



Palladium Books® Presents:

THE
RIFTER®

Your Guide to the Megaverse®

Questions & Answers

Nightbane® & Demon Hunters

Palladium Fantasy® Magic

Rifts® Psychics & Vehicles

Systems Failure™ source material

Fiction, news, and more ...

Chaos Earth™ Part Three!

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Violence and the Supernatural

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

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



The Rifter® Number 19

Your guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!

Palladium games are found in stores everywhere

First Printing – July, 2002

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Palladium Books® Presents:



#19

BRANDT -97

Sourcebook and guide to the Palladium Megaverse®

Coordinator & Editor in Chief: **Wayne Smith**

Supervising Coordinator & Typesetting: **Maryann Siembieda**

Contributing Writers:

James M.G. Cannon

Kevin Christensen

Jeremy Clements

Wayne Field

Shawn Merrow

Nicholas Mueller

John C. Philpott

Michael Richardson Jr.

Edward J. Sauerland

Kevin Siembieda

Rodney Stott

Richard Thomassen

Todd Toho

Interior Artists:

Apollo Okamura

Wayne Breaux Jr.

Kent Burles

Freddie Williams II

Michael Wilson

Tyler Walpole

and other Palladium Madmen

Cover Logo Design: **Steve Edwards**

Credits Page Logo: **Niklas Brandt**

Keylining: **Kevin Siembieda**

Proofreader: **Julius Rosenstein**

Cover Illustration: **Mark Evans**

Based on the RPG rules, characters,
concepts and Megaverse® created by **Kevin Siembieda**.

Special Thanks to all our contributors, writers and artists. Our apologies to anybody who got accidentally left out or their name misspelled.

Contents – The Rifter® #19 – July, 2002

Page 6 – Art

A fun illustration by Apollo “The Toronto Swallow” Okamura. It depicts a wizard and friend exhausted from going through piles of writing submissions for **The Rifter®**, with many more on the shelf behind them.

Page 7 – From the Desk

of Kevin Siembieda

Palladium’s President, CEO and Chief Game Designer, Kevin Siembieda, reminds people that *The Rifter®* is about sharing ideas and showing off new talent. That’s why a bunch o’ you readers should send in adventures and source material for possible publication. Especially material for *Heroes Unlimited™*, *After the Bomb®*, *Ninjas & Superspies™*, *Nightbane®*, *The Palladium Fantasy RPG®*, *Phase World®*, and other game settings.

Hey, we need some new artists for *The Rifter®* too.

Page 8 – Palladium News

Convention updates (hey, Pentacon will be the third or fourth con that Kevin and Maryann Siembieda are attending this year! Don’t miss ‘em), A+Plus comics, plus word on other news and stuff.

Page 11 – Coming Attractions

The latest and greatest out and coming soon from Palladium Books, including the most recent book in the *Palladium Weapon Series* (*Weapons and Assassins*) and the next one in the series (*Weapons & Castles of the Orient*), *Land of the Damned Two*, *Mutant Underground™* (for HU2), and the latest on *RECON Modern Combat* (a book that is really shaping up into something exciting). Not to mention *Palladium’s Checklist* of recent releases and upcoming products (page 17) through the end of the year.

Page 18 – What would I do with

2,000,000 CCG cards?

Maryann ran an online essay contest on that premise. The winner got a “case” of *Rifts®* CCG booster cards and runners up got a box or two. We thought you’d like to see the top five winners and enjoy some of the silly fun.

Art by Scott Johnson.

Page 21 – Questions and Answers

Another big, juicy section for questions and answers by Rodney Stott, Shawn Merrow and Kevin Siembieda. This issue’s Q&A covers a lot of different subjects, including Rahu-Men and Changelings in *Rifts®*, black powder weapons, aging characters, aging superheroes, and Chaos Earth. Helpful information and material officially *endorsed* by Palladium Books.

Artwork by Kevin Long and Mike Wilson. Oh, and yes, stats for the NEMA body armor on page 24 will appear next issue.

Page 25 – The Palladium Fantasy RPG®

Wand Magic

Kevin Christensen presents some cool ideas about how magic wands are created, their powers and design elements, along with four Famous Wands of Lore. It is fun and useful material to spruce up your game.

Illustrated by Kent “Mr. Baseball” Burles.

Page 29 – The Palladium Fantasy RPG®

The Magic of Ophid’s Grasslands

Nicholas Mueller offers a number of interesting and clever spells designed specifically for Ophid’s Grasslands.

Art by that Kent Burles fella.

Page 33 – The Palladium Fantasy RPG®

By Lance and Speed of Wing

Ever wonder if there are any special techniques, training and bonuses to riding a winged mount like a Pegasus? Well, wonder no longer. Richard Thomassen presents rules, bonuses, and the Great Gryphon for your entertainment.

Artwork by Michael Wilson.

Page 37 – For the Palladium Megaverse®

Go Mental

John Charles Philpott gives us some food for thought concerning “mental” skills like memorization, philosophy, puzzles and others, as well as some new physical skills and Optional Rules to Tame the Physical Skill Junkie. Outstanding and useful material suitable for most any Palladium role-playing game setting.

Artwork by Kent Burles and Michael Wilson.

Page 43 – Rifts®

We’re Not All Mind Readers, You Know

Ed Sauerland creates a number of interesting new “Eruptor” psionic character classes, including the Blaster, the Freezer (the cold hard truth behind this variation on Hydrokinesis) and the Soaker (Hydrokinesis as a power in its own right). Each is accompanied by a number of specific abilities, bonuses and penalties. A nice addition to any *Rifts®* campaign.

Artwork by the always impressive Freddie Williams II.

Page 54 – Rifts®

Coalition Support Vehicles

Wayne Field presents some of the workhorse vehicles behind the scenes that keep the Coalition Army on its feet and in the trenches. Six new vehicles in all – completely described, statted out and illustrated.

Art by Apollo “The City-Rat” Okamura.

Page 66 – Rifts® Phase World®

Hammer of the Forge

Chapter 19: Everything New is Old Again. James M. G. Cannon's gripping *Phase World™* story continues with new drama and intrigue and a hint of things to come.

Artwork by Apollo "searching for a nickname" Okamura.

Page 72 – Systems Failure™

Fort Folsom

Todd Yoho gives us a small but important stronghold against "the bugs" located in West Virginia. An overview, key leaders, and adventure ideas are all there just beggin' to be used in a Systems Failure adventure.

Artwork by Tyler Walpole.

Page 81 – Nightbane® & Other Palladium RPGs

Demon Hunters

Rollicking Mike Richardson offers us a completely fleshed out *Demon Hunter O.C.C.* with notes on how the character can be easily used in *Nightbane®*, *The Palladium Fantasy RPG®*, *Rifts®*, *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Ninjas & Superspies™*, and *Beyond the Supernatural™*.

Mike also gives us a nifty villain called "The Dark Rider."

Artwork by Wayne Breaux Jr.

Page 91 – Chaos Earth™ RPG

Part Three: Magic & Magic O.C.C.s

Kevin Siembieda is back with another heart stopping installment for *Chaos Earth™*, a complete new role-playing game being developed and presented in the pages of *The Rifter®* before the final version is released as a new game in 2003.

Ever want to play in an apocalyptic setting? We mean as human civilization collapses all around you? You have? Good, here's your chance. Enjoy.

This installment opens with *Excerpts from the Journal of Lieutenant General Lindsey Sawyer* (she was introduced last issue) to advance the story and set the stage for the current situation. We get a glimpse at life in Chicago and General Sawyer's personal experiences and fears. It is followed by a section about the *emergence of magic* in Chaos Earth and a few new Magic O.C.C.s. Plus more hints about NEMA and its forces and a bit on *psychics*. Yep, the excitement for Chaos Earth just keeps building.

Artwork by Mike Wilson. Bulldog power armor by Wayne Breaux Jr.

The theme for issue 19

Magic and psionics seems to be the running theme of this issue. Magic wands, new magic spells, the emergence of magic and spell casters in Chaos Earth, new psychic O.C.C.s and glimpses of the future (see Coming Attractions) fill this pulse pounding issue. Of course we had to throw in a little tech for you technophiles so there is a little something for everyone. Enjoy.

The Cover

The attractive but forceful (or at least "force field") young lady could be a psychic or one of the new practitioners of magic to appear out of the ashes of *Chaos Earth*.

The artist is *Mark Evans*, and the artwork is actually taken from one of the cards in the *Rifts® Collectable Card Game*. Art director, Kevin Siembieda, thought it fit the psionics and magic theme of this issue very nicely.

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, homespun adventures and material mostly created by fellow gamers and fans like you, the reader. Things one can *elect* to include in one's own campaign or simply enjoy reading about. They are not "official" to the main games or world settings.

As for optional tables and adventures, if they sound cool or fun, use them. If they sound funky, too high-powered or inappropriate for your game, modify them or ignore them completely.

All the material in *The Rifter®* has been included for two reasons: One, because we thought it was imaginative and fun, and two, we thought it would stimulate your imagination with fun ideas and concepts that the reader can use (if you want to), or which might inspire you to create your own wonders.

www.palladiumbooks.com – Palladium Online (12 pt)

Coming Next Issue

The Rifter™ #20

- *Chaos Earth™, Part Four: The weapons and equipment of NEMA and maybe some other O.C.C.s, some monsters and more setting information and ideas.*
- *Material for Nightbane®.*
- *More material for Rifts®.*
- *Material for Palladium Fantasy®.*
- *The next chapter of the Hammer of the Forge™.*
- *The latest news and developments at Palladium.*
- *Source material for the entire Palladium Megaverse®.*
- *New contributors and fun.*
- *So please join us.*

Palladium Books® role-playing games ... infinite possibilities, limited only by your imagination™



From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

What is The Rifter®?

Hmm, that might seem like a strange question to appear in *The Rifter®*, but based on some weird comments lately, I think people have forgotten what *The Rifter®* is supposed to be.

Fanzine

The Rifter® is supposed to be part *fan-magazine*, part *sourcebook*, part *talent show*, and all *fun* for the reader.

It is supposed to be a place where you, the reader, cannot only get a bunch of different ideas, find answers to questions, enjoy optional source material, and get the latest news, but also a place where you contribute *your* ideas.

Okay, we have high standards even for *The Rifter®*, so we do NOT accept just any submission, but if it's good and has some cool ideas, it is definitely a candidate for publication in these pages.

Rifter® Writers Wanted

This is a place for fans to get published. That's right. This is *YOUR* opportunity one of your ideas for an adventure, or a few new character classes, villains, monsters, magic, superpowers, weapons and gizmos to get published!

Yes, I mean *YOU* the reader!

Yes, it does have to be written halfway decent, use our rules, fit into one of Palladium's game worlds and make sense, but that's not much to ask.

It doesn't have to be huge, either. Your submission could be as small as 4-8 computer pages, maybe nothing more than a villain or two for *Heroes Unlimited™*, or two or three new monsters for *The Palladium Fantasy RPG®* or dungeon style ancient ruins or some such.

Or it could be bigger, maybe a whole "adventure" for *Rifts®* or *Nightbane®* or *Beyond the Supernatural™* or *Ninjas & Superspies™*. Or a setting. You know, a place like a *town* or *city* or *cave network* or *haunted woods* with some secret or trouble brewing under the surface or which will threaten the "place" unless some heroes do something soon.

Note: We always need *adventures* and *places* to visit and explore. ALWAYS. Especially for *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Nightbane®* and *Palladium Fantasy®* as well as many of our other RPGs. We don't have much need for *Rifts®* material right now. Hey, *Rifts®* is probably one of the most popular role-playing games of all time, but Palladium has a bunch of other popular RPGs. Did you know *Heroes Unlimited™* and *The Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game®* have both sold well over 100,000 copies? Well they have, and both are going strong.

Hey, Erick Wujcik is slow to getting around to writing *After the Bomb®* adventures and source material, so how about some of you guys and gals working up some cool stuff for ATB?!

Don't be chicken, write something today!

The Rifter® is supposed to be *YOUR* forum. A chance to share ideas and present some of your own adventures, villains, monsters and ideas.

As a fanzine, other gamers get to read and play *YOUR* stuff! Thousands of them.

It's cool.

It's fun.

And you get paid for your work.

Pay ain't much, \$10 dollars for a printed page of text, but you get published and read by other fans. Yeah Palladium owns the stuff we publish in *The Rifter®*, own it lock, stock and barrel, but you get cash and credit – yep, *your name* up in lights . . . well, um, ink anyway, and if we reprint it, you get paid again, plus you get six free copies of the publication, and maybe, if one of the Palladium staffers or I really like it, it *might* become an "official" part of the Palladium Megaverse. Hey, it has happened a few times now. And if we think you show real talent as a writer, it *might* get you the opportunity to try your hand writing for Palladium Books on a freelance basis! Don't think so? Guess again. We have three freelancers for *The Rifter®* working on manuscripts right now! Cool, huh?

So what do you have to lose? Don't be chicken, send in that short 4-8 computer pages article or that 10-30 computer pages of adventure or setting or even a short story (no multiple part stories, please).

If you build up the courage to write something, send us a printout and the same material on disk – something we can read on an IBM computer. *Word Perfect* or *MS Word* being ideal for us. Or you can e-mail your stuff to Wayne Smith or Maryann Siembieda.

What we need most

Adventures and *settings* for all of our games, ESPECIALLY – *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Ninjas & Superspies™*, *After the Bomb®*, *Palladium Fantasy®*, *Nightbane®*, *Wormwood™*, *Phase World®*, and *Skraypers™*, but you could also send stuff in for *Beyond the Supernatural™*, *Systems Failure™*, *The Mechanoids®*, *RECON® Modern Combat* or any of our current games or adventure settings – even different *worlds* or *dimensions*. (Sorry, no *Robotech®* or *Ninja Turtles®*. Those were "licensed" products owned by other people and we let them both go.)

Non-Rifts® submissions have the best chance of seeing print *soon*, because we have a mountain of *Rifts®* submissions already in the wings, but only a small number of submissions for our other games.

Note: PLEASE make certain any written submissions are *YOUR* "original" work and do not use ideas or text from other fans, games, films or publications. You will be required to sign a contractual letter of agreement from Palladium. If you are not 18 years or older, a parent will have to sign it for you. Oh, and we need you to sign our Unsolicited Manuscript Form before we even look at it. The form can be found on the Palladium Website or can be requested by telephone or letter. If you just send us your submission with no Unsolicited Manuscript form, we will mail it back to you and wait until it is returned to us.

So what are you waiting for?

Put your great villains, monsters, gizmos, adventures and settings down on paper and send them into **The Rifter®**, today!

Palladium Books, Inc.

Rifter Article Submissions Dept.

12455 Universal Drive

Taylor, MI 48180

Hey, what about you semi-pro Artists

Where are you sissies? Afraid to send in some samples? Can't cut the mustard?

Sure you can. Okay, maybe not. We do have high art standards, but if you are looking to break into the art business or you are a talented amateur, send us some samples of your work.

Please only send a photocopy/Xerox (not the original art) of 5-10 different illustrations. If they are available for publication let us know, 'cuz maybe we'll use 'em. If you think you have the goods or show promise, send us those samples. And make sure you indicate that they are samples for "**The Rifter®**." Rifter submissions will be given priority!

If you plan to do some specific samples with the hopes we can use them in **The Rifter®**, we always need general superhero, horror, fantasy and science fiction artwork, particularly for **Heroes Unlimited™**, **Palladium Fantasy®**, **Nightbane®** and **Rifts®**. Publication sizes are quarter page, half page and full page. Original art can be up to 50% larger than the final printed size. Pay is \$60 for a full page illustration, \$30 for a half page and \$15 for a quarter page.

If we like what we see, we'll call, write or e-mail you about your work. Like the writers, you will need to sign a contractual letter of agreement. Oh, and make sure you send samples to:

The Rifter® Art Dept.

c/o Palladium Books Inc.

12455 Universal Drive

Taylor, MI 48180

A note about payments

Remember, you guys and gals are fans and hopeful newcomers hoping to break into the role-playing business, so these pay rates are NOT what professionals get for "official" sourcebooks and games. And getting printed in **The Rifter®** does NOT make you a pro – it just means we liked your ideas or artwork and thought they were worth sharing with us other fans. Don't get a big head, and don't assume we'll publish anything else you might send us. Besides, Wayne is supposed to spread out contributions to give a lot of different folks a chance to see print.

Expect Rejection and don't hate us for it

Look, even the fan stuff that sees print in **The Rifter®** is usually pretty good, and Palladium Books, in its sole discretion, decides who gets published and who doesn't. If you get rejected 'cuz we didn't like your submission for whatever reason, you have to take it like a pro and go on with your life without hating us forever. Maybe you should think of getting into **The Rifter®** as a "contest" rather than a career move or great achievement. The lucky ones get in, the really lucky ones catch Wayne's eye and get in more than once (maybe even every 3-4 issues).

Likewise, *expect* us to edit, change, modify, delete and re-write or add things to written submissions, but even artwork may be cropped, modified or reduced to a smaller size. If you can't handle us changing your creations, please don't even bother sending them to us (really).

That's it for now. I expect to see Palladium's mailbox overflowing with writer and artist submissions for the **Rifter®** over the next several months, so get going.

– Kevin Siembieda, 2002

Palladium News

By Kevin Siembieda (the guy who should know)

Convention alert! Kevin & Maryann at Pentacon, November

Don't ask me how, but somebody convinced Maryann that she and I should attend Pentacon!

Seriously, we have heard great things about this game convention and plan to have a ton o' fun there. Palladium will have a table with our latest and greatest products, Maryann and I will be giving several talks, we'll be helping to judge the costume party and maybe, just maybe, I will run a game or two (no promises, though). Plus, *Jolly Blackburn* is one of the other guests of honor and he's always worth seeing.

The people at Pentacon have been super, so far, and we can hardly wait for the convention. So come on down to chat, get autographs, buy stuff and have a ton of fun.

Pentacon – November 1, 2 & 3, 2002

Held at the Grand Wayne Center, Fort Wayne Indiana

For more info contact:

The Northeastern Indiana Gaming Association

P.O. Box 10427

Fort Wayne, IN 46858

What is the fate of the *Rifts®* Collectible Card Game?

Precedence Entertainment is out of business.

Kevin Tewart and Mike Hummel, two good guys, landed jobs at Upper Deck in California. Congratulations fellas, you deserve it.

Palladium Books did NOT get all the remaining card stock (which is a good thing). We got a few dozen cases of boosters

and a dozen or so cases of starter decks. The rest of the CCG inventory was *destroyed*. A sad fate for a truly fun (and quite possibly great) *Rifts*® Card Game. Hey, maybe those of you who loved the *Rifts*® CCG should write to Upper Deck and tell them to pick up the CCG rights!!!

If you still need booster cards or want the game (you know no *Rifts*® collection is complete without one), you can still get 'em while supplies last from Palladium Books at *blow-out* prices.

\$1 US for a *single* Booster Pack.

\$5.00 for the *Starter Deck*.

\$19.95 for a "box" of *Booster Cards* (that's a lot of cards).

Your only other hope is the few stores who *may* still have them in stock, and then it's Ebay, boys and girls, and you know how ugly that can get.



Rifts® Movie Update

After a bit of a pause in the action, there has been a flurry of activity and some impressive progress in movie negotiations. That's all we are at liberty to saying right now. Keep your fingers crossed and as soon as we have something the report you'll get the news in the next issue of *The Rifter*®.

For those of you who haven't heard, Palladium has been negotiating for quite some time now with a major Hollywood movie studio that wants to do a big budget *Rifts*® movie! They contacted us and we've been wheeling and dealing ever since. Unfortunately, Hollywood deal making is a long and ponderous process, but at least things continue to move forward.

Surge Comic Properties is Palladium's New York City agent handling the negotiations and all *Rifts*® licensing. *Mark Freedman* brought Surge into prominence with his astute mar-

keting of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*® (movies, TV shows, toys, etc.). Maryann and I are also closely involved with every step of the negotiations.

Fan Note: Please do NOT send Palladium Books any movie scripts or film suggestions, as such matters will be left in the capable hands of the film producer. Besides, we don't have a film deal yet! We are still engaged in negotiations that could fall through. Thanks.

Check out Palladium's website for news about the CCG, updates and other information: www.palladiumbooks.com

RECON® Modern Combat is going to be awesome

I am pumped up about this book. Bill Coffin was taken off the project and Maryann Siembieda, Bryan Garner and I (Kevin Siembieda) have taken it over, and, man oh man, are we excited about it. The energy level has been amazing, the ideas are flying like crazy, and I think this new game is going to be fantastic!

Maryann and Bryan both have military experience which is helping to keep the look and feel for the game realistic and on point. Most of the research has been done, the art is being assigned and most of Maryann's and Bryan's writing is also done. I will soon start weaving everybody's contributions together with the final rules and text. Erick Wujcik may be chipping in a bit too.

If you are looking for something different in role-playing — a game set in our modern world that tackles today's fears with heroes dedicated to fighting the war on terrorism, drugs, and crime — then you have to give **RECON® Modern Combat** a look.

This game of modern, urban combat, homeland defense, espionage, intelligence and crime fighting should have a hard edge, a gritty realistic feel, and international appeal.

Coming, September, 2002.

Fun at Marcon

We had a great time at Marcon this past Memorial Day weekend. We met some old pals, like Bryan, Kurt, Mark, Richard, Connie and Roger and Mark, among others, but the big surprise was seeing Terry Williams, one of my old "Defilers" players. I hadn't seen Terry in years! Plus, we made some cool new friends (Hey Doug) who made the show that much more fun and memorable. Thanks guys.

We sold a bunch of books too, with the *Heroes Unlimited*™ RPG being our top seller (thanks to the excitement over the Spider-Man movie), and the *Chaos Earth*™ issues of *The Rifter*® coming in a close second place. Everybody seems pretty excited about *Chaos Earth*™ which is inspiring me to keep up my level of work and imagination. I hope everyone likes this latest installment.

Origins

As I write this, *Origins* is quickly approaching (it's only two weeks away). However, by the time this issue comes out, *Origins* will be over. I sure hope we have good time, stay outta

trouble and get to goof around with our old pals, Jolly, Doug, and a few other folks.

If we saw you there, thanks for coming by to chat. If you purchased a ton of books and showered us with compliments, *you* were our favorite person.

Thank you, everyone.



A+Plus Comic Books Available from Palladium

A+Plus Comics was Detroit's First Comic Book and it was published by yours truly, *Kevin Siembieda*, and long time pal (and Palladium Editor) *Alex Marciniszyn*. It was a black and white, 64 page, alternative comic book that came out in 1976 and 1977 while Alex and I were still in college. There were only five issues before we went broke (independent comics would not hit it big until 9 or 10 years later).

Other contributors include Brian Siembieda (Kevin's brother), Terry Austin, Tom Orzechoski, Mike Nasser (cover #1), Alex Nino (cover of #2), Mike Kucharski, Jim Osten and others.

We found a pile of these books cleaning out the basement and thought we would make a few dozen available online and through the mail to those of you who might want them. Remember, this is stuff we did when we were 19 or 20. Some of it is kinda cool and fun, and some of it is . . . well, um, not so good. We're told these issues are hard to find and sell for around \$8-15 bucks when you can find 'em.

Issue #1 (the rarest of the rare) is available only in the five issue set. Sorry, but we only have something like 20 copies.

Issues #2, 3, 4, & 5 are \$6.00 each or \$24.00 for the set. Include \$1 per each comic for postage and handling.

Issues #1-5 – \$35.00 plus \$5.00 for postage and handling. You must be 18 years old or older to purchase the complete set as issue number one is violent and a bit racy (Hey, the guys were college kids, what'd you expect).

All issues are signed by Kevin Siembieda & Alex Marciniszyn.

Available only while limited supplies last. Sold on a first come, first served basis.

Note that the level of quality for each comic varies. Most are good to very good condition, very few are mint. Remember, these comics are 25 years old. Most are yellowed to some degree and some may have a dent, ding, scuff or bent corner. **Note:** Only 5000 copies of each were ever printed, we only have a few dozen copies of each issue (maybe as many as 100 or so of #5). So for you collectors of the obscure, this may be your last chance at getting A+Plus at reasonable prices.

Send checks or money orders to:

Palladium Books Inc. 12455 Universal Drive
Dept. A+ Taylor, MI 48180

Glitter Boy at War Limited Edition Print – Available now

Wow, the first 250 limited edition prints flew out the door and they continue to sell strong, so get them while they last. It makes a great birthday or Christmas present, and just a nice gift to someone special or even yourself.

What's that? You haven't heard about this big, dynamic Scott Johnson limited edition print? Then you don't know what you're missing!

This is Palladium's *first* ever, poster-size limited edition print! It is the pulse pounding cover to **The Rifter® #18** (minus the Logo and type, and NEMA, of course) depicting a Glitter Boy standing defiantly in flames, holding a tattered American flag. It is an impressive piece, suitable for framing.

- Image Size is a big, 20 x 28 inches.
- Hand signed by artist, *Scott Johnson* and *Rifts®* creator, *Kevin Siembieda*.
- Limited to 700 signed and numbered copies (plus printer proofs and some "unsigned" promotional prints).
- Printed on a high quality, 100 lb., Silk paper stock.
- Shipped rolled in a sturdy mailing tube.
- \$20.00 US plus \$6 for postage and handling in the USA. Shipping is \$10 for Canada and Foreign orders. Available while supply lasts.

Send your orders to:

Palladium Books Inc. 12455 Universal Drive
Dept. GB Taylor, MI 48180

Coming Attractions

For The Palladium Fantasy RPG®

Adventures in the Northern Wilderness, 2nd Ed.

Summer 2002 – probably an *August* release.

Adventures in the Northern Wilderness and Further Adventures in the Northern Wilderness “combined” into one big sourcebook with additional notes, tables, maps and information.

- Information on *Shadowfall* the Wolfen capital.
- The 12 Wolfen tribes (updated).
- Expanded encounter table — offering 101 Adventures.
- Hook, Line & Sinker™ adventures.
- More history and background.
- The Northern Elfland, the ancient “Golden City.”
- Art by Burles, Wilson, Breaux, Johnson and others.
- Maps, adventure ideas and hints about the Wolfen War.
- Written by Siembieda, Wujcik, Coffin and others.
- \$21.95 – 192 or more pages.



Land of the Damned #2: Eternal Torment

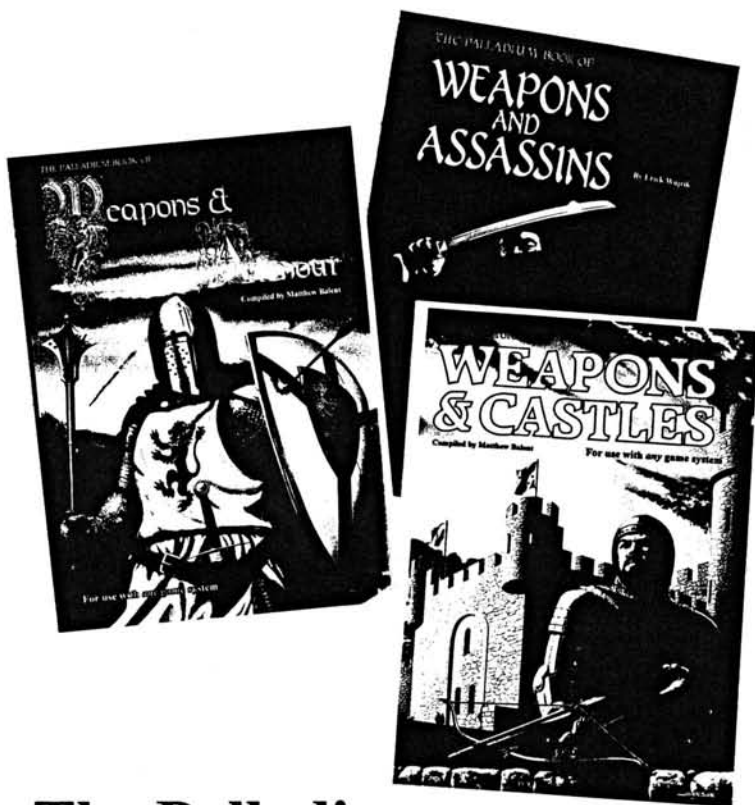
The seemingly endless forest region known as the Darkest Heart. The desolate Land of Eternal Torment – domain of the undead and the cursed. Lost champions, the Fallen Palace of Therendil, ancient artifacts of magic, and adventure all wait for you in this dynamic sourcebook.

- 15 Chaos Beasts, creations of the Old Ones.
- 14 new undead, cursed by the Gods of Light.
- Were-Beasts and evil Faerie Folk that plague the Darkest Heart.
- A compendium of curses, including dozens of new ones.
- Rumors and lies for campaign hooks and adventures.
- Overviews of key places, history, quests and more.
- Cover by Larry Elmore. Art by Truman, Perez, Wilson, and others.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and Bill Coffin.
- \$21.95 – 192 pages. *Available now.*

Land of the Damned #3: The Bleakness, Land of the Citadel

The Citadel, arguably “the” power in the Land of the Damned and darkest evil.

- The Minotaurs and their empire and war against the Harpies.
- The Citadel — Fortress of evil, magic and chaos.
- Key people, monsters, and more.
- Maps, adventure ideas and more.
- Cover by Zeleznik. Art by Burles, Wilson, Breaux, Johnson and others.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and Bill Coffin.
- \$21.95 – 192 pages. Fall 2002.



The Palladium Weapon Series

For use with *any* role-playing game

A series of small, 48 page, sourcebooks that present historically accurate data and information about ancient weapons from around the world.

For use with ANY game system. You heard right. The statistical information is designed and set up in such a way that it can be applied to virtually any game system that uses dice.

Much of the information in the series has been compiled in Palladium's Compendium of Weapons, Armor & Castles, but gamers continue to ask us for the "small weapon books."

One reason, I think, is that the books are small, but packed with a ton of information. Thus, a player or G.M. needs only to grab whichever book in the series he needs for reference, and he is ready to go.

Another reason is that there is simply something convenient and appealing about this size and format.

Ideal for fantasy and historical games, as well as modern games that use ancient melee weapons (knives, swords, axes, maces, ball and chain, picks, spears, pole arms, etc.).

And the price is right at \$7.95 each.

The bottom line is if our fans (and gamers in general) want a product, we'll try to give it to them. So you asked for it, you got it.

The Palladium Book of Weapons & Armor – Available now

- Over 600 different weapons. Each illustrated.
- Over 30 different types of armor from different periods of time. Each illustrated.

- Historically accurate.
- For use with any game system. Some adaptation required.
- Brief description on the types and styles of ancient body armor from around the world.
- Compiled by Matthew Balent.
- Color cover by Scott Johnson.
- \$7.95 – 48 pages. Square bound, comic book-sized reference book.

Weapons & Castles – Available now

- The bow and arrow, and crossbow weapons from around the world.
- Castles and design features.
- 15 different, real world castles. Each illustrated and with a *basic* floor plan.
- Section on siege weapons and layout for a castle under siege.
- Historically accurate.
- For use with any game system. Some adaptation required.
- Compiled by Matthew Balent.
- Color cover by Scott Johnson.
- \$7.95 – 48 pages. Square bound, comic book-sized reference book.

Weapons & Assassins

– Available now

- Assassin societies such as the Ninja and Thuggee.
- How deadly were they? What secrets did they hold?
- Their weapons and tools.
- Special equipment, armor and techniques.
- Historically accurate.
- For use with any game system. Some adaptation required.
- Written and Compiled by Erick Wujcik.
- Color cover by Scott Johnson.
- \$7.95 – 48 pages. Square bound, comic book-sized reference book.

Weapons & Castles of the Orient

In stores August

- The weapons & armor of Japan, China and the rest of the Orient.
- Spears, swords, bow and arrow, and other weapons unique to the Orient.
- A look at the Samurai, his weapons and armor.
- 15 different, real world castles. Each illustrated and with a *basic* floor plan.
- Historically accurate.
- For use with any game system. Some adaptation required.
- Compiled by Matthew Balent.
- Color cover by Scott Johnson.
- \$7.95 – 48 pages. Square bound, comic book-sized reference book.

For Rifts®

Rifts® Aftermath™

Available now

The final siege on Tolkeen represents a new beginning. A chance to re-examine the world of Rifts® and to see what has happened during the War Years elsewhere, as well as ride the shock waves that follow the aftermath of the Siege on Tolkeen.

- The fate of the Tolkeen refugees.
- The Coalition occupation force and Tolkeen resistance fighters.
- Another Juicer Uprising led by Julian the First as he stares down death.
- The appearance of Larsen's Brigade.
- The return of Archie-Three.
- Splugorth colonies in Canada.
- Trouble brewing with the Federation of Magic.
- The latest on Lazlo, Psyscape and others.
- The latest with the New German Republic and the Gargoyle Empire.
- England, Africa, and other places around the globe.
- Art by Perez, Williams, Wilson, Breau and others.
- Cover by Dave Dorman.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- \$21.95 – 208 pages. In store Available now.



New for Phase World®

Rifts® Dimension

Book Five: Anvil Galaxy

At last, an overview of the Anvil Galaxy and key people, civilizations and worlds. More about the mysterious *Cosmic Forge* and the insanity and terror that surrounds its search.

- Overview of the galaxy.
- Legends of the Cosmic Forge.
- The search (and ensuing madness) for the Cosmic Forge.
- New alien races and planets.
- Adventure ideas and more.
- Art by Ramon Perez, Scott Johnson, Freddie Williams and others.
- Cover by John Zeleznik.
- Written by Bill Coffin.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Available now.

Guide to the Three Galaxies™

Rifts® Dimension Book Six:

Phase World®

This Phase World® adventure sourcebook will come out before *Cosmo-Knights™* and presents a dynamic overview of the Three Galaxies, alien technologies, people and conflict.

- Overview of the Three Galaxies.
- Hook, Line and Sinkers™ for each Galaxy.
- Key people, leaders and villains for each.
- New Magic O.C.C.s, Tattoo Magic and spells.
- New aliens and monsters.
- New technology, spacecraft and equipment.
- Adventure ideas and more.
- Art by Perez, Breau, Wilson, Williams and others.
- Cover by John Zeleznik.
- Written by Karl Gleba (some additional material by Siembieda).
- \$17.95 or \$21.95 depending on the final page count. Fall 2002.

Cosmo-Knights™

Rifts® Dimension Book:

Phase World® – Rescheduled

A writing team will take a closer look at the mysterious space sentinels known as the Cosmo-Knights. Their secrets, their quest, and their connection to the *Cosmic Forge*.

- Overview of the Cosmo-Knights, their history and their purpose.
- More legends of the Cosmic Forge.
- More about the Three Galaxies and adventure ideas.
- New alien races and planets.
- Adventure ideas and more.
- Art by Perez, Breau, Wilson, Williams and others.
- Cover by John Zeleznik.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. 2003 release.

More for Rifts®

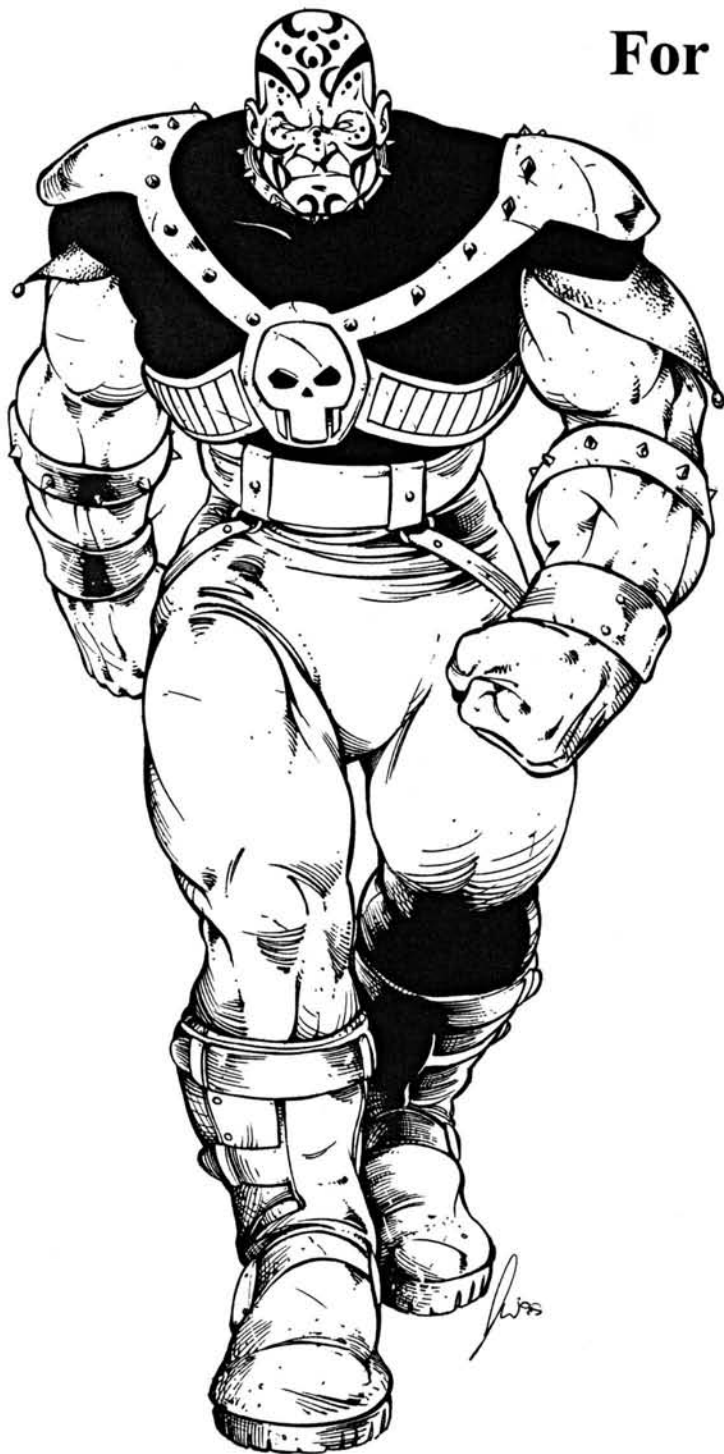
We're sitting on a number of freelance manuscripts right now and plan a lot more for 2003.

Rifts® Novel #3 is back

I almost forgot to mention that the *third novel* in the Rifts® Trilogy by Adam Chilson, *Treacherous Awakenings*, is back in print. All three Chilson novels are available at stores everywhere as well as from Palladium Books.

\$8.95 — 506 pages.

For Heroes Unlimited™



Mutant Underground™ — Ships September 24

Mutants. In the Heroes Unlimited setting they are starting to spring up all over the place causing people to ask: "If they don't look human, do they still have human rights?"

What about the mutants created in the laboratory. They started out as a lab rat or even a little pile of cells — do they have any civil or human rights? Or are they "animals" — property — owned by the company that creates them? And when they run away, should they be hunted down, recaptured and returned to their master/creator? Are mutant animals the beginning of a new slave race?

What about mutants created by criminal organizations?

And when the mutant runs away in shame, in search for freedom, or to build a life away from the humans who hate it (and whom it may hate right back), where do they go? How do they survive? Who watches out for them? Anyone?

These and many other questions are addressed in **Mutant Underground**, a sourcebook for **Heroes Unlimited, Second Edition**.

The Palladium staff has jumped to add their contributions to the setting and characters too, and many character are based on Mike Wilson concepts. So watch out, this is something special.

- Dozens of mutants — villains, heroes, anti-heroes, and lost souls.
- New ideas and variations for mutant humans and mutant animals (like animals with superpowers).
- The secret mutant underground society, home to mutants, runaways, criminals and lost souls.
- The superhumans who protect them and the villains who stalk them.
- Mercenary groups and government agencies, adventure and more.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and friends.
- Cover by Scott Johnson.
- Interior Art by Mike Wilson, Kent Burles and others. September 24
- \$13.95 — 112 pages. Coming this September.

Beyond the Supernatural 2nd Edition — October, 2002

I, Kevin Siembieda, will do everything in my power to get the **Beyond the Supernatural Role-Playing Game** out by Halloween, 2002!

This new edition will expand and develop the world of BTS, the supernatural and paranormal underground invisible to most people — the "worlds within worlds" that Victor Lazlo talks about. As well as more material on psychic investigation and specific people and organizations involved in paranormal study, including the Lazlo Agency. A new P.C.C. or two will also be added along with more on how to create and run a BTS campaign.

Oh, and all the other fun elements, magic, psionics, monsters and aspects you've come to love and expect from **Beyond the Supernatural™**.

Probably 200+ pages for \$21.95 to \$24.95. Written by Kevin Siembieda & Randy McCall.

Free 42 Page Catalog?

All you gotta do to get the latest catalog is ask! Call, e-mail or send us a letter with your name and address asking for Palladium's latest 42 page catalog and we will send it right out, absolutely free.



Coming September 2002

RECON® Modern Combat™

A complete new role-playing game

Torn from today's headlines, **RECON® Modern Combat** is a bold game of contemporary heroes, combat and counter-terrorism.

The face of the new enemy: Terrorism, drug kingpins, organized crime organizations, brazen gangs, lone maniacs and other villains who have no regard for life or law.

The setting: The world. For in this new age, the enemy hides and operates on many fronts, gathering the tools, resources and recruits for their private war campaign from around the globe, and using subterfuge, lies and guerilla tactics to strike from the shadows. A world of secrets, espionage, betrayal and danger.

The player characters: Are the men and women in the military Special Forces, the elite intelligence and law enforcement agencies, and homeland defense who delve into this shadow-world to hunt, find, and stop the enemy *before* he can strike. And failing that, they are trained in countermeasures to rescue the innocent, contain collateral damage, and destroy the enemy in his lair and wherever he shows his face.

The enemy, how he thinks, what he wants, and how and where he operates are also presented. The villains we focus on operate an international network which gives **RECON® Modern Combat™** an *international* arena in which to play.

RECON® Modern Combat™ is a comprehensive, role-playing game with an air of realism that will bring adventures to life, and may be the most requested Palladium role-playing game in the last decade. This September, the wait is over.

- Occupational Character Classes include Military Special Operatives and fighting units like the Green Berets, Navy Seals, Rangers, Delta Force, Snipers, EOD Specialists and others, as well as field agents of the FBI, CIA, NSA, MI-6, and others dedicated to stopping crime, murder and terror.
- Skills and areas of specialization are presented in detail.
- Special "agency resources" is something new and powerful conceived by Kevin Siembieda specially for this game.
- Procedures, methods and operations in counterterrorism, intelligence gathering, close combat and military operations are all part of this book.
- Weapons, body armor, vehicles and equipment.
- Plenty of information about the enemy, how they operate, plan and initiate their strategies, their weapons, goals and objectives.
- Adventure hooks, ideas, world information and more.
- Uses Palladium's Megaversal game system.
- Future sourcebooks will focus on specific nations, agencies and Special Ops from around the world.
- Over 200 pages. Final price yet to be determined. Probably in the \$21.95 to \$24.95 price range. This one has it all.

- Written by Kevin Siembieda, Maryann Siembieda, Bryan Garner & Erick Wujcik.
- Scheduled for a *September, 2002* release (and right on track).

Coming for RECON® Modern Combat

Available now

Compendium of Contemporary Weapons

For use with any game system.

- Over 400 real world weapons from around the globe.
- Machine-guns, submachine-guns, pistols, revolvers, and knives.
- Rifles, shotguns, and grenade launchers.
- Heavy weapons: bazookas, LAWS and mortars.
- EOD, pyrotechnics and riot control gear.
- Body armor, scopes and special ammo.
- Tanks, APCs and armored vehicles.
- Researched & Written by Maryann Siembieda.
- \$19.95 – 176 pages.

Coming for RECON® Contemporary Weapons “Two”

The latest in gun technology.

More weapons, more ammo, more armor, more of everything.

- Researched & Written by Maryann Siembieda.
- Price and final size not yet determined, probably \$17.95 to \$21.95 range.
- Coming early 2003.

Coming for RECON® Modern Combat

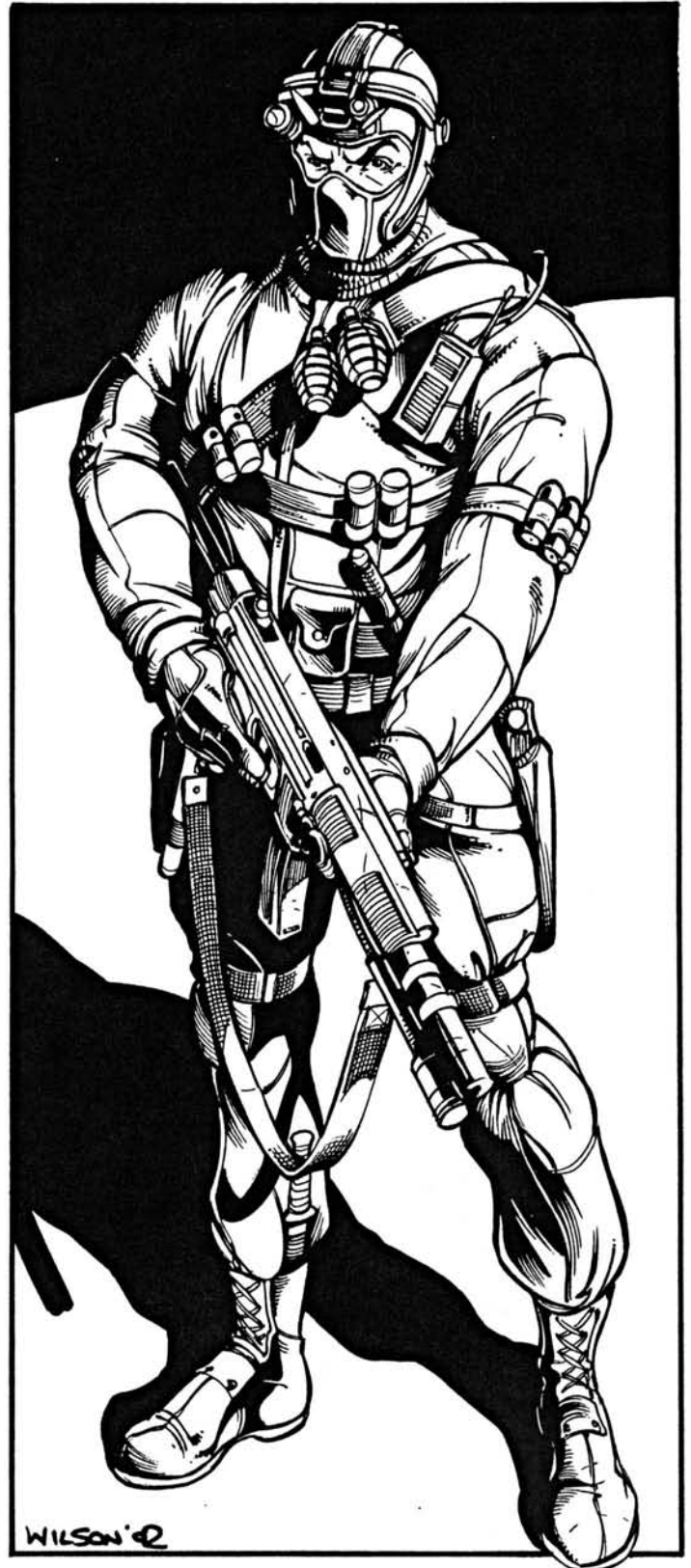
The Global Underworld

An insightful look at the many different criminal organizations known to exist from around the world. The Mafia, American Street Gangs, the Russian Red Mafiya, Albanian Mobs, the Chinese Triad, the Japanese Yakuza, Columbian Drug Cartels, and more.

- Final size and price yet to be determined. Probably a Spring 2003 release.

And that’s just to start with

Numerous other RECON® Modern Combat™ adventure sourcebooks for the FBI, CIA, MI-6, Interpol and many other organizations and places are under consideration.



One game system – a Megaverse® of adventure

Palladium's Checklist of recent releases & product coming soon

After the Bomb® the Role-Playing Game. If you have not taken a look at this complete role-playing game, you don't know what you are missing. Over 100 mutant animals, plus mutant humans, world information and adventures by game designing guru, Erick Wujcik. \$20.95, 224 pages; completely compatible with *Heroes Unlimited*. Available now.

Heroes Unlimited™: Mutant Underground™ is in *production* and should be out *soon*. Dozens of mutants – villains, heroes, anti-heroes, and lost souls. New ideas and variations for mutant humans and mutant animals (like animals with super-powers) and the secret underground society of mutants, run-aways and criminals. Great stuff. Written by Kevin Siembieda and others. *Available September 2002*.

Palladium Fantasy RPG®: Adventures in the Northern Wilderness, 2nd Edition. An updated and expanded edition of this popular adventure sourcebook is *back*. Includes material by Siembieda, Coffin, Wujcik and others. *Available August or September 2002*.

Palladium Fantasy RPG®: Land of the Damned One: Chaos Lands™. The Northern Mountains and the Great Rift inside the Land of the Damned. Over 200 adventure ideas! 192 pages of action, mystery, magic and demons. *Available now!*

Palladium Fantasy RPG®: Land of the Damned Two: Eternal Torment™. New types of Undead, new monsters, world information, an evil Faerie kingdom, the Darkest Heart, the City of Bones, and adventure ideas. Cover by Larry Elmore. Interior art by Timothy Truman, Ramon Perez and others. 192 pages. In stores *mid-June, 2002*.

Palladium Fantasy RPG®: Land of the Damned Three: The Bleakness™. The Citadel, a den of wickedness, slavery, dark magic and chaos. Warring hordes of Minotaurs, Harpies and other fearsome beasts. The final part in the Land of the Damned trilogy. 192 pages. In stores *Fall, 2002*.

RECON® Modern Combat – A “new” role-playing game. Play military and law enforcement “elite agents” (CIA, FBI, DEA, etc.) and “Special Forces” to fight the war on drugs, terrorism, espionage, homeland security, etc. It has been a project we've been kicking around for years and is now in final production. The game uses Palladium's familiar game system set in our modern world. Compatible with *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Ninjas & Superspies™* and other modern day settings. \$21.95, 200 or so pages, Cover by John Zeleznik, written by Siembieda, Garner, Wujcik and Siembieda. *Available mid-September, 2002*.

Rifts® “Limited Edition” Glitter Boy Print. 20x28 inch image of the cover to *Rifter #18*, signed by artist Scott Johnson and Kevin Siembieda, limited to 700 signed and numbered copies. \$20.00 +\$6.00 for postage and handling (\$10 for Canada & Foreign). Mailed rolled in a sturdy tube. *Available now*.

The Rifter #17 with all the usual good stuff and the start of *Chaos Earth™*. Now get two of your buddies to start buying *The Rifter®* and we'll be all set. \$7.95 per issue. *Available now*.

The Rifter #18, part two of *Chaos Earth™* and other good stuff. In stores *now*.

The Rifter #19, part three of *Chaos Earth™* and other good stuff. In stores, *July, 2002*.

The Rifter #20, part four of *Chaos Earth™* and other good stuff. In stores *Oct. 2002*.

The Rifter #21; part five of *Chaos Earth™* and other good stuff. In stores *Jan.. 2003*

Chaos Earth™ the RPG – the complete game Spring 2003!

Rifts® Conversion Book One; Revised Edition. Updated and revised with some new material, including more on the Summoner, HU2 superpowers, *After the Bomb* conversions and more! *Available end of July or mid-August, 2002*.

Rifts® Adventure Guide. A Game Master's sourcebook and reference guide with information, steps, tips and material for creating and running *Rifts®* adventures. Also rules and tables for creating organizations and information about dimensional Rifts, post apocalyptic Earth, Barbarian villages, the 'Burbs, towns, and more than 150 adventure ideas. Written by Siembieda, Coffin and Wujcik. \$21.95 for 192 pages. *Available now*.

Rifts® Aftermath. Not only the aftermath of the Siege on Tolkeen, but more than 150 pages of a *World Overview as of 109 P.A.* The latest on Archie-Three, the Coalition States, Lazlo, New Lazlo, Federation of Magic, Xitcix, Psyscape, Mexico, South America, England, Africa, Atlantis, the NGR/Triax, and other parts of the world. Adventure ideas on virtually every page. \$21.95 for 208 pages. *Available now*.

Rifts® Book of Magic. Hundreds of magic spells collected from World Books 1-23, including Warlock Elemental Spells, Ley Line Magic, Necromancy, Nazca Line Magic, Ocean Magic, Herbalism, Shamanistic Magic and Fetishes, and a whole lot more. Plus, magic items and more. \$24.95 for 352 pages. *Available now*.

Rifts® Game Master Guide. A collection of vital information frequently referenced by the Game Master, including ALL skills, psionic powers, experience tables, and condensed stats on a ton of weapons, body armor, power armor, vehicles, and miscellaneous equipment, plus index of O.C.C.s, R.C.C.s, some G.M. tips, a collection of maps and other useful data. \$24.95 for 320 pages. *Available now*.

Rifts® Coalition Wars™ series. A six book epic detailing the Siege on Tolkeen. *All are available now*.

Rifts® Dimension Book Five: Anvil Galaxy™. The quest for the “Cosmic Forge,” an overview of the galaxy and a look at the key aliens and civilizations that play a key role. New civilizations and aliens, and more. \$17.95 for 160 page book. *Available now*.

Rifts® Guide to the Three Galaxies™. This Phase World® adventure sourcebook presents a dynamic overview of the Three Galaxies, alien technologies, people, conflict, and a slew of new aliens, monsters, magic, equipment and information. Final size and price yet to be determined. *Autumn, 2002*.

Rifts® Dimension Book Six: The Cosmo-Knights™. A sourcebook dedicated to the mysterious super-beings known as the Cosmo-Knights. More on the Cosmic Forge too. Delayed till 2003.

Weapons and Armor: 48 pages presenting approximately 600 different weapons and 30+ suits of armor for use in *ANY* role-playing game. Each and every item is illustrated and are real historical weapons from around the world. Only \$7.95 for this amazing reference. Available now.

Weapons and Castles: 48 pages presenting all sorts of bow weapons, siege machines, and 15 castles, complete with basic floor plans. All are real world castles. Suitable for use in *ANY* role-playing game system. Everything is illustrated. Only \$7.95 and found in stores everywhere. *Available now.*

Weapons and Assassins: 48 pages presenting the weapons, secrets and history behind some of the most famous assassins in history, namely the Ninja of Japan and Thuggee Assassins of India. Everything is illustrated. For use with *ANY* game system. Only \$7.95 and found in stores everywhere. *Available now.*

Weapons and Castles of the Orient: 48 pages presenting all sorts of weapons, armor, and castles of China, Japan and the Orient, complete with basic floor plans. All are real world castles. As always, stats are such that they can be used in *ANY* role-playing game. Everything is illustrated. Only \$7.95 and found in stores everywhere. *Available July or August, 2002.*

Also Coming in 2002 or 2003

— *no definitive release date yet scheduled:*

Rifts® Federation of Magic™ Revised Edition (some new material & updates)

Rifts® Africa Two (all new)

Rifts® Australia Two & Three (all new, hopefully a 2002 release)

Rifts® Antarctica (all new, probably a 2003 release)

Rifts® Dragons & Gods (all new, probably a 2003 release)

Rifts® Dimension Book: Guide to the Three Galaxies™
(Phase World®, Fall 2002)

Rifts® Dimension Book: Worlds of Warlock™ (Phase World®, 2003 release)

Palladium Fantasy RPG®: Mysteries of Magic™

Palladium Fantasy RPG®: Wolfen War™ (with a little luck, an early 2003 release)

The Palladium Weapons Series (returns due to popular demand).

Heroes Unlimited™: Hardware/Gadgets Unlimited™

Heroes Unlimited™: The Atorian Empire™

Heroes Unlimited™: The City of Cascade™

New After the Bomb® sourcebooks

Beyond the Supernatural™ RPG, 2nd Edition (I promise, October 2002)

Mechanoid Space RPG® (a new epic series; December 2002)

Void Runners™ RPG (something different, 2003)

And who knows what else?

Available in stores everywhere

What would I do with 2,000,000 CCG Cards?

Well with the demise of the Rifts® CCG I decided to have a contest on our web site to see what you guys would do if you had 2,000,000 CCG cards. I received over 200 entries and it was not easy to come up with my winners, but here are the results. I want to thank everyone who entered, you have great imaginations!

— Maryann Siembieda, 2002

Ferkelberger Clothing Line

Mark Stone

“Television Advertisement”

“Percy Ferkleberger’s Rifts Card Clothing Collection”

[A camera shot opens on a young male, talking on the phone and smiling, as the voice over announcer speaks.]

It’s Friday night ... and you’ve got the weekend planned. A full-scale Palladium gaming weekend ...

[The camera shot then shows the same young male pulling various chips and cokes out of the refrigerator.]

You’ve got your food.

[The shot once again adjusts, this time to show a stack of Palladium books in a pile, with the Rifts Main Book leaning against the stack for the straight view of the cameras.]

You’ve got the books, cards, dice, and pen and paper at the ready.

[The young male then walks into his bedroom, and piles of clothes are seen strewn all over the place ...]

