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A Rifts® Adventure

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How to be a Game Master (Rifts® Primer)

Splicers® – Adventure and Source Material

Rifts® Setting – A Town in Canada

Rifts® Savage Worlds® preview

Coming Attractions, News, & More

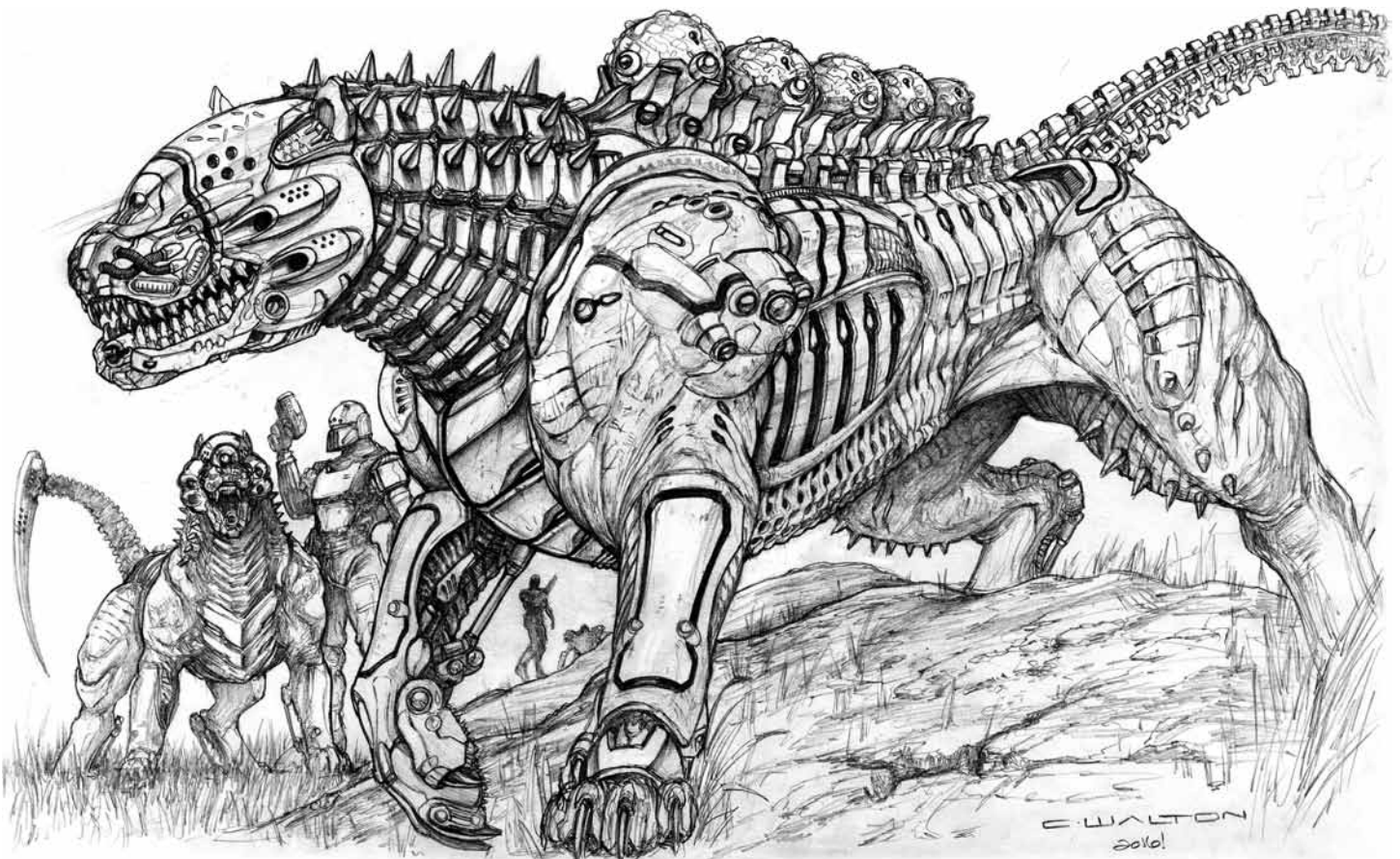
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The Rifter® Number 75

Your Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!

Dedication – In memory of Erick Wujcik, Kathryn Kozora, and the Detroit Gaming Center. Awesome people, wonderful memories. In a lot of ways, the DGC was the birthplace of Palladium Books. It was certainly the origin of Kevin Siembieda, Game Master and game designer.

– Kevin Siembieda, 2016

PDF Edition – January 2018

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Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER® #75

BRANDT - 97

Sourcebook and Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®

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Special Thanks to all our contributors, writers and artists this issue, especially new contributors, as well as to Sean, Shane, Ross, Aaron, Alida, Jodi and all the Pinnacle folks bringing Rifts® to life for Savage Worlds®. Our apologies to anybody who may have gotten accidentally left out or their name misspelled.

– Kevin Siembieda, 2016

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Page 6 – From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Publisher Kevin Siembieda talks about **Rifts® for Savage Worlds®**, how and why this license came about, and why we are excited to be expanding the **Rifts® Megaverse®** into a new rules set. He also talks about the fun time we had at *GrandCon* in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and the **Savage Rifts®** game we played in with main writer **Sean Patrick Fannon**.

Page 8 – Palladium News

There is some exciting news this issue, like a Hollywood producer inquiring about developing one of Palladium's intellectual properties into a movie or TV series. And this time the guy is a gamer who understands RPGs, so we are excited about the prospects. There is also some news about **Robotech®** and a pair of very cool **Rifts® Poker Decks** that you must own. And it's that time of year for the Palladium Surprise Package offer, so be excited about that too. With everything else going on, Kevin forgot to mention that a **Rifts® board game** is being developed by *Carmen Bellaire*, under license, for *Rogue Heroes LLC*. More on it next issue.

Page 9 – Coming Attractions

What's out – **Rifts® Heroes of Humanity™**, **Robotech® The Masters Saga™ Sourcebook** (8½ x 11 size) and **Rifts® Poker Decks** – and what's coming, like **Hell Followed for Dead Reign®**, **Rifts® CS Heroes of Humanity Arsenal**, **The Disavowed** and **Rifts® Secrets of the Atlanteans**, among other titles. Get all the details in the News and Coming Attractions section of this issue. The complete Palladium Check List can be found on pages 18 and 19.

Page 16 – Christmas Surprise Package™

– 'Tis the season to game, game, game

It is the deal of the holidays, especially if you are a gamer! And because this Summer issue is coming out so late (sorry), you are the first to know that we'll be extending the availability of the *2016 Christmas Surprise Package* till January 3, 2017. Order now and after the holidays. The Christmas Surprise Package with autographs and plenty of good cheer is our way of saying, "Thank you, we appreciate you, our loyal fans. Happy Holidays!"

Page 20 – Savaging Rifts®

– A Preview of Rifts® for Savage Worlds®

In case you haven't heard the news, Palladium has licensed **Rifts®** to be adapted to the **Savage Worlds** rules. We will continue to publish our own **Rifts®** games and books (and we have some big plans for 2017), but we thought it would be fun to expand the **Megaverse®** by adapting **Rifts®** for another popular game system. Read all about it and then see the sample pages. The actual **Savage World** books will be in printed in full color and arrive in stores sometime in the first quarter of 2017.

Page 32 – How to Play Rifts®, a Rifts® Primer

– Official source material for Rifts®; suitable for other settings

Carl Gleba and *Kevin Siembieda* join forces to create a tour de force of information about Game Mastering games and creating adventures. This article should help both G.M.s and players enjoy the storytelling experience of role-playing games, as well as helping them better understand the game rules. The second adventure, *Rescue the Rogue Scholar*, should help people in the creation of adventures and plot.

Page 34 – Getting Started, The Game Master

Page 34 – Setting the Scene (The Rusty Cup Pub)

Page 35 – G.M. also controls all of the NPCs

Page 35 – NPCs create atmosphere and further the story

Page 35 – More Game Master Tips and Tricks

Page 36 – (Siembieda) Know your NPCs

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Page 64 – Adventure Building: Rescue the Rogue Scholar

Page 66 – Keeping it All Organized

Opening Artwork by *Mark Dudley*. Character artwork by *Angela Deland-Baldwin*.

Page 67 – I am Legion, Episode Four

– Official adventure & source material for Splicers®

Chris Kluge, *Lance Colley* and *Charles Walton II*, team up to present the next chapter of *I am Legion*, an episodic adventure ushering in the new rogue **Nexus** personality, *Legion*. More ad-

venture, surprises and horror awaits. Special thanks to *Jeff Ruiz* and *Todd Spencley* for their assistance and input.

Page 67 – The Plot Revealed
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Page 88 – Tail Sickie Blade
Page 89 – Optional Features
Page 90 – Retcon Notes for Episode 3
Artwork by *Charles Walton II*.

Page 90 – A Haven in the Wilderness™ – Optional source material for Rifts®

Scott Fowler describes a burgeoning community in Western Canada, Sherwood Park. Another nice pit stop for adventurers.

Page 90 – Population Breakdown
Page 92 – Pierce Ian Atwood
Page 93 – Adventure Seeds
Page 96 – The Device
Art by *Madman Michael Leonard*.

The Theme for Issue 75

The theme of **The Rifter® #75** is adventure and the joy of role-playing. Game Masters, explore the possibilities and bring fun and adventure to your players. Um, players, watch out. Game on.

The Rifter® Needs You

We need new writers and artists to fill the next few decades of **The Rifter®**. You do not need to be a professional writer to contribute to **The Rifter®**. This publication is like a “fanzine,” written by fans for fans. A forum in which gamers just like *you* can submit articles, G.M. advice, player tips, house rules, adventures, new magic, new psionics, new super abilities, monsters, villains, high-tech weapons, vehicles, power armor, short works of fiction and more. So think about writing up something short (even something as small as 4-6 pages). Newcomers and regular contributors are always welcome.

The Rifter® needs new material, especially when it comes to adventures and source material, for *all* of our game lines, particularly *Rifts®*, *Chaos Earth®*, *Palladium Fantasy RPG®*, *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Ninjas and Superspies™*, *Beyond the Supernatural™*, *Dead Reign®*, *Splicers®* and *Nightbane®*.

Pay is lousy, fame is dubious, but you get to share your ideas and adventures with fellow gamers and get four free copies to show to your friends and family.

