson from that battle.

Melissa can often be found in the Channing Estate's library. She has become the team's historian through her interest in bettering her personal tactics. She has learned how to attack an enemy's weak points in the shortest amount of time possible.

Melissa has also picked up the habit of checking her watch constantly. This stems from the time limit on her powers and has become a nervous gesture.

O.C.C.: Duo-Sider.

Major Abilities: Miss Power possesses all the Duo-Sider abilities in her secondary form. She has **Teleportational Speed** (can move in any direction instantaneously), **Omni-Sight** (can see across the spectrum), **Homing Energy Blast** (9D6, +10 to strike), **Structural Disintegration** (P.S. damage +6D6 punch, +9D6 kick, punches hole in an object or does double damage to Hit Points to living opponents on a called shot of 15 or higher). The transformation lasts only one minute, plus one melee per level. Melissa can hold her transformation for eleven melees. It takes two melees between transformations to recharge. (For more details, see the Duo-Sider description below.)

Educational Level: Street Schooled.

Scholastic Skills: Streetwise 66%, Prowl 70%, W.P. Knife (+2 throw, +2 to strike, +2 to parry), Pick Locks 75%, Pick Pockets 65%, Safe Cracking 52%, Cooking 52%, Singing 75%, Research 90%, Spanish 90%.

Secondary Skills: Athletics, Running, Climbing 80/70%, Wilderness Survival 70%, Basic Electronics 70%, Literacy 70%, Basic Mechanics 70%, Auto Mechanics 50%, First Aid 70%, Pilot Airplane 58%, Land Navigation 44%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Attacks per Melee: 5/7.

Bonuses as Melissa: +9 to damage, +5 to strike, +7 to parry, +7 to dodge, +2 to roll, +2 to pull punch, +1 to initiative, kick (2D4), snap kick (1D6), critical strike on a natural 19-20.

Other Bonuses as Melissa: +8% versus coma/death, +2 versus magic, +2 versus poison.

Bonuses as Miss Power: 2D6 restrained/4D6 full strength/1D6x10 power punch, +22 to damage, +16 to strike, +15 to parry, +25 to dodge, +9 to initiative, +2 to pull punch, +14 to roll with punch, kick (2D4), snap kick (1D6), critical strike on a natural 19-20.

Other Bonuses as Miss Power: +11% to skill percentages, +3 versus psionics, +4 versus insanity, +9 versus mind control, 70% to trust/intimidate, +14 versus magic, +5 versus poison, +42% versus coma/death, 75% to charm/impress.

Appearance: Melissa Powers is a short, thin girl who likes to wear jeans and t-shirts and a watch. Miss Power is a tall, beautiful, muscular woman who dresses in black stretch tights.

Occupation: Melissa Powers is Guinevere Channing's ward and a member of the Dark Riders.

Weapons: Melissa does not use any weapons in either identity.

Vehicles: Melissa does not drive any vehicles yet.

Body Armor: Melissa wears a special suit of light body armor that expands and collapses to allow for her transformations. The armor has an A.R. of 16 and 150 S.D.C.

Salary: Melissa is paid 40,000 dollars a year. Most of the money is placed in a trust for her until she turns 21 years old.

Kenshi

Kenshi, the sword master, is Ken Moto. Moto has followed in the footsteps of his ancestors by becoming a ronin, a masterless samurai. He works with the Dark Riders on a two year contract basis. He is the only agent employed in this manner.

Moto has trained himself to be a specialist in all types of weapons. He is typically used as a reserve element and sniper. That's the way he likes it because it allows him to stay in the shadows and out of confrontation with enemies who may well be more physically powerful than he is.

Furthermore, Kenshi's weapon skills have allowed him to build weapons to attack weaknesses in an enemy. This usually calls for some kind of analysis and reconnaissance to determine any weakness. Then Moto can usually devise some method of attack while his comrades are holding the foe away from their objective.

One bullet is Kenshi's preferred way of dealing with threats.

Kenshi

Real Name: Ken Moto.

Aliases: Kenshi, Akira Yamamoto.

Alignment: Aberrant. **Level:** 8th.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 13, M.A. 12, P.S. 18, P.P. 15, P.E. 15, P.B. 10, Spd. 27.

Hit Points: 19. **S.D.C.:** 55.

Height: 5 feet, 7 inches (1.7 m). **Weight:** 140 lbs (63 kg). **Age:** 26.

Disposition: Kenshi is an honorable mercenary. He will fight to the limit for his clients. He will even avenge them if something should happen to them while he is under contract to them. On the other hand, he will do anything to get the job done, no matter how much collateral damage he may inflict to bystanders. Clients have to ask him not to harm others in the course of his duties.

Otherwise Ken Moto appears to be an ordinary person who likes to spend his time gardening.

O.C.C.: Hardware Weapons Specialist.

O.C.C. Skills: Sniper, W.P. Revolver, W.P. Pistol, W.P. Automatic Rifle, W.P. Bolt-Action Rifle, W.P. Energy Rifle, W.P. Heavy Weapons, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Sword (+3 strike/parry), Paired Weapons (Sword), Demolitions 98%, Demolitions Disposal 98%, Find Contraband 78%, Basic Electronics 80%, Basic Mechanics 80%.

O.C.C. Abilities: +1 attack per melee with any gun, +3 to disarm with a called shot, +4 versus Horror Factor, Make and Modify Weapons 100%, Recognize Weapon Quality 65% (at a distance)/90% (close examination), Paired Weapons (Pistols), Quick Draw, W.P. Sharpshooting.

Educational Level: Military Specialist.



Scholastic Skills: Running, Climbing 98/90%, Military Etiquette 95%, Radio: Basic 98%, Detect Ambush 90%, Intelligence 84%, Wilderness Survival 90%, Tracking 85%, Detect Concealment 80%, Pick Locks 85%, Escape Artist 85%, Navigation 90%, Read Sensory Equipment 70%, Weapon Systems 80%, Pilot Airplane 82%, Pilot Race Car 79%, Pilot Jet 72%, Pilot Jet Fighter 72%.

Secondary Skills: Auto Mechanics 65%, Athletics, Body Building, Prowl 65%, Identify Plants and Fruits 65%, First Aid 70%, Carpentry 50%, Boat Building 40%, Computer Operation 55%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

Attacks per Melee: 5.

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +4 to parry, +4 to dodge, +2 to initiative, +4 to damage, +2 to disarm, +3 to roll with punch, +3 to pull punch, paired weapons, body throw/flip, leap attack, critical strike on a natural 18-20, kick (2D4), snap kick (1D6), tripping leg hook, axe kick (2D6), roundhouse kick (3D6).

Appearance: Kenshi is a compact man who dresses for the occasion. He wears matte black body armor on the job. His personal symbol, a closed fist, is drawn in white on the front of the armor.

Occupation: Kenshi is a professional mercenary under contract with the Dark Riders, specifically Sir Thomas Channing.

Weapons: Kenshi carries an assortment of weapons on a mission. A typical selection is two automatic pistols (2D6), a backup pistol (2D6), an automatic shotgun (6D6), a sniper rifle (1D6x10), a dozen throwing knives and stars (1D4 and 1D6), two energy swords (4D6), and power gauntlets (3D6 ion blaster on the right, 2D6 laser on the left, three 3D4 extending knuckles claws on both, one secret compartment each for his emergency kit). Each of the projectile weapons has a laser designator mounted on it for a +1 to strike.

Vehicles: Kenshi is the team pilot. He keeps a disguised stock car on the Channing Estate as his personal transportation.

Body Armor: Kenshi wears a specially constructed suit of body armor in the field. The armor takes half damage from physical blows, is almost invisible to electronic detection (-40% to the relevant skills, like Read Sensory Equipment, or +40% to Prowl where electronic sensors are concerned), is fully environmental, and has basic vision enhancements such as infra-red and ultra-violet built into the helmet.

The armor's A.R. is 16 and S.D.C. is 200.

Salary: Kenshi is paid 10,000 to 50,000 dollars for each mission he goes on while under contract. He is the only member of the team who is paid this way.

Hook, Line, and Sinkers™ New Team In Town

Hook: A group of heroes who operate independently of each other begin receiving tips of criminal activities while in their civilian identities.

Line: Any cursory checking by the group will show that a single criminal is targeted by this information. All tips given are

accurate up to a point. The tips cannot be traced back to their source.

Sinker: The criminal affected by the group's efforts is Carlos Esperanza, a drug trafficker and weapons merchant. Carlos has decided to rid himself and his organization of the nuisances these heroes have become. He cannot suffer any more setbacks because of a big drop he is off-loading in the campaign city. Any complication would ruin the deal he has put in motion. The heroes should be actively engaged until after the deal has gone down one way or the other. Esperanza will want revenge if the heroes interrupt his delivery of the secret cargo.

Carlos Esperanza

Carlos Esperanza grew up in one of the worst neighborhoods of Bogota, Columbia. He lived to escape the crushing poverty he struggled with every day. He watched the local cartels with envy and jealousy.

The young Carlos came across a dropped pistol after a particularly violent battle between the police and a group of narcotics traffickers trying to avoid arrest. Carlos kept the pistol, practicing with it for hours. Soon he was proficient enough with it to join a local gang. Carlos began to kill his way to the top of the gang, then expanded to a syndicate, then internationally.

Carlos is now trying to expand his operations to a global scale. He'll kill anyone who gets in his way.

Carlos Esperanza — El Pistolero

Real Name: Carlos Esperanza.

Aliases: Carl Esperit, Chuck Spera, Slinger.

Alignment: Diabolic. **Level:** 5th.

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 11, M.A. 9, P.S. 18, P.P. 21, P.E. 15, P.B. 9, Spd. 14.

Hit Points: 33. **S.D.C.:** 57.

Height: 5 feet, 9 inches (1.75 m). **Weight:** 120 lbs (54 kg). **Age:** 40.

Disposition: Carlos Esperanza is a man who has worked his way up to the top in his chosen profession by killing anyone in his way. Carlos will use any resource to stay where he is and destroy any rival bold enough to try to get in his way. Any threat to his business will initiate a bloody vendetta. He has a violent temper and has been known to personally shoot his victims in public places. It is only a matter of time before he does something that can be proven against him (witnesses tend to stay quiet). Until then, Carlos is riding high at the top of the drug trade.

O.C.C.: Gunfighter.

O.C.C. Skills: English 98%, Spanish 98%, Land Navigation 66%, Detect Ambush 70%, Detect Concealment 60%, Find Contraband 58%, Recognize Weapons Quality 70%, Basic Electronics 65%, Armorer 85%, Sniper, W.P. Revolver, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, W.P. Automatic Pistol, W.P. Heavy, W.P. Sword, Pilot Motorcycle 80%, Horsemanship: General 70%, Basic Mechanics 75%, Paired Weapons (Pistols), W.P. Sharpshooting, Repair Weapons 85%.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Boxing, Athletics, Gymnastics, Prowl 55%, First Aid 60%, Pilot Hovercraft 65%.

Secondary Skills: Wilderness Survival 55%, W.P. Paired Weapons (Swords), Identify Plants and Fruits 40%, Carpentry 40%, Pilot Airplane 59%, Read Sensory Instruments 35%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Expert.

Attacks per Melee: 6 (+2 with pistols).

Combat Bonuses: +3 to damage, +3 to disarm with a pistol called shot, +5 to strike, +6 to parry, +6 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +7 to roll with punch, automatic KO on a natural 20, kick (2D4), +2 to quick draw, +2 to initiative, kick (2D4), roundhouse kick (3D6), tripping hook kick (knocks down victim).

Other Bonuses: +1 versus Horror Factor.

Appearance: Carlos Esperanza is a wiry man of average height given to wearing expensive clothes and jewelry. He goes on assassination missions in combat fatigues, armor, and a ski mask. He is always armed.

Occupation: Carlos is primarily a drug smuggler and distributor. He also dabbles in arms deals and other activities related to contraband. Carlos will also accept murder contracts.

Weapons: Esperanza has an arsenal at his disposal, but prefers to use the twin .45 Colt automatics that he is never without.

Vehicles: Carlos prefers to use high-powered sports cars. Occasionally when dealing with clients, or victims, he will use an armored limo to ensure privacy.

Body Armor: Carlos has had all of his clothes woven with Kevlar and has special plates inserted in them for protection. The armored clothes have an A.R. of 13 and 120 S.D.C.

Money: Carlos has an annual income of three hundred million dollars through both legitimate and illegal businesses.

Team Three

Hook: A group of heroes are contacted by someone calling himself Vincent Herald, who would like to discuss a business offer with them.

Line: The group is given a designated flight to catch at the local airport. The plane is unlisted and untraceable later by the group if they wish to do so.

Sinker: The group will be met in New Mexico by Vincent Herald. He will offer the group the resources of his organization in return for the group's cooperation in dealing with certain threats. There should be no mention of the strike forces, or the rest of the support staff, to the players.

If the group agrees, a hidden base with an untraceable link to the facility will be built for the group. Transport will be provided depending on individual skills. A contact will be put in place to facilitate the flow of resources from Herald, and maintain security.

If the group does not agree, they will be flown home, and all contact will be cut off from them. There will be no record of their flight, or any way to track it back to their destination.

Who Has the Witness?

Hook: Catherine Kavanagh has uncovered a link between government officials and SynthPro Inc., the company where she works. She is set to testify before Congress about illegal appropriations for nonexistent weapons and protective equipment.

Line: Catherine Kavanagh is attacked in her hotel by an assassination squad. A man in mismatched historical uniforms, wearing a gas mask, comes to her rescue and the two go into hiding.

Sinker: The group is asked to find the witness and make sure she testifies in front of Congress in 24 hours. They only have to contend with assassins, police, federal agencies, covert military operators, Sentinels of Liberty and Justice, a very protective Flag, an untrusting Catherine Kavanagh, and anything else you can think to throw into the mix.

Magic Time

Hook: Several women have disappeared in the wilds of the city. The only things the women had in common were their youth and fitness. Three of the victims have turned up dead, and appear to have been tortured horribly.

Line: Diligent investigation should reveal to the players that a hidden link does exist between the victims. Each of the victims attended a seminar on magic in medicine given by a renowned geneticist and doctor named Julian Poe. All of the disappearances happened within a week of the seminar.

Sinker: Julian Poe is a magic user who belongs to the Faustian Court. He wishes to usurp the power held by Hugh Younger, the Court's leader. To achieve his ends, Poe is trying to duplicate Younger's ritual to create Mask Wielders of his own.

The players must stop his experimentation before he maims or kills all of his victims. Feel free to throw in high-tech security, monsters, magic, and any other complication you can think of that would result from attacking a high level mage at his fortress estate.

Dr. Julian Poe

Julian Poe has always been interested in the human body. That was why he learned everything he could about it. His interest took him into the field of genetics where he felt he could shape his subject like clay. His experiments quickly caused him to be banned by the scientific community. Poe spent a year in depression, cut off from his equipment by his "small-minded" peers.

At the end of that gray year, Poe discovered magic.

Poe began to amass equipment and funds by using his magic to manipulate events and people the way he wanted. His personal fortune grew almost overnight. He never gave up his dream to shape people into better versions of humanity.

The Faustian Court invited Poe to join their ranks after gauging his talents and needs. He eagerly leaped at the chance to learn more magic to further his dream. When the good doctor learned of the Mask Wielder ritual, he knew he was right about enchanting gene structures and DNA. He was bitterly angry when Hugh Younger, the creator of the ritual and only possessor, refused to teach him the secret.

Now he spends his time trying to duplicate the spell and hiding his growing anger from his new peers. He has vowed revenge when he is done with the Court.

Julian Poe — Creator of the Hooded Executioners

Real Name: Dr. Julian Poe.

Aliases: Jim Raven, August Dupin, Dr. Hood.

Alignment: Diabolic. **Level:** 9th.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 12, M.A. 12, P.S. 9, P.P. 22, P.E. 23, P.B. 9, Spd. 22.

Hit Points: 52. **S.D.C.:** 39. **P.P.E.:** 131.

Height: 5 feet, 10 inches (1.8 m). **Weight:** 175 lbs (78.8 kg). **Age:** 45.

Disposition: Julian Poe is a charming individual who just wants to make better people, whether they would like to be better or not. He learned magic after completing his studies in medicine because it appeals to him to be able to twist someone with the power of his will. He is trying to fathom more ways to twist the human body, so he resents Hugh Younger's hoarding the secret of the Mask Wielder ritual. Poe remembers any slight or small defeat and will try to exact his revenge as publicly and humiliatingly as possible.

O.C.C.: Wizard.

O.C.C. Abilities: **Astral Projection** (6 P.P.E., 45 minute duration), Familiar Link (20 P.P.E., 600 feet/183 meters) with a crow possessing 15 S.D.C., 6 Hit Points, and 30 mph (48 km) flight. It's +2 to strike and +6 to dodge and has three attacks per melee, sense enchantment (90 feet/27 meters), sense supernatural evil (90 feet/27 meters), sense magic (120 feet/37 meters).

Magic: See the Invisible (4), Chameleon (6), Impervious to Cold (6), Impervious to Fire (5), Lesser Paralysis (5), Energy Bolt (5), Armor of Ithan (10), Seal (7), Mystic Alarm (5), Fear (5), Cloud of Smoke (2), Decipher Magic (4), Eyes of Thoth (8), Heal Self (20), Life Drain (25), Animate/Control Dead (20), Constrain Being (20), Mystic Portal (60), Words of Truth (15), Mystic Shield (10), Time Hole (210), Charismatic Aura (10), Horrific Illusion (10), Energy Disruption (12), Blind (6), Shadow Meld (10), Charm (12), Escape (8), Circle of Flame (10), Lesser Teleport (15), Sanctum (390), Breathe Without Air (5), Death Trance (1), Negate Toxins (5), Create Hooded Executioner Ritual (6000, plus all but one P.P.E. point of the victim).

Educational Level: Ph.D.

Scholastic Skills: Biology 98%, Chemistry 98%, Pathology 98%, Medical Doctor 98%, Computer Operation 98%, Advanced Mathematics 98%, Anthropology 95%, Botany 98%, Analytical Chemistry 98%, Basic Electronics 98%, Computer Programming 98%, Computer Repair 98%, Spell Translation 26%, Demon Lore 75%, Geomancy 70%, Religion 80%, Archaeology 75%, Holistic Medicine 75%.

Secondary Skills: Identify Plants and Fruits 70%, Pilot Automobile 78%, Land Navigation 72%, W.P. Pistol, W.P. Knife, Running, Prowl 70%, Athletics, Wilderness Survival 60%, Basic Mechanics 60%, Pilot Sail Boats 75%, Pilot Motor Boats 70%, W.P. Archery and Targeting, W.P. Blunt.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Expert.

Attacks per Melee: 6.

Combat Bonuses: +3 to roll with punch, +6 to strike, +8 to parry, +8 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +2 to initiative, kick (2D4), wheel kick (2D6), roundhouse kick (3D6), critical strike on natural 18-20, paired weapons, body throw, +2 to disarm.

Other Bonuses: +7 versus magic, +2 versus possession, +3 versus Horror Factor, has a 15 for spell strength, +4 versus poison, +16% versus coma/death.

Appearance: Dr. Poe likes to dress for any occasion. He has taken to wearing a ragged hood and scarecrow clothes to match the appearance of his main agents, the Hooded Executioners, when overseeing an operation.

Occupation: Dr. Poe is a known geneticist and medical doctor.

He is also secretly a member of a society of evil mages intent on taking over the world.

Weapons: The good doctor typically tries to avoid personal combat except as a last resort. He will use his magic and anything else he can to escape the fray as soon as possible when confronted.

Vehicles: Poe has several vehicles but prefers to use a 1945 Bentley that he has modified with the help of a mage from the Court. He can use the following spells three times a day: Fly, Breathe Without Air, Chameleon, and Armor of Ithan.

Body Armor: Poe routinely wears enchanted armor under his clothes with an A.R. of 16 and 500 S.D.C., which is light as a feather.

Money: Dr. Poe is worth about seven million dollars and has two million of that in liquid assets at any time.

Patch

Patch is the leader of the Hooded Executioners that Dr. Poe commands. He started his career as a messenger for Hermes Thanatos. He was left unemployed when his employer abruptly disappeared and his organization was absorbed by his rivals. He heard that a villain needed a local for access to fencing operations and clients. He eagerly signed on for the job.

He had not heard that the villain had used his volunteers for test subjects, and he was the next one in line.

Patch was the first one to survive the ritual and become empowered as a Hooded Executioner. He is even able to resist Poe's commands through an effort of willpower when he wants to do so. Of course, he has been careful not to let the good doctor know this fact. Dr. Poe would not like any display of independence.

Patch — Leader of the Hooded Executioners

Real Name: Gerald Wesolowski.

Aliases: Jerry West.

Alignment: Miscreant. **Level:** 6th.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 18, M.A. 10, P.S. 35, P.P. 24, P.E. 21, P.B. 3, Spd. 36.

Hit Points: 110. **S.D.C.:** 460 (A.R. 17 and 1260 S.D.C. when metal).

Height: 5 feet, 11 inches (1.8 m). **Weight:** 190 lbs (85.5 kg). **Age:** 34.

Disposition: Gerry Wesolowski is a vicious, bitter, evil person who has been turned into a stronger breed of monster. He follows Dr. Poe's orders because it suits him, even if he is under a compulsion to obey. He enjoys his duties to the point of adding his own goals to any given mission. He knows that if the doctor should suspect him of breaking free of his control, he would be in serious trouble. He just feels that he can beat any of Poe's other means in that case, and make a go of it alone. If someone were to make him a better offer for his abilities, he would leave Poe high and dry.

O.C.C.: Hooded Executioner.

Hood Natural Abilities: The hood has 1200 S.D.C. and recovers 1D6x50 S.D.C. per melee. It can not be removed while the wearer is still alive.

Hood Psionics: The hood grants the following, regardless of the wearer's wishes. The wearer has Automatic Mind Block, See the Invisible, Alter Aura (always appears as a normal human), Nightvision (500 feet/152 m), Impervious to Poi-

sons/Toxins, and Bio-Regeneration (1D6 x 10 S.D.C. per melee), and Patch does not breathe need to breathe.

Hood Superhuman Abilities: Invulnerability and Alter Physical Structure: Metal.

Level of Education: Street Schooled.

Scholastic Skills: Streetwise 58%, Prowl 55%, W.P. Pistol, Pick Locks 65%, Pick Pockets 55%, Safecracking 44%, Cook 65%, Sewing 70%, Demon and Monster Lore 65%, Literacy 60%.

Secondary Skills: Basic Electronics 60%, Basic Mechanics 60%, Wilderness Survival 60%, First Aid 75%, W.P. Blunt.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

Attacks per Melee: 5.

Combat Bonuses: +20 to damage, +7 to strike, +8 to parry, +8 to dodge, +3 to roll with impact, +3 to pull punch, +2 to initiative, kick (2D4), backward sweep, tripping leg hook, roundhouse kick (3D6), wheel kick (2D6), all jump kicks, critical strike on a natural 18-20.

Other Bonuses: +2 versus psionics, +2 versus insanity, +12% versus coma/death, +3 versus magic, +3 versus poisons.

Appearance: Gerry Wesolowski is a fit criminal who wears a costume made of a patched business suit, long cowl cloak, and his colorful, patchy hood.

Occupation: Patch is the chief agent and enforcer for Dr. Poe.

Weapons: Patch uses a 9mm pistol (2D6) and a steel baseball bat (4D6) on missions.

Vehicles: Patch uses a black van.

Body Armor: Patch typically does not use armor except as a disguise of some sort.

Money: Patch is only paid room and board by Doctor Poe. He supplements this with raids on the doctor's enemies. He has gathered a small trove of about 500,000 dollars in case he has to leave Poe in a hurry.

Decoy

Hook: A package is delivered to one of the player characters by mistake. Inside the box is a gorilla suit.

Line: The character in possession of it is soon attacked for the suit. If he examines the suit, he will find a harness made of strung together junk. Any attempt to examine the harness more closely will cause it to fall apart.

Sinker: Gig O'Brien has been working part-time as a thief since escaping the Roberta Yancy orphanage. O'Brien is a Grid smith, and is able to craft super powers into devices. Morley Donaldson, a fence, found out about some of O'Brien's gadgets and wanted a cut of the action. O'Brien convinced him that the gorilla suit held a flight pack before sending it to a random address. O'Brien promptly skipped town while Donaldson was distracted. Donaldson has called in every favor he could to get the suit back so that he could learn its secret and duplicate it.

Donaldson will be extremely angry when he finds out the harness is a fake, or has been destroyed accidentally.

Gig O'Brien — Grid Smith

Gig O'Brien was left on the doorstep of the Roberta Yancy School for Orphaned Children one night as a baby. He discovered a mechanical aptitude as he grew older. The constant abuse he suffered meant nothing to him. He thrived on his ability to take any punishment and come back for more.

Gig eventually became a leader of a small band of children. He was the one who actually discovered the strange machine in the hidden cellar of the building. He convinced the others to help him dig it out of the ground. He triggered the energy explosion that empowered his group. While the others were caught up with their abilities, O'Brien escaped the chaos and hid his new abilities and his link to an energy source called The Grid.

Gig spent the next year practicing with his abilities, learning the extent of his powers. He also learned everything he could about mechanical engineering. He departed the orphanage at the age of sixteen. Before he left, he arranged for the staff's abusive behavior to be broadcast over the local news. That caused a scandal that has yet to be sorted out and closed the Yancy School.

Gig became an expert thief after he left the Orphanage, while also working as a mechanic for an aircraft charter service. He led his dual life comfortably until Morley Donaldson, a major fence and fixer, discovered his secret and wanted a piece of the action. O'Brien diverted Donaldson with a fake gadget hidden in a gorilla suit so that he could vanish.

Gig O'Brien

Real Name: Gig O'Brien.

Aliases: Locksmith.

Alignment: Miscreant. **Level:** 4th.

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 11, M.A. 10, P.S. 38, P.P. 21, P.E. 35, P.B. 12, Spd. 40.

Hit Points: 58. **S.D.C.:** 58. **P.P.E.:** 60. **I.S.P.:** 360.

Height: 5 feet, 8 inches (1.7 m). **Weight:** 167 lbs (75 kg). **Age:** 17.

Disposition: O'Brien is a thief and that's all. Violence is very distasteful to him. Additionally, he feels he has nothing to prove. His record of 200 burglaries and robberies with no convictions or arrests should speak for itself. If interrupted on the job, O'Brien will do what he can to escape without hurting any adversary or bystander.

O'Brien is methodical and slow moving. He will not rush into a job, nor chase after a target under adverse conditions. Any employer will have to accept those facts or do without his services. Still, O'Brien has never failed to penetrate a secured area and take away the prize.

O.C.C.: Grid Smith.

O.C.C. Natural Abilities: Mechano-Link, Weapon Structuring (4D6 increase/decrease in weapon damage, increase/decrease armor S.D.C. 1D6x10 +20), Create Gadget (major power costs 25 P.P.E. permanently to build/20 I.S.P. to charge temporarily, minor power costs 15 P.P.E./10 I.S.P. to charge, charge duration is 1 minute + 1 melee per level, recover 2 I.S.P. while active/12 I.S.P. when resting).

O.C.C. Skills: Basic Math 85%, Electrical Engineer 90%, Mechanical Engineer 85%, Weapons Engineer 80%, Computer Repair 75%, Radio: Basic 80%, Read Sensory Equipment 70%, Pilot Robots 98%, Pilot Hovercraft 98%, Pilot Helicopter 90%.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Locksmith 80%, Robot Mechanics 70%, Surveillance Systems 50%, First Aid 65%, Demolitions Disposal 98%, Demolitions 98%, Paired Weapons (Blunt), Basic Chemistry 50%, Weapon Systems 80%.

Secondary Skills: Boxing, Bodybuilding, Running, Athletics, Prowl 55%, Climbing 70/60%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Expert.

Attacks per Melee: 6.

Combat Bonuses: +23 to damage, +2 to pull punch, +5 to strike, +9 to parry, +9 to dodge, +4 to roll with impact, automatic KO on a natural 20.

Other Bonuses: +8 versus poison/magic, +38% versus coma/death, lift 200 times his P.S., carry 100 times his P.S., only needs a twelve to save versus psionics.

Appearance: Gig O'Brien dresses casually in jeans and t-shirts. He wears overalls at his mechanic job. He wears black battle dress, ski mask, and several utility belts full of tools as "Locksmith."

Occupation: O'Brien is an aircraft mechanic and professional thief.

Weapons: Locksmith uses two weapons on the job. One is a Control Time wand (freeze targets, slow motion for target, age target which does 5D6 S.D.C. Range for these abilities is 100 feet/30.5 m) that resembles a television remote control. The other is a Control Space harness (teleport self or target line of sight, open portals, phase form which renders him invisible, intangible, and undetectable while doubling his speed). Both devices are third level (hold a charge for seven melees), and can be mentally activated by his Mechano-Link power.

Vehicle: O'Brien owns a 1976 Plymouth for his personal use.

Body Armor: Locksmith uses a modified bulletproof vest on the job. It has an A.R. of 14 and 200 S.D.C., and has the Create Force Field power (3500 maximum S.D.C.) built into it.

Salary: O'Brien makes 100,000 dollars a year as a mechanic. He makes between 100,000 and 500,000 dollars a year as a thief.

Morley Donaldson

Morley Donaldson is a fence and part-time hijacker who thinks he has lucked into the best security breaking device in the world. He knows nothing of the device's owner and very little of his true capabilities. All he wants is the device, which he thinks is an ultra-silent jet pack, and he'll use all of his connections to get it.

Too bad the device is a fake.

Morley Donaldson

Real Name: Morley Donaldson.

Aliases: The Broker, Marlin Davidson, Martin Dane.

Alignment: Diabolic. **Level:** 7th.

Attributes: I.Q. 17, M.E. 22, M.A. 12, P.S. 19, P.P. 15, P.E. 15, P.B. 12, Spd. 15.

Hit Points: 57. **S.D.C.:** 54.

Height: 5 feet, 7 inches (1.7 m). **Weight:** 200 lbs (90 kg). **Age:** 45.

Disposition: Morley Donaldson is a stubborn, ruthless, bad tempered, vengeful mole of a man. He is not capable of any type of subterfuge. He has only one saving grace. He is able to track down any number of rare items for the right price and acquire them. Only Fabricators Inc. has a wider array of contacts and customers.

O.C.C.: Criminal Boss.

Skills of Note: Literacy 98%, Basic Mathematics 98%, Advanced Mathematics 98%, Law 83%, Business and Finance 98%, Art 93%, Computer Operation 98%, Streetwise 51%, Find Contraband and Illegal Weapons 57%, Athletics, Prowl

60%, Climbing 83%/73%, W.P. Blunt (+2 to strike and parry), W.P. Pistol, W.P. Rifle.

Secondary Skills: Basic Electronics 68%, Basic Mechanics 68%, Wilderness Survival 68%, First Aid 83%, Land Navigation 67%, Computer Programming 68%.

Combat Skill: Hand to Hand: Expert.

Attacks per Melee: 4.

Bonuses: +3% to skills, +4 versus psionics, +4 versus insanity, +4 to damage, +4 to parry, +4 to dodge, +3 to roll, +2 to pull punch, +2 to strike, +2 to initiative, kick (2D4), tripping leg hook, roundhouse kick (3D6), critical strike on a natural 18-20, paired weapons (all).

Appearance: Morley Donaldson is a stout man who gives the impression of being made of spheres. He dresses slovenly, and is never without his Carolina Panthers hat. He also always wears an emerald high school class ring for good luck.

Occupation: Fence/Criminal Organizer.

Weapons: Donaldson is never without a .50 cal. Desert Eagle pistol (6D6).

Vehicle: Donaldson drives around in a bulletproofed Volvo.

Body Armor: Morley typically wears a vest with an A.R. of 12 and 120 S.D.C.

Salary: Morley Donaldson makes anywhere between 2 and 3 million dollars a year from his acquisitions business, plus numerous contacts among the criminal underworld.