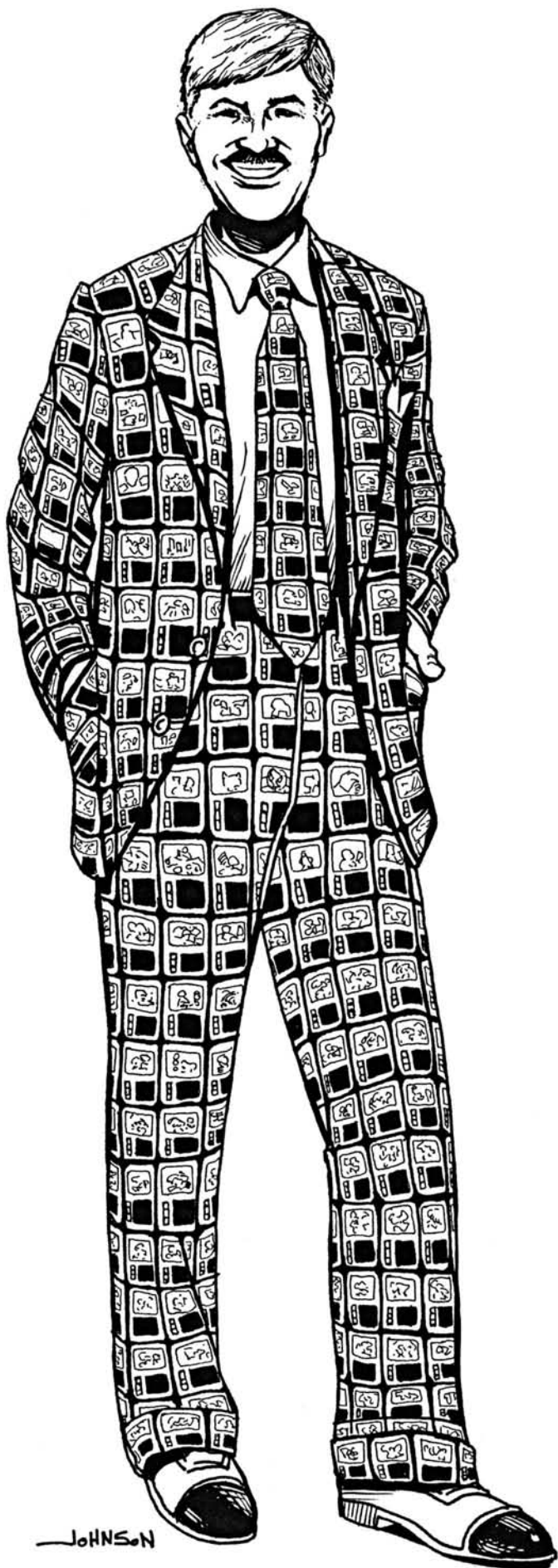
Oh No!!! You’ve forgotten your change of laundry!

[The infamous “Home Alone - McCulken hands to the face screen shot.”]

Young Male : AUGH!!

[The camera shot then changes to show the warehouse of Precedence Rifts Card Game stacks.]

No problem! Percy Ferkelberger has you covered ... the all new Rifts Card Collection Clothing Line!



[The camera zooms down the aisle in a very fast speed, coming to a hard break, and hanging off a shelf is an entire suit, made of nothing but RCGG cards.]

The newest thing for those gaming nights ...
The Rifts Card Clothing Collection!

[The young male then is reshowed on the screen with a huge smile on his face.]

That's right ... now you can be the hottest thing on the catwalk of the Chi-Town Burbs ... with the Ferkelberger endorsed clothing line.

[The camera shot changes to show four gamers, including our young male, who is now dressed in a RCGG suit, all playing the RCGG. The other three members are dressed in the regular clothing.]

And when you spill some of that dip.

[The young male spills some of his dip from his chip on his suit, and his fellow gamers just smile and snicker.]

No problem ... it's completely interchangeable!

[The kid pulls the now dip-stained card from his suit, and looks at it, before pulling the top card from his deck and replacing the "hole" in his suit.]

And if you find yourself stuck looking for a good card in your game?

[The same screen plays, and the young RCGG dressed gamer stares at the table with a worried look on his face, when his face suddenly brightens, and he pulls a card off the shoulder of his suit, and plays it on the table. The remaining players raise the hands in frustration, obviously ready to cede the game.]

You'll always have the ace "up your sleeve."

[The camera shot changes back to the warehouse shot of the original "RCGG" suit, and along side it is now a full length dress, again, made of RCGGs.]

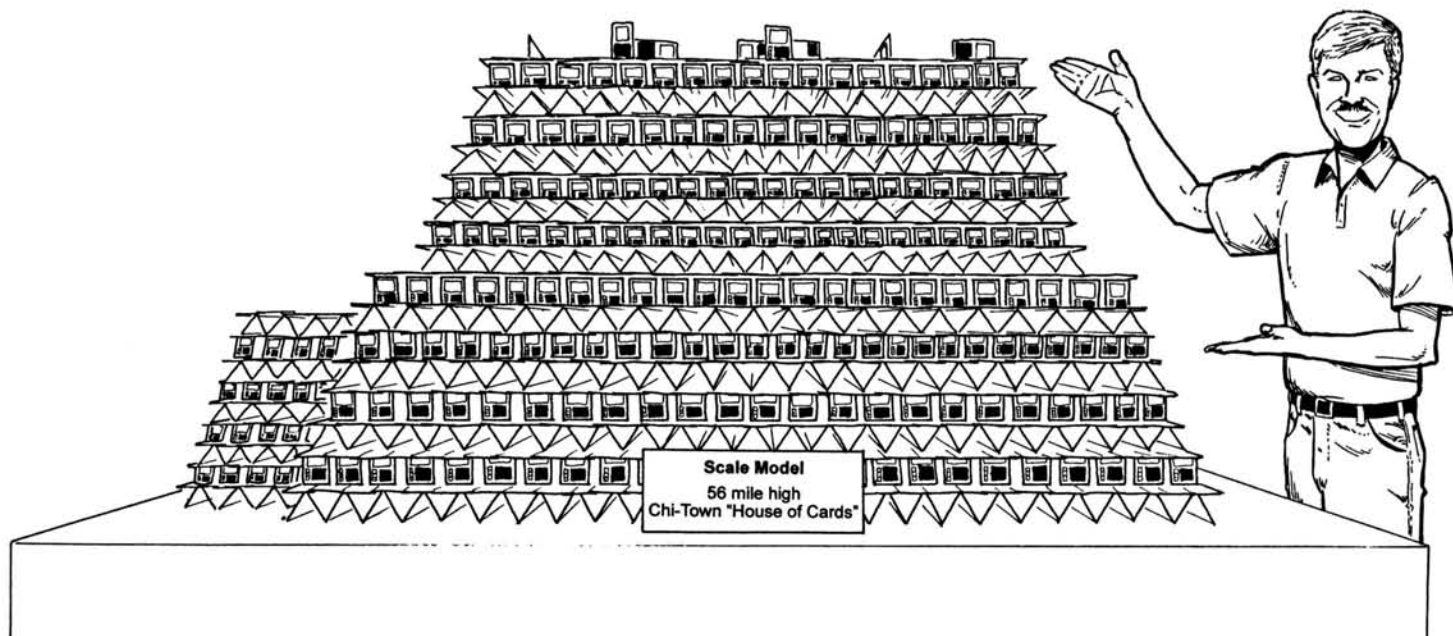
Available for both the male and female gamers of the Palladium world! Just ask Wayne Smith!

[The camera shot shows Wayne dressed in a RCGG shirt and shorts ...]

WS: Just the thing for when they need me to come in at late hours!

[Wayne smiles for the camera.]

So order yours today! Supplies going fast!



57.4 Mile High House

Barden A. Campbell

For the purposes of this activity, it is first necessary to make believe that the staff at Palladium Books can afford to take a few months off. I say make believe, because said staff consistently work twelve to sixteen hours per day. Whether or not they sleep is a matter of some debate.

However, let us assume that everyone there, from Kevin's father to Wayne Smith can all take three months off at the same time. Lock the doors to the office, and put on the answering machine, because we're going on a road trip. Where are we going? Colfax. Illinois.

As manager of this project I would first contact the Mayor of Colfax, or better yet, their Congressman, Timothy V Johnson (R). "It's going to be one for the record books", I'd tell them. And it would be.

I propose to build a house of cards using a 2,000,000 spare CCG cards. And not just any house, but a Rifts house, the ultimate Rifts house, Chi-Town. That's correct, building on the exact spot that the fortress city will occupy in about four hundred years, the staff of Palladium Books and I will build a scale model of Chi-town. Now given that the average height of one of the CCG playing cards is about 2 inches, stacked end to end they would reach a vertical height of over 300,000 feet or just over 60 miles.

The Chi-town house of cards could easily have a base diameter of 40 miles (208,000 CCG cards side by side). Its height would then be a breathtaking 57.4 miles. This Chi-Town of Cards would be taller than Mount Everest, lighter than all the pyramids combined, and cheaper than both the Hubble Space Telescope and the International Space Station. It would be easily visible from orbit or the lunar surface.

The benefits to the town of Colfax in terms of tourist dollars is beyond estimation. The Chi-Town model would command spectacular views of the Macinaw River and would assure Palladium Books a place in the book of World Records for all time.

CCG Summer!

Kurt Ellmauer

On the eve of the first day of summer. Palladium fans across the world shall descend upon towns, villages and cities. Armed both with masking tape and Rifts CCG cards, they will tape the cards to the rear wheel of every bicycle in sight. Then, on the first day of summer, when children and adults alike take to their bicycles, they will all be greeted with the delightful sound of cards striking spokes, making that grand motorcycle sound that you loved when you were a child. Parents everywhere will smile when they hear that sound, remembering their childhood, knowing their children and having fun being children, and being happy that they will not have to replace their bridge deck.

Collectible Army Cards

Jeff Prentiss

In what some are calling a "return to our childhood", CAC (Collectible Army Cards) have taken gamers back to their roots of yesteryear. At a recent convention we heard "This is more fun than miniatures!" and "Who needs gametext?" from players numbering in the hundreds. Rifts-CAC players take two or more copies of the same card, bending them just below the pictures, then glue and/or tape the picture backs together. They then cut the bottom portion of the cards and reshape them to produce bases for their "soldiers" which included feet, cyber-legs, vehicles, animals and more on the ones we saw.

Why is Rifts-CAC's so popular? Maryann Siembieda, credited with starting Rifts-CACs with a warehouse of former Precedence CCG cards, had this to say: "The players like it because not only do you use the cards to make your soldiers, but also for their terrain! For example, actual card houses! While the rules vary from player to player, including distances measured in 'card lengths', flipping cards to inflict damage or knock down the opposing "soldier", to the actual destruction of the "soldier" when they die or take damage. It is an amazingly fast game to learn and play! Retailers and distributors like Rifts - CACs be-

cause they are finally doing something with all of their dusty old inventory! And, the most important factor in our growth has been the fact that most players ALREADY had thousands of "soldier" material on hand, ready to start playing.!"

Remember, Rifts-CACs is 100% compatible with ANY former CCG game. And the use of Card Sleeves is optional.

CCG Cluster Bombs!!

Jeremy Richard (Therumancer)

Donate them to the military. Suggest that they load them into giant cardboard cluster-bombs and drop them from outrageously high altitudes on enemy targets. I'm sure that a box of cards dropped from sub-orbital distances would be quite lethal. This would help cut expenses as the cards are free and obviously won't cost as much as actual bombs. Making our tax dollars go further is the perfect thing to do on income tax day!

Questions and Answers

By Rodney Stott, Shawn Merrow & Kevin Siembieda

The future is what we make it, or at least that is what people say. After reading *Rifts® Aftermath*, which can bring our Rifts games forward in time, and *Chaos Earth™* which takes us to the beginning, our thoughts naturally gravitated along those lines.

The past, present, and future are all one in our games, and every moment begins something new.

The column for this issue starts off with a couple of questions dealing with the new inhabitants of the Rifts world, followed by some early firearms, then into rules for aging, and super abilities. Enjoy.

In the *Coalition War Campaign™* book it says the CS wiped out the Naruni based arms dealerships. Does this include the one in Los Alamo? And if so, what happened to Los Alamo in the Campaign of Unity?

The CS has been surprisingly patient with Los Alamo about their Naruni connections. Although this is primarily because of Los Alamo's overall outlook regarding humankind, it is also because the CS is not ready to open up a war on a new front. They already had Tolkeen and Free Quebec to contend with, and now the Xitix danger in the north and the potential threat from the *Federation of Magic* and strange goings on with the Shemarrians in the east (see *Rifts® Aftermath* for details). So, for now, Los Alamo has been keeping a "low profile" and the CS looks the other way. However, once the Coalition regroups and feels secure with itself, the pressure will be on Los Alamo to "toe the line," or else. The final defeat of Tolkeen and reunification with Free Quebec does make the CS feel rather cocky, and depending how things shake down in the months to come in 109 P.A., more Coalition transgressions could be brewing. Remember, you heard it here first.

South America Two speaks of a city Rifted from *Wormwood™*, does this region have the same powers of *Wormwood* itself? If so, do the symbiotes work upon leaving that region?

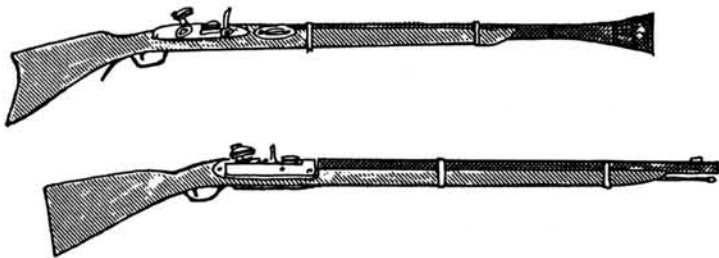
The region right around the city *does* have the same ambience as *Wormwood* and allows the symbiotes to work. However, such symbiotes that are away from the transplanted city by more than 50 miles (80 km) or away for more than 48 hours, become dormant and the powers they provide disappear until they return to *Wormwood* (instantly revive at full strength) or the trans-dimensional city (revives at full strength within 1D4 hours of returning home).

Are Rahu-Men the only kind of D-Bee accepted by the *New German Republic*? It says in *Conversion Book One* that a Rahu-Man Cyber Knight is a member of their government. And if so, what does the CS think of this? I think his name is Rasheen.

Rasheen served in the NGR government during its early years when there was little contact between North America and Europe. Since then, the Cyber-Knight has gone off to adventure in Africa and has never been seen again. As for accepting D-Bees, the NGR accepts most kinds (the more human-like the better), and even limited magic and psionics. They are not as prejudiced as the Coalition, but still all D-Bees are considered "second-class" citizens.

How are Changelings regarded on Rifts Earth? Are they hated and feared (even by non-humans) like in *Palladium Fantasy*, or are they considered normal D-Bees? Would a Changeling hide his true nature even from other D-Bees?

It all depends on the individual character and the environment he is operating or living in. A Changeling or any shape-changer might feel comfortable revealing his true nature in a community of other D-Bees, especially if the character was respected and loved in that community. On the other hand, shape-changers are generally feared. They would have a hard time fitting in even in a place like New Lazlo and even a community that once held them in high regard might shun or fear the character if his true shape-shifting nature were revealed. Of course a shape-changer, especially one as gifted as a Changeling, would be run out of town if not imprisoned or killed in a paranoid town or one that fears magic and/or aliens/D-Bees. The Coalition Army makes a concerted effort to find and exterminate Changelings and others with the power to change their appearance. Note: Changelings are exceedingly rare on Rifts Earth.



I am wondering are there any rules or statistics for Black Powder Weapons in any of the books?

Magically enhanced black powder weapons can be found in *Rifts® Dimension Book One*, and in *Coalition Navy™*, but stats for non-magical versions only ever appeared in *Trans-Dimensional Ninja Turtles™*.

For those who do not have *Trans-Dimensional TMNT*, the average Black Powder weapon inflicts 3D6 to 5D6 S.D.C. damage based on Caliber, with an effective range of 100 to 150 feet (30.5 to 45.7 m) for rifles, with pistols having an effective range of 50 to 75 feet (15.2 to 23 m).

These weapons also have an effective rate of fire of *one per melee round*, and require the rest of the round (or three melee actions) after firing to *reload* before they can be fired again.

Can a character who is affected by the Time Slip spell trigger wards, and if they can, when are they triggered, when everyone else gets to act, or when they activate the ward?

Yes, the character can set off wards while subjected to a Time Slip spell, and the activated wards are triggered *immediately*.

I noticed that there is a W.P. Modern Weapons skill in The Palladium Fantasy RPG®, and some of the art in it shows modern weapons, how common and available are firearms in Palladium Fantasy?

They are "super-rare," and are present at all only as the result of dimensional travel. As the book recommends, they should be treated as a special item much like a rare magic artifact.

What about gunpowder and its equivalents, how common are they?

Alchemists and select others *may* know the secrets of gunpowder, and use their knowledge in the making of fireworks, flash powder and smoke bombs. They do NOT have the knowledge or inclination to make firearms, or even grenade like explosives, and *neither* should the player characters. One of the rare explosive devices in the Palladium World is based on a naturally occurring substance called *Fire Sand*, and is only found in the Yin-Sloth Jungles. It is very rare and hard to acquire even in and around the jungles.

How far into the future is After the Bomb® set?

The post-holocaust, mutant setting for *After the Bomb®* is about 120 years into the future. With "The Crash," as it is commonly called, occurring about 30-40 years from today. This means that most mutant animals and their societies are about 4-6 generations old.

If a Temporal Mage casts Time Warp: Age on a Juicer, will he turn into a 100 year old Juicer? If so, would his aged body be able to handle the strain of all the chemicals running through him? Wouldn't he just keel over dead?

His body may magically age, but it is all happening in a short span of time. Consequently, the bio-comp system is able to adjust and compensate for the strange change the body is undergoing, so the character does not "keel over dead." However, there is strain and modifications due to age. All the penalties this spell inflicts on its victims also befall the aged Juicer – i.e. reduce all physical attributes, melee actions and bonuses by half. However, the Juicer's S.D.C. is also only reduced by half (not zero) and Hit Points are -10. Also reduce all of the Juicer's other abilities (leaping range, etc.) by half. The character is still tough for his age (heck, he can whip the snot out of any 80-100 year old), but he's still greatly diminished and on par with an ordinary Joe half his age.

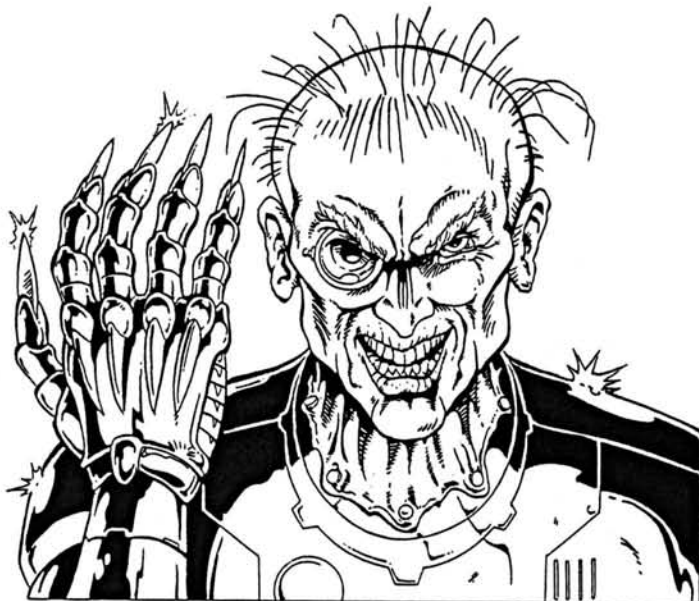
What about the same character's equipment?

The equipment and weapons of a character are NOT affected by the Time Warp: Age spell.

What sort of penalties should be applied to elderly characters? A previous Q&A says to look in The Palladium Fantasy RPG®, but I do not own that, or plan to purchase it.

Ok, here is a summary of the modification rules for old age for *humans*. They have been *modified* here to more accurately reflect our modern world, and for *Rifts®* you might want to start the penalties 10 or 15 years later unless a peasant or individual living under medieval conditions. In *The Palladium Fantasy RPG*, these penalties start at age 60.

I.Q.: 01-50% chance of losing 1 point of I.Q. for every 5 years beyond 70.



M.E.: 01-60% chance of losing 1 point of M.E. for every 5 years beyond 70.

M.A.: Not affected.

P.S.: Reduce by 1 point at 60, and 1 point every 5 years until P.S. is half the original score.

P.P.: Reduce by 1 point at 50, and 1 point for every 5 years until P.P. is half the original score.

P.E.: Reduce by 1 point at 50, and 1 point every 5 years until P.E. is half the original score.

P.B.: Reduce by 2 points at 60, and 1 point every 10 years until P.B. is half the original score.

Spd.: Reduced by 10% at age 40, 60, 80, 90, 100, 120 and 140 years (always round up).

Skills requiring prowess, agility and dexterity such as Pick Locks, Prowl, etc. are reduced by 5% for every 5 years beyond 50.

Carrying Weight is reduced at 60 by 1D4x10% and another 10% at age 70, 80, 90, 110, 120 and 130.

Number of Attacks are reduced by one at age 50, 70, 90 and 120 years.

S.D.C. is reduced by 20% (can be reduced down to zero) and **Hit Points** by 5% (reduce to half) at 60 years of age and for every 10 years beyond 60.

Fatigues 20% more quickly at age 50, 70, 90 and 110.

What ever happens to Old Super Heroes?

Great question, and one that is seldom addressed in comic books or RPGs. We think it all depends on the individual heroes, circumstance and the environment they live and work in. Some may die in a blaze of glory (at any age), others retire, some turn to consulting or take a desk job with a superhero group or law enforcement agency, while still others *vanish* from the public eye (retiring to live an ordinary life while working to maintain their secret identity a secret). This is something Kevin says he may address in the revised and updated **Villains Unlimited Second Edition** sourcebook, but here are some logical ideas here and now.

For an established campaign world where super abilities have existed for about two or more generations (50+ years), some thought has to be given to the older generation.

First, as superhumans, it is fair to assume that they are at peak physical and mental prowess longer than the average human. That means most can probably function as a superhero without noticeable deterioration or slowing down till age 50 or even 60, but after that, most are likely to feel old age come slamming down on them hard.

If using the suggestions for *Power Degradation* (mentioned a bit later on), then special retirement or medical facilities may have to be set up for caring for these heroes of a bygone age. If their super powers (or mind for that matter) go awry, they may have to be restrained and contained in places like *Gracemery Island* and other superhuman containment facilities.

If you want to make an Old Super Hero Character, you may wish to refer to the Aging Rules just presented, as well as the *Heroes throughout the Ages* article which saw print in **The Rifter® #5** which presents ways of changing **Heroes Unlimited™** for creating characters from the entire historical tradition of the Super Character, from Pulp Age Heroes of the 1920's, to the Golden Age of the 40's, right up to the modern age of **Heroes Unlimited**.

Next Generation. Those who maintained successful secret identities may just decide to fade away, and retire gracefully, maybe with friends and family. However, they may have a younger sibling, cousin, child or grandchild who chooses (with or without the super being's blessing) to carry on the *legacy*. That is covered to some degree in the **Heroes Unlimited™ G.M.'s Guide**.

What happens to *Super Abilities* as a hero grows old?

It all depends on the particular character, what their powers are, and what the Game Master decides should happen.

In all there are a few obvious possibilities. Here are just some ideas as to what could happen to Super Abilities over time. Pick one or make a random roll.

No Change. As amazing as it may seem, the character seems as strong, virile and alert as ever. This is most likely to be true of aliens and mutants who by their very nature defy the human norm. It may also apply to characters who are the product of an experiment.

Power Loss: The ability just fades away, possibly entirely or to a sliver of its former self. For Example: A character with a Flight ability can no longer fly, only hover, or only fly for a few (1D6) minutes at a time. Energy Expulsion Powers may only be able to generate a spark or blast of 1D6 at a range of only 50 feet (15.2 m). Healing powers may take 2-10 times longer to kick in, Invulnerability may be reduced to only 2D4x10 extra S.D.C. instead of hundreds, and things the character was once impervious to now do half their normal damage. And so on.

Burnout. The burnout is a more severe case of Power Loss, because the character's body (and/or mind) is worn out. The character is unmotivated, weak, plagued by aches and pains, and he tires three times faster than normal. Skills are performed at -20%, all physical attributes are reduced by 50%, S.D.C. by

80%, Hit Points by 40%, and super abilities are reduced by 70% and can only be used for 4D6 minutes per 24 hours! To push the power longer causes the hero to lapse into a coma for 1D4 hours and requires a roll to save vs Coma & Death (albeit with a bonus of +15% to save). The character even looks old and tired. A Super Speedster probably needs a wheelchair, walker or cane to get around because their super speed powers have burnt out and their leg muscles are weak or arthritis has set in something terrible. Energy Expulsion characters and those with supervision are likely to have eyes sensitive to light and require eyeglasses to see near and far.

Diminished Capacity: Reduce the level of damage, duration, range, and other factors (S.D.C., bonuses, speed, etc.) by half. Still has superhuman powers but they are not as potent as they used to be.

Erratic: The ability works most or some of the time, but not always. Every time the power is used or for every few hours the player or G.M. should roll percentile dice on the following table.

01-20% Functions at full strength, good as gold.

21-40% Functions at a diminished capacity, reduce all bonuses, damage and other aspects by -20%.

41-60% Functions at half normal levels. Reduce all aspects of the ability accordingly.

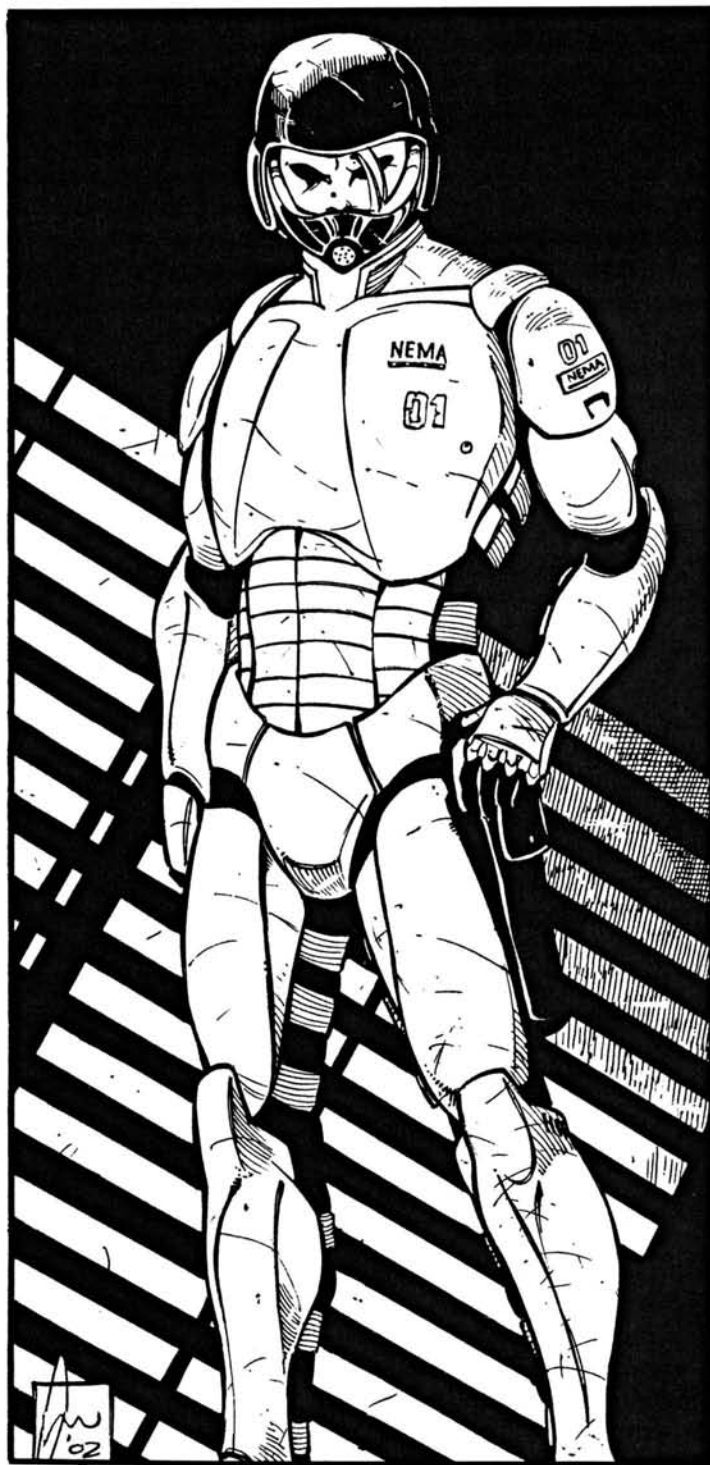
61-80% Functions at a fraction of usual. Super ability is barely noticeable. Reduce all aspects of it by -90%!

81-00% The super ability functions in overdrive and is, for the moment, 50% more powerful than it is normally. Increase all aspects of the power, including range, damage, duration, bonuses, etc., by 50%!

No Control. The power remains but the aging character can no longer control it. That means the power always comes on at full strength, speed, etc. whether the character wants it at a reduced level or not. This means he cannot pull punches, stop when he wants to or hit only the desired target, causing collateral damage, slipping and sliding into walls and other people, etc. Full force is a constant and sometimes (01-50%) the power comes on at a 50% greater power level. The character is a danger to himself and others around him. Worse, the power may "turn on" all by itself at random and unexpected times or when the old hero is angry, sad or otherwise upset, maybe even when he dozes off. And can't turn it off for at least 2D6 minutes. In the case of transformation/Alter Physical Structure, Intangibility, Invisibility, and similar abilities, the power may be "on" and the character transformed half of the time to constantly, whether the character wants to be or not. In the latter case, it takes a forced effort on the part of the aging super being to transform into a normal human state of being. This can be extremely dangerous with characters who turn into fire or energy.

I love Chaos Earth! How many parts will appear in The Rifter®?

Kevin plans to present five installments in issues #17-21. Then, after the fifth part in issue number 21, he plans to collect it all up, clean it up, add a bunch of source material and artwork, and put it all together with the game rules, skills, etc., and release it as a complete game, probably in April or May 2003. What you are seeing in *The Rifter*® is a work in progress and something of a *sneak preview*. Cool, huh?



What sort of weapons and body armor are there in Chaos Earth™?

Equipment like this will be covered in future issues of *The Rifter* (probably next issue), but if you want to start playing *now*, you can use the "equivalent" of many of the tech weapons, armor and items used by the CS found in the *Rifts*® RPG – a lot of the Coalition's technology is pirated from or based on NEMA Technology. Some of the weapons and gear of the *Republic of Japan* and the *New Navy* also harken back to the "Golden Age of Science" and closely parallel technology as it was before the Coming of the Rifts, so you can use them with little to no modification required.

Palladium Fantasy RPG®

Wand Magic

Optional New Magic for The Palladium Fantasy RPG®

By Kevin Christensen

Wand Magic is an ancient art that was discovered by men of magic during The Age of a Thousand Magicks. Since then it has been common knowledge passed down from teacher to apprentice among Wizards. It is knowledge that is imparted along with the knowledge for the creation of a spirit cauldron. However, unlike the spirit cauldron, a Wizard cannot create a wand until he has gained more experience and practice with his magic. Only those Wizards who have the practice of years of channeling mystic energies (must be 8th level or higher) can fully understand the principles of imparting magic into a piece of wood, which is the entire focus of this magic. The purpose is to increase a Wizard's ability to cast magic in situations where the mage would want to conserve his own natural reserves of magic or has spent those reserves and still needs some magic left.

Magic Wands are as common as other magic weapons, and once created can be fully used by any other magic class or by a Psi-Mystic. A wand can also be used by non-men-of-magic or by psychics, but the spells will be cast at half the power; decrease the range, damage, and duration of any spell by half, and the person will have to figure out from trial and error the number and types of spells the wand has stored. A wand is simple to use; all one has to do is concentrate on the spell desired and the target of that spell. The wand must be held and usually pointed in order to cast its spell. The aim does not need to be precise, but needs to be close. For example, trying to cast with the wand vertically tied to a belt will result in the spell appearing in the caster's face or toes, depending on the facing of the wand.

The wand created by a Wizard is very personalized and can be very diverse in its function. The Wizard could also choose to increase the power of the wand for the sacrifice of diversity. Sacrificing a range of spells to impart greater power to one particular spell is called "focusing," and can greatly boost the strength of a spell.

Some wands are very simple and look like a stick picked haphazardly off the ground. Others are intricately carved or inlaid with various metals, or have bands wrapping around them to increase the aesthetic value or to strengthen the wood. Their beauty is only limited by the creator's imagination and

will. When creating a wand, wood is the only material which can be charged with magic energy, and the wand is generally no larger than three feet (0.9 m) in length or two inches (5 cm) in diameter.

Once created, the wand is permanently charged with its magic and cannot be changed. Wands, however, are not indestructible and are only as strong as the base material used in the construction. Which is to say that for the benefits of the creation of a wand, they have the tradeoff of being somewhat flimsy. Note that a wand can be partially covered in metal, but they cannot be charged or function if more than 50% of the wood is covered, regardless if that metal is gold, silver or steel. There are a few dangers inherent with wands as well. Breaking a wand will result in all of the magic force stored in the wand exiting in an explosion that does 3D6 damage to a 12 foot (3.7 m) area. In addition, physically touching wands together is very bad. For some reason the magic polarities of wands are different for each, and when brought into contact with each other mix into a volatile reaction which does 3D6+10 damage to a 20 foot (6.1 m) area, which incidentally destroys the two wands involved. Trying to pump P.P.E. into a spell casting wand should *never* be done, with the exception of the P.P.E. battery. If this happens a small backlash will occur, inflicting 2D6 damage to the person holding it, and it will permanently burn out one of the spells or a spell's focused ability. A typical wand will have around 5-10 S.D.C. points depending on the size. One that is wrapped or partially covered in metal will have 10-20 S.D.C. points.

Rules for the Creation of a Magic Wand

Creation Cost: 200 P.P.E. plus the P.P.E. required to cast the spell(s) the Wizard desires to place in the wand.

Spell Storage: A wand has the ability to hold a maximum of four low level spells (1-4). A wand can also be enchanted with stronger spells, but the higher the spell, the more room it takes up. A medium level spell (5-8) counts as two low level spells, while a high level spell (9 and higher) counts as four low level spells. A Wizard can also choose to mix and match. For example, a wand could have one medium level spell and two low level spells; but only one high level spell can be placed in a wand.



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The Land of the Damned: Books 1-3. Described below.

Phi & Lopan. Tentatively planned for a Summer or Fall 2002 release.

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High fantasy and epic adventure

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In the alternative the mage can choose to charge the wand to hold P.P.E. In this case if the Wizard wants to store 60 P.P.E. he must expend 260 P.P.E. for the creation of the wand, which from that moment on will only be able to hold a maximum of 60 P.P.E. The maximum amount of P.P.E. a wand can hold is 100. To recharge a P.P.E. battery, the person using it channels the desired amount of P.P.E. back into the wand up to its maximum.

Casting Limit: The wand will be able to cast any combination of low level spells six times per 24 hours. Medium level spells can be cast up to four times per 24 hours, and high level spells will be able to be cast once per 24 hours. Additional P.P.E. *can never* be pumped into a spell casting wand to cast one of its spells. Each casting of a spell from a wand counts as one of the character's hand to hand melee attacks for that round.

Power Levels: Any spell that has been placed into a wand is cast as if by a fourth level Wizard regardless of the actual level of the creator, and cannot be increased further unless the spell is "focused." A character must roll a 12 or higher to save against a spell cast from a wand.

Focusing: A side effect of this magic is that the wand, like a lens focuses the sun, can be used to focus the power that is being placed into it. In this way the spell incorporated into the wand can achieve greater power levels. Focusing a spell does not require any additional P.P.E. or energy than explained in the Creation Cost section, it only takes space that might otherwise have been enchanted with a spell. When focusing, only one spell in the wand can be affected by that added power. Which means that if the casting limit of an Armor of Ithan spell were to be focused so as to double the casting limit, only the Armor of Ithan spell could be cast twelve times per 24 hours. Any other spell added on could only be cast six times per 24 hours. However, you can have a focused Armor of Ithan spell and a focused Energy Bolt that could both be cast twelve times per 24 hours, using all of the "space" in the wand.

Casting Limit: Low level spell casting limit can be increased so as to double the number of times per 24 hours the spell can be cast. This takes the place of one low level spell. In the alternative, the casting limit can be increased by one per 24 hours for medium level spells. This takes the place of two low level spells.

Increase the Damage: +1 die to the damage of that spell. This takes the place of one low level spell.

Increase the Range: +100 feet (30.5 m) to the range of the spell. Takes the place of one low level spell.

Increase the Duration: +1 minute (4 melees) to the duration. This takes the place of one low level spell.

Increase the Damage, Range, Duration, etc.: Same as above except that it increases every aspect of the spell. Double the range, damage and duration of that spell. This takes the place of two low level spells.

Strong Magic: The mage can increase the magic strength of the wand. For every low level spell that is taken up in this manner, the spell's strength is increased by one. So if the creating Wizard sacrificed two low level spells to increase the strength on a Cloud of Slumber spell, a character must roll a 14 or higher to save against it.

Security: The creating Wizard can make it so that the wand can only be used by certain people. This can be done by placing

alignment restrictions or permanently writing the true names of the people who can safely handle the wand. In this manner a Wizard can key a wand so that he's the only one that can use it. Anyone the wand is secured against will receive a shock when they touch it. The shock does 2D6 S.D.C. damage and forces the person to drop the wand. This feature takes the place of one low level spell.

Level Increase: Increases the strength of the spell by one experience level. So instead of a spell cast at a 4th level of experience, the spell will now be cast at a 5th level of experience. This will take the place of one low level spell for every increase in experience level.

Famous Wands of Lore



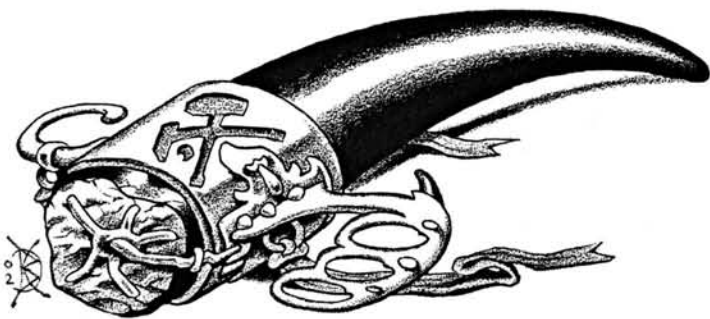
Gigante's Finger

The Gigante's Finger appears as a simple, albeit large, carved finger. It was a gift to a Western Noble by a Cyclops. The noble and Cyclops were long time rivals in the Western political scene, both vying fiercely for the prestige of the emperor. The wand was presented as a peace offering by the Cyclops, who decided to concede defeat to the noble. The haughty noble, convinced he had triumphed over his large competitor, graciously accepted the gift. To the noble's misfortune, the Cyclops had the curse, Dislike, placed on the wand. The cursed object drove the noble to ruin and eventually madness. The Cyclops made a quick recovery from his abdication.

The wand disappeared for a while before surfacing in the hands of a string of lone adventurers, the last of which was said to have been killed in the Old Kingdom by a cranky Troll.

Any combination of the following spells can be cast for a total of six times, with the exception that the Behemoth spell can only be cast for a maximum of four times out of the total six.

Behemoth
Superhuman Strength
Invisibility: Simple



Dragon Fang

And lo, did the Dwarven horde descend upon the Elves, breathing the fire of dragons. So did they lay upon the earth the gore and ichor of the Elves...

— *The Tristine Chronicles*

This excerpt from the Tristine Chronicles marks the mass use of a wand created for a Dwarven army known as "the Claw." They called the wand Dragon Fang after its power to cast an extremely powerful Firebolt spell. The Claw, an entire army of crazed Dwarves, were armed with Dragon Fangs, allowing them to spread destruction where they roamed. They were infamous for centuries of butchery performed on the Elves, which didn't end until the army was consumed in the destruction of the Golden City of Baalgor. This wand is now extremely rare and few, if any, new ones have been made for fear of the wand's power falling into the wrong hands, like an army of degenerates. The wand has the following powers:

Firebolt

Damage: In the hands of a magic user or Psi-Mystic the wand will inflict 6D6x2 S.D.C. damage.

Range: 240 feet (73.2 m).

Casting Limit: The spell can be cast a total of 12 times per 24 hours.



Will of Hoknar

A wand carved in the shape of a jagged lightning bolt and lacquered a deep blue color, with veins of silver tracing through the surface. It was made famous by many of the warrior priests

that have fought in Hoknar's battles. Unfortunately, the wand has changed hands dozens of times due to Hoknar's capacity for heavy losses of followers in his battles. Can cast any combination of the two following spells four times per 24 hours:

Invulnerability

Call Lightning



Ol' Bones

Created by a Wizard who missed his calling as a true Necromancer. The wand appears almost exactly like a human femur bone, down to the washed out white color. Only a close inspection and a successful roll on the Sculpting & Whittling skill will reveal that the bone is actually made from wood. Of course, a Sense Magic ability will also reveal the presence of magic. The wand has the following abilities:

Animate & Control Dead

Range: 800 feet (244 m).

Duration: 40 minutes.

Casting Limit: Can be cast a total of four times per 24 hours.

All other stats are exactly as the spell listed in the book.



The Magic of Ophid's Grasslands

Optional New Spells for The Palladium Fantasy RPG®

By Nicholas Mueller

For millennia, there have been people struggling to eke out a life on the plains of Ophid's Grasslands. As with any other environment, over time, people and creatures adapt to the unique conditions found there. The same holds true for users of magic, who sometimes adapt to their environment by developing new spells. Most of these invocations are found only in Ophid's Grasslands. Elsewhere, they will be considered rare magic from a forgotten land. Most were developed by Gnome mages and the local peoples during and after the Time of a Thousand Magicks. They could be sold for thousands of gold pieces in other locales, but the remoteness of Ophid's Grasslands, and the small number of mages that know these spells, keep them from becoming widespread.



Create Rope

Level: One.

Range: Spell caster's hands.

Duration: Permanent.

Amount: Up to 15 feet (4.6 m) per level of the spell caster, appears from his or her hands.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Two

This odd spell creates any adventurer's best friend, a length of rope. Uses for this obscure spell abound, such as tying up captured enemies, tying horses, hangings and others. Rope up to three inches (7.5 cm) in diameter can be created. It is normal rope.

Summon Grains

Also available as an Elemental spell (Earth).

Level: One.

Range: 10 feet (3 m).

Duration: Permanent.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Four

This bizarre spell is commonly used on the plains to create the fresh, nourishing grains that can keep a horse going strong for weeks. It provides enough grain to feed four horses for one day per casting. Spell scrolls and magic rings of this invocation are commonly found around Ophid's Grasslands, but usually are rare elsewhere.

Trough of Water

Also available as an Elemental spell (Water).

Level: One.

Range: 10 feet (3 m).

Duration: Permanent, see below.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Four

This companion spell to Summon Grains creates a trough of water which appears up to ten feet (3 m) away from the spell caster. It cannot be dropped on a person. It holds enough water for four horses to drink their fill. Humans can also drink from the trough, it holds enough for up to twenty persons to drink. The trough itself is not permanent, or even real, and is just a construct of magic force simply to hold the water. When the water is gone, or after thirty hours have passed (whichever comes first), the trough will disappear, dropping any remaining water to the ground beneath it.

Frighten the Animals

Level: Three.

Range: A 50 foot (15.2 m) area up to 150 feet (45.7 m) away.

Duration: Two melees per level of the spell caster's experience.

Saving Throw: None, flight is the instinctive response.

P.P.E.: Twelve

This spell is tuned specifically to create the sense of supernatural evil and great mystic power that so frightens horses, canines and other animals that can sense such things. Wild animals will flee outright, typically in a direction opposite that in which they were headed. Trained animals have a 01-66% chance of fleeing. War horses and other domesticated riding animals have a 01-33% chance of throwing their riders and fleeing. Animal

Familiars will not flee, but will be quite jumpy. A great spell to use against cavalry or an enemy's horse(s), or to create a distraction in a town or village (cast it on the stables). Note that cats will not flee, but will raise the hair on their backs and hiss incessantly.



Astral Horses

Level: Four.

Range: 400 feet (122 m).

Duration: 1 melee round.

Saving Throw: Dodge with a 14 or higher for all melee attacks in that round. If a dodge is failed, standard save.

P.P.E.: Twenty-Five

This odd spell creates a stampede of glowing blue-white horses that roar across the target area, trampling anything in their path. The stampede has a Horror Factor of 16 if seen, and being struck by a horse so overloads the nervous system that the struck person collapses for 1D4 melee rounds unless they save versus magic. The Astral Horses move in a straight line at a speed of 30 miles per hour/48 km (660 feet/201.2 m per melee round), and will go through solid objects but not magic barriers.

Parchment Airplane

Level: Four.

Range: 2000 feet (610 m) per level of spell caster's experience.

Duration: Until read.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Twenty-Five

Similar to Magic Pigeon, this spell creates a "parchment airplane." This magical construct will write down whatever the spell caster says, up to 500 words per side of the sheet (up to 1000 words per airplane). Any drawings will take up space according to their size (have the player character draw it on loose-leaf). This magical airplane can then be thrown up to the limit of the character's range (see above). It will fly silently and up or down according to need, always staying 10 feet (3 m) above any surface. If the throwing character rolls a 12 or above to strike (including targeting and P.P. bonuses), the magical Parchment Airplane will reach its target successfully. A miss will cast it off by 1D4x10 feet (3-12 m) for every 1000 feet (305 m) of distance traveled. A natural one sends it into the stratosphere, never to land.

Parchment Airplane is quite a handy spell for sending long distance messages. The airplane is mystically floated and guided to its target after the initial toss. It can be knocked out of the sky with arrows, fire bolts, or any other type of weapon, but it is small and the attacker is -4 to strike. It can also be picked off in flight by anyone who can reach it. It will not pass through magic barriers, telekinetic force fields, force fields, or any other types of shielding. If the target is inside such a barrier, then it will hit it and fall to the ground. It will roll and slide through bars and other such things, as long as it will fit (G.M.'s discretion), but definitely not keyholes.

Run as a Horse

Level: Four.

Range: Self or others by touch.

Duration: One minute per level of the spell caster or one hour per level of the spell caster.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Ten or Two Hundred

The first version of this incantation is similar to the spell Superhuman Speed, and incidentally has the same cost. It instills the target with a speed of 74 maximum (for the duration of the spell), and the ability to carry large loads via a cart and harness much like a work horse. The target can also jump an additional 6 feet (1.8 m) high and 10 feet (3 m) long from a run. The second version is the ritual of the Run as a Horse incantation. It provides the same bonuses as the spell version, but requires a horse bone (which is the actual object of the incantation) to be held for the duration. The horse bone *may be passed* from one person to another, thus transferring the incantation's effects. An Alchemist can even produce a version of the horse bone that is combined with a *permanence ward*! This makes the incantation work continuously and forever (obviously). However, additional magicks are needed, so a Diabolist most likely couldn't replicate the results without a real Alchemist to instruct him or her. Such knowledge is not easy to come by, unfortunately. The permanent Run as a Horse magical object isn't either.

Animate Grass

Also available as an Elemental spell (Earth).

Level: Five.

Range: 50 feet (15.2 m) + 10 feet (3 m) per level of the spell caster.

Duration: 2 melees per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Twenty-Five

This odd, forgotten spell animates the very grass of the land to do the spell caster's bidding. Though similar to the *Animate Plants* spell of the *Earth Warlock*, this spell is more powerful, albeit more limited. It grows the grass of a 200 square foot (18.6 square meter) area (20 x 10 feet/6 x 3 m) to a four foot (1.2 m) length, and grants full control of it to the spell caster. The spell caster can command the grass to entangle small beings (anything under 7 feet/2.1 m in height or length) or to slow larger beings down to 10% of their normal speed attribute (such as horses, buffalo, Ogres, or Giants). It can also be commanded to attack with a whip-like motion, inflicting 3D6 damage per attack action (up to three per melee). The spell can also grow a much smaller area of grass, 3 feet x 3 feet (0.9 x 0.9 m), to a length of up to 20 feet (6.1 m) to attack airborne opponents, serve as an observation platform, entangle larger beings, or many other uses. It can entangle people or inflict 1D4x10 damage per whipping attack, up to three times per melee round.

All grass attacks are rolled with a +2 to strike, and all successful attacks produce a multitude of tiny cuts all over the body or armor (grass edges are sharp). Attacking the grass is easy, but it will grow back in one melee round. S.D.C. is 25 for every 10 foot (3 m) area, or 20 for the entire 3 x 3 foot patch of longer grass.

Hay-Maker

Also available as an Elemental spell (Earth).

Level: Six.

Range: 10 foot (3 m) roll + 50 feet (15.2 m) in the air. A 10 foot rolling distance is necessary.

Duration: Instant.

Damage: 1D8 per level of spell caster.

Saving Throw: Dodge (14 or higher).

P.P.E.: Twenty-Five

This spell amasses a dense ball of grass and other plant matter which rolls for a 10 foot (3 m) distance (to gain size like a snowball), and then leaps from the ground to strike its target, up to fifty feet (15.2 m) away. Typically most effective against structures or massed enemies because most single enemies can see it coming. Does devastating damage, however. The ball seemingly disintegrates and turns back into fluffy grass after hitting its target.

Shoot Hay

Also available as an Elemental spell (Earth and Air).

Level: Six.

Range: 20 feet (6.1 m) plus 15 feet (4.6 m) per level of the spell caster.

Duration: Instant.

Damage: 2D4 per level of the spell caster.

Saving Throw: Dodge or parry (same as arrows, spell caster rolls to strike).

P.P.E.: Twenty

Upon the casting of this spell, 2D4 shoots of hay per level of the spell caster are flung with incredible speed (around 300 mph/480 km) at the target. This is similar to what happens inside a tornado, where hay shafts can go through trees! This spell, of course, was developed specifically for the grasslands environment, but has been modified to create the hay on the spot

so hay is not required. Particularly devastating to unsuspecting targets (for it does not have all the attention grabbing potential of a fireball or a lightning strike).

Phantom Stampede

Level: Seven.

Range: 400 feet (122 m).

Damage: Being trampled (failing to dodge) inflicts 3D6 damage. Objects in the stampede path take 4D10 damage.

Duration: 1 melee round.

Saving Throw: Dodge with a 14 or higher for all melee attacks in that round.

P.P.E.: Seventy

This spell, related to the level 4 spell *Astral Horses*, creates a stampede of several hundred phantom horses that rush across the spell area (up to 800 feet/244 m) in a stampede 50 feet (15.2 m) wide traveling in a straight line. These phantom horses will trample anything in their path and will go around any extremely solid objects (castle walls, stone monoliths, etc.) in their path. However, they are perfect for trampling massive groups of soldiers, army camps and the occasional market square. They cannot be slain, but can be stopped (or at least diverted) by massive solid objects (wall of stone, etc.).

Additional Limbs

Level: Eight.

Range: Touch.

Duration: One melee round per level of spell caster's experience.

Saving Throw: If not wanted, standard. Otherwise, none.

P.P.E.: Fifty. Permanence can be achieved by permanently subtracting 1000 P.P.E. from the spell caster's base.

This spell adds a pair of limbs (arms or legs) to any creature. These extra limbs add 2 (3 if ambidextrous) attacks per melee and feel like natural extensions of the body. They will disappear after the spell's duration expires, dropping anything that may be in them. Note that most suits of armor will not accommodate these extra arms.

Ball of Grass

Also available as an Elemental spell (Earth).

Level: Eight.

Range: Up to 300 feet (91.4 m).

Duration: One melee per level of the spell caster.

Damage: 3D6 initially, + 1D6+1 per melee round it has been rolling.

Saving Throw: Dodge (14 or higher).

P.P.E.: Thirty-Five

This spell, closely related to the *Hay-Maker* spell, amasses a dense ball of grass and other plant matter which rolls for a 50 foot (15.2 m) distance (to gain size like a snowball), and then can roll over any targets in its range. It can magically roll in any direction with a speed of 12. It inflicts 3D6 damage after the initial roll, and gains size (about 2 feet/0.6 m in diameter) and weight (an additional 1D6+1 damage) every melee round thereafter. This spell can be devastating to any slow moving enemies, large amassed forces (like cavalry) and structures. The ball itself has 200 S.D.C. and is +1 to strike when directed at a target. It falls apart after its duration as the grass migrates back to its original position. It can also be set aflame! This inflicts an addi-

tional 5D6 damage, but the ball is burnt to a cinder two melee rounds after being set on fire. When used en masse by multiple Wizards or Warlocks, this spell is particularly deadly.

Northern Hoarfrost

Also available as an Elemental spell (Water and Air).

Level: Eight.

Range: 100 foot (30.5 m) radius per level of experience.

Duration: Until it melts.

Damage: Initially 3D6 *directly to Hit Points* (air freezes in lungs). Further damage of 2D4 S.D.C. per melee until it is brushed off/melted. Characters in full clothing take only 1D4, but full metal armor causes its wearer to take 2D6 S.D.C. This attack is particularly stunning to people and animals, requiring a save against Horror Factor of 15, and if failed, the player or animal is shocked out of action for 1 melee round.

Saving Throw: 01-20% chance of the freeze not taking place outside of Ophid's Grasslands or the Northern Wilderness, including Byzantium (no effect, try again). Otherwise, victims are -3 to save. A successful save prevents initial (Hit Point) damage only, however.

P.P.E.: Fifty

This spell is particularly debilitating to both people and crops. It freezes all of the atmospheric water within range, which instantly drops out of the air to the ground. This, of course, includes any air that may be in the character's lungs unless he or she saves. Otherwise, a thick crust of frost will fall onto everything within the range. This is especially damaging to crops, livestock and *horses*, as it is not easily wiped off while in combat or travel (takes 1D4 melees to wipe off all the frost). The spell was developed to battle cavalry and large armies, and to destroy enemy agricultural lands. Nasty.

Permafrost

Also available as an Elemental spell (Earth and Water).

Level: Eight.

Range: 100 foot (30.5 m) radius per level of experience.

Duration: Until it melts (3-12 days depending on temperature).

Saving Throw: 01-20% chance of the freeze not taking place (no effect, try again).

P.P.E.: Fifty

Another spell that is devastating to any agricultural area. This spell essentially freezes the ground just below the surface, killing crops and creating a very cold surface. In warmer climates, it will create a low hanging steam/fog over the area of the spell as well, making it perfect for ambush.

Horse Curse

Level: Nine.

Range: Touch or twenty feet (6.1 m).

Duration: 24 hours per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Standard.

P.P.E.: Fifty

This spell can be cast either on a person or on a horse. When cast on a person, it causes all horses to see him or her as a threat. No horse, not even one familiar with the inflicted person, will allow itself to be ridden by the target. The horse(s) will back away, and throw the rider if mounted.

When cast on a horse, that horse (which saves at -4), will not allow anyone to ride it or even lead it. It will be wild beyond all

imagination, will tear up the ground, and will attack any sentient being that comes within ten feet (3 m). Clearly, this can be a nasty curse to be used out in the wild, in a stable, or anywhere. Wild horses are great for making a ruckus in cities and towns, as well as in combat.



Summon & Control Diatryma

Level: Ten.

Range: Varies.

Duration: Five hours per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Standard Animal, but only if said animal is part of the player character's group.

P.P.E.: Seventy

This spell requires the drawing of a pentacle and 1D8 minutes. Once cast, it calls 1D4 Diatryma, plus one per level of experience, to the spell caster's side. Diatryma are large, flightless carnivorous birds common to Ophid's Grasslands and the Land of the Damned. The caster can control these Diatryma for the duration of the spell, and does not need to stay in the pentacle. Similar to the Summon and Control Canines spell. Useless outside Ophid's Grasslands and the Land of the Damned (no Diatryma to summon).

Front

Also available as an Elemental spell (Air).

Level: Thirteen (Eight for Air Warlocks).

Range: 3 miles (4.8 km).

Duration: Instant, covers the entire area in 10 seconds.

Saving Throw: A natural twenty saves from being tossed, otherwise, grab something stable.

P.P.E.: Two Hundred

This powerful spell is reminiscent of Wind Rush, only several times more powerful. It creates a powerful front of air similar to a tidal wave that is 500 feet (152 m) tall and 1000 feet (305 m) wide that moves at a speed of 300 miles per hour (480 km)! It will knock down people, animals and buildings. It is extremely damaging against primitive buildings, towns and large, amassed forces (such as cavalry). It is capable of throwing entire armies into disarray and wiping small hamlets off the map.

People who do not grab a stable object (such as trees, posts and extremely large wild animals) will be thrown 3D10x10 feet (9-91 m) away and will take the following damage: 30-60 feet (9.1-18.3 m), 3D6; 61-100 feet (18.6-30.5 m), 5D6; 101-200 feet (30.5-61 m), 1D6x10; 201-300 feet (61.3-91.4 m), 2D4x10+30. Rolling with the damage is possible, but the victim must get a twelve or higher, will end up three times farther away from his or her start position, and loses any possessions not in hand (scattered over a 400 foot/122 m area; it takes 4D10 melees to recover all of them). Primitive buildings are destroyed by the wind, wood structures take 4D4x10 damage and have a 01-60% chance of collapsing. Poorly-made stone structures take 2D4x10 damage and have a 01-50% chance of collapsing. Well-made stone structures such as castles and forts take 1D4x10 damage from debris and have a 01-05% chance of collapsing.

By Lance and Speed of Wing

Optional Rules for Flying Mounts For the Palladium Fantasy RPG®

By Richard Thomassen

Rochare hunched down in the saddle, trying to gain some warmth from his mount's feathered back. He'd been searching for two days for the Ogres that had raided the valley. Two days of freezing cold and thin air. But the camp on the mountain pass below meant only one thing: vengeance was about to be served.

Wheeling the great Gryphon away from the pass, Rochare stretched, loosening the lifesaving straps that normally bound him tightly into the saddle. Routinely, he checked to make sure that his shield was tightly strapped to his arm, and his sabre loose in its sheath. Finally ready, the knight guided the monstrous mount into a shallow dive that saw it skimming across the mountainside, mere yards above a hard, sudden death.

A lone guard looked up a moment before the Gryphon's outstretched claws raked him all but in two. A breath later, Rochare and mount were in the midst of the camp...

Aerial Mounts

Knights and Palladins have always been favorite characters — the image of the lone, mounted warrior charging towards a dangerous foe is vividly portrayed over and over (just take a look at the covers of the 1st edition books). It is fitting that these warriors are incredibly dangerous on horseback.

But how much more dangerous would such a warrior be mounted on the back of a flying beast?

Horsemanship: Aerial (New Skill)

This skill represents training and talent in fighting from the back of a winged creature, such as Dragons, Great Gryphons (see below) and Pegasus. This presumes that the mount has been trained to accept the warrior's commands in the case of creatures of animal intelligence, or is at least willing to work with him in the case of something like a Dragon.

It is also presumed that the mount has a saddle that has been adjusted for the rider. Riding without a saddle negates all of the listed bonuses. The warrior also has the choice of strapping himself to the mount's saddle, reducing movement but increasing security. Doing so halves any dodge bonuses the rider has when avoiding attacks aimed solely at him.