The Cover

The cover is by **Garrie Gastonny** and **Chris Bivins** and shows a group of Rifts® adventurers dealing with Coalition forces. This is artwork from **Rifts®** for **Savage Worlds**.

Optional and Unofficial Rules & Source Material

Most of the material for this issue is “official” source material. As for optional source material, settings and adventures, if they sound cool or fun, use them. If they sound funky, too high-powered or inappropriate for your game, modify them or ignore them completely. We hope all of it ignites your imagination and inspires you to create your own wonders.

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The Rifter® #76

- **Rifts® for Savage Worlds® Preview®**. Get another look at what’s coming in the New Year.
- **Rifts® Pecos Badlands Town – by Brett Caron**. Thinking about doing some adventuring in the Rifts American Southwest? Mosey on over to Gohjjunk.
- **Rifts®, Three Galaxies and Palladium Fantasy RPG® – Primordians**, by **Greg Diaczek** with additional text and ideas by **Kevin Siembieda** – “official” source material. New type of Elemental beings that can be used as player characters or NPCs. These strange beings are believed to be some kind of human-Elemental hybrid. Are they emissaries of Greater Elementals or Elemental Intelligences, a new menace or something else completely? Plus some new alien beasts used by Promordians.
- **Splicers® – I am Legion, Part Five**, by **Charles Walton II**, **Chris Kluge** and **Lance Colley** – “official” source material. The adventure continues and more secrets and dangers are revealed.
- **Heroes Unlimited™ source material**. The story behind the creatures on the cover.
- **Source material for other RPG settings (tentative)**.
- **News, coming attractions, product descriptions and more**.
- **Rifts® cover by Nicholas Bradshaw**.
- **96 pages – \$13.95 retail – Cat. No. 176. Fall issue.**

**One game system, infinite possibilities
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**Celebrating 35 years
of adventure in
the Megaverse®**

From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

The cover to this issue is an illustration from one of the **Rifts®** for **Savage Worlds®** game books coming early next year. There is also a preview section for the **Rifts®** **Savage Worlds** game in the pages inside this issue. In case you haven't heard, Palladium Books has licensed Pinnacle Entertainment the **Rifts®** I.P. (Intellectual Property) for adaptation to the **Savage Worlds** game rules. Pinnacle launched an extremely successful Kickstarter campaign this past Spring and expects to release the **Rifts®** for **Savage Worlds** game line to the public in January or February of 2017.

Why Pinnacle and Savage Worlds®? A big part of that answer is *Sean Patrick Fannon*. Sean is a huge fan of both **Rifts®** and **Savage Worlds**. He approached Pinnacle's owner, *Shane Hensley* with the idea, and when Shane gave Sean the green light to move forward, they approached me.

I have known Sean for something like 20 years. I respect him as a writer and like him as a person. I knew his passion for **Rifts®** and that he would do a great job as the main writer and architect on this project. I only knew Shane Hensley in passing and by reputation, but I liked what I heard. After a couple of conversations we were all on board with the idea.

Then the project just sat for a couple years. Nothing happened. I don't know why, exactly; I suspect some of it had to do with some health issues for Sean. It does not matter. I was approached again at the 2014 Gen Con to see if I was still interested, I said yes, we signed a licensing agreement a short time later, and wham ... **Rifts®** for **Savage Worlds®** is becoming a reality.

Sean's passion is obvious in his work for the **Rifts®** **Savage Worlds** products, and the rest of the team is also doing a fine job. The writing, the rules and the artwork are all very good stuff. I do not know the **Savage Worlds®** game system well, so I cannot personally speak to how well the S.W. rules fit with **Rifts®**, but from what I hear, it is solid. I have a friend, *Eric Champion*, who tells me it is an excellent adaptation and something that both **Rifts** fans and **Savage Worlds** fans should enjoy. He and his gaming group should know, because they adapted **Rifts®** to **Savage Worlds** rules years ago for their personal gaming enjoyment, and know both properties inside and out. Awesome.

I can tell you that Wayne, Chuck and I had a fun time playing in the demo game Sean ran for us at GrandCon in September.

GrandCon and Rifts® Savage Worlds®

Wayne Smith, *Charles Walton II* and I attended our first **GrandCon**, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The convention is all gaming, well organized, the show runners are nice folks, and we had a lot of fun. I don't know the official attendance numbers, but I would guess there were at least 1,000 gamers.

GrandCon seems fairly evenly divided between role-playing gamers and board gamers, maybe with an edge going toward RPGers. Cool. The gaming tables always seemed to be filled and people seemed friendly and welcoming.

The two Lord DeSilca games I ran were a blast for the players and me. Both groups played extremely well and worked as a team. Both did a few things I seldom or never experienced running this fan fave game event, and I have run this game at least

70 times over the last 30+ years. Which made them especially fun for me.

Chris, *Amber*, *Mitch*, *Jesse*, *Shara*, *Destiny*, *Kelly*, *Kenyon*, and *Mark H* were in the first game. *Shara* played a Dwarven warrior with the courage of *Hercules* and was a heroic fighting machine. *Destiny* played a cagey and brave Grryph the Wolfen, *Mark* a clever Mind Mage, and they and all of the rest played wonderfully. They recognized many traps and delaying tactics, snuck around traps, battled demons and kicked some butts. They stopped *Lord DeSilca* and saved the day in dramatic fashion.

The second group was smaller, but played just as tight. *Jodie*, *Chris* (a different person than the *Chris* in the first game), *Andy*, *Will*, *Nichol*, *Luke* and *Jake* all played their characters with cleverness and heroic flare. *Andy* played one of the best Sir Matthew the Palladin I have seen in a long time, heroic and kind; *Chris* played the mage, *Coltran* of *Wonders* to the hilt, and *Luke* played the wily *Zandrox Cobbler Goblin* with absolute perfection. This group did a number of unexpected things – one toward the end was a complete shock, not just to me, but to most of the other players in the group, and the other was an act of extreme heroics and desperation that was epic. By the way, both of those actions came from *Coltran* moments apart. This group stopped the wicked *Lord DeSilca* with literally two seconds left on the clock. Talk about pulse-pounding, nail biting drama! After playing wonderfully the entire game, I thought they would be the first group ever to fail to save the day. Time management is absolutely critical in this game, with the clock's countdown adding to the sense of urgency, suspense and drama. But they pulled it out in the last few seconds in incredibly dramatic fashion. Fantastic. **Note:** I continue to play the *Lord DeSilca* game at conventions, so I'm terribly sorry, but I cannot give you more details than the above. You'll have to game with me at a convention, maybe *GrandCon* next year, to see for yourself.

I also enjoyed myself on the three panel talks I participated on, got to know my other panelists, *Steven Schend* and *Marc Tassin* (I already knew *Sean Patrick Fannon*), and enjoyed a pleasant chat with *Timothy Zahn*, who has written several best selling and beloved **Star Wars** novels. Of course, one of the highlights of the convention for me was being able to hang out a lot with my friend, *Sean Patrick Fannon*, a luxury we seldom have. *Sean* lives a thousand miles away and at most conventions, like *Gen Con*, we are both busy doing other things. Not only was *Sean* on each panel, but we had dinner together with *Chuck* and *Wayne* on Friday night, saw each other throughout the convention, and I got to play in a **Rifts®** **Savage Worlds** demo game.

The Rifts® **Savage Worlds®** demo game was a night of fun gaming. *Sean Patrick Fannon* (G.M.) is an Erick Wujcik-style gaming maniac who games, games, and games till he drops. So Friday night, *Sean* invited *Wayne*, *Chuck* and me along with a couple other gents to play **Rifts®** for **Savage Worlds**. The game ran till 1:15 AM and was a lot of fun. *Wayne* played a rapidly burning out Juicer in *Last Call*, *Chuck* a *Combat Cyborg* with a dangerous past, *Jake* played a heroic *Cyber-Knight*, *Joe* a *Glitter Boy* (I believe this was his first time playing **Rifts®** or **Savage Worlds®**), and I played a cocky *Mind Melter*. Long story short, *Jake* and I came up with a plan that surprised our Game Mas-

ter, Sean, and it worked out really well... until my character was about to die.

Since my *Mind Melter* character was supposed to be cocky, I pressed him to the max. I came up with an excellent scheme to quickly take down half the enemy forces. It was a great plan — *if it had worked*.

Instead, my target for mind control saved. Twice. The Mind Melter was down to 2 I.S.P. and was about to be killed by my intended victim, a big brute of a monster. I'm sure my Cyber-Knight companion would have *tried* to intervene to save me, but the odds of succeeding were slim and none. Then my opponent's head exploded and he toppled to the ground. Wayne's Juicer saved the Mind Melter with a long-range attack and rolled a critical hit to the head. I'm saved in the nick of time, and in dramatic fashion. Thanks again, Wayne! Joe's Glitter Boy and Chuck's Combat Cyborg kicked butt, big time, and we enjoyed victory and a raucous good time. Btw, this is the adventure that comes in the **Rifts® Savage Worlds game**, and it plays out very nicely.

As a game designer and dedicated Game Master, I seldom game as a *player*. I am always the guy *running the games*. Honestly, I prefer being the G.M. as I tend to get bored as a player. And when I get bored, I become the player who thinks of things for his character to do that can shake the game up or take it in directions the G.M. wasn't expecting. Yeah, I'm that guy.

Anyway, Sean and I were heading up to our rooms in the elevator when it struck me: this was the first time I had ever been a *player* in a **Rifts®** game. Crazy, right? Sean freaked out and was thrilled to have had me as a player in the game world I had created, and to be the first G.M. to run a **Rifts®** game for me. There had been other offers at conventions and the **Palladium Open House** over the years, but I was always too tired to accept those kind invitations. So after 25 years of writing and running **Rifts®** games, this was my first time playing in **Rifts®**. I guess that was a milestone of sorts. It was a thrill for Sean.

Heck, in 30+ years, I think I have only been a player in **Palladium Fantasy®**, **Heroes Unlimited** and **Robotech® RPG**, maybe a half a dozen times each. (RRT is the exception, where I've mostly been a player.) Do not get me wrong, I'm not complaining at all. I LOVE being the G.M. It is one of my passions. Of course, I was hardly a first time player, and knowing **Rifts®** (and my other RPGs) inside and out, it is always difficult for me to keep my mouth shut, play in character and let the other players (and sometimes the G.M.) do their thing without offering suggestions or taking the lead. Whenever I play, I always try to put my character in the background and let the other players take lead. It is the only thing that seems fair to me.