Hugh Younger's Masks of Power

Hugh Younger, the King of the Faustian Court, has discovered or invented a means by which to bind a human being to an elemental mask. This involves ritual torture as the victim's life force is bound to the magical creation. So far, he has only displayed the ability to create four masks at this point.

These masks are named after the element they are made from. The masks themselves are very ugly, mirroring the suffering their wearers have to undergo in the binding process. The four elements are silver, gold, lead, and iron.

Each mask has its own, common psionics, and different super abilities that it uses. The common abilities are what the mask has to keep a functioning artifact welded to a human being. The psionics are something granted to the wearer that he or she has no control over. The super abilities are granted to the wearer to use at will.

When a suitable recipient is found, he or she is brought to Hugh Younger's headquarters underneath Chicago. They are kept between "sessions" in a dungeon below the main quarters and rooms of the Faustian Court. The victim is matched to the element necessary for the mask. Younger and his assistants proceed to weld the element to the person, shaping the mask until it matches the torment the victim is suffering.

The ritual requires that the victim be cut with a specialized rune-covered knife. Each cut transfers one of the victim's P.P.E. points to the spell activating the mask. The mask maker also casts his P.P.E. into the element shaping. Each cutting ritual may take several hours as the victim is slowly bled dry. The vic-

tim permanently loses one P.P.E. point every session. The cuts heal themselves at 20 times the normal rate, with the recovery of P.P.E. by the victim. The casting mage recovers his P.P.E. as usual without suffering any loss whatsoever. These ritual sessions will go on until the victim is reduced to one P.P.E. and the mask creation P.P.E. cost is paid in full. The ritual costs 2000 P.P.E.

If the victim saves against this horrible magic two out of three rolls, then his/her body will reject the mask permanently. The scars from the ritual will remain (-2D6 to P.B.).

Younger has also built a domination spell into the mask creation so that he can control each wielder he creates. If the victim saves once against this spell, he or she controls the mask and is free to do as he/she wants to escape, or try to take revenge against his/her captors.

The saving throw for each of these spells is 18, including bonuses.

Elemental Masks

Common Abilities: Each mask possesses 1D6x1000 S.D.C., and regenerates 1D6x100 per melee. It cannot be removed after it has been welded to a wearer.

Common Psionics: The masks grant Automatic Mind Block, See the Invisible, Alter Aura, Nightvision (500 feet/152 meters), Impervious to Poisons/Toxins, and Bio-Regeneration (1D6x10 S.D.C. per melee), and the wearer does not need to breathe. There is no I.S.P. cost for these powers.

Special Abilities: Each mask has a separate set of abilities the wearer can use at will.

Silver: The Silver Mask wielder possesses each of the Elemental Control powers (Control Air, Fire, Water, Earth) with the accompanying Alter Physical Structure powers appearing at the same time. The wielder must alter his/her structure to fire before being able to control it, for example.

Gold: The mask allows the wielder to use two powers at will: **Multiple Projection** (This power allows the character to shoot the following at a target: ice, fire, water, stone, sonic booms, kinetic force, lightning, light, acid. All are 10D6 for damage and +3 to strike. Various effects can be found in the **Heroes Unlimited™** rule book), and **Projectile Hexing**. (This power allows the user to put a "hex" on a target, altering reality to cause something bad to happen to the victim. Examples include failing in an attack, tripping and falling, having a weapon jam, etc. Never anything horribly damaging in and of itself; the G.M. should use discretion with this power. First, the character must strike the target. The target must roll a natural 18 without bonuses to defeat the Projectile Hex. If the target cannot save, the hex thrower can choose the outcome 33% of the time; roll percentages. Any roll over 33%, and the outcome is still bad for the target. It's just not what the character wanted.)

Lead: The Lead Mask wielder possesses the powers of **Control Radioactivity** and **Alter Physical Structure: Plasma**.

Iron: The Iron Mask wielder possesses the powers of **Alter Physical Structure: Metal** and **Alter Limbs**.

Physical Bonuses for the Mask Wielder: +2D6 P.S., +2D6 P.E., -2D6 P.B., base S.D.C. is P.E.x50, Hit Points are P.E.x10 +2D6 per level. Free wielders have a 1D6+5 added to their M.E.

Julian Poe's Hooded Executioners

A would-be usurper of Hugh Younger's power, Julian Poe has developed a Mask Wielder of his own. Unfortunately, his Mask Wielders are not as powerful as his rival's. Additionally, Poe has only been able to use cloth as his main ingredient in the mask process since he has not discovered how to shape the elemental material into a mask yet.

Each executioner is grafted to a full hood made of various pieces of cloth. Poe has to pay triple the normal cost of the Mask Wielder ritual to create a Hooded Executioner as he sews the patches of enchanted cloth onto his victim. The saving throws versus these enchantments are only fifteen, including any bonuses versus magic, so Poe has suffered a number of resentful victims to his experiments.

Physical Bonuses: +1D6 P.S., +1D6 P.E., -1D6 P.B., base S.D.C. is P.E.x10, base Hit Points are P.E.x2 +2D6 per level. Free Hooded Executioners have a +1D6 added to their M.E.

Common Abilities: Each mask only has 1D6x200 and regenerates 1D6x50 every melee round. Of course, the hood cannot be removed without killing the wielder.

Common Psionics: The Hooded Executioners possess Automatic Mind Block, See the Invisible, Alter Aura, Nightvision (500 feet/152 meters), Impervious to Poisons/Toxins, and Bio-Regeneration 1D6x10 per melee, and does not need to breathe. All abilities are automatic and cost no I.S.P.

Wielder Powers: The Hooded Executioners must roll on the random powers table in **Heroes Unlimited™**. Poe has not been able to instill the same powers systematically in different subjects.

Grid Smiths

Grid Smiths are common in areas where there are many cross-dimensional influences. They are a living link to the energy field called The Grid. Unlike other Grid tappers, the Smith forces the energy outside of his body into a device. The effect is much the same as a Psi-Mechanic, or Techno-Wizard. The device is loaded with a superhuman ability instead of a psionic power or magic spell.

Additionally, The Grid allows the Smith some ability with regular machinery and weapons. It also boosts some of his/her physical abilities above those of a normal human.

A Smith with the proper tools is not to be underestimated. He can easily hold his own against most foes when he has enough time to build a gadget.

Grid Smith O.C.C. Powers and Abilities

1. Create Gadgets: The Grid Smith can invest a machine with a super power with the permanent expenditure of P.P.E. points. The smith then charges the gadget with I.S.P. to power it. Each charge lasts one minute, +1 melee per level. The raw power of the gadget is at the same level as the Smith when he creates it. The device will not make any scientific sense if taken apart.

Major powers cost 25 P.P.E. to build and 20 I.S.P. to charge. Minor abilities cost 15 P.P.E. to build and 10 I.S.P. to charge.

Example: Jack Tachyon, a third level Smith, is stuck at the bottom of a gorge with hundreds of villains close to finding him. He checks his tool belt. He has only enough parts for one gadget. He builds a flying harness to get out of the gorge. Wingless Flight costs Jack 15 P.P.E. for good. He charges the gadget with his last 10 I.S.P. The gadget is only able to fly for seven melees, but does fly at 260 mph (416 km), which is fast enough to carry Jack out of trouble.

The character does not receive any bonuses from the gadget's abilities. In the example above, Jack only gets the raw flight speed for his device, not any of the bonuses to dodge or initiative.

2. Weapon Structuring: This ability allows the Smith to change the damage that ordinary weapons can do, and the toughness of armor, with a touch. Weapon damage can be changed by 1D6 per level. Armor S.D.C. can be increased or decreased by 1D6x10 +5 per level. A weapon will always do at least 1D6 points of damage. Armor will always retain at least 10 S.D.C. and its base Armor Rating.

The character can also use any normal weapon he picks up. Do not select any W.P.s.

Rifts Note: This power can change M.D.C. to twice its number in S.D.C. and S.D.C. to one half its number in M.D.C. 10 M.D. will equal 20 S.D.C., and vice versa.

3. Mechano-Link: This power is the same as the power in the **Heroes Unlimited™** rule book. Bonuses are added in below.

4. Base P.P.E. and I.S.P.: The Smith's base P.P.E. is 1D6x10 +P.E. +10 per level. His I.S.P. is his P.P.E.x2 +10 per level.

5. Physical Bonuses: The Smith receives a +20 to P.S. and P.E., +2d4 to P.P., and +3d4 to his speed.

6. Skill Bonuses: The Smith enjoys the following bonuses on the listed skills: +20% to Pilot skills, Mechanical skills, and Pilot Related skills, +30% to Demolitions and Demolitions Disposal, +10% to any applicable Physical skill, +2 to strike/parry with any ancient weapon, +4 to strike with any modern weapon.

Grid Smith O.C.C. Skills

G.M.'s Note: This is for **Rifts®/Phase World®** characters mainly. **Heroes Unlimited™** characters may use the following, or roll on the random educational table in the rule book.

O.C.C. Skills

- Basic Math (+20%)
- Electrical Engineer (+20%)
- Mechanical Engineer (+20%)
- Weapons Engineer (+15%)
- Computer Repair (+10%)
- Basic Radio (+15%)
- Read Sensory Equipment (+20%)
- Select 3 Pilot skills of choice. (+10%)
- Hand to Hand: Basic

O.C.C. Related Skills: The Smith can select 10 other skills at level 1, plus 2 more at levels 4, 7, 11 and 13, from the following list.

- Communications: Any (+20%)
- Domestic: Any
- Electrical: Any (+20%)
- Espionage: Wilderness Survival only.

Mechanical: Any (+20%)

Medical: First Aid, or Paramedic, but Paramedic counts as two skills.

Military: Any (+10%)

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics, Gymnastics and Wrestling.

Pilot: Any (+20%)

Pilot Related: Any (+20%)

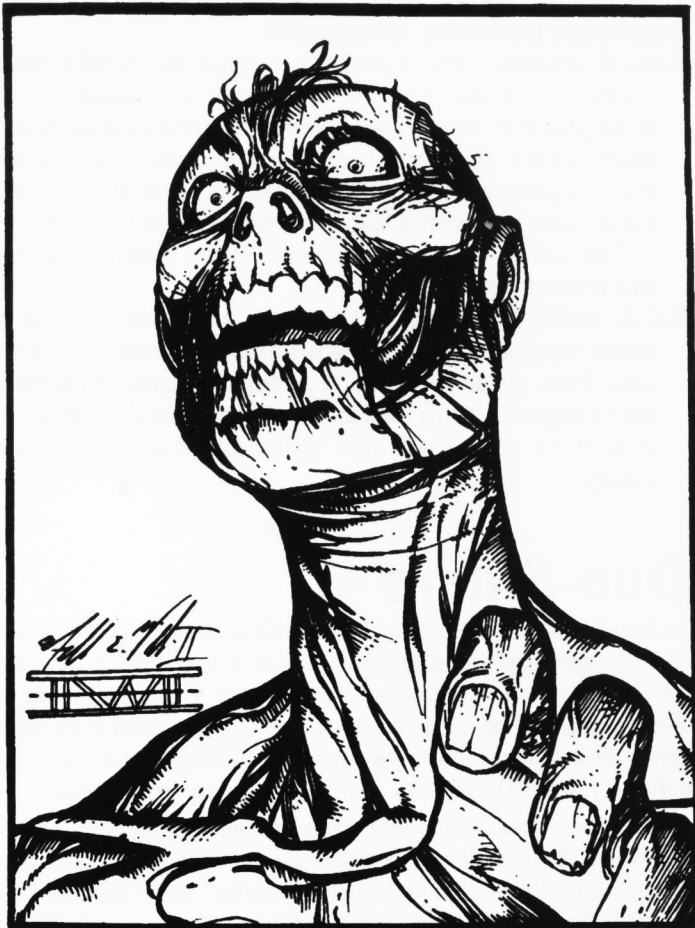
Rogue: Any

Science: Any (+10%)

Technical: Any (+10%)

Wilderness: Any

Secondary Skills: The Smith can select six skills from the above list, without the bonuses in parentheses.



Lybokja R.C.C. — Living Dead Men

Lybokjas are typically victims of a massive P.P.E. discharge that kills them, even as it empowers them to live again. The revenant is a battery of energy with a limited charge. The Lybokja can use his personal energy for spells, but he can never recover what he spends. Once his energy is all gone, the corpse must die again. His past life is not even a memory as he struggles to come to terms with his new existence.

The Lybokja's condition allows certain secondary abilities. They are immune to age, hunger, fatigue and poisons, and don't need to breathe air. They regenerate any damage done to their bodies, even lost limbs. They are also able to channel an energy

blast called hellfire that will burn even characters normally immune to fire. The hellfire will curve around corners to strike the Lybokja's enemy. The dead men also have supernatural strength.

Lybokjas are created by accident. It is almost impossible to duplicate the factors involved in their rebirth. These creatures are the rarest of all animated creatures. There is only one of these for every hundred other types of independent raised dead in existence.

Lybokja R.C.C.

Attributes: All attributes, except P.B., are 3D6+10. P.S. is considered supernatural. P.B. is 1D6.

Base Hit Points and S.D.C.: The Lybokja has base Hit Points of 3D6x100. His S.D.C. is 1D6x1000.

Base P.P.E.: Base P.P.E. is 1d10x1000.

Natural Abilities: The Lybokja possesses the hellfire blast (1D6x10 with one hand, 2D6x10 with both hands, +7 to strike plus P.P. bonuses, even burns characters normally immune to fire), does not eat, sleep, breathe, tire, or age, is immune to poisons of all types, regenerates 1D6x10 S.D.C. per melee, even regenerates lost limbs, and sees the invisible.

The Lybokja knows all common magic equal to his current level of experience.

R.C.C. Skills: The character knows the equivalent of Hand to Hand: Martial Arts and ten skills from the Domestic, Espionage, Pilot, Rogue, Science, Technical, W.P., and Wilderness skill categories. He is able to select two more skills at levels 3, 6, 9, 12 and 15. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Duo-Siders

Duo-Siders use the power of The Grid energy source to become juggernauts for a few minutes at a time. Their material bodies become living conductors, allowing a massive boost to their mental and physical abilities. The only problem from their perspective is that the charge from The Grid cannot be held indefinitely. Rash Duo-Siders do not last long in large battles.

Duo-Siders become men-at-arms and adventurers almost exclusively. Their basic personalities do not lend themselves to a heavy concentration on scholarly pursuits. Their link to The Grid blocks any ability to learn to cast spells, or use psionics. It also blocks Juicer and Crazy augmentation, as well as any other means of empowerment such as tattoo magic. They are not usually thoughtful enough to be trained as a knight. Robots and power armor are much too slow when compared to their natural abilities.

For the most part, Duo-Siders are bold adventurers who will plunge into trouble without a thought of the possible danger they are facing. An old Duo-Sider is a rare Duo-Sider who has learned to curb his exuberance through hard experience.

Duo-Sider R.C.C.

Transformation Bonuses: The character has +3D6 added to his attributes, P.S. becomes supernatural, a foot (.3 m) is added to his height, weight is doubled, and +2D6x500 to S.D.C. The transformation lasts one minute, plus one melee per level. It takes the character two melees to recharge between transforma-

tions. **G.M.'s Note:** A **Rifts®** environment will transform the Duo-Sider's S.D.C. to M.D.C.

Duo-Sider Powers: The Duo-Sider is granted the following powers by his link with The Grid.

1. Teleportational Speed: The character is able to move in any direction to any point almost instantaneously. It takes one action to start and one to stop. It also takes one action to change course. A teleportational speedster will blink in and out as he moves through an area such as a jungle as he avoids things in his way. The character can only strike and do damage at speeds below his top speed. His minimum speed is 500 mph (800 km). The maximum is lightspeed. Once the character crosses the sonic barrier, he becomes almost transparent to the world around him.

Teleportational Speed Bonuses: +4 attacks per melee, +4D4x10 to S.D.C., +2D6 to P.E., +12 to initiative, +4 to strike, +6 to parry, +12 to dodge, +12 to roll with punch.

Fast punches and kicks do 2D6 S.D.C. Super fast punches do 5D6 S.D.C. and cost two attacks. Super fast kicks do 6D6 and cost two attacks. Body blocks do 1D6x10 S.D.C., with the Duo-Sider taking half damage as well, and takes up four attacks. The character's vision is 10 times the normal human's.

2. Omni-Sight: The character is able to see across the spectrum from infra-red to ultra-violet. His vision is telescopic, allowing him to see a foot (.3 m) long sign at five miles (8 km). Omni-Sight also amplifies the ambient light to grant nightvision with a range of one mile (1.6 km).

3. Homing Energy Expulsion: The character is able to generate an eye-beam that will lock on a target and chase it until it hits the target or an obstacle, or exceeds the maximum range limit. The energy blast has three attacks per melee, is +10 to strike, does 2D6 +1D6 points of damage per level, and has a maximum range of 1000 feet (305 m).

4. Structural Disintegration: The character is able to generate an aura about his hands and feet that allows him to destroy physical matter. On a called shot of 18 or higher, the character can even punch through armor plate. Add 5D6 to physical damage.

Duo-Siders typically fall into the Headhunter (without the cybernetics), Wilderness Scout, Vagabond, and any CS Grunt equivalent category. Optionally, the character can roll on the **Heroes Unlimited™** educational table.

Experience Tables

Use the following experience tables for the new O.C.C./R.C.C.s. Mask Wielders and Hooded Executioners use the Enchanted Object table. Grid Smiths fall under the Hardware table. Lybokjas fall into the Alien slot. Duo-Siders are Mega-Heroes, of course.

Blueprint of a Dragon



Optional Source Material and Adventure Ideas for Rifts®

By John Courtenay Shera

The auditorium was filled to capacity — a rarity, even for the learned scholars of the Lazlo Free Academy. Usually there were two distractions from the spring seminars, the warm breezes of May luring frozen students onto the green campus, and the crunch of finals looming on the horizon. However, rumors of the impending lecture had been brewing for months now, and even the most distracted students jockeyed for position in the audience to see the mysterious results of the Blueprint Project. More surprising was the makeup of the crowd. Students of the sciences mingled with apprentices of the mystic arts. Professors of science and technology were seated next to masters of magic. The sea of faces reflected the multi-cultural nature of Lazlo. D-bee and human, mortal and supernatural, young and old all murmured their opinions about the nature of the study. The low wave of conversation tapered off as an elderly human, dressed in the black academic robes of the Free Academy, slowly walked to the podium. He nodded to a few of the more recognizable patrons, cleared his throat, and spoke in a booming voice that had set the tone for many a debate.

“Distinguished scholars of Lazlo, as the leader of the Council of Learning, it is my pleasure to bid you welcome to the fifteenth annual Quest presentation.” He paused as applause erupted from the crowd. Waving the room again to silence, he continued. “As you all know, the Quest presentation is an honor awarded to the highest degree of academic achievement. It is a reflection of excellence in the pursuit of knowledge in the sciences, technology, mystic or mental arts. Past awards have gone to those who left distinct impressions in particular fields. However, this year we are honoring a group who sets a new example for others to follow: a unique project that blurs the boundaries between science and magic.”

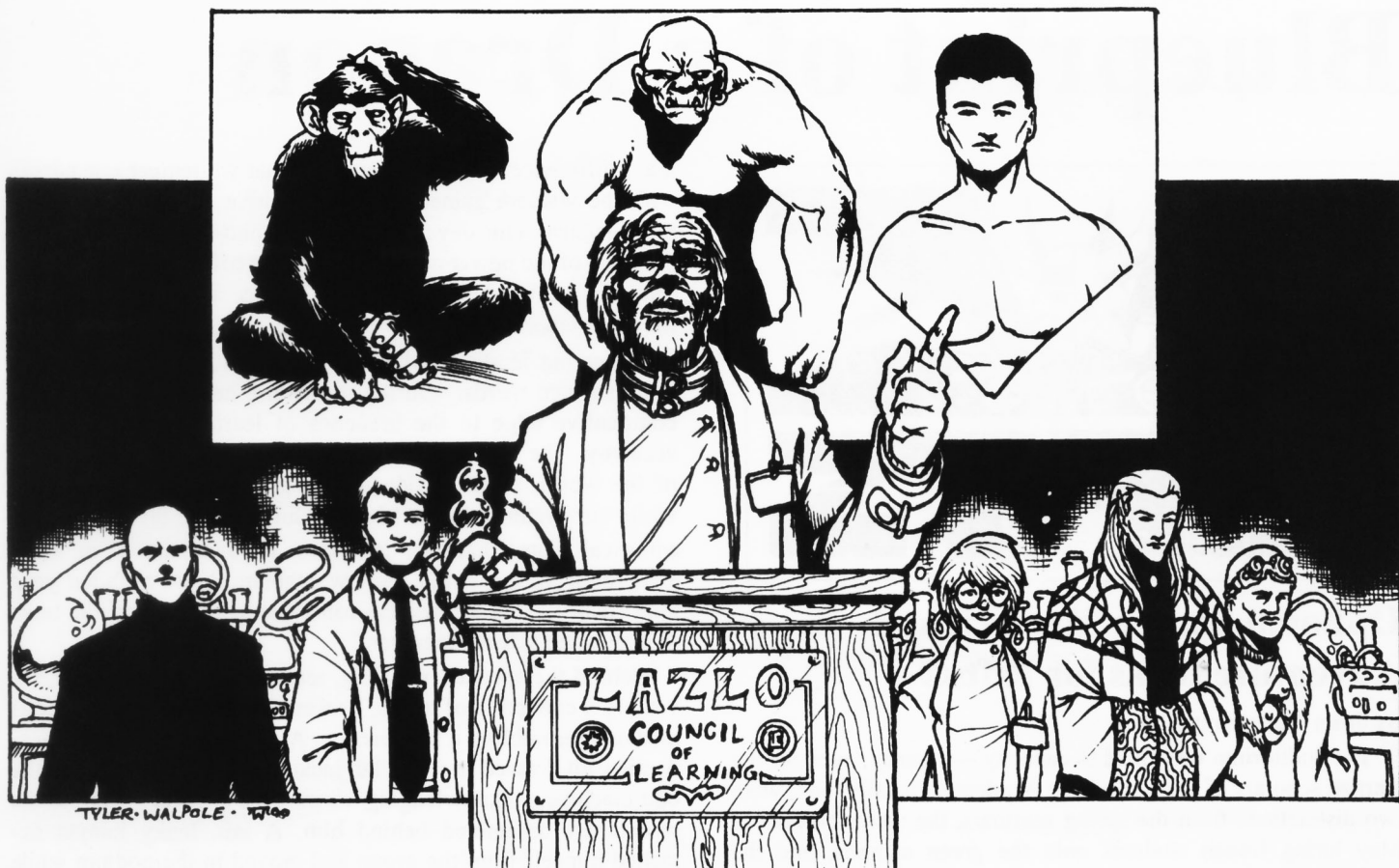
The speaker grasped the edges of the podium for effect as he leaned over, as if to address someone personally. “Our city is a bright spot amongst a field of darkness. We have always prided ourselves in the pursuit of knowledge, perhaps in the vain attempt to reach the spectacular pillars of Pre-Rifts Earth. The

main difference in our attainment is that we temper our pursuit with the wisdom gained from an intuitive connection with the metaphysical. Our development of Techno-Wizardry is but one example of the power at our command. Scoff if you will, but the future of knowledge is one where science and magic coexist in the same laboratory.”

Resuming in stance, the speaker nodded as if in agreement with his own words. “During my tenure here, I have noticed a competitive edge to the branches of learning at our beloved academy. The sciences too often cling to long formed theories of the world, casting aside the simple wisdom of the mystic, while our brethren in the Mage’s Guild ignore the centuries of empirical data that the sciences have amassed in their exploration of the world. Fellow scholars, I say abandon your long rivalry! True knowledge can be gained by using the tools of magic and science together.”

Behind the speaker, the long, red curtains began to part, revealing a collection of tables, beakers, slide trays, and a curious machine resembling a microscope. A team of seven young academics, all dressed in white lab jackets, stood in line behind the odd machine. Acknowledging his cue, the speaker waved to the researchers assembled behind him. A tall, lanky human detached himself from the group and moved to the podium while the speaker continued. “Project Blueprint has set a high standard for future recipients of this award. By utilizing tools once secluded by intellectual squabbling, they have uncovered a possible answer to a unique mystery. Ladies and gentlemen, may I present to you Dr. Vincent Sanderson, project leader.” The speaker turned to Sanderson, shook hands, and moved quietly to the side of the stage. Sanderson, obviously unused to mass attention, ran his fingers through his mane of white hair and cleared his throat.

“Hello everyone, we’re glad you all could make it. Before we begin, I’d like to introduce you to my team. Due to the nature of this project, I needed some high caliber backup, and all departments provided me with incredibly talented individuals in their respective fields.” He looked at the group behind him. “From the Computer Science Department, I’d like you all to meet Professor Charlie Helenius.” A blonde haired man smirked momentarily. “The Biology Department provided me with the most capable assistant ever, Dr. Lucy Hartlett. She picked up the nickname of ‘academy ghou’ over the course of the study. If you donated tissue samples to the project, you’ll recognize her as the one with the scalpel.” A short, red haired woman waved to the crowd, and Sanderson continued. “This project required the development of a new Techno-Wizardry device, which will be highlighted later. In order to fulfill this need, the Magic Guild graciously provided the assistance of the mage Piel Eikling and Techno-Wizard extraordinaire Devin Wathen.” A tall Elf nodded, and a young black man gave a quick salute. “Our initial work was done with the assistance of a private individual, gifted with certain mental abilities that proved quite beneficial to our study. Please welcome Andrew Delion.” The bald man towards the end nodded quickly. “Finally, the libraries of the Academy and the Mage’s Guild were made available to my researcher,



Professor Jack Shaffer, whose assistance was provided by the Department of Letters. Folks, their dedication and hard work made this research possible." A polite applause caused Sanderson to wait for a moment. As it died down, he began pacing in front of the audience.

"You might recall the Quest award from three years ago. Dr. Emma Ling, of the Department of Biology and Botany, spearheaded a movement to classify the million new types of flora and fauna that have become part of the Earth ecosystem since the appearance of the Rifts. How would these aliens compare to our fauna? How did they fit into the ecosystems of Earth? Or, if you want a more practical approach, what kind of biological differences are there between the newcomers and us? For example, are the biologies of Dwarves and Elves similar enough for a human doctor to administer aid or human medications? The truth is, we didn't really know. Until this time, there was no real scientific approach to examining these newcomers. As an assistant on that project, I was surprised at some of the results we found." Sanderson paused and rubbed his hair again. "In order to understand the mountain of problems we were expecting to encounter, picture trying to number all of the grains of sand on a beach, then trying to fit them all back into the original rock fragments they came from. Such was the power of the Rifts. As you know, our world is a crossroads of an infinite scale. We were dealing with information not only from a million other worlds, but a possible million of parallel Earths." Sanderson grinned for a moment. "I'm sorry to rehash this information to you all again, but it's directly responsible for Project Blueprint."

Sanderson turned to Helenius and nodded. A slide projector burst to life, and a projection appeared on the screen. There were three pictures, a chimpanzee, an Ogre and a human, standing side by side. "Pre-Rifts scientists were able to establish a di-

rect link between the human animal and the chimpanzee. Genetically speaking, humans and chimps are more than 99% similar. The bond is so close that our species can actually exchange blood. One of many findings over this project was the definition of the relationship between humans and Ogres. We now can prove an evolutionary link showing that ogres are in fact a form of hominid evolving from Earth, or a parallel Earth. From Pre-Rifts data, we think that the Ogre is actually an existing example of the Neanderthal, a hominid whose remains were found in Northern Europe, and died out as humankind pushed into that area. Earlier scientists theorized that the Neanderthals were absorbed by human communities, interbreeding with their newer evolved cousins. This fact of interbreeding with Homo Sapiens has been partially supported through old stories, coming from Lazzo residents Rifted from the Palladium World, where it has long been told of Ogre hordes stealing away human women.

"Ling's findings continued. Like the link between Homo Sapiens and chimpanzees, we determined there was a direct link between Wolfen, Coyles, Kankoran and Bearmen, all humanoid species from the Palladium World, to their animals cousins: wolves, coyotes, foxes and bears. From the records we have from Palladium, we can determine that it is not a parallel world to our own, so I would theorize that somewhere in that planet's past, these animals were Rifted there and took a separate path of evolution, evolving into distinct humanoid species. Despite the fact that these humanoid species seem unique to Palladium, their genetic record indicates that they have origins on Earth. As a side note, some of the earliest legends of Palladium seem to indicate that it shares the distinction of being a dimensional crossroads, much like our world is today. Looking at the sheer number of alien fauna roaming our planet due to the random acts of the Rifts, it is not a theoretical stretch to assume that

some of our animal life became displaced on another planet and thrived."

Another nod to Helenius changed the slide. The screen held a large blob, with smaller dots and wavy lines contained inside it. "As our catalog of samples grew, our findings proved something pretty unusual. What we have up there is a cell, an animal cell. It is the same building block used for every single animal evolving on Earth, from field mouse to whale. Every animal from planet Earth, from the dinosaur to man, shares this in common. There is the cell membrane, a skin that houses the entire machine. That dot over there is a vacuole, the waste disposal system of the cell. That structure there is the mitochondria. It's the power source of the cell, converting chemicals into energy for the cell machine. The brain of the operation is the nucleus, the blob in the middle. This entire machine has many functions, but one of them is to carry information, like a message in a bottle. Every animal has the same bottle." Sanderson pointed to a pair of interwoven wavy lines. "This structure is the message. It's a chromosome containing the DNA strand that controls the genetic program unique to every creature alive. Every individual obtains characteristics from both parents, thus the DNA is a combination of characteristics from the parents. As we all know, DNA is unique to every individual, but elements of it are the same for each species. It defines the parameters of a species, and the uniqueness of an individual."

Helenius shifted to another slide, which contained four more animal cells on the screen. "What you are seeing here are samples taken from animals not evolving from an Earth species." Pointing at each example, Sanderson continued. "Here is the cell of an Elf. There, a sample from a Dwarf. Over there, an Orc sample, and finally, here is a sample from a Simvan. Notice that each cell has essentially the same structure. Of course, the DNA chain will be wildly different from anything found on Earth, but the bottle that holds the DNA message remains the same. Evolutionally speaking, this is incredible."

Sanderson turned to face the audience. "In a way, Dr. Ling's study highlighted some interesting notions about evolution. Looking at the structures of the D-Bee cells, and reading through some of the descriptions of their home world, we get the idea that their world was similar to ours in many ways. It would appear that the same path of evolution our world took replayed itself on other worlds. I guess you could say that evolution always follows the easiest path. The animal cell is a marvel of biological engineering in itself; finding out that its form is unchanging through the Megaverse only proves that it is the ultimate form to be used in the building blocks of life.