There are two sets of bonuses provided by this skill: those for when fighting on the ground, and when "on the wing." Note that these bonuses apply to the rider, and not the mount.

Base Skill: 35% + 5% per level.

Requires Horsemanship: Exotic (Winged) and Horsemanship: Knight or Palladin. Those with Horsemanship: General may be allowed to take this skill for the cost of two skills from their O.C.C. Related skill selection.

On the Ground

These bonuses apply when the rider is fighting "ground-based" creatures while the mount is not airborne. The bonuses come from the fact that the rider has a height advantage, and that the mount may make leaps and short glides when required, giving the pair a huge advantage of mobility. If the fight is in a confined space, use Horsemanship: Exotic bonuses instead.

Taking off from combat or confined spaces requires a skill roll. Failure means the mount could not clear ground, and must retry next round.

Rider's Bonuses when Landed

+2 Parry and Dodge.

+1 Initiative.

+1D6 Damage.

+2D6 Damage on charge.

At 1st Level, the rider has the option of attacking with a weapon, or using the mount's natural attacks.

At 3rd Level, the rider may have the mount make a bite attack in addition to his normal attacks, or use the mount's natural attacks.

At 5th Level, the rider may have the mount make a bite attack and two front claw/stomp attacks in addition to his normal attacks, or use the mount's natural attacks.

At 8th Level, the rider may have the mount make a bite attack, two front claw/stomp attacks and two rear claw/stomps to rear opponents, in addition to his normal attacks, or use the mount's natural attacks.

In the Air

Zarn the Cruicifier's guard lay dead around him. His Palladin opponent had even managed to dispatch the Gargoyle he had bound to his will. Zarn cursed under his breath, and



mentally called his Air Elemental to him, to lift him up into the air and away from the carnage.

Zarn's curses became a continual torrent of abuse as he saw the wounded Paladin haul himself onto his Gryphon mount and launch into the air after him. The Summoner's hand curled around the handle of his black sword...

Rider's Bonuses when Flying

+3 Parry

+4 Dodge

+4 Initiative

+1D6 Damage per 25 mph/40 km speed, rounding up. This damage bonus also applies to the mount's attacks.

Bonuses apply when fighting other flying opponents.

If the rider wishes to swoop down and attack ground-based targets, make a skill roll.

If the skill roll was successful, the rider may make one attack on a number of opponents equal to his number of hand to hand attacks. Opponents may strike back only once, and only if they won initiative.

If the skill roll was failed by up to 30%, the attack was too shallow, but the rider is under danger of missiles and long weapons.

If the skill roll was failed by more than 30%, roll again to avoid a crash (same as 50%+ failure).

If the roll was failed by 50% or more, the mount has crashed. Crashing causes 2D6 damage to mount and rider per 25 mph/40 km of speed. If the mount and rider survive, the rider must make a further skill roll to stay mounted, unless he is strapped into the saddle.

For example: Sir Vilheim, a Knight with three attacks, wishes to attack a group of peasants who have strayed too close to his keep. He makes his skill roll, and passes. His mount's speed is 100 mph/160 km, so he can attack three separate peasants, doing an additional 4D6 damage per strike due to his speed. Had he crashed, Sir Vilheim and mount would have taken 8D6 damage each.

If the mount is diving to gain speed and damage, the rider must make a skill roll to pull out of the dive once all attacks have been made. This is very dangerous if done against ground based opponents. The skill roll is at a penalty of -10% for giant opponents (over 10 feet/3 m tall), or -20% if the target is 10 feet (3 m) tall or under.

Lance Charge Bonuses

+1D6 Damage per 15 mph/24 km of approach speed, rounding up.

A mounted knight with a lance is incredibly dangerous due to the massive speed and power of the mount being delivered at a single, small, sharp point. Damage is calculated from resultant combined speeds of combatants.

For example: two opponents face to face at 100 mph/160 km have an effective speed of 200 mph/320 km, which gives the lance wielder a bonus 14D6 damage! If a mounted knight was diving at 150 mph/240 km at a target fleeing away from him at only 50 mph/80 km the resultant speed is 100 mph/160 km, which will give a bonus of 7D6 to damage.

At such high speeds, it is very likely that the warrior will lose his lance because it is imbedded too far into the victim and wrenched from his hand. After making a successful lance attack, the warrior must make a skill roll at a penalty equal to the amount of damage, minus his level. Failure means the lance is lost or shattered, at the Games Master's discretion. For example,

a 5th level knight delivering 32 points of damage must make a skill check at (32 minus five) minus 27 or lose his lance.

If a target is struck but the lance fails to penetrate its armor rating, the lance must make a D20 save against the target's armor rating number or break. A lance bouncing off an A.R. of 14 must roll a 14 or higher to remain intact. A broken lance can still be used as a club, or dropped. A roll of one on the save will completely shatter the lance, making it useless (except for kindling).

Dodging

A fumbled dodge will unsaddle the rider unless he makes a successful skill roll. Riders may tie themselves into the saddle, but the rider's dodge bonuses are halved. Note that dodge bonuses apply to the rider only, not the mount, unless otherwise noted.

Aiming High

Rochare didn't stop to watch Zarn's body plummet to the ground, although it would have given him much satisfaction. His reign of terror and blood was at an end. He forced himself to focus on the dark spirit ahead of him: It bore a message, spoken with Zarn's dying breath, that would send his army crashing down upon the valley if it reached the commander.

But he was losing it.

The Gryphon had fought valiantly, but had lost a lot of blood. Rochare was sure it had suffered several broken ribs at the hands of Zarn's guard. It could not keep up the chase of the messenger. Rochare sheathed his sabre, and reached for his curved bow...

Mounted Archery (New Skill)

Normally, a mounted warrior trying to shoot a bow has all of his bonuses negated and rate of fire halved. With this specialized skill, a rider keeps his usual Rate of Fire, and is at -4 to strike when on a "normal mount" (such as a horse). When on an "exotic" mount, the archer is at -6 to strike. An archer's mounted archery penalties decrease by one at every 3rd level of experience (i.e., 3, 6, 9, 12, 15). Thus, by 12th level, a mounted archer will have no penalty to strike while on a normal mount, and only a -2 to strike while on an exotic mount. Note that at level 15, the archer's penalty to strike while on a normal mount remains at zero; it does not turn into a bonus.

This skill costs two O.C.C. related skills.

Purse

The Gryphon reared up to its full height and stretched, raking its claws on the wooden wall. It had been kept on the wing for too long, and it screeched its pleasure at being able to rest. A commotion nearby caught its attention, and it turned to see horses tied to nearby posts scream and stamp, panicked by such close proximity to the killer.

The Gryphon raked the earth and snapped its beak. It had been kept on the wing for far too long...

Flying mounts are not common. When one has been acquired, the owner will have to invest time and effort to keep the mount tame and ready to fly.

Saddle, harnesses & kit.

Attempting to fight from a flying mount's back without a saddle would be suicide. It would be impossible for a rider to stay mounted, and at most any height, this would see the rider plummeting to his death. A saddle is a must.

As the mounted warrior must attempt to burden his mount as little as possible, the saddles of these warriors are typically made from the best material and by the best craftsmen — they do not rely on bulk and mass to hold together. A saddle will often cost five hundred gold pieces, more if the mount is particularly unusual.

To randomly determine the cost of a saddle, harnesses and other trappings, roll 1D4+3. This is the number in hundreds of gold pieces the saddle will cost.

Finding an Aviary

Landing a flying carnivore with a wing-span of over forty feet, with talons as long as a man is tall, in the streets of Caer Itom is likely to cause more than a little panic. Apart from the reactions from the populace and city guard, the natural instinct of almost every animal nearby will be a frenzied attempt to escape. So a rider must be very careful where he lands.

Preferably, an aviary for such mounts must be found. Failing that, the rider must either find an accommodating stable, or possibly an abandoned building. The rider must be sure to choose a building which is capable of sustaining any uncontrolled movement of the mount, and is a suitable environment for it. For instance, while a Pegasus may find a regular stable much to its liking, a Peryton is likely to rip the place (and its occupants) apart. The undead Yema can be stored almost anywhere, but its great size and strength would suggest a requirement for a large stone building.

Only trained mounts will seek shelter within a building. The natural habitat of wild or untrained mounts is outside. A rider abandoning his mount to find its own roost risks the mount raiding local fields for fodder, livestock or even peasants — not something most riders would wish to face the consequences of.

In the table below, I have estimated some costs of housing various mounts overnight.

Feeding

If a mount is housed, it will then probably need feeding. Due to the size of these creatures, this could be expensive (see below). Taking care to feed the mount before it is taken to an aviary is going to be a cheaper option, but will require time.

The effects starvation will have on a mount are up to the Game Master, but it is at least going to be harder to control (-10% on ride rolls), slower by one third of its speed, and its wounds will not heal.

Grooming

Not only will a mount require feed, but it will also require feeding, and grooming. Knowing how to feed a starving Peryton is a skill known to few, and even fewer are willing to do it. Care of flying mounts is something that can be undertaken by the rider, but is likely to take an hour of his or her time at least.

Failing to see a mount groomed will risk the mount being unfit to fly, ill, possibly even injured and a risk to the rider. For in-

stance, failing to clean blood and grime from a Gryphon's claws and feathers could cause infection. Apart from endangering the Gryphon, the beast is likely to snap at anyone touching the infected area, rider included.

An ungroomed mount will suffer a penalty of -5% to control per day that it is neglected, up to -30%.

Average costs per day, by mount:

Horse: Stable: 5, Grooming: 2, Feed: 5 (oats), Total: 12 gold.

Dragonlance: Aviary: 20, Grooming: 10, Feed: 10 (cheap meat/oats), Total: 40 gold.

Gryphon: Aviary: 10, Grooming: 10, Feed: 10 (leg of meat), Total: 30 gold.

Great Gryphon: Aviary: 20, Grooming: 20, Feed: 50 (side of meat), Total: 90 gold.

Pegasus: Aviary: 10, Grooming: 5, Feed: 10 (high quality oats), Total: 25 gold.

Peryton: Aviary: 10, Grooming: 15, Feed: 50 (side of meat), Total: 75 gold.

Yema: Aviary: 10, Grooming: None, Feed: None, Total: 10 gold.

And in the red corner...

Pegasus-mounted knights in their gleaming armor are not the only things that can fly. The skies are full of creatures which are ready to face any aerial foes.

*Monsters & Animals*TM provides many potential flying dangers, natural, monstrous and supernatural.

Below, you will find three "forms" of flying: Basic, Expert and Master. These contain suggested bonuses that flying opponents will have in addition to their normal combat bonuses.

Amongst a race or culture where flying is common and natural (such as the Gromeks), the Game Master may even let characters take these forms as skills, showing how practiced and skilled they are at aerial combat. Flight: Basic should cost one skill, Expert costs two skills, and Master costs three.

Flight: Basic

Basic flight is representative of things that are not expert flyers (e.g., Owl Things, Sphinx) are of limited I.Q. (Minor Air Elementals) or are powered by relatively weak magic (such as a Fly spell).

0 to 60 mph (96 km): No bonus.

61 to 120 mph (96 km): +1 dodge.

Over 120 mph (192 km): +2 dodge, +1 initiative.

Flight: Expert

This level of flight indicates natural flyers that have great control and high skill in aerial fighting. E.g., Gromeks, Pegasus and Walk the Wind spells. This also covers larger, slower, more powerful creatures, such as Dragons.

0 to 60 mph (96 km): +2 dodge.

61 to 120 mph (192 km): +3 dodge, +1 initiative.

Over 120 mph (192 km): +4 dodge, +2 initiative.

Flight: Master

The best flyers, masters of the air, have a high level of skill and maneuverability. E.g., Wing Tips, Gryphons and Drakin. Note that they are so skilled at flying that it is not an effort for them to move out of the way of attacks and danger — it is second nature to them. This is represented by an auto-dodge. Alternatively, the flyer may make an effort to evade, gaining greater bonuses.

0 to 60 mph (96 km): +1 auto dodge, +3 dodge, +1 initiative.

61 to 120 mph (192 km): +2 auto dodge, +4 dodge, +2 initiative.

Over 120 mph (192 km): +3 auto dodge, +6 dodge, +3 initiative.

New Mount: The Great Gryphon

The Gryphon found all over the Palladium World is a ferocious hunter much in demand throughout royal courts. Those that can trap, rear and train them successfully can almost demand any price for the magnificent creatures. But only being 4 feet (1.2 m) tall at the shoulder, the "common" Gryphon is too weak to fulfil the dream of all but the smallest generals, warriors and adventurers — to fly.

It is to this end that the Gryphon aviaries set about selectively breeding their pets, choosing size and strength over grace and speed, until they arrived at the Great Gryphon, sometime called the "War Gryphon."

Great Gryphons have nearly the same statistics as normal Gryphons found in *Monsters and Animals*, with the following modifiers:

Weight: 350-450 lb (175-200 kg).

Size: Six feet (two meters) tall at the shoulder. 40 foot (12.2 m) wing span.

Attributes: Add 1D6 to P.S. and P.E.

S.D.C.: Double normal.

Damage: Add 1D6 to all attacks.

Notes: Despite its size, a Great Gryphon can barely carry an armored warrior (up to 350 lb/175 kg). Carrying up to half this weight again will halve the speed of the Great Gryphon, and exceeding this limit will restrict the Gryphon to the ground, something that will make it angry and irritable (-10% on ride checks). Normal Gryphons can only carry one third of these weights.

Value: An untrained Great Gryphon will fetch up to 30,000 gold. A trained Great Gryphon will fetch a minimum of 100,000 gold, but often double or triple that amount.

Zarn lay on the ground, his body shattered. His one good eye watched the cursed Palladin give chase to his servants, destroying Zarn's carefully laid plans of the last four years. He had only one thing to look forward to now — revenge. Zarn focused his mind, and pushed, severing his link to the crumpled body lying wrecked on the ground. His spirit soared free, then finally to the West, looking for another carcass suitable for his needs...

Go Mental!

New "Mental" Skills and Optional Rules for the Entire Palladium Megaverse®

By John Charles Philpott

As a veteran role-player of many gaming systems, one of the things that always impressed me about the Palladium Books system was its Physical skills. These allow not only for the acquisition of abilities and bonuses that can prove helpful in physical combat, but allow for greater role-playing opportunities as well. However, while these skills certainly are a major boost to physically based combat oriented characters, I have often felt that mind, magic, and skill based characters (that must rely on their brains rather than their muscles) are in some ways left out in the cold. For this reason I have created new "Mental" skills designed to fill this apparent void. In addition I have added some optional bonuses to existing skills which I feel they should provide. As a final added bonus, I've added some new Physical skills that I feel may have been overlooked in the past. I certainly hope you find these new optional skills and rules as helpful as I have, and hope you have as much fun using them as I had creating them.

Mental Skills for the Megaverse®

Recent studies have shown what many have suspected all along: that the human brain, like a muscle, needs continual use and exercise to "stay in shape." In addition to this, it has been shown that intelligence and creativity may actually *increase* with proper stimulation! The following "Mental" skills represent some methods of memorization, reasoning, mental relaxation, and other forms of mental conditioning that stimulate the brain and lead directly to greater mental discipline and awareness. The end results of these skills are bonuses to the mental attributes of the characters that take them. Note that many of these new skills are "image enhancement" skills that increase the character's P.B. attribute. While this is officially a Physical attribute, it seemed appropriate to include them here. Players may select Mental skills in the place of Communications/Performing Arts skills or Scholarly/Technical skills whenever such skills are available to them.

Beautification: This skill encompasses practices of skin care, tanning, anti-aging treatments, and others designed to heighten looks and lessen the effects of aging. Some techniques are modern while some have been in use for centuries. These practices are quite popular with public figures that rely heavily on how they look, such as actors/actresses, newscasters, politicians, etc. Note that this is typically a prolonged day-to-day process, often taking several minutes daily.

Add +2 to P.B.

Cosmetology: This skill represents methods for applying cosmetics and other beauty care products, hair cutting and styling techniques, and other methods of enhancing physical looks. It is unique in that it gives no immediate and permanent bonuses to the person who takes it. On the contrary, it allows a character with the skill to temporarily enhance their P.B. (or that of another person of their choosing) on a successful skill roll. (This skill may also be used in "reverse" to temporarily *decrease* P.B. by the same manner as dictated below.) On a successful roll below the character's percentile skill, the character receiving the "makeover" and/or "hairstyling" has his or her P.B. temporarily increased by one point (+1 P.B.). This effect lasts 2D6 hours, with an additional 1D6 hours added when the character reaches 5th, 10th, and 15th level. A successful roll of 01-10% gives an additional bonus of +1 to the character's P.B. for a total bonus of +2. "Additional" applications of this skill to add to this bonus are not allowed. A missed roll means no bonus; however, a natural roll of 00% means a truly botched job, reducing the character's P.B. by 1 (-1 P.B.) until washed off/combed out or "repaired" with a successful Cosmetology Roll. Note that a character does not need "makeup" or cosmetics in order to benefit from this bonus, benefitting instead from hairstyling or skin care/tanning. This bonus is therefore available to anyone regardless of culture or gender. Typical time needed to perform the skill is 2D6 minutes. This skill may also be taken as a Domestic skill. **Base Skill:** 45% +5% per level of experience.

Add +5% to the Disguise Skill, if known.

Etiquette: The knowledge of proper social manners and professional bearing, this skill gives one a demeanor of grace and eloquence. In addition to the full understanding of the rules of etiquette for the character's own culture, this skill gives them an overall aura of poise that is universal. The character is also acutely aware of the demeanor of people in general, allowing for the quick realization and adoption of the local customs of other cultures. The character also gains invaluable patience with people.

Add +1 to M.E.

Add +1 to M.A.

Add +5% to the Impersonation skill, if known.

Fashion: Clothing styles are various and unique, due to the fact that not everyone looks good in the same styles. (To illustrate my point, think about your local state Senator attempting to wear an outfit that Jack Nicholson or Jennifer Lopez might wear to a Hollywood awards ceremony!) The old expression "the suit makes the man" might better be expressed as "the *right* suit makes the man." The *Armani* suit that makes one man look sophisticated and cultured might make another look uptight and pompous. To this end, the character is knowledgeable not only with current fashions but with what to wear and how best to

wear it. Note that this skill extends beyond cultural lines or the limits of the “high fashion” of Hollywood or Paris. An African Prince or Arabian Sheik could use this skill to choose a fitting outfit in his native garb, or a character (on a successful roll) can make even common day-to-day clothing look exceptionally nice on him. On a successful roll below the character’s percentile skill the character (or the person he/she is selecting an outfit for) has his P.B. temporarily increased by one point (+1 P.B.) for the duration he is wearing those clothes (assuming nothing happens to damage, wrinkle, or soil the clothes). A successful roll or 01-10% gives an additional bonus of +1 to the character’s P.B., for a total bonus of +2. Like the Cosmetology skill above, “additional” uses of this skill to further increase this bonus are not allowed. Also like Cosmetology, a missed roll means no bonus; however, a natural roll of 00% means a truly botched job reducing the character’s P.B. by 1 (-1 P.B.) until the offending outfit is removed or “repaired” with a successful Fashion Roll. Typical time needed to perform the skill is 2D6 minutes of selection and dressing time. **Base Skill:** 35% +5% per level of experience.

Add +5% to the Disguise skill, if known.

Image Enhancement: This skill represents an active multi-aspect attempt to improve one’s overall presence and “look” either through self-study or through the hiring of professional Image Consultants. This skill encompasses both appearance (beauty and fashion) and bearing (etiquette and socialization skills) in a “quick and dirty” overall method not on par with specialized skills in the individual areas.

Add +1 to P.B.

Add +1 to M.A.

Memorization/Study Skills: Represents techniques in memorization and effective studying practices that help to maximize the character’s learning potential. In addition to the listed bonus, the character has learned how to effectively research and manage his time, thereby reducing research time by 25% (this includes spell memorization time and the research time necessary for learning new magic spells!). **Note:** Literacy is extremely helpful but not required for this skill.

Add +1 to I.Q.

Philosophy: This skill represents a working knowledge and interest in the philosophies and metaphysics of many cultures, as well as the ability to argue and/or find logical flaws in arguments. The end result is an enhanced sense of logic and insight into the world. **Note:** Literacy is extremely helpful but not required for this skill.

Add +1 to I.Q.

Add +1 to M.E.

Reading/Literary Studies: Often described as doing “push-ups for the mind,” reading is one of the oldest and most widely accepted forms of increasing one’s intelligence. This skill represents a large amount of time devoted to reading, both for studies and for personal enjoyment. It also represents the ability to understand and decipher what the author’s “meaning” or “purpose” was in writing any given work, fiction or nonfiction poetry or prose. **Requires:** Literacy.

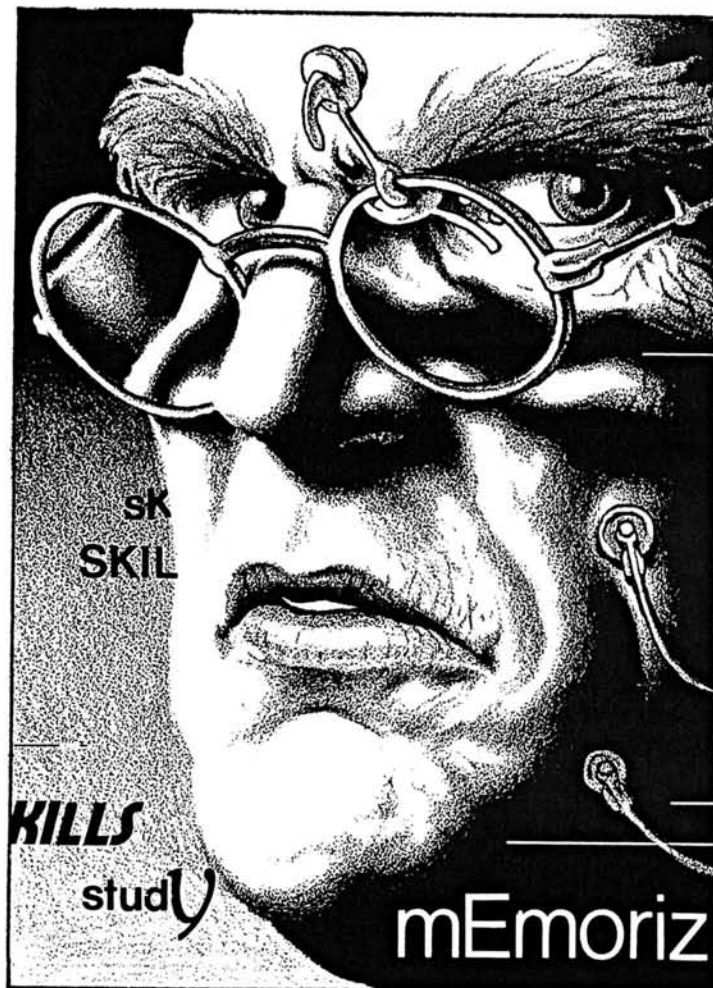
Add +2 to I.Q.

Riddles & Logic Puzzles: A fan of riddles, brainteasers, and other logic puzzles, this character has spent a lot of time study-

ing and deciphering them. As a result, the character’s logical and problem-solving capabilities are increased.

Add +1 to I.Q.

Add +5% to the Cryptography skill, if known.



Socialization: This character has spent a lot of time mingling and socializing with people of various backgrounds and cultures, learning how to act around them and what to say (not to mention when to say it!). As a result the character’s confidence and social skills around people are increased.

Add +2 to M.A.

Add +5% to the Impersonation skill, if known.

Speed Reading: This skill gives the character the ability to read at an exceptionally high pace that can reach up to several pages per minute! While this does allow for a lot of information to be gathered in a short amount of time, it also makes it harder for the character to logically analyze the material he is reading. This can lead to the character not fully understanding the literature in question. The maximum number of pages that can be read per minute is equal to the character’s I.Q. attribute. If the character slows down to a reduced speed, the character receives a +5% to the base skill for every four (4) pages-per-minute he slows the pace. To successfully understand the literature being read, roll against the percentile skill level (after the reading has been completed and the time accounted for). If the roll is 25% or more below the skill percentage (or a natural 01%) then the literature is fully understood as if read at a normal pace. If the roll is below the required skill roll necessary but not by 25%, the in-

formation is only partly understood (though the character may “think” he understands it, roll an I.Q. check to realize this), and requires a successful “second reading” at *any* successful number for full understanding. *Any* failed roll means no quick understanding of the literature is possible and it must be read at normal reading pace. **Note:** Magical literature (either for memorization, spell research, etc.) requires a *full understanding* of the material and it is therefore a risky proposition to attempt speed-reading of it. Attempting to cast a partially understood spell will result in an unstable reaction similar to that experienced by an unsuccessful magical scroll conversion (see page 105 of the *Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game*® for details on unsuccessful scroll conversions). **Base Skill:** 25% +4% per level of experience. **Requires:** Literacy.

Strategy Games: This character is a fan and a regular player of intellectual strategy games such as Chess, Backgammon, Go, etc., and may be an avid role-player as well. As a result, the character’s logical and problem-solving capabilities are increased, as are his patience, creativity, and resolve.

Add +1 to I.Q.

Add +1 to M.E.

New Bonuses for Existing Skills

In addition to the above new Mental skills, feel free to add the following bonuses to these existing skills.

Art: +1 M.E. from increased patience and personal “understanding.” Applies only on selection of the first Art skill, and not on latter ones (i.e. a character with the skills Art: Painting, Art: Drawing, and Art: Sculpture, will still only receive a +1 total bonus to M.E.).

Acting: +1 M.A. from increased poise, confidence around people, and the ability to “act” confident and sophisticated.

Dancing: A *temporary* bonus of +1 M.A. is received during and immediately following successful Dancing (i.e. a successful skill roll). This temporary bonus is increased to a +2 M.A. on a natural roll of 01-10% but becomes a -1 M.A. *penalty* on a natural roll of 00%.

Mathematics, Advanced: +1 I.Q. from increased logic and problem solving skills.

Meditation: +1 M.E. from increased relaxation and internal “understanding.”

Play Musical Instrument and Singing: +1 M.E. from increased patience and deeper personal “understanding.” Applies only on selection of the first of these skills and not on latter ones (i.e. a character with the skills Play Musical Instrument: Guitar, Play Musical Instrument: Saxophone, and Singing will still only receive a +1 total bonus to M.E.). These skills may also offer a *temporary* bonus to M.A. exactly as dictated above for the Dancing skill.

Public Speaking: +1 M.A. from increased confidence around people and the ability to appear confident and sophisticated.

New Physical Skills

As promised, here are a few new physical skills that I feel can provide an added dimension to player characters’ self-improvement, as well as opportunities for role-playing.

Ambidexterity: Special Skill Cost: Costs 2 Physical skill slots for full ambidexterity or 1 Physical skill slot for partial ambidexterity.

This skill represents the ability to use both the left and right hand equally (or at least semi-equally). Normally, a character suffers penalties for attempting skills or combat actions with his “off” hand (the left hand would be the “off” hand for a right-handed person, and vice versa). This skill represents the character being “ambidextrous,” or able to use both the left and right hand equally, either because of training/practice or nature (being born that way). Taking this skill once equates to “partial” ambidexterity; this reduces by half all penalties (to skills, combat, etc.) the character would normally receive for using his “off” hand. Taking this skill twice represents full ambidexterity, meaning the character has no “off” hand and suffers *no penalties* regardless of the hand used.

Add +1 to P.P. for *Full* Ambidexterity (i.e. taking this skill twice).

Ballet: *Author’s Note:* This skill is indigenous to Earth, and as such should only be available to characters that originate there. Characters from other worlds or dimensions (such as Palladium or Phase World) may only take this skill with the G.M.’s permission (perhaps as a “local equivalent”). This skill may also, at the G.M.’s discretion, be taken as a Communications/Performing Arts skill.

As an ancient European form of dance, ballet has been practiced for centuries in varying forms. Noted for its grace and athleticism, ballet features a combination of high jumps, splits, high kicks, and other difficult physical maneuvers performed in such a way as to make the dancer appear graceful and weightless. This requires the dancer to be in top physical condition. Training is difficult and time consuming but the benefits are immeasurable. Not only does the performer become physically strong and flexible, but they also gain increased balance and jumping distance. In addition, characters with this skill can balance their entire weight of their bodies on the very *tips* of their toes for extended periods of time without fatigue. In fact, the benefits of this demanding art form are so great that many martial artists and professional athletes have looked past its supposed “girly” image and learned this art, including NFL Hall of Famer Lynn Swan of the Pittsburgh Steelers. Provides the following abilities and bonuses:

60% +5% per level Sense of Balance.

70% +5% per level Back Flip.

35% +5% per level Prowl (or adds a bonus of +15% to Prowl skill).

+1 to P.S.

+1 to P.P.

+1 to P.E.

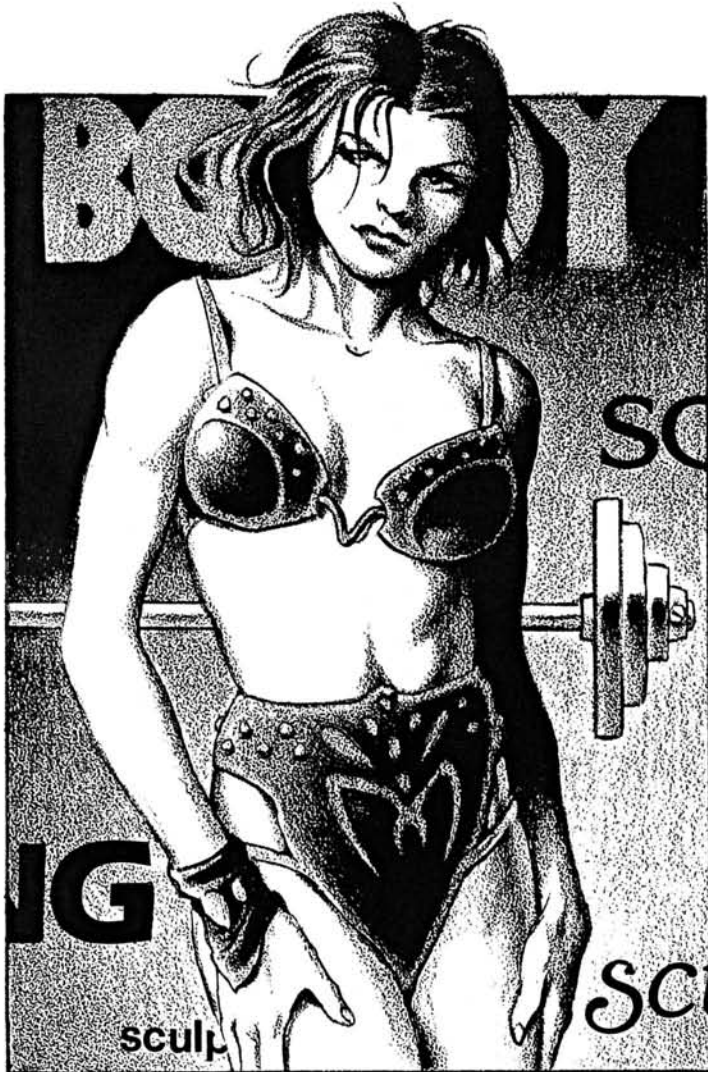
+1 to P.B. (tone, grace, and poise)

+1D4 to S.D.C.

+1 to Dodge.

+1 to Strike with *all* kick attacks (including all jump kicks and those that require spins).

Leap four feet (1.2 m) high and five feet (1.5 m) long plus 2 feet (0.6 m) per level of experience. (Note: characters with a Leap attack can use these distances in a strike.)



Body Sculpting: Similar to the Body Building/Weight Lifting skill, but with an emphasis on the toning and conditioning of the body to promote a fit and attractive physique instead of just building raw muscle power. This results in some strength (P.S.) gain but is mostly intended to improve physical appearance (P.B.). This skill may be taken in tandem with the original Body Building/Weight Lifting skill, but doing so eliminates any P.S. bonus received from the Body Sculpting skill.

Add +1 to P.B.

Add +1 to P.S. (applies only if the character does *not* also take the original Body Building/Weight Lifting skill).

Add +1D4 to S.D.C.

Contortionism: Special Skill Cost: Costs 2 Physical skills to select. Optional: May be selected for the cost of 1 Physical skill if the character already possesses the Yoga Physical skill detailed in Ben Lucas' excellent article on non-oriental martial arts, *The Rifter* #7, page 53.

Contortionism is the ability to squeeze the human body into unnaturally small places or bend in normally impossible ways.

Often used as a sideshow act, contortionists regularly stuff themselves into tiny boxes or other confining places. A contortionist can also perform "miracles" of flexibility, putting their elbows together behind their head or touching their lower backs with their toes while their legs are over their shoulders. What this means in game terms is increased Physical Prowess and unparalleled flexibility. In addition to the physical attribute, skill, and combat bonuses, the character is able to squeeze into a space as small as four cubic feet (0.113 cubic meters) or less and squeeze through gaps as small as one square foot (0.093 square meters)! Note that these figures apply only if the character is less than 5 feet 6 inches (1.68 m) tall and weighs 120 lb (54 kg) or less. Increase these sizes by one inch/2.5 cm (square or cubic, depending) for every 2 inches/5 cm of height and 10 lb/4.5 kg of weight beyond the aforementioned limits.

Add +1 to P.P.

Add +1 to Parry and Dodge.

Add +1 to escape from holds or locks.

Add +1 to Strike on Grappling attacks.

Add +15% to the Escape Artist skill, if known.

Free Diving: Free diving is an advanced diving technique where the diver learns to hold his breath underwater for exceptionally long amounts of time. Experienced free divers have been known to hold their breath for over five minutes! This is a difficult and dangerous skill that requires years of practice and the knowledge of advanced swimming techniques (i.e. the Swimming: Advanced skill). For game purposes, the character with the Free Diving skill is considered to be able to hold his breath for one melee round (15 seconds) per each point of the character's P.E. On top of that, the character gains an additional melee round of "breath time" for each additional level of experience. Therefore, a 9th level character with a P.E. of 16 will be able to hold his breath for a full six minutes! (Base four minutes at first level for P.E. 16, plus 15 seconds for every additional level up to ninth; 15 seconds times eight, or two minutes). Note that this time applies only under minimal exertion (i.e. swimming at no more than half maximum swimming speed and without performing any exerting tasks). The character's "breath time" is cut in half if the character is performing any stressful or exerting tasks including, but not limited to, carrying a heavy load, swimming faster than half speed, fighting, etc. If the character has some "mechanical" assistance to help pull him along, either from underwater sleds/submersibles or even a passing marine animal of sufficient size (such as a porpoise or shark), he gains one full additional minute of "breathing time." Note that "part time" assists (one half of the total time spent underwater or more) will provide only 30 seconds of additional time. Anything less than half time offers no additional "breath time." Remember also that the character's "breath time" is the *maximum* total amount of air, not the time required before needing to turn back to the surface. If the character has not surfaced by this time, he will take one *Hit Point* of damage per melee round (15 seconds) until he surfaces, and has an ever growing chance of passing out. Each melee round beyond the maximum "breath time" spent underwater will require the character to make a saving throw of 12 or higher (adding P.E. bonuses). Failure means unconsciousness, and the character starts to drown, suffering 1D6 damage straight to Hit Points per melee round until brought to

the surface. This “saving throw” number increases in difficulty by +1 every round! **Requires:** Swimming, Advanced.

Add +1 to P.E.

Marathon Dancing: Either a professional dancer or a fanatical dancing enthusiast, this character dances long enough and often enough to have gained physical conditioning from doing so. **Requires:** Dancing.

Add +1 to P.P.

Add +1 to P.E.

Add +5% to the Dancing skill.

Outdoorsmanship: Being an avid outdoorsman and survivalist, this character has spent a significant portion of his/her life living off the land or in the wild. As a result, the character is hardened to the rigors of outdoor life. At the G.M.’s discretion, this skill may be taken as a Wilderness skill. **Requires:** Wilderness Survival or any other “true” Survival skill such as Desert Survival, Castaway/Shipwreck Survival, etc.

Add +1 to P.E.

Add 1D6 to S.D.C.

Add +5% to the Fasting skill and +3% to any Wilderness skills, if known.

Physical Labor: Not all strength and conditioning comes from recreation and training; some comes from old-fashioned hard work. This skill represents the strength and endurance gained from hard physical labor either due to a physical occupation (such as construction, ditch digging, etc.) or physically demanding chores at home (such as chopping wood, bailing hay, etc.). This skill is particularly applicable to characters from such backgrounds as vagabond/peasant/farmer, slave, or other such “lowly” occupations.

Add +1 to P.S.

Add +1 to P.E.

Add 1D6 to S.D.C.

Poison Tolerance: This skill represents the slow process of building up a natural resistance to a given poison, toxin, drug, or similar substance. Through the gradual consumption of increasingly larger amounts of a poisonous substance, the character with this skill gains a bonus to *Saving Throws* versus any one specific poison, drug, or toxin, such as Mandrake or Hemlock. Bonuses to *Saving Throws* are for that substance and that substance alone. This skill may be taken more than once for additional poisons/toxins/drugs (one substance per skill taken).

Add +3 to all *Saving Throws* versus one particular toxic substance, with an additional +1 bonus to *Saving Throws* at levels 3, 6, 9, 12 and 15.

superceded). Each is taken as a separate skill. Again, these skills, as with this entire article, are *optional*.

Cross-Country Running: Not to be confused with the High School/Collegiate sport of the same name, Cross-Country Running here represents running through wild, untamed natural terrain most consider unsuited to walk, much less run. What this means in game terms is the ability to travel (on foot) through rough terrain such as forest, jungle, large rocks, etc., at only half of the normal speed penalty for the given terrain. In addition, the character is assumed to have learned to avoid obstacles like overhangs and branches, providing a bonus to Parry and Dodge. This skill may also, at the G.M.’s discretion, be taken as a Wilderness skill. **Requires:** Running/Jogging.

Add +1 to P.E.

Add +1 to Parry and Dodge.

Running/Jogging: This is the equivalent of the current Running skill listed in most Palladium games, and should replace the original skill whenever it is gained from O.C.C. Skills or Skill Programs. This skill represents regular “moderate distance” (3-10 miles/5-16 km or so) running practiced mainly as a cardiovascular exercise.

Add +1 to P.E.

Add +1D4 to Speed.

Add +1D6 to S.D.C.

Marathon Running: This famous distance race is often thought of as the ultimate in distance running, being a full 26+ miles (42+ km) in distance (longer races do exist). For game purposes, the character is considered able to run one mile (1.6 km) for every one point of P.E. without undue fatigue and two miles (3.2 km) for every one point of P.E. (minimum of 27 miles/43.5 km) before collapsing. **Requires:** Running/Jogging.

Add +2 to P.E.

Add 1D4 to S.D.C.

Sprinting: A running skill based wholly on increasing maximum speed, typically over short distances. This skill, when combined with Running/Jogging, equates to the “old” Running skill. **Requires:** Running/Jogging.

Add +3D4 to Speed.

Track and Field: The character possessing this skill is assumed to be experienced in all or several of the traditional “track and field” (Pentathlon/Decathlon) events featured in the Olympics. These include, but are not limited to, hurdles, high jump, long jump, pole vaulting, discus, javelin tossing, etc. In addition to increased physical attributes, the character gains some useful abilities. **Requires:** Running/Jogging.

60% +5% per level Back Flip.

50% +5% per level Pole Vault (8 feet/2.4 m high plus two feet/0.6 m per level of experience).

Add +1 to P.S.

Add +1 to P.E.

Add +1 to Speed.

Add +1D6 to S.D.C.

Add +2 to Roll with Punch/Fall/Impact.

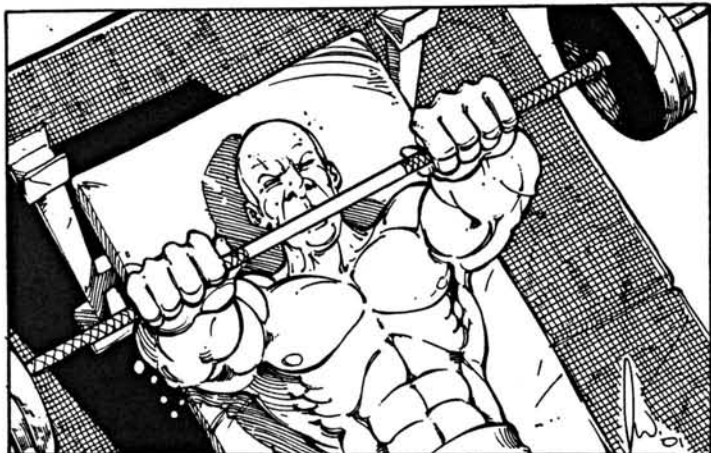
Add +1 to Strike and +25% to distance with thrown weapons and Targeting.

Leap 4 feet (1.2 m) high and 5 feet (1.5 m) long, plus 2 feet (0.6 m) per level of experience.

Optional Rules on the Running Skill

I’ve never been completely satisfied with the Running Physical skill as traditionally presented. It always seemed to me to over-generalize the “sport” of running. An Olympic sprinter obviously differs greatly in ability from a Marathon runner. Therefore I have devised the following “new” *optional* Running skills to represent the diversity of the sport. The following new Running skills replace the traditional Running skill (with all bonuses

Optional Rules to Tame the Physical Skill Junkie



One of my personal pet peeves is when a player loads up on Physical Skills for their associated combat and physical attribute bonuses without stopping to consider whether or not the skills fit the character. You know the type, the munchkin who fills *every available* O.C.C. Related and Secondary Skill slot their character has with physical skills until the character can bench press a school bus and run circles around Carl Lewis. This is the guy who, despite the fact that he wouldn't be caught dead in a pair of tights, has the Gymnastics and Acrobatics skills only because of the attribute and combat bonuses they give. (They typically don't even make use of the associated sub-skills like Walk Tightrope or Back Flip!) I call these people Physical Skill Junkies.

Don't get me wrong, I love Physical Skills! If I didn't, I wouldn't have included the above new ones. Many of my physically oriented characters (particularly Martial Artists) make heavy use of them since it fits the characters to do so. This brings up another difficulty in that I don't always *want* a character that can bench press a bus! (Thief characters, for example, really need the Acrobatics, Gymnastics, and Climbing skills but don't necessarily need a P.S. of 25.) With the creation of the above new Mental skills, I foresee similar problems developing with the Mental attributes. For these reasons, and for the sake of realism, which I will explain latter, I have created the following optional rule of Diminishing Returns.

Diminishing Returns

Any athlete or body builder can tell you about diminishing returns. This is the stage of an exercise program where your physical gains reach a "plateau" of sorts and it requires added effort to get the same rate of growth. You may need to do extra sets of reps or different exercises to achieve the same results as before. Simply put, the human body is limited in how strong,

fast, or even smart it can get. This is where the optional Diminishing Returns rule comes in.

Player characters, like any person, are subject to diminishing returns in their workouts. After a certain point their strength (P.S.) or other attributes are going to level off. What this means in game terms is an *attribute cap* of sorts. For any attribute you have three basic caps: the *Half Returns* level, the *Quarter Returns* level, and the *Eighth Returns* level. How these caps work is simple. When the bonuses to any attribute gained from skills, martial arts, or O.C.C. bonus reaches the *Half Returns* level, all subsequent bonuses are cut in half. After this point, it takes *twice* as many bonus points to increase the attribute the same level. In other words, if your total bonuses to P.S. have already reached the *Half Returns* level and you then take the Bodybuilding skill, the P.S. bonus you gain from the skill is cut in half (a +1 P.S. bonus instead of the normal +2). The *Quarter Returns* level and the *Eighth Returns* level work similarly, reducing the bonuses to 1/4 and 1/8 their original level, respectively.

If the bonus is an odd number, keep track of the fractional remainder. For example, if the character has already reached the *Half Returns* level and receives a bonus of +1, this bonus becomes a +1/2. If the character takes another skill that gives them another +1, this too becomes a +1/2 and adds to the previous +1/2 bonus to become a full +1 (assuming neither of these skills put the character in the *Quarter Returns* level). At the *Quarter Returns* and *Eighth Returns* level these bonuses behave likewise, but at a +1/4 and +1/8 bonus respectively.

The Level Caps

The following are the suggested Level Caps for the given attributes. The character can gain attribute bonuses up to and including equaling the numerical value of the Cap before diminishing returns set in. This means that if the character has a *Half Returns* level Cap of 5 then he or she can increase the attribute by 5 points (i.e. from a 12 up to a 17) before *Half Returns* set in and bonuses are reduced by half.

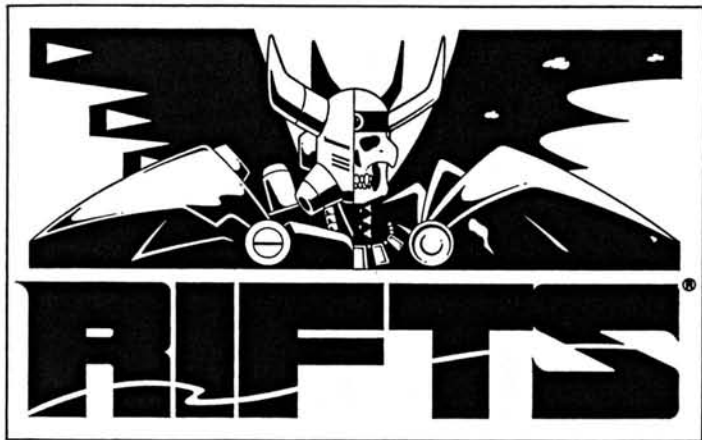
Physical and Mental attributes, including I.Q., M.E., M.A., P.S., P.P., P.E., and P.B., have a *Half Returns* level Cap of 5, a *Quarter Returns* level Cap of 10 and an *Eighth Returns* level Cap of 15.

The *Speed* attribute is unique among the attributes in that it has have a *Half Returns* level Cap of 10, a *Quarter Returns* level Cap of 20 and an *Eighth Returns* level Cap of 30.

S.D.C. as far as I'm concerned, doesn't really need any level Caps. A burst from an automatic weapon or a magical attack or dragon's breath will whittle any character's S.D.C. and Hit Points down in a hurry! If you insist on having S.D.C. Caps, however, I recommend the following: a *Half Returns* level Cap of 25, a *Quarter Returns* level Cap of 50 and an *Eighth Returns* level Cap of 75.

Combat Bonuses should not be subject to level Caps under any circumstances.

We're Not All Mind Readers, You Know!



New Eruptors for Rifts®

Optional Source Material

By Ed Sauerland

In the world of Rifts®, there are many sources of power. Magic, technology, and psionics all clash for supremacy. Of the last group, Mind Melters and other powerful psychics are the most feared. They have the ability to bend others to their will.

But a close second is the sub-class commonly referred to as 'Eruptors.' These are psychics who manifest their abilities in the form of impressive, *physical* acts. The most famous of these is the Burster, followed by the Zapper. But recently, new types of powerful physical psychics have emerged. Some are extremely rare, and tend to be found only within those specific habitats best suited to them. The following describes three new 'breeds' of Eruptors, their powers, and hints at their true origins.

Notes: Remember, the range and duration of psionic powers increases by 50% when at or near (within one mile/ 1.6 km) a ley line. Range, duration and *damage* of powers is doubled when at or near (within one mile/ 1.6 km) a ley line nexus. All Coalition psychics (including some contractors and mercenaries) undergo Identification Coding (IC) and implantation.

The Blaster

'Blasters' are psychics with explosive (literally!) psionic powers. A Burster can create flames with his mind, causing materials to ignite and burn. The Blaster takes this one step farther, by seemingly causing things to explode through sheer force of will. How this occurs is unclear.

It is theorized that the Blasters have developed a sort of super telekinesis that, while limited, is very powerful. They telekinetically command a few stray atoms or molecules and vibrate them at ultra high speed. The incredible friction creates energy that is released in the form of explosions. It's along the



lines of a mental microwave oven. Whereas a Burster causes flames, a Blaster lacks the 'finesse' to summon fires. A Blaster goes too far too fast, releasing a sudden pulse of explosive energy.

Or maybe the microwave analogy is closer to the truth. Perhaps the Blaster bathes his target in mental energy that results in explosions. Blasters could be an anomalous strain of Burster, with powers that have somehow mutated.

Research has proved inconclusive, but in any case, these psychics are highly prized as warriors and as bomb disposal experts. Indeed, many of the Blaster's skills and powers revolve around containing explosions, not just creating them.

Powers of the Blaster

1. Spontaneous Detonation: The Blaster can focus his mind to cause explosions in mid-air! There is no chemical or device of any sort involved, just concentrate and BANG! Scientists studying this power of 'combustive-kinesis' do not fully understand how it works. Still, it's quite impressive.

The Blaster has a great deal of control over the size of the detonation, and because it occurs out of nowhere, he can easily catch opponents off guard. Note: These explosions *only* occur in mid-air. The psychic cannot cause objects or people to just blow up like an overcooked burrito. However, the Blaster can *direct* the explosive force like a shaped charge. In this manner, he can attack a single, specific target, a part of that target (arm, leg, etc.), or a group of targets. Additionally, the explosive force is likely to knock people down and possibly set combustible materials ablaze. The psychic doesn't blow up a computer, for example, he directs the blast *toward* the computer. Each use counts as one attack.

This power isn't like throwing a grenade or using some other device. When the blast goes off, there's just a barely visible shockwave and a loud booming like a thunderclap (takes most people by surprise: Horror Factor of 11). No flash, no flame, nothing.

Range: Can create an explosion at a range of 200 feet (61 m), plus 20 feet (6.1 m) per level of experience.

Duration: Instantaneous.

Damage: The Blaster can vary the damage inflicted with this power by using more or less I.S.P. per strike. Small explosions, about the size of a firecracker, do 1D6 S.D.C. damage (stings, but not deadly, useful for surprising someone, getting their attention, as a signal, etc.). Medium size bursts pack a wallop and inflict 4D6 S.D.C. damage, plus 1D6 per level. The psychic can regulate this damage in increments of 1D6 in order to inflict less damage if he so desires. Heavy explosions inflict Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D., plus 1 per level. Again, this can be regulated to inflict as little as 1 point of Mega-Damage if needed.

Blast Radius: This can also be varied to strike one target or many depending on the size of the detonation. Small bursts affect one target only, no radius. The medium power blasts can affect all targets within a two foot (0.6 m) radius, plus one foot (0.3 m) at every other level (levels 3, 5, 7, etc.). The Mega-Damage blasts have a radius of 5 feet (1.5 m), plus one foot (0.3 m) per every level. Of course, the Blaster can focus his attack on just one target in any case, striking that one target alone and leaving all others untouched.

I.S.P. Cost: Small explosions: 2, medium: 5, large Mega-Damage blasts: 10.

Bonus: +1 to strike.



2. Shockwave Attack: Another interesting manifestation of the Blaster's power is the ability to generate a pressure wave of force radiating outward, with the psychic at the center. The psychic concentrates, then a loud pop or bang rings through the air, and a concussive wave of kinetic energy in the form of a ring or bubble shoots outward in all directions. This not only topples most mortal foes, but also shoves them back and momentarily stuns them, giving the Blaster much needed time and space with which to act. Counts as one attack.

Radius of the Wave: Five feet (1.5 m) plus one foot (0.3 m) per level of experience. The wave expands outward 360 degrees to strike *all* targets within range, effecting friend and foe alike.

Duration: Instantaneous.

Damage: 2D6 S.D.C., plus knockdown effects. Defender must roll a 14 or higher to maintain balance or be knocked off their feet (loses initiative and one attack that melee). Not applicable to heavy Borks or Power Armor.

I.S.P. Cost: 8

3. Sound Dampening: The Blaster has become immune to loud noises, most notably his own mental detonations. As a reflexive defense measure, the Blaster broadcasts a sort of 'white noise' to counteract outside noises. Thunder, rail gun fire, even

the Glitter Boy's Boom Gun do not deafen the character, not even temporarily. No permanent damage is caused by loud noises, although Blasters do tend to shout a great deal. They can hear just fine, but in combat situations, they assume others can't hear quite so well. This just sort of carries over into everyday life. Additionally, sonic attacks, even Mega-Damage ones, do NO damage to the Blaster.

Duration: Constant, always on.

I.S.P. Cost: None, automatic ability.

4. Powers for Defense and EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) Operations: Several of the Blaster's other psychic talents come in handy during disposal operations. These are powers 'common' to others psychics, but with a bit more refinement to better serve the Blaster.

Gets Electrokinesis (invaluable for detecting and disarming devices), but under subsection 4: Sense Electricity, double the range and triple the duration, plus add 10% to the base skill. Automatically has Psychic Body Field (but reduce the I.S.P. cost to 20, and, all abilities start at *third* level proficiency. So a First level Blaster can create a field with 30 M.D.C. that lasts 6 minutes). Also starts with Telekinetic Force Field (reduce I.S.P. cost to 20) and Sense Time (no changes, but very helpful for keeping track of timers) as well as Telemechanics (no changes).

5. Other Psionic Powers: At first level, the Blaster also has the following additional powers: Speed Reading, Total Recall, Telekinesis (regular, not super), Telekinetic Acceleration Attack, plus any two powers from the physical category. Select one additional physical power at levels 3, 6 and 9.

6. I.S.P.: Roll 3D4X10 and add the character's M.E. attribute number to determine base Inner Strength Points. Add 10 I.S.P. per level of experience. I.S.P. recovers at the rate of 2 per hour of activity or, or 12 per hour of sleep or meditation.

7. Saving Throw versus Psionic Attack: As a Master Psychic, the Blaster needs only a 10 or higher to save.

8. P.P.E.: Very little. Most has been spent developing psionic abilities. Only 2D6 P.P.E. remains.

9. R.C.C. Bonuses and Skills: +2 on initiative, +1 to strike, parry and dodge, +6 to roll with impact, +2 to save vs Horror Factor. Add 3D6 S.D.C. Also see skills for EOD training.

The Blaster R.C.C., also known as Brain Bomb, Fire-cracker, and Psi-Sapper.

Alignment Restrictions: None, but lean toward good or selfish.

Attribute Requirements: None, but a high M.E. and P.P. are helpful.

Race Restrictions: Must be of a race that can possess psionics. Most common among humans (75%), and human-like races, with Ogres (8%) and Dwarves (7%) comprising significant numbers. About 80% of Blasters are male.

R.C.C. Skills: Like other psychics, few skills are known, as much time and energy has gone into the development of psionic powers. Many of these skills relate to EOD. If the Game Master allows, this character can also possess the skills of modifying explosives known to the Coalition EOD specialist (See World Book 11: **Coalition War Campaign**, pages 73-75).

Speaks native language (usually American) at 98%.

Literacy: American (+12%)

Basic Math (+20%)

Basic Electronics (+15%)

Armorer (+15%)

Demolitions (+15%)

Demolitions Disposal (+25%)

Detect Concealment (+15%)

Trap/Mine detection (+15%)

Pilot: One of choice (+10%).

Body Building

W.P. Heavy Energy

W.P. Energy Pistol

W.P.: One of choice.

Hand to Hand: Basic (can be changed to Expert at the cost of one R.C.C. Related Skill or Martial Arts for two).

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select 6 other skills at level one. Select two more skills at levels 3 and 6, and one skill at levels 9 and 12.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Any (+5%).

Espionage: Any (+5%) except Disguise, Forgery, or Impersonation.

Mechanical: Any (+10%).

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: Any (+10%).

Physical: Any except Acrobatics.

Pilot: Any (+5%).

Pilot Related: Any (+10% to Weapon Systems).

Rogue: Any.

Science: Any (+5%).

Technical: Any (+10% for Computer skills).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Land Navigation only.

Secondary Skills: Select four Secondary Skills at level one, plus one additional at levels 4 and 8.

Standard Equipment: A few sets of clothes, uniform if part of a military organization, work gloves, large tool kit, small portable tool kit (includes a cordless drill, screwdrivers, clamps, wirecutters, pliers, duct tape, etc.), welding goggles, air filter or gas mask, Wilk's laser scalpel, Wilk's laser torch, pocket laser distancer, sunglasses or tinted goggles, multi-optics band, utility belt, several pouches, backpack, heavy duty flashlight with extra batteries, 100 feet (30.5 m) of rope, 2D4 flares, a survival knife, and personal items. Wears any type of body armor, usually heavy, but will have a light set for mobility as a backup.

Weapons: Blasters love heavy weapons, especially kinetic types like rail guns. Has a Triax TX-5 Pump pistol for a side-arm with 20 rounds all loaded into speed loaders. Also has one heavy weapon. Choose any *one* of the following: any rail gun that can be used by a human, with enough ammo clips or belts to supply 50 bursts; RR-C40 rocket rifle with five 100 round magazines (see World Book 6: **South America** page 24); WI-23 missile launcher with 5 magazines; or a WI-GL4 grenade launcher with 48 total rounds (see **Rifts® Mercenaries**). Also has 2D6 hand grenades of choice and one light fusion block.

Vehicles: None to start unless the G.M. allows it, but Blasters prefer trucks, A.P.C.s and hover vehicles.

Money: Very little to start, just 3D6X10 in cash and black market items worth 1D4X1000 credits. Everything else has been spent on equipment. Blasters are in high demand and can earn big bucks.

Cybernetics: None to start, and tends to avoid them when possible (disrupts their powers). The only exceptions may be minor sensor implants, especially optical enhancements or lung implants.

Blasters in the Coalition: Blasters are highly prized by most nations, and the Coalition has recruited about 150 or so, most operating in Special Forces or in Counter Terrorism units.

Blasters trained by the Coalition or other military state will have one additional W.P., Radio: Basic (+10%), one additional Military or Mechanical skill, and often Hand to Hand: Expert. They'll also have access to Coalition facilities, armor, weapons, vehicles, and equipment. Wages are excellent, typically the same as Military Specialists or Special Forces.

Experience: Use the Headhunter experience table (see *Rifts RPG®*, page 17).

The Freezer

'Freezers' as these psychics are known, possess the strange talent of *cryokinesis*. That is, the ability to control temperatures in such a way that they can literally freeze objects and opponents in their tracks. The Freezer can mentally condense moisture in the air into blocks of ice that can trap or hurt enemies. Additionally, their tremendous resistance to cold makes them excellent scouts for use in winter or arctic conditions.