Sales were solid at GrandCon, too. The **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** and **Rifts®** were the two top sellers, largely due to the gaming events, I suspect, but we sold a little bit of **Robotech®** and everything else. I'm thinking if we start attending GrandCon, and maybe U-Con, on a regular basis, they could take the place of the Palladium Open House. Time will tell.

The problem with conventions in September is that they compete for our time with other events and responsibilities, or are too close together. **GrandCon** is awesome and we want to go back next year. We have heard nothing but great things about **U-Con** and if I recall correctly, they invited me to be a guest this year, but I politely declined. But here's the thing, **GrandCon** and **U-Con** (in Ypsilanti, Michigan) are only a week apart, in the

mix is also the **Alliance Distributor Open House** which almost always falls on the same weekend as one of these two conventions, and I hate to not attend the Alliance show as they are our largest distributor. Plus my sweetheart, Kathy Simmons and I are Halloween maniacs and there is another event, the **Motor City Haunt Club Garage Sale** that we love to attend together. We seldom get to do things together that we both love, so this event is special for us and, you guessed it, ALWAYS conflicts with one of the events above.

On top of that, as Halloween fiends, every year Kathy and I put up a sprawling "haunt" with 120+ life-sized figures in various scenes and settings. It is truly impressive and fun, and attracts hundreds of people a day, more on weekends, so we always try to have most of the display up by the first weekend in October. That means setting it up in the last two weeks of September, so my time is very limited, especially with an already heavy work schedule. That's also why I never do conventions in October, I want to be home at night when we get visitors walking around our display, especially weekends where we can see as many as 1,000 people on a nice, rain-free weekend.

But I digress. GrandCon was fun. For several gamers we met, it was their first time at GrandCon and many of them came to see me and the Palladium crew in particular. Thank you, ladies and gents, you made our GrandCon that much more special. That is the cool thing about the smaller conventions that see 1,000-5,000 attendees, it is more intimate, making it more personal and fun.

Palladium to attend GrandCon in 2017?

I am fairly certain Palladium will be back at **GrandCon** in 2017 (waiting to see the dates for the 2017 convention). I would love to see many more Palladium gaming events and fans there. I know M.A. coordinator Patrick "Jake" Jakubowski plans to return in 2017 and run a few games along with me. We hope other *Megaversal Ambassadors* and Palladium G.M.s will join us. I hope to see a lot more Palladium fans there next year, too. Maybe we can make this a sort of fill-in for the Palladium Open House. We may try to exhibit at **U-Con** next year too.

Gaming Goodness coming for Fall 2016

We have several titles coming your way this Autumn: **The Rifter® #75**, **The Rifter® #76**, **Hell Followed**, a sourcebook for **Dead Reign®**, **Rifts® HoH CS Arsenal**, **The Disavowed Rifts® sourcebook**, and **Rifts® Secrets of the Atlanteans**, with more coming right behind them. ALL of these books are in active, final production. In fact, by the time you are reading this, **The Rifter® #76** and the **Hell Followed Dead Reign® sourcebook** should be heading to the printer, with Atlanteans close behind them.

All of this and our annual **Christmas Surprise Package** offer means this Fall and your Christmas should be full of Palladium gaming joy. And this is just the tip of the iceberg for what we have in store for you in 2017. Till next issue, keep those imaginations burning bright.

— Kevin Siembieda, Publisher and Fan Boy

Palladium News

By Kevin Siembieda, the guy who should know

Fall releases are coming

We cannot believe how fast this year has flown by, and continues to zoom by. Several books are about to head off to the printer and will be available soon.

Rifts® Poker Decks – two different decks – available now.

The Rifter® #75 is in your hands!

Hell Followed, a 160 sourcebook for **Dead Reign®**, will be available by the end of October, 2016.

The Rifter® #76 – November, 2016.

Rifts® Secrets of the Atlanteans should be available in November.

Rifts® CS Arsenal – November or December, 2016.

Rifts® The Disavowed – December, 2016.

Rifts® Sovietski – Early 2017.

And much, much more is coming.



Is it Christmas time already?

Um, well, sorta ... yes. This summer issue is so late, sorry, that it is coming out in October, and we usually announce the **Christmas Surprise Package** offer in October, so yes, you can already start ordering Palladium's hugely popular *Christmas Surprise Package*. This is a type of custom-pulled "Grab Bag," but designed to net you many of the books and products you really want, *plus autographs* from Palladium staff members and available freelancers. Each Surprise Package contains **\$90-\$100 worth of product** for only **\$52** plus shipping. If that sounds pretty cool, that's because it is, and no other company does anything quite like it.

If you have never purchased one for yourself or your friends, do yourself a favor and *try one*. You will not be sorry. But be warned, you may find yourself compelled to buy another and another.

When it comes to gift-giving, a single Surprise Package comes with so much that you will blow away the person you bought it for. If funds are limited and you need to be more frugal, you can probably get gifts for two or three friends, or one item for yourself and one or two for a friend or two. Giving that special someone one entire Surprise Package is almost certain to make a big impression. Palladium fans love the *Christmas Surprise Packages*. In addition to getting gifts at bargain prices complete with autographs, you can use the Grab Bags to fill holes in your collections, try new game settings, replace battle worn books and spread the Palladium love. **Warning:** Ordering two or more Surprise Packages WILL RESULT in some duplication.

See the complete description elsewhere in this issue.

Hollywood comes knocking again

We were approached by another Hollywood film studio in September expressing interest in developing two Palladium IPs (not **Rifts®** related) for film or television. We don't know where this may go yet, but we are pretty stoked about the possibilities. The cool thing is, the main guy looking at the possibility of developing these game worlds is a gamer himself. He has played our games in the past and was inspired by our games to tell stories in film and television. That's great, because he understands that RPGs present amazing world settings and world building opportunities in which the film company can create the narrative/story *it* wants to tell, with specific heroes they create.

We are just in the early discussion stages and even if a deal is cut, it does not mean a movie or TV show will ever become reality. Just look at the **Rifts® movie** deal, 14 years and nothing yet. Ah, but it seems like many of the great movies sit in development hell for 10-20 years before they explode onto the scene. Look at *Lord of the Rings*. We sure did not want to see it take that long for **Rifts®**, but we would rather wait a decade or two and see the movie done right than have done poorly. The **Rifts® movie** rights were acquired by *Walt Disney Pictures* in 2002 for development by *Jerry Bruckheimer Films*. Though there has been no movement on this front that we currently know about, we know JB still wants to make a movie and we have high hopes for this potential tent pole film franchise. I mean, heck, **Rifts®** has the potential to become the next *Star Wars* if you did it right, and JB films knows that.

I wish I could tell you EVERYTHING that is going on behind the scenes at Palladium Books. There is so much I would love to share with you. Things that would get you excited about current books, upcoming releases and the future in general. I can't because, **a)** our potential partners want everything hush, hush, and **b)** some of this might never come to fruition. For example, only one in 10,000 movie options ever actually get made into a movie.

I think I can tell you that we are talking with a few different Hollywood types about developing a handful of Palladium I.P.s (intellectual properties), meaning game worlds that might become films, television shows, videogames or comic books. These are I.P.s other than **Rifts®**, which is also exciting.

We are "shopping" a large number of Palladium I.P.s around and getting a considerable amount of interest. It is all very exciting, but may never become anything real. That is the weird thing about Hollywood and videogame companies – especially the big companies – they'll spend time and money on developing one or more projects to see if they can get them made, but after all that effort, money and time, maybe 1 in 10 ever see the light of day. Still, we would be crazy not to pursue the possibilities. I mean, wouldn't you love to see **Rifts®** or **Heroes Unlimited™**, or **Nightbane®** as a weekly TV show or movie, or videogame? We sure would. So we go down each road to see where it may carry us. It is a journey. Hopefully, one with a destination that is a great, new beginning.

I can tell you one of these projects has been boiling for a year and a half. The next step is a writer doing a treatment of the pilot episode and an outline for the rest of the series. That's probably another 4-6 months.

Rifts® Poker Decks are hot

Palladium debuted two different **Rifts® Poker Decks** at Gen Con and they have been selling like crazy ever since. Fans are loving these attractive playing cards, each with a unique image on the face of each card. See the complete description in the Coming Attractions portion of this issue for more details.

Robotech® RPG Tactics™ Update

Palladium Books is gearing up for the relaunch of **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** and the release of Wave 2 pieces in 2017. Getting a few quotes and focusing in on a number of areas for **Robotech® RPG Tactics™**. This ain't just talk.

There are already things happening. All the game cards are being posted as free downloads on DriveThruRPG at a rate of two every day, and paper game pieces are already waiting for your enjoyment. Basic rules and other info will follow. There is also a rough draft for the first **Robotech® RPG Tactics™ scenario book**, and a second one has been started. We are also speaking with folks about helping us get RRT organized play events together. We will be offering details and hard release dates for 2017 when we have them.

Robotech® TV show is the Top Rated Anime series on Crackle

Crackle is a rapidly growing, free, digital network that has been airing the original **Robotech®** episodes with tremendous fan response. The **Robotech® TV series** has consistently ranked as Crackle's *Number One Anime* and often in the overall Top Ten, giving a new generation a chance to discover **Robotech®**. I wanted to share this information with you so you can binge watch **Robotech®** from beginning to end or catch your favorite episodes anytime. You can find great inspiration for your **Robotech® games** watching old episodes.

Robotech®

The Masters Saga™ Sourcebook

People are loving the new, larger, **Robotech® The Masters Saga™ Sourcebook** in the 8½ x 11 format. It was one of our best selling items at Gen Con. It is amazing how much more powerful and dynamic this book looks with the artwork at the larger size. We were also able to include some art that did not see publication in the manga-sized edition, made corrections and added a few odds and ends. **The Masters Saga™ Sourcebook** is packed with all kinds of mecha, battroids, power armor, weapons and information about the *Army of the Southern Cross* and its 15 combat divisions. Available now. See the full description in the Coming Attractions section.