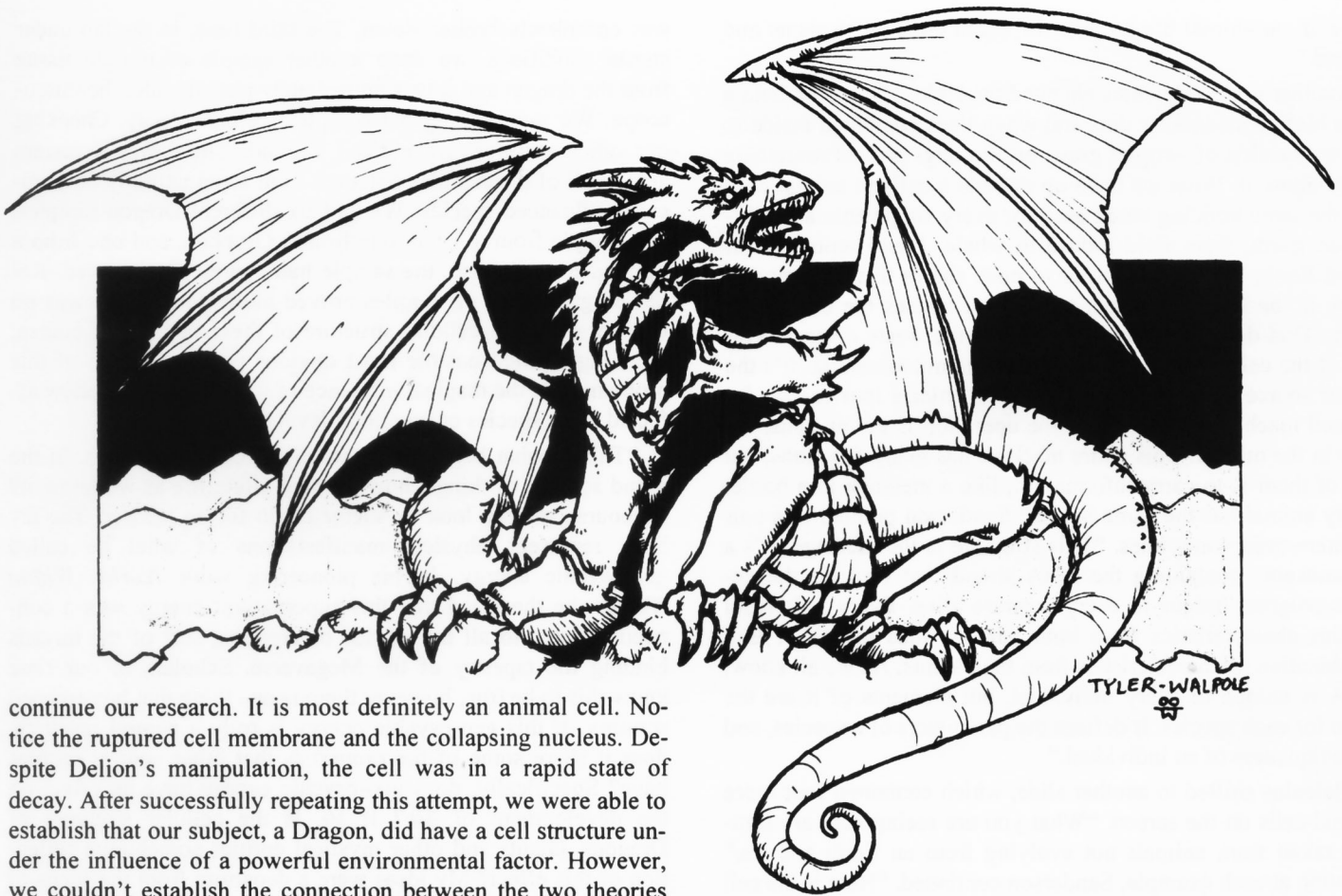
"Now we come to the problem raised by Dr. Ling's research. When we conducted this study, we had a great deal of variety in the animal species right inside the city limits of Lazlo. In order to gather data, we relied on the use of small tissue samples. Generally they store well, and even something as small as a hair follicle yields enough cells to be used for the most intensive study. Ling's team spent hours obtaining samples from residents. In each case, the sample would be collected, cataloged, and sent back to the academy for study. At the academy, Ling discovered a problem with a few samples. The first case arose when the tissue sample of a young Fire Dragon was examined. The sample had completely degraded, and was rendered unusable. Thinking we had somehow corrupted the sample, we obtained another sample from the individual. Again, the sample

was completely broken down. The third time, in the lab under sterile conditions, we drew another sample of muscle tissue from the dragon and it was immediately placed under the microscope. We saw nothing but complete cellular decay. Checking our other samples, we noticed a trend. There was a pattern among all of the samples obtained from supernaturally or magically influenced species. We had six different Dragon samples, one sample from a Titan, one from a Gryphon, and one from a Sphinx. In each case, the sample had completely decayed. Repeated gatherings of samples proved ineffectual. There was no way to study the cellular structure of these beings. Of course, Dr. Ling pointed out the most obvious possible source of this problem: that the magical influence of the ley lines somehow affected these species on a cellular level.

"This is what began to attract my interest. Ley lines. In the grand scheme of things, how do they affect life as we know it? Of course we can look to Victor Lazlo for an answer. The ley lines represent physical manifestations of what he called geo-psychic energy. In his pioneering work *Worlds Within Worlds*, he theorized that this supernatural energy was a connecting force to all the worlds of creation, sort of the threads binding the tapestry of the Megaverse. Scholars of our time know this to be true, however there is one thing that has escaped scrutiny. If this geo-psychic energy is truly a natural resource, does it share some of the properties that other energy sources have? Specifically, does geo-psychic energy have an effect on the development of life? If so, is the cellular structure of Dragons, Giants and other mystical entities somehow a reflection of this effect? My ideas were a departure from the focus of Dr. Ling's study, so with her permission, I took the information uncovered over this finding, and began focusing solely upon it.

"Thus began Project Blueprint. I set out to prove two things: first that organisms once considered creatures of legend were in fact anchored to the same biological drives that other forms of life have. The second theory was that the geo-psychic energy, ley lines, were an environmental factor in the evolution of these creatures of legend. I'd assembled part of my team, and we were brainstorming. A Dragon looked real. On the surface, it was an animal. It reproduced, fed, learned and demonstrated every criteria of life. However, under the microscope, this animal looked like it was made out of simple plasm. How could we prove that a dragon was a biological entity, rather than a spontaneous product of magic? After months of repeated attempts, it looked like we had reached an impasse. It was at this time where the project attracted the attention of an influential patron. This person suggested that we attack the problem from another angle, and provided us with the capable assistance of Mr. Delion.

"Delion, a talented Mind Melter, possesses the ability of Bio-Manipulation. With a simple thought, he is able to stimulate the living tissue of an organism in certain ways. We reasoned that since the tissue samples were degrading once they were removed from the subject, we had to fool the sample into thinking it was still part of a functioning biological system. Despite his talent, Delion failed on the first attempts of Bio-Manipulation. He had never learned how to use his power in this way before, so he had to train to manipulate a tissue sample from a supernaturally charged subject. It took weeks, but on one day we had limited success." Sanderson cued for another slide. It appeared to be an image of another animal cell, but it looked like it was in the process of exploding. "Here was the proof that we needed to



continue our research. It is most definitely an animal cell. Notice the ruptured cell membrane and the collapsing nucleus. Despite Delion's manipulation, the cell was in a rapid state of decay. After successfully repeating this attempt, we were able to establish that our subject, a Dragon, did have a cell structure under the influence of a powerful environmental factor. However, we couldn't establish the connection between the two theories yet. We needed some way to examine a cell completely. Again, our benefactor provided us with another avenue of approach to our problem."

"Our well traveled friend, versed in the ways of magic, proposed the construction of a new microscope, powered by Techno-Wizardry. With his assistance, we were able to round out our team, and constructed the microscope you see before you." Sanderson moved to the equipment on the table. "It functions like a normal microscope, but it is empowered by a spell from the world of Palladium, unknown to most mages of our world. I can't pronounce the name of the spell, but I'm told it's translated as "Immobilize." The properties of this spell are spectacular, and seemingly tailor made for our purposes. The spell projects a cone of light that temporarily suspends time for a limited duration. Everything caught within this light is halted, frozen in time. Our magical associates constructed the new microscope in a few short months. During this time, Delion practiced his Bio-Manipulation. In order for this project to work, everyone needed to work in concert. The seconds it took to obtain the sample and place it on the microscope meant the difference between a well preserved and a degraded sample. After more than a year of working on the project, it looked like we were ready to map out a cell. It took five attempts, and the computer artistry of Professor Helenius, but we were successful."

Helenius reached over to the computer on the table, tapped out a few keys, and a large hologram appeared over the screen. The image was of a large cell. Sanderson moved closer to the image with his pointer. "Here you have a reconstruction of an animal cell, obtained from a Dragon. Note the classic biological design. This cell has a membrane, vacuoles, nucleus, even chromosomes. It is definitive proof of the biological nature of drag-

ons. However, notice the mitochondria." A few taps on the keyboard enlarged the little blob of light. A new slide flashed onto the screen behind the holo-image. "The slide portrays the mitochondria from a cell donated by yours truly. The Dragon mitochondria bears a close resemblance to it, but is markedly different. I think you will see a distinct similarity to this cell structure." The slide projector clicked again, and showed another object. "The object you see now is a chloroplast, essentially, the fuel center for a plant cell. For the most part, plants derive their energy from a localized source of ambient energy, the sun. Notice the similar elements to the Dragon mitochondria. The Dragon mitochondria appears to be a structure that can fuel the cell in two ways: like an animal it may acquire nutrients in the form of food, which is broken down all the way to the lowest bodily level. Like a plant, it can harness ambient energy around it, in this case the geo-psychic force that seems to be present in varying degrees on every world. Ladies and gentlemen, I believe that this structure begins to confirm my theory. I think that the organism known as the Dragon evolved on a world so influenced by magical energy, that it developed biological uses for it. This explains why supernatural entities are so much more powerful here on Earth. Their bodies are harnessing the ambient energy around them on the cellular level. For the first time in history, may I present to you the blueprint of a Dragon."

The holo-image returned to the image of a cell. It glowed brightly in the darkened auditorium. Silence reigned for a moment as the body of scholars seemed to digest the presentation. Sanderson cued the lights, and returned to the podium. "Do I have any questions?"

An elder professor of the sciences raised his hand. "Doctor, in what ways have you confirmed your findings? Have you worked exclusively with the same subject?"

Sanderson shook his head. "The theory hasn't been totally confirmed, sir. Using the new microscope, we have tested samples from other supernatural beings, and have identified similar structures in each one of them. Just as the cellular structure of the Elf, Dwarf and human were similar, it would appear that evolution chose this form to use amongst the organisms that are affected by geo-psychic energy. However, as I said before, this theory hasn't been thoroughly researched yet because it would require us to remove the influence of the ley line from the subject. That will require us to travel off world, to a locale where the raw power of the lines is not present. That is, if we should we decide to pursue this line of investigation."

A tall, ancient looking Elven mage stood, towering over those next to him, and spoke with a heavily accented voice. "Doctor, I must say that I find this quite interesting. In fact, it reminds me of a text from my youth, back in the old country. I cannot remember the author, but it was an early study of life on Palladium. It mentions a creature called the Beast Dragon..." As the mage spoke, Sanderson motioned to Helenius, cueing a new slide, of the massive, primitive looking Beast Dragon. Sanderson smiled as he interrupted. "Yes sir, thank you for reminding me. Our researcher uncovered that text in his search. The text is an old document, written over three centuries ago, outlining many of the creatures found on Palladium. We found two legends that seem to support our theory that Dragons and other creatures of magic are susceptible to the pulls of evolution. They both seem to show an evolutionary path in a living biological record. The first is the one you mentioned."

Sanderson turned to the screen and pointed. "The creature portrayed is known as a Beast Dragon. They are a rare breed of Dragon, who some Palladium scholars believe might be a living ancestor of the Dragon, sort of a Neanderthalic Dragon. They demonstrate many of the powers and abilities of a typical Dragon, but are not as mystically powerful or intelligent." Murmurs wafted through the audience as Sanderson cued another slide, showing a lineup of Goblins. "Another interesting bit of lore is the origin of the D-Bee species known as the Goblin. Popular legend indicates that they are somehow related to Faerie-kind. It is even rumored that there is a rare breed of Goblin that has innate, Faerie-like powers, perhaps serving as the "missing link" between Faerie-kind and their mortal cousins. In both cases, we haven't explored the cellular structures of any of these examples. We haven't seen a Beast Dragon around Lazlo. As for obtaining cellular samples from the creatures of Fey, well, we didn't want to push our luck even for the sake of science." Sanderson paused as for a moment. "Are there any other questions?"

"Doctor Sanderson?" Sanderson had to search for the speaker, a Dwarf lost in the crowd. "If what you say is correct, that the cellular structure of the Dragon breaks down immediately after removal from the body, how do you explain the magical power associated with artifacts made from these creatures, such as Dragon armor and weaponry?"

Without hesitation Sanderson answered. "Yes sir, you raise a good point. The truth is we didn't explore this tangent. While an exploration into this might yield an answer, I felt that such research would be unethical. Using the examples you gave in your

question, these items are often created from materials taken from an unwilling participant. However, I would theorize that when creating these items, like Dragon scale armor, there is a mystical process which brings out the inherent magical nature of these items. I must again state that this is mere conjecture on my part."

Another hand went up, a silver haired Elven matron, judging by the elaborate robes. "I must say, Dr. Sanderson, that I have reservations about your research. By exposing the true origins of such a power like that of a Dragon, don't you run the risk of less ethical scientific manipulation of your work? Perhaps I don't truly understand the nature of your work."

Sanderson again shook his head. "I understand your reservations, but looking at our study, I can't see its results being abused. First of all, we're just looking at the cell as a whole. In order to truly find how the cell mechanism works, we would have to crack the genetic code trapped in the chromosome. We haven't even mapped out the human code yet, let alone that of a Dragon. However, I'm sure you're familiar with the abilities of the Coalition in the field of genetic manipulation. A Dog Boy is proof enough of their skill in working with DNA code. I think the secret of the Dragon cellular makeup will be safe from them because it took unbelievable efforts from us, using Techno-Wizardry and psionics, to even get a picture of a cell. Even if the Coalition overcame their aversion to magic, and duplicated our research exactly, they would have one problem." Sanderson grinned and turned to his associates. "Devin, time to play guinea pig." Turning back to the crowd, Sanderson continued. "The spell that forms the basis for our microscope has a defensive property." With a few motions, Wathen engaged the tool, and quickly touched the light forming at the base of the scope. Within moments he was surrounded by a glowing aura and he seemed to freeze in place. "Whatever penetrates the field of light instantly becomes affected by it. Therefore, no one can touch the sample, only view it from a safe distance." Thirty seconds later, Wathen seemed unaffected, and resumed standing. Amused laughter erupted from the crowd.

"Doctor Sanderson?" A woman's voice called from the middle of the crowd. "You keep calling geo-psychic energy an environmental factor influencing evolution. How come we haven't seen any serious changes on Earth?"

Sanderson drew himself up to attention to answer. "First of all, evolution doesn't happen overnight. It is a slow process of gradual change, occurring over generation upon generation. We haven't had the influence of the ley lines for that long. However, we know that this geo-psychic energy is influencing natural selection. Take magic use, for example. While it has been established that every person has a small reserve of potential psychic energy, usually those practicing the mystic arts have the greatest reserves. It's an interesting observation that often, one encounters a mage from a long family line of mages, indicating that there might be a slight genetic disposition towards the practice of magic. Psionics are the same way. In both cases, one can find individuals that are from families with no psychic or magical ability. However, it's often the case where gifted individuals bond and reproduce with other gifted individuals. Look at the clans of Psi-Stalkers, raising new generations of gifted children each year. As for the rest of humankind, it would be interesting to see the developments in humanity over the course of a million years of exposure to the Rifts. Perhaps we might develop a cellular structure similar to what we found in the Dragon."

"BLASPHEMY!"

The entire audience turned to the source of anger. A middle aged man, dressed in the robes of a mage, stood defiantly. "Again, I say, blasphemy!"

Sanderson took a step back. "Sir, I..."

"How dare you suggest that humans will ever attain the perfection of a dragon." The man's eyes were flashing, and his voice rose with heat. "It is written that the dragon is the embodiment of magic, not a product of it. You, with your science. Claiming that Styphon and his brethren stem from common animals. They are the shapers. They are the makers. They are..."

There was a large whirl of movement that took place on the stage as Plato detached himself from the corner where he had stood since the beginning of the presentation. Resuming his massive, natural form, he overtook the entire stage, somehow managing to keep from smashing any of the delicate equipment there. His head towered over the podium, yards above the human Sanderson. While the members of the audience were used to his form, its sudden appearance startled some of them, and shook the interloper into silence. Plato's already deep voice developed into a rumble that shook the floor. The ancient Dragon craned his neck as far into the audience as he could, staring directly at the indignant mage. "Did I disturb your train of thought? Please go on, I am interested in hearing your unbiased opinion about the nature of my species. I must say, it is most pleasing to my ears to hear that I am in fact the creation of the gods, and not a descendant of a common rock lizard."

The source of the interruption sputtered, and took his seat as the Dragon glared balefully. Many of the audience members, former pupils of the wyrm, chuckled as they remembered similar episodes of sarcasm from their youth. Satisfied that he had made his point, Plato resumed a less threatening stance. "When I provided assistance to Dr. Sanderson and his team, I had no doubts that his theories would come under attack from religious zealots. It reminds me of something I had witnessed earlier, much earlier.

"Around six hundred years ago, as humanity was just starting to explore the scientific boundaries of this world, another scientist, a man by the name of Darwin, dared to contradict religion as he published his theories of the origins of mankind. It was a revolutionary piece of work, which presented a well argued case for evolution, not just the evolution of man, but the evolution of life. His ideas came under attack from closed minds, who shouted philosophical fanaticism. Instead of accepting the idea of evolution as a wonder of development, they held to their beliefs that man was forever graced by the hand of their god, and had dominion over the natural world. Surely, as decades and centuries of supporting evidence became available, the theory of evolution grew into acceptance, but it was a superficial acceptance. For, while many believed in their origin, they ignored their place in the world, clinging to the belief that they were its masters. Humankind knew they shared a family tree with all life on Earth, but they grew arrogant in their ideal that technological might makes right. By detaching themselves from their natural origins, they planted the seeds of their own destruction. The "Golden Age" of man saw the worst of scientific abuse, as empire after empire sought to create the perfect human, failing to realize that such a creation would prove their downfall. Call it what you will, but the cataclysm that was the Coming of the

Rifts was a fitting punishment for the arrogance of the old world. It gave this world a chance to start anew, without repeating the mistakes of the past."

Plato paused for a moment, then continued in a softer tone. "Dr. Sanderson pointed out the legends of Palladium, another world that had fallen victim to the onslaught of the Rifts, in many ways a twin to our world. Looking at the records we have, it would appear that the inhabitants of Palladium fell victim to the same arrogance as the humans of this world. Instead of pursuing technology to its disastrous extreme, those of Palladium attempted to harness magicks best left alone.

"There was one major inspiration for my involvement with this project. I believe this research will be a powerful reminder to those of my kind, those who would exploit this world for their own use. Despite the mythic qualities of Dragonkind, we are of the same origins as those around us. We share a kinship with every living being in the Megaverse. To ignore this bond is folly.

"Which brings me back to Project Blueprint. While scientifically, it is a solidly established piece of work, its true merit lies in the unification of science and magic. Dr. Sanderson has paved the way for a new approach to discovery. His theory helps paint a picture of natural progression, not only of one world, but of many. He has failed to repeat the arrogance of his human forefathers. His achievement is breaking down academic barriers for the sake of learning. Scholars of Lazlo, I say to you that this achievement could only have taken place within the walls of this learned place. Together, we will ensure that the mistakes of the this world's past are not repeated. This discovery is but one of many to come. Please join me in congratulating the pioneers of a new scientific era!"

The applause started slowly, but grew to a roar as the team for Project Blueprint assembled under the presence of the great Dragon.

Putting the Pieces Together

Using the Theory of Dragon Evolution in Your Campaign

Is the theory of Dragon evolution correct? Perhaps. Sanderson's theory only applies to magically charged creatures and beings like Dragons, Faeries, Giants and other staples of fantasy role-playing. It bears no application to supercharged mutations or technological beings. Primarily, it can be an excellent source of background information for those campaigns nestled in the confines of Lazlo. However, the actual theory is likely to spark interest from outside forces, forces not likely to take this theory lightly.

Followers of the Dragonwright: This religious cult, founded on the ideals of the perfection of the Dragon, is not likely to accept the study. This cult, with ties to Atlantis (via Styphathal), the Federation of Magic and the rest of the Magic Zone, could interpret Sanderson's research as a direct attack upon their religious beliefs. Perhaps some sort of "holy crusade" could erupt, targeting Lazlo as the den of iniquity, harboring the blasphemers.

The Splugorth and Atlantis: News of this magnitude is not likely to be well received in Atlantis. Information like this could lead to the development of weapons to be used against the supernatural, and Splynncryth is most likely not going to sit and wait to become a target. This could lead to increased espionage activity in Lazlo, as well as possible new magical creations to counter any possible biological threats.

The Coalition: The idea of manipulating the cellular structure of a Dragon is likely to attract the attention of Dr. Desmond Bradford. Already experimenting with the cellular structure of vampires and the Brodkil, Bradford might find this research valuable. Despite the magical influences upon Sanderson's study, Bradford could try to duplicate the study using the advanced facilities at Lone Star. Could Bradford find a way to reproduce Project Blueprint? While he couldn't use the Techno-Wizardry involved with the Lazlo study, there might be another avenue to approach this study.

The New German Republic's study and use of the effects of uranium seem to illustrate that radiation can have a powerful effect upon the nature of the supernatural. In fact, the presence of uranium seems to retard the magical powers of the monstrous (nullifies the bio-regenerative abilities). By taking advantage of the diplomatic ties between the Coalition and the New German Republic, Bradford could duplicate this research, perhaps breaking the genetic code of the wyrm by using uranium as the means to slow the cellular decay. This kind of breakthrough could lead to the development of biological weapons targeting the supernatural, information valuable to both the Coalition and their German allies.

At the very least, the Coalition is likely to discover the fact that Sanderson and Lazlo are in the beginning stages of cellular research. Since this knowledge is a cornerstone of the Coalition, they might look into eliminating this future threat before it grows into something larger.

Dragons and Other Supernatural Creatures: How is the average Dragon going to react to the news that a mere human has begun to scrutinize the origins of creatures of magic? The thought of a "mortal" origin is likely to unsettle even the noblest creature, and the knowledge that a human is the source of this discovery is even more likely to cause unrest. Perhaps the leaders of Lazlo might come under criticism from these individuals. The search for knowledge is a noble effort, however many free thinking, individual entities could question the extent when it comes to their own origins. If Sanderson's research is correct, it could open a can of Megaversal worms.

Exploiting the Research

Another aspect of Dr. Sanderson's study is definitely going to attract attention. By his use of the spell *Immobilize*, Sanderson is advertising a powerful tool from the spell casters of Palladium, a spell that has distinct tactical possibilities in the war torn world of Rifts Earth.

Immobilize

Reprinted from the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®**

Range: 60 feet (18.3 m).

Duration: 2 melees per level of the spell caster.

Saving Throw: Special; if a successful save is made, the player rolls 1D4 to determine how many melee rounds his character is immobilized. After that time his character is able to move

freely out of the cone, but cannot move to affect anything inside it.

P.P.E.: 25

Spell Level: Seven.

This spell creates a transparent, glittering cone with a 20 foot (6.1 m) radius and 40 feet (12.2 m) tall (the spell caster may make it smaller if desired). The cone halts *EVERYTHING* within its scope. Missile weapons, speech, movement, flight, everything is momentarily frozen in time. Anyone entering or touching the glittering cone of light is *also* instantly immobilized. When the spell time elapses, any missile weapons or creatures in flight will drop to the ground while speech and movement will continue.



Optional Source Material for Rifts® Phase World®

By Richard Jenkin

Tyrell Industries

Design Note: The Power levels have been dramatically reduced from what the author originally presented. Still, the power level is high as per most **Phase World™** technology.

"If there is a Cosmic Forge, you'll only get there in a Tyrell Industries ship."

Tyrell Industries was formed from the ground up by one man — William Tyrell — with a very focused dream. That dream was to build spacecraft of all kinds, and build them well enough to become a leader in that field. Through a combination of luck and hard work, William Tyrell has managed to establish a company which does both of these things.

At this point in time, Tyrell Industries is a multi-billion credit enterprise, based in the Novaro System in the Corkscrew Galaxy. All of the inhabited worlds of the Novaro System are full members of the Consortium of Civilized Worlds. About 20 years ago, TI needed to expand its operations from its original base on Phase World, and so, at great expense, all of the company's manufacturing and research base was transferred to a small moon (which TI had just purchased!) in the inner part of the Novaro System. Now, all of the company's operations happen on (or in) the renamed moon of Remembrance, although it does maintain sales outlets on Phase World and a few other major worlds in the CCW.

Tyrell Industries' main aim has always been to produce high quality spacecraft and starships, and this they have been doing for the last 40 years or so, with great success. Some of the best research scientists and engineers in the Three Galaxies work for Tyrell Industries, and there is no shortage of applicants for new jobs. Research and the development of new ideas are happening constantly deep within the bowels of the moon, but all of it is completely voluntary and is done by very dedicated people; the attitude is that if you don't want to work, you don't have to, and there are no deadlines. However, most of the researchers, scientists and engineers love their work so much that they work around the clock, sometimes completely exhausting themselves if they find something really new and interesting. Many of Tyrell's new employees are ex-Naruni Enterprises employees that did not particularly like Naruni's attitudes or work ethic.

Remembrance does not just house Tyrell Industries' research facilities, however. The surface of the airless planetoid is devoted to heavy industrial manufacturing facilities, and there are four major space ports dotted around the moon. Electronics facilities are located just inside the skin of the moon, with the research and development facilities in a block on the northern pole of the moon. Deep inside are the living quarters for all of Tyrell Industries' staff and their families. Some notable exceptions to this general layout are William Tyrell's observatory, located in a large crater (the "Teardrop") on Remembrance's equator, and a small defense base on each pole.

These bases (known as Io and Sigma) each employ a standing security force of two thousand foot soldiers, which are able to reach any site on or in the moon within fifteen minutes, due to the moon's magnetic rapid transit system. Only three quarters of these troops are at each base at any one time, however; many are stationed as guards throughout the various complexes of Tyrell Industries, both on Remembrance and elsewhere. Also, each base has a hangar equipped with a spread of the company's most recent military spacecraft, and 250 pilots (mostly trusted mercenaries recruited from existing CAF stock). These pilots and their craft are mainly there as a precaution, as no party has ever tried to attack Remembrance overtly in its history. The soldiers are necessary because Naruni and other companies are always trying to get infiltrators in to steal secrets. Tyrell Industries also maintains a large fleet of transport craft to convey its products throughout the buying galaxy.

Recently, William Tyrell (both on the advice of his advisers and because of a yearning to do something new) has begun to diversify the products that Tyrell Industries produces. Or more precisely, the products Tyrell Industries' subsidiary companies produce, as he has decided to sell the products under the annex of separately named companies to keep the Tyrell Industries name synonymous with spacecraft and nothing else. These new companies are: Advanced WeaponTech Enterprises, Incorporated Atmospheric Vehicles, Milispec Ventures Personal Protection, Psionic Engineering Unlimited, Tellurian Robotics, Terrestrial Vehicle Technologies, and Total Survival Solutions. Only time will tell as to whether or not these new ventures can be competitive in an already overcrowded market. The advantage is that Tyrell Industries is already successful, and can probably absorb any losses incurred by the new companies with no problems.

Interestingly, Tyrell Industries has not set up subsidiary companies that deal with magic as of yet. This is because they figure

that those from the United Worlds of Warlock have already got this area sewn up tight with their Techno-Wizard creations. However, TI have made up for it by doing something similar with psionics — after all, the Noro are not likely to develop this area much in the future, are they? Also, TI has nothing whatsoever to do with cybernetic or bionic enhancement. They prefer to direct their efforts towards creating machines that will better serve all peoples — not by making people into machines.



William Tyrell

President of Tyrell Industries

William Tyrell was born into a poor family on a backwards world, somewhere on the outskirts of what was then the Kreeghor Empire. He was the fifth child of eight, and as such developed strong family ties with his brothers and sisters. William's father, Arastus, was a blacksmith by trade, but took on all sorts of technical jobs, from blacksmithing to vehicle repair (such was the spectrum of technology on William's home world; the name of which he remembers only as Scintia). Of all eight children, only William was interested enough to follow in his father's footsteps and became a primitive sort of Operator. He was forever tinkering with new inventions and designs for improving the poor technology that everyone but the very rich had to live with. Some of them even worked, or were practical enough to make more of. But William's one overriding ambition was to see the stars before he died. He used to watch the bright flares of the merchant ships rising up into the night sky, and wonder what life would be like on another planet, what it would be like to stand on an alien planet's soil and look up at unfamiliar stars.

William really had no idea how he was going to accomplish this, being poor as he was, although he had some vague plan of getting so good at repairing and making things that he could

hitch a ride as an engineer on one of the rare merchant ships. By the time he was 25, however, he had almost given up this dream, as the number of ships visiting Scintia were becoming fewer every year, and his work left him little time to consider places other than where he was. And besides, growing news of a war between the alien Kreeghor and some other empire had begun to filter through society from uncommon contacts with offworlders. These occasional rumors and snippets were suddenly given horrifying credence when, one day, Kreeghor occupation troops began landing on Scintia to “ask” for volunteers for their war efforts.

It soon became apparent that what the Kreeghor really wanted was slaves to use as cannon fodder, but the people of Scintia did not have the technology to put up any resistance, and soon the Kreeghor dominated the planet. They began to methodically round up those people able-bodied enough to fight, and loaded them onto ships to be taken offworld to fight in the war. William Tyrell was one of those people, and so he had finally realized his dream of going into space and seeing other worlds. The trade-off was that he would never see his family, friends, or anyone he knew from Scintia ever again.

While undergoing the small amount of training the Kreeghor felt they should provide to their “volunteers,” Tyrell’s mechanical aptitude was noticed, and he was assigned as a technician (under the watchful eye of a Kreeghor overseer, of course) on a Transgalactic Empire (for this was what the Kreeghor Empire had finally become, after annexing so many worlds) frigate. This was lucky, as he was spared the fate of so many of the other “volunteers” from his world — death on a murky, barely habitable world that the Kreeghor were using as a decoy to lure as many of their enemy to as possible. Scintians died by the thousands before the Kreeghor finally decided that their plan was not working as well as they had hoped; the rest were abandoned on the surface of the planetoid to perish slowly as their food supplies ran out.

Although Tyrell was unhappy at being a slave, he gradually began to love his work, to enjoy the subtleties of working on the various systems of the battered *Blight of Hope*. He swore that if he escaped slavery, he would one day own his own spacecraft, no matter how small. At least it would be something he could call his own. William’s chance came when the *Blight of Hope* was cornered one day by a Warshield-class Cruiser of the Consortium of Civilized Worlds. Although the standard Kreeghor tactic in such situations was to ram the other ship, William managed to overpower his overseer and get to an escape pod. He was ejected into the coldness of space just as the two warships came together in a deadly clinch. William Tyrell was the only survivor that day, on either side.

The small pod drifted through space for many days, and during this time William had a chance to think about his future. He determined that he would not only just own a spacecraft, he would MAKE them. Lots of them. And he would make them the best that there was in the Three Galaxies with any and all resources that he could muster. Four days later a merchant cutter called the *Phredorian Arrow* picked him up just inside the rim of CCW space. The first thing he did was make inquiries into the state of his home planet, Scintia, and his family. What he found out was devastating. The entire planet and everyone on it had been slagged by Kreeghor orbital lasers after a CCW relief force had landed there to try and push the Kreeghor out. Obvi-

ously considering that the planet had served its usefulness, they raked it from pole to pole with starship class lasers to stop the CCW forces from establishing a beachhead. The planet’s vegetation withered under the intense barrage. The soil blackened. The atmosphere boiled off. And the population died.

William Tyrell was apparently the only living Scintian left in the Three Galaxies. There may have been others still living as slaves under the Transgalactic Empire, but when the hostilities between it and the CCW ceased, there was no way of getting this information, as the Empire shut itself up tight to inquiries of this kind. At around this time, many privateers looking for a quick buck from the devastated border worlds began to come out of the woodwork. One such group (one of the more reputable ones, though no less mercenary) located Tyrell and offered him, as sole inheritor to Scintia, a fifty percent share in whatever mineral wealth they were able to recover from the now dead world. Having nothing else to fall back on, William reluctantly agreed, and was astounded when the mercenaries proceeded to blow the planet into pieces, then scoop up any interesting minerals. However horrified William was by this, his share of that much mineral wealth made him a rich man. Rich enough to start the company he called Tyrell Industries, and to develop his first ship — the Neptune Class Heavy Transport. It sold well, and propelled the company on to bigger and better things.