As much as the powers of Bursters and Freezers are polar (no pun intended) opposites, so too are their personalities. Whereas Bursters are often vivacious, passionate people, Freezers are calm and quiet, some would even say aloof. The average Freezer has little desire to fight unless in self-defense and even then they dislike killing. Freezers try hard to live harmoniously with nature, taking only those plants and animals needed for survival and leaving all the rest. They tend to live wandering, isolated lives in the bitter cold regions, only occasionally stopping into a wilderness town for news or supplies. Mostly, Freezers simply wish to be left alone.

The first reliable accounts of Freezers occur only 40 years ago. Before this time there existed rumors and a few sightings, but little hard evidence. Did this new class of psychic just recently come into being? Or have they always been there, hiding in obscurity in distant corners of the globe? No one knows for sure, but there are several theories.

The most widely held belief is that Freezers are descendants of people who were forced to flee their homes during the Great Cataclysm. These people sought sanctuary in the harshest climates and terrain, far to the north or into the mountains, away from civilization where it would be unlikely that supernatural menaces would follow. Over time, these refugees adapted to their new environment, with the strongest of them developing special psychic abilities to help them survive.

A second theory is closely linked to the first. It suggests that Freezers are descended from Native American tribes that lived in North America for centuries. This idea has great merit, for Native Americans were often forced to relocate, and some may



have been forced north. And many Freezers (40%) do in fact have Native American ancestry. This, along with the Freezer's close relationship with nature, has convinced many scientists and scholars.

Other theories are little more than wild speculation. Some think that Freezers are the results of experimentation, by the Coalition, aliens, or some D-Bee race. In truth, some combination of the first two theories is correct.

Not surprisingly, Freezers make their homes in northern latitudes, mostly in North America, but sometimes in northern Europe, especially Scandinavia, Germany, and the even the harshest steppes and tundras of Russia. In the Americas, they seldom travel farther south than Pennsylvania and West Virginia, usually sticking to the mountains. Even then, they will sometimes migrate northward during the warmer months. Still, as with most psionics, there is a certain randomness to the Freezer. Even the occasional city dweller may develop the Freezer's abilities.

Freezers respect nature, animals, and life. They hold Wilderness Scouts, Native Americans, Elves, Psi-Stalkers, and other outdoorsy types in high regard. Freezers have earned the respect of these individuals. Even most Simvan and Faerie Folk give them grudging respect and keep their distance.

Powers of the Freezer

1. Impervious to Cold: The Freezer has adapted to cold environments to such an extent that he can survive in sub-zero temperatures indefinitely. They can live out their whole lives under arctic conditions with no ill effect. They suffer no effects from exposure: no frostbite, no hypothermia, nothing! Nor do they suffer from exposure to frigid waters. Even magic and Mega-Damage cold, such as an Ice Dragon's breath, do just one-tenth damage. This aura of protection extends to cover the psychic's clothing, armor, and equipment. Weapons never clog with ice or freeze up, visors never fog over, etc. Not only that, but the character's breath cannot be seen. Unlike normal humans, no steam comes from the Freezer's mouth or nostrils when they breathe out in the cold. No I.S.P. cost, this power is constantly in effect.

2. Control Body Temperature: Even indoors sitting right next to a hot stove, a Freezer tends to be slightly cold to the touch. But by concentrating, the Freezer can 'pull in' the excess body heat that normally escapes most other people. By slowing and controlling respiration and heart rate, the Freezer can temporarily lower his outside, surface body temperature by as much as 50%! This has two benefits. First, when combined with the psionic power of Death Trance, the character can very realistically feign death. Second, it enables him to blend into his surroundings, making him invisible to infrared detection (very useful for avoiding trouble). At best, someone looking for the Freezer will see a distorted cold spot on his sensors. Again, this effect creates an aura which protects the items being worn or carried.

Example: A Freezer empties the E-Clip of an ion rifle, firing continually at the enemy. The weapon should be hot enough to register easily on sensors, but is protected by the aura. Activating this power counts as one melee attack.

Range: Self only to start, but starting at third level, the Freezer can extend the aura to cover a five foot (1.5 m) radius,

plus 1 foot (0.3 m) at levels 6, 9 and 12. Thus, a small group of people can be hidden from infrared detection, but they must remain almost motionless, and the Freezer must concentrate the whole time, using one attack per melee round to maintain the wider radius effect.

Duration: For self only, 10 minutes per level of experience. For the wider area, 2 minutes per level, but still uses up one attack each melee due to concentrating to maintain the aura.

I.S.P. Cost: Self, 4. For area effect, 10.

3. Generate Ice and Snow: The psychic has the unique gift to condense moisture in the air and freeze it into snow or ice. While not as deadly or impressive as the Burster's fiery eruption, it does have its uses. The snow and ice can be molded in a variety of ways to create protective walls, encase people, or blind sensors and cameras. To keep this description short, I'll just provide some quick basics. For more ideas on commanding snow and ice, check out **Heroes Unlimited**, specifically, the Alter Physical Structure: Ice super ability.

Creating Ice/Snow: The psychic can create snow or ice out of thin air by condensing moisture in the air and supercooling it at an incredible rate. This power can be used to bar access to rooms by walling off doors, freezing an enemy's weapon (encases the whole hand or arm, weighs about 50 pounds and renders the weapon useless), or coating the floor with a slick layer of ice that makes walking and balance difficult (reduce speed by half, to move any faster risks falling and losing an attack, -1 to strike, parry, and dodge). A single use of this power can encase a whole person. Only those with flame based powers, supernatural strength or other incredible powers can escape the icy prison. Alternatively, ice blocks or manacles can be formed to restrain a captive (usually have 30 S.D.C.).

Range: 100 feet (30 m), plus 20 feet (6.1 m) per level.

Duration: Instantaneous creation, lasts until melted or destroyed.

Amount created: About four cubic feet (0.113 cu. m) per level. Snow walls have 200 S.D.C. Per level, ice walls have 20 M.D.C. per level.

Damage: Dropping a heap of snow on someone will stagger them and inflict 4D6 S.D.C. per every four foot block. Ice inflicts 1D4X10 S.D.C. per four foot block and lands with a resounding 'thud.'

I.S.P. Cost: 10

Ice Armor: Another aspect of this power is that the Freezer can coat himself with a thin layer of ice that acts like body armor. The ice armor is unnaturally tough (M.D.C.) and freezing cold to the touch (does 2D6 S.D.C. per touch and tends to fog up or freeze anything touching it), and makes the Freezer slippery and difficult to grasp, plus physical blows glance off the slick surface. Attackers are -2 to strike or parry, and -6 to entangle or disarm the Freezer. Despite being made of ice and snow, the armor does not hinder the movements of the psychic in any way. Creating the armor counts as one attack.

Range: Self only.

Duration: 2 minutes per level of experience.

I.S.P. Cost: 6

M.D.C. protection: The armor provides 25 M.D.C. plus 2 per level, and renews itself at a rate of 2D6 per melee round (more moisture freezing to the armor, patching any holes and restoring

its strength). Also, lasers inflict *half* damage to the reflective surfaces of the armor.

Ice Weapons: The Freezer can form crude weapons out of ice. These are little more than spears or clubs, but they can inflict limited Mega-Damage. Also, this power can be combined with the ice armor above to create fist spikes or a spike studded set or armor.

Range: Self or up to 10 feet (3 m) away.

Duration: Instant creation, lasts until melted or destroyed.

Damage: Varies. A club or blade inflicts 3D6 S.D.C damage per strike. These weapons have 15 M.D.C. themselves, and can be used to parry Mega-Damage attacks. Or, the Freezer can create hammers or spikes attached to his ice covered body. These inflict 1D4 M.D. per punch or 1D6 M.D. with a kick. Body slamming an opponent while covered in spikes inflicts 2D6 M.D. Mega-Damage attacks such as these count as *two* attacks, however, one to create the weapon and one to use it (this occurs almost instantly, so the two actions take place during *one* attack, but it still counts as two). The M.D. blades shatter when they inflict their greater damage, and must be remade each time.

I.S.P. Cost: 4 for hand held clubs or blades, or to create fist, knee, or foot blades. To cover the body in spikes costs 8 I.S.P.

Hurl Ice and Snow: The Freezer can toss snow and ice great distances.

Range: Snow, 80 feet (24.4 m), plus 5 feet (1.5 m) per level. Ice, 100 feet (30 m), plus 10 feet (3 m) per level.

Duration: Instantaneous.

Bonus to strike: +1

Damage: Snow, only about one S.D.C per snowball (more annoying than deadly). Ice balls hurt, doing 4D6 S.D.C.

I.S.P. Cost: 2 for snow, 4 for ice balls.

Hurl Ice Shards: This is a much deadlier variation of the power above. The Freezer attacks his target with a wall of jagged ice shards that cut like razors. They splinter like glass on contact and can shred even Mega-Damage armor. This power is sometimes called 'the ice storm,' for obvious reasons.

Range: 50 feet (15.2 m), plus 10 feet (3 m) per level.

Duration: Instantaneous.

Bonus to strike: +1

Damage: 3D6 M.D. at level one, plus 1D6 every third level (does 4D6 at level three, 5D6 at level six, etc.).

I.S.P. Cost: 6

4. Psionic Powers for Survival:

Sense Magnetic North: One I.S.P., lasts 10 minutes per level, useful for navigation.

Weather Sense: Can predict local temperatures for the next 12 hours, accurate to within 1D6 degrees. Can sense approaching storms (not ley line storms) over the next 48 hours and can predict when they will start to within 4D6 minutes. Sense wind direction and speed at 80% +1% per level accuracy.

Range: Limited to the local area, about 2 miles (3.2 km), except for sensing storms, the range for which is 100 miles (160 km) plus 10 miles (16 km) per level.

Duration: 10 minutes per level of experience.

I.S.P. Cost: 6

Sense Avalanches and Other Dangers: This is a limited form of Sixth Sense that warns the Freezer of natural hazards such as slides, hidden crevices, or thin ice covering frozen lakes. Like a psychic minesweeper, the character detects these dangers in time to avoid them and/or lead pursuers into them as a trap.

Range: 100 feet (30 m) plus 25 feet (7.6 m) per level. Will have advanced warning of avalanches or other landslides up to a range of 2 miles (3.2 km) per level and will have at least 1D6X10 minutes warning. This only takes into account *naturally* occurring slides. The Freezer may predict an avalanche won't occur for another 20 minutes, but heavy weapon fire may trigger it prematurely.

Duration: 10 minutes per level of experience.

I.S.P. Cost: 8

5. Super Psionic Invisibility (friendly/non-threatening, a limited form of Empathy): The Freezer has developed the ability to go unnoticed in the wilds. They give off a sort of non-threatening vibe (a limited form of Empathy). When activated, this power allows the Freezer to just walk past animals (even predators) without any sign of disturbance, similar to the Psi-stalker's affinity with animals. Birds don't scatter, deer don't run away, etc. (Automatically succeeds against animals, no saving throw.) Another example of how these psychics are 'one' with the environment.

Range: 100 feet (30 m) plus 50 feet (15.2 m) per level.

Duration: Five minutes per level.

I.S.P. Cost: 10

Limitations: Can only be used on the psychic himself, no one else, and his intentions *must not* be hostile. This power is used for camouflage, not hunting. Any aggressive act or intent towards an animal under this influence cancels the power and the Freezer will be revealed. Also, this power is meant to affect mortal *animals*, not intelligent beings, monsters, etc. It is possible to use this power against such beings, but the chance of success is only 50% plus 3% per level, and the I.S.P. cost is tripled. Again, the Freezer must not take any hostile action for the power to work. Can also be used to hide from normal humans and D-Bees just like the power of Psionic Invisibility in **Psyscape**.

6. Other Psionic Powers: The following, more common powers are available to the Freezer. Most are extremely helpful for surviving the harsh climate or for avoiding trouble. Automatically starts at first level with Nightvision, See the Invisible, Sense Evil, and any two physical powers of choice. Select one additional physical power at levels 4, 6 and 8.

7. I.S.P.: Roll 3D4 X10 and add the character's M.E. attribute number to determine base Inner Strength Points. Add 10 I.S.P. per level of experience. I.S.P. recovers at the rate of 2 per hour of activity, or 12 per hour of sleep or meditation.

8. Saving Throw versus Psionic Attack: As a Master Psychic, the Freezer needs only a 10 or higher to save.

9. P.P.E.: Very little. Most has been spent developing psionic abilities. Only 2D6 P.P.E. remains.

10. R.C.C. Bonuses and Skills: +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +2 to parry, dodge, and disarm, +6 to save vs Horror Factor! (They are used to the wilderness dangers and solitude.) Also, living a rugged life adds +1 to P.S., +2 to P.E., and add 2D6+10

S.D.C. Great sense of balance on ice and snow, 80% +1% per level, can walk, even run over snow and ice with little fear of falling. Reduce speed by just 10% over snow and 25% on ice.

Skill note regarding Lore skills: The Freezer gains a +20% bonus on these skills when dealing with 'native' animals, monsters, and D-Bees. For example, if Monster Lore is taken by a North American Freezer, add the bonus when dealing with Xiticix. If D-Bee Lore is known, add the bonus when dealing with races from **Rifts® Canada**, and so forth.

Vulnerabilities: Heat and flame based attacks (plasma weapons, magic, etc.), either S.D.C. or M.D.C., inflict double damage to the Freezer.

The Freezer R.C.C., also known as Coldhearts or Coldbloods by those who scorn them. Friends and allies may give them playful names like Fridge, Chill, Snowman or even Frosty. Some Native Americans call them 'Keepers of the North.'

Alignment Restrictions: None, but lean toward good, or selfish (especially Anarchist) if a loner.

Attribute Requirements: None, but a high M.E., P.S., and P.E. are very helpful.

Race Restrictions: Must be of a race that can possess psionics. Most common among humans (70%), but also among other nature loving races such as Elves (15%) and Kankoran (10%). About 70% of Freezers are male.

R.C.C. Skills: Much time and energy has gone into developing psionic powers. Like other psychics, few skills are known, and many of these skills emphasize survival.

Speak native language (usually American) and one other at 98%.

Another Language of choice (+15%).

Climbing (+20%)

Horsemanship: Cowboy (+15%)

Land Navigation (+20%)

Lore: Any two of choice (+20%).

Pilot: Skis, snowboards, and dogsleds: 75% +2% per level.

Pilot: Automobile or Truck (+10%)

Prowl (+20%)

Track Animals (+20%)

Wilderness Survival (+20%)

W.P. Rifle (bolt-action). **Bonus:** +1 to strike.

W.P. Knife

W.P.: One of choice.

Hand to Hand: Basic (can be changed to Expert for one R.C.C. Related Skill or Martial Arts for two).

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select any two Physical skills, any three Wilderness skills, and four other skills at level one. Select two more skills at levels 3 and 6, and one skill at levels 9 and 12.

Communications: Any.

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any (+5%, +10% to Cooking, Fishing, and Sewing).

Electrical: Automotive or Basic only.

Espionage: Any except Disguise, Forgery or Impersonation.

Mechanical: Automotive and Basic only.

Medical: First Aid (+10%) or Holistic Medicine only (+20%, but counts as two skills).

Military: Camouflage, Recognize Weapon Quality, and Trap

Construction only (+15%).

Physical: Any except Acrobatics (+10%, Swimming is +15%).

Pilot: Any except Jets and Helicopters.

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Any (+5%).

Science: Any except Chemistry.

Technical: Any (+10% for Languages, +15% for Lore skills).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+20%).

Secondary Skills: Select two at levels one, four and seven.

Standard Equipment: Wilderness clothing, extra pair of gloves and boots, sunglasses or tinted goggles, plus a spare pair, utility belt, several pouches, backpack, large backpack, extra coat (to blend in or give to others), NG-S2 survival kit, first aid kit, spare sleeping bag, heavy duty flashlight with extra batteries, large canteen, cooking gear, 100 feet (30 m) of heavy rope, gas mask, spare compass, binoculars, fishing pole and lures, 2D4 flares, a week's supply of food, and some personal items. Body armor can be of any type, but lean toward light to medium suits for the best mobility and low Prowl penalty.

Weapons include an ax or hatchet (for use on trees or enemies), survival knife, set of quality skinning knives, silver plated dagger, a Vibro-Blade, and one ancient weapon of choice. The Freezer's most prized weapon will be a high powered hunting rifle, often a family heirloom. It may be old, but is in excellent condition, and has a 10-power magnification scope (possibly passive nightvision), and has been modified enough so that nothing jingles or shines on it to give away the Freezer's position. Has 100 conventional rounds (for hunting), a box of 24 explosive rounds (for larger, more dangerous game or self-defense), and 24 silver rounds for use against were-beasts or other menaces. The Freezer also has at least one Mega-Damage weapon that he keeps in reserve, typically a laser rifle with 3 clips.

Vehicles may vary, but they'll always have a set of skis and poles for backup. Tend to go for real or robot horses (robot horse not available to start), with a second horse or pack animal to carry equipment. Often, they'll own a jeep or other off-road vehicle, usually trucks and 4X4's. Or, they may opt for a light snowmobile or hovercycle. Professional scouts especially prefer hover vehicles.

Money: Almost none, just 2D6X10 in cash and trade goods worth 1D4X1000 credits. Everything else was spent on food and equipment. They don't need much money in the wilderness, but can earn a good living as scouts and trackers.

Cybernetics: None to start, and hate them, not just because they disrupt their natural powers, but because implants are unnatural.

Freezers in the Coalition: Only a few of these rare psychics (fewer than 20) have been recruited into the CS, operating mainly as scouts or hunting down fugitives. Still, the CS is impressed. Said one CS Ranger officer:

"We dropped this guy named Pines off in a helicopter in the middle of nowhere. His assignment was to hunt down some criminal that'd escaped into an old National Park a week earlier.

"It was insanely cold that day in the chopper! I asked Pines if was sure he wanted to do this alone. He told me he'd be back in one week with our man, dead or alive.

"Well, that Freezer lied, or at least he was too modest. We got a radio message in just two days saying he'd captured the fugitive. I was there at the pick up point. Yeah, Pines had caught him all right. Froze him in a block of ice with nothing but his head showing. He wasn't going to escape this time."

Freezers trained by the Coalition or some other military state will have W.P. Energy Rifle, Radio: Basic (+5%), and often Hand to Hand: Expert. They'll also have access to Coalition facilities, armor, weapons, vehicles, and equipment. Wages are usually good, typically the same as the Grunt, possibly as high as Military Specialists or Special Forces, depending on their missions.

Optional Skill Selection: Not every Freezer hails from the cold wilderness. Some come from the urban sprawl, and as such, have different skills. If the player wishes to play a 'city slicker' instead, just make the following adjustments and substitutions.

Under **#4, Powers for Survival:** substitute the powers listed with Presence Sense, Radiate Horror Factor, and Mask I.S.P. and Psionics. Under **#10, Bonuses:** change to +2 to initiative, +2 to strike, parry, pull punch, and roll with impact. +2 to save vs Horror Factor at level one, plus 1 at levels 4 and 7. Add 10 S.D.C.

Skill note regarding Lore skills: Similar to above, but is familiar with urban creatures like the Spiny Ravager and D-Bees like the Quick-Flex alien, etc. (many found in **Coalition War Campaign**).

Under **R.C.C. Skills** instead has:

Speak native language (usually American) and one other at 98%.

Literacy: American (+10%)

Computer Operation (+15%)

Land Navigation (+20%)

Lore: Any two of choice (+20%).

Pilot: Motorcycle (+15%)

Pilot: One of choice (+10%).

Prowl (+10%)

Streetwise and Streetwise: Drugs (+15% each)

Find Contraband (+15%)

W.P. Energy Pistol. **Bonus:** +1 strike.

W.P. Knife

W.P. One of choice.

Related Skills: Select 7, but with these bonuses and restrictions:

Communications: Any (+5%).

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Automotive or Basic only.

Espionage: Any (+5%).

Mechanical: Automotive and Basic only.

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: Military Etiquette and Recognize Weapon Quality only.

Physical: Any except Acrobatics.

Pilot: Any except Jets and Helicopters.

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Any (+10%).

Science: Any except Chemistry.

Technical: Any (+10% for Languages, Lore, and Computer skills).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: None.

Secondary Skills: Select six at level one, plus 2 at levels four and eight.

Standard Equipment: More befitting a City Rat: Several sets of clothing, set of 'working' colors (with emblems, gang affiliations, etc.), some fashionable clothes, sunglasses, flashlight, 50 feet (15.2 m) of rope, portable computer, mini-disc recorder and player, lock picks or other criminal gear, personal items, and 2 fake sets of I.D., along with one true set. Wears any light M.D.C. body armor. Weapons include a few knives, energy pistol of choice with 4 extra clips, a Vibro-Blade or neural mace and possible one other energy weapon. Vehicle will be a souped up car, motorcycle or hoverbike.

Money: 1D4X1000 credits, plus black market items valued at 2D4X1000 credits.

All other details are the same, though the city Freezer may have useful social contacts, friends, safe houses, and Black Market connections.

Experience: Use the Headhunter experience table (see **Rifts RPG®**, page 17) for the standard Freezer, or use the Burster experience table for the 'city' type Freezer.

The Soaker

Bursters are masters of fire and Pyrokinesis. Zappers have uncanny control over electricity. So it is with the Soaker as well, only the Soaker's realm of expertise is Hydrokinesis, the ability to command water. The Soaker exercises such degree of control over water, that the psychics can even summon it from the air around them.

Not surprisingly, the Soaker is at home in, on, under, or even just around water. They often live near lakes, streams, or the ocean. Still, many are found in arid, dry regions. In these areas plagued by drought, or worse, vampires, a Soaker can be a blessing. By locating fresh sources of water and helping to preserve the water, a Soaker can give new life to a desert village. And their water-based powers are excellent weapons in the fight against vampires and other fiends.

Many nations, including the Coalition, are recruiting Soakers as vampire slayers or as naval commandos. Here you have the perfect amphibious soldier, equally at home on land or at sea. Soakers make ideal scouts and saboteurs, sneaking on and off hostile ships with minimal diving gear. They can earn plenty of money either as vampire hunters or as naval Special Forces operatives. Soakers often make their living at sea: fishing, piloting ships, fighting pirates, or just seeking adventure. They are the most common of all the newer psychic classes, being found about as often as Bursters.

Powers of the Soaker

1. Water Senses: The Soaker has a natural affinity for water and can sense the location of water sources over great distances as well as discern the quality of the water (drinkable or polluted).

Sense Large, Open Sources of Water: Such as lakes, river, or streams, at 75% accuracy, plus 2% per level. Can sense the general direction and distance of the water source, as well as its approximate size (a trickle or a vast supply).

Range: 100 miles (160 km), plus 10 miles (16 km) per level.



Duration: 10 minutes per level.

I.S.P. Cost: 4

Sense Underground or Hidden Sources of Water: The psychic can detect water, or liquids that are at least 50% water, whether the sources are underground or sealed in a container.

Range: 1000 feet (305 m), plus 20 feet (6.1 m) per level for underground water sources, half that distance for water sealed in containers.

Duration: 5 minutes per level.

I.S.P. Cost: 4

Sense Depth of Water: The Soaker can accurately estimate the depth of any body of water. The estimate will be within about 2 feet (0.6 m) for rivers and streams or small lakes, and 20 feet (6.1 m) for large bodies of water such as major lakes or the world's oceans. This is helpful for finding the safest crossing point or for determining safe diving depths for vessels, etc.

Range: 100 feet (30 m), plus 20 feet (6.1 m) per level.

Duration: 5 minutes per level.

I.S.P. Cost: 2

Sense Impurities: The Soaker is able to sense impurities in water, as well as determine the general nature of the contaminant.

Range: Up to 50 feet (15.2 m), plus five feet (1.5 m) per level.

Duration: 2 minutes per level.

I.S.P. Cost: 2

Cleansing Touch: Furthermore, the psychic can eliminate any poisons or toxins in the water.

Range: Up to 50 feet (15.2 m), plus five feet (1.5 m) per level.

Duration: Instantaneous.

Amount of Water Purified: Four gallons (15.1 liters) per level.

I.S.P. Cost: 10

2. Create Water: The Soaker is able to condense the moisture in the air, soil, and even plant life into water. This water can then be manipulated via any of the Soaker's other powers. The water can be placed into a container or made to hover in place via Telekinesis. Limitations: Using this power in very dry climates costs twice as much I.S.P.

Range: 10 feet (3 m) maximum.

Duration: Instant creation.

I.S.P. Cost: 2

Note: Horrible as it sounds, this power can be used to draw water from a living person! Such an action would never be considered unless the Soaker was in mortal danger, or if the psychic is a truly evil individual. In the latter case, this makes for a wonderful assassination technique. The range is 30 feet (9.1 m), maximum, and there must be exposed skin on the target. I.S.P. cost is 10, and it inflicts 3D6 damage direct to Hit Points. Fur-

thermore, if his Hit Points are depleted, the victim is -30% to save versus coma and death. This attack does no damage to supernatural beings or creatures of magic; only affects mortal foes.

Water Aura: This power can be used to surround the psychic with an aura of water. The water is held in place via Telekinesis and appears in the form of water rings or a tornado like swirl of water surrounding the Soaker. While it does not afford Mega-Damage protection, it is useful for fighting fires, and it terrifies vampires (Horror Factor of 14!) The water makes the Soaker difficult to fight. They are slippery to the touch and the flowing water impairs an attacker's vision. Attackers are minus 2 to strike or parry, and -4 to entangle.

Range: Self only.

Duration: 2 minutes per level of experience.

I.S.P. Cost: 6

S.D.C. protection: The aura provides 50 S.D.C., plus 10 per level of experience, and regenerates at a rate of 10 per melee. This is running water, and as such inflicts 4D6 to vampires per strike (any time the vampire touches the aura or when the Soaker hits a vampire).

3. Control Water: This is essentially an improved form of Hydrokinesis. The psychic can hurl water greater distances, summon water spouts, and even lessen the effects of tidal waves.

Boil Water: The psychic can increase the temperature of water to its boiling point. From there, it can be tossed at opponents.

Range: 40 feet (12.2 m).

Duration: Instant boiling, and stays hot for four minutes.

Damage: Splashing hot water on the body is terribly painful, especially if it hits the face or groin. Normally does 2D4 damage, but tossing water in the face also causes the loss of all attacks for 1D6 melees, and temporary blindness for 3D6 melees (-10 to strike, parry and dodge). Characters of a good alignment will never use this tactic unless it's a life or death situation.

I.S.P. Cost: 2 per gallon (3.8 liters) of water.

Bonus: +1 to strike.

Increase or Diminish Waves: The Soaker can psionically influence waves, either increasing their size to make water travel more dangerous, or decreasing their size and calming the nearby waters. Wave height can be controlled to add up to eight feet (2.4 m) to the average wave height, plus one foot (0.3 m) per every other level of experience). Alternatively, this power can diminish waves, *decreasing* their size and intensity by the same amount.

Range: Influences waters up to 1000 feet (305 m) away, controlling a radius of 300 feet (9.1 m), plus 20 feet (6.1 m) per level.

Duration: Effects of calming waters or increasing wave height last for 20 minutes, plus two per level of experience.

Damage: None for calm waters. Extreme waves of eight feet or more will buffet large watercraft and can capsize smaller vessels. At the very least, speed of any ship caught in rough seas is reduced to about half, and crew members will be tossed about (taking about 2D4 S.D.C. damage per hour) making for a miserable voyage.

I.S.P. Cost: 20



Hurl Water: The psychic can shoot a stream of water from his fingertips. This has a variety of uses, from damaging electrical devices, to blinding an opponent, or damaging vampires.

Range: 50 feet (15.2 m).

Duration: Instant.

Damage: Minimal to most people, just 1D6 S.D.C., plus may blind them temporarily. Inflicts 4D6 damage to vampires.

I.S.P. Cost: 4

Bonus: +1 to strike.

Water Stream: This is a much more powerful stream of water, like a fire hose. It's strong enough to knock most people over and can literally melt vampires!

Range: 80 feet (24.4 m).

Duration: Instant.

Damage: 3D6 S.D.C., plus it's very likely that they'll be knocked down. Defenders must roll a 14 or higher to maintain their balance. Inflicts 1D6X10 damage to vampires and is likely to send them running for their unives!

I.S.P. Cost: 6

Bonus: +1 to strike.

4. Water Walk: The Soaker can walk or run across the surface of water with excellent speed and grace. Reduce running speed by just 25%.

Range: Self only.

Duration: 5 minutes per level.

I.S.P. Cost: 25

5. Breathe Water: This is a form of psychic purification that enables the Soaker to absorb oxygen from water. This enables them to remain submerged without the aid of bulky diving gear. This power does not eliminate bubbles like a re-breather, though, so the Soaker may give away his position. Reduce Prowl by 10%.

Range: Self only.

Duration: 15 minutes per level.

I.S.P. Cost: 6

6. Water Abilities and Bonuses: The Soaker is an instinctive swimmer with a skill of 80% plus 2% per level. Add +1 to initiative, +1 to parry, and +2 to dodge underwater. This is also an *automatic* dodge that does not cost any melee attacks. Also, speed is doubled while swimming. Natural Prowl ability in water, 70%, or add 20% to the Prowl skill if it's known. Retains full range of vision underwater. Can slip in and out of the water with no sound and can hold their breath for up to five minutes. The Soaker can also survive depths of up to 100 feet (30 m) without the aid of any special gear. No I.S.P. cost; automatic abilities.

7. Other Psionic Powers: At first level, the Soaker has the following additional psionic powers: Impervious to Cold, Sense Evil, Suppress Fear, Telekinetic Leap (excellent for boarding ships), and any four total from the categories of Physical or Sensitive. Alternatively, the player may select Bio-Manipulation, Psychic Body Field, or Radiate Horror Factor, but each of these counts as *two* lesser power selections. Select two additional Physical or Sensitive powers at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12.

8. I.S.P.: Roll 3D4X10 and add the character's M.E. attribute number to determine base Inner Strength Points. Add 10 I.S.P. per level of experience. I.S.P. recovers at the rate of 2 per hour of activity, or 12 per hour of sleep or meditation.

9. Saving Throw versus Psionic Attack: As a Master Psychic, the Soaker needs only a 10 or higher to save.

10. P.P.E.: Very little. Most has been spent developing psionic abilities. Only 2D6 P.P.E. remains.

11. R.C.C. Bonuses and Skills: +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +1 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with impact, +2 to save vs Horror Factor. Add 2D6 S.D.C.

12. Penalties: The Soaker takes double damage from flame and heat based attacks.

The Soaker R.C.C., also known as Water Warriors and Washouts, or sometimes a cute nickname like "Squirt."

Alignment Restrictions: None, but most (80%) are good or selfish.

Attribute Requirements: None, but a high M.E. and P.E. are helpful.

Race Restrictions: Must be of a race that can possess psionics. Most common among humans (70%), and human-like races, with True Atlanteans making up the second largest percentage (5%). About 65% of Soakers are female.

R.C.C. Skills: Because of the time and effort expended in developing psychic powers, few skills are available to the Soaker. Most of these, naturally, relate to water.

Speaks native language (usually American) at 98%.

Speaks one additional language (+20%).

Swimming (80% +2% per level)

S.C.U.B.A. (+25%)

Fishing (+20%)

Undersea and Sea Survival (+20%)

Track and Hunt Sea Animals (+20%)

Pilot: Water Skiing & Surfing (+15%)

Pilot: Water Scooters (+15%)

Pilot: One watercraft of choice (+15%).

Read Sensors (+5%)

Navigation (+12%)

W.P. Speargun (Bonus: +1 to strike at first level).

W.P. Trident (Bonus +1 to strike, and +1 to pin/disarm, all at level one).

W.P. One of choice.

Hand to Hand: Basic (can be changed to Expert for one R.C.C. Related Skill or Martial Arts for two).

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select six other skills at level one. Select two more skills at levels 3 and 6, and one skill at levels 9 and 12.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Basic only.

Espionage: Any except Disguise, Forgery or, Impersonation.

Mechanical: Automotive or Basic only, water or submersible vehicle mechanics are (+10%).

Medical: First Aid or Holistic only.

Military: None. For those with military training/assignments, any (+15% to Underwater Demolitions).

Physical: Any except Acrobatics or Wrestling.

Pilot: Any except Jets and Tanks (+5%, +15% to watercraft of any type, including power armor).

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Any (+5%).

Science: Any (+10% to Biology and underwater skills).

Technical: Any (+10% for underwater skills).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Underwater skills (+10%) or Land Navigation only.

Secondary Skills: Select four secondary skills at level one, plus two additional at levels 4 and 8.

Standard Equipment: A few sets of clothes (including a few swim suits), uniform if part of a military organization, wet suit, swim goggles, fishing pole and lures, life preserver or vest (for friends), sunglasses or tinted goggles, gas mask or air filter, silver or wooden cross, compass, two spare canteens, one large canteen, utility belt, several pouches, backpack, heavy duty underwater type flashlight with extra batteries, 50 feet (15.2 m) of rope, 2D6 flares (mix of regular and underwater types), a survival knife, and personal items. Will wear any light or medium body armor on land and has a light to medium environmental wetsuit as well. See **Rifts®** World Book 7, **Underseas** pages 137-139 for examples.

Weapons: A blue-green spectrum laser rifle (typically 3D6 M.D.C. or a pulse model, doing 2D6 damage per single shot, 6D6 per triple pulse; 2000 foot (610 m) range; 20 shots per short E-Clip, 30 for a long clip), spear or trident (either conventional, 2D6 S.D.C., or Vibro-Blade, 2D6 M.D.C.), speargun with 25 S.D.C. spears (2D6 damage), 10 explosive tip spears (4D6 Mega-Damage), and 6 Vibro-tip spears (2D4 damage, reusable, just retrieve them). Vampire hunters will also have a mallet and six wooden stakes, a Techno-Wizard

water gun (typically a rifle or shotgun), and 1D4 storm flares or other anti-vampire weapons.

Vehicles: Will have a set of skis, a surfboard, or a windboard (surfboard with collapsible sail) for fun and as backup transportation. Main mode of transportation is either a hovercycle, motorcycle, or just hitching rides from friends on land. Will have a small motorboat or jet ski/water scooter, possibly a small hydrofoil for use on the water. If the Game Master allows, the character can have two vehicles, especially if neither is very powerful (often unarmed or gasoline powered), like a bike or jetpack for land use, and a jet ski for the water. The character must have the necessary piloting skill in any case.

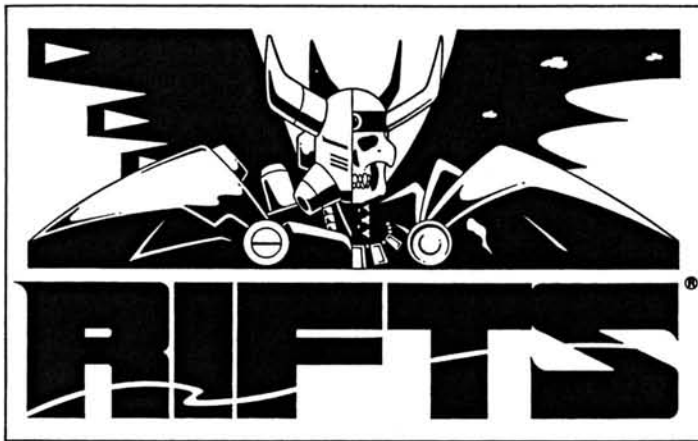
Money: 4D6X100 in cash, and black market items worth 4D4X1000 credits. Can earn lots of cash as vampire hunters or in the military.

Cybernetics: None to start, and tends to avoid them when possible (disrupts their powers).

Soakers in the Coalition: Soakers are always in demand. Wilderness towns hire them to locate water or fight vampires. The Coalition has recruited about 70 to fight vampires and other menaces in their cities. An additional 200 belong to the Coalition Navy. They operate as scouts, salvage experts, and naval commandos.

Soakers trained by the Coalition or some other military state will have any one extra W.P., Radio: Basic (+10%), one additional Espionage or Military skill, and often Hand to Hand: Expert. This means they'll also have access to Coalition facilities, armor, weapons, vehicles, and equipment. Wages are usually very good, roughly the same as Military Specialists.

Experience: Use the Burster experience table (see *Rifts RPG*®, page 17).



Coalition Support Vehicles

By Wayne Field

During the campaign against Tolkeen, the people of North America were given a full view of the Coalition's new army. Mighty new machines were revealed to the world, as the Coalition fought to eradicate the hated Tolkeenites from the surface of the Earth.

One thing the campaign against Tolkeen did was bring to the public eye an array of support vehicles that few were aware even existed. These vehicles have been around for years, or

even decades, but have maintained a quiet presence in the background, doing the unassuming, but vital task of maintaining and supporting large units when they are away from their bases.

Long ago, the well proven Mark V APC was chosen to be the basic frame for a number of support vehicles that would be capable of following large units (Company size or larger) into the field for extended deployments away from base. While some semi-permanent bases are constructed during extended deployments (like the Tolkeen Campaign), it is neither effective nor practical to build bases all over a theatre of operations.

The following are a few of the key support vehicles that the Coalition uses when it deploys its armies into the field on a large scale. Note that the Coalition has plans on the drawing board for newer versions of most of these vehicles based mostly around the Death Bringer APC. However, due to the success of the existing vehicles, there is no rush to have them replaced.

Coalition Mark V Armored Personnel Carrier Support Variants

Model Type: APC

Class: Infantry Assault and Transport Vehicle.

Crew: Four: pilot, co-pilot, and two gunners. May vary by type; see individual descriptions for details.

Troop Transport Capabilities: None.

M.D.C. by Location:

*Top, Rear Turret — 100 (shielded)

*Center Turret — 50

*Lifting Crane — 75

*Sensor Mast — 50

Side Laser Turrets (4) — 20 each

Forward Headlights (2) — 2 each

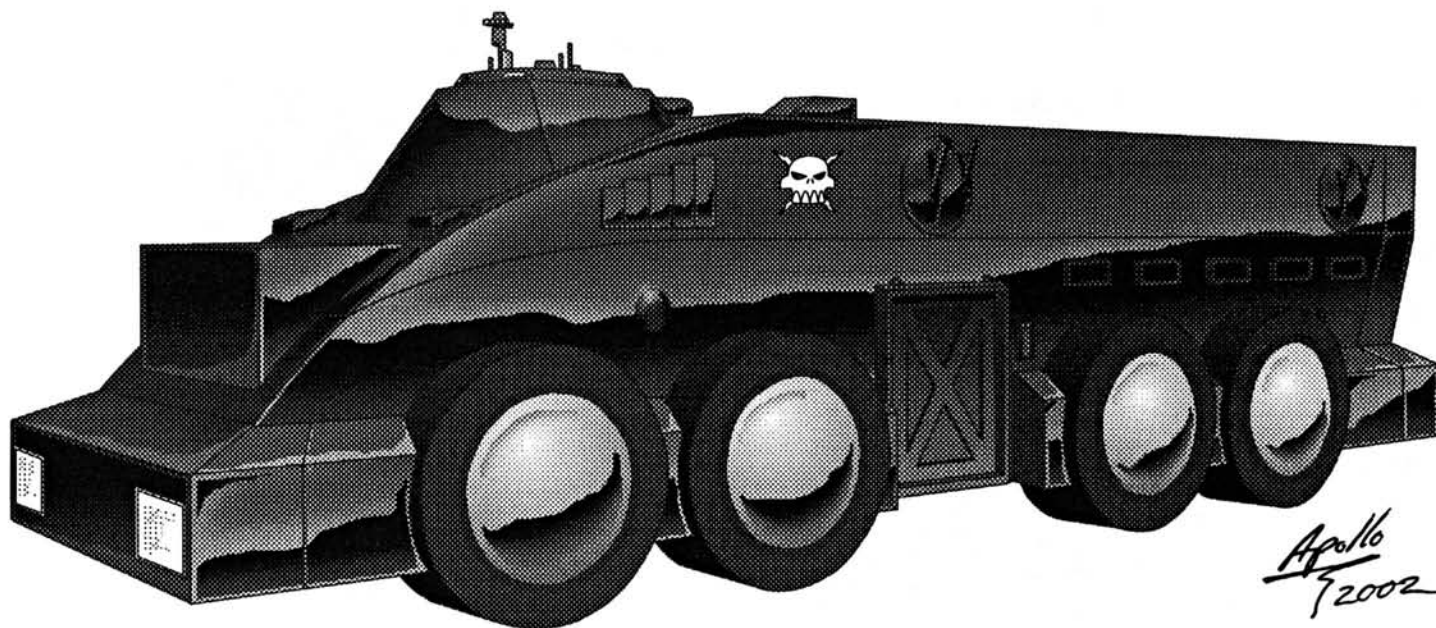
**Main Body — 350

Reinforced Crew Compartment — 100

Wheels (8) — 50 each

Note: The side turrets are small and difficult targets to hit. Thus, they can only be hit when a character makes a called shot and even then, the attacker is -3 to strike.

*These locations are not present on every vehicle. See individual descriptions for details.



****Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body will shut the APC down completely, rendering it useless.**

Speed: 90 mph (144 km) maximum on land. In water, speed is about 30 mph (48 km).

Statistical Data

Height: 16 feet, 8 inches (5.1 m).

Width: 9 feet (3.6 m).

Length: 33 feet, 6 inches (10.2 m).

Weight: 12 tons fully loaded.

Cargo: Minimal storage space; personal gear, weapons, and armor for the vehicle's crew are stored in locked overhead compartments.

Power System: Nuclear; average energy life is 15 years.

Weapon Systems

The Mark V Support Vehicles are not intended for combat duty. As such, almost all of their weapons and sensors have been removed. With the exception of the side laser turrets, all other weapons were left out of the modified designs. The side turrets were left so that the APC had at least some basic self-defense capability.

- 1. C-2T Dual Laser Turrets (4):** There are two light laser turrets on either side of the APC. These are operated by the co-pilot and gunner, primarily used against enemy troops. Each has full 360 degree rotation and a 90 degree arc of fire.

Primary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D. per dual blast.

Range: 4000 feet (1200 m).

Rate of Fire: Can shoot up to six times per melee.

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

Mark V/K Mobile Kitchen

It has been said since long before the Great Cataclysm came that an army travels on its stomach. This is as true for the Coalition as it was for Hannibal, Napoleon, and Schwarzkopf.

While on active patrol, Coalition troops sustain themselves on CS field rations known as Integrated Ration Packets (IRP's). IRP's have a shelf life of about five years and, after combat

technology, are the most well-stocked item in the Coalition's storerooms.

These two pound packets each contain one full meal that includes a snack, entree, dessert, and a package of purification powder (enough to purify up to 3 quarts/liters of water and comes in 1 of 4 "flavors": orange, grape, cherry, and watermelon). Various IRP meals are optimistically named "Steak and Potatoes," "Chicken and Rice," "Vegetable Medley," "Spaghetti and Meat Sauce," and other appetizing dishes.

Common belief among troops is that the IRP acronym was chosen because it was reflective of the sound one made after first trying IRP's. Other's insist that the letters really stand for "I'm Really gonna Puke!" Field rations have always had a well-earned reputation for not being the best cuisine, and even the advanced technology of the Coalition hasn't made much difference.

The taste aside, one IRP per day is enough to provide the average person with all their nutritional needs; due to their high activity levels, troops are given two per day. IRP's (or equivalent non-Coalition products) are available on the open and Black Markets for 15 credits per IRP, with prices changing to reflect availability and demand.

In order to provide hot meals to troops operating away from established bases, the Coalition converted the chassis of the well proven Mark V APC to that of a self-contained mobile kitchen. These Mark V/K vehicles are sent out to accompany any large troop movements away from any of the Coalition's permanent bases. Use of tents and other lightweight mobile buildings is far more limited than it used to be, because too many kitchens were lost to stray weapons fire or a rampaging monster.

One Mark V/K, accompanied by food-carrying cargo vehicles, is usually deployed per two companies of personnel (320 combat troops) whenever those troops will operate away from base for more than 7 days.

Crew: Ten; two cooks and eight others who act as cook's assistants, servers, and dishwashers. The crew are regular infantry and are combat trained in APC operation, filling the regular



Mark V stations. They just happen to know how to cook as well.

Troop Transport Capabilities: None. A few passengers could be crammed into the kitchen area, but would be *very* uncomfortable.

Black Market Cost: Three or four million at most. Due to its stripped down nature the Mark V/K is not a viable combat vehicle, and few groups seem interested in a portable kitchen.

Features of Note:

1. Kitchen Facilities: The rear 2/3 of the Mark V/K contains a full restaurant-grade cooking area with two large ovens/grills, several microwaves, prep area, one high capacity/high speed dish-washer, and two cafeteria-style serving booths (one across the rear hatch, one through the center doors). The ovens in the Mark V/K use a combination of microwaves and infrared heat to fast-cook food. With these ovens a 20 lb (9 kg) turkey can be cooked in less than 15 minutes, a roast in 10 minutes, and a pizza in 2 minutes. When adequately supplied and operating at peak capacity, a single Mark V/K can supply 500 hot meals per hour.

2. Water Storage and Purification: The two upper weapon turrets of the Mark V/K have been gutted and sealed to act as water tanks. Rather than have separate hot and cold water storage, water is heated or cooled as it reaches each sink (there are four large dual basins total). The APC also has water pumping and purification equipment with 2500 feet (762 m) of hose, so that it may draw from available water sources.

3. Sensor System Note: The Mark V/K has the following robot vehicle features:

1. Nuclear Powered
3. Combat Computer
5. Laser Targeting System
6. Radio Communication
8. Spotlights

11. Voice Actuated Locking System

12. Complete Environmental Pilot and Crew Compartment

Mark V/HM

Hazardous Materials Unit

One of the core advantages that the Coalition military holds over the average kingdom in North America, is the fact that almost every single vehicle in service operates off of a nuclear power system. Most of the nuclear engines in use can run for years, or even decades, before needing refueling.

This practice has two key advantages: First, military units are capable of operating for much longer periods of time away from established bases. This gives the CS a serious edge against mechanized opponents with a limited operating range. The second advantage is the freedom of not having to maintain fuel dumps or large portable generators. Both of these are especially vulnerable to attack, and liquid fuels must be restocked frequently. (*A 1990's armored division consumed about 600,000 gallons of fuel a day!*)

There is one serious drawback to the widespread use of nuclear engines in combat vehicles. When a nuclear powered vehicle is destroyed in combat, the unit's engine usually survives relatively intact. It is not uncommon, however, for the battered engine to leak dangerous levels of radiation. Despite the best efforts of Coalition, Northern Gun, and Manistique Imperium engineers, no one has yet to design an engine housing that can take the kind of damage dealt by modern military weapons. Best case scenarios often result in damaged systems leaking toxic coolants, while the worst cases see a broken or shattered engine housing with radioactive material scattered over valuable farmland or watersheds.

Early in its history, the Coalition realized the need for special cleanup crews that would enter an area once an incident was

over, and retrieve and clean up any contaminated material. This resulted in the creation of the Coalition's Environmental Safety Program. This program was tasked with the retrieval and cleanup of any nuclear materials that posed a hazard to Coalition territory. In addition to preserving the environment, the program also allows for the recycling of nuclear materials whenever possible. While the Coalition does have an impressive stockpile of both fuel and weapons-grade nuclear material, it is not limitless. The safety program also allowed the Coalition to deny others the use of any salvaged nuclear material.

The Environmental Safety Program needed a retrieval vehicle for its specialized work, and the Mark V APC was once again called upon to fill a task that its designers had not originally intended for it. The interior of the Mark V was gutted and fitted with extra layers of shielding to contain the lethal cargos it would carry. Both upper turrets were removed, and a heavy lifting crane was mounted in place of the rear turret.

The interior of the Mark V/HM is divided into two areas. The front 1/3 of the APC is accessed from the forward hatch and contains the crew stations and six power armor units. In the past, these were stripped-down SAMAS units. The wings, thrusters, and weapon systems were removed and extra radiation shielding added.

One common practice is to take power armor units that have been heavily damaged in combat and convert them for use by the HazMat teams. When a power armor is too damaged to be effectively repaired back to combat status, but not damaged to the point where it is a total write-off, the suits are stripped of weapons, flight systems, and almost all sensors, and refitted with extra radiation shielding. While it is most common to see modified SAMAS and Mauler power armors assigned to the Mark V/HM, Smiling Jack, Striker, and even the occasional

Super SAMAS can be seen with the HazMat teams. Keep in mind however, these suits carry no armament or flight systems, and are intended for environmental protection and heavy lifting only.

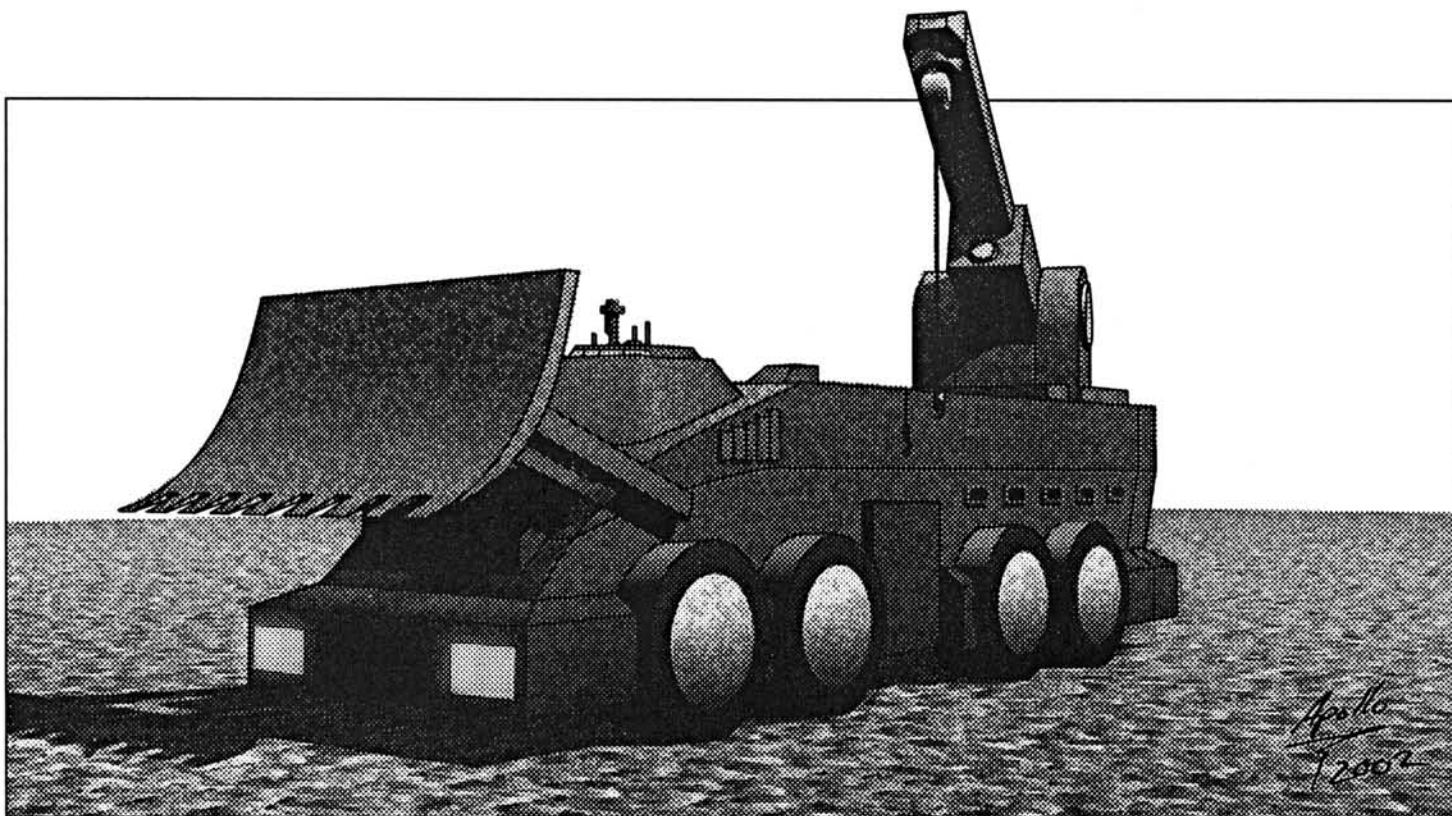
The rear 2/3 of the Mark V/HM is only accessible through the large rear hatch. Both side hatches are sealed (welded shut) and there is no interior access to the containment area. Heavily shielded and sealed to prevent fluid spills from leaking, the containment area is large enough to hold two robot/large vehicle engines or 10 power armor/small vehicle engines. In the rare instance that the Mark V/HM has to retrieve material from something larger (such as a Death's Head), just the fuel rods are taken or special equipment is called in.

The Mark V/HM also has a large plow attached to the front end for pushing contaminated soil and other materials into piles for disposal. The plow can be raised to clear the front hatch for crew access.

Mark V/HM units are usually accompanied by a Mark V/NBC for decontamination. Otherwise, crews remain inside the APC or their armors until they can access decontamination facilities back at base.

The crews of these vehicles are trained to deal with the especially dangerous job of nuclear salvage. They are trained in nuclear safety, and are fully versed in nuclear engine repair and construction. The crews are also skilled in ordnance disposal. This is required because they are often working on damaged vehicles that still have live munitions in badly damaged weapon systems.

One interesting side note on the use of nuclear engines: With the heavy losses suffered in the campaign against Tolkeen, numerous members of the military have begun advocating the idea of reducing the fuel store of many of the military's vehicles. The



thinking is, why put a 20 year engine in a vehicle that may not last 20 weeks?

Current suggestions have fuel stores being reduced to a monthly rating. This would mean that a 20 year fuel reserve would be reduced to a 20 month fuel reserve. If accepted, this would mean more frequent engine overhauls, but this would be offset by less of a loss when an engine was irrecoverable (a very common occurrence). Also, if engines were retrofitted to take advantage of the more frequent rebuilds, there could be a 10 to 25% reduction in the weight of the engines. While this line of thinking is gaining support, it remains to be seen if the policy will be adopted.

Crew: Eight; two are APC crew, six are collection specialists. All have the following skills in addition to their normal training: Nuclear, Biological, & Chemical Warfare (+10%), Demolitions Disposal (+10%), Mechanical Engineer (+15%), and Robot Mechanics (+15%). A +15% bonus is applied to Mechanical Engineer and Robot Mechanics when dealing specifically with engine related issues. The crew are regular infantry and are combat trained in APC operation, filling the regular Mark V stations.

Troop Transport Capabilities: None.

Black Market Cost: Three or four million at most. Due to its stripped down nature the Mark V/HM is not a viable combat vehicle, and few kingdoms have use for this type of vehicle.

Features of Note:

1. Heavy Lifting Crane: The Mark V/HM has a heavy crane mounted where the rear turret used to be. The crane can be fitted with a variety of different hooks and lifting electro-magnets in order to handle almost any lifting job.

The crane has a 75 ton lifting capacity and reaches a height of 60 feet (18.3 m) fully extended.

2. Hazardous Material Storage: The rear 2/3 of the APC's cargo area is fully sealed. There is enough room to safely store two robot vehicle engines, 10 power armor/small vehicle engines, or one robot engine and five power armor engines.

The area has its own separate environmental system that is used to contain any dangerous gases within the storage area. These controls also allow the crew to maintain atmospheric pressure, adjust temperature, and even create a complete vacuum in the rear compartment if desired.

3. Sensor System Note: The Mark V/HM has the following robot vehicle features.

1. Nuclear Powered
3. Combat Computer
5. Laser Targeting System
6. Radio Communication
8. Spotlights
11. Voice Actuated Locking System
12. Complete Environmental Pilot and Crew Compartment

Mark V/NBC Decontamination Unit

Developed in tandem with the Coalition's Environmental Safety Program (see the Mark V/HM for details), the Mark V/NBC provides full decontamination facilities for nuclear, biological, and chemical exposure. While environmental body armor, power armor, and vehicles provide excellent protection against a wide range of hazards, there is nothing to protect the individual when he or she must leave that protection.

With the development of the Coalition's nuclear weapons program, the dangers of fallout and radioactive contamination have become even more of a concern for the CS military. While the probability of nuclear weapons being deployed is slim, and the chance of them being used on land is even less, it was realized that safety measures would need to be expanded to counter the risk of exposure to radioactive material.

The Mark V/NBC is deployed under the same guidelines as the Mark V/K, with one being deployed for every two companies (320 troops). The appearance of the Mark V/NBC is similar to that of the Mark V/K, with the addition of a water cannon mounted on a small crane used for decontamination of tall robot vehicles.

Under optimal conditions, the Mark V/NBC can decontaminate 24 troops per hour, plus two small vehicles/power armor or one robot or large vehicle. Vehicles such as the Death's Head Transport and Fire Storm Mobile Fortress require at least two hours.

In a rare case of lateral thinking, the design team for the Mark V/NBC also included toilets and laundry facilities. This has slightly increased the morale of the troops attached to these units. No one likes digging latrines, and clean clothes and a hot shower are always welcome.