CoastCon in Biloxi, Mississippi – March 2017

I (Kevin Siembieda) will be attending **CoastCon** along with *Sean Patrick Fannon*, the core writer and architect of **Rifts® for Savage Worlds®**, in Mississippi in March, 2017. CoastCon, AdeptsCon, Gen Con and GrandCon are the only four conventions we plan to attend in 2017; that's how busy I expect to be banging out new gaming product. I hope to see many fans at CoastCon.

Coming Attractions

Palladium's 2016 Release Checklist

Available Now

- **Rifts® Poker Deck (color)**
- **Rifts® Poker Deck (color and b/w illustrations)**
- **Rifts® Heroes of Humanity™**
- **Robotech® The Masters Saga™** – New 8½ x 11 format, 160 pages.
- **Robotech®: Expeditionary Force Marines™**
- **Rifts® Chaos Earth® Resurrection™**
- **Rifts® Chaos Earth®: Rise of Magic™**
- **The Rifter® #71 & #72, Double Issue** – 224 pages.
- **The Rifter® #73, Official Source Material** – 96 pages.
- **The Rifter® #74 – Spring issue** – 96 pages.
- **The Rifter® #75 – Summer issue** – 96 pages.

Coming Fall 2016

- **Dead Reign® Sourcebook: Hell Followed™** by Taylor White – a large, juicy, 160 page sourcebook – October.
- **The Rifter® #76 – Fall issue** – 96 pages – November.
- **Rifts® Secrets of the Atlanteans™ Sourcebook** by Carl Gleba – November, 2016.
- **Rifts® Heroes of Humanity™ ARSENAL** – 96-128 pages – in final production right now. Ships November or December.
- **Rifts® The Disavowed™ Sourcebook** by Kevin Siembieda and Matthew Clements. Ships November or December.
- **Rifts® Sovietski™ World Book** by Brandon Aten – December (tentative)

Coming in 2017

- **Garden of the Gods™, a Palladium Fantasy RPG® Sourcebook** by Kevin Siembieda – Winter.
- **Rifts® Haunted Tech™ sourcebook** by Kevin Siembieda
- **Lopan™, a Palladium Fantasy RPG® Adventure Sourcebook** by Glen Evans, additional material by Kevin Siembieda.
- **Chaos Earth® First Responders**
- **Splicers® Sourcebooks**
- **Heroes Unlimited™ Sourcebooks**
- **Beyond the Supernatural™ Sourcebooks**
- **Robotech® RPG Sourcebooks**
- **Robotech® RPG Tactics™ Wave 2 expansions packs**
- **Robotech® RPG Tactics™ source material and events.**
- **Rifts® World Books and Sourcebooks, including Rifts® Antarctica, Rifts® New Navy, and others.**
- **And some surprises ...**

Palladium RPGs are available in many hobby and game stores around the world. We encourage people to support their local stores. Going to a store enables you to see the product before purchasing it, and many stores are happy to place special orders for you, provided you pay in advance, enabling you to avoid the cost of shipping and possible damage in the mail.

Ordering from Palladium Books: You can also order directly from Palladium Books, but you will pay extra for shipping. For customers with access to a computer, we highly recommend ordering online. This provides you with information about the most recent releases and Palladium's entire product catalog. It also provides you the most accurate shipping costs and more shipping options. You can also order by telephone; 734-721-2903 (order line only). For customers without such access, use the following "mail order" process.

1. Send the cost of the books or items being ordered.

2. **In the USA:** Add \$6 for orders totaling \$1-\$50 to cover shipping and handling. Add \$12 for orders totaling \$51-\$95. Add \$18 for orders totaling \$96-\$200. **Note:** For non-book products, including the **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** box game and expansion packs, add an extra \$6 per \$50 worth of product, on top of the shipping amounts listed above. This is because non-book products cannot ship via Media Mail, and must use a more expensive method of shipping. **Outside the USA:** Double the shipping amount for orders going to Canada, and *quadruple* it for overseas orders. Any and all additional costs incurred as a result of customs fees and taxes are the responsibility of the foreign customer, NOT Palladium Books.

3. Make checks or money orders payable to *Palladium Books*.

4. Please make sure to send us your complete and correct address, *including* apartment number. **Note:** These costs are for the least expensive and slowest method of shipping only. Allow 2-4 weeks for delivery. Order online or call the office for a superior but more costly shipping method.

New! Rifts® Poker Decks

For the first time ever, **Rifts®** is captured in a deck of standard playing cards. Each card has a powerful image. Gen Con gamers went wild over the two **Rifts® Poker Decks** and you will too. Both contain iconic **Rifts®** artwork and characters, and look gorgeous. The color and design of both poker decks makes the artwork pop and a joy to use. The two different **Rifts® Poker Decks** have been selling like crazy since their initial release in August. Have you gotten yours?

The **Rifts® Poker Decks** are gorgeous and practical. They can be used to play poker or any card game that uses a poker deck as well as an **Action Deck** for **Rifts® Savage Worlds**. They are sweet, visual collector's items that make great gifts, and are just plain cool. Get one of each for yourself and your friends. Both sets of **Rifts®** playing cards present iconic and dynamic, fan fave images from covers and illustrations in the **Rifts®** game series. If you want something that visually summarizes **Rifts®** with powerful images of iconic characters, mecha and monsters, then these playing cards are a must for you. Both decks are available from Palladium Books in attractive, full color, tuck boxes – right now.

- Premium card stock.
- Standard US Poker size deck of playing cards.
- Rifts® specific symbols for each suit.
- 52 full color playing cards, plus 2 Jokers.
- Customized, full color, Rifts® tuck box.
- \$11.99 retail per deck – available now.

Rifts® Poker Deck Number One (full color) – \$11.99 – Cat. No. 2575 – available now. Diamonds are magic. Clubs are D-Bees. Hearts are heroes. Spades are the Coalition States. **Each card is a unique, color image.** Artists include *John Zeleznik*,



Scott Johnson, Kevin Long, David Dorman, Charles Walton II, Mark Evans, and others. **The back of the cards is the artwork from the cover of Rifts® Ultimate Edition** depicting a Ley Line Walker with an Alien Intelligence emerging from the Rift opening behind him, energy swirling. Art by Scott Johnson.



Rifts® Poker Deck Two (line art illustrations) – \$11.99 – Cat. No. 2576 – available now! This second deck of playing cards captures **Rifts®** in a different light. Each card has a unique, iconic, black and white illustration set in a color border of rippling magic energy from the Rifts. Diamonds are monsters. Clubs are heroes. Hearts are robots and power armor. Spades are the Coalition Army. **Each card has a unique illustration of a famous Rifts® hero, monster, mech or agent of the Coalition.** Artists include *Kevin Long, Ramon K. Perez, Freddie Williams II, Michael Wilson, Jeffery Russell, Apollo Okamura, and others.* **The back of the cards is the artwork from the cover of Rifts® Psyscape™** depicting a beautiful female psychic warrior, triumphant over a robotic enemy. Art by John Zeleznik.

NEW! Hell Followed™

A Dead Reign® Zombie Apocalypse Sourcebook

At 160 pages, **Hell Followed™** is the largest **Dead Reign®** sourcebook yet. Artist Nick Bradshaw is already fast at work on the art. Cover by E.M. Gist is finished.

Can you survive the Zombie Apocalypse? Find out by playing the **Dead Reign® RPG**. This post-apocalypse setting is only



picking up steam and is much more than just about killing the walking dead. And future sourcebooks will delve deeper into the survivor camps, the new world order and human heroes and villains.

- 10 new types of zombies.
- New O.C.C.s and skills.
- Running zombie horde battle.
- Disasters and other dangers.
- The US government's response to the Zombie Apocalypse.
- Government enclaves and survivor camps.
- More world information, new dangers and new adventures.
- Cover by E.M. Gist. Interior art by Nick Bradshaw.
- Written by Taylor White. The biggest Dead Reign sourcebook yet.
- 160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 236. October 2016 release. In final production.

Robotech®: The Masters Saga™

New, large format 8½ x 11 sourcebook – 160 pages

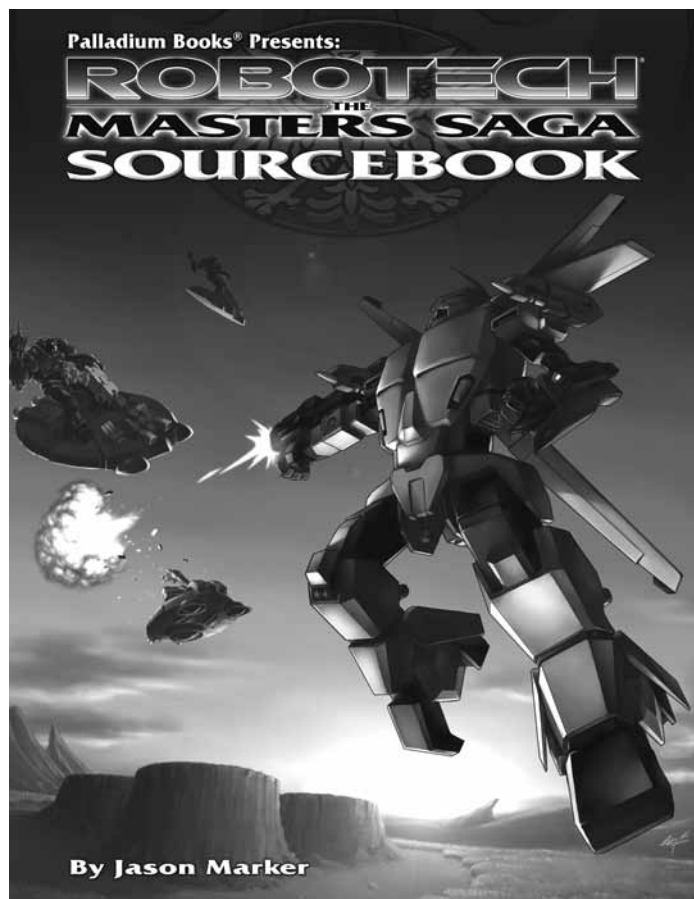
Robotech®: The Masters Saga™ is now available as a 160 page sourcebook in the large 8½ x 11 inch format.

Artwork is given the deluxe treatment – large, clear, and detailed to go along with a wealth of information about the **Second Robotech War**, the **Army of the Southern Cross**, its combat forces, mecha, weapons, and vehicles. With the same comprehensive treatment given to the invading **Robotech Masters**. Everything you could want to know about these combatants in the *Second Robotech War*.