Today, William is a relatively spritely 70 year old. He still very much enjoys wondering about other planets, although he does not get the opportunity to get away from the company very often these days. Instead, he hires parties of young, headstrong adventurers to journey to uncharted worlds, or merely worlds that William does not know much about, and bring him back reports on their adventures. He also hires these kinds of people in a professional capacity, to scout out new technologies that may benefit Tyrell Industries (which always strives to be on the cutting edge of space tech).

William Tyrell

Race: Human from the planet of Scintia.

Alignment: Scrupulous

Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 20, M.A. 14, P.S. 12, P.P. 18, P.E. 11, P.B. 13, Spd. 20.

Hit Points: 70, S.D.C.: 28

M.D.C.: None

Weight: 150 pounds (67.5 kg)

Height: Five feet, 10 inches (1.78 m)

Age: 70

P.P.E.: 8

Disposition: A friendly, likeable man who abhors mistreatment of others and believes everyone should have a chance at creating their own destiny. He hates the Transgalactic Empire with a passion, and longs to meet someone else from his home world. He has an adventurous spirit which he has had to stifle for the last 20 years or so to concentrate on running his company. This now manifests itself as a desire for knowledge, which he pursues by hiring adventurers to seek out and explore other parts of the galaxy. William still enjoys fiddling with mechanical and electrical devices, and is quite often involved with designing new products for his company, though less so recently.

Experience Level: 6th level Operator/8th level businessman.

Skills of Note: Electrical Engineer 98%, Mechanical Engineer 98%, Automotive Mechanics 94%, Spaceship Mechanics

80%, Lore: Kreeghor 70%, Read Sensory Equipment 80%, Astronomy 60%, Basic and Advanced Mathematics 92%, Computer Operation 85%, Language and Literacy: Trade Four 98%, Language: Trade One 75%, Computer Operation 80%, Writing 60%, Pilot Automobile 70%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic and W.P. Energy Pistol. Kick attack (1D6), critical strike on unmodified 19 or 20, body flip, critical strike from behind.

Attacks per Melee: Six.

Bonuses: +3 to parry, +3 to dodge, +2 to strike, +4 to pull/roll with punch, fall or impact, +4 to damage.

Magic Knowledge: None.

Psionic Powers: None.

Cybernetics: None.

Personal Resources: Around 100 million credits for general use. Personally worth at least 10 billion credits, the bulk of which is tied up in Tyrell Industries. Can gain access to any of Tyrell's products or resources at short notice. Owns his own moon and employs thousands of people.

Tyrell Industries' Subsidiary Companies

Advanced WeaponTech Enterprises

"Plasma? What's that?" — Shalrha K'fir, when asked to compare AWE's new Fusion design with existing plasma weapons.

AWE is Tyrell Industries' personal weapons division. That is to say, they make man (humanoid?) -portable weaponry for the discerning buyer. As with the other subsidiary divisions, AWE has only just started producing merchandise, and it will be interesting to see how they compete with existing weapon manufacturers. AWE has a number of new ideas for weapons under its hat, however, and has just begun producing Elevated Intensity Laser (EI Laser) weaponry, which is basically a more refined version of the technology used in producing High Intensity Lasers (HI Lasers). As well as this, they are on the edge of producing the first mass-market Fusion rifle, a step up from the standard Plasma weapon in more ways than one. Advanced WeaponTech is also looking into a number of new designs for projectile weapons, chiefly the conversion of standard bullets into Mega-Damage capable rounds. Note that AWE does not make any form of rail gun or gravity gun, as they do not feel that they can add anything new to this field at this point in time. The Managing Director of Advanced WeaponTech Enterprises is a Space Wolfen (former CAF officer) named Shalrha K'fir.

Incorporated Atmospheric Vehicles

"In our latest test, the X-64 pulled 13.2 G's in a tight turn at Mach 5. 'Course, we haven't installed the main engine yet..." — unnamed aerospace engineer at IAV.

Incorporated Atmospheric produce what on most worlds would be called jet aircraft. As you would expect, in the Three Galaxies this is a very limited market, given that most space-capable craft can also fly in an atmosphere due to their

contra-gravity generators. However, Tyrell, like Naruni, prefer to keep their two lines of craft separate, hence the creation of IAV. At this point in time, IAV is working on a number of transformable aircraft that they figure may well be different enough to entice buyers. Where they got this idea is not known, but Naruni's new transformable submarine may have something to do with it. Incorporated Atmospheric have also aimed at producing a range of sleek, fast, ground attack/fighter aircraft that can do their job better than a non-dedicated spacecraft. It is rumored that this new line may sport some innovations not seen before in commercial craft, including NPN (No Pilot Needed) computer control and target acquisition. The Managing Director of IAV is a human from another dimension named Samuel "Jetstream" McKenzie who calls himself a "Drivejock."

Milispec Ventures

Personal Protection

"The first time we tried out a Null Field, half our security people tendered their resignations. They thought they'd fallen asleep on the job." — Krom Patache, in New Galaxy Scientific Journal Volume XXXVII.

Directed by former Naruni Enterprises scientific adviser Krom Patache, Milispec is a company devoted to producing high quality body armor for all types of races. Their main selling point is that they have gone beyond the chameleon technology of Naruni's body armors, and equipped their suits with what they have termed a Null Field. This Null Field has been developed from the same technology that was used in manufacturing the revolutionary new Null-Drive (first seen in Tyrell Industries' Vortex Medium Fighter). When activated, it completely seals around the person's body (or body armor, if they are wearing it), staying about a millimeter away from their body surface. The Null Field provides a certain amount of protection, but chiefly it masks **all** of a person's emissions — noise, heat, etc. — with one hundred percent efficiency. Furthermore, it also bends light around the Null Field, making it near completely invisible. Since the Null Field is quite weak defensively, it is usually built into one of Milispec's new line of body armor — which have surprises of their own. The Executive Board at Milispec has decided to hold off releasing their product until they can be certain of its market appeal, as they aren't sure they'll be able to break Naruni's stranglehold on stealth armor with anything less than a perfectly-targeted marketing campaign.

Psionic Engineering Unlimited

"Shikta!" — PEU technician, after scoring 400 consecutive bull's-eyes on a target range with PEU's new Kinetic Flechette Rifle.

One of Tyrell Industries' more "experimental" subsidiary companies, Engineering Unlimited is chiefly concerned with devising new ways of incorporating the psionic element into mundane military technology, and because of this they often work closely with the other companies, sometimes converting their latest designs into a psionic format. More often, however, PEU designs its own equipment, and they are about to release onto the market a new range of psionically linked weapons and equipment. That is, a rifle linked into a suit of body armor, linked into a communications deck, linked into a vehicle, all usable only by the psionic soldier. Many critics are skeptical about

this company's ability to sell their product; after all, it's not exactly mainstream. Engineering Unlimited's Managing Director is (unsurprisingly) a Noro Mystic Warrior named Farra Erus, and he is hoping to prove them spectacularly wrong. However, in common with Milispec Ventures, Engineering Unlimited has not yet released any of their designs onto the open market — they're waiting to see what the public reaction is to the creations of the other subsidiary companies before entering the limited and competitive market of psionic weaponry.

Tellurian Robotics

"This time next year, when you see a Tellurian Scythe on the battlefield, we're hoping you're gonna admire its sleek lines, its fluidity of movement, and its revolutionary new weaponry — and then run away." — Harrison Devero the Eighth, when asked about the potential of TR's new line of combat robots.

Tellurian Robotics makes robot combat vehicles. It's that simple. Power armor, giant robots, automated security drones, whatever. They are attempting to make the best models in each category that the Three Galaxies has ever seen, in accordance with Tyrell Industries' basic philosophy (although they stick to ground robots — the air is IAV's province, and space is the parent company's domain. Not that most of TR's robot's can't be used in space or the air, they just have no propulsion capabilities whatsoever). Lately they have been helping IAV develop a number of smarter than average robotic brains, but they hope soon to release their first original creation onto the common market. Tellurian Robotics' focus in developing their new line has been on what they call a Neurocomp Interface, which apparently allows the pilot and gunners of a vehicle to almost totally meld with their vehicle, increasing reaction speed and accuracy. Robot jockeys galaxy-wide wait with bated breath. TR is directed by Harrison Devero the Eighth, a former mercenary.

Terrestrial Vehicle Technologies

"Our new <deleted> compound was working perfectly until we shot it with one of AWE's new Fusion weapons. Back to the drawing board, I suppose." — Hans Chiraz, armorer at TVT.

Whether hovering, tracked, wheeled, or contra-gravity, TVT has got it covered. Makers of both military and civilian ground vehicles, such as cars, tanks, and prime movers, Terrestrial Vehicles have tried to take into account the differences in gravity of many worlds in the Three Galaxies in designing their new products. Incorporating many of the advancements in weapons technology that AWE have made, TVT's vehicles should be the mercenary's choice from now on whenever they need transport. Using both tried and tested powerplants, and some new, experimental technologies that TVT has developed, TVT has created a revolutionary range of new vehicles. Their powerplants are more efficient, their weapons more dangerous, and their armor more damage resistant than most other military vehicles around. The armor efficiency increase is due mostly to a lot of hard work in perfecting a new compound that deflects both ablative projectiles and cutting energy weapons equally as effectively. Jonah Sanford, a retired CAF weapons engineer, directs operations at Terrestrial Vehicle Technologies.

Total Survival Solutions

"Remember that news item a while back about the miraculous survival of the 400 person crew of the freighter Barnief's

Opportunity after it crash-landed on Aridus-Minor? They were using prototype TSS equipment." — reply to a question voiced in a bar somewhere in the Novaro System.

This subsidiary, directed by a former colonist to the Novaro System named Harcine Ghant, is a bit of a hodgepodge of all the other companies combined. Survival Solutions think up and design new ways to keep people alive, no matter what situation they find themselves in. Their products range from standard survival kits to small hoverbikes which pilots can use as auxiliary transport in case of a crash, to escape pods for larger craft, to multi-purpose weapons and equipment, to portable language translators, to atmospheric gas/radiation detectors. As such, they are perhaps less exciting than the other companies, but no less essential to those who have just ejected from a burning craft into an alien desert. Quite often, Total Survival Solutions will outfit the technologies that the other companies produce with survival equipment, or "pirate" their latest design and modify it, then market it as a "Survival Model" or some such. Occasionally, TSS comes up with something really astounding and very interesting indeed.

Vehicles and Equipment

T-HT590 Neptune Class

Heavy Transport

A somewhat older design, the Neptune Class Heavy Transport is still in use among many of the worlds that cannot afford to upgrade their fleets. The Neptune was first contrived by the then up and coming Tyrell Industries as their first spacecraft. It was hoped that the durable ship would appeal to the merchant market, and thus launch the company towards bigger and better things.

This it did, and with astounding success. Its low price and high cargo capacity compared with other ships of its class earned the Neptune a positive reputation among those who plied the space lanes of the Three Galaxies. Some used it for transporting crates of produce between neighboring star systems, some filled the cargo space with passenger cabins and began a charter service, and some used it to run guns in various military conflicts. The only problem that most pilots and traders had with the transport was that it tended to be under-equipped defensively. Many solved this by installing custom weapons turrets to stave off the inevitable pirates that attacked ships of this type. Due to this, many of the secondhand models around today exhibit heavy modifications which were not in the original plans (Tyrell Industries does not care about this; William Tyrell is merely grateful that this ship sold in significant numbers and thus enabled him to expand his business to its current level of success). Ironically, these heavily armed, modified transports have become a favorite of space pirates, who find them ideal for menacing a target and then hijacking all of its cargo; storing it, of course, in the Neptune's copious cargo bays.

The Neptune looks somewhat like an oversized whale, but with a number of large booster jets in place of a tail. Some grizzled, old pilots affectionately refer to it as the "Space Guppy." The four standard laser turrets are mounted one in front, one on each side, and one in the rear, above the jets. The fire control crew member can control them one at a time, or he can designate control to the computer and just control one, or jump be-

tween the guns at will. The same goes for the two mini-missile launcher turrets mounted in the underbelly of the Neptune.

Model Type: Tyrell Industries T-HT590

Class: Heavy Cargo Transport/Freighter

Crew: Five; pilot, copilot, navigator/sensors, fire control, and engineer.

M.D.C. by Location:

Jet Nacelles (4) — 400 each

* Sensor/Communications Array (1, underbelly) — 400

Light Laser Turrets (4) — 200 each

Mini-Missile Launcher Turrets (2, underbelly, front and rear) — 200 each

Reinforced Crew Compartment/Control Room — 300

** Main Body — 1700

* Destroying the sensor and communications array means that it is impossible to receive or transmit messages. Additionally, it means that the weapon turrets can no longer acquire or track targets — this must now be done manually by the fire control crewman. All sensor bonuses and radar are eliminated.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body shuts down all propulsion systems and renders the ship inoperable. The weapons turrets may continue to fire, though, as they have power backups for 24 hours. At this point it is probably wise to eject in one of the escape pods, because if the M.D.C. of the Neptune reaches minus 500 M.D.C., the ship is completely destroyed.

Speed: In an atmosphere, the Neptune flies like the proverbial (lead) brick; maximum speed is 600 mph, but doing anything other than descending/ascending at a slow hover through the atmosphere incurs a -40% penalty to all piloting rolls. In space, the Neptune is capable of a much better Mach 9. It can also be optionally fitted with a Gravity Drive, meaning it can travel at faster-than-light speed; 2 light years per hour maximum.

Statistical Data:

Height: 40 feet (12.2 m)

Length: 235 feet (71 m)

Width: 100 feet (30.5 m)

Weight: 1500 tons

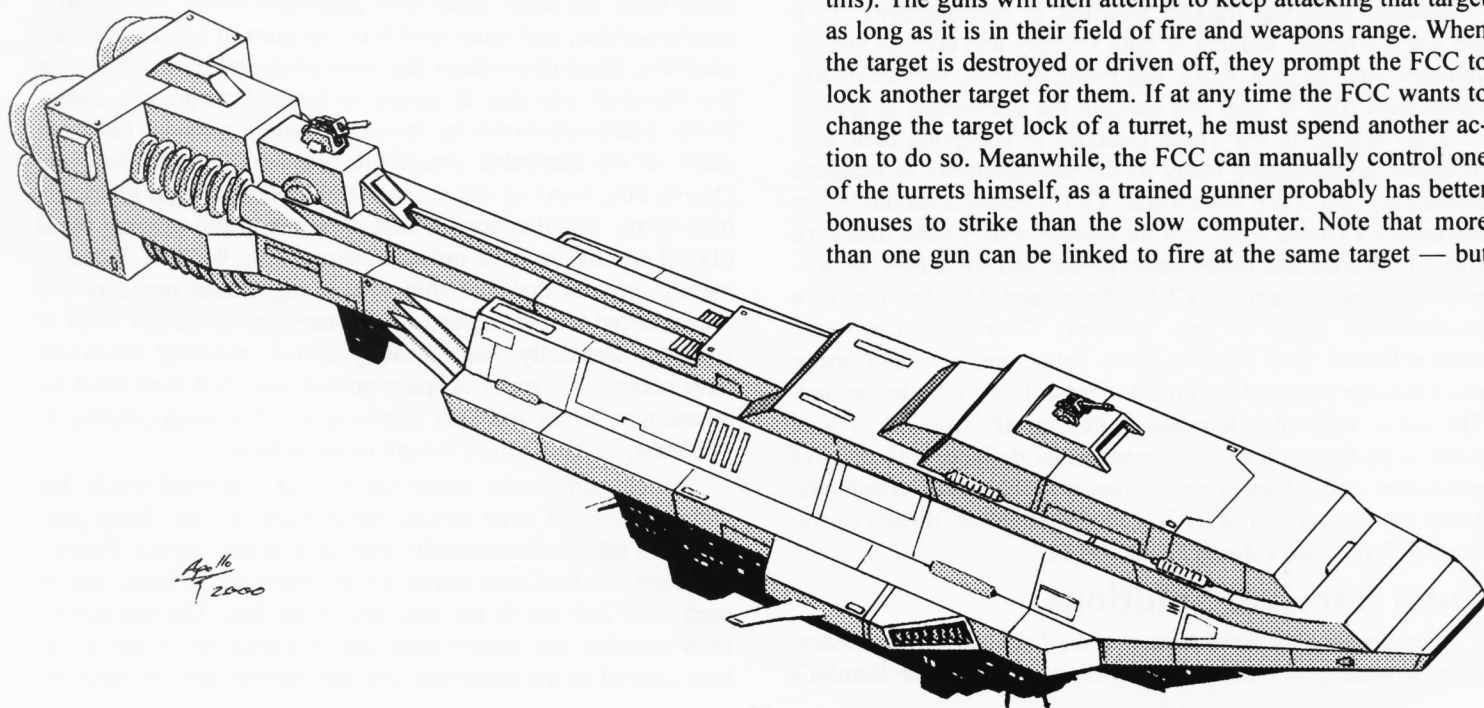
Cargo: The middle three-fifths of the ship is devoted to a large cargo area (first fifth is crew, last fifth is powerplant and engines). The dimensions of this area are 138x66x26 feet (42x20x8 meters). Maximum weight tolerance is 1000 tons of cargo. This cargo area is accessed by a large ramp that folds down from the underbelly of the ship, allowing vehicles to drive up into the ship.

Power System: Nuclear with an average life of 9 years.

Market Cost: Since they are no longer made, the only way to buy a Neptune class ship is secondhand. Roll percentile: 01-40% the ship is in original condition. 41-80% three extra weapons systems have been added (G.M.'s choice). 81-90% six extra weapons systems have been added (G.M.'s choice). 91-00% amount of weapons stays the same, except a capital ship class energy weapon has been installed (G.M.'s choice), firing forward and cutting through the middle of the ship; this halves the amount of cargo space available. The cost of a standard ship is 50 million credits. Add 5 million credits per extra weapons system, except in the case of the capital ship weapon which boosts the standard ship's cost to around 100 million credits. Also, this modification is highly illegal, and will only be available through the Black Market. A Gravity (light-speed) Drive adds another 15 million credits to the basic cost.

Weapon Systems

1. TI-LT250 Light Laser Turrets (4): These four turrets have overlapping fields of fire that are able to cover most of the ship, apart from the underbelly which is covered by the missile turrets. They are a somewhat older model that link with the older fire control system on board the Neptune, and because of this, they are not capable of automatic target acquisition. This means that the fire control crewman (FCC) must spend one action per gun to manually acquire a target (you can, if you like, use a successful Weapons Systems roll for this). The guns will then attempt to keep attacking that target as long as it is in their field of fire and weapons range. When the target is destroyed or driven off, they prompt the FCC to lock another target for them. If at any time the FCC wants to change the target lock of a turret, he must spend another action to do so. Meanwhile, the FCC can manually control one of the turrets himself, as a trained gunner probably has better bonuses to strike than the slow computer. Note that more than one gun can be linked to fire at the same target — but



the strike bonuses are not accumulative (still just +1), and you have to roll to strike for each gun separately.

Primary Purpose: Defense

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Spaceship

Mega-Damage: 1D4x10 M.D. per single blast from one turret.

Maximum Effective Range: 6000 feet (1828 m).

Rate of Fire: Three per melee when under computer control; equal to the combined hand to hand attacks of the FCC when under manual control.

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

Special Feature: Targeting bonus: +1 to strike.

2. TI-MT260 Mini-Missile Turrets (2, fore and aft underbelly): Suffering the same target acquisition restrictions as the laser turrets (see above), these turrets have been installed mainly to protect the blind spot of the laser turrets — the large underbelly of the craft. Unlike the laser turrets, these mini-missile weapons do not have an unlimited payload, so, if they are left on automatic too long, a serious waste of mini-missiles could result as the computer fires missile after missile at its designated target. To avoid this, it is probably best if the FCC keeps the turrets on manual control most of the time. Another feature is that the FCC can set how many missiles the turrets fire each time they fire when they are under computer control; that is, he can set them to fire one missile at a time, or volleys up to their maximum volley rate. In this way, the FCC can limit the amount of ammunition they use on less critical targets when under computer control. Both turrets can be linked to fire at the same target, but, as with the laser turrets, bonuses are not cumulative. The turrets can also be used to fire at ground troops while the Neptune is in dock, but without the strike bonus due to their low angle when in that position.

Primary Purpose: Defense

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Spaceship

Mega-Damage: As per missile type; usually plasma (1D6x10).

Maximum Effective Range: As per missile type; usually about one mile (1.6 km).

Rate of Fire: Two attacks per melee when computer controlled; equal to the combined number of hand to hand attacks of the FCC when on manual. These can be in volleys of 1, 2, 4, 6 or 12 missiles at a time.

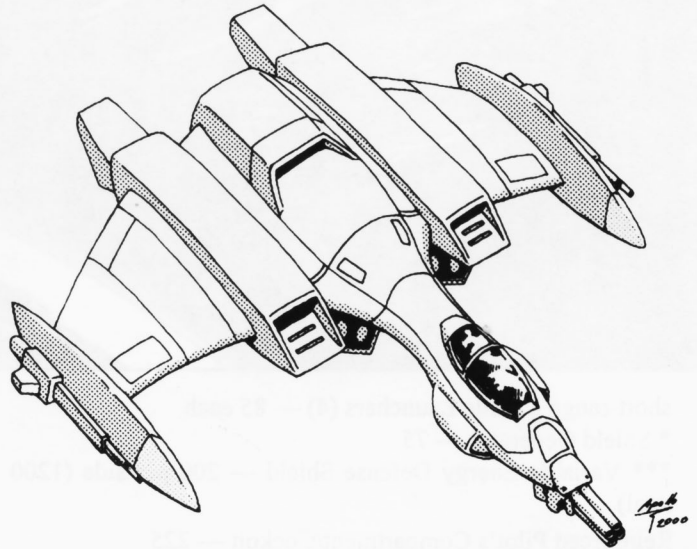
Payload: 24 per launcher; 48 total. Another 48 missiles are stored inside the ship (24 above each launcher, near the loader), but to load these requires a crew member to move to the appropriate location in the ship, and feed the missiles individually into the loader, at a rate of one per melee action. No auto-loading launchers on this ship!

Special Feature: Computerized targeting gives +1 to strike.

3. Additional weapons systems: Are determined by the G.M., according to the percentile roll above. Note that more weapons systems places an enormous strain on the FCC, so usually a secondary (and even tertiary) fire control station is installed, and operated by a free crew member during battle. Also, a secondary nuclear generator is sometimes installed, especially if most of the new weapons are high-powered energy weapons (this is calculated into the above costs, but provides one more thing that can go wrong in battle). In addition to this, if a capital ship class weapon of some kind is installed, it must have the secondary generator all to itself, and can only fire once every other melee (i.e. once every 30 sec-

onds). At this time, the lights dim and radar screens flicker due to the enormous power outage. Any optional rules covering all this extra stuff are left up to individual G.M.s.

4. Sensor Systems Note: All standard systems, nothing fancy, so use the standard merchant ship (in the **Phase World®** Dimension Book) as a guide. Note that, like everything else aboard a Neptune Class Heavy Transport, piloting, navigation and sensor acquisitions must be done manually, with the computer as a sort of helper, rather than the other way round as in most modern ships. No fly-by-wire here!



T-F870 Vortex Space Interceptor

The latest fighter made by Tyrell Industries, the Vortex is an outstandingly effective front-line fighter. It is the first Tyrell fighter to incorporate "Null-Space" technology, and also the first to be made available on the open market. The reasons it is so successful are twofold; first, its Null-Drive gives it great long-range capabilities, making it able to conduct a long-range war from light years behind friendly lines. Second, it is extremely potent and capable in its primary role as a fast strike interceptor.

To be most effective, the Vortex is usually deployed in squadrons of twelve or more, and sent into combat in pairs. This enables both pilots to cover each other and bring maximum firepower to bear against the enemy. And what firepower it is! Quad-mounted plasma cannons are backed up by a pair of particle beam weapons for close-in dog-fighting, and for long-range work, racks of long, medium and short-range missiles suffice. Add this to the T-F870's amazing maneuverability and high speed, as well as its strong shields, and the result is formidable.

Model Type: Tyrell Industries T-F870

Class: Medium Fighter/Interceptor

Crew: One

M.D.C. by Location:

Wing Nacelles (2) — 200 each

* Sensor Array — 150

* Communications Pod — 90

Jet Nacelles (2) — 200 each

Quad Plasma Cannon Mounting — 180

Particle Beam Cannons (2) — 100 each

long-range Missile Launchers (2) — 150 each

Medium Range Missile Launchers (2) — 100 each



short-range Missile Launchers (4) — 85 each

* Shield Generator — 75

*** Variable Energy Defense Shield — 200 per side (1200 total)

Reinforced Pilot's Compartment/Cockpit — 225

** Main Body — 700

* A single asterisk indicates small or difficult targets to hit. They can only be struck when an attacker makes a called shot, and even then the character is -3 to strike. Destroying the communications pod makes it impossible to receive or transmit messages. Destroying the sensor array eliminates all sensor bonuses and radar. Destroying the shield generator causes the defense shield to collapse immediately.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body will shut the Vortex down completely, rendering it useless.

*** Once depleted, the energy defense shield will continue to recharge at the rate of 4D6 M.D. per melee, unless the shield generator is destroyed.

Speed: Cannot be used in atmosphere! In space it can achieve a speed of Mach 18. In addition, the Vortex has a "Null-Drive" which can propel it into Null-Space, enabling it to skip 1D4x5 light years in the blink of an eye. No time passes for the pilot, but about 5 hours will have passed in real-time. The Null-Drive requires 3 hours to recharge for another jump.

Statistical Data:

Height: 10 feet (3 m)

Length: 40 feet (12 m)

Width: 30 feet (9.1 m)

Weight: 27.5 tons

Power System: Nuclear with an average of 4 years of life.

Black Market Cost: 100 million credits. Not available to private individuals through normal commercial channels.

Weapon Systems

1. TI-QP401 Quad Plasma Cannon Mount (1): Consisting of four long-range and very powerful plasma cannons linked together, the Quad Plasma Mount is the main offensive weapon

of the Vortex fighter. It is mounted on the nose of the Vortex, and linked to the main computer's targeting system, assuring accuracy.

Primary Purpose: Anti-spaceship

Secondary Purpose: Defense

Mega-Damage: 1D6x10 M.D. per single cannon blast, or 4D6x10 M.D. per quad blast.

Maximum Effective Range: 8000 feet (2438 m).

Rate of Fire: Single blasts equal to the combined number of hand to hand attacks of the pilot. However, when more than one quad blast is fired per melee round, the cannons have a chance of overheating and sustaining serious damage. See below.

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

Special Feature: Independent coordinated targeting: +2 to strike.

Special Penalty: If a more than two quad blasts are fired per melee round (15 seconds), there is a cumulative 20% chance for each additional single blast fired (i.e. 80% chance if a third quad blast is fired) that the conductive plasma arrays will melt, and render the Quad Plasma Cannon Mount unusable until extensive and expensive repairs have been completed. The engineers at Tyrell are looking into this problem, but so far they have had no luck correcting it.

2. TI-P578 Particle Beam Cannons (2): Twin particle beam cannons, mounted in the wing nacelles on either side of the cockpit, are the secondary armament of the Vortex. They are of great power also, but are hampered by a short-range and the need to recharge after a certain number of shots.

Primary Purpose: Anti-spaceship

Secondary Purpose: Anti-missile

Mega-Damage: 1D6x10 M.D. per single shot, or 2D6x10 M.D. per dual blast.

Maximum Effective Range: 4000 feet (1219 m).

Rate of Fire: Equal to the combined number of hand to hand attacks of the pilot.

Payload: Effectively unlimited, but after 10 shots (or 5 dual blasts) the capacitors that distribute power to the guns must charge again; this takes four melees (60 seconds) and the guns cannot fire while this is taking place.

- 3. TI-LRM304 Long-Range Missile Launchers (2):** Two long-range missile launchers are mounted as pods slung on the underbelly of the Vortex fighter.

Primary Purpose: Assault

Secondary Purpose: Anti-spaceship

Missile Type: Any long-range missile can be used, but standard factory issue is proton torpedoes (4D6x10 M.D.). All are smart bombs and are +5 to strike.

Mega-Damage: Varies with missile type.

Range: Usually about 500 miles (800 km).

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of two.

Payload: 4 missiles.

- 4. TI-MRM612 Medium Range Missile Launchers (2):** Two medium range missile launchers are mounted on the sides of the Vortex, just under the Particle Beam Cannons.

Primary Purpose: Anti-spaceship

Secondary Purpose: Assault

Missile Type: Any medium range missile can be used, but standard factory issue is plasma (2D6x10 M.D.). All missiles are +3 to strike.

Mega-Damage: Varies with missile type.

Range: 50 to 100 miles (80 to 160 km).

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of two or four.

Payload: 6 missiles.

- 5. TI-SRM243 short-range Missile Launchers (4):** Two short-range missile launchers are mounted on each side of the Quad Plasma Mount in the nose.

Primary Purpose: Anti-spaceship

Secondary Purpose: Anti-missile

Missile Type: Any short-range missile can be used, but standard factory issue is plasma (1D6x10 M.D.). All missiles are +3 to strike.

Mega-Damage: Varies with missile type.

Range: Usually about 1 or 2 miles (1.6 to 3.2 km).

Rate of Fire: One at a time, or in volleys of two, four or eight!

Payload: 12 missiles.

- 6. Sensor Systems Note:** All the most advanced communication, optical and sensor systems are installed, plus all other features common to robot vehicles. Enhanced radar, can track up to 96 targets out to ranges of 2500 miles (4000 km).

Advanced WeaponTech Enterprises

— Laser Weaponry

AWE has been perfecting a number of new technologies since its inception a decade ago. The most high profile of these has been their new Fusion range, but a separate research component has also been working on both an Elevated Intensity Laser system, and what Advanced WeaponTech calls the Augmented Energy Storage System. Each of these new developments is described below, along with the practical applications of same.

Augmented Energy Storage System

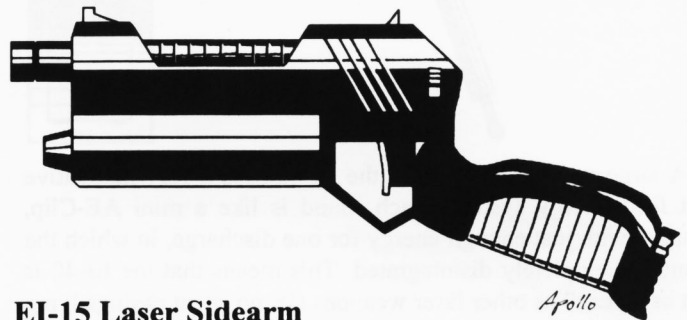
Basically, this is a way of increasing the density of energy inside a standard Energy Clip (E-Clip). By a process known only to AWE technicians, the electric cells within an E-Clip are modified so that the amount of energy they can hold is tripled! These

AE-Clips have a catch, however. Existing weapons must be modified before they can use an AE-Clip, because of the special way that the energy must be extracted from the clip — and the only people who know the proper modifications are those who invented the process. Advanced WeaponTech Enterprises are not likely to release their knowledge to all and sundry, so for the moment, the only weapons that can use this fantastic new technology are AWE's own. Perhaps in time this knowledge will filter out and other weapons will be able to reap the benefit of AE-Clips.

An AE-Clip costs 15,000 credits new, and 5,000 for a recharge.

Elevated Intensity Laser Weapons

Using some of the same conclusions that were formed while researching the AE-Clip, AWE has been able to increase the efficiency of the standard HI-Laser (High Intensity Laser) weapon to produce the Elevated Intensity Laser weapon (EI-Laser). By extrapolating on the increased density of the energy storage cells in an AE-Clip, WeaponTech scientists were able to increase the power ratios of the laser conduction crystals within HI-Laser weapons — and hence increase the intensity of the laser beam. This means that EI-Lasers are able to do more damage over longer ranges than the equivalent HI-Lasers. The downside is that they require much more power than the equivalent HI-Laser weapons. When using AWE AE-Clips, this is not too much of a problem, as it just means that they have a normal payload (no 3 times enhancements) when used in the EI-Laser weapons. When using standard E-Clips (which they can do — although standard weapons cannot use the AE-Clips), the power drain is quite noticeable. Treat normal E-Clips as having one third of their normal payload when being used in an EI-Laser.