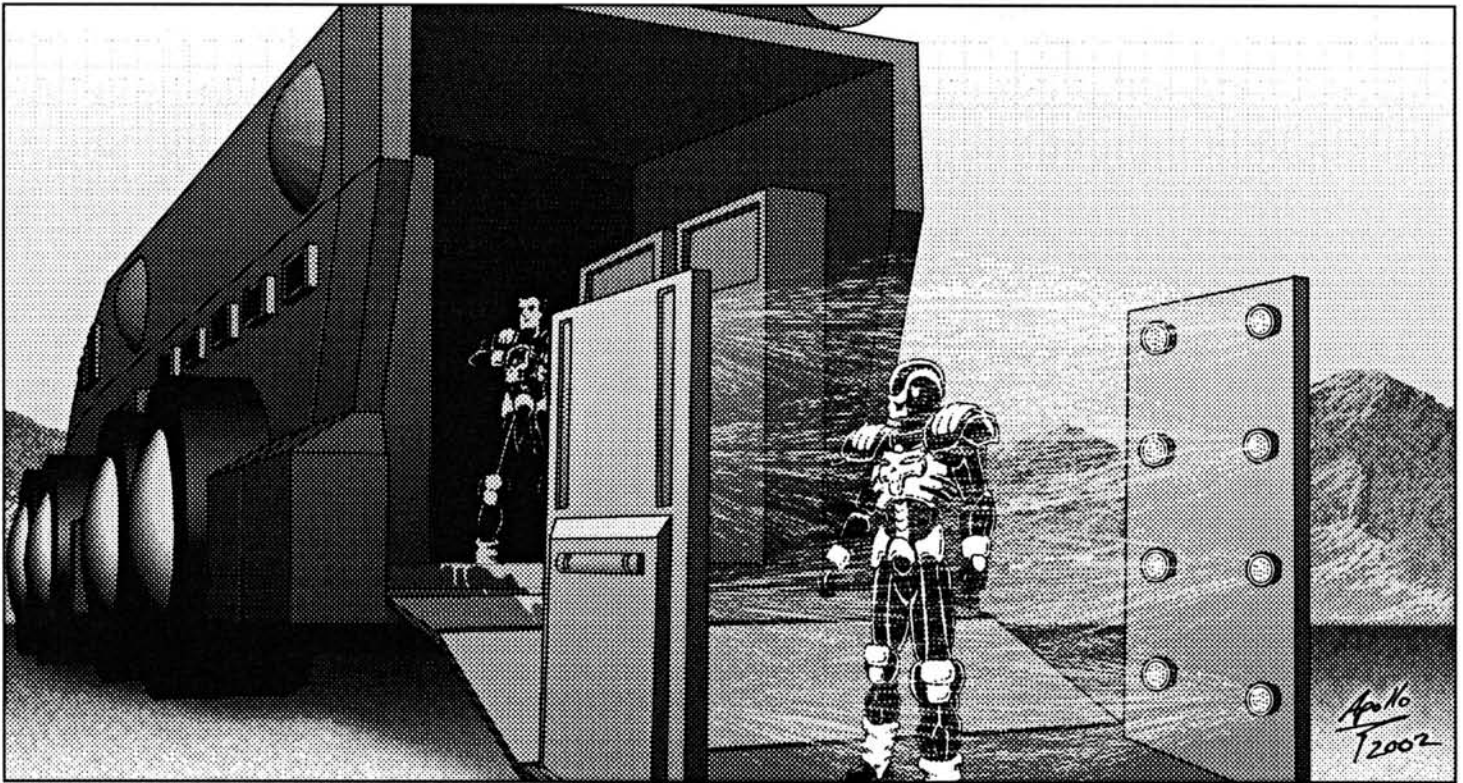
Crew: Eight; all have the Military skill: Nuclear, Biological, & Chemical Warfare (+25%). The crew are regular infantry and are combat trained in APC operation, filling the regular Mark V stations.

Troop Transport Capabilities: None. A few passengers could be crammed into various areas, but would be *very* uncomfortable.

Black Market Cost: Three or four million at most. Due to its stripped-down nature the Mark V/NBC is not a viable combat vehicle, and few kingdoms have use for this type of vehicle.

Features of Note:

1. Decontamination Facilities: The Mark V/NBC carries a wide range of soaps and disinfectants. When deployed for decontamination, a large rear hatch (effectively the entire rear end of the APC) is lowered and a rack of sprinkler heads deploys. Contaminated personnel are showered and scrubbed here first to wash away any contaminants. Once scrubbed down, the personnel remove any armor and proceed inside to the individual shower stalls. There are 12 showers total with dividers to provide basic privacy (similar to a bathroom stall). From there troops pass through an interior door where they can dry off and receive new fatigues, or simple jumpsuits for those re-donning body armor. Clothed once more, the troops pass through another door into a narrow hall that connects the two side hatches and separates the decontamination area from the latrine and laundry areas.



The APC also has a stock of heavy hoses and scrubbers for use on vehicles.

2. Latrine and Laundry: The forward half of the APC contains latrine and laundry facilities. There are six individual latrine stalls accessed primarily through the APC's front hatch. Each stall is equipped with a mini-incinerator capable of breaking down solid and liquid waste. The resulting ash is removed daily and deposited in a designated spot just outside the camp perimeter. Despite its origin, the nutrient rich ash is sterile and offers no risk of transmitting disease. In fact, some farmers have taken to raiding camp ash piles once the unit has moved on.

The laundry room sits between the latrines and waste corridor. The room contains two high capacity washer and dryer units, along with storage for towels and spare fatigues. The door leading to the latrines is usually kept closed for obvious reasons. The side hatches and door to the waste corridor are often open, weather permitting, when parked to allow better air circulation in the often humid room. Note, while not intended for such high volume, the laundry room often gets pressed into service as a camp laundry. This has lead Mark V/NBC crews to carry several replacement drive motors and dryer heater coils to keep the overworked laundry functioning.

3. Water Storage and Purification: The two upper weapon turrets of the Mark V/NBC have been gutted and sealed to act as water tanks. Both tanks are fitted with heater coils that quick heat the water to 110° F (43° C). The APC also has water pumping and purification equipment with 2500 feet (762 m) of hose, so that it may draw from available water sources.

4. Sensor System Note: The Mark V/NBC has the following robot vehicle features:

1. Nuclear Powered
3. Combat Computer
5. Laser Targeting System

6. Radio Communication

8. Spotlights

11. Voice Actuated Locking System

12. Complete Environmental Pilot and Crew Compartment

Mark V/REP Mobile Repair Unit

The Mark V/REP is one of the more uncommon Mark V variants. While every field unit has use of a maintenance and repair facility, the Mark V/REP is insufficient to meet these needs. The REP Unit is fully capable of completing minor repairs, but it falls short when trying to accomplish the level of maintenance that field units usually require. Standard Coalition procedure is usually to cycle units in and out of the field or, if that proves impractical, simply resupply/reequip the unit in the field.

The stores of the Mark V/REP are capable of basic small arms and body armor repair, and limited power armor repair. In general terms, the Mark V/REP can repair/rebuild 75 small arms (pistols and rifles) and 25 suits of body armor, and conduct minor repairs on 5 small vehicles/power armor suits before needing to restock. (See below for details.)

The Mark V/REP was classified a failure shortly after entering service and produced in very limited numbers. Those in service have seen little use due to current Coalition military doctrine and the REP's inability to properly fulfill its mission.

When it is sent into the field, it is deployed on a three per company basis and is often accompanied by several parts supply vehicles.

Crew: Six, all are standard Coalition Technical Officers. There are two with the Technician MOS and four with the Engineering MOS. They are also combat trained in APC operation, filling the regular Mark V stations.

Troop Transport Capabilities: None. A few passengers could be crammed into the repair bay, but would be *very* uncomfortable.



Black Market Cost: Three or four million at most. Due to its stripped-down nature, the Mark V/REP is not a viable combat vehicle. Add one million if the APC still has its full stock of spare parts.

Features of Note:

1. Repair Bay: The rear 3/4 of the APC has been converted into a repair bay. The bay has a full stock of tools and parts for completing minor repairs to small arms, body armor, small vehicles, and power armor. Rather than provide a piece by piece list, the following is a rough guideline for what is contained in the stores:

- 1000 M.D.C. of plate for body armor repairs; if used to repair power armor the ratio is 5:1 (5 points of body armor repair equals 1 point of power armor repair).
- Materials to repair/rebuild 75 small arms; energy pistols, energy rifles, firearms, etc.; -15% penalty if attempting to repair heavy weapons (W.P. Heavy, Heavy Energy, power armor weapons, etc.).
- 5 each of any major non-weapon system for power armor/small vehicles; this covers sensors, thrusters, etc. No replacement weapons.
- Parts for repairs to miscellaneous electronics.
- -30% penalty to work on any robot vehicle due to lack of proper tools, parts, etc.
- Full stock of tools, drills, lathes, and general repair equipment.

Note: These guidelines apply to what is available in the APC itself. If an alternate supply of parts and materials is present then the APC can do almost any repair, without penalty, that does not require a full maintenance bay.

If properly supplied, the APC can function as a small, well equipped garage. In field operations the Mark V/REP is seldom properly supported, and is left lacking in its intended role.

2. Heavy Lifting Crane: The Mark V/REP has a heavy crane mounted where the rear turret used to be. The crane can be

fitted with a variety of different hooks and lifting electro-magnets in order to handle almost any lifting job.

The crane has a 75 ton lifting capacity and reaches a height of 60 feet (18.3 m) fully extended.

3. Sensor System Note: The Mark V/REP has the following robot vehicle features.

1. Nuclear Powered
3. Combat Computer
5. Laser Targeting System
6. Radio Communication
8. Spotlights
11. Voice Actuated Locking System
12. Complete Environmental Pilot and Crew Compartment

Mark V/EC Electronic Intelligence and Command

The Mark V/EC was created to fulfil the role of mobile sensor platform and command center for large scale operations. One Mark V/EC can comfortably handle all the communications traffic and command for one company (320 troops) and can cope with up to three companies if necessary. The Mark V/EC is usually assigned to act as a forward listening post or as a base of operations until permanent bases can be constructed.

When used as the central command unit, standard procedure is for the Mark V/EC's sensors to cover the immediate area surrounding its current base. Mobile air patrols, usually SAMAS or Sky Cycles, are used to run sensor sweeps of the surrounding area at ranges of 5 to 10 miles (8-16 km) and transmit the data back to the Mark V/EC. In its Command and Control capacity, a single Mark V/EC can run coordinated operations involving almost 1000 troops over a 150 mile (240 km) area.

When larger groups are needed, multiple Mark V/EC's are grouped together with their electronics linked and one APC designated as a central control unit. With proper setup and coordi-

nation, three Mark V/EC's can handle all the communications and command for an entire division.

With the introduction of the CTX-54 Command Fortress, the Mark V/EC has been delegated to support roles for the larger command center. During the Tolkeen Campaign, over 35 Mark V/EC's were supplementing the 8 CTX-54's controlling the army groups there. This does not include the numerous forward listening posts and semi-independent bases that surrounded Tolkeen.

With the impressive range of Coalition sensor systems, it may seem a waste to have so many units covering the same area. After all, the radar coverage provided by one CTX-54 is sufficient to cover the entire Tolkeen theater of operations. In reality, however, radar loses accuracy over distance. At one or two hundred miles, a slow moving target traveling at treetop level may not be detected. With multiple radar systems, the chances of slipping through undetected are greatly reduced. For most of the war, it was virtually impossible for airborne traffic above tree-top level to go undetected anywhere south of Tolkeen (unless aided by magic). This multiple coverage also made it almost impossible for Tolkeen to disrupt communications and sensor coverage on any meaningful level.

Crew: Two, driver and gunner for the APC, plus 20 communications officers (+15% Read Sensory Equipment) and one command officer. In this case, the command officer is not just in charge of the APC, but also anywhere from a Company to a Division of troops. Rank is determined by number of troops commanded and the nature of the mission. Lowest rank would be a Captain for a Company, up to a Colonel for a Division or if a very important mission. Generals, as a rule, no longer use the Mark V/EC, having switched to using the more capable and prestigious CTX-54.

Troop Transport Capabilities: None. A few passengers could be crammed into the command area, but would be *very* uncomfortable.

Black Market Cost: 10 to 15 million credits approximately. A Mark V/EC has never been available on the Black Market. To a small kingdom or mercenary army, the Mark V/EC would be extremely valuable as a command center. The Black Market, Northern Gun, or Manistique Imperium might pay triple or more for access to the advanced sensors and communications gear the Mark V/EC uses.

Features of Note:

1. Command Center: The Mark V/EC has a full complement of sensor and communications gear. The APC is designed to handle communications traffic and coordinate movement for hundreds of troops. The center has full radio capabilities, including scramble/de-scramble, code-breaking, and jamming. The Mark V/EC can also act as a relay station to extend the range of less powerful transmitters. The command center also has a holographic plotting table for mapping and coordinating troop movements.

There are 16 sensor stations in the command center. Under low threat conditions, two technicians man the holographic plotting table and only two of the stations are active, with four staggered, 12 hour shifts (Midnight to Noon, 6 am to 6 pm, Noon to Midnight, and 6 pm to 6 am) of four operators each. With this setup there are two shifts active at any given time with techs trading off every 1.5 hours in order to maintain alertness in the

operators. During combat operations (e.g. the war against Tolkeen) or when coordinating larger troop formations, four technicians man the plotting table or act as runners and the number of active stations is increased. When operating under these conditions, extra sensor crews are brought along in regular transports in order to keep operators fresh and functioning at peak levels.

2. Sensor Mast: A radar and full sensor array are mounted on a retractable mast. Fully extended, the mast raises the radar/sensor unit 100 feet (30.5 m) into the air to allow for maximum sensor coverage. When fully operational, it is virtually impossible for anything to be within one mile of the Mark V/EC without them knowing about it. The sensor mast contains the following systems:

Radar: Range: 200 miles (320 km). Can identify and track up to 200 targets simultaneously.

Combat Computer: This computer collects, coordinates, and filters the large amount of data relayed by the various sensors and presents it at the appropriate sensor stations. While a single station can access all incoming data, the work is usually divided between several stations so as not to overload the operators. The computer has a massive target database, and can identify over 5,000 different targets ranging from unarmored humans to monsters to vehicles.

Targeting Computer: This dedicated computer assists in the identification and tracking of enemy targets. Under extreme conditions it is possible for a station at the Mark V/EC to vector a unit to a target to initiate an attack without the attacking unit activating any of its own sensor systems. This ability is not used often, as Coalition doctrine does not lend itself to this type of remote-control leadership. Also, field situations are often too fluid and complex to wait for a decision from the rear echelons.

Radio/Video Communications: Wide band and directional, radio and video telecast capabilities.

Short-range broadband: Range: 50 miles (80 km).

Video broadcast: Range: 100 miles (160 km).

Long-range directional: Range: 1000 miles (1600 km).

Loudspeaker: 80 decibels.

External Audio Pickup: Range: 2500 feet (762 m). A sound amplification listening system that can pick up a quiet conversation 2500 feet away.

Thermo-Imager: A special, optical, heat sensory unit that allows the infrared radiation of warm objects to be converted into a visible image. Enables the pilot to see in darkness, shadows, and through smoke. Range: 4000 feet (1219.1 m).

Night Vision Optics: An image intensifier which is passive, meaning it emits no light of its own, but relies on ambient light which is electronically amplified to give a visible picture. Range: 4000 feet (1219.1 m).

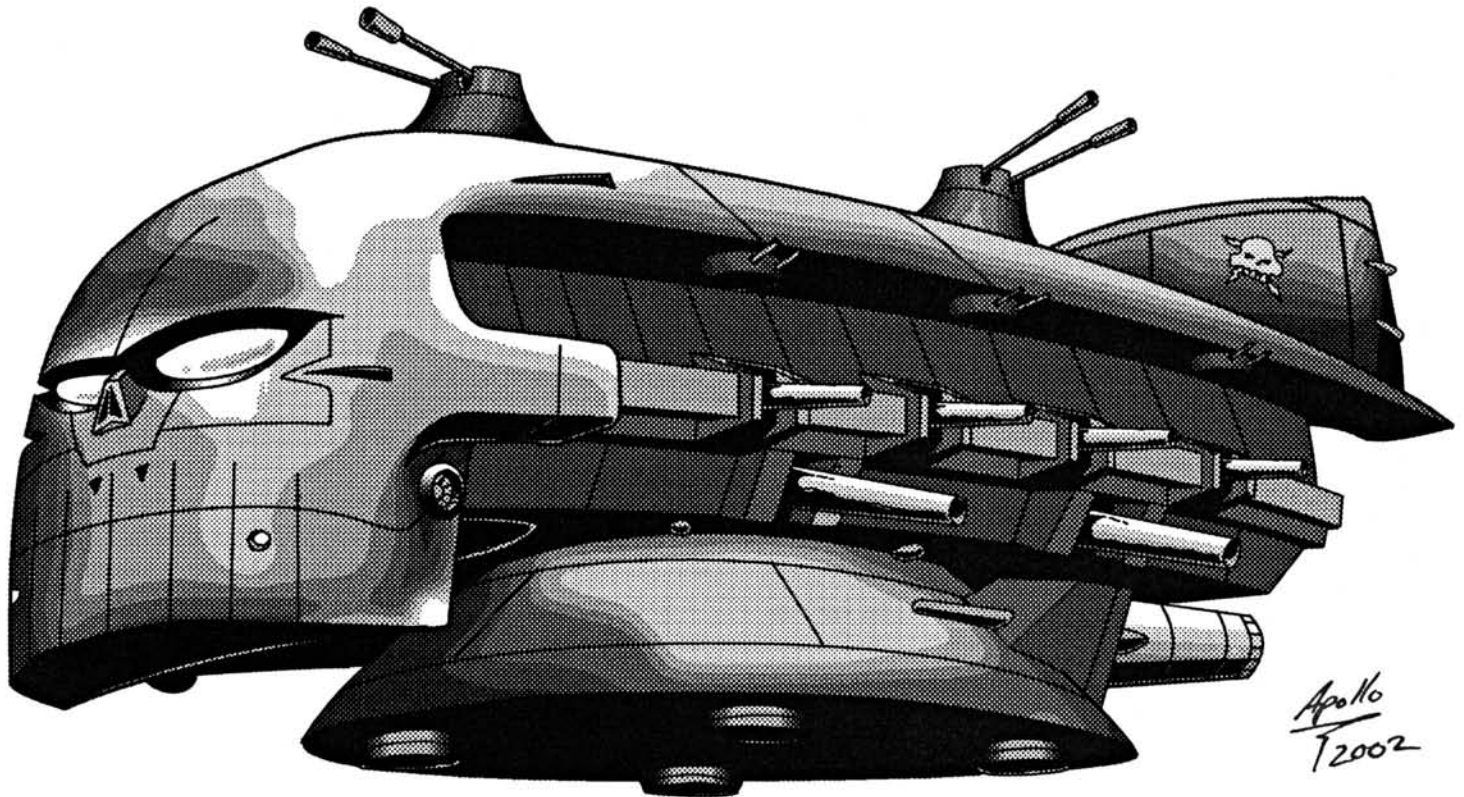
Infrared and Ultraviolet Optics: This optical system projects a beam of infrared or ultraviolet light that is invisible to the normal eye. The infrared system enables the pilot to see in the dark and to see other infrared beams. The ultraviolet system enables the pilot to see into the ultraviolet spectrum of light and is mostly used to detect the light beams of ultraviolet detection systems. Both can be seen by anyone who has the appropriate optics system, and the line can therefore be traced back to its

source. Also, smoke impairs the vision/beam, rendering it temporarily useless. Range: 5500 feet (1676.3 m).

Motion Detector & Collision Warning System: Close Range: 500 feet (152.4 m); sounds alarm and red light warns of impending collision and/or immediate target.

3. Sensor System Note: The Mark V/EC has the following robot vehicle features.

1. Nuclear Powered
5. Laser Targeting System
8. Spotlights
10. Self-Destruct
11. Voice Actuated Locking System
12. Complete Environmental Pilot and Crew Compartment



Coalition Death's Head Armored Gunship

During the period of military research and development prior to, and during, the Coalition's recent military deployment, there have been dozens of different weapon systems and concepts experimented with. While the core of the military's equipment roster has been determined and placed into production (see equipment and vehicles detailed in *Coalition War Campaign™*, *Coalition Navy™*, and other books) there were, and still are, a number of experimental weapons programs. These programs range from testing camouflage patterns, to different alloys used as rail gun projectiles (attempting to find better penetration and damage using existing weapons), to replacement weapons for existing vehicles, to the massive CAF-1 Stratocarrier project (see *Siege on Tolkeen™* Book Two for details).

While the CAF-1 project is, at best, a public relations tool, the *gunship* program is a less ambitious, more practical weapon

platform design. Some unappreciated research assistant deep in the bowels of the Coalition's R&D bureau stumbled across references to pre-Cataclysm aerial gunships and realized that such a concept would offer an excellent, lower cost, less obvious alternative to the huge bomber. The idea would be to take an existing cargo vehicle (the Death's Head Transport was ideal) and mount an impressive array of conventional weaponry for use against large targets.

The idea of the aerial gunship developed during the pre-Cataclysm conflict known as World War Two. In that conflict, fighters and light bombers were mounted with large numbers of machine-guns facing forward (more than 20 in some cases) and were given strafing missions against ground targets. The idea was to send as many bullets as possible towards a target at one time. The drawback of this design was that the pilot was forced to fly over the target and turn around if he wished to continue attacking.

During another pre-Cataclysm conflict the American Empire developed what would become a far better gunship design. This time medium sized cargo aircraft were used and machine-guns were replaced with Gatling-style rotary cannons. The first design, the AC-47, mounted only three Gatling guns, while the crowning achievement, the AC-130A, mounted six Gatling guns and a 105mm *artillery piece*. The new configuration of the gunship had all the weapons facing to the left side of the aircraft. In this setup, all the pilot had to do was simply circle the target area, raining down weapon fire from a safe distance.

With the advanced technology available to it, the Coalition has raised the effectiveness of the aerial gunship to new levels. The Death's Head transport, with its nuclear engine and ability to travel as slow as a hover, allows it to surpass the old propeller driven designs (chosen for fuel efficiency and slow airspeed) in range, endurance, and versatility.

The weapons package of the Death's Head Gunship was chosen primarily for cost efficiency. The CAF-1, while mounting a very impressive amount of firepower, could cost over 100 million credits for the bomb and missile load for one mission alone. While Coalition technicians are still experimenting with different weapon mixes, it appears that the main armament for the gunship will consist of projectile weaponry only (even the shells for the GR-155 howitzers are still less complicated and cheaper to manufacture than missiles). One other reason for the projectile weaponry has stemmed from the recent loss of large quantities of missiles during the initial attack on Tolkeen and through the first few months of the war. While there is currently no shortage of missiles available, and production seems to be keeping pace with demand, even Coalition commanders can see the benefits of destroying some targets with inexpensive rail gun rounds rather than missiles.

Currently the Death's Head Gunship project is classified ultra-top-secret. The gunship concept seems to have been lost to history for the moment and the Coalition would like to see it remain that way. In order to protect the secrets of the gunship, Coalition designers have installed two additional self-destruct systems (for a total of three) in the Death's Head Gunships. The self-destruct systems are activated in the normal manner and, as an added security feature, the hard-wired links are severed with micro-explosive charges. This prevents psychics from using Telemechanics or other machine controlling psionics to deactivate the self-destruct. The only way to disable the self-destruct once started is to find all three detonator control boxes and deactivate them separately.

In tests, the Coalition scientists placed six convicted psychics, with the appropriate powers, inside a mock-up of a Death's Head transport and told them exactly what was going on and what they were to look for. The detonator control boxes were even labeled so that psychics would know them when they found them. The agreement was that if the psychics could find and disable the system they would receive a full pardon and be allowed to safely leave Coalition territory. The system was given the maximum 60 second countdown, and, well, the Coalition never had to renege on its promise to the prisoners.

Currently there are only three Death's Head Gunships in the Coalition inventory. While pleased that the gunship is proving to be extremely successful at its assigned mission, Coalition command is uncertain if they wish to integrate the gunship into

military offensive planning. There is no doubt that the gunship is economical, but its limited combat applications may relegate it to just being a military curiosity. The gunship, while powerful, is not intended as a front line combat unit. The primary weapon array of eight rail guns has a limited arc of fire and is best suited for attacks on stationary targets or mass formations. If placed in front-line situations it would need to be heavily defended by more agile units such as SAMAS or rocket cycles.

Tolkeen Campaign Note: By the end of the war against Tolkeen, the Coalition will have a total of eight Death's Head Gunships in its inventory. This is down from a total of 15 at the height of the war. Of the seven that were lost (completely destroyed), four were sacrificed during the Sorcerer's Revenge, using their massive firepower to cover elements of the retreating army. It was the support of these gunships, in part, that allowed for the few organized Coalition withdrawals during the Sorcerers' Revenge.

The other three were lost during the second push on Tolkeen. The gunships proved their worth during the assault through the layers of fortifications in The Barrens. Flying with heavy air support, the gunships were responsible for more than their share of the destroyed fortifications and entrenched defenses.

Ironically, the success of General Jericho Holmes' surprise attack left very few worthwhile targets for the gunships during the final siege on Tolkeen. As it was, while the gunships operated with near impunity during Tolkeen's final days, they were relegated to a relatively minor fire support role.

Model Type: AFC-050A

Class: Air Armored Assault Gunship

Crew: 14: One pilot, one copilot, one navigator, one communication engineer, and ten loaders/gunners.

Troop Transport Capabilities: None. The entire cargo area is dedicated to weapons and ammunition storage.

M.D.C. by Location:

Forward Observation Windows (2, eye-shaped) — 80 each

Side Mounted Laser Turrets (6) — 50 each

Weapon Barrels (10) — 75 each

Tail Fin — 125

Lower Saucer — 400

Rear Jets (3) — 200 each

*Main Body — 1300

Reinforced Crew Compartment — 200

*Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body will destroy the transport. Destroying the saucer portion impairs the transport's mobility and hover capabilities.

Speed

Driving on the ground: Not possible.

Flying: The rocket propulsion system enables the Death's Head to hover stationary up to 2000 feet (610 m) or fly. Maximum flying speed is Mach One, about 670 mph (1072 km), but cruising speed is considered to be about 350 mph (560 km). Maximum altitude is limited to about 40,000 feet (12,192 m).

Flying Range: The nuclear power plant has years of life, but the jet rockets get hot and need to cool after a maximum of twenty hours of flight when travelling at speeds above cruising. They can operate indefinitely with rest stops and/or at cruising speeds.

Statistical Data

Height: 76 feet (23.2 m).

Width: 104 feet (32.7 m).

Length: 240 feet (73 m).

Weight: Approximately 1250 tons fully loaded.

Cargo: While there is a little within the gunship to carry passengers and some cargo, the Death's Head Gunship is not intended to do so, and space is limited.

Power System: Nuclear; average energy life is 20 years.

Black Market Cost: A Death's Head transport has never been available on the black market. The current security surrounding the gunship project has mandated that the few gunships in service be fitted with three separate self-destruct systems. When activated the hard-wiring between the systems is physically destroyed by micro-explosive charges. The purpose behind this is so that psychics using Telemechanics and other machine controlling psionics cannot deactivate the system in the seconds before detonation.

Weapon Systems

1. Primary Heavy Weapons Package: On the gunship variant of the Death's Head Transport, only the CR-6T laser turrets remain of the original weapons package. It is important to note that the heavy weapons package mounted facing the left of the craft is designed to fire on relatively slow moving ground targets. Unless the target is large and slow, any attempt to fire on airborne targets results in the loss of all strike bonuses and a -3 penalty to strike. Fast moving ground targets are -1 to strike for each 10 mph (16 km) above 50 mph (80 km).

Note: Because of a unique combination of altitude, custom weapon mounting, and advanced targeting software, some of the weapons listed are able to fire farther than their usual ranges. Also, the size of the target determines how many weapons can be brought to bear on it; for each 20 feet/6.1 m (or portion thereof) of target size, one pair of weapons may be targeted on it. For example: a 20 foot (6.1 m) tall robot could have both the C-200DH rail guns targeting it, while a 35 foot (10.7 m) long bunker could have both C-200DH rail guns and both CPC-100 cannons targeting it. It is important to note that all of the primary weapons are configured to fire individually or in matched pairs (no mixing and matching of weapon groups). Each pair of weapons has its own set of two gunners (one shooter, one spotter) but the entire package can be controlled by two people in an emergency.

The primary heavy weapons package currently mounts the following (in order of front to rear):

A. C-200DH Rail Guns (2): These are simply the re-mounted turret guns of the original Death's Head transport.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Weight: Rail Gun: 1.2 tons each.

Mega-Damage: A burst is 100 rounds and inflicts 1D4x10 M.D.; a dual burst inflicts 2D4x10 M.D.; one round does 1D4 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Equal to number of combined hand to hand attacks (usually 4-6).

Maximum Effective Range: 2.5 miles (4 km).

Payload: 80,000 rounds per each gun, that's 800 bursts each. Reloading a rail gun requires special equipment and takes about an hour.

B. C-144 Auto-Cannons (2): These are two of the massive auto-cannons mounted by the IAR-2 Abolisher.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Weight: 2 tons each.

Mega-Damage: 2D4x10 M.D. per single blast or 4D4x10 M.D. per double blast.

Range: 6000 feet (1828 m); maximum range is 10,000 feet (3048 m), but the gunship is -1 to strike targets over 6000 feet (1828 m) to about 7000 feet (2286 m), and -3 to strike targets beyond that point.

Rate of Fire: 2 per cannon, per melee round.

Payload: 480 total; each cannon has a payload of 240 shells.

Note: Due to the cannon's slow rate of fire and difficulty targeting at longer ranges, it is being seriously considered whether the C-144's should be replaced with two more C-200DH's.

C. C-200DH Rail Guns (2): A second pair of the turret guns of the original Death's Head transport.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Weight: Rail Gun: 1.2 tons each.

Mega-Damage: A Burst is 100 rounds and inflicts 1D4x10 M.D.; a dual burst inflicts 2D4x10 M.D. one round does 1D4 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Equal to number of combined hand to hand attacks (usually 4-6).

Maximum Effective Range: 2.5 miles (4 km).

Payload: 80,000 rounds per each gun, that's 800 bursts each.

Reloading a rail gun requires special equipment and takes about an hour.

D. CPC-100 High-Powered Cannon (2): Borrowed from the AFC-151 Deathbringer APC, this cannon fires a powerful plasma rocket shell.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Mega-Damage: 1D6x10 M.D. per round or 2D6x10 M.D. per double blast.

Range: 8000 feet (2438.4 m).

Rate of Fire: Equal to number of combined hand to hand attacks (usually 4-6).

Payload: 400 total; each cannon has a payload of 200 shells.

E. GR-155 Electromagnetic Howitzer (2): These artillery pieces are among the heaviest weapons mounted on an aircraft.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Shell Type: Armor piercing shells are used against fortifications and hardened targets and inflict 3D6x10 M.D. to a 10 foot (3 m) blast radius. Plasma and Fragmentation shells are used for area bombardment and inflict (respectfully) 1D6x50 M.D. to a 50 foot (15.2 m) blast radius and 2D4x10 M.D. to a 70 foot (21.3 m) blast radius. Illumination shells will light up an area like flares and smoke shells will create clouds of vision-obscuring smoke over a 300 foot (91 m) radius.

Mega-Damage: Varies with shell type as noted above.

Range: 18.7 miles (30 km).

Rate of Fire: Each howitzer can fire once per melee.

Payload: 200 total. A standard load includes 90 fragmentation, 60 plasma, 30 armor piercing, and 10 each of illumination and smoke.

Strike Penalty: -3 to strike targets smaller than 20 feet (6.1 m).

Note: In addition to the shells listed above, chemical shells (e.g. tear gas) are sometimes used. Newer shells (such as la-

ser-guided and rocket assisted) are in the experimental stage but are not yet available for regular combat use.

Special Attack: Rather than direct the weapons at individual targets, the gunship has the ability to saturate an area with firepower. This attack is directed at a 100 X 100 foot (30.5 x 30.5 m) area and all weapons are fired into it. This attack replaces any attacks by the primary weapons package and can be done twice per melee round. The attack uses one burst/round per weapon (one howitzer is used per attack) and inflicts 1D4x10 M.D. to everything inside the attack area, can not be rolled with, and is impossible (or at least incredibly difficult) to dodge.

2. CR-6T Laser Turrets (6): Three heavy laser turrets are mounted on each side of the transport. Each is capable of 180 degree rotation and a 90 degree arc of fire, up and down.

Primary Purpose: Anti-personnel.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 1D4x10 M.D. per dual blast.

Range: 6000 feet (1829 m).

Rate of Fire: The pilot can operate all weapon systems at a rate equal to the combined number of hand to hand attacks per melee (usually 4 to 6).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

3. Neural Grid: After years of development, the Coalition R&D groups may have finally come up with a way to counter dragon attacks against the Death's Head Transport. The most popular dragon tactic is to teleport directly on top of the transport. This puts the beast inside of the arcs of fire of all of the transport's weapon systems and has resulted in many lost transports over the years. To counter this, Coalition techs have mounted a grid that covers the roof of the transport and has the effect of a Neural Mace against dragons (or any large supernatural creature). The grid covers the entire roof of the transport, and requires direct contact to work on a target (there was one incident during the testing phase where a transport pilot intentionally rammed a dragon when it refused to make contact with the transport).

Primary Purpose: Anti-Dragon.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: Save vs Neural Mace: 16 or higher, a failed save means there is a 25% chance of rendering the target unconscious. Even if the save is made the target is -5 to strike, parry, and dodge for 1D4 melees. The duration is increased 1D4 melees for each time the target is shocked by the grid. Note: Due to the massive amounts of power channeled through the neural

grid, any S.D.C. creature shocked by the grid has a 01-99% chance of being killed instantly (immediate medical attention may be able to save them). Even M.D.C. creatures up to the size of a horse still stand a 01-50% chance of being killed instantly. Power armors/vehicles shocked by the grid have a 01-40% chance of having all of their electrical systems fried and any occupants suffer 2D4 S.D.C. damage. Note: During the Tolkeen Campaign, the Neural Grid proved to be ineffective against Elementals, animated dead/undead, and a number of monsters/D-Bees whose natural defenses made them immune to the grid's effects.

Range: Touch.

Rate of Fire: Once per melee round.

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

4. Hand to Hand Combat: None.

5. Sensor System Note: Has all the standard robot sensors and systems, as well as the following.

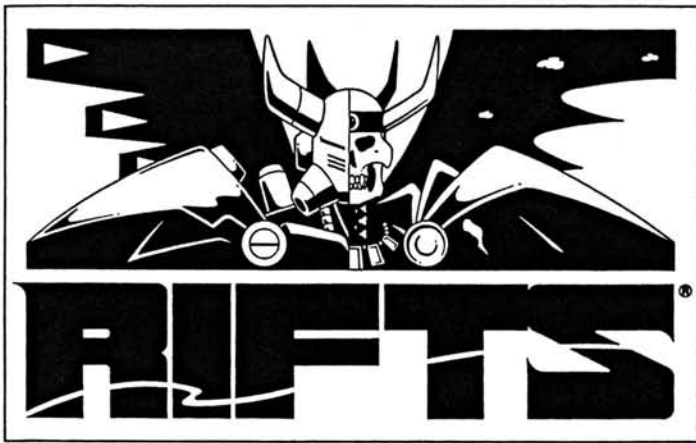
1. Thermo-Imager: A special optical heat sensor that allows the infrared radiation of warm objects to be converted into a visible image. Enables the pilot to see in the dark, in shadows, and through smoke. Range: 2000 feet (610 m).

2. Infrared and Ultraviolet Optics: This optical system projects a beam of infrared light that is invisible to the normal eye. The infrared system enables the pilot to see in the dark and to see other infrared beams. The ultraviolet system enables the pilot to see into the ultraviolet spectrum of light and is mostly used to detect the light beams of ultraviolet detection systems. Note: The infrared light beam can be seen by anybody who also has infrared optics, and the beam can be traced back to its source. Smoke impairs the infrared beam, making it impossible to see.

3. Infrared Searchlights: Built into the face of the Death's Head are a pair of headlights that also serve as infrared searchlights. The lights can be used to scan an area at night using the invisible light to avoid detection. Only somebody who can also see infrared light will see the beams. Range: 500 feet (152 m).

4. Enhanced Radar: Can identify and simultaneously track up to 96 different targets. Range: 200 miles (320 km).

Special Bonuses: +1 to dodge when flying at cruising speeds and +2 to dodge when flying over 300 mph (480 km). Trained CS pilots get an additional +10% to pilot the Coalition transport. Note that city maneuvering/combat usually requires piloting rolls.



The Hammer of the Forge

By James M.G. Cannon

Chapter Nineteen

Everything New is Old Again

The Naruni Repo-Bot is the deadliest soldier in the Three Galaxies. Armed with the latest in Naruni designs, armored like a tank, powered by a fist-sized cold fusion reactor, and piloted by the cybernetic brain of a sentient warrior, amplified by all the tricks and toys the Naruni could fit into the 'bot's combat computer. A single Repo-Bot is capable of tearing apart an entire platoon of lesser troops, and can hold its own against a single Cosmo-Knight.

On the other hand, if you put two or three Cosmo-Knights against a platoon of Repo-Bots, then the Naruni Corporation is going to be spending a lot of money to replace their damaged property. For that is the one weakness of the Repo-Bot: They are essentially slaves, and their programming ensures that the only freedom they will ever know is death.

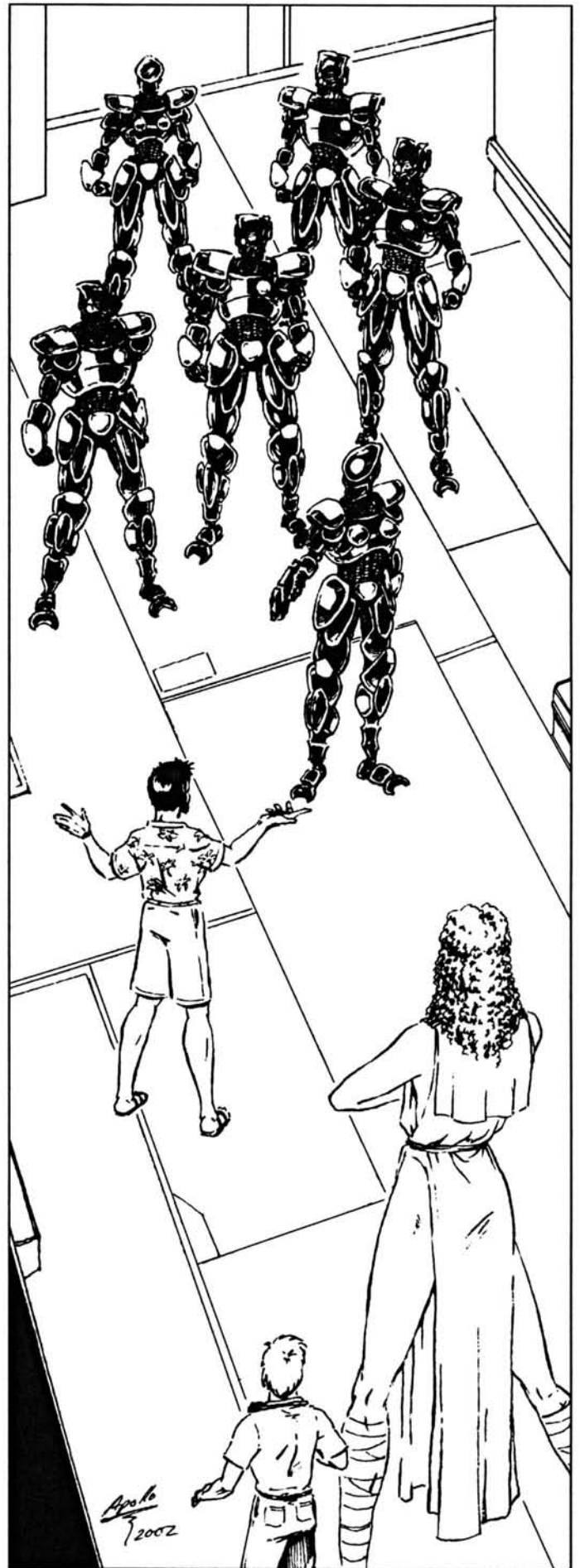
Of course, the fact that Repo-Bots aren't afraid to die just makes them more dangerous.

—from the trideo documentary Thraxus & Me by Morlan

Miks

Caleb Vulcan recognized the long, low-slung starship parked in the midst of the tarmac. The crimson finish was unmistakable, as was the Acherean clan symbol painted on the nose. What worried him was the six black and gold 'bots standing in a semi-circle around the ship's access hatch.

"It's our ship, no doubt about it," Caleb told his friends. He and his Cosmo-Knight allies were clad in their civvies, in an at-



tempt to remain inconspicuous. Caleb wore his blue jeans, red grav boots, and silver shirt. His goggles and communications ring hung around his neck.

Vyking, a tall and rangy human with a shock of raven hair and a neatly trimmed beard, gestured at the robots stationed around the craft. "Bad mojo, Caleb. Looks like your Promethean buddy was right; the Naruni Corporation has impounded your ship." Vyking looked extraordinarily comfortable in canvas shorts, sandals, and a blue t-shirt with a palm design. Vyking looked more ready for the beach, rather than a tour of Phase World.

"I'm more concerned about my friends," Caleb answered, running a hand through his red hair. He felt Ariel place a reassuring hand on his shoulder.

"We'll find them," the Titan told him. Nearly ten feet tall, Ariel had auburn hair and green eyes, and her statuesque frame was wrapped in an elaborate white toga.

Vyking grinned, a mischievous light in his blue eyes. "Let's see what the Repo-Bots have to say." His grin broadened, and the knight sauntered across the tarmac in the direction of the ship. Ariel exchanged a concerned look with Caleb, then followed.

Caleb took a moment to survey the scene. Docking bay sixteen was a massive room the size of a warehouse. It contained docking space for six separate medium-sized starcraft, including maintenance bays, and umbilicals linking the ships to Center. Power, oxygen, coolants, and other chemicals were fed back and forth between the city and the ships. The far end of the room was a doorway opening out into Phase World's cold, gray afternoon sky. Half of the docking brackets were empty, while the remaining two were occupied by merchant craft. A crew of Catyr swarmed over one of them, effecting repairs on its damaged hull. The last ship, like the Comet, was dark. The only potential hostiles in sight were the six Repo-Bots around the Comet.

Which forced Caleb to focus on them once more. At Vyking's approach, the six of them formed up in an impressive display, their heavy plasma ejectors braced against their chests.

"Evening, gentlemen... and ladies." Vyking's voice carried across the room. The Repo-Bots didn't seem impressed by his casual tone. Vyking stopped about twelve feet from the first two cyborgs, and Ariel halted right behind him, crossing her arms and looming threateningly.

The Repo-Bots remained unimpressed.

"You know," Vyking continued in the same bored manner, "I used to have a friend who flew one of these rigs. Same bright red shade, too. I don't suppose you folks have seen the pilot?"

One of the cyborgs stepped forward. Curiously, the robot body was curved in a feminine shape. "Step away, citizen," she said mechanically, levering the barrel of her gun at Vyking's head.

Vyking held his hands up in surrender. "Hey, hey," he said. "There's no need for violence. I was just asking a question."

"I will not ask you a second time," the robot warned.

"Oh, sure," Vyking said quickly, "I'm not one to press my luck. It just seems like too much of a coincidence, you know, seeing my friend's ship here. I mean, what are the chances?"

"What are the chances," the cyborg returned, "that I will pull this trigger?"

"Eh, right." Vyking turned on his heel and began walking back to the maintenance bay where Caleb waited. Ariel waited for a moment. Caleb knew she was contemplating calling up her two handed sword and slicing the cyborg in two, but at last she started back towards Caleb.

"That was a wash," Caleb said when Vyking drew near.

"Mmmm," Vyking muttered. "Are they watching us?"

"Of course. Still aiming her gun at your head, too."

"Good. Hate to think they won't remember us."

"Why would you want them to?"

Vyking grinned enigmatically. "I like my enemies to see my face," he said. "When this is all over, I want them to be able to look back and realize this point is when we arrived, when they could have just handed over your friends and your ship and avoided all the pain and misery that's about to follow."

Caleb could only stare at his fellow knight, but before he could fully process Vyking's words, Ariel appeared. "What next? A trip to the Naruni sector to poke around?"

Vyking shook his head. "According to our Promethean informants, the customs agents Tor and Egis, a man matching Doctor Abbot's description was last observed in docking bay ninety-four. I say we head up there to poke around, look for clues."

"Clues?" Caleb said absently, still shocked at Vyking's speech.

"You okay, Caleb?" Ariel asked.

"Yeah, I just, I don't — " Caleb stuttered. A shadow detached from the wall behind Caleb, interrupting him and drawing the attention of all three Cosmo-Knights.

"Caleb Vulcan?" the shadow asked. It roughly approximated the shape of a human, but the dark matter of its body was as wispy and thin as its voice.

Caleb brightened, though he sensed his companions bristling, preparing to deflect an attack. Caleb put a hand up to block his friends. "Yes?" he said to the shadow.

"I have a message from Doctor Abbot," it said. "He is hiding on the lower levels with Siv Yurilak and Arwen. I must bring you to him."

Caleb frowned. "What about Kassy?" he asked. Instead of answering, the shadow merely repeated its previous statement.

"Magic," Vyking muttered derisively.

"It's only a construct," Ariel told Caleb. "It isn't intelligent. It can only answer questions it's programmed to understand. The trick is to think of the right questions."

"Yeah, well, think of them quickly," Vyking said, looking over his shoulder. "The Repo-Bots are getting curious and some of them are heading this way."

Caleb risked a glance of his own. The lead cyborg was indeed marching across the tarmac, accompanied by two other black and gold bots with weapons at the ready. "Shivok," Caleb swore under his breath. He turned back to the shadow. "Take us to Abbot," he said.

Those seemed to be the right words. The shadow expanded outward, stretching its thin body even thinner. Though it grew

outward, the shadow did not gain any mass, and in but a few heartbeats, it stretched itself to the breaking point. A sharp tearing sound echoed across the chamber as the shadow split apart, ripping a hole through space. A window opened up within the tear. On the other side was revealed a darkened room, containing rough hewn furniture and three humanoid forms familiar to Caleb.

Doctor Abbot, Siv Yurilak, and Arwen.

Caleb risked a glance at the advancing Naruni, and grabbed his friends by the hand. Without hesitation, and against Vyking's protests, Caleb stepped through the window. He felt a chill wind pass through him, and the next moment the three of them stood in the middle of the darkened room. Ariel had to crouch.

Doctor Abbot surged to his feet. "Caleb, my boy! You made it," he said energetically, his dry British tones unmistakable. Abbot was a humanoid shadow clad in a weather-beaten trench coat and fedora. He possessed no distinguishable features save twin orange lights that served as eyes, and they focused closely on Vyking and Ariel now. "You brought reinforcements as well. Good for you."

"It's great to see you, Doc." Caleb said as he took the doctor's proffered hand. Siv Yurilak, the lanky Noro hired to pilot the Comet, grinned uncertainly. Yurilak wore black leathers and armor plates, and two prominent grav pistols hung from his belt. Arwen Griffen, a slightly built alien girl with green skin and blue hair, gave Caleb a quick hug. The young knight made quick introductions, and Abbot was visibly heartened to learn Ariel and Vyking were servants of the Forge.

"Abbot," Caleb said at last. "What happened? Where's Kassy? Why have the Naruni impounded our ship?"

The doctor sighed, a strange noise coming from his mouthless face, and gripped his cane tightly. "We've had a rough few days, Caleb." Abbot dropped into a poorly designed chair with a thump. "As you know, we initially came to Phase World to locate a possible kinsman of mine. I've sought clues as to my origins for as long as I can remember, and this was the best opportunity I've had in centuries. We tracked the signal I detected to the *Vigilance*, a S'hree Vek vessel on one of the upper levels, and were invited aboard. There we met Hazmat, the other Shadowbeing." Abbot paused.

"It didn't go well," Arwen supplied, offering Abbot a concerned look.

"Indeed," Abbot said, finding his voice. "Hazmat proved to be a monster. Apparently, I am descended from some of the most evil entities in the Megaverse. Answers I found, but I almost wish I had remained ignorant."

Caleb placed a hand on Abbot's shoulder and gave him a reassuring squeeze. "I'm sorry to hear that, Doc. I'm sorry I wasn't there."

"Thank you, Caleb. But I'm sure your business for the Forge was more pressing," Abbot said, gesturing at the other knights with his cane. "Our encounter with Hazmat left us drained, myself in particular," he continued, "and we were unprepared for the assault that followed. We were attacked by two platoons of Naruni Repo-Bots and a Great Horned Dragon. It appears that Thraxus may indeed have been involved in Harkonnen's assault on Dellian-4. At the very least, that is the only motive I can think of for the involvement of the Naruni."

"According to our sources," Vyking interrupted, "the Horned Dragon you fought is one of Thraxus' personal bodyguards. How did you three manage to escape?"

"Kassy took charge," Abbot continued, "and it is entirely due to her quick thinking that we three survived."

"Kassy?" Caleb asked sharply.

"Remained behind to help Joriel, a Celestine who distracted the dragon with the *Vigilance's* cannons long enough for us to slip away. Kassy refused to leave Joriel behind, and before I could do anything, her Gryphon had carried us from the battle."

"We've been in hiding ever since, here on Center's lower levels, where it is very difficult for the Naruni to locate us. I sent servants out to watch for you and Kassy, however."

"And Kassy hasn't turned up yet," Caleb said needlessly. "How long have you been down here?"

"Four standard days," Yurilak explained.

"That's a long time," Vyking pointed out. Caleb shot him an angry look.

"Indeed," Abbot agreed. "Every moment I grow more and more anxious for Kassy's safety."

"We'll find her," Caleb said sharply. He had lost his mentor, the Wolfen Cosmo-Knight Lothar of Motherhome. He was not about to lose Kassy as well.

"Yes," Abbot said. "Now that you're here, we can begin planning a course of action. I've been recharging my energy reserves thanks to a nearby ley line. The battle with Hazmat took a lot out of me, but I'm ready to rescue Kassy now."

"We'll need intelligence," Vyking pointed out. "Your friend may be captured, or she may be dead." The blue-eyed Cosmo-Knight appeared unfazed by Caleb's angry stare or Abbot's concerned look.

"She's not dead," Abbot said. "If she were, Siv or I would be able to locate her. The only possibilities that remain are incarceration at the hands of the Naruni, or that she is lying low as we are. If the latter were true, I believe by now she would have found a way to contact us, or activate the servant I left to wait for her."

Vyking held up his hands in mock surrender, grinning easily. "Fair enough. Either way, we'll have to find where she's being held. Caleb, you think your Promethean buddies will be any help?"

"Wouldn't they have told us that already?" Ariel interjected.

"She's right," Caleb agreed. He snapped his fingers, and shifted his attention to Abbot. "What was the name of that Monro you and Kassy met with last time we were here?"

Abbot's orange eyes twinkled suddenly, his version of a smile. "Of course. I should have thought of him myself. Squamato Kekkil Damathui, better known to his patrons as Squiddy."

"Is he reliable?" Vyking asked.

"I would never use that term to describe him," Abbot answered. "But if anyone knows what's going on, I wager it will be Squiddy. His tentacles extend very far."

"Fair enough," Vyking nodded. "We should also plan on freeing the ship. Ariel, why don't you take Yurilak and Ms. Griffen here and take care of that." Ariel frowned, clearly disappointed.

"Actually," Arwen said brightly, "I can handle the Repo-Bots on my own."

Vyking looked at her, uncertain. "She can," Abbot and Yurilak said simultaneously. With a grin, Vyking relented. "How about you?" he asked Siv. "Will you be able to handle the ship? The Naruni will have installed some kind of control system in the ship's computer."

Siv scratched at his spiky mohawk. "There isn't a ship in service or computer system online that I can't handle," he promised.

Caleb was suddenly reminded of why he didn't care for the arrogant Noro, and Vyking's cavalier attitude was beginning to rankle him as well. He reigned in his emotions quickly. What mattered now was not Caleb's ego, but Kassy's safety. Vyking could take charge all he wanted, and Yurilak could boast until his face turned blue and Caleb wouldn't care, so long as they were able to rescue Kassy from the Naruni.

"Do you really think this is all the doing of Thraxus?" Ariel asked. With a start, Caleb realized that he had lost the thread of the conversation.

"It must be," Abbot admitted. "As far as we could tell, we did nothing to provoke the Naruni Corporation itself. It is conceivable that their real target may have been the S'hree Vek vessel and we were simply caught in the crossfire, but I do not believe this to be the case. My instincts tell me that this was done at the behest of Thraxus."

"I've tried looking for clues psionically," Yurilak offered, "but Doctor Abbot was afraid we would alert the Naruni to our whereabouts, so I've had to be extra careful. I haven't learned much."

"Then we'll just have to depend on this Squiddy fellow," Vyking said.

* * *

Squiddy's pawnshop was located in a rundown neighborhood on Center's fifth level. Abbot led the knights there, while Yurilak and Arwen split from the group to head up and see what they could do about the Comet. As Caleb picked his way down the street, stepping around mounds of trash spilling out of doorways and alleyways, and over the bodies of beggars or drug-addled humanoids, his mood darkened. The presence of such squalor, such poverty, on a planet as rich and technologically advanced as Phase World angered him.

Abbot, perhaps sensing Caleb's growing anger, hurried them along. Vyking appeared nonplused by the decay, but Ariel wore a concerned look. "I wish there was something we could do for these people," she said at last. Caleb echoed the sentiment.

"Unfortunately," Vyking pointed out, "we weren't empowered by the Forge to look after the poor and disenfranchised — nor the rich and powerful, either."

Caleb looked at him sharply. "What do you mean?"

"We're warriors, Caleb. We're designed and built to battle cosmic threats, the hostile forces that seem to propagate throughout the Megaverse." Vyking grinned suddenly. "No one else could have saved Ninemous from the Dominator, and very few others besides us could pose a danger to the mechanized ar-

mies of the Naruni. We have larger responsibilities, in other words. We're the light that shines against the darkness, and that means hard choices."

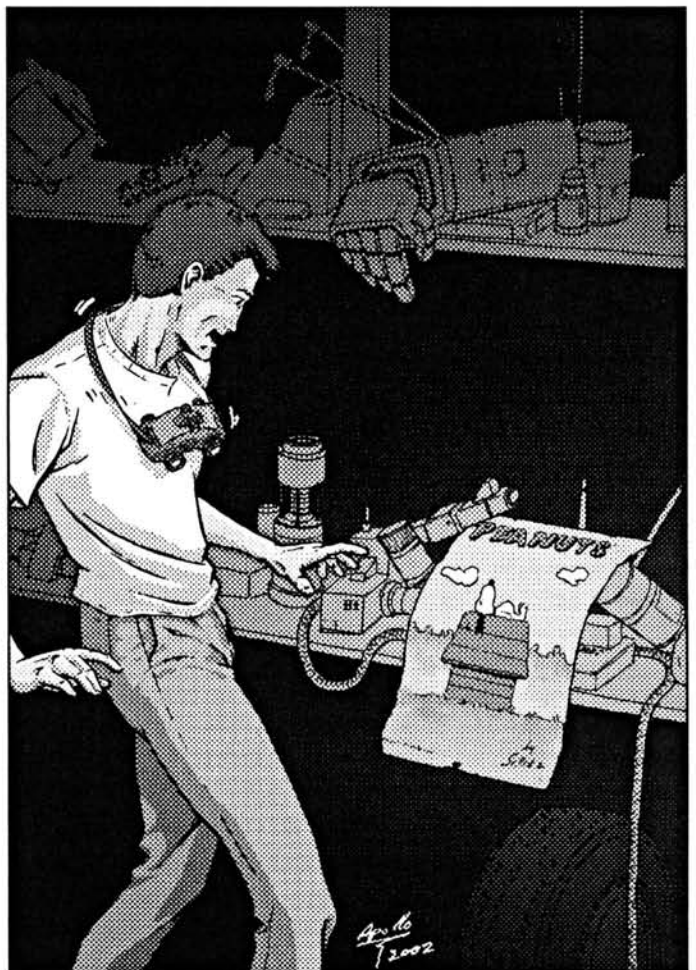
"Hmm," Abbot interrupted. "I hate to end a philosophical discussion, but we've reached our destination."

The four of them stood outside a nondescript storefront with darkened windows and a great deal of graffiti adorning its exterior walls. "This is it?" Caleb asked. Abbot nodded and pushed open the front door with the tip of his cane.

"I guess I'll wait out here," Ariel said, frowning at the human-sized doorway.

"We will return momentarily, my dear," Abbot told her, eyes twinkling.

Caleb followed Abbot into the dark interior of the pawnshop, Vyking in tow. The young knight's first impression was of clutter. There appeared to be three aisles, but the visible shelves were covered in items, piled haphazardly and dangerously. Many of the piles expanded off the shelves and into the aisles, creating difficult footing. Most of the items were unrecognizable to Caleb's eye; strange bits of technology that were beyond his experience. He did notice robotic and cybernetic limbs and heads, helmets and bits of armor, flight suits and other bits of clothing, as well as less advanced bits and pieces like lengths of string, wrenches, video screens, small figurines, and the like. Caleb's heart skipped a beat when he saw a "Snoopy" poster, tattered and draped across a mound of refuse.



He thought for a moment that his eyes were playing a trick on him, but the instant his trembling hand touched the brightly colored paper, he knew it was real. A relic from Earth, a piece of his home world. He turned to Abbot and Vyking to share the discovery with them, but realized there would be little point. They had no frame of reference; they could not possibly be as delighted as he was to see a picture of Charles Schultz' little beagle.

The choice to travel to the Three Galaxies had been his own, and he didn't regret that choice for a moment, but a crushing wave of homesickness inundated him. He never expected to see Earth again, let alone something from Earth, and his knees threatened to buckle as visions of Sunday newspapers, hot cups of coffee and doughnuts, the smell of his father's cigarettes, the warm Arizona mornings, and other reminders of home flashed through his mind.

"You like that? Two credits," a deep, croaking voice said. Caleb looked up, blinking back unshed tears. A heavy-set Monro regarded him, his wide, frog-like mouth split into a friendly grin. One baleful red eye examined Caleb closely, while the Monro's tentacles waved about, almost tasting the air. One fluid limb brought a cigar to the Monro's lips, and he puffed contentedly. The quadrupedal alien was the fattest Monro Caleb had ever seen, and though he was only five feet tall and about as long, the Monro looked as corpulent as a hippopotamus.

"You must be Squiddy," Caleb said, suddenly and violently brought back to the present. He let the poster fall from his hands.

The red eye narrowed in suspicion. "Who wants to know?"

"My name is Caleb Vulcan." The young knight grinned at the reaction his name elicited. Squiddy blanched, and tried to waddle backwards, flashing his tentacles in a frenzied patterns between himself and Caleb. Before he could get far, Squiddy bumped up against Vyking, who had materialized from behind a mound of refuse. Caleb didn't remember losing track of his friends, but then he hadn't noticed the approach of Squiddy either.