The emphasis of this sourcebook is on the Second Robotech War and the wealth of weapons, vehicles and equipment on

both sides. Making the **Masters Saga** a big mecha and equipment book that you will want in your collection. Did you know the *Army of the Southern Cross* used powered armor and Battloids in addition to their famous mecha? You'll find out all about it in this comprehensive, 160 page sourcebook. Much of it described and stated out in an "official" capacity for the very first time in this sourcebook. **Note:** Only the size, size of artwork and layout has changed. The text and data are the same as the manga-sized edition, apart from some errata and minor additions.

- 40+ weapons; pistols, rifles, grenade launchers.
- 14 vehicles of the Army of the Southern Cross (ASC).
- ASC Tactical battle shields, jet packs and other gear.
- ASC Veritech Mecha like the Ajax, Logan, Spartas Hover Tank, Myrmidon Light Hover Tank and more.
- 6 ASC power armor suits.
- 4 ASC Battloids.
- The Golem Autonomous Patrol Robot.
- 15 O.C.C.s and MOS skill packages for the 8 main branches of the ASC and the 7 Special Forces Divisions operating under the Tactical Corps.
- The Robotech Masters and their legions.
- 6 different Bioroids, as well as the Bioroid Terminator, the Bioroid Invid Fighter, hover sled & more.
- Tirolians, spacecraft and other gear and info.
- Cover by Apollo Okamura. Interior art by the Mannings and others.
- Written by Jason Marker.
- 160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 552. Available now!





NEW! The Rifter® #76

– Ships November, 2016

The Rifter® #76 is in final production. Articles are being selected, artwork is being assigned and editing begun.

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

Rifter® #76 Highlights:

- **Rifts® for Savage Worlds® Preview®.** Get another look at what's coming this winter.
- **Rifts® Pecos Badlands Town – by Brett Caron.** Thinking about doing some adventuring in the Rifts American Southwest? Mosey on over to Gohjjunk.
- **Rifts®, Three Galaxies and Palladium Fantasy RPG® – Primordians, by Greg Diaczky with additional text and ideas by Kevin Siembieda – “official” source material.** New type of Elemental beings that can be used as player characters or NPCs. These strange beings are believed to be some kind of human-Elemental hybrid. They possess curious minds and seem to be exploring the Megaverse® for reasons

unknown. Are they emissaries of Greater Elementals or Elemental Intelligences, or something else completely? Do they come in peace, or are they a new potential menace? Get your first glimpse of them in **The Rifter® #76**. Plus there are some new alien beasts used by Promordians.

- **Splicers® – I am Legion, Part Five, by Charles Walton II, Chris Kluge and Lance Colley – “official” source material.** The adventure continues and more secrets and dangers are revealed.
- **Heroes Unlimited™ source material.**
- **Other – source material for other RPG settings.**
- **News, coming attractions, product descriptions and more.**
- **Rifts® cover by Nicholas Bradshaw.**
- **96 pages – \$13.95 retail – Cat. No. 176. In final production. Ships around November 21, 2016.**

NEW! Rifts® Secrets of the Atlanteans

True Atlanteans are descendants from Earth's past. The survivors of the sinking of Atlantis (really a dimensional mishap) and travelers of the Megaverse, wielders of Tattoo Magic and other lost mystic arts. Most people regard them as heroes, but are they? The Sunaj Assassins are mythic villains feared by all, yet they too are True Atlanteans who serve dark forces.

For the first time, much of the story behind True Atlanteans and their secrets are revealed.

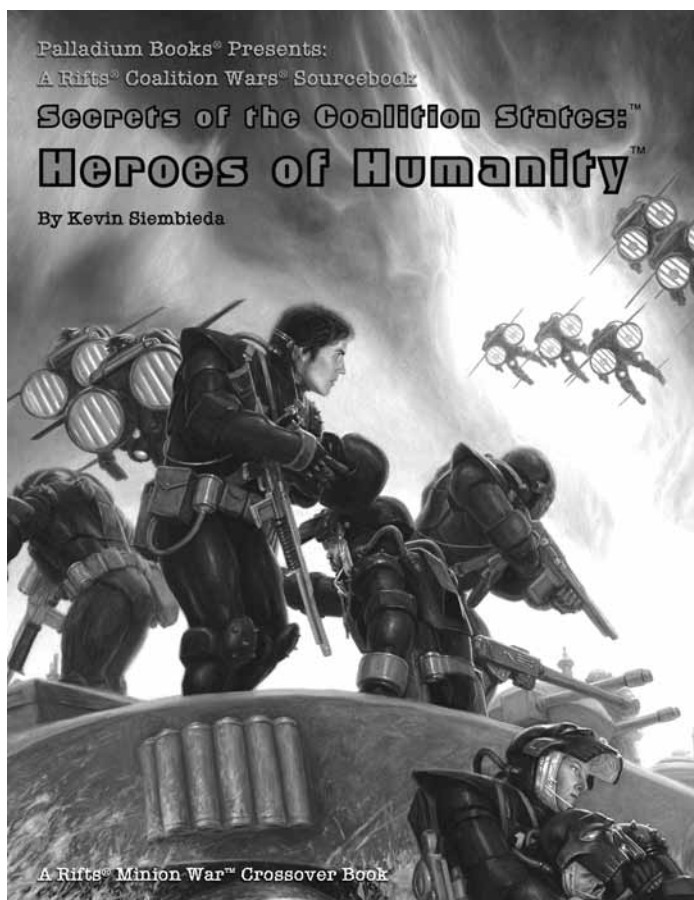
- **True Atlanteans revisited.**
- **Optional Atlantean character creation tables including clan heritage and other factors.**
- **Secrets of the stone pyramids, different types/purposes and powers.**
- **Many new magic tattoos, magic spells, weapons and armor.**
- **Atlantean hideouts and secret communities across the Megaverse.**
- **The Sunaj Assassins, their secrets, history and plans for the future.**
- **Atlantean Monster Hunter O.C.C., Atlantean Defender O.C.C. and much more.**
- **Cover by John Zeleznik. Interior art by Walton and others.**
- **Written by Carl Gleba. Additional material by Kevin Siembieda.**
- **Final page count and price yet to be determined, but probably 192 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 890. November or December.**

New! Rifts® Heroes of Humanity™

Secrets of the Coalition States™ – Available now

Rifts® CS Heroes of Humanity™ changes the landscape of Rifts North America and beyond, as well as presents ways to upgrade and improve existing Men-At-Arms characters with Advanced Training and includes new character classes, weapons, equipment, alliances and conflict to inspire epic new adventures.

Rifts® Heroes of Humanity™ is the battle for the soul of humanity. The Minion War™ has spilled onto Rifts Earth. At the epicenter of the invasion is *North America*. If either of the two rival demonic forces succeeds in conquering the continent, the rest of the world shall follow and Earth will be annexed to Hell. The demon hordes believe no one can stop them. The Coalition States has something to say about that.



For the first time in history, the Coalition States, Northern Gun, the Manistique Imperium, Lazlo, New Lazlo, Free Quebec, the Cyber-Knights, Lemurians, True Atlanteans, D-Bees, mages, mercs and many, many others stand together against a common enemy. Meanwhile, *the Splugorth of Atlantis*, *Archie Three*, *the Republicans* and *the Vanguard* engage in their own shadow war against the invading demon hordes, and each other.

- ***Heroes of Humanity*™ lets unprecedented types of characters gather in mixed groups that would otherwise be ideologically opposed. Together they fight side-by-side for the greater good.**
- New ways to upgrade your existing Men-at-Arms characters.
- Coalition Demon Hunter school and advanced training programs.
- New Coalition O.C.C.s like the Death Knight and Skelebot Specialist.
- Coalition military O.C.C.s expanded such as the CS Juicers, CS Combat Cyborgs, Psycho-Stalkers, Coalition psychics and more.
- New CS gear such as the Hellbuster and Falcon Death Wing.
- CS battle plans, world information and many adventure ideas.
- The strategies and tactics of the demons against humanity.
- The strategies and tactics of the Coalition States and its allies.
- Summary of Demon and Deevil vulnerabilities.
- One Xiticix battle plan and who really pays the price.
- Plenty of guidelines, tables and rules to help you run it all.
- Art by Charles “Chuck” Walton II, Nick Bradshaw, Mark Dudley, Allen Manning, Brian Manning, Mike Mumah, Siembieda and others.

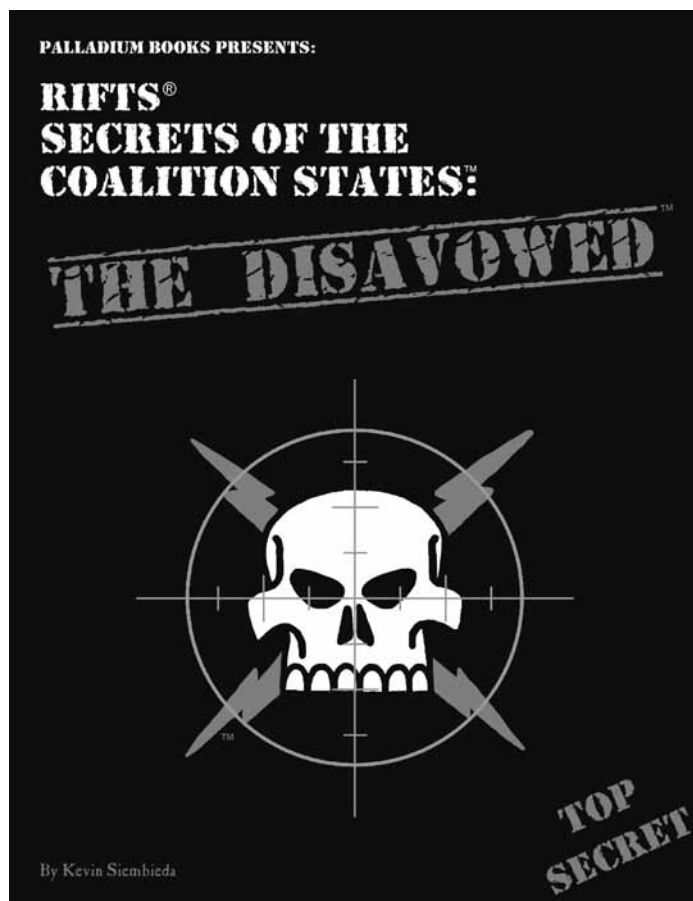
- Written by Kevin Siembieda, Gleba, Clements and others.
- 160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 889. Available now!