EI-15 Laser Sidearm

The EI-15 is intended to be the standard pistol weapon in the Elevated Intensity range. That said, due to the EI enhancement, it is better than most comparable laser pistols currently on the market. It is a sleek but menacing-looking weapon that is also finely crafted of lightweight polymers.

Weight: 3.3 lbs (1.5 kg).

Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D. per shot.

Rate of Fire: Standard.

Maximum Effective Range: 1000 feet (305 m).

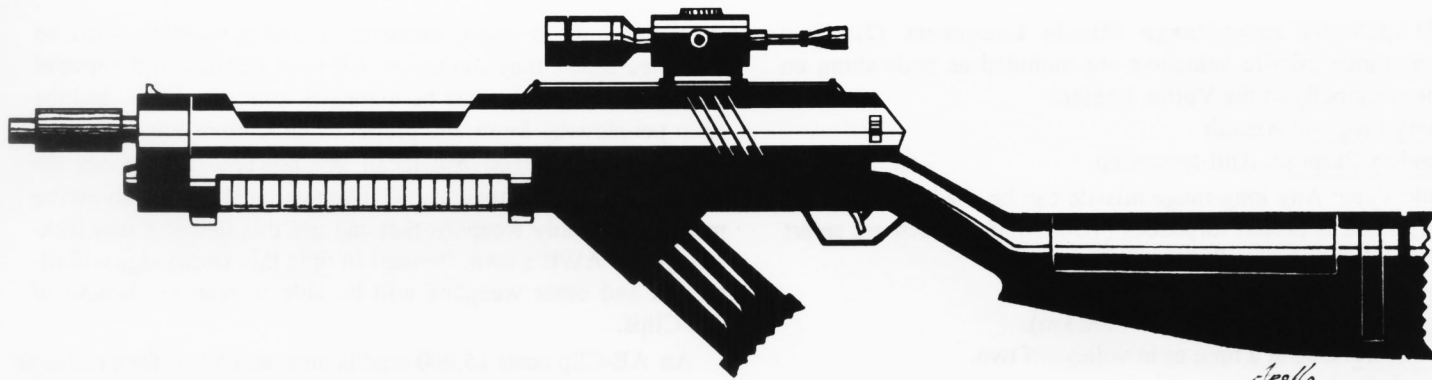
Payload: 20 shots (with AE-Clip), or 6 shots (with normal E-Clip).

Market Cost: 25,000 credits.

Strike Bonus: +1 due to superior build.

EI-20 Laser Assault Rifle

One of the notable features of the otherwise standard EI-20 LAR is its ability to use an Energy Storage Unit, which basi-



cally is a large AE-Clip that fits into the stock of the EI-20. This modification allows the EI-20 to operate in a sustained fire capability because of the increase in ammunition. The EI-20 has an experimental shot selection system mounted — meaning the wielder can select to fire a single shot, or a ten round burst, but not fully automatic. Also, the EI-20 is fitted as standard with laser and telescopic sights.

Weight: 6.7 lbs (3 kg), 8.9 lbs (4 kg) with ESU installed.

Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D. per single shot, 2D4x10 M.D. per five round burst.

Rate of Fire: Single shot, or five shot burst.

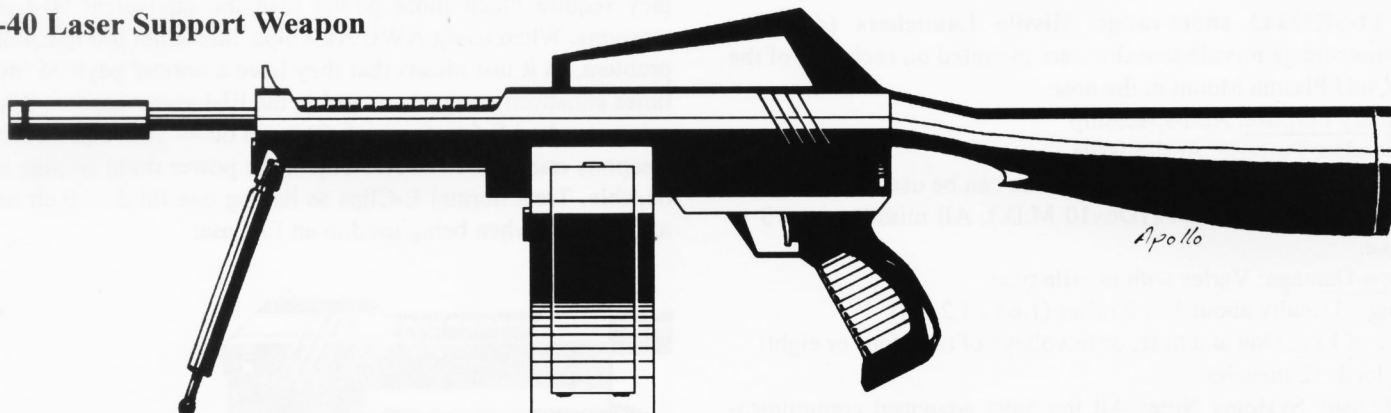
Maximum Effective Range: 3000 feet (914 m).

Payload: 25 shots (using AE-Clip; 8 shots using a normal clip). Add 35 if using an ESU as well.

Market Cost: 60,000 credits (ESU costs 20,000, plus 7,000 for a recharge); poor to fair availability.

Strike Bonus: +1 to strike (at short-range due to the laser sight, at long due to the), with single shots only.

EI-40 Laser Support Weapon



A large and heavy weapon, the EI-40 uses a very innovative belt feed energy system! Each round is like a mini AE-Clip, charged with just enough energy for one discharge, in which the round is completely disintegrated. This means that the EI-40 is just as “clean” as other laser weapons (ie. no spent casings lying around after firing), but has an amazing capacity for an extended amount of support fire; it can fire hundreds of AWE’s “Laser Cartridges” before having to reload. The only reason someone has not done something like this before with laser weapons was a problem of concentrating enough energy in a cartridge to make the resulting discharge damaging enough. AWE has solved that problem with their Augmented Energy Storage System. The EI-40 is meant to be tripod or vehicle mounted, but can be carried by power armor troopers or those species strong enough. Those with a P.S. of less than 24 are -4 to strike.

Weight: 22 lbs (10 kg).

Mega-Damage: 6D6 M.D. per single shot. 2D6x10 M.D. per 10 round burst.

Rate of Fire: Single shot or ten round burst.

Maximum Effective Range: 5000 feet (1524 m).

Payload: Uses 200 round belts.

Market Cost: 100,000 credits (laser cartridges cost 4,000 credits per 10 rounds).

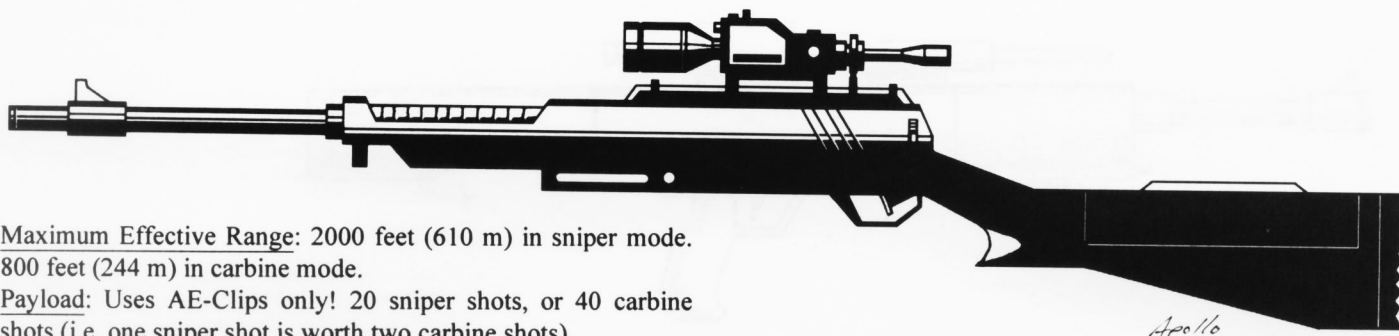
EI-50 Sniper Laser Rifle

The last in AWE’s new range of EI-Lasers, the Sniper Laser Rifle is a long-barrelled weapon capable of hitting targets nearly half a mile away. As per usual, the EI-50 uses WeaponTech’s AE-Clips to provide the power needed to shoot a beam this far and still retain power, but what is special about this gun is its targeting system. The SLR uses an Electron-Enhanced Thermal Scoping system which provides a large degree of magnification over the long-range of this rifle. Added to this is the fact that while the EI-50 is normally only capable of single shots, a Carbine Kit can be purchased which consists of a shorter barrel and fire selector patch-in, meaning that the weapon can be transformed into a rapid fire, short-range weapon for those sticky situations snipers sometimes find themselves in when an operation goes wrong.

Weight: 11 lbs (5 kg; only 6.7 lbs/3 kg when in carbine mode).

Mega-Damage: 4D6x10 M.D. per shot in sniper mode, 2D6 M.D. per shot in carbine mode.

Rate of Fire: Single, aimed shot only in sniper mode; single or short burst when in carbine mode.



Maximum Effective Range: 2000 feet (610 m) in sniper mode.
800 feet (244 m) in carbine mode.

Payload: Uses AE-Clips only! 20 sniper shots, or 40 carbine shots (i.e. one sniper shot is worth two carbine shots).

Market Cost: 35,000 credits. The carbine add-on costs an extra 10,000 credits, and can be fitted within one melee.

Strike Bonus: +2 to strike in sniper mode! No bonus in carbine mode.

High Intensity Laser Weapons

In addition to their trademark EI-Laser weapons, Advanced WeaponTech Enterprises has been contracted by the Consortium Armed Forces to produce a quota of High-Intensity Laser weapons. These, of course, use AWE's AE-Clip, giving them three times the payload of normal HI-Lasers, but are otherwise exactly the same, exhibiting none of the power or range enhancements of WeaponTech's other weaponry. AWE's versions of the HI-Lasers will usually be found in the hands of CAF Special Forces and elite troops, due to their rarity.

HI-30 Laser Pistol (AWE version)

Weight: 2 lbs (0.9 kg).

Mega-Damage: 2D6 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Standard.

Maximum Effective Range: 1000 feet (305 m).

Payload: 40 shots per AE-Clip. Only 20 if using a normal E-Clip.

Market Cost: 20,000 credits.

HI-10 Heavy Laser Pistol (AWE version)

Weight: 3 lbs (1.35 kg).

Mega-Damage: 3D6+3 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Standard.

Maximum Effective Range: 1000 feet (305 m).

Payload: 30 shots per AE-Clip. Only 15 if using a normal E-Clip.

Market Cost: 25,000 credits.

HI-50 Laser Rifle (AWE version)

Weight: 5 lbs (2.25 kg).

Mega-Damage: 3D6+6 M.D. single shots, or 1D6x10+10 M.D. per tri-pulse burst.

Rate of Fire: Standard.

Maximum Effective Range: 2000 feet (610 m).

Payload: 60 shots per AE-Clip. Only 30 if using a normal E-Clip.

Market Cost: 35,000 credits.

HI-80 Combat Laser Rifle (AWE version)

This is the standard front-line laser rifle of the CAF ground forces. The addition of an AE-Clip payload gives it added punch.

Weight: 7 lbs (3.2 kg).

Mega-Damage: 4D6+6 per shot.

Rate of Fire: Standard.

Maximum Effective Range: 2000 feet (610 m).

Payload: 60 shots per AE-Clip. Only 30 if using a normal E-Clip.

Market Cost: 48,000 credits.

Experimental Energy Technology

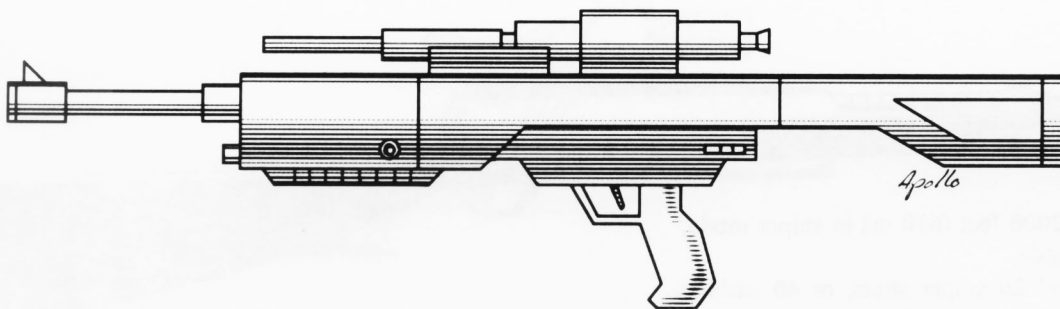
Recently, along with a number of other projects, AWE has been attempting to push the boundaries of existing energy weapons. This they have done, with varying amounts of success during the testing periods of the weapons below (there were fatalities, and at one point a remote asteroid in the Novaro System was cracked in half after a fusion meltdown), but now AWE is proud to report that the first of their new lines of energy weapons have begun to ship from the factory and that they are quite safe to use.

Fusion Weaponry

Fusion power has long been in use in the Three Galaxies, but until now no one has managed to create a small enough version of a fusion generator to be useful in hand-held weapons. This is why most weapons manufacturers stopped with plasma and particle beam weapons in their quest to increase weapon damage. Not Advanced WeaponTech Enterprises, who have been tirelessly working at being the first to put a commercial Fusion weapon on the market — and they have succeeded. A Fusion weapon basically uses the same process as a plasma weapon to do damage, with the exception that the Fusion weapon superheats a plasma-like material to temperatures so high that it actually begins to undergo nuclear fusion before it is released from the storage unit. This release comes in the form of a high velocity (6.3 miles/10 kilometers per second) stream of reactive atomic particles, much like an old-style flamethrower, except so much faster that it seems like an energy bolt. This Fusion "beam" does immense damage to the target, and also has a "splash" effect in which the particle stream is sprayed outwards from the point of impact, much like molten metal. At this point in time, Fusion weapons are quite expensive compared to other energy weapons.

FB-75 Fusion Rifle

This weapon is unlike most other rifles in that it must be attached to a backpack that holds the fusionable material. The at-



tachment comes in the form of a thin piece of heavily insulated cabling which attaches to the rifle about where an ejection port would be on an old-style assault rifle (this can be on either side of the rifle for right- or left-handed firing), and in no way impairs the use of the FB-75 in a rifle configuration. The FB-75 has great range compared with other energy rifles, and this combined with one of AWE's Electron-Enhanced Thermal Scoping systems makes it an excellent general purpose weapon. It is capable of fully automatic fire, and when the "splash" effect of the fusion beam is taken into account, the FB-75 Fusion Rifle becomes an exemplary weapon for "painting" a target with suppressive fire. There is one major drawback to the weapon; in common with the flamethrowers of old, puncturing the storage backpack can result in a volatile explosion. The backpack has a total of 100 M.D.C., and if this is destroyed, there is a 01-30% chance that the fusionable material will reach critical mass and inflict 3D4x10 M.D. to the surrounding 50 foot (15.3 m) area.

Otherwise, automatic systems will render the material non-volatile and the gunner merely loses his ammunition source. Note that severing the attachment cabling (which has 75 M.D.C.) is a difficult shot at -5 to strike, and has no effect but to cut off the gun from the ammo supply.

Weight: Rifle: 8.9 lbs (4 kg). Backpack: 13.2 lbs (6 kg).

Mega-Damage: 6D6 M.D. per shot. (The "splash" does half this damage to anything within a 10 foot/3 m area around the target).

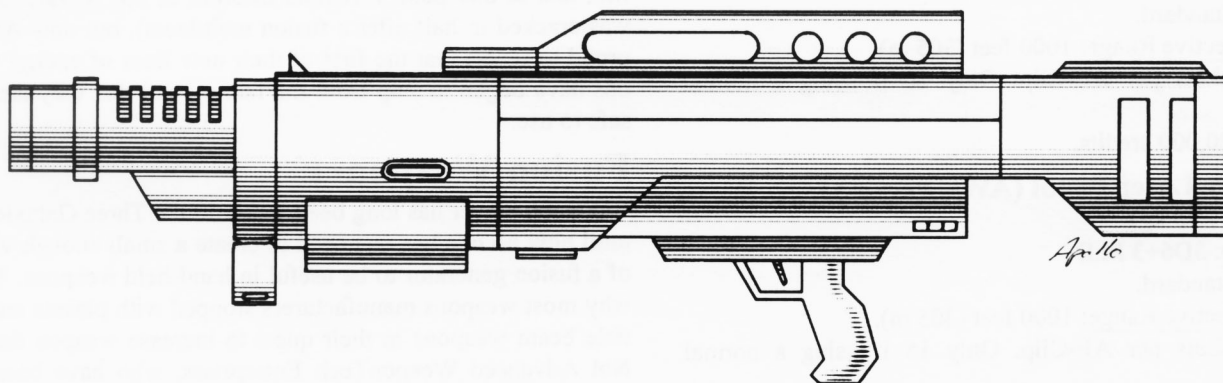
Rate of Fire: Single shot.

Maximum Effective Range: 1400 feet (427 m).

Payload: A Fusion Storage Backpack holds enough material for 30 shots.

Market Cost: 150,000 credits. A backpack costs 40,000 new, and can be reloaded at a cost of 10,000 credits with a refill package. This takes a whole melee.

Strike Bonus: +1 to strike due to the Scoping system.



FB-90 Heavy Fusion Support Weapon

A larger version of the FB-75 Fusion Rifle, the FB-90 does more damage and has a greater range and payload but is also not intended to be man portable. Rather, it is meant to be fixed in place as a defensive mount, or to be mounted on a vehicle of some kind, because of the weight of its ammunition repository. However, AWE does anticipate that those in power armor and who are unusually strong will try to wield the weapon. This is possible, but they warn those who try to do this that they will lose accuracy due to the tremendous kick of the weapon. The wielder is -4 to strike unless they have a robotic or supernatural strength of 28 or greater. The FB-90's fusionable material tank has a total of 320 M.D.C., and inflicts 4D6x10 M.D. to the surrounding 100 feet (30.5 m; unless contained in a vehicle of some kind) on a roll of 01-40% when destroyed. The connection cabling is also more resilient, and has 180 M.D.C.

Weight: Rifle: 33 lbs (15 kg). Fusion Tank: 165 lbs (75 kg).

Mega-Damage: 1D4x10 M.D. per shot ("splash" damage is half this to an 20 foot/6 m area surrounding the target). 4D4x10 M.D. for a ten round burst.

Rate of Fire: Single shot or burst only.

Maximum Effective Range: 2200 feet (671 m).

Payload: 50 shots (5 bursts).

Market Cost: 250,000 credits. Fusion tank costs 80,000 credits new, and 25,000 per reload. Connecting a full tank takes three melees, and the gun cannot fire until the process is fully completed.

Strike Penalty: Unless mounted on a stable platform, the wielder is at -4 to strike if their strength is less than 28 (robotic or supernatural).

Neutron Weaponry

Along with Fusion weapons, Advanced WeaponTech have been researching possible ways to forge a workable Neutron weapon. With a great deal of tenacity they have once again succeeded, but the concept has a number of drawbacks. The basic principle that the Neutron gun works upon is sort of a combination of both the ion and particle beam weapons. Energy is drawn from a high intensity source and emitted through a series of polarized crystals in the form of a stream of charged particles. When these particles contact any form of dense matter, they act to pull the neutrons away from the atomic nuclei of that matter, which in turn dissolves the target at a subatomic level, much like the "disintegrator ray" of fiction. The visible effect is that the matter that is being fired at simply boils away in a number of mini-nucleonic explosions. An immense amount of energy is needed to maintain such a stream of particles; luckily AWE's new AE-Clips, which were developed for use in their new range of EI-Lasers, are able to provide such an amount of energy. The other problem is that the Neutron stream tends to lose cohesiveness the further away the target is, and this leads to Neutron weapons doing a large amount of damage at short-ranges which gradually decreases the longer the range. Still, the range of Neutron weapons is quite short compared with other types of energy weapons, and this is particularly notable when compared with a Fusion or EI-Laser weapon.

NA-120 Neutron Particle Assault Rifle

Another bulky weapon with a short, stubby barrel, the Neutron Assault Rifle is best used at shorter ranges than most energy rifles because of its inherent damage limitations at higher ranges. It is not provided with any kind of electronic scope, because its limited maximum range would make such an addition redundant. It does, however, have a long Vibro-bayonet (3D6 M.D.) fitted under the barrel for even closer range confrontations.

Weight: 17.8 lbs (8 kg).

Mega-Damage: Dependent on target range, but can also fire a five round particle burst.

Up to 600 feet (183 m): 1D6x10 per shot, or 2D4x10 for a burst.

601-1000 feet (183-305 m): 1D4x10 per shot, or 1D6x10 for a burst.

1001-1200 feet (305-366 m): 5D6 per shot, or 1D4x10 for a burst.

1201-1400 feet (366-427 m): 3D6 per shot, or 5D6 for a burst.

1401-1600 feet (427-488 m): 2D6 per shot, or 4D6 for a burst.

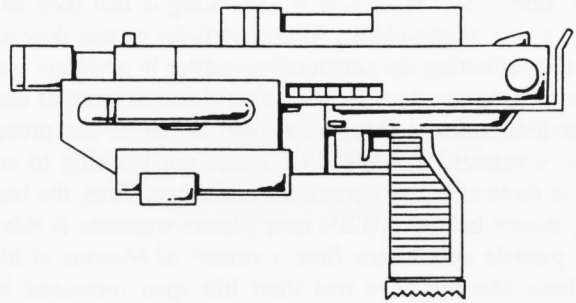
Vibro-bayonet does 2D4 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Single shot or a five round particle burst.

Maximum Effective Range: 1600 feet (488 m), but more effective at shorter ranges.

Payload: 15 shots (can only use AE-Clips).

Market Cost: 90,000 credits.



NA-100 Neutron Particle Sidearm

This weapon is about the size of a small sub-machinegun, chiefly because AWE engineers could find no way of further reducing the size of the conducting crystals which charge the Neutron beam (this is actually a misnomer, because the beam a Neutron gun fires is not a stream of Neutrons — it merely affects Neutrons. However AWE realizes that "Neutron Gun" has a better effect on potential buyers than "Neutron-Affecting Gun"). It does not have a very long-range, and indeed the range at which the gun can do the most damage is severely limited, but Advanced WeaponTech consider this a very slight drawback in a pistol-like weapon. In common with other Neutron weapons, the NA-100 is quite bulky and very heavy for an energy weapon its size.

Weight: 8.9 lbs (4 kg).

Mega-Damage: Dependent on range, but can also fire a particle burst of three rounds:

Up to 200 feet (61 m): 5D6 per shot, or 1D6x10 for a burst.

201-400 feet (91-122 m): 6D6 per shot, or 8D6 for a burst.

401-600 feet (122-183 m): 4D6 per shot, or 6D6 for a burst.

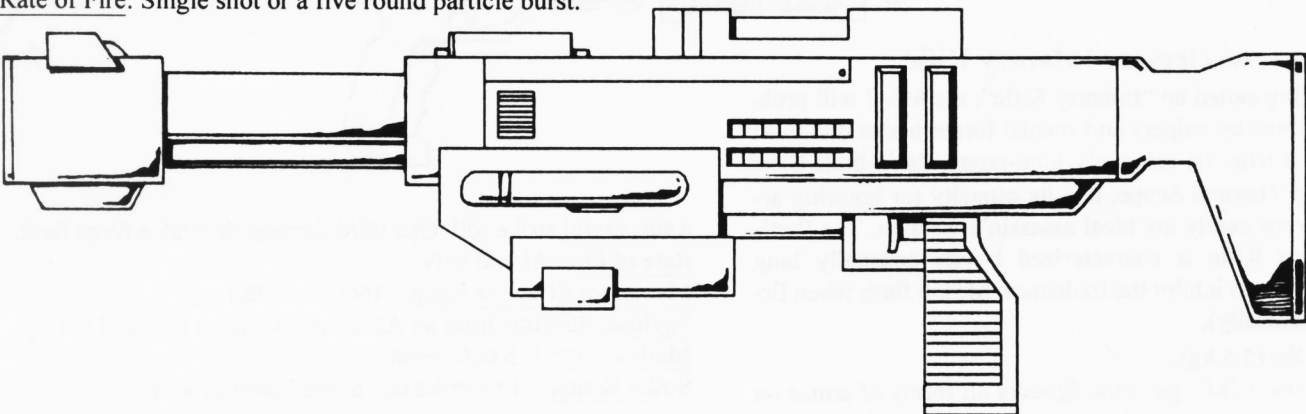
800 feet (183-244 m): 4D4 per shot, or 4D6 per burst.

Rate of Fire: Single shot or three round particle burst.

Maximum Effective Range: 800 feet (244 m), but more effective at shorter ranges.

Payload: 20 shots (can only use AE-Clips).

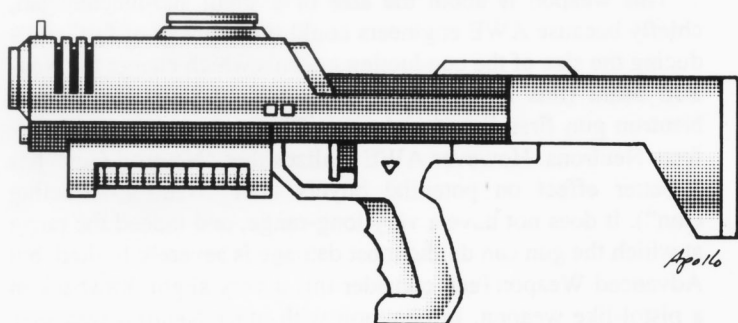
Market Cost: 40,000 credits.



Meson Weaponry

Mesons are subatomic particles that do not normally interact with other matter. They also decay quite quickly, and so have a very short life span. Advanced WeaponTech researchers have come up with a way of extending the life span of Mesons for set periods of time. The reason this is interesting is that they have also found a way of stimulating Meson particles so that they will explode, thus affecting the surrounding matter in a violent way. This Meson explosion does not do a significant amount of damage to modern military (Mega-Damage) armor at the present time (this is something AWE's engineers are working to correct), but is quite effective against human tissue. Thus, the basic operating theory behind AWE's new Meson weapons is this: a modified particle accelerator fires a stream of Mesons at high speed. These Mesons have had their life span increased just enough to reach a predetermined range (which is set digitally by

the gunner), at which time they explode. Normally, the gunner programs the Meson stream to explode *inside* his enemy's armor, thus bypassing the Mega-Damage material and inflicting great amounts of damage directly to his opponent's tissue (somewhat like phase and microwave weapons, although the principle is very different). The only difficulty arising from this is that when targeting fast moving opponents, it can be hard for the gunner to judge at what range to make the Meson stream explode, leading to no hits but a lot of explosions in the wake of the target. For every five miles per hour (8 km) that the target is travelling, deduct 2 from the attacker's roll to strike with Meson weaponry. Also, force fields have a tendency to make a certain percentage of the Meson particles explode prematurely (i.e. outside the field), and thus reduce the damage a Meson weapon can do to a shielded target.



MS-5 Meson Accelerator Carbine

The smallest Meson weapon AWE could create, the MS-5 looks very much like a shortened rifle. The E-Clip (either standard or AE) is mounted on top of the weapon, forward of the trigger and handle. This helps cut down on the length of the weapon, and makes it very concealable. In common with all Meson weapons, when it is fired the MS-5 emits a bright white flash, but there is no visible energy beam or bolt as there is with other energy weapons, since Meson particles are invisible for all

intents and purposes. The flash is caused by the unperfected particle acceleration process — AWE engineers hope that they will soon negate this effect, making Meson weapons perfect for sniping. Due to the short barrel, the MS-5 Carbine has a shorter range than the rifle version, and lacks the scope as well.

Weight: 6.7 lbs (3 kg).

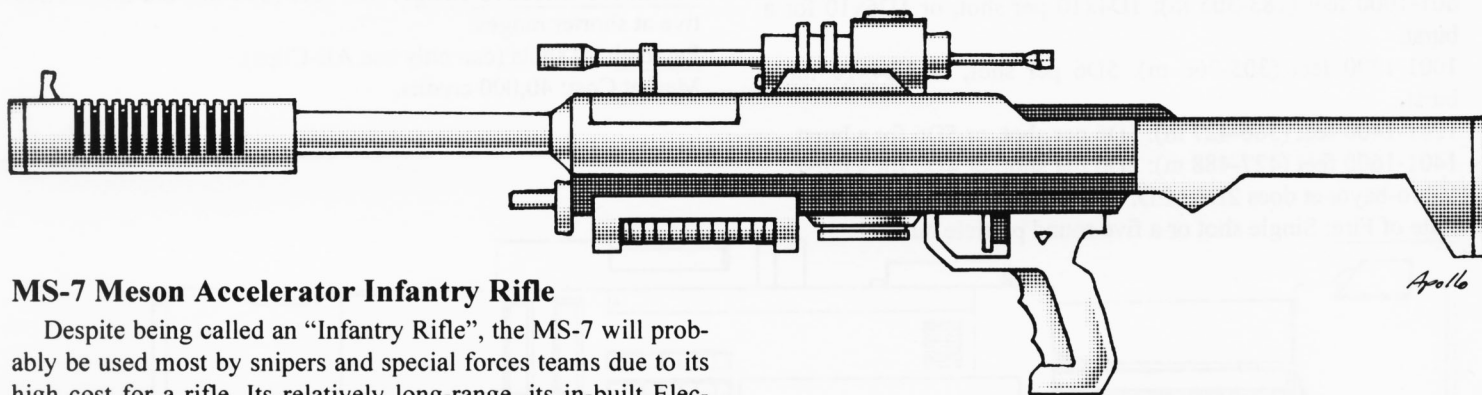
Damage: 2D6 S.D.C. per shot. Ignores all forms of armor on a successful strike roll. Does one third damage through force fields.

Rate of Fire: Aimed only.

Maximum Effective Range: 1200 feet (366 m).

Payload: 20 shots from an AE-Clip. 6 shots from a normal E-Clip.

Market Cost: 75,000 credits



MS-7 Meson Accelerator Infantry Rifle

Despite being called an "Infantry Rifle", the MS-7 will probably be used most by snipers and special forces teams due to its high cost for a rifle. Its relatively long-range, its in-built Electron-Enhanced Thermal Scope, and its capacity for ignoring armor make it very nearly the ideal assassin's weapon. The Particle Accelerator Rifle is characterized by its unusually long barrel (an attempt to inhibit the trademark Meson flash when firing — unsuccessfully).

Weight: 12.2 lbs (5.5 kg).

Damage: 3D6+3 S.D.C. per shot. Ignores all forms of armor on

a successful strike roll. One third damage through a force field.

Rate of Fire: Aimed only.

Maximum Effective Range: 1600 feet (488 m).

Payload: 40 shots from an AE-Clip. 13 from a standard E-Clip.

Market Cost: 115,000 credits.

Strike Bonus: +1 to strike due to the Electron Scope.

Electromagnetic Weaponry

Like Meson weapons, Electromagnetic weapons do not directly affect the outer armor of the target. Unlike Meson weapons, however, those weapons working on an Electromagnetic principle are useless against organic targets. Rather they are intended for disrupting the internal workings of battlefield robots and vehicles. Electromagnetic weaponry fires a concentrated electromagnetic pulse (EMP) which scrambles electronics and computers into non-operation, and are primarily useful for capturing robots or equipment without damaging them. The difficulty is that most modern combat vehicles are shielded from the effects of a normal EM pulse as part of their standard NBC (Nuclear, Biological, Chemical) life support package. AWE have got around this by enhancing the strength of their pulse to around five times the intensity of a normal EM pulse caused by, say, a small nuclear explosion.