"What is this?" Squiddy croaked. His fat neck flexed as he looked back and forth between Caleb and Vyking. "I haven't talked to Harkonnen since he left Center, and I seem to recall helping your friends locate him in the first place."

"Indeed," Abbot agreed, appearing at Caleb's elbow. "And we need your aid once again."

Squiddy's face fell as he recognized Abbot. "The wizard," he muttered around his cigar. Suddenly, he brightened. His red eye widened hugely, and his wide, lipless mouth split into a hungry grin. "You're here on business. That's different." Grunting and puffing, Squiddy maneuvered himself around Vyking and waddled to the back of the store, where he took up a station behind a glass counter. Settling into a sitting position, the Monro used one tentacle to flick his cigar into a dark corner, while two other limbs produced and lit a second one.

"What can I do for you? And how do you expect to pay?"

"I helped save your life," Abbot reminded Squiddy.

The Monro smile widened. "What have you done for me lately?" he chuckled.

"Our friends were attacked by the Naruni," Abbot continued, orange eyes glinting dangerously. "This is fallout from the

Dellian-4 affair. Harkonnen kept his mouth shut, and we never had the proof nor the political leverage we needed to press the issue, but it is clear that Thraxus wants payback for the job we did foiling his genocidal scheme. I believe that means I still have some credit here."

The grin had disappeared. Squiddy's red eye jumped around, examining each of them closely. "That, uh, isn't how I do business," he coughed.

Vyking placed his fists on the top of the glass case and leaned forward dangerously. "Let me tell you how I do business. I serve the Cosmic Forge. Monetary matters do not concern me, but justice does. Those who obstruct justice feel my wrath."

Squiddy's eye blinked rapidly. He sucked on his cigar for a moment, sending puffs of smoke into the air. "Okay," he said finally, "I suppose I can extend you guys some credit. What is it that you want?"

Caleb frowned, but Vyking wore an expression of triumph. Abbot didn't seem to care. "Four days ago, docking bay ninety-four was attacked by Saburo and two platoons of Repo-Bots. We believe that at least two individuals were captured by the attackers. We want to know where they are being held."

Squiddy puffed his cigar, looking at Abbot. "Wait here," he told them. He turned around and disappeared through a low doorway into a backroom.

Caleb nudged Vyking with his elbow. "You didn't have to threaten him," he said. "We have some money."

Vyking shrugged. "Creatures like him only understand one language," he said.

Abbot and Caleb exchanged concerned looks, but it didn't look like Abbot wished to press the issue, and Caleb wasn't sure if this was the right place to argue with Vyking. He did know that some kind of confrontation with the other knight was coming. The man's arrogance was grating, and he seemed to have some strange ideas about how best to serve the wishes of the Forge.

Or were Caleb's views the flawed ones? He didn't want to explore that venue, even within the privacy of his own thoughts.

Ten minutes passed before Squiddy poked his head out the door once more. Seeing that the three of them were still there, he heaved a great sigh, and waddled back into the room. "According to the records I have access to," he began, "Saburo and the Repo-Bots captured six individuals, including an Atlantean and a Celestine. Surprisingly, they weren't brought back to the Free Trade Zone. Instead, the prisoners were escorted to a warehouse on 4-B, ostensibly owned by Kralizec Industries."

"Isn't level 4-B the UWW sector of Center?" Abbot asked.

Squiddy nodded. "Yep." He paused. "It's also where Harkonnen had his interview with Thraxus."

"Interesting," Vyking said softly.

* * *

Ariel agreed with Vyking's assessment after they briefed her. "That's something of a relief, actually," she said. "I was afraid we'd have to fight our way through the Naruni sector to find your friends."

"No," Abbot said, "we'll just have to worry about a Great Horned Dragon and a few dozen Repo-Bots, in addition to whatever defenses Thraxus has secreted within the warehouse itself."

"Exactly," Ariel enthused. "It should be a cakewalk."

Abbot's eyes twinkled. "I admire your spirit, my dear, but I..." He trailed off. "What is that?" he asked.

The four of them were tracing their steps through the fifth level's clogged and dirty streets, heading toward the lifts that would carry them up to the fourth level. Abbot and Vyking led them, with Ariel and Caleb bringing up the rear. They had just reached a plaza when a shimmering, black and red field appeared before them, eliciting Abbot's outburst.

The air before the foursome shimmered and shifted, like the haze over an Arizona road in the midst of summer. Brief flashes of red and black flickered into view, forming vague geometric shapes that gradually achieved greater definition. Something resembling a face came into view at last. Abbot gasped, and raised a hand to fashion some kind of ward.

Caleb stepped forward and placed an arm across Abbot's chest. "It's okay," he said. "I've seen this before. I don't think it's an attack."

As soon as he finished speaking, the flickering face before them began to talk. But whatever force kept it from attaining perfect resolution also interfered with the message it wished to impart. Only garbled fragments reached the ears of Caleb and his friends.

"Cal... Vulcan... bring... warn... you must be... Quaj... has the... watch. Utter... aster. Must... us. All... lost unless —"

And then it disappeared, as quickly as it arrived.

"An omen," Ariel breathed.

Abbot looked closely at his young friend. "You've seen something like this before? Why didn't you mention it?"

Caleb shrugged. "It didn't seem important in all the excitement."

"Someone is trying very hard to send you a message," Abbot said sharply. "Someone incredibly powerful who, unless I miss my guess, just mentioned the name of Quajinn Huo."

Caleb gritted his teeth. He had assumed the same thing after the apparition's first appearance on Ninemous. But there wasn't anything he could do about the message, not yet. On the other hand, he could do something about Kassy. "We have more pressing matters to attend right now," he told Abbot. He opened his mouth to say more, but the sky suddenly split with a metallic scream.

Caleb looked up, and to his surprise he saw two giant black and gold eggs roaring through the air, each orb marred by strange projections. The projections flickered, and Caleb realized they were guns. The pavement beneath their feet exploded as plasma beams and rail gun slugs tore across the ground. Abbot cried out, and without thinking Caleb used his own body as a shield to protect the wizard.

Silver and blue lights flashed, and within moments, Ariel and Vyking stood in their cosmo-armor. Ariel towered in a form fitting suit that resembled Greek hoplite armor, the blackness of the void showing through the joints, and from the depths of her helmet. Vyking's armor looked more like a medieval knight's, save for the two curling horns that erupted from his helm.

Vyking's blue longsword appeared in his hand, and Ariel likewise summoned her silver two-handed sword, as long as she was tall. In the same instant as their armor sheathed them, the two knights leapt into the air to engage the enemy.

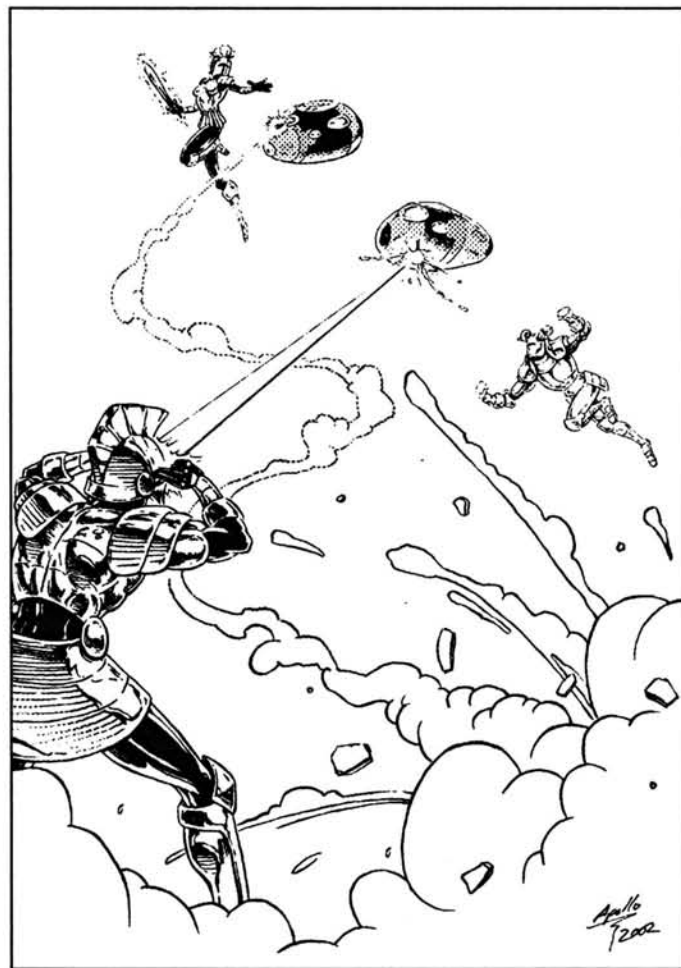
A terrific crash thundered across the plaza as Cosmo-Knights met eggs of death in mid-air. Abbot pushed Caleb off of himself. "I'm fine, Caleb," he said hoarsely. "Help your friends."

Caleb stood, and a crimson light brought his own centurion themed armor to him. "What are those things?" he asked.

"Naruni Ovoid combat 'bots," Abbot explained. He struggled to his feet, brushing off dust and fragments of pavement. His hat and coat looked unruffled, but his cane had disappeared.

"Naruni," Caleb echoed. "Why am I not surprised? Find cover Doc, we'll take care of this." So saying, the young knight stepped into the air.

The Ovoids were the size of fighter jets, Caleb observed, but they were obscenely maneuverable. They glided across the sky with ease, stopping on a dime and rotating their guns to track their airborne targets. Plasma tracers lit up the sky, and rail gun bullets screamed through the air. Buildings exploded in showers of glass, stone, and fire as the Naruni cut loose without regard. Ariel and Vyking ducked and weaved, trying to evade the attacks, looking for an opening to make a counterattack.



Focused as they were on the other two knights, the Ovoids didn't appear to register Caleb's presence. Caleb's visor flashed three times with crimson light, and one Ovoid's force field flickered and died. The robot reoriented itself, seeking out the new threat. The guns on one side tracked Caleb, while on the other

side a panel opened and a volley of missiles fired in Ariel's direction. With preternatural accuracy, the silver knight blasted the missiles out of the air with her own energy beams, then flashed forward for the kill. Caleb distracted it with more energy attacks, and Ariel slashed at the black and gold surface of the Ovoid with her giant blade. Megasteel shredded like tissue paper.

Meanwhile, Vyking was being knocked about by the other Ovoid. The sudden attack had drawn the attention of civilians, and Vyking was forced to use his own body as a shield to keep the innocents from being harmed by a stray bullet. The plasma ejectors couldn't harm the knight, protected as he was against all forms of energy, but the rail gun bullets were cutting his armor to ribbons. He took the punishment without complaint, answering with bolts of cerulean light launched from the tip of his sword. The Ovoid's shields flickered under the onslaught, but held.

Ariel braced herself upon the first Ovoid's dorsal surface, and stabbed repeatedly into the robot's body with her sword. Smoke and flames erupted from the machine, and it began to slowly descend to the ground in a spiral. Caleb blasted past with a salute to the Titan.

A red bar appeared in Caleb's hands, resolving into his chosen weapon, a massive sledgehammer. At close to top speed as he could get in the amount of space he had available, he slammed into the remaining Ovoid, leading with his hammer. The robot's shields popped like a bubble. The hammer dented the side of the egg, and it listed sharply. Its surface was raked by Vyking's energy beams, and while the Ovoid's guns tried desperately to track Caleb and fire, the crimson knight laid into the machine again and again with his hammer.

In moments, it too was a smoking wreck lying in the street.

While Ariel and Vyking wrenched the Ovoids open and extracted the pilots, harmed but whole, Caleb and Abbot checked on the civilians caught in the crossfire.

The plaza around them was a smoking ruin. Bodies lay in smoking heaps all around. Shards of glass and chunks of concrete littered the ground. Sirens echoed in the distance, promising the swift arrival of medcabs, but too many of the people Caleb and Abbot found were beyond help.

With each death they discovered, Caleb's anger grew. Thraxus would pay, he vowed. He didn't know how he would bring the wealthiest and most powerful being in the Three Galaxies to justice, but he knew it had to be done.

SYSTEMS FAILURE™

Fort Folsom

An Optional Locale for Systems Failure™

By Todd Yoho

A History

Fort Folsom is a small but important community in the northwestern part of West Virginia, just south of the northern "pan-handle." It is home to a militia group calling itself the "Mountaineers." It is also home to one of the best stocked trading posts this close to Bugland, USA: The Route 1 Exchange Post. From here, characters can stock up and refuel before heading out to combat the bugs on their own turf. NORAD is currently considering sending a detachment of troops to bolster the Fort's defenses since it will be a key staging ground for any assaults into Bugland.

Being a rural area, Folsom had few main hard lines for the Bugs to use for entry. After the Bug threat was determined to be real, the citizens took to destroying the few land lines into the area and went as far as disabling the railroad switch boxes that run through the mountainous countryside. This proved to be a wise decision for the future. Being such a rural area, the citizens were used to being isolated, especially during the harsh winters when they can be snow bound for months at a time. Realizing the dire straits they were in, the community of 500 gathered at

the Old School House and decided to collect all of their stores and form a tight knit community around it.

Over the next year, they moved many of the mobile homes in the area around the Old School House, encompassing the fire department and a heavy equipment repair shop behind a wall of homes. These mobile homes were then packed with dirt, and buried under mounds of dirt, making a formidable castle wall. They built homes within the compound from the numerous nearby timber yards that provided much of the community's income, and they began to re-open the abandoned coal mines that permeate the surrounding countryside. They also repaired the local junked steam locomotive and a few cars for use to travel the many rail lines that snake through the mountains, enabling them to trade and communicate with other communities in the area, and across the state if necessary. They have made use of the various waterways and tributaries of the Ohio River by constructing rafts and boats to travel them, giving them another avenue for trade. This resurgence of transportation enabled the community to build and maintain The Route 1 Exchange Post. Over time, they attracted friends and family from all over to come and live at the newly christened Fort Folsom.

Refugees from nearby towns began to trickle in as word spread about the Fort and the Exchange Post. With these refugees came agents from the FBI Fingerprinting Bureau in Clarksburg, and they had contacts in what was left of the government. Through them, trade began to flourish and the sleepy little town of Folsom became an important staging ground for militias in the surrounding areas. They also benefitted from hav-

ing a large portion of the female population being employed at area hospitals and nursing centers, giving them access to better medical care than in other areas of the country. Being a rural community, they were also well versed in raising livestock, agriculture, and hunting, enabling them to have a steady, if not exactly overabundant supply of food. Being rich in coal and timber allowed them to have a steady supply of fuel for warmth and to power the steam locomotive, and it did not hurt that the area had a small number of oil wells pumping away. Also to the benefit of the community, there was a significant population of the elderly who grew up during the Great Depression and had lived in near apocalyptic conditions. Their insight and experience enabled the community to effectively use its resources and hold strong as the rest of the world was collapsing in on itself.

After spending the first few years learning how to survive, the community began to send exploratory raids into the surrounding counties where some of the larger cities used to be. They found them to be destroyed by the Bugs: Clarksburg, Morgantown, New Martinsville, Wheeling, Charleston and more all fell victim to the Bugs' assault. Not content to simply sit around and wait to die, they began to organize into a fighting force. Calling themselves the Mountaineers, they began hit and run tactics in Clarksburg in order to gain raw materials. Through judicious use of the locomotive, they were able to carry large amounts of forces relatively long distances and recover large amounts of materials while combating the Bugs. By the year 2009, they have developed these raids to a science and have been quite successful in combating the Bugs.

Working Vehicle Breakdown: 2009

- 1 Steam Locomotive with 8 cars
- 2 Fire Engines; One tanker has been modified to spray bug juice.
- 5 Coal hauling dump trucks
- 8 log carrying tractor-trailers
- 4 tractor-trailer cabs
- 1 ambulance
- 4 log skidders
- 100 operational 4 wheel drive trucks
- 55 4 wheel ATV's
- 20 3 wheel ATV's
- 20 canoes
- 5 flat-bottomed cargo rafts (made from telephone poles)
- 7 fishing boats
- 2 Hummers
- 1 P-51 Mustang (90% ready to fly)
- 35 Horses
- 40 Pack Mules
- 25 Tractors
- 100 Riding Lawn Mowers
- ~300 old cars and trucks for spare parts

Topography

One of the advantages that Fort Folsom has is the local topography. It is situated in a region full of small hills and mountains with valleys, known as hollows, but locally defined as "hollers," where equipment and troops can be stored in relative



secrecy. Even from the air, these secretive coves are difficult to view thanks to the tree cover. The region is also cut by streams and creeks that are part of the watershed of the Ohio River. These streams and creeks wind their way throughout the lowlands providing water and transportation routes to almost anywhere in the region. Adding to the isolation is the fact that there is only one main road, Route 1, which leads into and out of town. By securing this road to both the north and south of town, the community has strict control of who gets in and out of their locality.

Aside from the main road, the railroad tracks and the streams, there is another route of transportation that enables the Mountaineers to cover long distances in a short amount of time: Old State Route 1 and the logging roads. Before the blacktopped Route 1 was built in the 1930's, Route 1 was a winding gravel road that cut its way through the heavily forested hills, barely suitable for automobile traffic. It was better suited for horseback or even better, on foot. However, with the advent of four-wheel drive trucks, the old Route 1 is a perfect way to shave time off of a cross-country trip. It may be rugged, but there is no more direct route to some of the other communities that have sprung up in hollers around Fort Folsom like Hartzel, New Smithfield, and Wallace. These logging roads are heavily patrolled and they are beginning to set up checkpoints as well. Augmenting the suitability to wage a guerrilla war from here are the honeycombs of old coal mines that permeate the mountains. There are vast coal seams that run through the area, and there were uncounted small coal mines dug in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Most of these mines were closed in the 1950's in favor of mechanically mining the larger seams found across the river into Ohio, but the tunnels were never collapsed or sealed. They have been rediscovered, thanks to the surviving miners and the numbers of hunters who have stumbled across them in the past century. These old mines have been put to good use as cold storage for perishables, weapon caches, outposts and living quarters. All of these factors combined have enabled Fort Folsom to develop into the Militia staging ground that it has become.

The Armory

Aside from the plethora of vehicles, some armored, some not, Fort Folsom started out with an impressive arsenal of weapons. Culled from the community of gun collectors and war veterans of the 20th century, the Armory was stockpiled with several thousand guns and the necessary ammunition. Aside from the obligatory hunting rifles, shotguns, and handguns, Fort Folsom boasted several automatic rifles, including well cared for Vietnam "Souvenir" AK-47's, numerous M-16's, and two .50 caliber machineguns. The owner of those two beauties claimed he assembled them from parts purchased at gun shows over the past 20 years. Also included in this arsenal were the supplies, and skills, for reloading shell casings, providing a plentiful, but not inexhaustible, initial supply of ammunition. Many of these weapons were used as trade items in the early days, augmenting the wealth of the community.

Over time, as military personnel began to strike out on their own and National Guard Armories were looted, more military hardware came to Fort Folsom. Several WWII display cannons were removed from their pedestals in New Martinsville, Paden City, and Pine Grove in the early days, and after months of refit-

ting, were returned to fighting form. One was destroyed in a bandit raid on the fort in 2007. As the FBI employees began to trickle in to Fort Folsom from nearby Clarksburg, they brought with them protective equipment, supplementing what the fire station already had, and more military hardware. Through their government connections, they secured a few Organitech weapons and a supply of Bug Juice. Not wanting an opportunity to go to waste, one of the fire engines was modified so that it would have a storage tank of Bug Juice, should the need for it arise. The crown jewel of the armory will be the P-51 Mustang they looted from a privately owned airstrip near Buckannon. It was a harrowing process, and the fighter was in bad shape, but after a year of scrounging and jury-rigging of parts, it is almost ready to fly. All they need now is a pilot.

A Population Breakdown

Fort Folsom began as a quiet mountain town of 1,114. After the Meltdown, family members who had since moved away began to trickle back in, raising the number to near 1,800. Over time, with illness and limited medical facilities, the population dropped to 1,400 by 2005. After word began to spread about Fort Folsom, prospective militiamen began to arrive with families until it has reached the current 2009 population of 2,100 men, women and children. About 3/4 of this number are actual fighting members of the community, the rest being termed "support" personnel. However, should the need arise, everyone capable of handling a weapon will fight for Fort Folsom.

Locations

Fort Folsom

Built around a large brick schoolhouse dating from the 1920's, Fort Folsom is a complex that stands as an example of the spirit and determination of humanity. It rests at the head of a large field that expands into one of the larger hollers in the area. It rests on the banks of one of the smaller streams that run out of the hills. The schoolhouse itself is square in design boasting 12 rather large classrooms, 2 former office rooms, and in the center is a gym and cafeteria area with full kitchen facilities. Also important are the four 2 bedroom apartments built into the southwest face of the building. The size and compartmentalization allowed for centralized storage of goods for the community and the gym allowed them a meeting place for everyone. The belfry was immediately turned into an observation post armed with a .50 caliber machinegun. The roof was modified eventually to mount one of the reclaimed cannons, providing the complex with artillery support in the event of an attack of Bugs or bandits.

Adjacent to the schoolhouse is the fire department building, a three-garage sheet metal structure with a large wood stove and kitchen facilities. Both structures are old enough that they utilize wood stoves and have wells for water supply, making them fully operating kitchens capable of feeding several hundred people at a time in rather primitive conditions. The perimeter also enclosed a heavy equipment repair shop that placed the means of repairing vehicles within the confines of the compound. This also included two large storage tanks of gasoline and diesel fuel that was essential for these early projects to take form. The huge supply of fuel is gone, but it did enable the community to ac-

comply with the work they needed to do with the heavy equipment in the time that they did it. As time went on, the large field behind the schoolhouse was tilled for agriculture and the perimeter of mobile homes was put into place. Within the perimeter, permanent structures were built for housing from cannibalized homes and local stores of lumber. Soon, everyone was living within an armed compound with crude facilities for food, water, warmth, sanitation, health care, protection, and most importantly, a sense of community. As the word of Fort Folsom grew, and family that had moved away began to return, the permanent population increased to double its size. Along with the permanent population, drifters pass through frequently, and other communities send Freebooters to trade with the stable Fort Folsom. Because of this, the Terrison family used their wealth and influence to establish The Route 1 Exchange Post. Because of the stability of Fort Folsom, other communities are beginning to take hold in the area, some at the insistence of Fort Folsom. They hope to have a strong chain of human settlements in the region, which has attracted NORAD's attention about using it as a staging ground for future attacks against Bugs in the region.

The Route 1 Exchange Post

Located in the field north of the complex, the Exchange Post began as a humble collection of trade goods and vehicles owned by the Terrisons. Over the years, the Post has evolved into a well-stocked bazaar with several permanent structures and covered tents. They deal only in trade goods and precious metals, including pre-meltdown coins. They are used in manufacturing bullets for the Militia. The Post exists outside of the complex wall, and most visitors to the community are rarely allowed inside the actual compound. This has kept out many of the undesirables that the Terrisons sometimes deal with, especially through Janie's connections. Items for trade include weapons, vehicles, surplus food, purified water, clothing, timber, coal, crude oil, and skills such as repairs, refits and medical attention. Mechanical work is usually done inside the complex with the vehicle brought out to the owner when the work is done. There is a clinic set up in the Post, but should the need arise the patient can be taken in to the complex's infirmary inside the compound. Usually only the patient is allowed in, unarmed, for security reasons. The post does not openly trade out medical supplies, however, under the table negotiations through Janie can be arranged, for the right price.

The Underpass

The Underpass is a concrete railroad bridge that crosses Route 1 about a mile (1.6 km) south of Fort Folsom. It has been armored and fortified as a checkpoint in order to serve as a first line of defense against attackers. It has 2 .50 caliber machineguns behind plate bunkers on both sides of the bridge and 5 people routinely man the post at any given time. Also within earshot is the Hartzel Run Logging Road Checkpoint.

The Tracks

The Tracks is a checkpoint where the railroad tracks cross Route 1 on a small rise, located about a mile (1.6 km) north of Fort Folsom. 8 people man the checkpoint at all times and it has a .50 caliber machinegun in a bunker cut into the hillside. There is also an observation post at the top of the hill at The Tracks that allows for a clear view of everything coming down the road

for 6 miles (9.6 km). One of the WWII artillery pieces is positioned at the observation post providing artillery protection for this side of Route 1.

New Smithfield

New Smithfield was the first of the satellite communities that grew after Fort Folsom was secured. An oil boomtown in the early years of the 20th century, Smithfield fell into poverty as the United States began to become more and more dependent on foreign sources of crude oil. After Fort Folsom was established, one of the first actions taken was to garrison Smithfield. It was well known for still having intact oil derricks, and crude oil would prove to be a valuable trade commodity. New Smithfield is only 12 miles (19.2 km) north of Fort Folsom and boasts a population of 350, all involved in pumping crude oil and protecting the site. It is set well off the main road and unless someone knows it is there, no one is going to go looking for it. Outsider ignorance is the main protection for New Smithfield.

Notable Mountaineers

Junior Seigers

Junior is a short, round retired railroad worker with a devilish sense of humor. He is the senior Grease Monkey of Fort Folsom. Passing on what he knows to some of the younger Grease Monkeys before the Meltdown, he was a respected member of the community and his voice carried a lot of weight among the people. The strength and determination that helped build Fort Folsom is due in no small part to his organization in the days after the Meltdown. He is nearly 80 years old, but extremely strong in his old age, the result of 30 years of repairing railroad tracks. His family is highly involved in the safety and operations of Fort Folsom.

O.C.C: Grease Monkey.

Background: Construction: Retired Railroad Worker.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

H.P.: 47, **S.D.C.:** 30.

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 17, M.A. 11, P.S. 16, P.P. 14, P.E. 13, P.B. 12, Spd. 9.

I.S.P.: None.

Age: 77

Height: 5 feet 3 inches (1.6 m), **Weight:** 165 lbs (74.25 kg).

Experience Level: 9th

Psionics: None.

Combat: No Hand to Hand skill, 2 attacks per melee round.

Bonuses: +1 vs Psionics, +1 vs Insanity.

Skills of Note: Carpentry (65%), General Repair (75%), Jury Rigging, Scrounging (90%), Electrical Engineer (90%), Mechanical Engineer (85%), Automotive Mechanics (85%), Aircraft Mechanics: (85%), Locksmith (90%), W.P. Revolver, W.P. Shotgun, W.P. Bolt-Action Rifle.

Weapons and Equipment: Junior has a well-kept Datsun pickup truck with a camper top where he keeps his tools and scrap pile. He usually has a .44 revolver "hanging low" at his side and a 12-gauge shotgun on his truck gun rack.

"Big" David Seigers

Big David Seigers, the son of Junior, is a tall, thin, wiry man who spent years working in the coal mines. Before the Melt-



down he had little to do with the law, however after the Melt-down, he has fallen into the shoes of Fort Folsom's Senior Peacekeeper. He is the brother in law of the Terrisons, but he gives them no leeway in any dangerous or "illegal" dealings at the Exchange Post.

O.C.C: Peacekeeper.

Background: Production: Coal Miner.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

H.P.: 27, **S.D.C.:** 43.

Attributes: I.Q. 9, M.E. 11, M.A. 14, P.S. 15, P.P. 14, P.E. 13, P.B. 13, Spd. 22.

I.S.P.: 37

Age: 55

Height: 6 feet 1 inch (1.85 m), **Weight:** 140 lbs (63 kg).

Experience Level: 5th

Psionics: Minor Psionics: Object Read, See Invisible, See Aura.

Combat: Hand to Hand: Expert, Boxing, 6 Attacks per melee round.

Bonuses: +3 initiative, +2 disarm, +5 pull punch, +2 strike, +5 parry, +5 dodge, +3 roll with impact.

Skills of Note: Law (45%), Streetwise (36%), Intelligence (48%), Climbing (60%), Prowl (45%), Pilot: Motorcycle (76%), W.P. Automatic Pistol, W.P. Shotgun, W.P. Automatic Rifle, W.P. Bolt-Action Rifle, W.P. Blunt.

Weapons and Equipment: "Big" David rides a Honda 4-wheel ATV loaded down with a 12-gauge automatic shotgun, 2 .50 Desert Eagle pistols at his side, and an M-16 for emergencies. He is also fond of his oilskin duster and black derby hat.

"Little" David Seigers

Little David is the son of Big David, though anyone who has met them would believe that the titles should be switched. Where Big David is tall and thin, Little David is taller, broader and much more densely packed, making his father look like a beanpole in comparison. Little David before the Meltdown was a heavy equipment operator for the Terrisons' lumber company. He has now taken up the role of an Exterminator hunting down Bugs in his 1977 "Green Machine" Ford pick up truck. He is constantly scrounging for supplies to trade for fuel for his truck.

O.C.C: Exterminator.

Background: Transportation: Heavy Equipment Operator.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

H.P.: 28, **S.D.C.:** 76.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 15, M.A. 14, P.S. 21, P.P. 15, P.E. 21, P.B. 12, Spd. 10.

I.S.P.: 33

Age: 32

Height: 6 feet 4 inch (1.93 m), **Weight:** 210 lbs (94.5 kg).

Experience Level: 3rd

Psionics: Minor Psionics, Resist Fatigue, Resist Hunger, Resist Thirst.

Combat: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, Boxing, 5 attacks per melee round.

Bonuses: +2 initiative, +2 strike, +5 parry, +5 dodge, +2 disarm, +5 roll with impact, +3 pull punch, +6 damage, +3 vs magic and poison, +12% vs coma/death.

Skills of Note: Body Building, Climbing (60%), Wrestling, Basic Radio (75%), Camouflage (50%), Find Contraband (54%), W.P. All Modern, Paired Weapons-Modern.

Weapons and Equipment: "Little" David drives a 1977 tricked out green Ford truck outfitted with armor plating and a dual 20mm machinegun mounted in the bed. He carries in his truck within easy reach a .357 magnum revolver, a .45 automatic pistol, two 9mm Berettas, an M-16 with a 20mm grenade launcher, 2 Mosin Nagat 7.62mm bolt-action rifles, a semiautomatic Browning 30-06 hunting rifle and a drum fed Thompson sub-machinegun. He has an even larger collection of weapons in a bunker beneath his house within the walls of the fort. You could say he's fond of firearms.

Mike Seigers

A former lumberjack, and son of Junior, Mike began to stockpile supplies when he first heard about the Y2K scare. He was determined for his family to survive the collapse of civilization and he was one of the best prepared when the crash did come. Mike is built like his older brother, "Big" David; tall and thin, causing some to confuse them for one another at a distance. He has served well as a Militiaman for the Mountaineers.

O.C.C: Survivalist.

Background: Production: Lumberjack.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

H.P.: 32, **S.D.C.:** 35.

Attributes: I.Q. 9, M.E. 13, M.A. 12, P.S. 14, P.P. 15, P.E. 17, P.B. 11, Spd. 15.

I.S.P.: None.

Age: 50

Height: 6 feet 1 inch (1.85 m), **Weight:** 140 lbs (63 kg).

Experience Level: 5th

Psionics: None.

Combat: Hand to Hand: Basic, 5 attacks per melee round.

Bonuses: +1 initiative, +1 strike, +2 parry, +2 dodge, +2 roll with impact, +2 pull punch, +1 vs magic and poison, +5% vs coma/death. (With a firearm: +1 initiative, +1 strike, +2 strike with an aimed shot, +1 attack per melee round.)

Skills of Note: Sense Bugs (70%), Wilderness Survival (75%), Hunting, Land Navigation (72%), Skin and Prepare Hides (75%), Preserve Food (65%), Sniper, W.P. Knife, W.P. Targeting, W.P. Bolt-Action Rifle.

Weapons and Equipment: Mike is a perfectionist and disdains the use of automatic weaponry. He takes great pride in his marksmanship abilities and uses only bolt-action rifles. He owns a wide variety of them in various common hunting calibers.

Garrett "Thor" Seigers

Only 10 at the time of the Meltdown, Garrett was already following in his father, Mike's footsteps of being an outdoorsman. After the Meltdown, Garrett found a particular joy in hunting down the Bugs with his family and has grown into a powerful Exterminator for Fort Folsom. His record of 45 kills stands as something that all of the Mountaineers aspire to break. Garrett is short and stocky, muscled, and has short blonde hair with a blonde beard giving him a Nordic, Viking like appearance.

O.C.C: Exterminator.

Background: Kid.

Alignment: Anarchist.

H.P.: 28, **S.D.C.:** 63.

Attributes: I.Q. 9, M.E. 15, M.A. 9, P.S. 22, P.P. 13, P.E. 15, P.B. 16, Spd. 22.



I.S.P.: None.

Age: 19

Height: 5 feet 3 inches (1.6 m), **Weight:** 185 lbs (83.25 kg).

Experience Level: 4th

Psionics: None.

Combat: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, Boxing, 6 attacks per melee round.

Bonuses: +2 initiative, +2 strike, +5 parry, +5 dodge, +7 damage, +2 disarm, +6 roll with impact, +3 pull punch, 30% charm/impress.

Skills of Note: Body Building, Prowl (45%), Gymnastics, Running, Demolitions (89%), Demolitions Disposal (89%), Horsemanship, Pilot: Motorcycle (82%), W.P. All Modern, W.P. Battle Axe, W.P. Blunt, W.P. Chain, Paired Weapons-Modern.

Weapons and Equipment: Garrett is fond of explosions and consequently he uses a lot of explosives. He carries an M-40 breech loading grenade launcher with explosive and fragmentation grenades. He also carries a dozen explosive grenades, a score of sticks of dynamite, and 5 pounds of C-4 explosive with detonators. He will also wield a sledgehammer when in close quarters, playing up to his nickname "Thor."

Dick Terrison

Dick Terrison owned the largest lumber company in the northern half of the state before the Meltdown. He had mercantile contacts across the state, and after the Meltdown happened, his becoming a Freebooter was a natural extension of his pre-Meltdown life. He used his wealth and contacts to build the

Exchange Post and run it in such a manner as to make the most profit for him while benefitting Fort Folsom. He is a huge, powerful man who looks like a Hell's Angel crossed with Santa Claus. Dick rarely engages in combat, his huge size usually stops trouble before it starts.

O.C.C: Freebooter.

Background: Administrative: Owned a logging business.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

H.P.: 35, **S.D.C.:** 30.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 13, M.A. 23, P.S. 19, P.P. 14, P.E. 15, P.B. 12, Spd. 10.

I.S.P.: None.

Age: 61

Height: 6 feet 6 inches (1.92 m), **Weight:** 223 lbs (100.35 kg).

Experience Level: 6th

Psionics: None.

Combat: Hand to Hand: Basic, 5 attacks per melee.

Bonuses: +1 initiative, +1 strike, +2 parry, +2 dodge, +2 roll with impact, +2 pull punch, critical strike on natural 19 or 20, +4 damage, 75% trust/intimidate.

Skills of Note: Basic Math (85%), Business and Finance (80%), Law (70%), Fast Talker, Appreciate True Value (76%), Find Contraband (66%), Palming, Brewing (50%/55%), W.P. Blunt, W.P. Chain, W.P. Heavy, W.P. Sub-Machinegun.

Weapons and Equipment: Dick usually carries an Uzi and a crowbar, but when he knows that he is going into a rough situation, he brings along "Blue Ribbon," his souped up chainsaw. Blue Ribbon does 5D6 S.D.C. damage per hit.

Neil Miles

A native to Folsom, Neil moved his family to North Carolina after he lost his job in the early 1980's in the coal mines. He worked as a welder before the Meltdown, and after civilization collapsed, he and his family fought their way to the safety of Folsom. He has become an important Grease Monkey in the community, as he is an extraordinary welder. His skill and attention to detail make his work much sought after at Fort Folsom. Neil has most of his black hair left and wears a goatee sprinkled with gray.

O.C.C: Grease Monkey.

Background: Construction: Welder.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

H.P.: 49, **S.D.C.:** 32.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 12, M.A. 10, P.S. 18, P.P. 10, P.E. 18, P.B. 12, Spd. 13.

I.S.P.: None.

Age: 58

Height: 5 feet 8 inches (1.72 m), **Weight:** 150 lbs (67.5 kg).

Experience Level: 8th

Psionics: None.

Combat: Hand to Hand: Basic, 5 attacks per melee round.

Bonuses: +1 initiative, +1 strike, +3 parry, +3 dodge, +5 damage, +1 disarm, Critical Strike on natural 19 or 20, +3 to roll with impact, +2 pull punch, Body Throw/Flip, +2 vs magic and poison, +6% vs coma/death.

Skills of Note: Athletics, Carpentry (60%), General Repair (70%), Jury Rigging, Scrounging (85%), Electrical Engineer (85%), Mechanical Engineer (80%), Automotive Mechanics (80%), Pilot Truck (78%), W.P. Automatic Rifle, W.P. Bolt-Action Rifle.

Weapons and Equipment: Neil drives a beat up red '57 Chevy with a welding rig on the back and a bed full of scrap metal for repairs. He has an M-16 and a .300 Savage pump action rifle for when things turn nasty.



Janie Terrison

Janie is the wife of Dick Terrison and before the Meltdown, was involved in some of the more shady aspects of the lumber company. She was in charge of bribes to environmental officials, creative shipping paperwork and other less than legal operations. After the Meltdown, she saw the collapse of civilization as just another situation to use to her advantage. She is the crime kingpin of Fort Folsom, dealing with smuggling and trading of illegal goods such as medical supplies, drugs and other hard to get items. Janie has gray hair with a few strands of blonde remaining, but has retained the stunning good looks of her youth.

O.C.C: Freebooter.

Background: Criminal.

Alignment: Miscreant.

H.P.: 37, **S.D.C.:** 30.

Attributes: I.Q. 22, M.E. 14, M.A. 13, P.S. 11, P.P. 19, P.E. 13, P.B. 22, Spd. 11.

I.S.P.: None.

Age: 52

Height: 5 feet 2 inches (1.57 m), **Weight:** 120 lbs (54 kg).

Experience Level: 7th

Psionics: None.

Combat: No Hand to Hand skill, 2 attacks per melee round.

Bonuses: +8% to all skills (already added), +2 strike, +2 parry, +2 dodge, 60% charm/impress.

Skills of Note: Basic Math (98%), Business and Finance (93%), Law (83%), Fast Talker, Appreciate True Value (88%), Find Contraband (78%), Pick Locks (88%), Streetwise (92%), Seduction (60%), W.P. Knife, W.P. Revolver.

Weapons and Equipment: Janie carries a snub nosed .38 special in a belt holster at all times. She usually finds a safe place to hide when things get rough.

Colleen Miles

The oldest daughter of Junior Seigers, Colleen ran a daycare in North Carolina. She has become the leading Sawbones pediatrician in Fort Folsom, despite her only having a high school education. Colleen wears her hair died brown and reddish at shoulder length and is the spitting image of her father, Junior Seigers. She is quiet and shy, hating to be the center of attention. Her psychic powers to heal make her a powerful, yet reluctant, voice in the community.

O.C.C: Sawbones.

Background: Personal Services: Ran a Daycare.

Alignment: Principled.

H.P.: 43, **S.D.C.:** 20.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 14, M.A. 11, P.S. 11, P.P. 18, P.E. 21, P.B. 12, Spd. 12.

I.S.P.: 34

Age: 57

Height: 5 feet 3 inches (1.6 m), **Weight:** 135 lbs (60.75 kg).

Experience Level: 8th

Psionics: Minor Psionics: Increased Healing, Psychic Diagnosis, Psychic Surgery.

Combat: No Hand to Hand skill, 2 attacks per melee round.

Bonuses: +2 strike, +2 parry, +2 dodge, +3 vs magic and poison, +12% vs coma/death.

Skills of Note: Medical Doctor (98%/98%), Chemistry (85%), Biology (85%), Identify Plants and Fruits (60%), Holistic Medicine (70%).

Weapons and Equipment: Colleen carries no weapons, only her medical kit. She does not object to violence, she just does not wish to take part in it.

Fox Miles

The only child of Neil and Colleen, Fox was a college student studying geology when the Y2K bug hit. He and his wife were reasonably prepared thanks to his paranoia, and went with Neil and Colleen when they decided to try and fight their way to Folsom after the Bug invasion. Over the course of the years at Fort Folsom, Fox has developed into an important Militiaman for the Mountaineers, leading daring hit and run attacks on the Bugs whenever he can. He has black hair, wears a scraggly, short black beard and can usually be seen in fatigues.

O.C.C: Survivalist.

Background: College Student: Geologist.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

H.P.: 36, **S.D.C.:** 41.

Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 12, M.A. 12, P.S. 12, P.P. 13, P.E. 26, P.B. 13, Spd. 18.

I.S.P.: None.

Age: 34

Height: 5 feet 10 inches (1.77 m), **Weight:** 175 lbs (78.75 kg).

Experience Level: 4th

Psionics: None.

Combat: Hand to Hand: Expert, 5 attacks per melee round.

Bonuses: +5% to all skills (already added), +2 parry, +2 dodge, +2 roll with impact, +2 pull punch, +6 vs magic and poison, +22% vs coma/death. (With a firearm: +1 initiative, +1 strike, +2 strike with an aimed shot, +1 attack per melee round.)

Skills of Note: Geology (50%), Sense Bugs (70%), Wilderness Survival (75%), Carpentry (45%), Hunting, Running, Climbing (70%), Demolitions (84%), Camouflage (60%), W.P. Automatic Rifle, W.P. Shotgun, W.P. Automatic Pistol, W.P. Revolver.

Weapons and Equipment: Fox carries a Mossberg 500 Military Spec 12-gauge shotgun and a .45 automatic pistol as part of his regular attire. When he knows that he is going into trouble, he carries an AK-47, 2 .45 automatic pistols, a .357 magnum revolver and 3 pounds of C-4 explosive with detonators just in case a situation presents itself.

Julia Miles

The wife of Fox, Julia was employed at a blood bank before the Meltdown and naturally gravitated into becoming a Sawbones after reaching Fort Folsom. She has become the rock of the medial services at Fort Folsom, organizing and leading them into being one of the best places, comparatively, to receive healthcare in the shattered country. Julia has long, curly blonde hair with elfin features that cause those who don't know her to misjudge her age as much younger.

O.C.C: Sawbones.

Background: Medical: Medical Technologist.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

H.P.: 25, **S.D.C.:** 20.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 12, M.A. 20, P.S. 10, P.P. 12, P.E. 12, P.B. 14, Spd. 15.

I.S.P.: None.

Age: 34

Height: 5 feet 4 inches (1.62 m), **Weight:** 120 lbs (54 kg).

Experience Level: 4th

Psionics: None.

Combat: No Hand to Hand skill, 2 attacks per melee round.

Bonuses: 60% trust/intimidate.

Skills of Note: Biology (65%), Pathology (75%), Chemistry (65%), Chemistry: Analytical (50%), Medical Doctor (95%/85%), Basic Math (70%), Advanced Math (70%), W.P. Automatic Pistol.

Weapons and Equipment: Julia carries a 9mm Beretta and her medical bag.

The Bottom Line

Fort Folsom is only one of many settlements that have developed in the devastated world that is **Systems Failure™**. It is one of the more established and powerful, having had the advantages of isolation, independent peoples, and determination not to give up and surrender to the Bugs. They are hardy fighters, and wary of strangers, but accept anyone after they have proven their merit. They are not going to go down without a fight, and



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are ready to take as many down with them as they can. Fort Folsom is definitely the powerhouse of its region.

New Skill

Geology (Science): The study and understanding of the composition of the Earth. Characters will be able to identify rocks and minerals, have an understanding of ground water locations and contamination, and be able to find weaknesses in rock faces. This skill allows characters to locate and retrieve gems, precious metals and other economically valuable resources. It adds a +5% situation bonus to appraisal skills when they are used for determining worth of gems and precious metals. **Base Skill:** 30% +5% per level of experience.

Nightbane®

Demon Hunters

An Optional R.C.C. for Nightbane®, Palladium Fantasy®, Rifts® and Other Games

By Mike Richardson

After a long day of unanswered questions, 17-year-old Brian Mack found himself weary of surprises and chaos. His day had been spent running from what he called "nightmare stuff," while he ran from shadows that moved of their own free will. Now all he wanted was a chance to get some sleep. His bed had been calling him since he arrived home to his mother's rundown apartment, and now he gave in to his body's need for slumber.

He drifted off into a land of dreams and mysteries, as thoughts of scantily clad girls danced through his mind. He slipped effortlessly from the world of the conscious to the world of the unconscious, where he found his desires fulfilled. Things changed for him though as time wore on, it seemed. He found himself falling through that unconscious reality to a different world altogether. From a world of sunshine and happiness, the young man found himself somehow transported to a dark and shadowy hallway.

One by one, spotlights turned on to light a path down the eerie corridor. He could see no walls in the inky blackness as he felt himself being drawn farther into the occult realm within. Deeper into the darkness Brian slowly crept, unsure of what to expect in his journey into the unknown, the silence broken only by his breathing and footfalls.

"What the am I getting into here?" he wondered aloud. He was answered simply by a hand that extended from the shadowy void at the end of the hallway.

He approached the hand warily, ready to run if needed. His eyes shifted uncertainly from the tips of its fingers to the base of its wrist, contemplating what could be hidden by the ebony mists of emptiness.

And then there was sound...

It was the simple sound of the murmuring of voices, like the din of a distant crowd all trying to be heard as individuals. Slowly he approached the hand despite the fear he felt deep within his heart, for he knew that somehow the hand would lead him to the truth behind the frightful occurrences of the day. Would his instincts betray him now, though? Or would his feelings be proven correct?

The voices meanwhile seemed to slowly change in tone — more of a unified chant now than a mass of mumbling tones. And in unison they seemed to call out to him, "Brian... Brian... Brian..." Fear clenched his heart like icy daggers through his very soul as he heard the name called out by the hollow, echoing voices in the distance. But onward still he followed the dimly lit pathway toward the extended hand.

Suddenly everything went bright, with a flash like lightning, and young Brian was blinded by the abrupt spark of illumination. When his eyes adjusted, he was standing before a large gathering of some kind. Dimly lit was the great hall, and he could see little of those surrounding him in this incorporeal parliament.

A single, booming voice rose above the bustling chaos of the others, "And so I bring this session of the Council of Elders to order. Brian Mack has reached the Awakening."

Brian simply asked, "The Awakening? What are you talking about?" He was confused and more than a little scared by what he saw before him. He was ignored, as though he wasn't even there. The Council continued to talk about him, seemingly oblivious to his existence.

After what seemed an eternity, all eyes were turned to the young man once more.

Finally the speaker could be seen, with his flowing robes hiding what appeared to be a gargantuan stature. His ephemeral state gave him a somewhat hollow appearance, yet did nothing to diminish the majestic aura that somehow surrounded him. He had the look of royalty somehow, but with the haunting features of a man who had known death many times over. Most striking was his lack of eyes, each replaced by seemingly unending darkness. It was an unearthly vision, and one that shook Brian to the core of his soul.

The same lack of eyes seemed to dominate the features of the others as well, with few exceptions, as the young Hunter surveyed his surroundings. He looked back to the head of the Council to see the same hand that had lured him to the hall reaching out to him, surrounded in an unusual yellow glow. Brian tried to move but found himself paralyzed, whether by fright or by some unseen force he couldn't know.

The hand touched his forehead and a rush overwhelmed him. Everything went blurry and he felt faint. He staggered as nausea swept through his system and dizziness clouded his thoughts. And then he fell.

When Brian regained consciousness he was in his bed once more, covered in a cold sweat and breathing heavily. His heart was pounding like a jackhammer and his skin felt consumed by flames. For a moment and no more, he took to his feet before crashing down as the dizziness overcame his senses.

"I've gotta be sick," he coughed as his body convulsed from dry heaves on the floor of his bedroom. When he was finally able to stand he felt an uncomfortable buzzing in his head that drove him to one knee once more. The buzzing grew stronger and stronger until it felt like a knife being driven through his skull.

There was a knock at the apartment door and Brian struggled across the floor to answer it, hoping it was someone he knew. He opened the door to find a man dressed all in black, with an Australian duster and a wide-brimmed cowboy hat. Brian had no clue who this long-haired man was.

"Brother, I'm here to help to you," said the mystery man with a smile. His dark hair and coat blew in the breeze as he stepped in the door past the young man. His east coast accent betrayed his would-be western appearance and made Brian even more confused. And the pain in his skull seemed to get worse and worse. "First let me help you with the worst headache of your life," said the stranger as he placed his hands on either side of Brian's head and stared deep into his eyes. "Open your mind to me... let your pain flow freely out of you," he spoke softly to the younger man.

"So the learning shall begin. Know what you are and know what you do. Know that your life is changed forevermore. Know

now that you will live apart from humanity, yet as its guardian. Know that the path is not one of convenience, but one of righteousness. Know this and know more." These were the booming words of the spectral leader of the council.

Brian reluctantly found himself complying with man's words and was relieved to find that the pain subsided, as he had been told. "Who are you?" he weakly asked the smiling stranger in his living room.

"I'm here to give you the answers to all the questions you've had the last few days. I know what you've been through, more or less. It's pretty much the same for any of us at first, I guess." Extending a hand, he finally introduced himself, "By the way... name's Rick. Rick Barr."

It took a minute for Brian to reply. "Uh... Brian. Brian Mack. Look man, I don't know what happened, but I..."

"Take it easy," Rick cut in. "I'm here to teach you what you need to know. I'll get you through this." And so the training began as it had hundreds of times before.

The Demon Hunter R.C.C.

Throughout the centuries, mankind has told tales of mythological heroes, men and women who stood against gods, demons, and monsters without fear. Gilgamesh of the Babylonians. Perseus of the Greeks. Ivan Tsarevich of the Russians. Sir Lancelot from Camelot. Bellerophon of the Corinthians. The list of legends goes on. But were they simply myths?

In each generation, there come a rare few individuals who are born different from the rest of humanity. These few are given both power and responsibility in the battle with the forces of darkness. Their destiny is the eternal struggle between good and evil.

Most times a young Demon Hunter will find that strange things seem to happen around them, with a great deal of supernatural activity and unexplained phenomena. They often, but not always, take an interest in the unknown, with independent studies into the supernatural or the unexplained.

Sometime after their first head-to-head encounter with the unknown, they will find themselves dreaming of a darkened room where they stand in front of a great council, not unlike the Parliament or Congress. And then is when they learn their destiny.

This is no simple dream, you see. It is an Astral Projection, usually their first. They have been called to the Council of Elders, a collection of Hunters from the past who lived their lives in service against evil. Here they learn what they are, and why they exist. Here they learn their purpose in life. Here their eyes are opened to the complete picture of the world, and they are shown the darkness they must oppose.

At this point their life is changed forever. They may try to pass it off as just another dream, perhaps born of too many drinks or a late-night snack that didn't agree with them, but deep down they know that something is different. They suddenly seem to be able to see the darkness in what once seemed so innocent. Their perceptions of the world are seemingly altered, with nothing being so simple anymore. They have been awak-



ened to the unnatural dangers that exist in the world. Their world will never be the same.

It is at this point that their powers begin to take shape, becoming more obvious. And it is at this point that they usually meet their mentor.

The young Demon Hunter will find himself drawn to another Hunter, someone who will teach him what he needs to survive the war against the unknown. The teacher may not even be living, as some Demon Hunters may find themselves being taught by the spirit of a Hunter who has passed into the beyond, having died at the hands of a greater evil before he could impart his knowledge to his pre-destined student. This makes it more difficult for the young Demon Hunter to learn his role in the struggle with darkness, and makes him more vulnerable to attacks of all kinds from the forces of evil. But after they learn their purpose and what they need to do, they are among the greatest champions mankind has ever known.

Being a Demon Hunter is a way of life, not just a frame of mind or a set of skills, and should be role-played as such. The Demon Hunters are not as organized as the existence of the Council may imply. Most times Demon Hunters are simply expected to protect their own area. On rare occasions the Council will, however, assign Hunters to deal with specific situations. Rarely will you see more than one Demon Hunter dealing with one particular problem. It is more than just a rarity to see another Demon Hunter as your partner. It can be considered a sign of great danger.

Demon Hunter Powers:

1. Sense Supernatural: Demon Hunters automatically sense all supernatural creatures, including magic users, psychics, and other Demon Hunters, within 100 feet (30.5 m). This sensation is like a slight buzzing in the skull. Until level three, the Demon Hunter feels slightly disoriented by the sensation (-1 initiative, parry, and dodge for the first round). Demon Hunters can recognize familiar individual presences (40% +5% per level) if exposed to the same individual creature/person repeatedly.

2. Extraordinary Healing: Demon Hunters regenerate 2D6 S.D.C. or 1D6 Hit Points per minute (four melee rounds). They also have a bonus of +10% to save vs coma/death, and a +4 to save vs all toxins/poisons. For this reason, they have a remarkable tolerance for alcohol and drugs, including prescription medicines. They also receive a +2 to save vs disease. They cannot regenerate lost limbs.

3. Combat Skills: Demon Hunters are gifted with heightened reflexes and agility that allow them to deal more efficiently with the supernatural when physical combat is required. Add +1 to dodge, parry, and roll with punch fall or impact. Their damage is treated as supernatural damage. They also deal full damage in hand-to-hand combat with all supernatural creatures, such as Vampires, Werebeasts, and Grave Ghouls.

4. Longevity: Demon Hunters age more slowly than normal humans once they reach physical maturity, aging one year for every five past their twentieth birthday. For this reason they do not suffer the normal effects of aging on the brain and nervous system.

5. Psychic Abilities: All Demon Hunters have psychic powers. The Demon Hunter will have Meditation, Astral Projection, See the Invisible, and Exorcism, plus two of the following abilities,

but the I.S.P. cost to use the others is doubled. Demon Hunters begin with 4D6 P.P.E. and 6D6 I.S.P. They gain an additional 2D6 I.S.P. per additional level of experience, and one new power at every third level.

Available abilities: Alter Aura, Deadened Pain, Death Trance, Empathy, Healing Touch, Increased Healing, Mind Block, Object Read, Resist Fatigue, Resist Hunger, Resist Thirst, See Aura, Sense Evil, Sixth Sense, Telepathy, Summon Inner Strength.

6. P.P.E. Channeling: When a Demon Hunter kills a supernatural creature, he drains its P.P.E. into himself, absorbing its power. This additional energy can be discharged later in physical combat (including hand-to-hand weapons), with additional P.P.E. being spent for additional damage. For every five P.P.E. expended in this way, 1 additional point of damage is done, with a maximum of 2 additional points added per level of experience. For example, a 2nd level Demon Hunter can spend up to 20 P.P.E. to add 4 points of damage. P.P.E. spent in this manner is recovered normally.

Alignment Requirements: A Demon Hunter must be of Principled, Scrupulous, or Unprincipled alignment. Other alignments are allowed only at the G.M.'s discretion, but will usually call for the character in question to be taken under the control of the G.M. as a Dark Rider NPC.

Hit Points: P.E. attribute +3D6; add 1d6 per additional level of experience.

S.D.C.: 2D6x10+20 plus any gained from skills.

R.C.C. Skills: Skill packages are selected same as Nightbane R.C.C.; may select a martial art form as per the rules outlined in *The Rifter*® #3; will always be proficient with one ancient weapon; rarely use modern weapons because of preference for physical combat against supernatural creatures.

Secondary Skills: Demon Hunters select eight Secondary Skills, with an additional skill selected at levels three, six, nine, twelve and fifteen.

Weapons and Equipment: Demon Hunters will have one ancient weapon of choice; will also have the following as their money and equipment:

Automobile: Roll on the following table — may be exchanged for a motorcycle instead.

01-33 Brand new, cost: \$20,000, player's choice.

34-70 Classic, slightly worn, valued at \$10,000.

71-85 Classic, completely restored, valued at \$50,000.

86-00 New, cost \$200,000, player's choice.

Set of clothing and personal belongings; equipment will complement skill package selection — gang members will have knives, gang colors, etc.

Personal Savings: 2D6x\$100

Experience: Same as the Nightbane (See the Nightbane RPG).

Dark Riders — NPC Villains

Steadily into the shadows Johnny Hamilton stalked. The back alleys of the Bronx were not a place he enjoyed to hunt in. Coming from a small town, he considered himself more suited to dealing with monsters that inhabited cornfields or barns. Now



with his ax in his hands, he uneasily made his way after the rogue Hunter he had been searching for. "How many others have come after this guy?" he thought to himself. "And how do they expect me to find him?"

Suddenly he was overcome by a familiar buzzing in his skull. Someone — or something — was nearby. All he had to do was stay calm. A cool breeze blew through his short blond hair as he tightened his grip.

A flash of light. Then the sickening sound of bone snapping repeatedly.

The young Hunter never knew what hit him.

On a cold damp floor, Johnny's eyes opened in a haze of red and his body was overcome with pain. He tried to get up and shake off the grogginess but found no feeling in his legs. Slowly — painfully — he pushed himself up with his hands. And then came crashing down again.

Then a voice like sandpaper came from the darkness. "Hurts, doesn't it kid?" The sound of a striking match was followed by the scent of a cigar. With a chuckle the mystery man added, "I just love how a bunch of dead guys think they know what's best for the living. Ever wonder how they got on the Council?"

Johnny softly cried out, "Who are you?"

With another laugh, the mystery man puffed on his cigar and then worked his way casually into Johnny's view and extended a hand to the fallen Hunter. "Name's Parker — Alan Parker." Seeing that his younger opponent was in no condition to shake, he pulled his hand back and chuckled slightly again. With an air of disdain, he added "I, little man, am what the almighty Council of Elders call a traitor. I am a Dark Rider, or so I'm told. Now getting back to what I was saying..."

Johnny lay there in absolute disbelief, his clothes spattered with his own blood. And he still couldn't feel his legs. "You're a traitor? What do you mean?" Johnny had thought himself unbeatable — invulnerable — but suddenly he knew just how wrong that thinking was. And he knew he needed to keep this guy talking so his recuperative powers could save him.

"Hey, hey, hey... let's get somethin' straight here, kid," Parker said, suddenly agitated. "This is my show, not yours. You're gonna listen. And you're gonna like it. Deal?" Hot ashes from the burning cigar flicked at Johnny as Parker grew more animated during his outburst. Now seemed like the time for the young man to keep quiet.

"Now... you know how those guys got onto their precious Council?" he asked with a great deal of sarcasm. Johnny had no answer for his dark long-haired assailant.