New! **Heroes of Humanity™ Arsenal**

Rifts® **Secrets of the Coalition States™ Sourcebook**

Rifts® Heroes of Humanity gave you updated Coalition Army O.C.C.s, ways to upgrade men-at-arms, new O.C.C.s, battle plans and strategies and tactics. **CS Heroes of Humanity™ Arsenal** provides an array of new Coalition hardware: weapons, armor, additional SAMAS, other power armor, robots, combat vehicles, gear and info.

- **New CS weapons and gear.**
- **New CS SAMAS and power armor.**
- **New CS robots and combat vehicles.**
- **More secrets and information about the Coalition States.**
- **Wild adventure opportunities, fun and more.**
- **Part of the *Minion War*™ “Crossover” series.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda, Clements, Gleba and others.**
- **96 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 893. November or December.**



New! **Rifts® The Disavowed**

Secrets of the Coalition States™

“Desperate times require desperate measures. War has nothing to do with morality or justice. It’s all about winning or dying. We cannot bind our hands with high ideals, even our own, or worry about the laws of renegade nations or the rights of alien people. We must fight fire with fire. And you are the match.” – *Colonel Lyboc addressing a Disavowed team*

The Disavowed are so Top Secret that their existence is known only to a handful of the Coalition States' most elite, top echelon, with *Joseph Prosek II* the mastermind behind the Disavowed operation, and Colonel Lyboc its shadowy face. Find out who these men and women are. How the Disavowed get away with using magic, traveling to other parts of Rifts Earth and even to other dimensions in pursuit of enemies and strategic information that cannot be had through conventional means. Learn about the secret parameters in which these hard-boiled warriors, secretly hand-picked by Joseph Prosek II, operate, why almost every mission is considered a suicide mission, and why they must forever be the Disavowed.

- CS operatives so secret that even the top military and political leaders right up to Emperor Prosek *know nothing about them*. And if they did know, would they condone their activity or condemn it?
- Are the Disavowed heroes or renegades? Assassins or soldiers? Madmen or super-patriots? Or a little of them all?
- Unsung heroes who keep the CS safe, or thugs and pawns of a shadow agency within the Coalition government?
- What role does the Vanguard play in this group?
- How do they reward their D-Bee "teammates" when the mission is over?
- What happens to the Disavowed when they have seen or learned too much? Adventure ideas galore and so much more.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and Matthew Clements.
- 96 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 892. Ships November or December.

New! Rifts® Sovietski™

– Coming this Winter

The **Rifts® Sovietski™ World Book** presents background information on the fledgling Sovietski nation, notable cities and people, politics, and its growing army, plus Deadzones, Spetsnaz Special Forces, new bionics, Russian D-Bees, and more.

- New Cyborgs and other O.C.C.s.
- The Sovietski nation and its army.
- Weapons, new bionics, combat vehicles, and gear.
- Bunker creation tables and Deadzone tables.
- Russian D-Bees, adventure ideas and more.
- By Brandon Aten and Matthew Orr.
- 192 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 891. Winter 2017.

Robotech® RPG Tactics™

Wave Two is coming ... but you can get started with the *core box set* and *Wave One expansions* – available now

If you love Robotech®, you want to take a look at this game. Beautifully detailed game pieces of your favorite Robotech® mecha, and fast playing rules that capture the Robotech® experience in a new, exciting way. And this is just the beginning. We have so much more planned in the years ahead.

- **Robotech® RPG Tactics™ Box Set (Main Box Game)** – Cat. No. 55100 – \$99.95 retail price. This is the game Robotech® fans have wanted for decades. **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** is a fast-paced, tabletop combat game that captures the action and adventure of the **Robotech®** anime. Two or more players can engage in small squad skirmishes or scale

up to massive battles. Relive the clashes of the First Robotech War, engage in stand-alone tactical games, or use the dynamic game pieces to enhance your Robotech® RPG experience. Or simply collect your favorite mecha from an expanding range of top-notch game pieces. Get yours now, so you can build your armies and have them ready when Wave Two is released.

The First Six Robotech® RPG Tactics™ Expansion Packs are available to retail along with the main box game. Here are the SKUs and retail prices.

- **UEDF Valkyrie Wing** – Cat. No. 55201 – \$36.95 retail.
- **UEDF Tomahawk/Defender Destroyers** – Cat. No. 55202 – \$32.95 retail.
- **UEDF Spartan/Phalanx Destroyers** – Cat. No. 55203 – \$32.95 retail.
- **Zentraedi Regult Battlepods** – Cat. No. 55401 – \$36.95 retail.
- **Zentraedi Artillery Battlepods** – Cat. No. 55402 – \$36.95 retail.
- **Zentraedi Glaug Command** – Cat. No. 55403 – \$36.95 retail.
- **Robotech® RPG Tactics™ Rulebook** – Cat. No. 55105 – \$20.00 retail. Note: This is the same rulebook that is included in the main game box, and is offered separately for those who want an extra copy, or want to check out the rules before buying the whole game.





BACK in STOCK:

After the Bomb® RPG

– Stand-alone game and suitable for **Heroes Unlimited™** RPG

Ever wonder what it would be like to play an intelligent, humanoid eagle? What about a sword-wielding turtle or ninja rodent, or heroic wolfman, or a flying pig? In **After the Bomb®** you can turn a mouse into the size of a gorilla, or keep him small and sneaky, but with special animal powers, psychic abilities and human speech and intelligence. Or create that winged humanoid eagle who preys upon criminals. Or maybe a giant hamster, let alone a mutant lion or tiger, that is an animalistic brute who hunts other mutants (humans and animals!) and feasts upon them like a monstrous predator. The choices are yours.

After the Bomb® lets you mutate any animal you can think of, into a heroic crime-fighter set in our modern world or a mutant animal survivor of post-apocalyptic Earth — think *Planet of the Apes* on steroids. An environment where humans struggle to survive in a devastated (nuked?) world, and intelligent mutant animals appear to be the inheritors of the planet. Fun. Wild. Imaginative stories await.

The After the Bomb® RPG and its future world setting is one of the late, great, Erick Wujcik's most fun and lasting creations. Play it as a stand-alone game or use **AtB** as a resource to create mutant animals that can be dropped into your **Heroes Unlimited™** game, **Aliens Unlimited™**, **Rifts®**, **Phase World®**, **Robotech®** or just about any game setting. Play them as mutant animals or aliens from another world, heroes or villains, victim and fugitives, but get **After the Bomb®** because its mutant creations can fit many roles and are a blast to play in any setting.

- 100+ intelligent mutant animals already described, statted and ready for you to play.
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Savaging Rifts® – One Megatrip of an Adventure

The long, strange, wonderful trip that brought Palladium's Rifts® and the Megaverse® to the *Savage Worlds* game system.

By Sean Patrick Fannon, Brand Manager & Lead Writer/Designer of Rifts® for *Savage Worlds*

The Opportunity of a Lifetime

I've long thought the Rifts® setting and material deserves to get in front of many more gamers. It's always been one of the most compelling universes in the hobby — an excellent combination of anything-goes multi-genre mash-ups and a deeply rich, detailed history with iconographic characters, factions, and other elements. I'm not the first to think such things, nor the first to put forward the idea.

I am extremely grateful to be the guy who Kevin trusted to take a crack at it, however.

I do not doubt for one second that Kevin's respect for and trust in Shane Hensley and the Pinnacle team went a long way towards making this happen, as well. After Kevin gave me the initial nod (on that fateful road trip to Michigan a few years ago), there was a lot of back-and-forth with Pinnacle. Timing was utterly vital to the success of the project. It had to be worked through from all angles, and planning the Kickstarter and the release needed coordination at the highest level.

Then there was the design work itself, which I've said many times is the most challenging of my entire career. *Savage Worlds* is a multi-genre game engine, to be sure, but there are so many different ways to express things between it and the *Palladium System*. Finding the right way to express the expected ideas and powerful capabilities of Rifts® characters, monsters, vehicles, etc. in *Savage* terms was a long labor of love, with many great minds involved in the thinking, play-testing, and design process. Among them, my partner at Evil Beagle, **Ross Watson**; the legendary **John Wick**; **Clint Black**, the *Savage Worlds* Brand Manager; and, of course, **Shane Hensley** himself (original designer of *Savage Worlds* and head-honcho of Pinnacle).

It's sometimes a bit odd for me to look back and realize how long it took from pitch to execution for this project. Then again, this was never something to be rushed; everyone involved knew we had to knock this out of the park our first time up at bat.

On the one hand, we had the existing *Savage Worlds* players to consider. They tend to grab anything the system touches, and they'd be the ones to judge whether or not this was a properly *Savage* game, despite all the ways we cranked it to 11 (and then ripped the knob off). On the other, we had the Rifts® fans who had a great stake in what we did (or failed to do). For them, a beloved setting was getting a new presentation, and if we didn't show it the right love and respect, the letdown promised to be of epic proportions.

Another segment of the gaming population we had in mind were all the folks who played Rifts® years ago, and for one reason or another had stepped away from the game. *Savage Rifts®* had the chance to bring them all back into the Megaverse®, but only if we did our jobs correctly and delivered the best game design and presentation possible.

No pressure, right?

The Future of a Savage Megaverse®

This trip is only just begun. As of this writing, we're just about wrapped up with all we promised for the Kickstarter. I've still got ten One Sheet Adventures to write, which will empower Game Masters to quickly lay down the groundwork for their Tomorrow Legion heroes to go from Novice to Legendary.

Of course, I know the *big* thing that many GMs and players are waiting for is the *Savaging Your Favorite Rifts Ideas* document. That may well be *the* most challenging thing I write for this project, as it's meant to open the window on how I and the rest of the *Savage* team see translating iconic material from Rifts® into *Savage Worlds* terms. It's not about conversion, mind you; the language of the *Palladium System* is rich and detailed in a particular way, as is that of *Savage Worlds*. Math alone won't get the job done, because the expressions are so very different. The game play of each system represents a completely distinctive experience. To remain true to the *Savage* experience requires translation, rather than conversion.