EMP-65 Electromagnetic Pulsar

The EMP-65 is a rifle sized weapon whose most notable feature is its large, hexagonal barrel. The extreme thickness of the barrel is caused by layer upon layer of both insulating material and conduction ceramics, and because of this the gun is slightly front heavy. When fired, the Pulsar has an area of effect that widens the further away from the barrel it gets, out to a maximum of 10 feet (3 m) wide at the weapon's maximum range of 1200 feet (366 m). After this point, the beam is too diffused and underpowered to affect any electronics. Up to its maximum range, however, the beam will affect any and all targets within its area of effect, meaning that if two targets are lined up, both will be affected. When a successful hit is scored, give the target a roll to save vs lethal poison (12 or over). If this roll is failed, roll on the EMP Effect Table below.

Weight: 16.7 lbs (7.5 kg).

Mega-Damage: None. Roll on the following table for effects:

01-10% Radar is affected: it fuzzes out and shows false images.

Pilot is -8 to strike without visual confirmation.

11-20% Radar goes down completely. Pilot is sensor blind, and all forms of combat bonuses are lost.

21-30% All targeting systems are lost. No bonuses to strike.

31-40% Electrical system shorts out. Pilot loses two attacks per melee due to slow movement/control response.

41-50% All sensors go on the fritz. Infrared, thermal, nightvision, visual, radar, everything goes out. No bonuses to strike.

51-60% Weapon system control conduits are fused. ALL weapons become inoperable.

61-70% Computer circuits that control movement are fused. Vehicle is immobilized. If moving, vehicle comes to a halt at the earliest opportunity, and cannot resume movement.

71-80% Life Support goes down. All temperature control, air recycling and circulation functions are inoperative.

81-90% Computer system is completely wiped. All vehicle functions cease to operate and shut down, immobilizing the vehicle.

91-100% EM shot disables the nuclear reactor safeties, meaning the reactor will reach critical meltdown in approximately three minutes, and explode with 1D6x(maximum M.D.C. of the vehicle's main body) M.D.C. to a 600 foot (183 m) radius. Note: If the vehicle is petrol driven, the pulse causes the tank to explode. Damage is at the G.M.'s discretion. If electrically powered, batteries fuse and all power is lost.

Rate of Fire: Aimed shot only.

Maximum Effective Range: 1200 feet (366 m).

Payload: 10 shots from an AE-Clip. Only 3 shots from a regular E-Clip.

Market Cost: 110,000 credits.

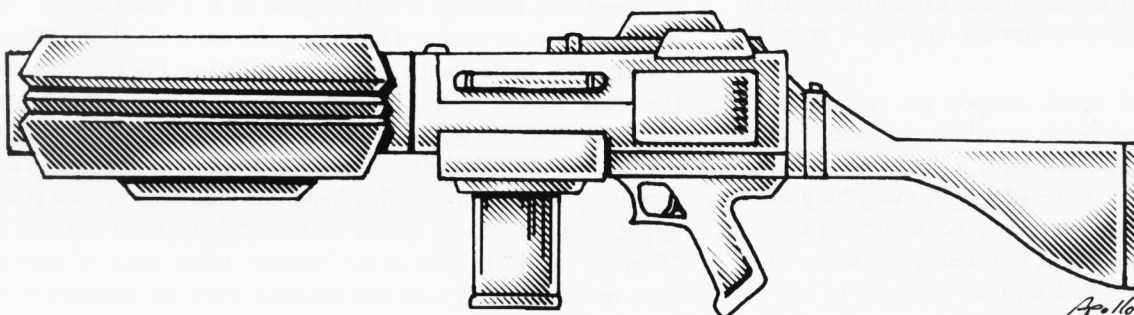
Strike Penalty: -1 to strike due to weapon's front-heaviness.

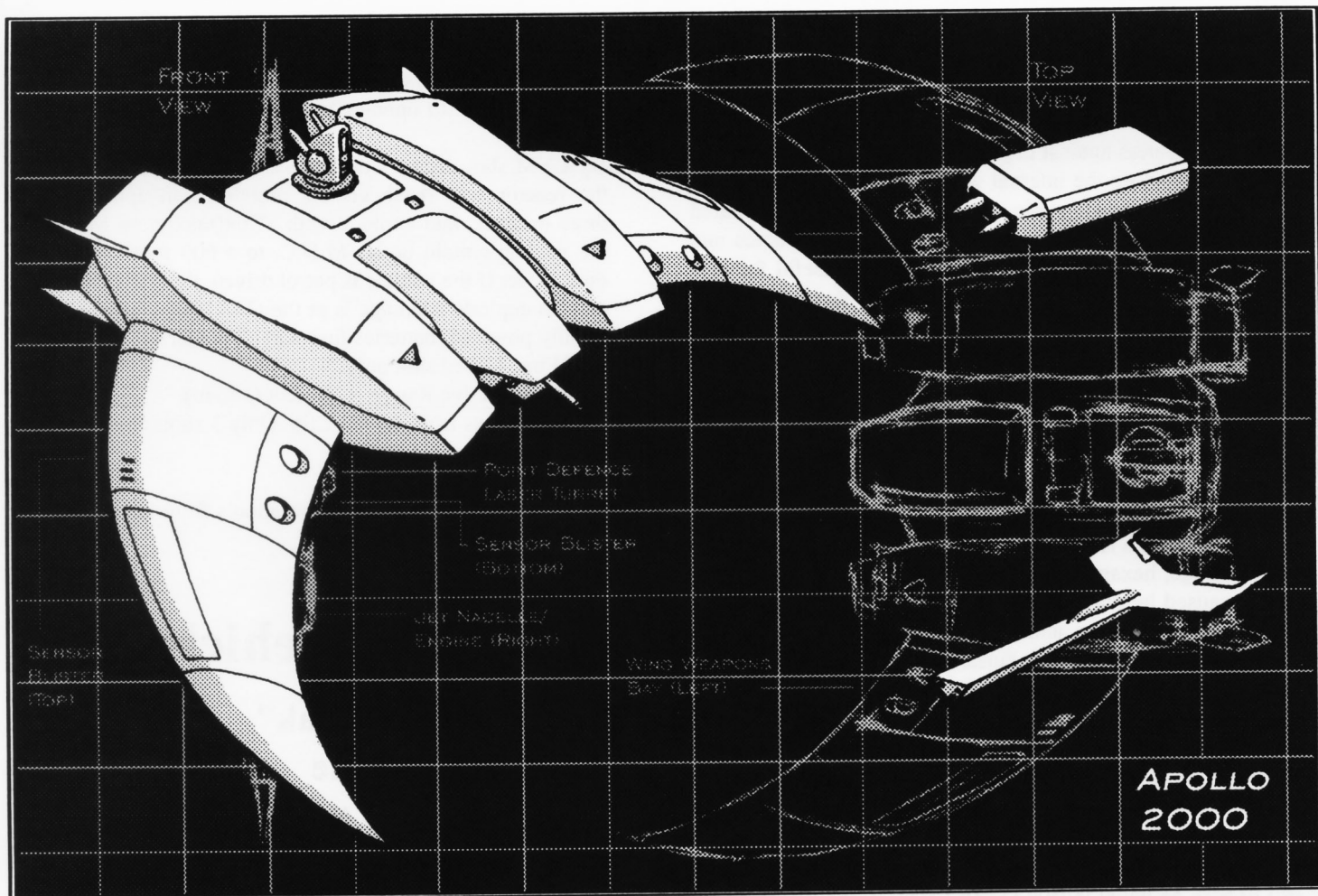
Incorporated Atmospheric Vehicles

AI-32NPN "Helstreak" Assault Magnadyne

The first of Incorporated Atmospheric Vehicles' new range of No Pilot Needed (NPN) aerial weapons platforms, the Helstreak is designed to be used as a ground attack weapon system in "hot" battle areas where there is every chance that a conventional attack aircraft will be blown out of the sky. The rationale behind this is very simple: one, if a computer controlled craft such as the Helstreak is destroyed, no pilot is lost, and two, the fact that there is no pilot controlling the Magnadyne means that it can push the flight envelope to a much higher degree. The Helstreak can perform maneuvers (climbing, turning, etc.) at velocities that would kill an organic pilot, and so is much more adept at avoiding defensive fire than a conventional attack craft.

The Helstreak has a very distinctive design, and is basically a large, flat crescent, the tips of the crescent being the craft's forward swept wings. Between these wings, where a pilot's cockpit might normally be, is housed the AI computer unit along with its memory core. Above and below this area are two sensor blisters, enabling the Helstreak to scan the ground no matter which way up it is flying. For stability in heavier atmospheres (gravity or atmospheric pressure-wise), a symmetrical tail section with two flattened, horizontal wings (but no vertical stabilizer — too





much drag when flying upside-down) is added to the rear of the craft, but in an Earth-like atmosphere the aerodynamic “fly-ing-wing”-like qualities (and control surfaces which are constantly adjusted by the on-board AI) of the Helstreak are more than adequate to maintain performance. Contained within the wing are three weapons bays, one large one under the main fuselage and two smaller bays within the arc of the crescent under either wing. The Helstreak keeps its weapons inside these bays for as long as possible to reduce drag and radar signature. The Helstreak’s four engines and jet nacelles are situated behind the computer core and underneath the optional tail section, along with the nuclear powerplant.

Like all of IAV’s NPN line of ground attack craft, the Helstreak is designed (and the on-board computer programmed) to be used in groups of at least four, so that coordinated attacks and maneuvers can be performed. This tactical design decision makes the Helstreak an expensive proposition for all but the largest governments and military forces in the CCW, but many of the civilized and cultured worlds in the Consortium would rather make the large financial commitment required in order to minimize loss of life.

Being primarily a ground attack weapon (as opposed to a craft designed with air superiority in mind), the Helstreak’s on-board computer is programmed with a focus on evading ground fire and destroying its assigned target; everything else, such as enemy air threats, is a secondary consideration unless the Helstreak feels it or its mission is threatened. Basically what this amounts to is that the Helstreak will not go out of its way to

destroy enemy air/spacecraft, or conduct aerial reconnaissance of the target area, until its programmed objectives have been met.

The Artificial Intelligence built into the Helstreak is limited at best, and has knowledge only of those things pertaining to its purpose (i.e. kill the “enemy” on the ground). It knows what the flight and weapons capabilities of the Helstreak are, the identities of its three other “Hel-Mates,” who its “friends” are (usually the organization that owns the craft), who its “enemies” are (the parameters of which are usually programmed in before every mission) and what its obligations are toward both. Specific mission information like the exact target and level of threat is downloaded to the AI before it is sent out, as well as any other information that is deemed relevant by its commander(s). During a mission, the Helstreak AI is in constant communication with the other three members of its squadron in order to plan attack runs and maneuvers.

The Helstreak is also capable of communicating with its base of operations, although it will only do so if a “pre-flagged” parameter comes up during a mission and it has no built-in instructions on how to deal with the current situation. For example, the Helstreak arrives at the primary target to find it already destroyed, according to the Helstreak’s current definition of “destroyed.” Its built-in instruction set instructs it to proceed to the secondary target. On the other hand: the Helstreak arrives at the target, and its sensors reveal units that have been defined as “friendly” in the middle of the “enemy” target zone. If instructions on how to deal with this situation were not included in its

programming, but the mission planners had anticipated such a possibility and put a "flag" in the Helstreak's mission plan (indicating that the unit should hold off on the attack until it had obtained further data), the Magnadyne would send a burst of coded transmission back to its base of operations containing all the data it (and its Hel-Mates) had on the area/situation and requesting a course of action before proceeding. Note that if such a memory "flag" had not been included in its supplemental cache during that mission, the squadron would have noted the anomalous presence in the target zone and razed the area to the ground anyway. Thus, use of these machines of destruction has its pros and cons, and it is recommended by IAV that they only be used in combat theaters and regions where there is little or no chance of encountering friendly forces (i.e. missions deep behind enemy lines), thus limiting the possibility of collateral damage.

Helstreak Assault Magnadyne

Model Type: IAVAI-32(NPN)

Class: Autonomous Aerial Assault Craft

Crew: None.

M.D.C. by Location:

* Jet Nacelles/Engines (4) — 50 each

** Wing Arcs (2) — 150 each

* Sensor Blisters (2, top and bottom) — 30 each

* Nose Laser Turret (1, nose) — 40

*** Small Weapon Bay Doors (2) — 75 each

*** Large Weapon Bay Door — 85

**** Optional Tail Section — 100

***** Main Fuselage — 300

* Indicates a small or difficult target to hit. The attacker must make a called shot, and even then he is -3 to strike. Destroying an engine/jet assembly reduces the top speed of the craft by 20% (cumulative until all four are gone, which causes the craft to crash). Destroying both sensor blisters eliminates ALL combat bonuses.

** Destroying a wing (effectively, blowing off one side of the crescent) causes the Magnadyne to leave the flight envelope and crash.

*** Destroying the weapon bay doors leaves the payload vulnerable to destruction.

**** Destroying the tail section while it is needed to maintain stability in a heavy atmosphere causes the Magnadyne to crash.

***** Destroying the main fuselage (middle of the crescent) destroys the Magnadyne.

Speed

Flying: In a standard, Earth-like atmosphere, the Helstreak can reach a velocity of Mach 7.2. In heavier atmospheres, this velocity is reduced depending on the situation and atmospheric density (drag). Note that the Helstreak is not designed for maneuvering or travel in space, despite the fact that it can attain escape velocity. Unable to hover, and must obey the laws of inertia when maneuvering.

Statistical Data:

Height: (undercarriage down): 9 feet (2.7 m).

(undercarriage up): 6 feet (1.8 m).

Width/Wingspan: 30 feet (9.1 m).

Length: 16 feet (4.9 m), or 22 feet (6.7 m) with tail attached.

Weight: 1200 pounds (540 kg) unloaded. Note the Helstreak is composed primarily of carbon fibre composites to keep it as light as possible.

Cargo: None.

Power System: Nuclear.

Market Cost: 6 million credits for a single Helstreak, but almost always purchased in groups of four for 20 million credits. Only sold to responsible CCW worlds (i.e. stable governments). Too new to have appeared on the black market, yet.

Weapon Systems

1. Central (Large) Weapons Bay: All three of the Helstreak's weapon bays have been designed to be as modular as possible, enabling it to carry a wide range of ordnance and making it suitable for a variety of mission tasks. The central weapon bay usually carries the primary payload (i.e., what the unit will use to destroy its target), whether this is guided missiles or smart bombs.

Primary Purpose: Anti-installation and Bombardment

Secondary Purpose: Anti-armor and anti-robot

Mega-Damage: Varies with missile and bomb type. Usually 2D6x10 or 4D6x10 M.D. per bomb or missile (fragmentation or plasma).

Rate of Fire: Up to two missiles or four bombs can be released per melee attack/action.

Effective Range: Missiles: varies with missile type. Usually 500 to 800 miles (800 to 1280 km). For bombs, around a half mile (0.8 km) from the target site.

Payload: 4 missiles or 8 bombs.

2. Wing Weapons Bays (2, within each wing): The wing bays are used to carry secondary ordnance or defensive weapons.

Primary Purpose: Anti-armor and anti-robot

Secondary Purpose: Anti-aircraft

Mega-Damage: Varies with missile type. The wing bays can be fitted with either medium- or short-range missiles. Medium-range missiles are usually medium or heavy High Explosive (2D6x10 or 3D6x10). Standard issue short-range missiles are fragmentation (2D4x10).

Rate of Fire: Up to two of either type of missile can be released per melee attack/action.

Effective Range: Medium-range missiles around 40 miles (64 km). Short-range missiles around 3 miles (4.8 km).

Payload: 3 medium-range missiles or six short-range missiles per wing bay (six or twelve total). Both types can be combined in a bay; in that case one medium-range missile equals two short-range missiles. For example, a pilot could put one medium-range missile and four short-range missiles in the left bay, and five medium-range missiles and two short-range missiles in the right bay, or use some other combination.

3. Point Defense Laser Turret: Used mainly as a defensive weapon to shoot down incoming missiles, but can also be used to strafe ground targets. Mounted under the nose of the craft, and can swivel through 360 degrees to engage targets all over the sky.

Primary Purpose: Defense

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Infantry

Mega-Damage: 5D6 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Has two attacks per melee, in addition to other attacks that the craft has.

Effective Range: 2000 feet (610 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

4. Sensor Systems of Note: On-board artificial intelligence includes: tactical database of known threats in the CCW (and can be programmed with more), combat computer and all

other standard features, including a full optics/sensor array. Radar can track up to 96 different targets out to a distance of 500 miles (800 km), as well as sonar to the same distance. Full radio transmission/reception suite, including the ability to establish an uplink with orbital satellites. Combat programs give the following skills/abilities: Land Navigation 90%, Intelligence 85%, Detect Ambush/Concealment (both) at 80%, and the ability to employ group tactics with its Hel-Mates and take evasive action as necessary.

Sensor Bonuses: Includes all bonuses due to speed, maneuverability, combat computer, and on-board AI. +2 on initiative, +3 to strike with laser, +3 automatic dodge when in the air (does not have to spend a melee action to dodge), +1 to roll with impact.

Tellurian Robotics

TR-490 Saracen

Medium Combat Robot

The Saracen is the first production design combat robot to showcase the Neurocomp Interface (N.I.) developed by Tellurian Robotics for use in their latest range of fighting 'bots. Unlike the larger, quadrupedal Scythe (which has been slated for production later in the Galactic Year), the Saracen is a more conventional-looking bipedal design, save for the fact that, from a distance, the robot appears to have two "heads."

The reason for this is that the Saracen has a sensor pod designed to look like a head, with the usual humanoid facial features, mounted over the right shoulder of the bot, making room for a turret housing one of A.W.E.'s new Fusion Cannons over the left shoulder (this is, however, about a third larger than the sensor head in size). A mini-missile rack is mounted between the two heads. The right arm of the robot contains a larger version of A.W.E.'s Electromagnetic Pulsar, able to affect tougher targets, while protruding from the cuff area of the left hand are two high-powered laser weapons.

In a normal combat situation (and in any other robot), the pilot of the Saracen would handle the piloting of the robot and the firing of the arm mounted weapons, while the gunner, who sits beside the pilot in the chest of the robot, targets the Fusion Cannon and the mini-missile rack. What makes the Saracen different from just about every other combat robot on the market, however, is the fact that both the pilot and gunner are hooked up to a Neurocomp Interface. This interface consists of a special helmet, as well as numerous sensor pads which are placed at key areas on the soldier's body. In the case of the pilot, the interface allows a much greater tactile sensation and situational awareness while piloting the Saracen — it's almost like the robot is an extension of the pilot's body. Added to this is a direct neural connection from the pilot's brain to the robot vehicle, allowing the pilot to issue commands to the Saracen virtually at the speed of thought. However, piloting with the Neurocomp system requires so much concentration that the pilot cannot use any of the Saracen's weapon systems. Thus more of a burden is put on the gunner, who can use the extra ability the Neurocomp Interface gives to balance out the extra duties and, in addition, more efficiently and accurately target the weapons of the robot.

During testing of the Neurocomp Interface, Tellurian Robotics' engineers discovered some drawbacks within the system. Chief of these is the long period a pilot takes to acclimate himself/herself to piloting "hands-free" with the Neurocomp system. Even for experienced pilots, this initial learning period can last for months (1D8 months). Secondly, TR discovered that only those pilots with a great deal of mental discipline could effectively pilot a robot vehicle using the Neurocomp Interface. What this means in game terms is that only those people with a Mental Endurance (M.E.) of 18 or greater can learn to pilot a Saracen; in addition, Robot Combat: Basic cannot be used to pilot any Neurocomp-Enhanced Robot. The pilot must possess the Robot Combat: Elite (Saracen) skill in order to pilot a Saracen, as there are very little conventional control surfaces in the Saracen cockpit. Those with a less focused mind are unable to order their thoughts well enough to control the machine (i.e. the robot jerks "spastically" when moving, stumbles and falls over a lot, and weapons rarely hit what the gunner wants them to). Due to this limitation, the Saracen and other N.I.-equipped robots will generally find use only in elite military units, where the proportion of disciplined, experienced (robot combat-wise) minds is greater than elsewhere.

Saracen Medium Combat Robot

Model Designation: TR-490

Class: Neurocomp-Enhanced Medium Offensive Robot

Crew: Two; pilot and gunner.

Piloting Requirements: Pilot must have an M.E. of 18 or greater and possess the Robot Combat: Elite Saracen skill.

Gunnery Requirements: Gunner must have an M.E. of 18 or greater.

M.D.C. by Location:

* Head/Sensor Turret (right shoulder) — 150

Fusion Cannon Turret (left shoulder) — 200

Mini-Missile Rack — 140

Right Upper Arm — 140

Electromagnetic Pulsar (Right forearm) — 200

Left Arm — 200

Dual Medium Lasers (Left hand) — 95

Right Hand — 85

Legs (2) — 250 each

** Fusible Material Containment Tank (1, rear) — 320

*** Main Body — 450

Reinforced Pilot's Compartment — 175

* Destroying the sensor head eliminates the primary optics and sensor systems. However, the Neurocomp Interface requires that tiny sensors be distributed evenly all over the Saracen, so they can act as a backup should the primary sensor head be destroyed — all robot combat bonuses are halved if this is the case. Note that the head is a small and difficult target to hit, requiring the attacker to make a called shot, and even then he is -3 to strike.

** Destroying the F.M.C. Tank on the rear of the Saracen inflicts a devastating 2D6x100 M.D. in a 300 foot (91.5 m) radius surrounding the robot.

*** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body will shut down the robot completely, rendering it useless.

Speed

Running: 110 mph (176 km) maximum. Note that the act of running does not tire the pilot.

Leaping: Not designed for leaping, but can leap 20 feet (6.1 m)

forward after a short run, and 10 feet (3 m) high. Halve these distances if attempted from a standing start.

Underwater Capabilities: Limited to walking on the bottom at 35% of its cruising speed.

Flying: Not possible.

Space Movement: Not possible.

Statistical Data

Height: 20 feet (6.1 m).

Width: 10 feet (3 m).

Length: 9 feet (2.7 m).

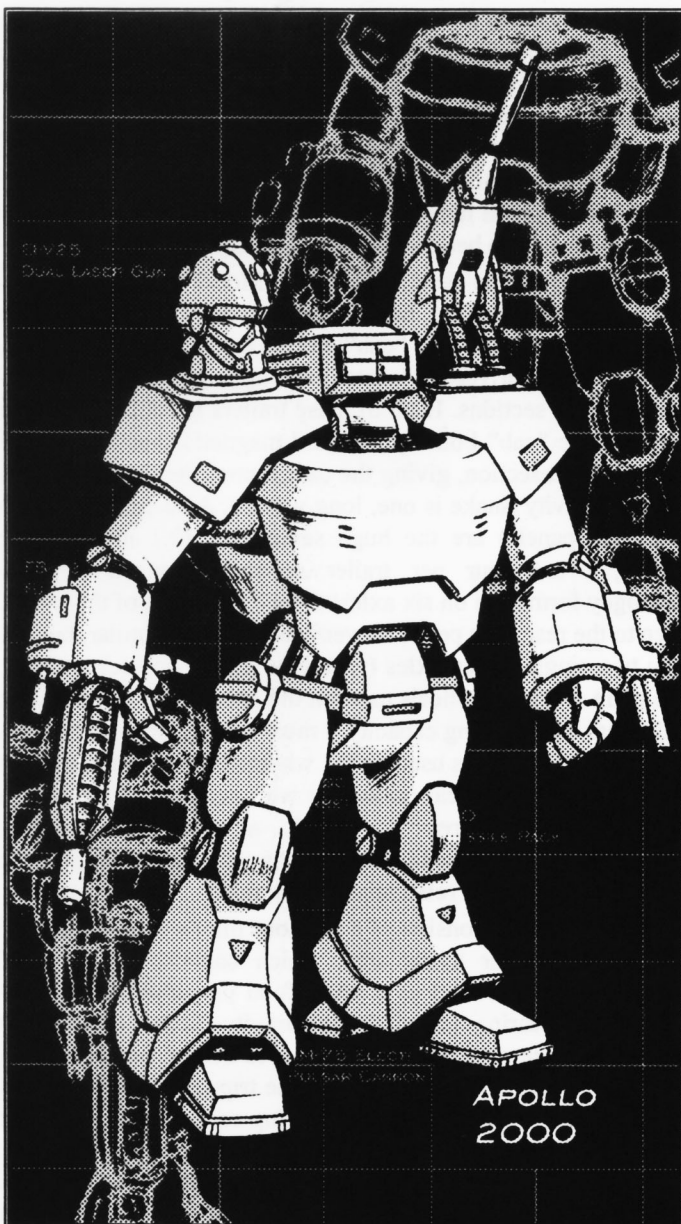
Weight: 30 tons fully loaded.

Physical Strength: Equal to a robotic P.S. 40.

Cargo: A small compartment provides storage for two rifles, two suits of body armor, and a TS-24 Modular Survival Rifle Package.

Power System: Nuclear; average life is 16 years.

Market Cost: 40 million credits. High due to the complexities of adding the Neurocomp Interface to the 'bot and the cost of the Fusion and EMP Cannons. Poor availability outside Phase World and the Novaro System.



Weapon Systems

1. FB-120 Heavy Fusion Turret: Mounted on the left shoulder of the Saracen, the damage capabilities of this weapon are high compared to a standard Gravity Cannon, however the drawbacks are a much smaller payload and a potentially self-destructive fusible material reservoir mounted on the rear of the robot.

Primary Purpose: Anti-robot/tank

Secondary Purpose: Assault

Weight: Not applicable — built-in.

Damage: 4D6x10 M.D. per burst (with splash effect inflicting half this in a 20 foot/6.1 m area around the target). Cannot fire single shots.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the combined number of hand to hand attacks of the gunner.

Effective Range: 2200 feet (671 m).

Payload: 30 bursts/shots. It takes a skilled engineer with the proper equipment and containment facilities four minutes to refill the tank. It can NOT be reloaded if the required facilities are unavailable.

2. EM-75 Electromagnetic Pulsar Cannon: Integrated into the right forearm of the Saracen, the EMP Cannon is a relatively short-ranged weapon used to disable opponents before moving in for the kill. The more powerful EMP blast of this mounted weapon than the hand held version gives it a greater range, but the effects are the same.

Primary Purpose: Disabling/Capturing Opponents

Secondary Purpose: Anti-vehicle

Weight: Not applicable, an integral system.

Damage: None. If a saving throw versus lethal poison (12 or over) is failed, roll on the following table for effects:

01-10% Radar is affected: it fuzzes out and shows false images.

Pilot is -8 to strike without visual confirmation.

11-20% Radar goes down completely. Pilot is sensor blind, and all forms of combat bonuses are lost.

21-30% All targeting systems are lost. No bonuses to strike.

31-40% Electrical system shorts out. Pilot loses two attacks per melee due to slow movement/control response.

41-50% All sensors go on the fritz. Infra-red, thermal, nightvision, visual, radar, everything goes out. No bonuses to strike.

51-60% Weapon system control conduits are fused. ALL weapons become inoperable.

61-70% Computer circuits that control movement are fused. Vehicle is immobilized. If moving, vehicle comes to a halt at the earliest opportunity, and cannot resume movement.

71-80% Life Support goes down. All temperature control, air recycling and circulation functions are inoperative.

81-90% Computer system is completely wiped. All vehicle functions cease to operate and shut down, immobilizing the vehicle.

91-00% EM shot disables the nuclear reactor safeties, meaning the reactor will reach critical meltdown in approximately three minutes, and explode with 1D6x(maximum M.D.C. of the vehicle) M.D.C. to a 600 foot (183 m) radius. Note: If the vehicle is petrol driven, the pulse causes the fuel tank to explode. Damage is at the G.M.'s discretion. If electrically powered, batteries fuse and all power is lost.

Rate of Fire: Twice per melee round.

Effective Range: 2000 feet (610 m). The pulse expands as it

travels so that at its maximum range it is 12 feet (3.7 m) wide, and affects everything within that area.

Payload: Effectively unlimited, but it takes about seven seconds to charge up again after each shot.

3. EI-V25 Dual Laser Guns: Mounted on the back of the left hand are a pair of high-powered laser weapons.

Primary Purpose: Anti-personnel

Secondary Purpose: Anti-armor

Weight: Not applicable; part of the left arm.

Damage: 4D6 M.D. per single shot, or 1D4x10 if both are fired at once (counts as one melee attack).

Rate of Fire: Equal to the number of hand to hand attacks of the gunner.

Effective Range: 3000 feet (914 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

4. TRM-20 Mini-Missile Rack: Situated on the top of the Saracen, between the two heads, is a rack of mini-missiles.

Primary Purpose: Anti-personnel

Secondary Purpose: Anti-aircraft

Weight: Not applicable.

Damage: Varies with missile type. Standard issue is fragmentation (5D6 M.D.).

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of two or four.

Effective Range: Typically about a mile (1.6 km).

Payload: Twenty.

5. Hand to Hand Combat: Rather than use a weapon, the pilot can engage in Mega-Damage hand to hand combat. The Neurocomp Interface makes the Saracen quick and deadly in the hands of a skilled pilot. Bonuses for N.I. use are factored into the Robot Combat: Elite (Saracen) skill below.

Bonuses & Damage from Saracen Combat Training:

Full Strength Punch — 1D6 M.D.

Power Punch — 2D6 M.D.

Crush, Pry or Tear — 1D6 M.D.

Kick — 2D6 M.D.

Jump Kick — 4D6 M.D. (counts as two attacks)

Body Flip/Throw — 1D4 M.D.

Body Block/Ram — 2D4 M.D.

Stomp — 1D4 M.D. versus man-sized targets

+1 to strike

+2 to parry

+2 to dodge

+4 to roll with the punch, fall or impact.

Automatic Dodge (no bonuses apply).

Critical Strike same as pilot's hand to hand ability.

Remember, these bonuses are in addition to the pilot's own hand to hand training and attribute bonuses. Also note that the pilot must have a Mental Endurance of 18 or greater to pilot the Saracen.

6. Sensor Systems: Standard sensor suite includes full optical system, infra-red, ultra-violet, telescopic, thermo-imaging, polarization, radar and laser targeting. The Neurocomp Interface and its additional sensors add to the robot's capabilities.

Sensor Bonuses: +3 to initiative, +1 to strike using long-range weapons, and +1 to dodge, in addition to Saracen Elite Robot training. The gunner gains an extra attack per melee every five experience levels (starting at level one) due to the responsiveness of the Interface, as well as +1 to strike on an aimed shot.

Terrestrial Vehicle Technologies

TVT Model 400 "Gravity Snake" Super Freight Transporter

Designed with the huge, life-supporting (not necessarily to humans), heavy gravity terrestrial (i.e. non-gaseous) worlds that are regularly found within star systems all over the Three Galaxies, the Model 400 bears a passing resemblance to the standard prime mover/heavy haulage vehicle that is used on many Terran-normal worlds. In order for it to be able to move heavy cargos over extremely long distances through crushing gravity and often poisonous atmospheres, Terrestrial Vehicle Technologies has incorporated a number of interesting features into the Model 400.

The vehicle specialists at TVT discovered early on in the design process of the Model 400 that the power of contra-gravity generators required to both fight the gravity on heavy-G worlds and move a vehicle as big as the Gravity Snake would make the vehicle prohibitively expensive. So, in order to keep down costs for smaller operators, the Gravity Snake is a wheeled vehicle that makes extensive, but not primary, use of small contra-gravity generators to facilitate movement through a heavy gravity environment. A small defensive armament, consisting of a couple of weapon turrets on the cab and one on the last trailer in the line, has also been mounted on the Gravity Snake.