Parker's tone changed to a deadly serious one. "Simple. They didn't cut it in the field. They're all dead. Who do you think killed them, kid? The demons. Now I look at it this way — the demons are willing to cut us a piece of their action, and all we have to do is a little dirty work. How little, you ask?" And he laughed again.

"Okay, more than a little, but who cares? Let me be the first to tell you the perks are the best. You think we have power? I think I proved to you that what Demon Hunters do have isn't much compared to what we can have, right? Right. Now I know you wanna keep that pretty-boy face of yours lookin' like it does now, so I'm gonna give you a chance to do the right thing and keep your sorry little do-gooder butt alive, boy."

Chills and pain were joined by uneasiness in Johnny. He could only imagine what was in store for him. "What do you want?" the young Demon Hunter cried out.

Parker laughed and said simply, "You're gonna join the winning team." He paused to puff on his cigar once more. "Or you can die."

Johnny tried to hide his fear with bravado. "You don't have the power to win it all. You rely on the darkness, and the darkness will be washed away by the light of our brothers and sisters. You and your unholy allies..."

"Let's get somethin' straight, boy," Parker growled, his eyes now glowing red. "Hunters have power. I am power!" Another puff on his cigar and his tone calmed again. "I thought you could cut it. I guess we'll have to cut you instead," he said as demons crept from the shadows toward the young Demon Hunter.

Those were the last words Johnny Hamilton heard.

Those who rebel against the Council and their fellow Hunters often are preyed upon by the evils they are meant to battle. With their souls in confusion and their hearts feeling betrayed by the Council or by their fellow champions of light, some Hunters are persuaded to join the demons they were born to destroy. With the power of a Demon Hunter turned to the side of the demons, the loss for the forces of good is two-fold. They lose a powerful weapon, and they see their sworn enemies gain one at the same time.

These traitors are yet another enemy for the Demon Hunters in this world of constant conflict. They are known as Dark Riders, and their powers, combined with the dark forces bestowed upon them, make them a living terror for Demon Hunters and all forces of good.

Dark Rider Powers:

1. Sense Supernatural: Dark Riders automatically sense all supernatural creatures, including magic users, psychics, and other Demon Hunters, within 100 feet (30.5 m). Dark Riders can recognize familiar individual presences (40% +5% per level) if exposed to the same individual creature/person repeatedly.

2. Extraordinary Healing: Dark Riders regenerate 3D6 S.D.C. or 2D6 Hit Points per minute (four melee rounds). They also have a bonus of +15% to save vs coma/death, and a +4 to save vs all toxins/poisons. For this reason, they have a remarkable tolerance for alcohol and drugs, including prescription medicines. They also receive a +2 to save vs disease. They cannot regenerate lost limbs.

3. Combat Skills: Dark Riders are gifted with heightened reflexes and agility that allow them to deal more efficiently with the supernatural when physical combat is required. Add +1 to dodge, parry, and roll with punch fall or impact. Their damage is treated as supernatural damage. They also deal full damage in hand-to-hand combat with all supernatural creatures, such as Vampires, Werebeasts, and Grave Ghouls.

4. Longevity: Dark Riders age more slowly than normal humans once they reach physical maturity, aging one year for every three past their twentieth birthday. Their resistance to aging is reduced by the corruption of their souls and bodies by the demonic entities that have given them their enhanced powers.

5. Psychic Abilities: All Dark Riders have psychic powers. The Dark Rider will have Meditation, Astral Projection, and See the Invisible, plus two of the following abilities, but the I.S.P. cost to use the others is doubled. Dark Riders begin with 3D6 P.P.E. and 6D6 I.S.P. They gain an additional 3D6 I.S.P. per additional level of experience, and one new power every other level of experience.

Available abilities: Alter Aura, Bio-Manipulation, Deaden Pain, Death Trance, Electrokinetics, Empathy, Empathic Transmission, Induce Pain, Mind Block, Object Read, Pyrokinesis, Resist Fatigue, Resist Hunger, Resist Thirst, See Aura, Sixth Sense, Sense Magic, Summon Inner Strength, Suggestion (Hypnosis), Telekinesis, Telepathy.

6. P.P.E. Channeling: When a Dark Rider kills a supernatural creature in physical combat (hand to hand or melee weapons), he drains its P.P.E. into himself, absorbing its power. This additional energy can be discharged later in physical combat (including hand-to-hand weapons), with additional P.P.E. being spent for additional damage. For every seven P.P.E. expended in this way, 1 additional point of damage is done, with a maximum of 2 additional points added per level of experience. For example, a 2nd level Dark Rider can spend up to 28 P.P.E. to add 4 points of damage. P.P.E. spent in this manner is recovered normally.

7. Power of Darkness: When in darkness and/or shadow, Dark Riders are revealed to have the equivalent of the Nightstalking minor super power from the **Heroes Unlimited™** RPG.

8. Insanities: Dark Riders become increasingly insane as their life continues. It begins with Megalomania, and progresses with the following insanities added at every other level: Obsession: Destruction of the Council of Elders; Manic Depressive; Mindless Aggression — Semi-functional; Obsession: Crime Lord. Roll for Random Insanities every other level thereafter.

9. Minions: A typical Dark Rider will have a host of minions, whose number will reflect the power and experience of the Dark Rider. Dark Riders gain 2d6+4 minions per level of experience, including (but not limited to) Doppelgangers, Gargoyles, Gurgoyles, Hell Hounds, Werebeasts, Witches, and magic users of various disciplines. Any race or creature can be decided by the G.M. to be a minion for the Dark Rider.

10. Answering the Call: Dark Riders must answer to their demonic masters, doing whatever tasks they require. Rebelling against their dark benefactors causes the evil entities to strip Dark Riders of ALL powers and make them fugitives from both the Council and the demonic hordes they once served. Once

they join the forces of darkness, it is for life. When their alliance is ended, their life is, as well.

Hit Points: P.E. attribute +3D6; add 1d6 per additional level of experience.

S.D.C.: 2D6x10+50 plus any gained from skills.

Armor Rating: Dark Riders are granted a limited resistance to physical harm by their pact with the darkness, resulting in a Natural Armor Rating of 10.

Experience: Same as the Hound Master (See the Nightbane RPG).

Skills, Weapons, and Equipment are the same as the Demon Hunter R.C.C.

The Council of Elders

The Council of Elders is made up of Demon Hunters from days gone by. Some of the greatest warriors of history live on in the war against demons. Their strategy and guidance remains one of the greatest assets to hunters across the globe. They often appear detached from the needs of their earthly charges, however, and many Hunters have cursed the Council for their apparent lack of concern for their well-being.

A Hunter may lose his entire family, and the next day he could be sent off to another battle by order of the Council. Some would say that this is the price that Hunters must pay for their incredible powers and abilities, but others would argue that this pressure from the Council could be the reason that the path of the Dark Riders is often so enticing.

Every member of the Council of Elders has made sacrifices against demons, in most cases giving their lives in battle against the darkness. Not much is known specifically about the majority of the members, though. Most seem to have gone insane over time, becoming obsessed with the destruction of the evil entities that destroyed their lives, and in some cases, their families.

The Council of Elders is divided into two groups. All members of the Council of Elders are members of the Council Electorate. At any time, however, there are twelve to fourteen members of the Inner Circle. They are also members of the Electorate, just as members of the various committees in the United States Congress are members of the House of Representatives or Senate. There is just a different level of responsibility given to each.

No Demon Hunter is required to join the Council once they have passed to the realm of the spirit world, but most do enter the Electorate. It can take decades or even centuries for a member of the Electorate to gain enough notoriety to be considered for membership in the Inner Circle.

The Inner Circle makes most of the policies and decisions for the Council. They make their decisions in secret, apart from the Council Electorate. They are headed by the being known simply as "The Great One," and he chooses the membership of the Inner Circle. The Inner Circle decides upon such things as assignments for Hunters, priority of actions, investigations, and research into the backgrounds of various demon lords.

Unless the utmost secrecy is needed to secure the success of a plan or action, The Great One will call to order a meeting of the Council of Elders and then inform the Electorate of the happenings that have led to that gathering. In meetings of the general Electorate, initiatives put forth by the Inner Circle are voted

on, progress reports of known actions of Hunters are given, and any information about the movements of the demon hordes is announced.

For the G.M.'s Eyes Only

A Warning to Players!

Players should probably not read the following information because it may ruin some surprises the G.M. has planned for you. It involves some of the background and inner workings of the Demon Hunters and could make it difficult to role-play some aspects of Demon Hunters if freely known by all.

Unknown to all is the role that the demonic hordes they oppose play in the affairs of the Council of Elders. Several of the members of the Inner Circle are actually Dark Riders, trading some of their influence over the Demon Hunters to a Demon Lord for power in the Astral Plane and spirit realm. That Demon Lord is none other than The Great One himself!

The Great One was the first Demon Hunter, and his name has been lost to the ages, but unknown to most, he was also the first Dark Rider! While doing battle against supernatural evils in the days following the Fall of Atlantis, the Great One was defeated by the Demon Lord X'orath'yn after single-handedly destroying his minions. X'orath'yn turned the Great One to the path of Darkness, seducing him with power. The Demon Lord used the Great One to destroy other demons and therefore increase his influence over the world.

This arrangement worked for centuries, with no one seeing the darkness that influenced areas "saved" by the Great One. X'orath'yn's influence was more subtle than his fellow Demon Lords and as such he was able to hide his efforts more easily than most. Eventually the Great One rebelled against him, however, and they engaged in battle once more, this time with the Great One empowered by X'orath'yn's own magicks!

Hours became days, days became weeks, and weeks became months as the epic struggle between the two continued to build. The outbursts of their powers opened Rifts in time and space that sent them hurtling through the Megaverse as the fight raged on one world after another. Finally the Great One was able to find an opening in the defenses of X'orath'yn as they entered yet another realm and exploited it to defeat the Demon Lord. Knowing that no prison could hold the evil creature and that his soul could not be destroyed forever, the Great One decided to use his own body and soul as the prison for the Demon Lord, absorbing its essence into himself.

And so the epic war was ended, but at a great price. The Great One would eventually succumb to the grievous injuries inflicted in the battle and pass from the plane of mortals to the spirit world. Finding the souls of other Demon Hunters, the Great One founded the Council of Elders to help provide guidance to the Demon Hunters that still lived. For centuries, he was able to maintain complete control over the dark energies at the core of his immortal soul, and led the Demon Hunters into an age of prosperity and success that was without precedent. The other members of the Council knew nothing of his darker half and cheered his ascendance to the leadership of them all. During this Golden Age for the Hunters, some of their greatest triumphs were made, as they reached new heights of power and glory in the war against evil.

But then, for simply a fraction of a second, less time than it takes to blink, the Great One's reserves lessened and he weakened ever-so-slightly. In that moment of seemingly insignificant weakness, his control faltered and he fell victim to the darkness in his soul. X'orath'yn gained subtle influence over his thoughts and actions. The Great One never knew it happened, and never would.

Over the centuries, X'orath'yn would increasingly take control of the Great One's actions, until he was in complete command of every single thought. Slowly he put into action a plan to eradicate the other Demon Lords and take over their dominions. The Demon Hunters were the perfect weapon in the war for supremacy with his fellow demons.

In the 873 years since X'orath'yn took charge of the Great One and the Council, roughly half of the Dark Riders were seduced to corruption by his power. These Dark Riders are completely unaware as to the actual identity of their evil benefactor, however, knowing only the glowing red eyes and skeletal appearance presented to them in their meetings with him.

Two of the Dark Riders of the Inner Circle know the truth about X'orath'yn and are his servants. Two other Dark Riders are members of the Inner Circle, as well, but believe that their hidden alliances with demons are unknown to the rest. Neither of them knows of the other's deception, either. The rest of the Inner Circle is under the subtle mental control of X'orath'yn, who disguises this by allowing them to disagree with the Great One on lesser matters.

Anyone else who has ever gotten close to the truth about the Great One and X'orath'yn has mysteriously disappeared. Demon Hunters, living and dead, are not safe until X'orath'yn can either be exorcized from the Great One, or he can be destroyed.

Using the Demon Hunters in Specific Palladium Settings

Demon Hunters can be run in any world, including one featuring just their battle with the evils of the unknown. That's for the G.M. to decide if it is appropriate for his or her campaign. The following notes have been compiled to give players and G.M.s a guide for using the Demon Hunters in their favorite Palladium Books settings, as well as some adventure ideas.

Nightbane®

Using Demon Hunters in the world of Nightbane is pretty straightforward. With the abundance of supernatural creatures that exist there, such as Vampires, the Nightlords, Doppelgangers, and others, there is plenty for the Demon Hunters to go after. Because of the magic-rich environment, increase P.P.E., I.S.P., and S.D.C. by half. Double the range of their ability to sense the supernatural, as well as the speed of their rapid healing.

Demon Hunters do not operate in large groups together, but may be found within the different factions of the Nightbane world. Demon Hunters in this setting will likely be tolerant of the Nightbane themselves, but will not be overly friendly toward them, as they are seen as another supernatural creature that may have to be destroyed at some point.

The Resistance never allows Demon Hunters in their ranks, knowing that if and when the Nightlords fall, they could be the

Hunters' next prey of choice. Individual Hunters will usually assist the Resistance only if it will help the Hunter achieve his specific goals.

Demon Hunters can be given membership into the ranks of the Nocturnes, because of their powers against the supernatural, and their common goal of the destruction of supernatural evils. Demon Hunters are looked upon with suspicion, however, and are never completely trusted by the Nocturnes. Most Hunters will stay away from the Nocturnes anyway, because of the faction's Vampire members. On some occasions, Demon Hunters have engaged the Nocturnes in battle or have worked behind the scenes to bring about their downfall.

The Underground Railroad is seen by most Demon Hunters as a danger that is potentially worse than the Resistance. With the Underground Railroad's ability to hide its members and other young Nightbane, the Hunters know that they could be difficult to deal with when the war with the Nightlords is ended.

The Warlords never accept Demon Hunters into their fold, but some Dark Riders have joined the Nightbane-dominated gangs of the Warlords. Dark Riders see the Warlords as cannon fodder that can be manipulated to serve their demonic masters. Demon Hunters are likely to oppose them in an attempt to free the communities that have fallen under their influence.

The Seekers are looked upon as being somewhat misguided, because of their willingness to befriend the Nightbane, but are considered a valuable asset in the war against evil. There are few Demon Hunters within the ranks of the Seekers, but it is not impossible. Seekers are probably the Demon Hunters' greatest



allies in the Nightbane world, giving them the knowledge they may need to find answers to their questions. Seekers also have an interest in the existence of Demon Hunters and find them fascinating. Some of them even specialize in knowledge about Hunters.

The Lightbringers are also viewed as misguided because of their Nightbane membership. They do however share the common belief in acting on faith, and this has led to occasional alliances between Hunters and Lightbringers. Some have hypothesized that the Guardians are somehow responsible for the creation of the Demon Hunters millennia ago, but no evidence can be found to support that.

Despite the Spook Squad's prejudice against supernatural creatures, Demon Hunters are frequently allowed into their ranks. Their ability to sense the supernatural is seen as a great asset, along with their natural combat skills. Hunters are also seen as equals by all but the most prejudiced "Spooks."

Beyond the Supernatural®

Beyond the Supernatural is also an excellent setting for Demon Hunters. A Demon Hunter working with a group of psychics, Parapsychologists, and Arcanists can be very effective in combating the supernatural. The Demon Hunter may be looked to as the "big gun" of such a party, ready to deliver the final strike against a supernatural foe. Keep in mind that a Demon Hunter is powerless against noncorporeal opponents, so those would be used to best negate the Demon Hunter's advantages.

Dark Riders make an excellent adversary for Beyond the Supernatural characters, as well. An entire campaign could be centered around trying to stop a vicious crime lord who has mystical minions to do his bidding.

Skills and equipment would be assigned as listed in the R.C.C. description.

Ninjas & Superspies™

Ninjas & Superspies is an excellent source of adventure for Demon Hunter characters. With the combination of Martial Arts Powers and secret agencies, the sky is the limit. Demon Hunters added to the intrigue of things could become important agents for some of the superspy agencies involved in the game, while Dark Riders could provide some very different muscle than players are used to seeing, with their supernatural minions and underlings. Besides, how many superspies are really trained to combat the occult? It's a great way to make the player characters more than a little edgy and will keep them on their toes.

Characters could, at the G.M.'s discretion, choose any of the non-cybernetic O.C.C.s. Demon Hunters would most likely be drawn to the Worldly Martial Artist, Private Eye, or Veteran Grunt O.C.C.s. Those would allow characters the freedom to pursue their destiny with few people to answer to. Reduce the number of skill programs available to these characters by one to account for time spent learning to develop their senses and powers, as well as knowledge needed to combat the demons.

Mystic China™

Mystic China Demon Hunters could take offense at anyone else calling themselves Demon Hunters, which could lead to some interesting (and humorous) attempts at one-upmanship in a campaign. Dark Riders could also be used to inspire some of the bizarre antics that would undoubtedly occur under the cir-

cumstances. Considering the exaggerated personalities of most Mystic China characters, using the more serious Demon hunters and Dark Riders as the occasional "straight man" could lead your campaign to new heights of lunacy. Mix with caution, please.

Skills and equipment can, at the G.M.'s discretion, be chosen by selecting a Mystic China O.C.C. from Demon Hunter (think of a Demon Hunter R.C.C. as a Crazy Hero and you'll get the idea) or Jian Shih. Triad Assassin training is not available. Reduce the number of Secondary Skills and O.C.C. Related Skills by half.

Heroes Unlimited™

Demon Hunters also fit in the world of Heroes Unlimited. Their population would lessen, of course, because of the lack of magical energy, but make a fine addition to any crime fighting team. Make one a vigilante who has a knack for dealing with demons and such and you have the basis for an NPC or perhaps a hero for your campaign.

Demon Hunters are also an interesting change-up to add to a Heroes Unlimited campaign when things have sunk into a rut. Introduce some of the occult elements that might otherwise be missing from your game, and make your players question what is real and what isn't in your campaign world.

Skills and equipment are assigned as written in the R.C.C. description above.

Palladium Fantasy RPG®

Demon Hunters are easily justified in this world of magic and monsters. They could serve as some of the greatest knights of the land. With their abilities against the supernatural, they make uncommonly efficient monster slayers as knights-errant, as well. Dark Riders could secure their own little fiefdoms, using their mysterious powers and villainous followers to do away with any locals who would stand against them.

Skills and equipment are chosen differently because of the setting, however. Demon Hunters must choose an O.C.C., most likely from the Men of Arms. Demon Hunters are most likely to be Knights, Palladins, Rangers, or, as a rarity, Gladiators or Sailors. It is also possible to select the Squire, Vagabond/Peasant/Farmer, Acrobat & Tumbler, Bard, Actor, or Minstrel.

Dark Riders may also be Pirates, Assassins, Mercenary Warriors, or Thieves.

O.C.C. Related and Secondary Skill selections are reduced by half.

Rifts®

Demon Hunters in Rifts are not only a natural mix, but also a very simple one. Double existing I.S.P. and P.P.E. and convert the combined total of S.D.C. and Hit Points to M.D.C. Oftentimes, Demon Hunters will work alongside Psi-Warriors, Undead Slayers, and Cyber-Knights in traveling parties of monster slayers. Dark Riders gain an additional 50 M.D.C.

Skills and equipment can be chosen as above, or the Demon Hunter may opt for an O.C.C. Demon Hunters may elect to become Headhunters, City Rats, Rogue Scholars, Wilderness Scouts, Vagabonds, Bounty Hunters, Special Forces (non-CS), or a Super-Spy. O.C.C. Related and Secondary Skill selections are reduced by half.



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Chaos Earth™

Part Three

By Kevin Siembieda

Excerpts from the Journal Of Lieutenant General Lindsey Sawyer

December 31, 2098, day nine since the world began to crumble. Pandemonium still reigns, and there's no sign of it letting up.

Left Atlanta, Georgia in flames on Christmas Day. There wasn't anything we could do. The situation was out of hand and if we stayed, my troops and I would simply be part of the growing death toll. I have never witnessed such destruction in my entire life. By now the entire city must be reduced to smoldering ruins. I can't imagine more than 20-30% of the civilian population surviving, and those may be optimistic numbers.

It took us six days to get to Chicago. I lost 10% of the NEMA troops under my command doing it, but we picked up 350 more along the way. Saved a few thousand civilian lives, too. Bunches of which should be making their way to Chicago as I write this.

I decided to start this journal so I can keep everything straight in my own mind. Probably doesn't matter, but I thought I should memorialize at least some of this before I forget or . . .

It is painfully clear that the entire infrastructure of our nation has been shattered and the government is gone. Communications are gone too. It's like the damn Dark Ages. From what I can tell, two thirds of the North American continent has been destroyed, maybe more. It burns or is under siege by elements that defy description. Where cities remain reasonably whole many are besieged by riots as a prevailing dog-eat-dog, free-for-all, end of the world attitude engulfs the population. And that's where absolute mania, terror, and chaos have not already won out completely.

On our trek from Atlanta to Chicago we found carnage and destruction of biblical proportions. Entire cities and towns toppled by quakes or burnt to the ground from one disaster or another. Many have been devastated by the elements – the freak storms, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions – but nearly as many suffer self-inflicted devastation. There is an incredible amount of damage from panic and paranoia, often laying waste to an entire community. It's unbelievable.

The things we have been witness to have been more terrible than I can find words to describe them. How quickly the dark side of humanity rises to the surface. Without a prevailing government or law enforcement, people have gone crazy. With so

many believing this is the end of the world, people have done crazy, brutal, insane things to one another. The carnage is just everywhere and ongoing. It seems like only one in every ten cities have survived, and of those that have survived, they are shattered communities at war with fear, the elements and themselves. Most have fractured into a thousand different warring factions. Mobs of rioters, bands of looters, gangs of rapists, and madmen fill the streets looking for victims. Others wander around like zombies, oblivious to the horrors around them or searching through the wreckage of civilization for missing loved ones. It tears at your heart. No amount of training can prepare anyone for this.

We came across a number of places where the entire community has decided this is the final reckoning foretold in the bible. Most of the people at these places have accepted their fate, so they gather in and around the churches and city hall where they wait and pray for the angels to come for them. We offered to escort them to Chicago, or to help set up some guidelines for survival and come back as soon as we can, but they refused. They are so sure this is "The" end that they refuse to lift a finger to help themselves, protect their children or even feed themselves. They just wait. Wait in prayer for the end to come. In some ways, this . . . this acceptance of doom was more painful to watch than riots and carnage. I lost a dozen or so of my own men who decided to join them and wait for the angels of death to claim them.

I wish I could say they were right, so we could all be embraced by the warmth of God and let this nightmare end, but if this is the end of the world, it's not the one in the bible. I don't think there will be any angels coming to carry the good folk to their heavenly reward. And I don't think God would want us to just give up the ghost. It's not His way, and it sure isn't mine. When I go down, I'll go down fighting, so it never ceases to amaze me how many people are willing to give up. I realize they are in shock, but still.

One town around Nashville committed mass suicide to speed along their trip to heaven. We'd seen our share of suicides already. Here and there, we would find an entire church or civic center, a few hundred people who ended it all – but never an entire town. A quick reconnaissance showed no survivors and no sign of combat or looting. Spray painted on the wall of the largest church were the words, "Gone to meet the Lord." The welcome sign indicated there were 8,572 people in that town. I find myself wanting to write the word, sad, after that sentence, except maybe the road they've chosen is the easier path.

Of course, we have seen our share of evil done in the name of God. Seems a good number of people have decided this is the "wrath of God" punishing them for allowing any number of transgressions in the eyes of God. To purge themselves and stop the Almighty's wrath they've gone on killing sprees. We've seen whites gunning down blacks, blacks attacking whites, Muslims and Christians at each other's throats, homosexuals hung

from church steeples – you name it, we’ve seen it. I was just surprised by how many of the old prejudices I thought had vanished fifty years ago resurfaced with a killing vengeance.

As I look over the words I have written, I realize how woefully inadequate they are to describe the horrors, the carnage and the magnitude of it all. It is bedlam. Yet though the word conveys the notion, it falls terribly, terribly short. Bedlam. Horror. Armageddon. None of them capture the reality of it all. There has just never been anything like this. The things we have seen and experienced simply defy words and logic.

Maybe I need pictures to accompany this journal. But even images only convey so much. They can’t capture the entirety of it all. Nothing could. I mean our senses are assailed by so much all at once.

The tastes. Death mixed with chalky ash falling from the sky like snow. Charcoal and the sweet tinge of burning flesh filling your mouth and nostrils with every gulp of acrid air.

The smells. The scents of burning brick and wood, bone and flesh, oil and rubber, sweat and blood, death and tears mixed in with the stench of sulfur, ozone and a thousand other odors that hammer the senses to make your head swim and your stomach wretch. NEMA troops in environmental body armor don’t have it so bad, but the civilians, or if your suit is ruptured, oh god, the ash and grit is suffocating. Burns the eyes and fills your nose and mouth as if you’re sucking in sand, and the smell . . . When it snows, there still isn’t any relief, just wet gunk to choke down. The civvies try to protect themselves with goggles and scarves or air filters, but it only helps to a point.

The noise. The cacophony of sounds: Screams, shouts, crying, laughing, gunfire, explosions, sirens, the crackling of fire, the tumbling of buildings, the scream of steel, the sounds of digging, running footsteps, the pleas for help, the prayers to god, the bellows of hate, the moans of agony, the whimpers of fear and cry of . . . things not of this Earth.

The sensations. The constant rush of light and motion. The sting of hot ash carried by icy winds, the smorgasbord of odors, the fist in your stomach, the ache of your muscles, the throbbing of your temples, the dryness of your mouth (like a desert) and the annoying moistness of your perspiring hands. Sometimes you can’t even feel your body and you barely notice your surroundings because you seem to be walking through a dream – a nightmare – and you are detached from everything around you, including yourself.

All of it crashing into one another. Never stopping and you can’t escape. It’s unbelievable. Like nothing I have ever seen.

I keep saying that, don’t I? But it is. It is unlike anything anyone has ever seen or could imagine. I wish to god I wasn’t living through it, though the alternative is an unmarked grave, and I’m not ready for that.

I realize now, that I confide my thoughts and emotions to this journal to deal with it all. To give release to my thoughts and fears and innermost secrets. I can’t show my fear or voice my feelings. I’m a General. My troops need to see a strong, determined and confident face. A leader who listens to their fears and replaces them with hope. I must smother my own uncertainties and give my troops a shoulder to lean on. So I try to convince myself that we are doing all we can and that we will bring an end to the nightmare. I must convince myself so I can be strong

and believable for them. And in so doing, we can all come to trust that our unity, strength, courage and sacrifice will tow the line and save the day. Then I come home and confide my real feelings to you, Dear Journal, and lock them away for no one else to see.

I’m supposed to be getting three hours of sleep before the next shift, but I’m too tired to sleep. Its New Years Eve and the brass is concerned the coming of the new year might trigger more lunacy, rioting and god only knows what. My forces go on shift in another twenty minutes, and I want to be with them.

January First, 2099. No New Year’s celebrations, just another day in Hell. Any celebrating among the civilians was kept to quiet hugs and softly spoken prayers. For me and my crew, it was snuffing out fires, taking down some I-don’t-know-what, and helping two thousand and some people find shelter and food for the night. They just keep coming, the disenfranchised and homeless. Sergeant Nelson calls them the “walking wounded,” like we’re any better off.

The good news is nothing outside of the usual happened. We stood on duty from midnight to 1800 hours, and now me and my troops are going get some much needed rest. We’re off for the next 24 hours. I feel like I could sleep for a week.

January Second, 2099. I slept like I was dead for the last 14 hours straight. Woke up with a pounding headache and feel like I could sleep for another 14 hours. Exhaustion and stress can do that to a body. I’m still alive, and now that I’ve had my cup of coffee I’m starting to feel like I’m back among the living. I guess that’s a start. I have to shower for a briefing and run.

January Fourth, 2099. Coming to Chicago was the right thing to do. Been here a whole five days, but I already know this was a good decision.

Chicago is a central location in the heart of the country. From here our NEMA forces can reach most parts of the US, Canada and Mexico with relative speed, or so the theory goes. For now, we are doing all we can to secure the Chicago metropolitan area. Casualties are only at about 1.5 million and less than 30% of the city and surrounding suburbs have been destroyed. Rioting has been kept at a minimum and the local government and civilian population have rallied behind NEMA. Compared to Atlanta and the trip here, it’s like a peaceful paradise, if you can call 18 hour shifts calm or paradise.

The weird blue lines of energy that slice through the city are elsewhere too. It’s unknown whether they are some weird side effect of the worldwide catastrophe or whether they caused it. Some places, like Chicago, have several of these lines of blue light, other places none at all. Half the time the light doesn’t seem to do anything except radiate from the earth. The other half of the time freak lightning storms, tornadoes and weird rainstorms gestate and roll out from them. When I say weird rainstorms, I mean storms that shower hail the size of grapefruits, or rain things like rocks, frogs, fish, insects, slime and small animals not of this Earth. The most dramatic amounts of destruction to property is along these Blue Lines, forcing people to flee or die. And when I say lines of blue light or energy, I mean lines that are a half mile to one mile wide and several miles long. Been told bigger and longer ones exist in Minnesota and elsewhere. I believe it. We saw some big S.O.B.’s on our way through the Ohio valley, and I’m told that part of the country is covered with Blue Lines.

The trouble with Blue Lines doesn't end with freakish storms and illuminated nights. They seem like some kind of magnet or conduit for supernatural phenomena and hot tempers. God, I can't believe I'm writing this, but ghosts or some kind of ghostly things haunt the Blue Lines. This is not hysteria, I've seen them myself. Ghostly white vapors, half human, half mists, as well as glowing lights and specters that look rather like holographic projections. This has led a frightful number of people to believe the glowing Blue Lines are portals to Heaven and Hell, and that's why they attract the dead. Somehow I doubt it, even though I can make first hand reports about ghosts, walking dead and a hell of a lot worse. Aliens and monsters for one, other things that are best described as demons, for another. And I mean real demons. Fire and brimstone monstrosities that seem driven to torment, torture and kill humans out of instinct or sheer evil. It sounds impossible, I know, but I'm living it.

So far, the Chicago Blue Lines haven't coughed up anything we can't handle, but I'm afraid it's only a matter of time before they do. Word from Detroit, Windsor, Cincinnati, Louisville and other places is that they are overrun with monsters and demons. I haven't seen any of those locales, but if they're anything like St. Louis, then heaven help us.

Three days after we arrived at Chicago, I was asked to coordinate and lead a D3R operation into St. Louis. The Chicago NEMA Command Center had picked up a distress call from Missouri and being in such close proximity, we responded.

The inferno of St. Louis, on both sides of the river, made Atlanta seem like a little picnic barbeque. Reconnaissance Teams Three and Four estimated 200+ square miles around St. Louis were ablaze, another 100 miles had already been reduced to smoldering rubble and the St. Louis Arch was crackling with energy and lightning around the clock. If Armageddon had come, I imagined it was starting in St. Louis.

In addition to the fires and chaos, there were these hordes of demonic creatures. Not demonic, I mean demons, the genuine articles. Technically, I guess we don't know what they were for sure, but we called them demons. Thousands of them. Each with the strength and power of a Chromium Guardsman and as fast and mobile as the Silver Eagles. Took an entire squad to take down just one of the most powerful ones, and if that squad didn't include a pair of Silver Eagles and a Bulldog we would not have won the conflict. Some of these "creatures" used melee weapons like swords and clubs. Most didn't have a taste for technology. Some seemed outright baffled by tech, not that it helped us much, because these demons had hides like titanium alloys and some could shoot fire or energy bolts from their eyes or hands. Others could call down lightning from a cloudless sky, open up fissures in the earth and some – some seemed to call upon what I can only call magic. I'm telling you some could fly, turn invisible, create clouds of gas out of thin air and ensorcel my men with swirling lights or verbal commands.

We got out of there by the skin of our teeth. Lost 23 out of 160 troops. Never did find the people who sent the distress call. The signal was dead by the time we arrived. My guess is so were the poor souls who sent it. We did rescue about 120 people, and stragglers and refugees show up in Chicagoland every day.

Half of the places to the south and to the east are just as bad as St. Louis. It is my recommendation to cordon off lower Illinois, Indiana, Southern Michigan, Ohio and Missouri and make them a no-man's zone. It's not so bad right now with the horrific winter we've been having, but come summertime, I shudder to think. The best NEMA forces can do is contain the demons and keep them out of the northern Midwest. God help the people trapped down there, but our forces are stretched too thin to do anything else, at least for the foreseeable future. To launch any



kind of offensive would be suicide, pure and simple. As much as it hurts, we have to pick our battles, and St. Louis is a losing proposition. We'll try to get as many people out in small groups as we can and build our defenses here in *northern Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Upper Michigan, and Ontario.*

Truth be told, if I had access to nukes, I'd turn St. Louis and half of Ohio and Michigan into the surface of the moon. I wouldn't hesitate, either. I don't know what that says about me or our situation, other than we're as desperate and lost as the next person.

An interesting note, according to Intelligence, a number of nuclear missiles, maybe as many as a hundred, were launched in the first two days of the disaster, peppering a number of cities and sites in the western half of the US, Texas and Mexico. I wonder if it was an executive order from NORAD before it went silent or whether it was some twitcher with a nervous finger on the button. We'll probably never know. It's hard to believe we nuked ourselves to save ourselves. I wonder if it did any good.

Like I said, life since 12-22 is unreal. All of it.

January 11, 2099. I feel like NEMA is quickly getting a handle on the situation. Chicagoland is quickly becoming a well organized military compound. The civilians have been amazingly supportive and the growing sense of camaraderie has boosted morale considerably. I still don't agree with the wisdom of basing our operations in a city with so many Blue Lines, but my concerns have been overridden by the majority. I must agree that it would be a logistical nightmare to reorganize and relocate now, especially in this weather. The snow has not let up and accumulations are already reaching three feet, more in the northern suburbs and Wisconsin. I just hate those lines. They're an X-factor we know too little about and I just get a feeling they'll be the source of trouble later on.

At any rate, I have been placed in charge of internal defense, intelligence and security for Chicagoland – that's the megalopolis of Chicago, its surviving 3.7 million people and the surrounding 14 cities, townships and suburbs accounting for an additional three million. From what I can tell, we may be one of the largest surviving communities in the country. Of course, we've lost contact with 95% of the country and only get intermittent reports from Canada. Mexico is a black hole. It's anyone's guess what's happening in Mexico and the rest of the world, but I doubt it's good news.

It's weird, but there are pockets of civilization, entire cities and towns that have survived the initial holocaust virtually untouched, particularly here in the Midwest. On the other hand, there are places, sometime only 50-100 miles away from one of those unscathed, that are completely obliterated, become war zones or have been replaced by an alien landscape. That having been said, the general level of destruction remains beyond measure. We have effectively written off everyone and everyplace west of Iowa and east of the Allegheny Mountains. Meanwhile, the state of everyplace in between is pandemonium and destruction. Our allies in Mexico might as well have fallen off the planet for us, while parts of Canada are showing great promise. Quebec, Ottawa and much of southeastern Canada has fared much better than the United States and they anticipate launching a reinvigorated rescue and recovery campaign this spring.

While optimism is running high at the moment, and NEMA is undoubtedly North North America's best hope, there are

mounting problems. The winter is unusually cold and fierce. Snow levels have already exceeded what's normal and there are still 10 weeks of winter yet to go. This is presumably the result of the ash cloud from the super-volcano that covers the globe, and may be helped along by the fallout from the launch of a number of nuclear missiles. In short, we are suffering the effects of a nuclear winter.

On other fronts, storms over Lake Michigan are off the charts, strange lights over the lake are constantly being reported and a number of civilian and military aircraft and vessels have vanished without a trace. The Minneapolis and St. Paul region of Minnesota is another Blue Line center that has reduced those cities to ruin and has unleashed all manner of alien and supernatural life forms. Reconnaissance reports warn that the state of Kentucky has vanished, and is replaced by an alien jungle even in the dead of winter.

There have also been an increasing number of paranormal incidents that can only be described as "psychic phenomena." Incidents of Extra-Sensory Perception among the civilian population and NEMA operatives. Things like prophetic dreams and sensing imminent danger.

January 22, 2099. Things just keep going from bad to worse. 1) Demons are penetrating our defensive perimeter and we don't know how.

2) It has been confirmed, aliens have invaded the Earth. Seriously, alien humanoids like something out of a sci-fi movie have been appearing, mostly outside Chicagoland, but within our defenses too. Most are scavengers and scared out of their wits, so they aren't an honest to god "invasion force," that's for sure. We thought they might have been responsible for the cataclysm but most of them seem as confused and terrified as we are, so that seems an unlikely scenario. I swear I feel like I'm living an episode out of the *Twilight Zone*. Where these "aliens" are coming from or how this can happen is anyone's guess. Personally, I have stopped asking how and why and simply respond to each new crisis. The damned aliens are no help. They don't speak our language (obviously) and run from us at first glance. Intelligence has identified three different species and a dozen so-called demons.

3) The storms and snow are unrelenting. Between the snow, the ash, and unstable atmospheric conditions the use of any kind of 'chopper or aircraft is out of the question. Even the Silver Eagles have a difficult time of it. That means we're snowed in till spring unless the snow lets up. We're limited to ground forces and have mobilized the *Chromium Guardsmen, Bulldogs, Mastiffs, and Gunbusters*, as well as grounded *Silver Eagles*. However, the deep snow is hampering their movement as well. I only hope if we're socked in for the winter, so are the demons and monsters out there. Of course, that also means NEMA can not mount an effective rescue and recovery effort. Those not already here are on their own. I fear the death toll from this winter is going to be horrific.

January 30, 2099. Its been confirmed, where two or more Blue Lines meet, an energy flare or surge can occur at random and rip open a portal in space and time. At least that's what the eggheads say. Saw one first hand this morning, and that's sure as hell what it looked like to me. Some sort of wormhole to someplace beyond the veil – to demonic Hells and alien worlds. So now we know where the aliens are coming from and how the

demons are managing to circumvent our defenses. It also means we now have to worry about alien beings as well as monsters and demons popping right into the heart of Chicagoland. In my estimation, this is an insurmountable obstacle. It is impossible to contain or monitor the Blue Lines around the clock, though we are establishing posts at each junction point. Still, we don't know if the enemy can appear on other points on the Blue Lines or how long these portals stay open or how many things can come crawling out at a time. I have never felt more naked and vulnerable than today. After all our hard work, we find out that monsters and aliens can just appear out of nowhere at a moment's notice. We are completely vulnerable to enemy invasion. I think only a handful of us in command realize the full ramifications of this revelation, which is the way we want it. If word leaked out to the public, there would be widespread panic. For the moment, it remains a secret. We're stuck here for the duration of winter, so we have to make the best of it. I only hope nothing comes out of one of these wormholes that NEMA can't handle.

— From the Journals of Lieutenant General Lindsey Sawyer



Love Lost, No Future

February 14, 2099. It's Valentine's Day. Funny, I keep thinking about the massacre, not love. Whatever enthusiasm I had for our situation and rebuilding has been squashed and buried under the snow and ice of the worst winter in Midwest history.

It's been about eight weeks since the cataclysm struck and there's no sign of anything getting any better. We're starting to see more of our share of monsters and weirdness, and I'm wait-

ing for our own massacre. It's only a matter of time before one of the squads runs up against something they can't handle. Just hope it's not another Valentine's Day massacre.

The entire Midwest is being clobbered by a succession of the worst snowstorms in over two hundred years.

Snow removal is impossible except in the heart of Chicago, so most of Chicagoland is immobilized and people are dying from the sub-zero temperatures and lack of adequate food and shelter.

Meanwhile . . .

No resurgent government. We're on our own.

No mass rallying of NEMA troops to our side. I think most are dead. Those that survive in places like Manitoba and Quebec are in the same boat we're in and doing all they can to stay alive themselves.

No break from the snow or sub-zero temps.

Security and defense is, at best, flimsy and stretched.

Civilian population is increasingly frightened and desperate. I don't blame them.

Greater number of "unexplained" phenomena, especially around the Blue Lines.

Even the air is filled with grit and grime, forcing civilians who go out-of-doors to cover their mouth and nose with scarves, air masks or some kind of wrapping.

There's been some radioactive fallout too, but nothing deadly.

I pray I can shake this depression, because right now, I feel like there is little hope and no future. That's why I've missed the last six days' worth of journal entries. I just haven't had the energy, and Valentine's Day only makes matters worse. Makes us all sad and depressed thinking about all the loved ones we've lost. Makes us miss the world that vanished overnight last Christmas (seems like a million years ago), and makes us all lonely and so, so sad.

We've been taking it a "day at a time." It's the only effective strategy, but here I am, one of the leaders of our sorry compound and I can't stop wondering if there really is a future, or if we are doomed to just another day of uncertainty, death and the bizarre, one after another.

The bad thing is, it's not just me. The squads in my battalion have investigated 63 suicides and 114 homicides over the last six days. That's nearly quadruple the number of suicides and double the homicides. And that doesn't even include the 172 people dug out of the snow frozen to death. Those kinds of statistics don't help morale which is at low ebb, for certain.

So much for NEMA leading by example and reestablishing security and prosperity in our tiny part of the world, let alone functioning as a rallying point for the rest of the nation. We can barely make ends meet, and I still contend there isn't any "rest of the nation." Only small pockets of civilization and lucky cells of survivors scratching and scrounging to survive the best they can. And we lose a couple of them every week. Lost what was left of the cities of Springfield and South Bend this week, Danville, Kewanee, Fort Wayne and Des Moines last week. Between the snow, volcanic clouds and the damn Blue Lines, communications are limited to under 200 miles, sometimes less, and the three feet of snow that has fallen in the last week paralyzed

travel even here within the heart of Chicago, and we're socked in by a blizzard right now. At this rate we'll be snowed in till spring, and won't know how bad off the country really is until spring thaw. We're alone here in Chicago. Alone and isolated, with no sign of relief.

Us leaders of the Chicago NEMA Recovery Force insist we're being too hard on ourselves. That the task before us is impossible. That we're all doing everything we can and must find solace in every tiny accomplishment. Good words, I second the sentiment, but it's garbage. Yeah, we're working around the clock, but we feel like we're accomplishing squat. We're so frustrated and pent up inside. Seems like we're just spinning our wheels stalling the inevitable slide into oblivion. Now we find out the food supply is probably insufficient to last the winter, especially if it goes long. We're initiating food rationing starting tomorrow. That's it for today.

— *From the Journals of Lieutenant General Lindsey Sawyer*

The New Plague: Magic and Mind Powers

February 21, 2099. I understand now, the power of an idea. An idea is like a virulent virus that sweeps throughout a community infecting the whole damn population in a matter of days.

The new virus that plagues us now is *magic* and *psychic abilities*. There had been "incidents" of magic and psychic phenomena since the cataclysm and the appearance of the Blue Lines. At first, the ideas of magic and the paranormal were ignored, buried under the sorrow and immensity of the crisis. We were all too busy staying alive to give any time to these fanciful notions, yet almost from the beginning the signs were there. Stories about people having prophetic visions and dreams. Ordinary people knowing, just "knowing," a loved one was alive, and in some cases, where they were trapped beneath the rubble. I witnessed that a few times myself. I know I tended to ignore the ones who mixed their psychic vision with fire and brimstone or spiritualism, but I had to give them their due when the demons appeared. There was no scientific explanation for demons, especially not demons who could cast magic spells and command the weather.

I've seen my share of ghosts too. Some just walk the earth like lost souls, some weep, some animate wood and rocks and even skeletons. Let me tell you, it is something the first time you see a walking skeleton or a humanoid shape form out of rubble into some kind of roving soulless thing out for blood. I mean, how do you fight that? How do you explain it? I'm sure there is some scientific and logical answer, but there is a simple and rather obvious answer: Magic. Blue Lines of magic. Why not?

I've probably said it a thousand times now, but there has never been anything like this. Even the wonderful stuff is too bizarre to really enjoy – for me anyway. It makes me feel like a fish out of water stuck on a roller coaster that just won't stop. Up and down and sideways I go. Always in motion. Never able to completely catch my breath.

A lot of theories have been flying around. Most of them involve the Blue Lines and talk about a previously undiscovered (or alien) form of energy that gives substance to people's

thoughts. I don't know, and I don't much care. All it means for NEMA is another set of X-factors and problems to deal with. Problems that defy logic and aren't covered in the rule books.

Not all people can use this energy to power their thought, but some can (an estimated 10-15%), and some are learning to do so with alarming speed and proficiency. What's worse, everybody seems to be trying in it. That's what I mean about ideas being like viruses. One person realized the Blue Lines can breathe life into our thoughts, and the next thing you know, everybody is trying it.

What amazes me even more, is how quickly people just accept the idea of magic and mind powers. Everybody, and I mean EVERYBODY is talking about "magic and ESP." Not just talking about it, but trying to discover if they have special powers too. I realize it's human nature, but overnight magic and ESP are accepted as parts of our lives! A lot of people seem to think magic is their new salvation, but I think its grasping at straws. We want to be rescued and see our past life style returned, so we blindly accept powers and abilities we know nothing about.

Under different circumstances this might be fun and exciting, but it worries me. Worries me a lot. Magic and psychic abilities change the environment. Create a whole new reality and a new set of problems and potential abuse. Like we didn't have enough trouble already.

Yesterday, I headed up an investigation to examine a ten foot diameter circle of springtime. Here we've been getting hammered with one storm after another, over seven feet of accumulation since the cataclysm. Yet, in the suburb of Carol Stream is a circle of green grass, flowers and 70 degree temperatures (Fahrenheit). It turns out the cutest little girl is responsible for it. A nine year old. She said mommy was sad and wanted the snow to go away, so she went out and thought real hard and wished it away. The little darling said she wished she could make it all go away, but this little patch was all she could do. She guessed that's why mommy cries even more, because there's only one little circle of grass and flowers. Truth is, mom is on the brink of losing it completely. She's not sure if her little girl, Emilia, is an angel or a monster. She told me she wants to hug and kiss Emilia, but is afraid what else the girl can do with her "wishes" and is afraid to be alone with her own daughter. The father and half the family are gone – missing and presumed dead. Emilia is being taken care of by her Aunt Lisa, Uncle Scott and their three boys. Thankfully, these relatives see Emilia's ability to create a tiny piece of springtime as a miracle and a blessing. Good for them. Good for Emilia.

Wigged-out mother is right to ask, what else can Emilia do just by wishing it? The Aunt and Uncle say they haven't seen her do anything else, and certainly she has tried to wish up ice cream and candy by the gallons, not to mention a new pink dress, but all without success. However, while we were walking, hand in hand, from her house to the green in the backyard, we were hit by a blast of icy wind. The bone chilling kind. Emilia frowned and said, "Oh my, that just won't do," and I swear, the wind stopped. At least around us it did. Then the little darling looked up at me with her angelic face beaming with pride, and she said, "I don't like cold winds. Do you?"

Personally, I think there are different – I don't know – different aptitudes or disciplines of magic. That's what I put in my report. For example, I don't think little Emilia can actually make

or wish for things to appear or happen. I think she's like a *druid* or something that can manipulate nature or the elements. That's different than the ones who can draw upon the Blue Lines and use them to create and hurl bolts of energy, or the ones who are figuring out how make and cast magic spells. Little Emilia is definitely not like the lunatics who try to summon and command the demons. One of my squads had to take down a Demon Caller today. When the dust cleared we had two men down, one in critical condition, the rest were banged up but okay. At least they neutralized the Demon Caller and slew the two monsters under his thrall. That's what I mean about magic causing more trouble. Pretty soon those who can control magic to some degree are going to use it. While some will use it to help people, we're going to see plenty of lowlifes who will use it to rob, manipulate, enslave or hurt others. It's like giving a loaded gun to a bully. God only knows what he's going to do with it.

As for psychic abilities, that's a whole other ball of wax I'd rather not get into right now. Still trying to wrap my mind around magic. I can say with complete confidence, however, that psychic abilities are real. I know, because it was getting too dark in here and I just hit the wall switch to turn on the lights without leaving my chair. I flipped that switch using telekinesis. I didn't want telekinesis. Didn't try to make it happen. Just one day about a week ago, it started happening. The tech boys call people like me who have only one or two minor ESP abilities "Latent Psychics," I think. Haven't told anybody about it yet. I don't relish the idea of becoming a lab rat or looked at differently by the troops. Besides, I don't have any great power. All I can do is unbutton my blouse without using my hands and move around small things like a cup of coffee, a pen, or knife. I can flick switches from across the room, open doors and make my sidearm fly into my hand, but that's about it. Nothing to write home about. I sure don't get visions or speak to dead people, all I can do is move knickknacks with my mind. Nothing anybody needs to know about, except you, Dear Journal.

— From the Journals of Lieutenant General Lindsey Sawyer

The Emergence of Magic

Like the real world, today, magic was considered make-believe. Fantasy. Pure fiction. The stuff of fairy tales, role-playing games and Hollywood movies. Nobody knew magic or Psychic Potential Energy (P.P.E.) existed. Consequently, when it exploded back onto the scene and caused the cataclysm that reshaped planet Earth, it was completely beyond human comprehension. The appearance of the *ley lines* throbbing with energy seemed a bizarre enigma. Most survivors of the global disaster had never heard of "ley lines" or the metaphysical theories of "Geomancy" — that lines of mystic energy radiated from the Earth. Energy that ancient seers, wizards, alchemists, shamans, druids, Oriental mystics and secret brotherhoods of magic have drawn upon (or tried to) for thousands of years.

In fairness to the people of the modern world, the mystic energy of Earth had been used up by the lost civilization of Atlantis long before the first Pharaoh took the throne. What energy remained was but a scant trickle that only the most sensitive psychic or skilled mystic could sense or draw upon. The ancient secrets of the supernatural and magic were forgotten. As a result, "magic" was relegated to the stuff of fantasy and superstition. Those few who claimed it was real were ridiculed and shunned as liars, lunatics or charlatans. *Science* became the new high art, and in its pursuit, *science* obscured the spiritual and mystical realities of the past and buried it under technology.

For all intents and purposes, magic did not exist. Science said so. Claims regarding demonic entities, ESP, things that go bump in the night, and inexplicable phenomena to which science had no answer were disregarded and ignored.

Thus, on that fateful day when the planets were aligned and a few million lives were snuffed out in a blinding nuclear flash, humankind could never have anticipated the chain reaction of "change" it sparked. In that instant, the magnified P.P.E. of millions of lives flooded the neighboring ley lines already powered by the string of planets. The result, the explosive return of magic surging across the globe, creating disaster and transforming the entire planet as it went.

As the dinosaurs learned before us, change is often catastrophic, and so it has been for the people of Earth. The world they once knew is gone. The laws of science they still cling to, shattered. The impossible is a daily occurrence and magic and psychic powers are a reality.

The vanguard of a new age

The unreal is suddenly real. Demons, ghosts and dragons walk the streets and wield a power that is unmistakably *magic*. For humankind, it defies everything they have ever been taught or believed in, and turns catastrophic disaster into a living nightmare.

For many, it is more than they can accept. Some kill themselves rather than endure it. Others go mad. Some hide and pray for salvation that never comes. For NEMA and others who refuse to give up, they try to adjust and deal with the new realities as best they can.

Only a tiny percentage of people don't feel overwhelmed by dread and, instead, hear the call to a new destiny. Even among these special few, half deny and reject the new sensations and power coursing through their veins. Many are psychics who suddenly have their awareness expanded beyond the five senses, but there is also another group. Those individuals who feel the ripple of mystic energy around and through them, and dare to embrace it, hold it and direct it through their own force of will. These are the vanguards of a new age. The first people of a shattered world to accept magic, consider the possibilities, and seize the moment. They are the new breed in Chaos Earth.

Magic rediscovered

Inevitably, the first and most profound exposure to magic on Chaos Earth was, and continues to be, the ley lines — or what people are calling the "Blue Lines." Wide, towering bands of blue light that light up the night sky and roll with waves of seething power and often crackle with lightning and streaks of energy. The Blue Lines are also the cause of freak rain and lightning storms, energy flares that shoot a mile into the sky,

balls of energy, random levitation and a host of other weird phenomena. However, the most terrifying of them all is to watch the energy coalesce and then spread apart, tearing a hole in the sky as if some invisible hand were pushing open a curtain. The hole is a portal to other worlds and realities. Some beautiful and wondrous, most nightmarish or alien. It is through these portals from which the demons, monsters and aliens arrive. A byproduct of magic gone awry and seething unchecked like an angry volcano.

The next encounter with magic for the people of Chaos Earth comes from the flood of supernatural beings, from ghostly entities to demons, dragons and other mythic creatures. Many of whom know the secrets of magic and use them freely to cast spells, weave enchantments and attack humans. As terrifying and mind-boggling as all of this is, it has also illustrated to humans the power and potential of magic.

Lastly, ordinary people began to *accidentally* draw upon and use the ambient P.P.E. of the Blue Lines to do the impossible. For example: A frantic, desperate individual struggling to lift a half ton slab of concrete off a loved one or pry open the jammed door to a burning wreck suddenly found the superhuman strength to do so, or, even more miraculously, made the debris to rise up in the air or the door to magically melt away. Imagine seeing your family about to be slaughtered by some hellish thing and you scream, "no, get away from them," and it does. Or a bolt of energy hurls from your hand to strike the creature and send it running. Imagine a group of frightened people huddled in the corner of a half toppled building wishing for a fire, and one magically appears. Or a mother sobbing over the death of her child, wishing with all her heart she could heal her child's wounds and bring him back to life – a moment later a little hand squeezes her's and a weak voice says, "don't cry mommy, it

will be okay." Accidents of magic, all of them. Enchantment given life by powerful emotions and a chance aptitude for magic or a keen mind or crisis to channel the energy and make something magical happen. That's how it all began.

After a while, when word spread about these many "miracles," especially along the Blue Lines, people began to experiment. They would brave the curfew and the dangers of the burbling lines, waiting for a momentary calm in the turbulence, and then try to work magic or "wish" for something. Most fail, but some are able to tap into some inner potential and make things happen. To draw on the Blue Lines and weave a bit of magic. The more practice, the easier it gets.

Of course, none of these tech based people know anything about magic. They have no formal training and know nothing about spells and mantras to focus their thoughts. Nor do they know the limits of their powers or what the Blue Lines provide or how best to use them, but they are learning. Making it up as they go along. Experimenting. Trying things they saw in horror and fantasy movies, or read in books, or remember from fairy tales. It will be decades before any true masters of magic will emerge. These survivors of the cataclysm are crude and clumsy amateurs who lack any true understanding, knowledge or finesse. Desperate people grasping at anything that might save their lives. Magic is just one, unbelievable alternative.

The indomitable spirit of youth, the power of imagination unleashed

The suspension of belief and the power of conviction (true, heartfelt conviction) are easier for youngsters than adults, so they are most profoundly affected by magic. Approximately 50% of *all* fledgling practitioners of magic are teenagers, 20% are between the ages of 20-25, and 10% are only 10-12 year



olds! Those under the age of ten find it difficult to focus enough to draw on their own P.P.E. or the Blue Lines to adequately direct the energy to create a magical effect. Meanwhile, those over the age of 25 have trouble freeing their minds and spirits from what they thought they knew, to accept the impossible and embrace the reality of magic in order to channel mystic energy even on a Blue Line. Thus, fueled by a sense of wonder, discovery and empowerment, teens are the inheritors of magic among the survivors. They are the ones most willing to let go of the past and embrace things they do not understand. Consequently, they are the first to wield magic. Unfortunately, many lack the maturity to use magic well, and instead use it as a means to power and revenge. The ability to use magic makes them special, and while many use their newfound power for good, others use it carelessly as a new toy, or to extract retribution or make themselves important and powerful.

A new problem

Magic is as much a problem as it is a godsend. Individuals who can use magic, even a little bit, have a distinct advantage over those who don't, especially among the civilian population. Gangs led by spell casters are starting to crop up, as well as small bands made up entirely of practitioners of magic. Truth be told, with everything else they must deal with, NEMA has no idea how many psychics and mages may be on the loose, but already spell casting leaders and cults are starting to emerge. For those who are so inclined, they can use magic to carve out their own little power base (it's too soon to talk about empires) and subjugate others. Some of these practitioners of magic have begun worshipping dark forces (alien intelligences, dark gods and demons), others are independent powers unto themselves. Still others garner support from ordinary people by using their developing mystical powers to protect all who accept them as their leaders (or god). Desperate and terrorized, many people are accepting these new masters of magic to help them survive the chaos. Most are tiny operations, little more than a neighborhood gang that controls a few city blocks or a particular resource, but they are growing in numbers and in their boldness. The most ambitious are already dreaming of magic being their means to carve themselves their own kingdom and to become a new power in a bizarre world of chaos, even if it's only for a little while.

Most cities that have survived the initial cataclysm are splintered into hundreds of smaller rival factions. Chicago and its suburbs are one of the exceptions, due in large part to the presence of NEMA forces and pure luck. At places divided by strife, each faction vies for supremacy over resources, territory and challengers. Many are concerned only about their own survival and welfare, often at the expense of those weaker than they. Thus, most cities and towns are places of war and constant violence as one group is pitted against another in their battle to survive. Rather than destroy their enemies, they often absorb rival groups and territorial holdings into their own, which makes them larger and stronger with each conquest. While this can make for a strong group, continuing vendettas and intense, bloody rivalry with other factions quickly burns up what resources and gains they may have acquired, leading to their destruction. The larger and stronger a group is, the bigger a target they become. Few large groups can maintain their power base and most are inevitably shattered, broken into several smaller

bands or destroyed and looted entirely. Magic, therefore, is the great equalizer. The means by which a small group may overcome a larger one. A force that can compensate against a well armed challenger and an asset when it comes to fighting supernatural foes and creatures of magic.

Of course, a good number of magic users are benevolent, well intentioned and kind, while others are just wild and reckless souls with a new toy. Most are playing with a source of power they have no genuine knowledge or control over, and, as noted earlier, more than two thirds are wild-eyed "kids" dealing with raging hormones and finding a place in the world for themselves to begin with. Magic just adds an additional component to an already uncertain and volatile mixture. More than a few mages have unleashed monsters or wholesale destruction by accident, destroying themselves or those around them, or have tried to tackle opponents and forces far beyond their current capabilities and paid the ultimate price.