Consider a poem originally crafted in Russian. It will not resonate in the same way if forcefully and literally converted into Spanish or English — for example, if you cut-paste it into Google Translate. So much of the rhythm and other important elements of language will be completely lost. For the best result, a poet who fully grasps both Russian and the intended destination language is required.

Once those things are done, rest assured there's a greater line of books planned. We've already begun outlining the next round of projects. More focus is planned on North America to start, as we just scratched the surface with the initial releases. There's a lot more to be said (and created) where the Coalition, Federation of Magic, and other key players on the continent are concerned. After that, we'll start touring the rest of Rifts® Earth, mining the many decades of Palladium Books releases for the gems we know will best serve the gaming audience.

For Your Viewing Pleasure

For those of you encountering the *Savage Rifts®* phenomenon for the first time, via this issue of the Rifter®, we've included a lot of goodies for you to examine. You'll get a sense of what we've crafted, and perhaps you'll be encouraged to delve deeper into the *Savage* version of your favorite game setting. While we've remained lovingly true to the heart and soul of Rifts®, we've also taken the opportunity (with Kevin's blessings) to express the Megaverse® in some new ways, and to add some new things to the mix.

At the end of the day, I sincerely hope you'll enjoy the *Savage Rifts* material. At the same time, if you are having the time of your life playing it *Palladium*-style, rock on! There's no right or wrong way to have fun in this mighty, epic setting. The only wrong move here is to not play, because we all know how much you'd be missing out then, right?

—SPF

RIFTS®



The following Design Diary by Sean Patrick Fannon reflects some details from the upcoming *Savage Rifts*®. It isn't final and some details may change before the book is finally sent to print.

MAKING RIFTS® SAVAGE—THE TOMORROW LEGION AND THE TIMELINE

Here's one more Design Diary about the *Savage Rifts*® project for you as we head into the last week or so of the Kickstarter. The first two covered a lot about game mechanics and the decisions behind them. This one focuses more on larger content issues we considered, and the choices we made that would guide how we presented this iteration of the Rifts® setting.



THE TOMORROW LEGION

There's a *lot* going on in the world of Rifts®. There are many factions, all vying for control of territory, resources, populations, magic, and technology. There are many horrors—man-made, otherworldly, and supernatural—threatening everything from small communities to existence itself. Caught in the middle, people from all over the Megaverse®, human and otherwise, struggle just to survive and make lives for themselves. The world of Rifts® is a very dangerous one, to say the least, and sometimes all that stands between destruction and another day is a band of armed and dangerous folks willing to take on whatever may come.

Interestingly, this premise can be found across many *Savage Worlds* settings. The world at large may or may not be aware of the terrible dangers that threaten lives and create chaos, but there are always groups of hardy, talented, and heroic individuals ready to step up with knowledge, special abilities, and guts to face off against danger and push back the darkness. In *Deadlands*, it's the Texas Rangers and the Pinkerton Agency (and the mysterious Twilight Legion), who gather together those who understand the true horrors of the Weird West and do all they can to fight the machinations of the Reckoners. In *Weird War I* (and the rest of the *Weird War* series), the Twilight Legion remains a key part of the background story,

though there are also the secret agencies of each nation doing more “boots on the ground” efforts against the supernatural horrors of war. The *Rippers* of the setting of the same name fight monsters and madmen for an unknowing world.

Each of these in-game organizations fulfills the role of an “adventuring paradigm” (as Ross Watson describes it); a faction and structure that provides a gaming group an easy mechanism to gather together a group of disparate, interesting characters into a team and give them a purpose to explore the world and fight the threats no one else can face. Early in the planning process, we decided our take on *Rifts*® should follow suit, and after consulting with Kevin Siembieda about adding a new faction to the setting for this purpose (and with his enthusiastic approval), we decided on the name of the Tomorrow Legion.

At once a nod to the Twilight Legion of many other *Savage Worlds* settings and a means of examining the efforts of folks like Erin Tarn and Lord Coake in the canon of *Rifts*®, the Tomorrow Legion represents

a renewed effort to build a better world. Instead of trying to recreate the world of the past, however, the leaders of the Legion now want to take the world they have—with all its glory and horror—and build a better civilization than the one envisioned by factions like the Coalition and the Federation of Magic. More importantly, at least for the Game Master and the players, is the function of exploring the wilderness, finding communities who share their ideals, and protecting innocents from the vast array of dangers that threaten them from all sides.

Yes, this gives a decidedly heroic spin on the whole thing. Instead of mercenaries, wanderers, or bandits, members of the Tomorrow Legion are funded and given a purpose, which is generally to put themselves in the direct line of fire against the endless dangers of *Rifts* Earth. This is very much in line with what most other *Savage Worlds* settings do, and we felt maintaining that consistency not only supported the overall experience of *Savage* fans but added something new and useful to the *Rifts*® setting.



Note, however, that it's entirely possible to ignore the Tomorrow Legion. You can still make whatever kinds of characters you wish and go on the kinds of adventures you want. The Game Master is in no way restricted by the existence of the Legion; she can set her campaign anywhere in the world, with whatever premise she chooses, and there's plenty of material right out the gate to support that approach. Most of the adventures, while written with the idea that the group is part of the Tomorrow Legion, will work fine for any other kind of group the players want to form.

109 PA—AFTER THE FALL

The *Siege on Tolkeen* series—six books long, not counting the prequel *Coalition War Campaign* and the sequel *Aftermath*—is one of the most important sets of books and events in the entire Rifts® line. In it, the events surrounding the Coalition's decision to pursue all-out war are explained, and the events of the war and the fallout of the defeat of the magical kingdom are covered in great detail. Also covered is the brief war with Free Quebec and the subsequent peace accords between them and Chi-Town.

(*Rifts® Aftermath* is an excellent source for anyone wanting a complete picture of the world of Rifts® in the era that our products exist within. Find it at www.palladiumbooks.com.)

When we started talking about this project, one of the many conversations Ross and I had was about when we should set things. One option was to “go back to the beginning” and start exactly where the original Rifts® RPG book started—101 PA. While it was an interesting thought, we felt fans would really appreciate playing with a lot more of the stuff that came out long after that first release.

At the same time, we didn't think we would be best off trying to start exactly where the current Rifts® timeline is. The *Minion War* and *Megaverse® in Flames* story seriously upturns the status quo of Rifts® continuity.

While this is incredibly exciting, and would be a lot of fun to write new material around, we determined that it might be better to have both new and returning players to the setting begin their adventures with more familiar and established canon. In 109 PA, the Coalition States are primarily an antagonist force, especially where D-Bees, magic wielders, and proponents of education are concerned. The True Federation of Magic is a serious threat to anyone who doesn't want to submit to Dunscon's evil rule. All of the other famous factions—the Black Market, the Pecos Empire, the Apocalyptic Cavalry, the Vampire Kingdoms, Atlantis, and more—are still pretty much as they were, if a bit more involved in maneuvering for advantage in the wake of Tolkeen's fall.

The aftermath of the magic kingdom's destruction also provides a powerful backdrop for constructing an organization like the Tomorrow Legion and a place like Castle Refuge. Additionally, the war and its aftermath is a fantastic hook for many potential player character backgrounds, which was the final element that cemented our choice. Those who fought in the war, or merely survived it, will have meaningful stories to tell from that point forward. A war like that is exactly the kind of thing to motivate heroes to try and make a better world.

Thus, 109 PA, in the wake of the fall of the magic kingdom of Tolkeen, is where we set the current material coming out for *Savage Rifts®*. In time, we may choose to set future products a bit further ahead in the timeline, but we think there's still a great many adventures to experience and tales to tell in the time frame we've chosen.

As of this writing, we've broken the \$300,000 mark on the Kickstarter, which is truly breathtaking and humbling. All of us at Pinnacle, Palladium, and Evil Beagle are very grateful to the incredible community supporting this project, and we really look forward to exploring the world of Rifts Earth with you for some time to come.

Sean Patrick Fannon
May 2016

GLITTER BOY

NOBLE

The Glitter Boy stood there, its gun pointed right at Noble and his pack. The rest of the Coalition troops had abandoned them, demanding the Dog Boys hold off the enemy and cover their escape. Even Ulik, the Psi-Stalker who'd been their pack leader for almost two years, ran away and left the Dog Boys to just die. Noble stood there, waiting for the deafening roar of the gun that would shred them all to bloody chunks. Instead, the Cyber-Knight who'd also fought with those people stepped around the shimmering battle suit and addressed the pack. He explained that the Glitter Boy pilot (Garner was his name) couldn't bring himself to fire, and wanted to give the mutant animals a chance at another life. That was almost a year ago, and after extensive training, Noble is ready to repay the mercy and kindness of the Tomorrow Legion in a Glitter Boy of his own.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d8, Repair d6, Shooting d10, Stealth d4, Survival d4, Tracking d6

Cha: -2; **Pace:** 10; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 30 (24)

Hindrances: Enemy (Major — Ulik), Hard of Hearing, Heroic, Outsider, Wanted (Minor — Coalition)

Edges: Breed Advantage (Strong Breed), Danger Sense, Marksman, Power Armor Jock

Gear: Glitter Boy Armor (+18 M.D.C. Armor), Boom Gun (Range 250/500/1000, Damage 4d12+6, RoF 1, AP 25, Mega Damage, MBT), NG-LG6 Laser Rifle (Range 25/50/100, RoF 1, Damage 3d6+2, AP 2), NG-LG6 Integrated Grenade Launcher (Range 18/36/72, High Explosive Grenades Damage 3d8, RoF 1, Mega Damage, MBT), Wilk's 227 Pulse Laser Pistol (Range 18/36/72, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 2, AP 2), 2 extra clips/belts each firearm, "Dog Pack" Light Riot Armor (+5 Armor), NG-S2 Survival Pack, Tool Kit, 1300 credits.

Cybernetics: Cyber-Wired Reflexes.

Special Abilities:

- **Big and Shiny:** Glitter Boys are immediately recognizable and often a priority target for heavy weaponry. They suffer -8 to Stealth rolls due to their glittering armored coating. At 10 feet tall and Size 3, Glitter Boys are big targets and man-sized opponents gain +2 to hit them.