Straight from the factory floor, the Model 400 most resembles a long, silver snake, hence its name, despite the fact that it is actually composed of a "cab"/motive area (where the engine, powerplant and driver are located) and up to six rectangular, enclosed trailer sections. Each of these trailers is connected to the next and the "cab" both by standard magnetic shackles and by an articulated section, giving the casual observer the impression that the Gravity Snake is one, long vehicle. Also concealed (behind side panels) are the huge seven foot (2.1 m) diameter wheels, twenty-four per trailer section, arranged in double-bogey formation on six axles; three to the front of the trailer, three to the rear. The prime mover/"cab" itself is similar, but has only two single bogey axles (with two wheels apiece) up front. The extra axles and wheels used on the Model 400 represent the additional load-bearing capacity it must have to deal with crushing gravities. The tires used on the wheels are solid rubber — an inner tube is impractical on worlds with extremely high or low atmospheric pressures — and advanced, heavy-duty shock-absorbers are used in conjunction with the CG-generators in order to maintain a relatively smooth ride.

The cab section consists of a spacious pilot's compartment in front of a smaller living area, which contains a couple of fold-down beds as well as a small food preparation and bathroom area, bearing in mind the Gravity Snake is built for lengthy haulage runs. A small cargo area behind the living area is usually stocked with supplies for the trip, and can be used as an emergency airlock. This entire living section is situated just above the motive engine and chassis/axle section of the cab, leaving the nuclear powerplant placed directly above the pilot's compartment and living area. This is the opposite of the case in most normal Terran-style haulers, and was done for two reasons.

One, the powerplant acts as a very efficient radiation shield for the living area when on planets where there is lot of solar radiation penetrating the atmosphere, and two, since the wheels are so big, putting the pilot's compartment just above them gives a better view of the road than if it had been situated on top of the nuclear plant/main contra-gravity generator area, a full seven feet (2.1 m) higher again. Note that the Model 400 has a fairly comprehensive sensor suite, but that being able to drive visually can be an advantage on worlds where certain instruments (i.e. radar, infra-red) do not work due to atmospheric anomalies.

The Gravity Snake makes limited use of contra-gravity generators in two main ways. One, the gravity in the living areas (i.e. the pilot's compartment and cabin) can be altered at will in order to maintain a comfortable environment for the crew no matter what the external conditions are like. Two, a number of smaller generators located under the axles of the vehicle continually compensate for the sometimes tremendous loads placed on the axles. Remember that in a two-G environment, everything masses the same but weighs twice as much. Hence, a fully loaded cargo trailer would still be the same size and have the same inertia, but would weigh around 500 tons (rather than its usual 250 tons). In a 5g environment, which is the maximum the Gravity Snake can operate in, the same cargo trailer would weigh an astounding 1250 tons! It is only the effects of the contra-gravity generators acting to alleviate gravitational forces which enable the vehicle to function in such conditions. If the advanced technologies of the Three Galaxies were not present, the Gravity Snake would not exist. (Author's Note: Yes, I realize that pounds/tons are a measure of mass rather than gravitational weight, which is measured in newtons — 100 metric grams equals 1 newton. However, **Rifts® Phase World®** is not a "hard" science fiction setting, so the simple explanation above should suffice for normal gaming use. Those interested in more accurate measurements are advised to consult an encyclopedia and do the math themselves.)

A secondary motor has been added to the fourth trailer in the train of six; this is in order to ensure that a constant drive is maintained to the rear trailers even when the primary engine is working hard (i.e. laboring up a steep hill under the weight of

three gravities). These engines tend to run extremely hot due to the immense load that they are pulling, so they use a liquid nitrogen coolant. Even so, the heat build-up is automatically vented out the sides of the vehicle periodically as steam. Some of this heat can be diverted up into the cabin to maintain warmth on frigid worlds; likewise, some of the nitrogen reserve can be used to cool the cab on warmer worlds by circulating it through the air-conditioning system.

The cargo trailers can be vacuum-sealed in order to protect their cargo from any unwanted atmospheric effects or conditions which may harm the cargo. As well as this, the trailers are fully environmental, meaning that they can be heated or cooled — in order to do this without drawing power from the nuclear plant, the tops of the trailers have been outfitted with ultraviolet panels. Similar to solar panels, these collect solar energy, but work just as well when the sun is covered by clouds. If for some reason ultraviolet emissions are blocked, the nuclear plant can be used to power the trailer containers at the cost of a reduced cruising speed.

Gravity Snake Super Freight Transporter

Model Type: Terrestrial Vehicle Technologies Model 400

Class: Multi-Wheel Heavy Gravity Freight Hauler

Crew: Pilot, Co-Pilot, Gunner (interchangeable; two people are generally in the cab, one driving and one manning the weapons console, and one on break in the living area).

M.D.C. by Location:

Freight Trailer/Container (6) — 350 each

* Container Doors (6, rear of containers) — 90 each

Articulated Trailer Joining Sections (6, between trailers) — 40 each

Ultraviolet Panels (12, two per trailer) — 25 each

Protective Wheel Panels (28, four per trailer plus cab set) — 75 each

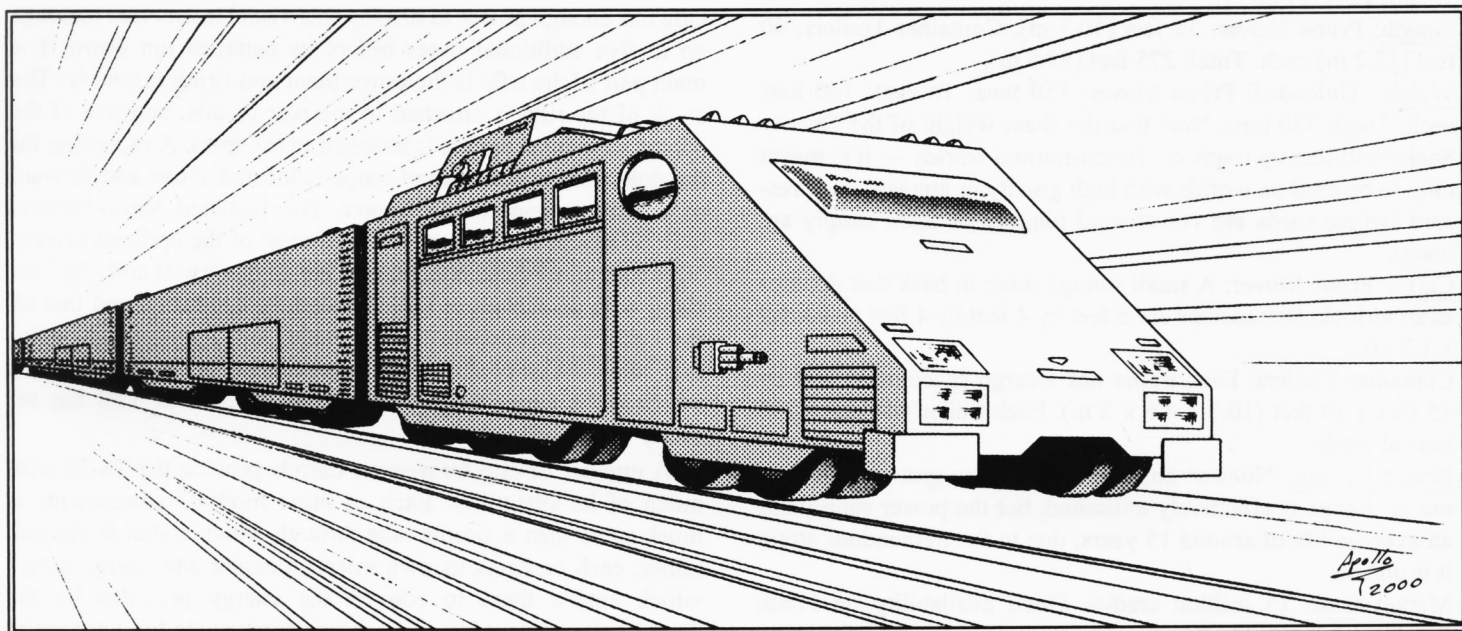
* Solid Wheels (160! Twenty-four per trailer plus sixteen on the cab) — 35 each

*** Prime Mover Lower Section (cab and living area) — 650

Pilot's Compartment Hatch — 100

Rear Cargo/Airlock Hatch — 100

* Forward Spotlights (2) — 25 each



- * Reinforced Front Windscreen — 300
- *** Prime Mover Upper Section (powerplant) — 600
- * Sensor Blisters (2, front and top of prime mover section) — 45 each
- * Weapon Turrets (3, two on cab section plus one on last trailer) — 150 each
- ** Reinforced Pilot's Compartment — 150
- ** Reinforced Living Area — 150
- * These components are small and/or difficult targets to hit, thus they can only be hit when an attacker makes a called shot and even then they are -3 to strike. Note that before the wheels may be attacked the protective wheel panels must be destroyed. Also note that the inner wheel on a double axle may only be attacked once the outer wheel has been destroyed. The front windscreen is made of Total Survival Solutions' "transparent steel" and is nearly six inches (15 cm) thick. The container doors are concealed within the articulated joining sections between trailers.
- ** These two areas can be independently sealed off from each other. Thus, if the pilot's compartment is penetrated and becomes open to a toxic atmosphere, the living area may be sealed off from it to maintain atmospheric integrity. Note that piloting the vehicle and using its weapons are not possible from the living area.
- *** Destroying the upper section of the vehicle brings it to a halt. Auxiliary power for life support may be routed from the UV panels on the trailers, if they are still intact. Destroying the lower section shuts the vehicle down. Destroying both sections reduces the Gravity Snake to twisted scrap metal.

Speed

Land: Top speed is 90 mph (144 km). Cruising speed is around 60 mph (96 km). Capable of operating in no more than five gravities.

Flight: Not possible.

Water: Not built for amphibious travel, but capable of driving along the bottom at a range of depths depending on the relative ambient pressure.

Statistical Data

Height: 25 feet (7.6 m). Wheel Height: 7 feet (2.1 m).

Width: 15 feet (4.6 m).

Length: Prime Mover: 35 feet (10.7 m). Container Trailers: 40 feet (12.2 m) each. Total: 275 feet (83.8 m).

Weight: Unloaded: Prime Mover: 150 tons. Trailers: 100 tons each. Total: 750 tons. Note that the sheer weight of the Gravity Snake will tear up roads on Terran-normal worlds — it is meant only to be used on worlds with high gravity or atmospheric pressure (where roads are constructed tougher or there simply are none).

Cargo: Prime Mover: A small storage room in back that doubles as an airlock. Dimensions are 6 feet by 4 feet by 4 feet (1.8 x 1.2 x 1.2 m).

Container Trailers: Each trailer has a cargo space of 35 feet by 15 feet x 10 feet (10.7 x 4.6 x 3 m). Each trailer will carry 150 tons of cargo.

Power System: Nuclear coupled with contra-gravity enhancements. Range is effectively unlimited, but the power supply has an average life of around 15 years, due to the tremendous strain it is under.

Market Cost: 15 million credits. Good availability on Phase World and in the Novaro System. Secondhand models may be found on high gravity worlds.

Weapons

1. **Medium Ion Turrets (3):** Mounted one either side of the front of prime mover, and one on the top of the last trailer in the line. Ion turrets were chosen because it was calculated that on average they would work without drawbacks in many types of environments. Lasers are diffracted by clouds of gas and moisture in the atmosphere, plasma guns don't work well on hot planets (overheat) and the range of gravity guns is greatly reduced on high gravity worlds.

Primary Purpose: Defense

Secondary Purpose: Anti-air

Weight: Not applicable, an integral part of the vehicle.

Damage: 1D4x10 M.D. per blast.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the number of hand to hand attacks of the gunner.

Effective Range: 2000 feet (610 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

2. **Sensor Systems of Note:** Holographic optics, HUD, 360 degree sensor screens, full communications suite with a range of 400 miles (640 km), radar to 25 miles (40 km; can track up to 12 targets at once), two forward facing spotlights (450 feet/137 m), loudspeaker (600 feet/183 m), as well as the standard robot vehicle sensor systems such as infra-red, ultra-violet, nightvision, etc.

Total Survival Solutions Equipment

TS-24 Modular Survival Rifle

The TS-24 is a modular rifle that is composed of several components and comes pre-packaged in a vacuum sealed container (2 feet x 2 feet x 7 inches/61x61x18 cm). It is a marvel of miniaturization, and enables those unfortunate enough to be stranded in an alien wilderness area awaiting rescue to have a much better chance of survival. Upon opening the container, a small holographic display projects from the lid, showing how to assemble the rifle and how its parts work together — the rifle case has enough power to display this visual instruction message up to five additional times before its batteries run down. The main part of the rifle is the powerplant and firing assembly. The stock of the rifle is attached to the rear of this, and one of the TS-24's modular barrels is attached to the front. A mounting for the dual telescopic/infra-red scope is located above and forward of the rifle's handle and trigger. The included Vibro-bayonet may be attached to the underside of most of the optional barrels. Note that all of these attachments are of the "twist and clip" variety, with no screws or tools needed for assembly, and that all the rifle's components are made of non-volatile polymer-ceramic composites, with the exception of the scope lenses, which are a super tough "transparent steel" that TSS has recently developed.

A number of clip-on weapon barrels provide the TS-24 with much of its versatility. Each of these modular components is much more than a simple tube through which a shot is ejected; rather, each contains its own microprocessor and energy arrays which enable them to convert the energy provided by the TS-24's powerplant into a discharge appropriate for a particular

barrel. For example, the laser barrel contains focused crystals which convert energy from the weapon's power-pack into a powerful light discharge (laser beam), whereas the plasma barrel stores up a mass of energy, heats it, and then releases it in one big gout of flame. The shotgun/rifle barrel merely uses a small amount of energy as an electromagnetic propellant for its bullet, and so on. This process is not perfect, and generally results in each weapon being slightly below par when compared to other weapons in its class, but nonetheless gives the TS-24 an adaptability that few weapons have.

The stock of the TS-24 is hollow, and contains the following: a small, multipurpose knife, three distress flares, two hundred feet (61 m) of densely coiled nylon wire, and an automatic flint (press the button and a spark is ejected from the end). Since the stock is hollow and composed of such light material, the survival gear it contains helps more to balance the weapon than make it unwieldy. The lining of the case that the TS-24 comes out of may be easily removed, and folds out into a sort of sleeping bag lined with TSS's new "Thermal Equivalency" material. What this means is that whatever the external temperature, the material will attempt to keep whatever is inside it at a constant temperature, determined by the body temperature of the creature in it. A small power jack on the side of the case may be used to recharge up to five shots worth of the rifle's powerplant, in place of the holographic instruction display (the display no longer works if this is done).

Primary Purpose: Survival/Defense.

Weight: 10 lbs (4.5 kg).

Market Cost: 40,000 credits. Good availability and often supplied as part of a vehicle's survival equipment.

Power-plant: Enough energy to power 50 standard shots before recharging is required.

Targeting Bonus: +1 strike due to targeting scope.

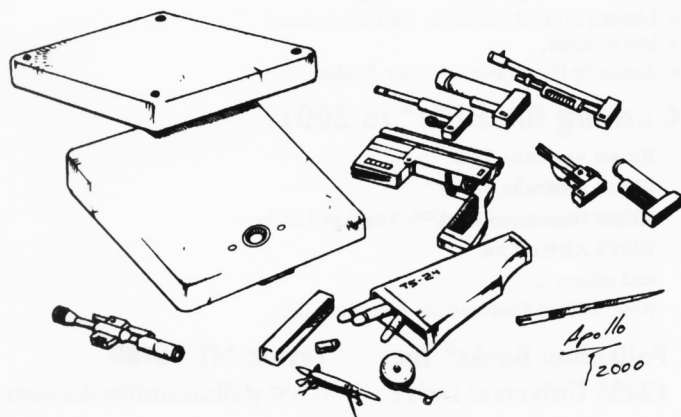
Modular Barrel 1: General Purpose Laser Barrel.

Mega-Damage: 2D6 M.D. However, the laser may also be used at lower intensity as a cutting or welding tool. A small flashlight is situated under the laser itself.

Rate of Fire: Single shots only.

Maximum Effective Range: 2000 feet (610 m).

Payload: One laser shot equals one standard shot. Low intensity use consumes 1 standard shot every minute.



Modular Barrel 2: Heavy Assault Plasma Barrel

Mega-Damage: 5D6 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Single shots only.

Maximum Effective Range: 800 feet (244 m).

Payload: One plasma shot equals four standard shots.

Modular Barrel 3: Combined Shotgun/Rifle Hunting Barrel

Mega-Damage: None

S.D.C. Damage: Shotgun — 6D6 S.D.C.

Hunting Rifle — 4D6 S.D.C.

Maximum Effective Range: Shotgun — 800 feet (244 m).

Hunting Rifle — 2000 feet (610 m).

Payload: Ten shots of either weapon counts as one standard shot, energy-wise. However, this barrel fires actual physical bullets, which are contained in an internal magazine slung under the rear of the barrel (near where it connects with the powerplant). The magazine contains four shotgun shells and twenty case-less rifle rounds; it cannot be reloaded once spent.

Modular Barrel 4: Grappling Hook Attachment

Mega-Damage: None. This barrel contains a small grappling hook connected to two hundred feet (61 m) of tough synthetic rope, as well as a small motor for reeling in the hook once fired. The grappling hook itself can be locked in a folded (unextended) position, and thus used as a speargun.

S.D.C. Damage: Speargun does 3D6 S.D.C.

Rate of Fire: Single shots only.

Maximum Effective Range: 200 feet (61 m).

Payload: One grappling hook. Firing the hook five times consumes as much power as one standard shot, as does reeling it back in five times.

Modular Barrel 5: Double Barrel Attention Attachment

Mega-Damage: None. This barrel contains a limited supply of distress flares (three different colors, selectable) and smoke rockets, as well as a noise generator capable of emitting siren-like sounds to either attract attention or scare things away.

Rate of Fire: Single shots only.

Maximum Effective Range: Flares and rockets — 800 feet (244 m).

Siren — Depends upon atmospheric conditions and location.

Payload: Nine flares and four rockets. Firing either five times equals one standard shot. Leaving the siren on for ten minutes equals one standard shot.

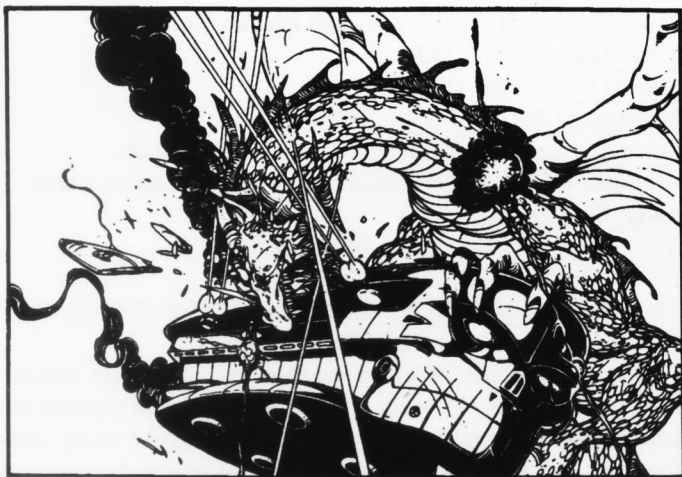
Vibro-Bayonet: A long energy blade that slides under any barrel of the weapon.

Mega-Damage: 2D4 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the attacks of the user.

Range: Hand to hand.

Payload: Having the Vibro-bayonet active for one minute consumes one standard shot.



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- Interior Art by Perez, Breaux, Wilson, Johnson and Williams.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- 112 pages — Cat. No. 842
- \$12.95 — in stores early November!

Coalition Wars™ 5: Shadows of Evil™

The plot thickens as the war rages on and the Coalition Army proves to be relentless.

This book will present a dramatic turn of events that will change the war!

- Cover by John Zeleznik
- Interior Art by Perez, Breaux, Wilson, Johnson and Williams.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda
- 112 pages — Cat. No. 843
- \$12.95 — end of November or early December.

Coalition Wars™ 6: Final Siege™ — December 2000

Only one will win. Winner takes all. And the world will tremble.

- \$20.95 — Page Count 200+ pages. Cat. No. 844
- Cover by John Zeleznik — wrap-around battle scene.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- Date of Release: December in time for Christmas — that's our target date. HOWEVER, this is a big book and the grand finale, so it *might* slip into a January release (sorry).

RiftsworkZ™ Two

The art of John Zeleznik — X-Mas release

Another gorgeous art portfolio of John Zeleznik's **Rifts®** covers, plus a little seen **Skrappers™** concept painting of a Blhaze Alien (a black and white version appears on page 56 of *Skrappers*).

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The Hammer of The Forge

By James M.G. Cannon

Chapter Twelve The Battle

"You will discover Cosmo-Knights to be some of the most valuable allies the Consortium worlds possess. Very few of you have ever seen a Cosmo-Knight up close and personal, let alone one in action. Certainly, like most sentients, you've seen figures like Lothar, Ariel, or Vyking on trideo stations, captured for posterity by newscasters of a thousand worlds. They are impressive creatures, Cosmo-Knights. Resplendent in metallic armor, wielding devastating weapons of archaic design, gliding effortlessly through the vacuum of space. They look pretty on the trid screen.

"It is different out in the field. Vastly different. When the claxons are ringing in your ears and the Kittani war cruiser or Kreeghor dreadnought is bearing down upon you, one hundred million tons of screaming steel, and the only thing standing between you and utter destruction is a two meter tall being of Cosmic Forge blessed flesh... that, cadets, is when you realize just what the Cosmo-Knights mean to the CCW, and to the Three Galaxies. They are a thin metallic line between chaos and order, and they make our job look easy by comparison."

— Preface to a lecture by Captain Hiram
Starling, Consortium Armed Forces Fleet Command

"One down, six to go," muttered Elias Harkonnen as the last T'Zee hover cannon in the vast room detonated, becoming a spiraling fireball as it plummeted down the reactor shaft. The Elf, late of the Invincible Guard, a special cadre of super powered soldiers in the Kreeghor Imperial Legion, was not referring to the pitiful defenses of the T'Zee, shattered by Harkonnen and his team of saboteurs. He referred, instead, to the six remaining food distribution centers on Dellian-4, the T'Zee homeworld.

The small, hairy humanoid species that populated Dellian-4 possessed a high birth rate that multiplied their numbers on a geometric scale across their planet. The T'Zee had terraformed their homeworld, driving to extinction nearly all other native life, including plants and microscopic organisms. But the T'Zee had mastered nanotechnology, creating billions of tiny machines to expand their cities across the globe, to manufacture oxygen and nitrogen to fill the atmosphere, and also to convert raw organic material into a suitable foodstuff to feed the twenty-five billion sentients that called Dellian-4 home. There existed six processing plants that manufactured the nutritive paste most T'Zee subsisted upon; only an hour before, there had been seven.

Until Elias Harkonnen destroyed it, at the behest of a man called Thraxus, said to be the richest — and most cruel — sentient in the Three Galaxies.

The T'Zorrian Kal Facility of Southern Mek'loris Province, along with several hundred city blocks surrounding it, was a smoking ruin. Now, Harkonnen and his team prepared to do the same to the T'Zall Fvish Facility of the Northern Mek'loris Province, and then the other five in turn.

Luckily, Harkonnen was invulnerable, super strong, and capable of independent flight, making him a one Elf wrecking crew. He also had in his employ one of the Three Galaxies' most powerful mages, a Draconid named Quajinn Huo, and a team of hard-bitten mercenaries who all manifested unique and powerful talents. With them at his side, Harkonnen had struck down the last defenses the T'Zee of T'Zall Fvish had mustered. Now Orix, the bark-faced Kisent technician, would plant the nuclear bombs Quajinn Huo had summoned from Harkonnen's ship, which lay cloaked in orbit around the planet. Once Orix finished, Quajinn would teleport them all to the D'Mekton Klor Facility of Huk'tdon Province.

"Orix, get to work," Harkonnen growled. "Friar and Tatsuda," he added, gesturing towards the cold manipulating Klikita and the Oni martial artist, "help him set up the detonators. Huo, get ready to jump us out of here in a moment." The Relogian, Hector, looked to Harkonnen for orders as well. "Look busy," the Elf snapped, and the insectoid warrior hopped to comply.

It was a good life, Elias Harkonnen decided. Everything was going according to plan. The T'Zee were technicians, not warriors, and though they could throw twenty-five billion people at the invaders, even that could not stop Elias Harkonnen. He was invincible, after all.

He felt the skin on the back of his neck prickle. Had he any hair, he knew it would be standing up. Harkonnen turned on his heel and gazed down the long catwalk to the end of the chamber. The air there was shimmering. A gateway was opening.

"Huo, is this your doing?" Harkonnen demanded.

The Draconid, hovering in the air with his legs crossed, his staff balanced across his lap, shook his white mane. "It appears we've attracted the attention of some heroes," Quajinn Huo said darkly.

* * *

Caleb Vulcan swallowed, though his mouth was dry. At a breakneck pace he and his friends had raced from Phase World in the tri-galactic hub, to the small planet known as Dellian-4 in the Consortium of Civilized Worlds. The four of them had reached Dellian-4's orbit only moments ago, and now they stood poised to attack the mad Elias Harkonnen and his band of killers.

This was what Caleb Vulcan was born to do. Moments like this were why he existed, why the Cosmic Forge had chosen him and transformed him from Arizona high school senior to Cosmo-Knight, guardian of the Three Galaxies. Or so Caleb tried to remind himself. He didn't relish the coming battle, nor did he truly wish to unleash "lethal force" as his mentor had ordered. Yet Caleb couldn't resist the call to justice, either. Elias Harkonnen was waging genocide on an alien world, and it was Caleb Vulcan's duty to stop him.

The realization did not still the butterflies in his stomach.

"You okay, Caleb?" Kassiopaea Acherean asked softly, putting a hand on Caleb's shoulder. Kassy was tall and long-limbed, with glossy black hair that fell almost to her waist and bright, ice blue eyes. She was easily the most beautiful woman Caleb had ever met. On Earth, she could have been a fashion model, but the blue and white tattoos decorating Kassy from wrist to shoulder marked her as a warrior, an Atlantean Undead Slayer.

"I'm fine," Caleb managed to say. "Just a little nervous."

"As well you should be," Doctor Abbot chimed in, his upper class British accent incongruous with his alien features. Abbot appeared to be a being of pure shadow, save for the twin orange

lights that served as his eyes. The trench coat and fedora he wore made him look more substantial than a shadow, however, as did the ever-present cane in his hands. "We're heading into a war zone," the doctor added. "Lack of nervousness would be cause for concern, not the possession of it."

"Enough," growled Lothar of Motherhome. Seven feet of emerald armor and attitude, the Wolfen Cosmo-Knight was not known for his patience. "We have a world to save. Now, the T'Zee have informed us that Harkonnen has penetrated into the heart of the T'Zall Fvish Facility. While the T'Zee mass their forces in the other plants, we're going in to save T'Zall Fvish. Abbot, if you would do the honors?"

Doctor Abbot adjusted his hat. His eyes began to glow in the depths of his shadowy face, and Caleb could hear strange sounds coming from Abbot's invisible mouth. A heartbeat later, reality twisted, and the four of them were transported off the bridge of Lothar's ship to the bowels of the T'Zee food production plant.

Despite himself, Caleb gasped in surprise. He wasn't sure what he expected, but it wasn't what he saw before him.

The reactor chamber was vast in dimensions, surrounding a massive central pylon that hummed with energy and shimmered with golden light. A broad platform encircled the pylon, with dozens of narrow walkways, pipes, cables and conduits snaking off to connect with the walls hundreds of feet away. The pylon reached downwards several miles into the planet's crust, creating a shaft of rock and steel. If Caleb had understood Kassy correctly, then the entire room was composed of billions and



billions of machines, each smaller than his thumbnail and most as tiny as a single molecule. Working together, all those machines created the main reactor of the food distribution plant — the pylon humming with power, boring into the planet's surface and transforming the very crust of the planet into both the energy it required, and tons and tons of "burl," the paste most of the planet's population subsisted upon.

The bodies of a dozen short, thin humanoids were scattered about the catwalks, marked with the burn marks of laser fire or ripped to shreds by bare hands. The perpetrators of this horrid crime stood upon the central platform, staring in shocked disbelief at the arrival of Caleb and his friends.

An angular humanoid with skin like tree bark hunched near the pylon itself, a case of tools laid out before him. A woman in military style garb stood nearby, holding a heavy metal case in her hand. Behind and to the left, a massively muscled purple alien in black armor held another such case. On the other side of the pylon, almost hidden from Caleb's view by the sparks of energy given off by the reactor itself, stood a tall, thin, armored figure with antennae and compound eyes. Those would be the mercenaries.

The really dangerous beings stood together at the end of the very catwalk Caleb stood upon. The lizard faced, white-maned figure in the robes had to be the wizard, Quajinn Huo. Huo was hovering in the air, with a serene look on his face that quickly turned to rage when he recognized Lothar. On the ground beside him stood a thin, angular being in red and black armor. His head was bare, save for a black skullcap, revealing large ears that each tapered to a point. His opaque white eyes were rimmed with black, but Caleb could still read the expression on Elias Harkonnen's face.

Confusion. Good.

Red light flashed around Caleb as he called up his second skin, the armor that was his legacy as a Cosmo-Knight. The armor, reminiscent of a Roman centurion's garb, was metallic red in color, with the gaps showing the deep black of the void. Caleb saw Kassy create a bow of blue light by touching a tattoo at her wrist, and Lothar summoned his emerald green battle ax with a flourish. Abbot's eyes were still glowing, and his trench coat flapped with a breeze Caleb couldn't feel.

Harkonnen glanced back at his people, setting the bombs at the base of the pylon, as Quajinn Huo uncoiled from his meditative stance like a snake.

"Going to run again, Harkonnen?" Lothar called across the intervening distance. The Elf's attention snapped back to Caleb's friends.

"Orix," Harkonnen barked. "Set the detonators. Everyone else: kill them."

Huo waved his hand, and the crystal set in his staff flashed with light. The catwalk beneath Caleb disappeared, startling the young Knight. Kassy squawked and started to fall, and Caleb instinctively went after her, catching her neatly in his arms.

Lothar, with the same disregard for gravity that Caleb possessed, launched himself at Harkonnen and Huo, emerald beams of energy flashing from his eyes and his ax cocked for a devastating strike. Abbot landed lightly on a shadowy platform that formed beneath his feet and carried him towards the battle.

"Remember the plan," Kassy told Caleb.

"Right," he agreed. His voice sounded deeper to his ears, with an annoying echo quality. He hated wearing the armor, but he knew he would need the added protection against the mercenaries. With Kassy in his arms, Caleb ducked under a pipe and circled the pylon. Blaster fire traced his path across the room, telling him that the bad guys knew he was on the way.

"Fly up there and throw me at the Kisent," Kassy told him.

"Throw you?" Caleb squeaked.

"Trust me," she said.

"Right." The Kisent was the tree faced guy, Caleb reminded himself. He flew up towards the platform, instinctively dodging the energy beams flashing towards him, and when they cleared the guard rails, he tossed Kassy towards the hunched Kisent and his tools.

But a beam of frost knocked Kassy out of the air, forcing her to crash hard on the platform. She snarled a curse and rolled as more ice hit her. The woman in the military garb, the Klikita, was conjuring ice and snow from the very air, and hurling it at Kassy with devastating results.

The insectoid, the Relogian, readied his laser rifle and blasted Caleb with it. The beams glanced off the Knight's armor. Caleb decided the Relogian was pretty stupid; he should have known better than to use an energy weapon against a Cosmo-Knight. Then someone grabbed his ankle and spun Caleb though the air to crash into the platform.

I'm the idiot, Caleb realized. The Relogian was distracting me, so the Oni kung-fu master could flip me. Caleb rolled to his feet as the Oni's fist dented the metal platform. Another blast from the Relogian bounced off the crest of Caleb's helmet. Instinctively, Caleb turned his attention toward the gunman, and took a punch that almost tore his head off for his trouble. The armor took the brunt of the blow, but as it was a part of Caleb, he could still feel the impact of the Oni's fist.

You're immune to energy attacks, Caleb reminded himself, turning back to the Oni. But this guy can still break every bone in your body. Pay attention.