For all the talk of power-hungry maniacs, bullies and street punks, the overwhelming majority of would-be wizards are well-meaning, idealistic teens and young people with surprising courage and commitment to help others. Most see themselves as heroes and saviors with the power to save the world – or at least their little part of the world – after they figure out how to use their powers, that is. It's tough, dangerous, hard work learning and wielding magic, but it's also an exciting challenge. A chance to be "somebody." To be a "super-hero." For many of them, the chaos and carnage and magic gives them a chance to prove themselves and make a mark on the world. It is the nature of youth and high ideals. For many, it will also spell their doom. But these are times where death is a common daily occurrence, and at least this way, their candle will burn brightly at least for a little while before it is snuffed out.

Magic O.C.C.s on Chaos Earth

All of the following magic O.C.C.s are crude, unrefined, undeveloped and limited. In some cases the magic is unpredictable. Why? Because this is all new to these would-be practitioners of magic. They have only begun to study and learn the secrets of magic, and it will take generations before they develop any real methodology and domination of the mystic arts. In many ways, regardless of their level of experience, Chaos Earth sorcerers are self-taught amateurs wielding power beyond their comprehension. The different types of magic reflect the *approach* by which people have chosen to acquire magic, not any actual method or desired outcome.

Human beings are incredibly curious and adaptable. A couple of facts illustrated by how quickly humans began to dabble with magic. Six or seven short weeks after the cataclysm struck, incidents of people using magic began to appear all around Chicago and the Ohio Valley. Of course, the use of magic by humans varies dramatically from place to place and depends largely on how strong magic energy via the ley lines is at any given place. Those with one or more ley lines, or "Blue Lines" as the people of Chaos Earth call them, are among the very first to recognize, accept and use magic. This is not the result of brilliant deduction, but the simple fact that it is hard to ignore the presence of magic at these locations. Here in the first few years of the cataclysm the ley lines rage with energy. Uncontrolled, weird phenomena and feats of random magic are a constant daily oc-

currence. Add to this the appearance of supernatural beings and aliens who emerge from the Blue Lines and the “magic” many of these beings command, and it is pretty much impossible to ignore or deny the existence of magic. On top of that, with so much, largely untapped Potential Psychic Energy (P.P.E.) unleashed in and around the lines, even untrained and unimaginative people are able to inadvertently tap into the energy and focus it with their own raw emotions. Though the outcome is wonderful and often saves lives, for most it is a terrifying experience and only one more reason to shun the Blue Lines. For others, however, it opens up a whole new world of possibilities. A world of magic.

Remember, the citizens of Chaos Earth come from an age of science and technology. Their only knowledge of magic comes from ancient myths, fairy tales and other works of fantasy. They can scarcely believe it is real, and it is a completely alien and mysterious “thing.” Thus, in their ignorance, the first of a new generation of practitioners of magic see the Blue Lines as the obvious and tangible source of magic. They assume the blue light radiating from the earth is some sort of energy supply that, believe it or not, can be channeled by the human mind and used to rearrange molecules into . . . anything. While some look for a “scientific” explanation, others don’t care. They simply accept that the Blue Lines are “the” source of magic and the courageous ones set out to learn how to use that energy. This is a dangerous prospect during the first decade or two after the cataclysm, because the magic energy levels rage out of control with an intensity that not only reshapes the planet Earth, but sends shock waves throughout the Megaverse.

Humans are only beginning to get a glimpse at the *Megaverse* – the thousands (some say infinite number) of worlds that contain life, both human-like and alien and demonic. Worlds that are disrupted by the tears in space and time that appear at ley line nexuses, junctions where two or more ley lines/Blue Lines cross. Call these tears dimensional portals, reality bridges, gates, doorways, wormholes, or “Rifts,” the bottom line is they create a two-way opening or doorway to an alien world. Worlds that may exist hundreds, thousands or millions of light years away, or an alien dimension that does not even exist on the same plane of reality. It is from such fantastic realms or dimensions that demons, entities, so-called gods and other *supernatural beings* originate from. Beings who see themselves as beyond humans, beyond any mortal being, and who often wield powers of psionics, magic and abilities that defy the laws of science. Beings who often operate on base emotions and instincts and who regard mortals as playthings, victims to torment and prey to devour. The people of Chaos Earth are only beginning to realize that these “things” are the demons, vampires, monsters and bogeymen of ancient myths, legends and superstitions. Weird and terrible beings who thrive on torment, murder, blood and chaos. Thus, in a world gone mad and lost to chaos, these creatures of anarchy arrive like harbingers of a new age of change, chaos and magic.

Attempts to “tap” the Blue Lines are dangerous on a more immediate and person level, for they are more powerful at this point in time than at any time in Earth’s history, even the period that comes after the ensuing Dark Age and the period of comparative calm on what is to become known as *Rifts Earth*. The ebb and flow of energy is such that Ley Line Storms appear

without warning 1D6 times a day! Areas along the lines fade in and out (like Fadetowns) or are replaced with alien landscapes (and often alien flora, fauna and intelligent or demonic life forms). They attract Haunting Entities and other supernatural beings and spit out monsters that appear at random out of thin air.

Those humans who dare try to tap or command the power of the Blue Lines are often ravaged or destroyed by the very forces they seek to control – struck down by a Ley Line Storm, atomized by a bolt of energy out of the blue, turned into a phantom who straddles two or more realities, torn from Earth against their will and hurled to some world a million realities away, and a hundred other less pleasant ways to meet one’s end. Still there are those who try. They are the **Line Wizards**. In another two hundred years they will be known as Ley Line Walkers, masters of ley lines and the most adept spell casters on the planet.

Design Note

The abilities of the Chaos Earth practitioners of magic may be similar to **Rifts®** or other Palladium RPGs, while other times they are extremely different. That’s because the setting for Chaos Earth and the level of mystic energy is vastly different than those in other settings. Remember too, that while some of these Chaos Earth O.C.C.s will eventually be developed into the disciplines of magic found on Rifts Earth (i.e. the Line Wizard becomes the Ley Line Walker and so on), during the days of Chaos Earth, these are all fledgling magicks being discovered and developed for the very first time. Consequently, some of the abilities and spells change over the decades, and some are completely forgotten or lost with the passage of time.

Presented in the pages that follow are the various types of magic as they manifested during the early days of Chaos Earth. Most remain this way for the first 50-75 years of the ensuing Dark Age before they start to take on the more familiar mystic arts presented in **Rifts®**. Furthermore, some special abilities disappear after the Ley Lines stop seething and settle down to a more consistent level of power. At the onset of the Great Cataclysm, the ley lines/Blue Lines are overflowing and bursting with energy. That is what causes the magical chain reaction of the cataclysm to begin with, and continues to seethe and cause considerable atmospheric and trans-dimensional disturbances. All of which serves to reconfigure the planet Earth, link it to thousands of different worlds, open doorways through which supernatural beings can enter our realm of existence and pluck innocent aliens from their home worlds and bring them to Chaos Earth. Not to mention restore magic to Earth, amplify psychic abilities and become a dimensional nexus point for much of the Megaverse.

Line Wizard O.C.C.

Individuals possessing a strong will, determination and a natural aptitude for magic can draw upon the mystic energy of the boiling ley lines without a true understanding of magic or how they are able to do what they do. Those who manage to successfully draw on the Blue Lines repeatedly, and turn the energy into spells or physical manifestations, are called **Line Wizards**.

Line Wizards, like most Chaos Earth practitioners of magic, are undisciplined, wild and dangerous wielders of a force they neither understand nor control. They have, through observation,

figured out that the Blue Lines are an energy conduit that can be tapped by the human mind and used, for lack of a better word, to perform *magic*. They don't know where the lines come from, how they work or exactly what they can do. Any spells or magic abilities are the result of trial and error. In these initial months of experimentation, knowledge is shared between the fledgling Line Wizards. There is no formal group nor organization, but a number of individuals trying to learn about and use the energy of the ley lines. Those willing to share their knowledge with



others do so, those who work in secrecy shun all others. The only reason there seems to be a cohesiveness to them as a "group" is because they all dress similarly. This is not intended to be a uniform or gang colors, but a simple act of necessity. The out of doors of Chaos Earth is a hostile environment. The air is filled with ash, grit, sulfur and particles. A lot of it was launched into the atmosphere by the super volcano and countless smaller, conventional volcanos, as well as the widespread fires of burning cities and wild lands. The constant storms (both natural and unnatural) perpetually stir and whip the debris on the ground into the air, while other grit, acid rain and pollution falls from the sky. Clouds of noxious fumes and low level radiation also pass across the land. Without access to satellites, accurate weather forecasting is impossible. Besides, the grime in the air makes it, in effect, a constant sandstorm of varying intensity. Being wintertime and off of Lake Michigan, the icy wind is cutting and temperatures (thanks to the weather altering ley lines, ongoing cataclysm and fallout of the volcanoes and nuclear missiles) have been well below freezing and often sub-zero. To brave the elements and breathe the polluted air, one must take precautions and wear some type of gas mask, air filter or face covering like a scarf or bandages over the nose and mouth.

Just going outdoors can be a painful, if not deadly, adventure. As a result, the Line Wizards literally bundle up, wearing layers of clothes and covering their mouths with air filters (gas masks when they can get them) and wrapping their face and heads with scarves or additional cloth wrappings. The hands, feet and other extremities are also frequently wrapped in cloth under or over conventional gloves and boots for warmth and protection. Most have also taken to wearing hooded cloaks, ponchos, rain slicks, and even a canvas tarp or blankets fashioned into a hood and cloak for additional protection for the head and upper body. Whenever possible, goggles or some sort of protective eye coverings are also worn, although the hood of the cloak provides reasonable protection for the eyes. This garb has, inadvertently, created a rather distinctive "look" for *Line Wizards* that has become something of an instant icon identifying those trying to tame the ley lines for what they are. It is a distinctive look because NEMA forces use environmental body armor, power armor, and standard uniforms, while most ordinary folk avoid going outside for long periods of time, so they make do with conventional articles of clothing and run back to shelter as quick as possible. The Line Wizards need to stay outdoors in the hazardous elements for hours at a time studying the Blue Lines and experimenting with magic, thus they need the hooded cloaks, face coverings and other protective wrappings to do their work. Some rather resemble hooded mummies. All in all, it adds to their impressive and rather menacing visage.

Ironically, the self-styled Line Wizards' focus of study and experimentation is based on the *false assumption* that magic only comes from the Blue Lines and that one must be on or near the Blue Lines in order to draw on that energy to cast magic. They don't yet realize that all living creatures have a certain amount of Potential Psychic Energy (P.P.E.) and that humans with a natural aptitude for magic can learn to build and use their inner potential for magic (or psionics). They don't know that practitioners of magic can become *living batteries of P.P.E.* and cast spells anywhere. In that regard, their ignorance is working against them. On the other hand, it works in their favor, leading

Line Wizards to study (and with time understand) ley lines and how best to use them in ways other sorcerers will never master.

For now, Line Wizards can *only* cast spells and work magic when on or near a Blue Line. They do not even consider trying to cast magic away from a line, because from their point of view it is not possible. While this limits the scope and range of their abilities (i.e. must be in close proximity to a Blue Line), it makes them among the most powerful of the new breed of sorcerers. For one thing, they are unwittingly building and drawing on their own personal P.P.E. reserve which supplements their Blue Line spell casting. For another, the fulminating Blue Lines offer greater available P.P.E. (and will for the next twenty or so years), providing 1D6x10 P.P.E. at any given *moment*, double (2D6x10) at key times of increased energy flow like noon and midnight – x100 at Summer and Winter Solstice, the Equinox, and eclipses.

Rifts® Historical Note: The Line Wizard is the predecessor of the *Ley Line Walker*. The Wizard's functional garb born from the harsh conditions of Chaos Earth would, over the generations, become something of a uniform and badge of honor. Thus, the air mask and wrappings would be kept long after they were necessary, while the goggles were abandoned and the hooded cloak is sometimes substituted with elaborate forms of head gear. Also with time and experience, the mastery of magic would increase beyond the Blue Lines/ley lines, though they would forever remain the masters of the Blue Lines and Ley Line Magic. Ironically, some of the earliest and intuitive abilities of the Line Wizard would be forgotten or developed into something completely different during the Dark Ages. Thus, the powers of the Line Wizard are often crude and basic, while the Ley Line Walkers who come later, are true "masters" of spell casting and the ley lines.

Limitations:

Despite the high amount of available P.P.E. from the Blue Line, the Line Wizard (and any Chaos Earth practitioner of magic) is unable to take advantage of it, so the character's abilities are limited and rooted to the lines themselves.

1. Can only cast spells when on a Blue Line or within 100 feet (30.5 m) of one (+20 feet/6.1 m per each additional level of experience, i.e. 120 feet/36.6 m at 2nd level, 140 feet/42.7 m at 3rd level, etc.). The Line Wizard doesn't even try casting spells when not near a Blue Line.

2. Can only cast one spell, or work one magical effect, per melee round (15 seconds). **Note:** Many of the Line Wizard's abilities are not actual spells so much as they are magical effects, often worked on themselves (see abilities).

3. Available P.P.E. from a Blue Line is unpredictable and inconsistent. 1D6x10 P.P.E. points can be tapped every melee round (15 seconds), which means sometimes a spell will work because there is sufficient available P.P.E. and sometimes it won't due to insufficient available P.P.E. The wide swing of available energy reflects both the unstable and constant ebb and flow of the Blue Lines and the Line Wizards' own lack of understanding and experience in using magic. Consequently, a Line Wizard can always cast a spell that requires 1-10 P.P.E. points, but those requiring 11-60 P.P.E. is the luck of the draw.

Furthermore, the Line Wizard does not know how much is necessary to cast a magic spell, because the mage does *not* yet

have a clear understanding of magic, how P.P.E. works, or that one spell may require a small amount of P.P.E. and another might require a great deal more. The Line Walker and other magic practitioners of Chaos Earth use a scattershot approach to magic, and either it works or it doesn't. However, the character does realize that a certain range of magic (i.e. spells that are the equivalent to 1-4 level) *can* usually be cast on a Blue Line without failure.

4. Another limit is the fact that the Line Wizards are not used to "channeling" magic energy through their bodies. Heck, they don't even realize that's what they are doing! And even Blue Line energy must be drawn upon and "channeled" through the spell caster to perform magic. Consequently, the Line Wizard can *NOT* cast more than a total of 12 spells (that are actually successful) per 12 hours without feeling incredibly fatigued and weak. After 12 spells have been cast, the Line Wizard can try to cast additional spells for several minutes (see "e" below), but does so with the following penalties:

- a) Each spell costs *double* the usual P.P.E. to cast.
- b) The duration, damage and range of the spell are reduced by half.
- c) The character's Speed attribute, attacks per melee round and all bonuses are reduced by half. Can still cast one spell per melee round.
- d) The Line Wizard's M.D.C. (available whenever on a Blue Line) is reduced by half and the character's S.D.C. is reduced to zero.
- e) Danger of collapse. The Line Wizard can only continue to cast magic beyond 12 spells for one minute per each Physical Endurance (P.E.) attribute point. Thus, a character with a P.E. of 8 can only cast spells for another eight minutes. A P.E. of 15 means he can continue to try to cast spells for another 15 minutes and so on. However, if the Line Wizard pushes himself like this, he is in danger of collapsing and falling into a coma. Roll to save vs coma and death (+10% to save). Worse, if the character is not found and taken to get medical attention as soon as possible, the Wizard will suffer from the elements (frostbite and hypothermia during the winter) and is vulnerable to attack from demons, monsters, and predatory animals as well as bandits.

5. The inherent danger of the Blue Lines. In addition to the obvious limitation of only being able to perform magic from the Blue Lines, the Line Wizard is vulnerable to attack from the entities, monsters and supernatural beings that are also attracted to the lines of magic energy. Demons and creatures of magic regularly stalk the Blue Lines or come to them to enhance the casting of their own magic. Meanwhile, Entities are attracted to Blue Lines like moths to a flame, and then there is the danger of the Blue Lines themselves. The ley lines of Chaos Earth are much less stable than those on most other worlds and even Rifts Earth 200+ years later. Right now and for decades to come, they surge and seethe with unpredictable amounts of energy which is the cause for numerous storms of many varieties, as well as the opening of dimensional portals, dimensional anomalies, random feats of magic, strange phenomena and explosive reactions. Any of which may occur at least once every hour of the day and which will affect anybody on the line at the time it happens. The nature of Line Wizards makes them living "lightning rods" for these events and many practitioners of magic are injured and killed by them on a regular basis. **Note:** See the Random Table a page or two down for details.

Special Line Wizard Abilities:

1. Becomes a Mega-Damage being whenever on or within 100 feet (30.5 m) of a Blue Line. This is actually a sort of invisible force field reminiscent to Armor of Ithan. Total M.D.C. is 22 points +4 per level of the Wizard's experience. Best of all, damage to the force field regenerates at a rate of one M.D.C. per melee round (four points per minute). So as long as the character can avoid taking significant amount of damage, he has a renewable means of defense. **Note:** The Line Wizard does have to concentrate for one melee round (15 seconds) to activate this defense mechanism, but once it is engaged it remains "on" as long as the Line Wizard remains on or close to a Blue Line.

2. Fire Energy Bolts. Line Wizards can focus their minds to draw upon the ley line energy to hurl bolts of energy. Damage & P.P.E. Cost: 3D6 S.D.C. points of damage costs 2 P.P.E., 4D6 S.D.C. damage blast costs 3 P.P.E., 6D6 S.D.C. costs 4 P.P.E., 1D6 M.D. costs 6 P.P.E., 2D6 M.D. costs 8 P.P.E. and 3D6 M.D. costs 10 P.P.E. Duration: Instant. Each blast counts as one melee action (does *not* count as a "spell"). Range: 300 feet (91.5 m on a ley line) +40 feet (12.2 m) per level of experience. Bonus: +2 to strike (target must be within the character's line of sight). **Note:** These energy bolts can be fired at will as long as the Line Wizard is on a Blue Line.

3. Energy Fist. The Line Wizard's hands crackle with blue energy and tiny lightning bolts. A punch does 2D6 M.D. P.P.E. Cost: 6. Duration: One melee round per level of experience, but its activation *counts as a spell*.

4. Calm Storms, including Ley Line Storms. P.P.E. Cost: 60. Duration: 10 minutes per level of experience for Ley Line Storms and 20 minutes per level for natural storms and strange rains. The magical influence reduces the intensity of the storm by half as well as shortens the duration of the storm by half. *Counts as a spell.* **Note:** Affects storms that are over a Blue Line, but affects the entire storm system including the portions that are away from the Blue Line for a one mile (1.6 km) radius per level of the spell caster. Of course, Ley Line Storms and strange rains only occur along a Blue Line.

5. Float on Blue Lines. The Line Wizard can float or walk through the air along the length of a Blue Line at a maximum Speed of 10. To do so, the Wizard must open himself to the line's energy and concentrate for one melee round (15 seconds). Does *not* count as a spell nor does it require the expenditure of any P.P.E.

6. Blue Line Regeneration. The Line Wizard can absorb the mystic energy of the line to triple (due to the great amount of energy) the natural rate of healing. This means the character can recover 1D6+4 Hit Points or S.D.C. per 24 hours he is on or near the line. The Wizard can also perform an instant rejuvenation once every 24 hours in which any toxin is purged from the body and 3D6 Hit Points and 4D6 S.D.C. are instantly restored.

7. Sense the coming of a Ley Line Storm (automatic). The Line Wizard can "sense" or feel a disturbance on the Blue Line and tell if it is a Ley Line Storm, what direction it is coming from and approximately when it will reach his current location (accurate to within 1D4 minutes).

8. Sense the opening of a dimensional portal (automatic). The Line Wizard can "sense" or feel a disturbance on the Blue Line and tell if it is a dimensional portal opening up. The mage

can also tell approximately where, how far away it is and how long the portal is open. He cannot tell if anything enters or exits the portal.

Sense Power Surge (automatic). Knows to run or teleport out of a Blue Line when a power surge happens.

Sense supernatural beings and demons. Effective only when on or within 100 feet (30.5 m) of a Blue Line, but requires concentration and the expenditure of four P.P.E. points.

See and communicate with entities (all types).

Teleport out of Blue Line. Costs 30 P.P.E. and pops the Line Wizard just outside of the Blue Line. This is especially effective in escaping Ley Line Storms, Power Surges, the opening of dimensional portals and other sudden or freak events on a Blue Line.

9. Limited Teleportation! The Line Wizard can teleport *out* of a Blue Line at will. This is not to a specific location on or near the Blue Line but to the nearest point outside the line. It is used to escape sudden storms, weird phenomena, attacks and other danger while on the Blue Line. This is a one way teleportation that can be performed with but a thought, but does *count as casting a spell*.

10. Initial Spell Knowledge: In addition to the special abilities described above, the Line Wizard also knows 12 spells: Pick three from Spell Levels 1, 2, 3, and 4, or four from levels 1, 2, and 3.

11. Learning New spells: The Line Wizard has no formal means of finding or learning new spells in a scholarly capacity (they are making this up as they go along), but can successfully develop/learn *one* new Wizard Invocation for each new level of experience. The spell can be selected from any level up to two levels higher than the spell caster (i.e. a second level Line Wizard can select one spell from any of the levels 1-4, while a third level character can select one spell from levels 1-5. That's one spell period, *not* one from each spell level).

In the alternative, the Line Wizard *may* select TWO spells from the special category of *Dimension & Ley Line Magic*. This choice should be left entirely to the player and is a direct result of the Line Wizard's study of Blue Lines and the dimensional aspects of the lines. Thus, *Dimension & Ley Line Magic* is available exclusively to the Line Wizard only! **Note:** Descriptions for *all* spells/invocations are found in the *Rifts® Book of Magic* (along with a ton of other M.D.C. based types of magic). Some would argue Line Wizards are the most fluent and powerful of the new breed of primitive sorcerers, and they do wield considerable power. However, because they are convinced their power comes exclusively from the Blue Lines, they are powerless away from the lines and do not even try to cast magic away from them.

12. Secret P.P.E. Reserve. Unknown to the Line Wizard, the character has a personal P.P.E. base or reserve of energy equal to the character's P.E. attribute number plus 1D6 per level of experience (starting at level one). This extra P.P.E. is often drawn upon when the Wizard needs it most – in other words, it is tapped by desire and intense emotion and added to the P.P.E. available from the Blue Line to cast spells that require more than 10-60 P.P.E. points or to compensate for when the Blue Line P.P.E. is low.

13. O.C.C. Bonuses: +1 to save vs magic, +2 to save vs Horror Factor and possession. Spell strength does NOT increase, so for spells in which an opponent gets a "saving throw," the character need only roll a 12 or higher to save. Ritual magic does not yet exist on Chaos Earth.

Line Wizard Chaos Earth O.C.C.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. and P.E. of 9 or higher, other than that, a desire to learn magic. A high M.E. is also helpful but not required.

O.C.C. Skills: Mainly common skills known to most people of Chaos Earth.

Speak, Read and Write Native Language at 98% (typically English or Spanish in the US, English or French in Canada and Spanish or English in Mexico)

Basic Math (+30%)

Climbing (+5%)

Land Navigation (+5%)

Lore: Demons & Monsters (+10%)

Pilot Automobile (+10%)

One Domestic Skill of Choice (+10%)

Hand to Hand: Basic can be selected as one of the O.C.C. Related Skills or Martial Arts for the cost of two skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: The people of Chaos Earth were members of an advanced civilization and culture before the ley lines erupted and Armageddon ensued. Consequently, most are highly educated, with a high school education and some college or trade school type training.

As a result, pick one Skill Category in which the character is a "skilled professional" and choose THREE skills from it. Each gets a +20% skill bonus.

Then select an additional eight skills from any of the available categories listed below.

Communications: Any

Domestic: Any (+5%)

Electrical: None. Only available for selection as a "skilled professional."

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Automotive and Basic Mechanics only. Other skills in this category are available only for selection as a "skilled professional."

Medical: First Aid only. Other skills in this category are available only for selection as a "skilled professional."

Military: None. Only available for selection as a "skilled professional" (soldier or law enforcement occupations).

Physical: Any, except acrobatics, gymnastics, wrestling and boxing are available only for selection as a "skilled professional" athlete.

Pilot: Any (+5%), except military vehicles and power armor.

Pilot Related: Any (+5%)

Rogue: None.

Science: Advanced Math (+15%) and Astronomy (+10%) only. Others are only available for selection as a "skilled professional" (scientist, lab technician, etc.).

Technical: Any

W.P.: Any Ancient or S.D.C. firearms; no energy weapons to start.

Wilderness: None.

Secondary Skills: The character gets one secondary skill at levels one, four, eight, and twelve. These are additional areas of

knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in parenthesis. All start at the base skill level and normal restrictions apply.

Standard Equipment: Most survivors of the initial cataclysm have only the clothes on their backs and a few items they salvaged or scavenged. Line Wizard gear includes an air filter or gas mask, scarf or wrapping cloth for the face and head, wrappings for the hands and feet, a hooded cape or cloak (may be water resistant), a pair of warm boots or combat boots, several pairs of socks, a pair of gloves, sunglasses or tinted goggles, 1D4+2 sets of clothing, a heavy jacket, belt, satchel or duffle bag, backpack, survival knife (does 1D6 S.D.C. damage) or pocket knife (1D4 S.D.C. damage), pocket computer, notebook, 1D6 markers and one mechanical pencil, flashlight, disposable cigarette lighter, utility belt or 20 feet (6 m) of rope, canteen, and may have an S.D.C. firearm but only if a W.P. was selected for it.

Money: Has 1D6x1000 in credits (which may have no value) and 1D6x100 credits worth of tradeable goods. May or may not have a job that continues to pay any kind of salary or goods (like food, room and board) for trade of services. Most survivors of Chaos Earth pool their resources and work together with NEMA (or some other leader), sharing in whatever the community has to dole out. Many Line Wizards become obsessed with magic and Blue Lines and only do enough work or perform magic to get food and equipment to survive.

Cybernetics: None and avoids them like the plague (cybernetics interferes with magic).

Available Spell Invocations

Only the following spell invocations are available to the Line Wizard. The range of spells is limited due to the fledgling Magic O.C.C.'s lack of knowledge and understanding about magic and spell casting. Most also reflect the logical needs and desires for magic under the apocalyptic circumstances (i.e. a good number of combat, hiding and healing related magic) and the Line Wizard's study of the Blue Lines. The spell descriptions for *all* invocations can be found in the **Rifts® Book of Magic**. Otherwise most are found in the *Rifts® RPG*, and the rest in *Federation of Magic™* and *Coalition Wars™ One*.

Level One

Blinding Flash (1)
Cloud of Smoke (2)
Death Trance (1)
Globe of Daylight (2)
See Aura (6)
See the Invisible (4)
Sense Evil (2)
Sense Magic (4)

Level Two

Chameleon (6)	Levitation (5)
Cleanse (6)	Manipulate Objects (2+)
Climb (3)	Mystic Alarm (5)
Cloak of Darkness (6)	Throwing Stones (5)
Extinguish Fire (4)	Turn the Dead (6)
Fear (5)	

Level Three

Breathe Without Air (5)
Create Wood (10-20)
Float in Air (5)
Fuel Flame (5)
Ignite Fire (6)
Impervious to Fire (5)
Impervious to Poison (5)
Invisibility: Simple (6)
Light Healing (6)
Magic Shield (6)
Mystic Fulcrum (5)
Negate Poison/Toxin (5)
Telekinesis (8)
Wave of Frost (6)

Level Four

Charismatic Aura (10)
Cure Minor Disorders (10)
Deflect (10)
Electric Arc (8)
Energy Field (10)
Fireblast (8)
Fire Bolt (7)
Magic Net (7)
Multiple Image (7)
Reflection (7)
Repel Animals (7)
Swim as a Fish (8)
Watchguard (10)

Level Five

Calling (8)
Charm (12)
Circle of Flame (10)
Distant Voice (10)
Energy Disruption (12)
Escape (8)
Featherlight (10)
Fly (15)
Heal Wounds (10)
Implosion Neutralizer (12)
Influence the Beast (12)
Instill Knowledge (15)
Mend the Broken (10+)
Superhuman Endurance (12)
Superhuman Speed (10)
Superhuman Strength (10)
Sustain (12)

Level Six

Apparition (20)
Call Lightning (15)
Create Water (15)
Cure Illness (15)
Fire Ball (10)
Fire Blossom (20)
Fortify Against Disease (15)
Frostblade (15)
Impervious to Energy (20)
Magic Pigeon (20)
Mask of Deceit (15)
Sheltering Force (20)
Tongues (12)

Level Seven

Animate & Control Dead (20)
Constrain Being (20)
Dispel Magic Barrier (20)
Fire Gout (20)
Fly as the Eagle (25)
Heal Self (20)
Negate Mechanics (20)
Purification of Food/Water (20)
Wind Rush (20)

Level Eight

Commune with Spirits (25)
Dessicate the Supernatural (50)
Exorcism (30)
Expel Demons (35)
Forcebonds (25)
Greater Healing (30)
Lightning Arc (30)
Locate (30)
Minor Curse (35)
Negate Magic (30)
Power Weapons (35)
Protection Circle: Simple (45)
Spoil (Water/Food; 30)
Water to Wine (40)
Wisps of Confusion (40)

Dimension & Ley Line Magic

Exclusive to the Line Wizard

Anti-Magic Cloud (140)
*Close Rift/Dimensional Portal (200+)
D-Step (50)
Ley Line Fade (20)
Ley Line Ghost (80)
Ley Line Phantom (40)
*Ley Line Restoration (800)
*Ley Line Resurrection (2000)
*Ley Line Shut Down (3000)
Ley Line Storm Defense (180)
Ley Line Tendril Bolts (26)
Ley Line Time Capsule (15)
Ley Line Time Flux (80)
Ley Line Transmission (30)
Mystic Portal (60)
Reality Flux (75)
Re-Open (Dimensional) Gateway (180)
Rift to Limbo (160)
See in Magic Darkness (125)
*Summon Ley Line Storm (500)
*Time Hole (210)
Time Slip (20)
Warped Space (90)

* An asterisk indicates a spell that can only be performed at moments when a Blue Line is at an increased energy level, like during an eclipse or solstice, or with a boost or help from some other creature of magic.

Random Blue Line

Dangers & Phenomena

In addition to learning how to cast spells, the Line Wizard also learns about the many habits, random events, ebbs and flows, dangers and powers of the Blue Lines.

One of the following occurs every hour on a Blue Line. Roll percentile dice for random determination or the G.M. can pick one. Sometimes these events happen more frequently than even one per hour, but that is up to the G.M. (No more than one effect

every 20 minutes, and only when the Blue Line is in some momentary state of disruption or agitation, like when a dimensional portal opens up, a demon lord or god appears, or there is some stellar event that causes the line to fulminate with increased energy.)

01-05% Anti-Gravity Anomaly. A strange, dull buzzing fills the air and everybody in the affected area (typically a quarter of the Blue line with the character in the middle of the length) floats up into the air 10-20 feet (3-6 m) and hang there. One can move by using a swimming motion, but maximum speed is a factor of 1D4. Shooting a gun will push the shooter in the opposite direction at a speed of 10x3D6 yards/meters. While hovering suspended in the air the characters are fairly helpless and cannot air swim higher or lower, just side to side. Duration: 1D6+1 minutes.

06-10% Bright Sun. Despite its name, the magical effect can occur day or night. When it does, the entire Blue Line is filled with near-blinding light that radiates from everywhere (within the line itself). Those without protective tinted glasses or goggles must shield their eyes with their hands and arms or hood and squint.

Penalties: Without sunglasses the character can only see about six feet (1.8 m) in front of them and suffers a -2 penalty to initiative and -2 to strike, parry and dodge and Land Navigation is -30%. In addition, the light is so blinding that it makes reading anything from a sheet of paper, book or computer screen impossible (washed out). Those with a pair of quality sunglasses or tinted goggles can see for 30 feet (9.1 m) and are only -1 on initiative, strike, parry and dodge, Land Navigation is -10%, and the character can read books and see computer screens.

Duration of the Bright Sun Effect: 5D6 minutes.

11-15% Cascading Energy Field. Sparklets of white and green energy rains down in a wall that resembles a waterfall of energy. The cascading energy field slowly rolls along the Blue Line and is fairly easy to avoid, though a short sprint is probably required. If the shower of sparks should strike a practitioner of magic the character feels warm and at peace, however, he cannot cast a spell or work any type of magic for 1D6 minutes. Psychics are similarly affected. Ordinary people without magic or psionic abilities suffer no ill effects and, in fact, see any injuries healed for 1D6 points of damage (a cold or flu-like illness vanishes completely). Running through the shower of energy does NOT have multiple magical effects. Duration: As noted. Note: The Cascading Energy Field usually straddles 90% of the width of the line and runs from one end to the other. Once it has done so, it vanishes.

16-20% Dance of the Dead. A gruesome magical effect in which all the dead within the Blue Line (the recently deceased and the long-time dead) rise up, clawing their way out of the rubble (or shaking their fists and clawing at the air as if stuck). The animated dead mindlessly roam the length of the Blue Line, lashing out at any living creature (human and animal) they encounter. It is easy to hide from these walking dead, plus a holy symbol will cause them to shy away in search of easier prey, and the *Turn Dead* magic spell can send as many as 1D4x100 away! Duration: 1D6x10 minutes. Note: See the *Animate and Control Dead* spell for basic stats on these animated skeletons and corpses.

21-25% Energy Drain. All of a sudden the Line Wizard can feel the Blue Line energy ebb away, as if drained by some mysterious force or a circuit has been flipped to reduce the energy flow. Only 2D6 points of P.P.E. is available to the Line Wizard while the drain is in effect. Furthermore, his normal M.D.C. force field is reduced by half. Duration: 1D6x10 minutes.

26-30% The Fleeing. There is a time when all Entities and ghostly spirits suddenly rush shrieking out of the Blue Line. How or why this happens is beyond human perception, because there is no apparent change in the Blue Line that humans can see, not even practitioners of magic or psychics. Duration: 1D6x10 minutes.

31-35% Halo Effect. When this happens the aura of all living things shine forth with a luminescence for all to see. The overall effect is impressive and attractive, but those who can "read" auras are able to see everything the psionic power of See Aura provides. Furthermore, illusions are shown up for what they really are (those previously fooled by the illusion get to roll to save vs illusion/magic with a bonus of +5 to save). This phenomenon is also likely to reveal the true nature of supernatural beings, dragons, and other shapechangers, for their aura is most definitely *not* human. Duration: 2D6 minutes.

36-40% Howling Wind. A strong, howling wind appears without warning. The wind (about 30 mph/48 km) kicks up dirt and grit into the air and the noise of the wind is such that talking is difficult. One must shield one's eyes and shout to communicate; can be heard no more than 10 feet (3 m) away when shouting loudly. Duration: 3D6 minutes. Note: Wind will blow away sheets of paper and other light materials.

41-45% Hypnotic Lights. These mesmerizing lights may appear as swirling balls of energy or the rainbow-like display of an Aurora Borealis. In either case the display is beautiful and worth watching, except that it has a hypnotic effect on all viewers. Characters must roll a 16 or higher to save vs magic in order to have the willpower NOT to look at the lights. A failed save means the individual is transfixed by the lights and loses all sense of time, urgency and purpose, and just stands there transfixed for the duration of the light show. Penalties: Any attacker that comes along gets the first attack (those transfixed do not get to roll initiative, their attacker has it), and though the transfixed characters can fight back they do so as if in a mental fog; reduce the number of attacks and all combat bonuses by half. Likewise, skill performance takes twice as long and is done at -20%. Otherwise, there is no adverse effect. Duration: 3D6 minutes.

46-50% Lightning Bolt. A single lightning bolt appears out of nowhere and zeros in on any practitioner of magic presently casting a spell, otherwise any practitioner of magic or supernatural being is next and psychics are targeted after that if no magic user is present. Damage: The bolt does 4D6 M.D. and knocks its victim off his feet (loses initiative and two melee actions). Duration: Instant; one blast. A *practitioner of magic* or *psychic* can sense it coming a heartbeat before it strikes and can try to dodge without benefit of bonuses (a natural, unmodified die roll). Needs 15 or higher to dodge. Ordinary folk never see it coming until they are struck. Note: Only one individual is struck by a single bolt of lightning.

51-55% Lightning Storm. This is bad, real bad, as bolts of lightning (not rain) rain down from the sky as the storm rolls

across the ley line. Damage: Every humanoid caught in the storm takes 2D6 points of damage (S.D.C. damage to Hit Point beings and M.D. to Mega-Damage beings and Line Wizards) per *melee round*. Duration: The shower of lightning lasts 1D6 melee rounds. Note: Line Wizards often try to teleport out of harm's way when these storms appear.

56-60% Phantom World: The ghost image of an alien world appears along one third of the Blue Line with the Line Wizard smack-dab in the middle of it. Can be fascinating and dazzling but also a bit disorienting as the ghost image is superimposed on reality, blurring images and confusing the actual situation in the real world. Penalties: -1 on initiative, -2 to strike, parry and dodge. Also can NOT sense or see Entities or the invisible when this happens. Duration: 1D6x10 minutes.

61-65% Power Surge: A wave of magic energy rolls through the Blue Line. Any practitioner caught in a power surge convulses as energy crackles around him, and is then swept up and carried away 1D6x100 yards/meters, before dropping to the ground. The mage is rendered unconscious for 2D4 minutes and can NOT cast a spell or use any of his special abilities for 5D6 minutes even when on a Blue Line.

66-70% Rain of Creatures. Squishy, icky, slimy, foul smelling alien . . . things . . . fall from the sky in a light rain. They could be worms, larvae, slugs, fish-like creatures and god only knows what. They are no larger than a man's hand and are often as small as a thumb. Most are still alive, squiggling around. The slimy things do no physical damage, die within an hour, but stink up the place for 1D6 days. Duration of the rain: 3D6 minutes.

71-75% Rain of Slime. Some kind of non-toxic slime pours down from the gathering clouds. The cold, wet goop is disgusting and clings to everything. Even after the rain is over, the slime covered ground is treacherous to navigate until the slime dries up – which takes 6D6 minutes. Movement Penalties: Travelers moving at more than 20% their speed attribute slip and fall, taking 1D6 S.D.C. points of damage and lose initiative and two melee actions every time they fall down. Ground vehicles traveling faster than 10 mph (16 km) will slip, slide and crash. Duration of the Slime Rain: 2D6 minutes.

76-80% Rain of Stones. Stones ranging from pea to marble-sized fall from the gathering clouds overhead. Damage: 3D6 S.D.C./Hit Point damage every minute unless one can find suitable shelter (a vehicle, a slab of overhanging cement, etc.). In addition to the damage, the sound from the thunking and clattering stones is deafening, making it difficult to even hear shouting over the din. Duration: 2D6 minutes. It is also interesting to note that the stones vanish 1D4x10 minutes after the storm ends.

81-85% Time Warp: 1D6 more hours pass while on the Blue Line than the character realizes.

86-90% Vanish. The individual (practitioner of magic or ordinary Joe) caught in this effect vanishes, as if he or she has popped out of existence. Line Wizards can sense a dimensional distortion or anomaly coming and may attempt to teleport out of harm's way before it hits (roll initiative at +2 to succeed; requires a 16 or higher to pop out in time). The victims of vanishing feel momentarily disoriented as if floating and not knowing which way is up. The sensation seems to last only for a minute or two before the character returns to normal. In reality, how-

ever, much more time has passed. Duration: Roll on the following table to see how long the character has been gone.

01-20: 1D6 minutes

21-40: 1D6x10 minutes

41-60: 2D6 hours

61-80: 4D6 hours

81-00: 1D6 days

91-95% Ley Line Storm appears with all its dangerous ramifications.

96-00% Dimensional Portal Opens! And who knows what may crawl out of it (actually there is a 01-50% chance that nothing comes out). This is a two-way portal so the character may step through it to another place and time.

Chaos Wizard O.C.C.

Chaos Wizards do NOT have genuine control over the magic energies they wield and have absolutely no understanding of magic. They are mostly teenagers and young people (ages 13-25) who exhibit a natural ability to perform magic. Unlike the Line Wizards, they do not rely on the Blue Lines. Chaos Wizards have developed and draw upon their own inner P.P.E. to work their magic, not that they know it. Most Chaos Wizards have no idea how or why their magic works, only that it does. Sadly, fueled by the impetuosity, powerful emotions and desires and a sense that anything is possible, at least two thirds of these mages unleash their magic for personal fame, glory, power and revenge. This is not just because they are young (many teens are thoughtful, intelligent, reasonably mature and good). These practitioners of magic seem to willingly embrace the chaos and become wild, reckless, devil-may-care maniacs. The reason for this is unknown, but even Chaos Wizards who are of good alignment and have hearts of gold are swashbuckling daredevils who often act on a whim, take foolish (often death defying) chances, are quick to accept a challenge or respond to an insult, and generally act silly or like crazy people. Not blithering lunatics or obnoxious louts, but wild-eyed adventurers who think they are indestructible.

As a result, Chaos Wizards are emerging as a powerful and dangerous new brigand for NEMA and law abiding people to reckon with. In fact, they and the *Chaos Witch* are among the most aggressive, self-serving and savage magic users to emerge from the carnage. Both use their mystic might to grab power, steal and dominate others. The worst become gang leaders, bushwhackers, criminal kingpins, elite assassins, and tyrant lords who would be kings. The best try to use their powers for good but often do as much harm as they do good. While this harm can be the result of rash behavior, more often than not, it is the result of their unpredictable spell casting.

Magical Mayhem

For whatever reason, whenever a Chaos Wizard casts a spell there is usually some problem, side effect or collateral damage.

Roll on the following table every time a spell is cast. Regardless of the outcome, the P.P.E. spent is the amount of the desired spell whether it works or not. The negative results cannot be altered, stopped or cancelled by the Chaos Wizard who caused it. They must go through the duration indicated.



01-10% Miracle! The spell went off without a hitch! Works exactly as intended.

11-30% The spell is twice as powerful as it should be. Double the range and damage.

31-50% The spell is half as potent as it should be. Reduce range, duration, damage, etc. by half.

51-55% Spell does not work, instead the mage and everybody within a 30 foot (9.1 m) radius of him are engulfed in a Cloud of Smoke (same as the spell). Duration: Two minutes.

56-60% Spell does not work, instead the target of the spell is struck by a burst of energy that does 3D6 M.D., maximum range: 500 feet (152 m), duration: Instant.

61-65% Spell does not work, instead the target of the spell is turned invisible (same as the spell: *Invisibility: Simple*)! Duration: Three minutes per level of the spell caster.

66-70% Spell does not work, instead the target of the spell is made invulnerable. Duration: One minute.

71-75% Spell does not work, instead the target of the spell is instantly made spotlessly clean (same as the *Cleanse* spell). Duration: Instant.

76-80% The spell works fine but the Chaos Wizard is *blind* (same as the spell). Duration: One minute per level of the spell caster and it cannot be cancelled early.

81-85% The spell works at half power, but there is also an explosion that inflicts 2D6 M.D. to everything within a 20 foot (6.1 m) diameter of the spell caster!

86-90% The spell works at half power, and every living creature within a 20 foot (6.1 m) diameter of the spell caster (friends and foes) are instantly healed 4D6 points of damage (Hit Points or S.D.C., M.D.C. if a Mega-Damage creature).

91-95% Spell doesn't work at all, instead a flock of 1D4+4 *Magic Pigeons* appear. All function as per the spell. If it's not a life and death situation, this may be the time to write home.

96-00% Spell works perfectly at full power, but the spell caster is transformed into a harmless (ideally cute) animal (same as the *Metamorphosis: Animal* spell). Duration: One minute per level of the spell caster.

Special Chaos Wizard Abilities:

1. Becomes a Mega-Damage being whenever on or within 100 feet (30.5 m) of a Blue Line. This is automatic and provides a total of 12 M.D.C. +2 per level of the Chaos Wizard's experience. Best of all, damage to the character regenerates at a rate of one M.D.C. per melee round (four points per minute). So as long as the character can avoid taking significant amount of damage, he has a renewable means of defense. **Note:** The Chaos Wizard does NOT have to concentrate to activate this defense mechanism, it automatically engages a minute after entering a Blue Line.

2. Initial Spell Knowledge: Armor Bizarre (only costs 7 P.P.E. for the Chaos Wizard), Aura of Power (4), Charismatic Aura (10), Shatter (5), and Blinding Flash (1). In addition to these five spells, the Chaos Wizard can select 9 others spells: Pick three from Spell Levels 1, 2, and 3.

3. Learning New spells: The Chaos Wizard has no formal means of finding or learning new spells in a scholarly capacity, but they somehow intuitively gain one new spell ever new level of experience. Spells can be selected from those listed under the *Line Wizards* (or if the G.M. allows it, may select any of the *Invocations* found in the *Rifts® Book of Magic*, pages 88-114) *Levels 1-6*. That's it.

4. Secret P.P.E. Reserve. Unknown to the Chaos Wizard, the character has a personal P.P.E. base or reserve of energy, of 1D4x10 +P.E. attribute number and 2D6 P.P.E. per level of experience (starting at level one). The Chaos Wizard unknowingly draws on this P.P.E. reserve to cast his spells. Expended P.P.E.

recover at a rate of 1D6+4 per hour of sleep/rest or meditation (2D6+4 P.P.E. when on a Blue Line). The Chaos Wizard can *NOT* draw upon P.P.E. from Blue Lines to cast spells.

5. O.C.C. Bonuses: +1 to save vs magic, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +1 to save vs possession. Spell strength does NOT increase, so for spells in which an opponent gets a “saving throw,” the character needs only to roll a 12 or higher to save. Ritual magic does not yet exist on Chaos Earth.

Chaos Wizard O.C.C.

Attribute Requirements: None. A high I.Q. and P.E. are recommended (12 or better), but not required.

Typical Alignment: Can be any, but most are Anarchist (43%) Miscreant (30%) or Unprincipled (12%).

O.C.C. Skills: Mainly common skills known to most people of Chaos Earth.

Speak, Read and Write Native Language at 85% (typically English or Spanish in the US, English or French in Canada and Spanish or English in Mexico).

Basic Math (+10%)

Climbing (+10%)

Land Navigation (+5%)

Lore Demons & Monsters (+10%)

Pilot Automobile (+10%)

One Domestic Skill of Choice (+15%).

Automatically gets Hand to Hand: Basic (can be upgraded to Martial Arts for the cost of three O.C.C. Related Skills or Assassin for two, but the latter applies only if Anarchist or evil).

O.C.C. Related Skills: The people of Chaos Earth were members of an advanced civilization and culture before the ley lines erupted and Armageddon ensued. However, since most Chaos Wizards are teenagers, most have only a grade school education and some high school. Older ones may have high school and some college education.

Select an additional eight skills (10 if over 18 years old) from any of the available categories listed below.

Communications: Any, except Surveillance Systems, Scramblers, Laser and Cryptography.

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: None.

Espionage: Basic Electronics only.

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

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: None.

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics and Boxing.

Pilot: Automobile, Motorcycle, Sail Boats, and Motor Boats only.

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Any.

Science: Advanced Math (+5%) and Astronomy (+10%) only.

Technical: Any (+10% to computer skills only).

W.P.: Any Ancient or S.D.C. firearms; no energy weapons to start.

Wilderness: None.

Secondary Skills: The character gets one secondary skill at levels one, four, eight, and twelve. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in parenthesis. All start at the base skill level and normal restrictions apply.

Standard Equipment: Most survivors of the initial cataclysm have only the clothes on their backs and a few items they salvage or scavenge. Chaos Wizard gear includes an air filter, leather jacket or something fashionable, a pair of gloves, a pair of combat boots, several pairs of socks, sunglasses, 1D4+4 sets of clothing, a winter coat, belt, backpack, survival knife (does 1D6 S.D.C. damage) or pocket knife (1D4 S.D.C. damage), pocket computer, note book, 1D6 markers and one mechanical pencil, flashlight, disposable cigarette lighter, utility belt, canteen, and may have an S.D.C. firearm but only if a W.P. was selected for it.

Money: Starts with 1D6x100 credits worth of tradeable goods. Probably does not have a job and relies on scavenging, gambling and trade of goods (like food, clothing, room and board) for their services. Anarchist and evil characters may actively engage in robbery, mugging and raids. Good characters pull their resources and work together with NEMA and small groups, sharing in whatever the community has to dole out. Many Chaos Wizards see themselves as “Robin Hood” types who steal from bad guys (bandits, etc.) and/or monsters to give to themselves and to share with others.

Cybernetics: None and avoids them because cybernetics interferes with magic.

Chaos Witch NPC Villain

The Chaos Witch can be male or female who derives their power from an outside, evil supernatural power. They have more control over their specific powers – “gifts” from an evil master and may even know spells that the other Chaos Earth Magic O.C.C.s do not know. However, since the source of their power is an evil and corrupting force so alien that it is beyond most humans’ power to imagine, these witches are agents of evil. Malignant creatures who are either self-serving or pawns in the willing service of supernatural evil.

Witches are often born from vengeance, forsaking their soul for power to extract revenge and inflict suffering. Witches tend to thrive on the fear and chaos, and enjoy enslaving, dominating and harming others. They are wicked creatures who forsake their humanity to become something to enjoy a brief moment of power and glory before the individual brings about its own violent end.

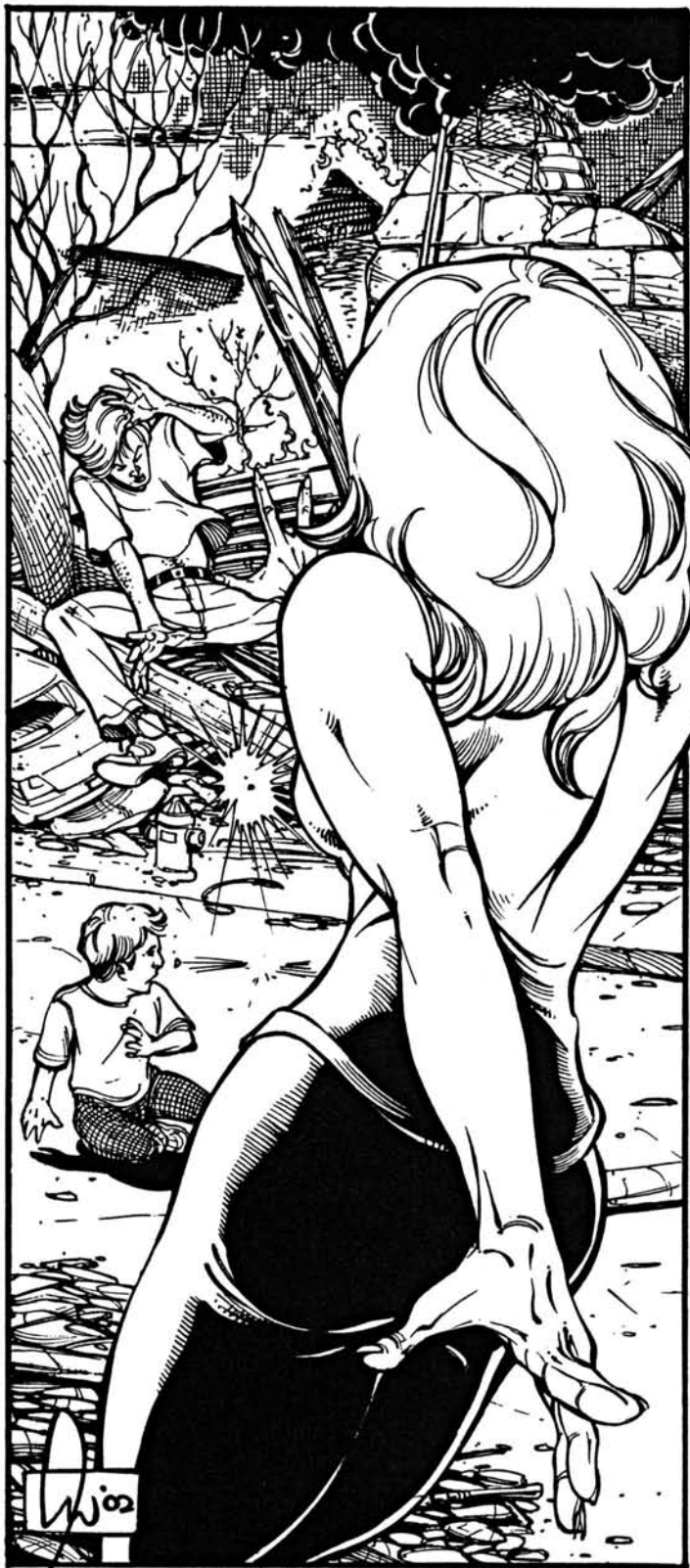
Witches are the least common of the Chaos Earth practitioners of magic, but among the most powerful, especially initially, and cruel.

Special Chaos Witch Abilities:

1. Becomes a Mega-Damage being as soon as the Witch cuts the deal with its evil supernatural master. Has 1D4x10 M.D.C. +36. Gets an extra 20 M.D.C. when on a Blue Line and recovers lost M.D.C. at a rate of 2D6+6 every hour.

2. Supernatural P.S. Add 1D6 to the Witch’s P.S. and make it supernatural.

3. Initial Spell Knowledge: Cloak of Darkness (6), Death Trance (1), Aura of Death (12), Escape (8), Fly (15), Tongues (12), and Metamorphosis: Animal (25) plus 1D4+4 spells of choice selected from Invocations Levels 1-7. (See the *Rifts*®



education and some high school. Older ones may have high school and some college education.

Select an additional 10 skills from any of the available categories listed below.

Communications: Any, except Scramblers and Laser.

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: None.

Espionage: Any (+5%).

Mechanical: Automotive (+5%), Basic Mechanics (+5%) and

Computer Repair, only.

Medical: First Aid (+5%) and Brewing (+10%) only.

Military: None.

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics.

Pilot: Automobile, Motorcycle, Sail Boats, and Motor Boats only.

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Any (+10%)

Science: Any.

Technical: Any (+5%).

W.P.: Any Ancient or Modern (may have a stolen energy weapon).

Wilderness: Any.

Secondary Skills: The character gets one secondary skill at levels one, four, eight, and twelve. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in parenthesis. All start at the base skill level and normal restrictions apply.

Standard Equipment: Most survivors of the initial cataclysm have only the clothes on their backs and a few items they salvage, scavenge or steal. Chaos Witch gear includes an air filter, 1D4+6 sets of clothing (many are fashion plates), a pair of gloves, a pair of shoes or boots, sunglasses, a winter coat, belt, backpack or satchel, large sack or purse, survival knife (does 1D6 S.D.C. damage) or pocket knife (1D4 S.D.C. damage), note book, 1D6 markers and one mechanical pencil, flashlight, disposable cigarette lighter, utility belt, canteen, one ancient weapon and one S.D.C. or energy firearm but only if a W.P. was selected for it.

Money: Has 1D6x1000 in credits (which may have no value) and 1D6x100 credits worth of tradeable goods. May or may not have a job that continues to pay any kind of salary or goods (like food, room and board) for trade of services. Chaos Witches are generally power-mad tyrants, carving out territory and abusing others. Their self-serving behavior is only interrupted by the demands of their evil benefactors.

Cybernetics: None and avoids them because cybernetics interferes with magic.

Other Magic O.C.C.s

There are few other Magic O.C.C.s on Chaos Earth including the *Technophite* and *Death Mage*, as well as a few *Psionic O.C.C.s*. However, I leave them for development at a later time. (Hey, I have to leave something for the finished role-playing game so there are at least a few surprises).

Next Issue

I think *Chaos Earth™ Part Four* will focus on some of NEMA's weapons, equipment, power armor and vehicles. Until then, keep those imaginations burning and have a pleasant summer.

— Kevin Siembieda, June, 2002

Explore the Palladium Megaverse®



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Beyond the Supernatural® 2nd Ed.

Palladium's popular supernatural, horror RPG is undergoing an overhaul and scheduled for release sometime Fall 2002.

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A complete new role-playing game — September 2002

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- Plenty of information about the enemy, how they operate, plan and initiate their strategies, their weapons, goals and objectives.
- Adventure hooks, ideas, world information and more.
- Future sourcebooks will focus on specific nations, agencies and Special Ops from around the world.
- Over 200 pages. Final price yet to be determined. Probably in the \$21.95 to \$24.95 price range.
- Scheduled for a *September, 2002* release (and right on schedule).

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- Over 200 pages. A complete stand alone role-playing game.
- Final price yet to be determined. Probably in the \$21.95 to \$24.95 price range. Written by Kevin Siembieda and Randy McCall. Lots of new artwork.
- *October, 2002*, release date.

Mechanoid Space™ RPG

Mechanoid Space™ is science fiction and space opera that spans the universe and pits the heroes against the insane Mechanoids (everyone's favorite villains).

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This new science fiction role-playing game has been carefully designed and developed by Kevin Siembieda over the last three years. He hopes to make it the ultimate space adventure and combat game. Us folks at Palladium think **Mechanoid Space™** is so fresh and compelling that it has the potential of being a *Rifts®*-scale mega-hit. Watch for it. *Tentative December 2002 release date.*

Coming soon for *Rifts®*:

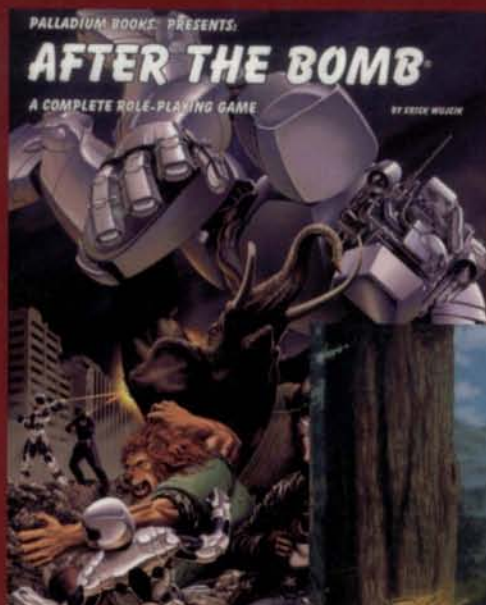
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