Up close, the Oni was quite impressive. Seven feet tall, massively muscled, clad in a black body stocking with strategically placed bits of armor, he cut a dashing figure. Worse, despite his bulk he was as lithe and athletic as a dancer. Caleb could take him out with one cosmically charged blast of energy from his eyes, but that would probably kill the Oni. Caleb wasn't ready to do that, not just yet.

As he was internally debating the best course of action, the Oni was moving. A sharp kick to the solar plexus doubled Caleb over, leaving him open to a pair of open hand strikes across his shoulders that, were Caleb anything but a Cosmo-Knight, would have dropped him like a log. Caleb recovered quickly, his Forge-tempered stamina allowing him to shrug off the Oni's strikes. He could match the Oni's speed, too, Caleb knew. The young Knight lashed out with his own fists, hoping to knock the alien out with a well placed blow to the jaw or temple.

The Oni laughed, revealing sharp, predator's teeth, as he blocked Caleb's clumsy swing and then cut Caleb's feet out from under him. As Caleb hit the floor, he saw Kassy's upper body encased in ice, and the Klikita adding more, chuckling as she did so. The Atlantean was pinned to the ground by the weight of it. Her weapon was dispelled, and she was almost certainly suffocating within the frosty prison.

Caleb felt a surge of anger, hot and pulsing, well up in his breast. The Oni hit him in the head again, and Caleb felt his helmet crack.

On the other side of the platform, the battle was going just as badly. Huo had launched a dozen mystic bolts at Lothar, but Abbot blocked them with a hastily raised shield, leaving the Knight to deal with the former guardsman.

Huo turned to Abbot then, saying, "I remember you too, Doctor," in a voice cold enough to chill Abbot's bones, had he any. "Lothar will keep," he added, and sheathed himself within a mystic shield of blue light. Beams of light lashed out from his fingers, but Abbot deflected them with a wave of his hand.

Abbot's eyes flashed as he made an attack of his own, calling shadow figures out of the ether to bedevil the Draconid sorcerer. But before the artificial beings were within a meter of their target, Quajinn Huo blasted them apart. "Is that the best you can do, Doctor?" Huo taunted. "Unless you brought Koguk or Callista with you, I'm afraid this contest will be short."

A sizzling arc of light leapt from the tip of Huo's staff. Abbot tried to block in time, but he was too slow; the bolt cut through him, burning the shadowy tissues of his body. Abbot howled, and wavered on his conjured levitation disc. Quajinn Huo cackled, his magic light getting brighter.

Despite the risk, Abbot divided his attention. Abbot was powerful, much stronger in magical might than most native magic wielders in the Three Galaxies, but Quajinn Huo surpassed him by several factors. Abbot had hoped, though never dared believe, that Huo's powers had waned during his exile on Phase World. Such was not the case; indeed, Huo appeared to be much stronger than the last time Abbot had faced him, during the climactic battle for the control of the United Worlds of Warlock ages ago. Then, Abbot had been little more than an apprentice magic-user. He had paled before the blazing light controlled by the Wolfen shaman Koguk or the dark sorceress Callista, whose combined might had distracted Huo long enough for Lothar and a rag-tag fleet of battle ships to take out Huo's fleet. During that encounter, Abbot had been little more than a witness to awesome destruction. But he had learned much since then, and he believed himself equal to the task of dealing with Quajinn Huo.

He had made a prideful mistake that just might cost billions their lives, Abbot lamented. He needed an edge. Even as he conjured up a vortex of black light to confound the Draconid, Abbot reached out with his arcane senses and sought a ley line or nexus, a font of magical power, the manifestation of the planet's life-force, a power which Abbot could tap into and use. Most wizards, Huo included, needed to be practically on top of such a power source in order to make use of it. However, Abbot had discovered at a young age that, as in many things, he was different from the norm. Even from remote distances he could feel the ebb and flow of a planet's magical lines of force, and could call upon them to bolster his incantations.

There, at the edge of Abbot's perceptions, he could feel a throb of power. It was weak, though, so terribly weak. The depredations the T'Zee had delivered upon their environment had weakened the planet's very life-force, leaving the ley lines dim and weary. There wasn't much to work with, Abbot realized, but he needed all the help he could get. As Huo blasted away the black light vortex, Abbot opened a channel to the ley line.

On the catwalk below, two titans clashed, one in red and black and the other in emerald green. Lothar had the advantage of height and reach, as well as a glittering battle ax in hand and the ability to emit beams of light from his eyes, but Elias Harkonnen had been transformed into an invulnerable soldier by Kreeghor bioengineers. No physical attack could harm him, no matter how hard Lothar struck. The same could not be said of Lothar, however.

Harkonnen and Lothar traded strikes that could dent a starship, but only Lothar felt the impact, staggering under the hail of blows Harkonnen laid upon him. The Elf laughed as the ax glanced off his side and Lothar's fist connected with his chin. He responded with a left hook that nearly shattered Lothar's jaw, sending a white fang and a spray of blood flying over the lip of the catwalk.

Lothar didn't flinch, however. With his free hand he grabbed Harkonnen by the wrist and spun him around. "Enough games," he snarled, launching a kick with all the Forge enhanced strength at his disposal. Harkonnen grunted as he sailed into the air, flashing past Huo and startling the Draconid mage.

"Abbot!" Lothar shouted. "We're switching!" A beam of emerald light flashed from the Knight's eyes, glancing off Huo's magic shield. Quajinn snarled and turned his attention towards Lothar.

Harkonnen arrested his own movement, halting in mid-air, upside down but whole and unharmed. "Pfaugh," he grunted, as Lothar engaged Quajinn Huo. "Let the two kill each other," he said. Then a beam of intense cold slammed into him and sent him spinning again. He yelped in pain.

Pain! The cursed shadow wizard had cut through his defenses. Harkonnen hated magic. He oriented himself for an attack even as the wizard tossed another beam of darkness towards him. Harkonnen dodged it, and blasted towards the wizard at top speed.

Across the way, Caleb's anger finally got the better of him. Without thinking, he cut loose with an eyebeam at full power. He was aiming for the kung-fu master, but the Oni was too quick by far. He leapt into a somersault, tumbling through the air to land on his feet on the other side of Caleb. But the Knight's attack was not wasted. The Relogian had foolishly positioned himself behind the Oni, and took the full brunt of Caleb's ire in the chest. The blast burned through him, the force of the energy disintegrating his trunk and leaving his head and limbs to fall to the platform with meaty thumps.

Even through the haze of anger, Caleb felt a pang of regret. But Kassy had told him that Relogians possessed a bizarre mutation that granted them multiple lives; he might be dead now, but he would get better. Thinking of Kassy reminded Caleb that his friend was suffocating to death. Caleb bounded to his feet, hoping to take out the Klikita, but found his way blocked by the grinning Oni.

Purple fists lashed towards Caleb's head. The young Knight stepped back and out of reach, thankful for the preternatural speed and reflexes the Forge had granted him. With two feet of empty space between them, Caleb made a backhanded blow towards the Oni, who, bemused, didn't bother to block or dodge.

Mistake.

In mid-swing a red bar formed in Caleb's hand, solidifying into the massive red sledgehammer that served as his personal weapon. The Oni had a moment to look surprised, and then the hammer connected with the crack of snapping ribs. The Oni was knocked off his feet, sliding across the platform to slam into the guard rails. Caleb didn't slow. He tossed the hammer at the Klikita, knocking her into the air to crash into the energy screen surrounding the pylon.

Caleb crouched down next to Kassy. If he hit the ice to break it off, he could kill her by accident. If he tried to burn the ice away with a heat beam, he could melt Kassy's face off as well. And if he did nothing, she would die. Through the warped lens of the ice, Caleb could see Kassy's face twisted into a silent scream. He didn't hesitate another moment, cutting loose with a low powered blast from his eyes that shattered the ice, freeing Kassy. She flopped to the floor, coughing and gasping for air.

Caleb put a hand on her shoulder to reassure her, and glanced around. The Klikita was dazed, but rising. The Oni, bloody and angry, had found his feet, and some weird gas was forming over the Relogian's remains. Tree-face the Kisent was nowhere to be found, but the big metal casings housing the bombs were open and jacked into the pylon's control grid. Caleb could see a little red screen on one of the boxes, flashing strange symbols as it counted down to what would probably be one heck of an explosion.

A chilling scream echoed across the vast room, and Caleb wildly sought the source of the sound. The Kisent stood in the middle of a catwalk, covered in some kind of goo that burned through him like acid. Beyond him stood a squad of T'Zee soldiers, pointing strange guns at the dying Kisent. As Caleb watched, the squat, furred humanoid surged past the Kisent towards the platform. One of them paused to fire another gob of goo at the corpse.

Caleb suppressed a frown. Lothar had told the T'Zee to evacuate the complex and the surrounding area, in case the Knights failed. It appeared as though the "Captains of Industry," the leaders of T'Zee society, had disagreed with Lothar's plan.

A blast of ice interrupted Caleb's thoughts, smashing into his head. The Klikita had fully recovered while the Knight was distracted, and now sought to encase him in ice as she had with Kassy. The Relogian, fully reformed, grabbed his rifle and fired off a quick shot at Caleb to keep him off balance. Caleb knew that the Oni would step in and wallop him in a moment as well. He recalled his hammer, his vision blurring as the ice covered his eyes.

He was starting to feel the cold, which unnerved him. He could survive in the vacuum of space unaided, but the cold from the Klikita's ice was cutting into him.

The Relogian aimed past Caleb and began to take potshots at the advancing T'Zee. They scrambled for cover, with meager success. One of them took a blast in the chest that knocked him off the catwalk to plummet into the chasm with a heart-wrenching scream.

Caleb blasted the ice from his body, and prepared to throw the hammer at the Klikita again, but the Oni appeared out of nowhere and connected with a kick that rattled the Knight's teeth. Caleb swung at him with the hammer, but the slippery Oni ducked under the blow and jabbed Caleb in the ribs. He grunted in pain.

Out of the corner of his eye, Caleb saw the Relogian take aim at the T'Zee again. Before the Knight could act, a sword of blue flame sliced through the Relogian's arms, sending the rifle clattering to the ground. While the alien howled in pain, the blue sword slashed low, cutting the Relogian off at the knees. He crashed to the floor, out of the fight. For good this time, Caleb hoped.

Kassy turned her attention from the Relogian flopping on the ground and slashed her fiery blade in the direction of the Oni. The martial artist cackled, saying something in his language that Caleb missed, and then launched a rapid series of attacks at Kassy.

A blast of cold rocked Caleb on his feet. "That's enough out of you," Caleb snapped, spinning on his heel and throwing the hammer underhanded. The Klikita, now sheathed in ice herself and yet oddly mobile, dodged nimbly. She retaliated with a blast of cold that wrapped the hammer in a ball of ice, altering its trajectory so it crashed to the floor. But she missed the beam of light flashing from Caleb's eyes; the Klikita took the blast in the chest and, while she proved harder than the Relogian had, she still screamed in pain. The ice covering her body burned away and she collapsed in shock.

Caleb turned his attention to Kassy and the Oni in time to see the martial artist slip past Kassy's defenses and fell her with a nerve tap to the temple. Caleb called the hammer back to his hand, releasing it from its icy trap, and prepared to pound the kung-fu master to oblivion.



Before he could, the T'Zee surged past him, firing their strange goo-guns in the Oni's direction. The Oni side-stepped a dozen blasts, and the blobs fell past him, dangerously close to Kassy's prone form.

Caleb grabbed the nearest T'Zee and spun him around, coming face to face with the pinched, long nosed visage of the furry being. "Leave him to me," Caleb snapped. "Defuse the bomb."

The T'Zee growled something in his own language, and shrugged free of Caleb's grip. "The bomb," Caleb insisted, hefting his hammer. As he did so, the Oni leapt backwards into a somersault, disappearing around the edge of the pylon.

Caleb leapt into the air himself, buzzing around the pylon from the opposite direction to meet the Oni on the other side. Simultaneously, Caleb took a moment to see how Lothar and Abbot were doing.

Abbot hovered in the air on the shadowy platform he had conjured, holding his cane out before him to create a mystic shield of darkness. Elias Harkonnen flew rings around him, lashing out with a foot or fist that Abbot would just barely deflect in time. Occasionally Abbot would get a chance to zap the Elf with a mystic blast, but Harkonnen's maneuverability was inhuman. He dodged nearly every attack, and the ones that got

through didn't seem to faze him in the least, though the black and red plates of his armor looked battered. Harkonnen was laughing maniacally, but Abbot's orange eyes were dimming.

Lothar and Huo were a blaze of light in the center of the chamber. Surrounded by his shield, Huo launched attack after attack at the Cosmo-Knight: mystic bolts, fire balls, arcs of lightning, phantom fists, tendrils of light to entangle him, and anything else Huo could create through force of will and mystic knowledge. The force of the magic bit into Lothar, cutting past his formidable defenses, but the Wolfen Knight ignored the pain, raining titanic blow after titanic blow against Huo's shield until it began to crack and weaken, forcing Huo to waste a spell to strengthen it. Lothar snarled, bright blood leaking from a dozen places, but with every blow Huo's shield shuddered and he was knocked back another inch.

"My God," Caleb breathed, awed by the expenditure of power the two were unleashing. Caleb's attention was suddenly diverted by a triumphant cry from Harkonnen, who had finally penetrated Abbot's defenses, landing a blow that knocked Abbot off his platform and sent him falling into the shaft. Caleb started in horror, but before he could rescue his friend, the Oni grabbed him by the arm and swung him into the pylon with a crash. Stunned, Caleb lost his grip on the hammer, and stood there dumbly as the Oni rained a dozen blows upon him, denting his armor and slamming him again and again into the energy field surrounding the pylon.

In his mind's eye, all Caleb saw was Abbot falling to his death.

No more games, he thought, as the Oni's fist slammed into his cheek and rocked his head back. *No more friends die*. Caleb's head snapped back into position, and a beam of crimson light erupted from his eyes, slamming into the Oni. The Oni's upper body disintegrated under the onslaught, leaving his legs and pelvis standing there for a moment before they flopped on the floor. Caleb hardly noticed; he was looking for Harkonnen.

The Elf had left the air and slammed into the platform, scattering the T'Zee who, due to Caleb's urging or their own plan, had been attempting to disarm the bomb. Harkonnen looked around, reached behind himself, and drew a metallic blue longsword. Caleb summoned the hammer and took to the air, sparing a glance in the direction of Lothar and Huo.

Huo was giving ground again, and his shield was weakening. Patches of Lothar's armor had been ripped away, revealing the black fur beneath, but Lothar pressed the attack, shouting out something in the Wolfen tongue. His emerald eyes blazed.

Caleb caught a glimpse of Abbot, sprawled across a catwalk a few levels below, and laughed out loud. They would win this yet.

He returned his attention to Harkonnen, who was ignoring the acid-goo the T'Zee sprayed him with and slashing at them with his sword. One of them fell, bright blood spraying from the end of his arm. Caleb heaved the hammer at Harkonnen, and had the satisfaction of seeing Harkonnen look up just as the hammer slammed into him with enough force to drive him through the floor with a thunderous crash.

Caleb didn't have long to enjoy it, however, as only moments later Harkonnen blasted through the floor again, teeth bared in a grimace and his white eyes narrowed. Harkonnen's right arm was held out stiff and straight, aiming the blue sword like a

spear directly for Caleb's heart. Caleb grimaced under his helmet and recalled the hammer with a flash of red light, bracing for impact.

Caleb twisted just as Harkonnen slammed into him, deflecting the Elf's blade so that it sheared off his shoulder pad, rather than ramming through his sternum. As it was, Harkonnen's impact still sent Caleb spinning through the air. He arrested his movement with a thought, and managed to get his hammer up in time to smash the Elf in the face as he pressed the attack. Harkonnen, knocked off course, careened through the air, buzzing past Lothar and Huo.

Caleb massaged his shoulder, feeling the hot stickiness of his own blood. Harkonnen's blade was sharp indeed, and in his hands it was deadly, even to a Knight of the Forge. And Caleb had no illusions about Harkonnen's willingness to kill. He tightened the grip he held on his hammer and flew after the Elf, who was already recovering from the blow.

But Caleb drew up short as a shuddering crack split the room.

Quajinn's Huo's force field shattered like glass under the onslaught of Lothar. Light exploded around the pair as Huo's magic died. The Draconid mage fell to the catwalk below him, stumbling, his staff spilling from his hands. His white mane of hair was plastered to his scaled flesh, and his eyes burned with surprise and fear. Lothar, battered and bleeding, moved in for the kill.

The Wolfen drew back the emerald battle ax for one last blow. Caleb could hardly recognize the elder Cosmo-Knight. Lothar's green armor was pitted and scorched with magic fire, and whole chunks of it had been blasted away, melted or dispelled. The right side of his helmet had run like wax; the ear was gone, his eye sealed shut, and the metallic skin of the armor dripped onto his scorched shoulder. Where Lothar's flesh was exposed, terrible wounds showed, matting the Wolfen's dark fur with red blood. Yet Lothar stood, snarling with fury.

The ax fell. Lothar roared and Quajinn Huo screamed, raising a feeble arm to ward off the blow. Metal bit into flesh, shearing through scales and bone and hard muscle, and Quajinn's Huo's right arm separated from his body. Blue fire erupted from the wound, hissing as it sprayed on the catwalk. Lothar shuddered, cursed, and hefted the ax once more. "This is finished between us," Lothar growled in Trade Four. "You shouldn't have left Center." The ax rose for the last time.

Quajinn Huo's eyes narrowed in fury, the magic bleeding from the gaping wound in his shoulder. But those eyes still sparked with power, and so too did his left hand.

"Lothar!" Caleb shouted. He launched himself forward, the hammer leading the way.

But he was too late. Just as Lothar's remaining eye focused on Huo's hidden hand, realizing what was about to happen, Huo struck. A spear of light erupted from Huo's palm, leaping from him to slam into Lothar. The Wolfen howled in pain as the light burned through him, shearing through his chest and back and slamming into the pylon behind him. The light spread, consuming Lothar, burning his flesh, melting his armor.

Caleb felt hot tears sting his cheeks. He smashed into the catwalk, shattering the walkway with the force of his impact, but Huo had sprung away, cackling madly.

The spear of light, interrupted, died. What was left of Lothar clattered as it fell upon what was left of the walkway. A green wolf's head helmet, and an emerald battle ax.

He was dead.

Caleb turned on the wizard, eyes blazing with the power of the Forge. Quajinn Huo was nonplused, hovering in empty space, his levitation spell enacted once more. As Caleb watched in horror, the blue fire gouting from his shoulder extended, warped, and solidified, forming a new arm. Huo's staff materialized in his new hand.

"I've no quarrel with you, boy," Huo rasped.

"I'm going to kill you anyway," Caleb said, his voice tight.

Huo smiled. "Yes, I suppose you could try. You might even win. My battle with Lothar drained most of my power. On the other hand, it will cost you. And then you will still have Harkonnen and the bombs to deal with, if they haven't already gone off by then, killing everyone in a forty kilometer radius. So what will it be, boy? Revenge, or duty?"

Caleb stared at him. He could feel the power within him pulsing, rising as his anger and hatred increased.

"Huo!" Harkonnen yelled, hanging in the air. "Don't taunt him. Just kill him."

Huo spared a glance in the Elf's direction, while still maintaining his attention on Caleb. "Our alliance is ended, Harkonnen. It died with Lothar. You're on your own now." He cackled again, the crystal in his staff sparking.

"You traitor," Harkonnen growled. "I'll kill you."

Duty, or revenge? Caleb asked himself. What would Lothar do?

Caleb turned his head slightly, and cut loose with his energy beams. Harkonnen was caught unawares; the force of the blast knocked him out of the air and sent him flying across the room to smash into the wall.

Quajinn Huo disappeared in a blast of light, leaving only his cackling laugh behind.

"Another time," Caleb mumbled, turning on his heel and leaping over Lothar's remains. He landed lightly on the platform. The T'Zee squad ignored him, trying desperately to disarm the explosives wired into the plant's energy source. Caleb grabbed one of them by the elbow. "How long before it blows?" he demanded.

The T'zee showed his teeth in what Caleb took to be a humorless grin. "We be vapor in little more than two minutes," it said, using Trade Four with an odd accent.

"I'll survive the blast!" Harkonnen cried from across the room. "How many of you can say the same?"

"That guy needs to shut up," Caleb growled. To the T'Zee he said, "Can you defuse it?"

"It looks no good," the T'Zee admitted, flashing that weird grin again. "Kisent very smart. Cannot read his code."

"Blast," Caleb growled. He looked around wildly. Harkonnen was flying towards them lazily, a crazy grin on his face. Kassy was on the ground, unconscious. Like Abbot.

Abbot. He could teleport these people to safety. But he's out cold. And if I try to grab him, Harkonnen will kill the T'Zee and Kassy. Lothar, what am I supposed to do?

Kassy groaned, and pushed herself up on her elbows. "What hit me?" she croaked.

Caleb released the T'Zee and raced to Kassy's side. "Kass," he said. "Are you okay?"

"I have a terrible headache," she admitted. "Did we win?"

"Not yet," Caleb said. "And I haven't much time. Abbot is on a catwalk below us, unconscious." *He has to be just unconscious*, Caleb thought. *Otherwise we're all dead.* "Wake him, get these people out of here."

"What about him?" Kassy asked, pointing over Caleb's shoulder. He craned his neck to see Harkonnen hanging in the air twenty feet away, slapping the sword blade in his palm. His grin was even wider than before.

"Leave him to me," Caleb said. He turned back to Kassy. "Okay? Less than a minute before everyone dies. I'm counting on you Kass."

"Trust me," she said, painfully getting to her feet. That was all Caleb needed to hear. He jumped into the air and aimed himself at Harkonnen. The Elf slipped sideways, and Caleb blasted past him, moving too quickly to react in time. When Caleb drew to a halt and reoriented himself, Harkonnen collided with him, carrying him across the room to smash into and through the wall. His hammer fell from his hand, but Caleb had a moment to see a blue and white gryphon forming above Kassy before the reactor room disappeared from view.

"You think I'm beaten, don't you?" Harkonnen said, as their bodies smashed through walls and shattered supports. "But when the bombs blow, I'll still be standing and no one will know. Then I'll fly up to my ship and complete the job, with no one the wiser."

"I got news for you, buddy," Caleb said, shifting in Harkonnen's grip and wrapping his hands around the Elf's upper arms. "I've already survived a supernova this week. You don't scare me." He tightened his grip and shifted again, pulling Harkonnen down, slamming him into the floor. They skidded across an access hallway as their momentum shifted, careening off the floor and drawing to a halt as they hit a blast door. Caleb slammed his forehead into Harkonnen's, knocking his head back and denting the floor.

Harkonnen got his arms under Caleb's chest and pushed, throwing the Knight off him. Harkonnen rolled to his feet. "Only moments, now," he growled.

The two of them froze, bracing for the coming explosion. The thrum of the factory's engines hummed beneath their feet, the only sound as they waited.

Nothing happened.

They stared at one another for a long moment, neither one fully comprehending. "I don't understand," Harkonnen stuttered. "There's no way the T'Zee could have defused Orix's bomb."

Caleb chuckled. "Must have been a dud. Looks like you lose after all."

Harkonnen's angular features contorted in a snarl. "You won't live long enough to savor your victory," he snapped, leaping forward. Caleb was waiting for him, using a judo throw his father had taught him to flip Harkonnen on his back. Before Harkonnen could recover, Caleb blasted into him, driving both of them through the floor.

They went through a dozen feet of steel and wiring and exploded out into another huge room, thrumming with power of its own. As they emerged, steam washed over them, carried on a wave of heat and thunderous sound. Huge pipes and cables crisscrossed the room in hex patterns, surrounding and plugging into a series of massive vats that churned and shook. Within the vats steamed the burl, the foodstuff manufactured by nanite machinery from the living surface of the very planet. Roiling waves of thick, orange liquid shuddered within the vats, reeking with a sickly sweet organic smell that brought tears to Caleb's eyes. The heat from the walls and conduits caused the burl to bubble and steam, sending clouds of vapor to partially obscure the dimensions of the room.

Harkonnen kicked himself free of Caleb's grasp and flew deeper into the room, cursing. Caleb stoked the furnace within his breast to match the Elf's speed. He grabbed Harkonnen by the ankle and threw him into a network of pipes. They shattered, spraying orange goop all over the Elf, who sputtered and coughed. "I am going to relish your death," Harkonnen said, spitting burl.

Caleb cocked his head. Harkonnen was invulnerable all right; Caleb could pound on him all day and not hurt him at all. But the Elf needed to breathe.

"Let's go for a swim," Caleb said. He flew at Harkonnen again, grabbing him by the chest plate and aiming the Elf downward. Harkonnen's eyes widened in surprise, and as Caleb flew them towards a huge simmering vat, the Elf aimed wild punches at Caleb's helmeted head. Caleb's head rocked back with each blow, but he ignored the pain. In a moment, they splashed into the vat, and Caleb's world went orange.

The thick paste washed over him, warm and viscous, but not unpleasantly so. It was like swimming in oatmeal. Harkonnen thrashed beneath him, but the burl lessened the severity of his blows, and Caleb barely felt them.

It felt like an eternity, soaking in the goop, before Harkonnen stopped moving. Caleb counted to ten when Harkonnen went limp, and then flew out of the burl with an explosion that sprayed orange goop everywhere. Caleb hefted Harkonnen in his arms, inspecting the Elf. Burl dripped from Harkonnen's nose, mouth and ears. He didn't appear to be breathing.

Caleb felt sick.

Then burl erupted from Harkonnen's mouth, splattering Caleb with more goop, and the Elf took a long, shuddering breath. Caleb tensed, waiting for Harkonnen to erupt, but the Elf just lolled in his arms, apparently unconscious. Caleb breathed a sigh of relief, and began to make his way back to the reactor room.

* * *

He found it easily enough, following the trail of destruction he and Harkonnen had left in their wake. When he entered the reactor chamber, he noticed that the top part of the pylon and half of the central platform was missing. Kassy, Abbot, and the T'Zee huddled on the remaining portion. Caleb crossed the gulf quickly and landed on the platform, dropping Harkonnen with a thump that caused the platform to list dangerously. The T'Zee chattered at Caleb irritably, but he ignored them.

Abbot sat cross-legged next to Kassy, cradling a massive battle ax in his slight hands. Kassy had an arm around Abbot, but she released him and stood up as Caleb landed. Her eyes were bright with unshed tears.

"What happened?" Caleb asked, not looking at the ax.

"I woke Abbot and explained things quickly," Kassy said, her voice thick. "He decided to teleport the bombs themselves, rather than us. He was still a bit thick-headed, so he didn't quite get the mass right. Still, I believe the explosives detonated more or less harmlessly in orbit."

"Good," Caleb said. "That's good."

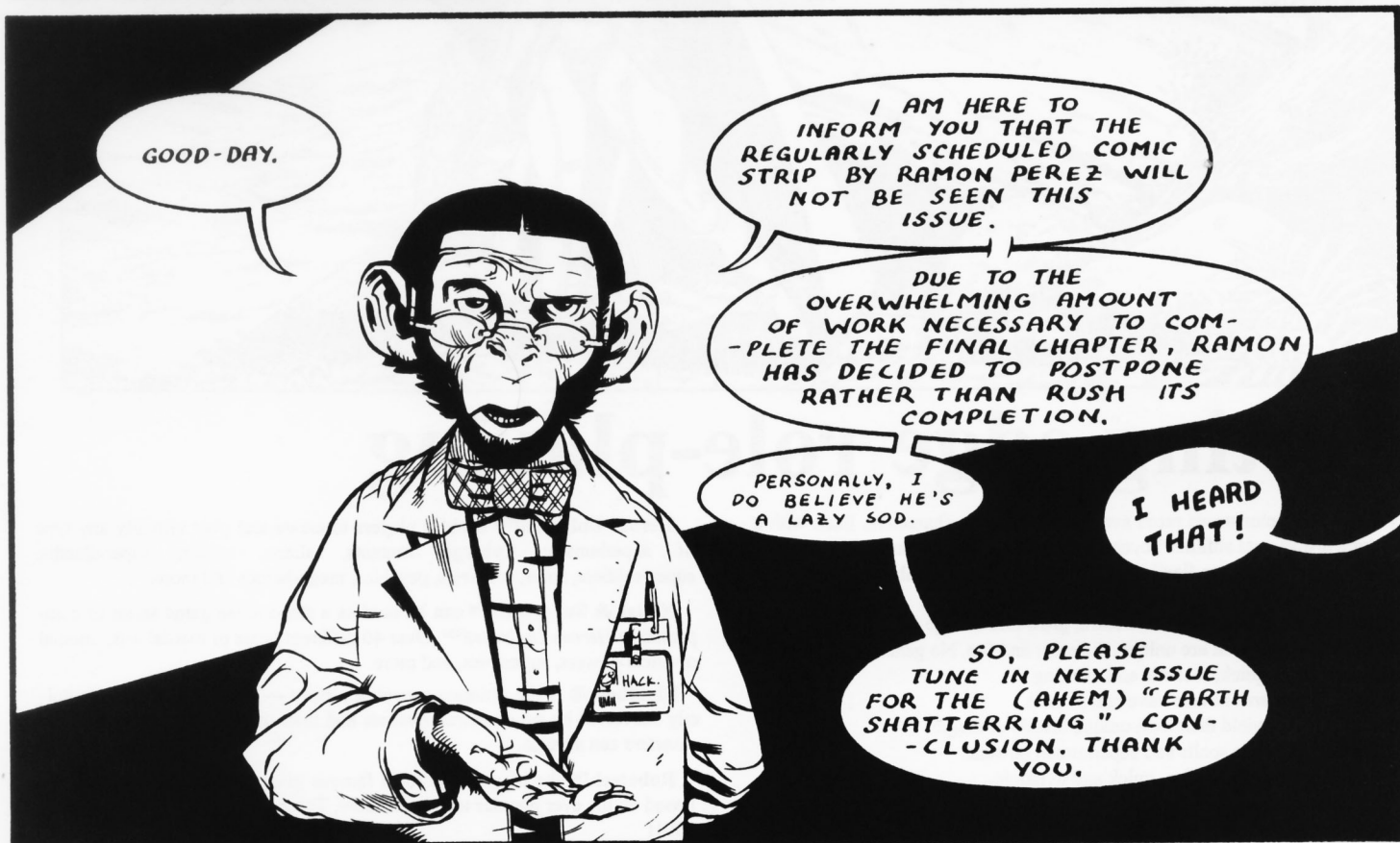


Abbot looked up at them. His orange eyes had dimmed to yellow. "He's gone," he said. "I can't believe... he's gone." Kassy buried her face in her hands, trying to hide her grief.

Caleb stood quietly nearby, feeling hollow. Burl dripped from his armor, pooling at his feet. He should dispel his armor, but he couldn't. The people of Dellian-4 were saved, but Caleb's mentor — a being he had begun to think of as his surrogate father — had paid the ultimate price. He couldn't think past that moment, couldn't see what would happen next.

So he stood, silent and encased in his armor, unable to think, or feel, or act.

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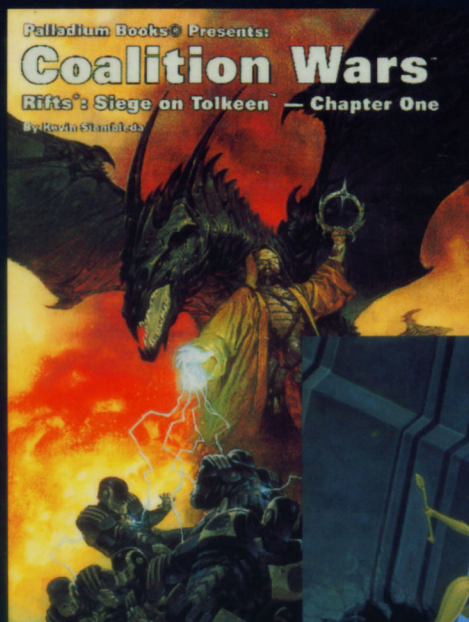
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