- **Digging In:** Activating/deactivating the stabilization system is an action. Firing the Boom Gun without these measures knocks the Glitter Boy 2d6" back and prone, leaving the pilot Shaken. Once dug in, the Glitter Boy cannot move and can only fire to the front and sides (180 degrees). Digging in makes the Glitter Boy an easier target, attackers gain a +2 to attack rolls against the suit while dug in.
- **Glitter Boy Armor:** Size 3, +18 M.D.C. Armor, Pace 10 (Run d10), Swim 6; half damage from lasers, life support (self-contained breathing; immune to heat, cold, radiation, environmental toxins, and disease), full electronics suite (+2 Notice, night vision and thermal vision).
- **Glitter Boy Strength:** When in the suit, Noble has a Strength of d12+4.
- **Hand-to-Hand:** The Glitter Boy's powerful fists and feet do Str+d6, Mega Damage.
- **Hero's Journey:** A number of bonuses, already figured in, come from Noble's Hero's Journey rolls.
- **Heroic Legacy:** A Glitter Boy pilot gets +2 Charisma. If a Glitter Boy is stolen, word passes quickly and the thief is targeted by Glitter Boy pilots across North America.
- **Keen Sense of Smell:** Dog Boys have a great sense of smell, similar to their canine counterparts. They gain a +2 bonus on all Notice checks where smell could come into play, as well as +2 on all Tracking rolls.
- **Laser Resistance:** Glitter Boys take only half-damage from lasers.
- **Life Support:** In addition to self-contained breathing, the suit makes Noble immune to extreme temperatures, radiation, poisons, and diseases. He is able to survive in the suit continuously for four weeks.
- **Natural Weapons:** Dog Boys can bite for Str+d6 damage.
- **Psychic Sense:** Dog Boys have the inherent ability to *detect arcana*,

interpreting it as a scent. They use the Notice skill (with their Keen Sense of Smell bonus) to detect the presence and location of any psychic or magic energies, beings, or items. They can also use the Tracking skill (also with the Keen Sense of Smell bonus) to follow a specific magical or psionic entity. This sense works to detect anything psychic, magic, or supernatural, including invisible and astral beings. Psychic Sense doesn't work inside sealed armor or vehicles. Cybernetic implants also cause problems; every point of Strain imposes a -1 penalty when the Dog Boy uses his Psychic Sense (the Cyber-Psychic Alignment Edge can negate this penalty).

- **Sonic Boom:** Anyone within a Large Burst Template who is not in environmentally sealed armor (or having similar protections) must make a Vigor check at -2; failure means they are Shaken, and a modified 1 on the Vigor die means they are stunned. Stunned beings are Incapacitated and must make a Vigor check each round to revive up to Shaken status (with a raise, they aren't Shaken). Anyone in the area effect without serious ear protection is deaf for 1d6 minutes, suffering -2 to Notice checks.
- **Stand By to Fire:** A Glitter Boy cannot move and fire its Boom Gun on the same round. This is why some carry other firearms as alternatives for when they need to move and shoot.
- **Targeting Computer:** The system offsets up to -2 Shooting penalties.
- **Weakness (Ley Line Hypersensitivity):** Dog Boys lose their Psychic Sense when on or close (within 2" or 4 yards) of a ley line. Ley Line storms cause them a level of Fatigue from severe headaches and distress as if for a psychic (which does not stack if they have the Arcane Background), but their Fatigue requires an hour to recover after the storm ends.

LEY LINE WALKER

BRANDYN CRYOS

For a time, Brandyn called the Federation of Magic his home, and he saw the unification of magic wielders and D-Bees against the Coalition as a noble, important goal. The fall of Tolkeen strengthened his resolve, and he soon made his way to Dunscon's City of Brass to get more directly involved in the greater effort. There, however, he saw such depravity and darkness, all in the name of power and control, which shook to the core his confidence in the effort. He observed as a group of Cyber-Knights—recently arrived from the Tolkeen war—were belittled, taunted, and ultimately drawn into a fight against demons and Murder Wraiths. Though one of the knights was a woman he'd had a less-than-friendly encounter with years ago (Lady Kyla Foster), he could not stand by and allow the murder of her and her companions in the streets. Helping them effect their escape, he was offered another option, and now the Tomorrow Legion has his service.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Knowledge (History) d6, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d4

Cha: -4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 10 (5)

Hindrances: Curious, Enemy (Major—Coalition and Federation), Stubborn, Ugly

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Luck, Master of Magic, Power Points, Rapid Recharge

Powers: *armor, bolt, boost/lower Trait, burst, quickness, teleport.* **PPE:** 20

Mega Powers: *greater armor, onslaught, greater boost/lower Trait, greater burst, exalted quickness, greater teleport*

Gear: Ley Line Walker Medium Armor (+5 Armor, +4 Vigor checks vs toxins and disease), NG-33 Laser Pistol (Range 15/30/60, Damage 2d4+1, RoF 1, AP 2), NG-S2 Survival Pack, 1000 credits.

Special Abilities:

- **Disconnected:** Constantly dealing with the alien and arcane, Ley Line Walkers tend to be awkward with normal people and situations. They suffer -2 Charisma.
- **Expanded Awareness:** Walkers can use *detect arcana* at will, with no PPE cost and as a free action.
- **Hero's Journey:** Brandyn's Hero's Journey rolls granted him (among other things already figured in) +2 with all direct damage spells (such as *bolt* and *burst*) and Techno-Wizard weapons. He also reduces the cost of any spell cast by 1 PPE if he gets a raise or better on the casting roll (minimum cost 0).
- **Ley Line Walker Abilities:** Walkers have the following—Ley Line Magic Mastery, Ley Line Rejuvenation, Ley Line Sense, Ley Line Walking, and Ley Line Transmission (see *The Tomorrow*



Legion Player's Guide, Ley Line Walkers).

CITY RAT

HALIMA CORTEZ

Hamadi was a fool! He should have never tried to steal from an electronics dealer with so many friends inside of Chi-Town. When the security forces came for him, she saw no choice but to help him escape. Halima dragged her brother onto her hovercycle and led Coalition forces on one of the wildest chases the 'Burbs had known in years. Through luck and wild talent, the Cortez siblings got away, though both of their faces are on wanted posters all over the Coalition now. Grateful, but still foolish, Hamadi took up with the Black Market. Halima decided to seek different challenges. On the road, she'd picked up rumors about the Tomorrow Legion, so she decided to see how her talents might prove useful with them.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Driving d6, Fighting d8, Lockpicking d6, Notice d6, Piloting d10, Shooting d10, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d6

Cha: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 12 (5)

Hindrances: Overconfident, Loyal, Wanted (Minor)

Edges: Ace, Acrobat, Ambidextrous, Scrounger, Strong Willed, Thief, Two-Fisted, Upgrade (x2)

Gear: Huntsman Armor (+5, +1 Toughness), Two Wilk's 237 Laser Pistols (Range 15/30/60, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, AP 4), Vibro-Blade Vambraces (Str+d8, AP 4, Mega Damage, +1 Parry), 2 extra clips/belts each weapon, NG-S2 Survival Pack, Lockpicks, 800 credits.

Cybernetics: Bionic Strength Augmentation (+1 die type, Strength, figured in), Core Electronics Package (+4 Repair and Common Knowledge, computer, radio), Cyber-Wired Reflexes (+1 die type, Agility, figured in), Optics Package (+2 sight-based Notice, thermal and night vision, video recording), Subject Matter Expert Port IV (up to four die types in Smarts-linked skills), Targeting Eye (+2 Shooting).

Special Abilities:

- **Hero's Journey:** A number of bonuses, already figured in, come from Halima's Hero's Journey rolls.
- **M.A.R.S.:** City Rats are one of the Mercenary, Adventurer, Scholars, and Rogues options, which means Halima begins as a Seasoned character with a number of special bonuses.
- **Subject Matter Skill Sets:** Though physically switching between sets is a free action, it takes a full round for a new set to come online. Halima has two chips: First Aid (Healing d10) and Hacking (Knowledge: Computers d10).
- **Sweet Ride:** Halima has an NG-357 Magnum-Turbo Hovercycle with the nuclear engine option (but no mounted weapons yet).



BURSTER

ARIEL FIREDANCER

The renegade Altara just wanted to prove what she could do. She didn't feel particularly heroic when she made her way to the Tolkeen war zone; she was just wanted to flex her powers upon running into a rather large contingent of CS troops and decided to start practicing on them. Barely surviving the encounter, she wiped out most of the platoon in the process. She limped away and hid, nursing wounds and a grudge. Hearing rumors about Castle Refuge and the Tomorrow Legion, Ariel decided they presented an excellent opportunity to get payback.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d4, Notice d6, Psionics d8, Shooting d4, Stealth d6, Survival d4

Cha: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 12 (6)

Hindrances: Bad Reputation, Enemies (Minor — Coalition), Loyal, Overconfident, Quirk (Pyromaniac), Vengeful (Minor), Wanted (Minor — Atlantis)

Edges: Alertness, Arcane Background (Psionics), Attractive, Danger Sense, Elan, Frenzy, Improved Fiery Aura, Major Psionic

Powers: *armor, deflection, fly*. **ISP:** 30.

Gear: NG-33 Laser Pistol (Range 15/30/60, Damage 2d4+1, AP 2), NG-S2 Survival Pack, 2 extra clips, 1800 credits.

Special Abilities:

- **Blind:** Altara cannot see colors, read, or notice visual details. This is

offset by natural radar that extends 200" (1200').

- **Everything Burns:** The flames of a Burster set most things on fire. See Burster in the see *The Tomorrow Legion Player's Guide*.
- **Fiery Aura:** Ariel can surround herself with a fiery aura at will, no roll required. The aura grants her +6 Armor (which stacks with the *armor* power, but not worn armor) and a damage field of 3d8. Both remain active for as long as she wishes, or until she is Incapacitated or otherwise unconscious. If she spends 3 ISP when activating the field, the armor is M.D.C. capacity. She can extend this aura to a Medium Burst Template.

- **Fire Mastery:** Ariel can pick a spot within 12" and place a Large Burst Template, where she can create, control, or extinguish flames as a free action, no roll required.

As an action, she can roll her Psionics skill to impose -2 to Trait rolls over the area (-4 with a raise) due to heat, smoke, and other conditions.

- **Firewalker:** Completely immune to all fire, plasma, and heat effects. They suffer only half damage from lightning, electricity, and lasers.

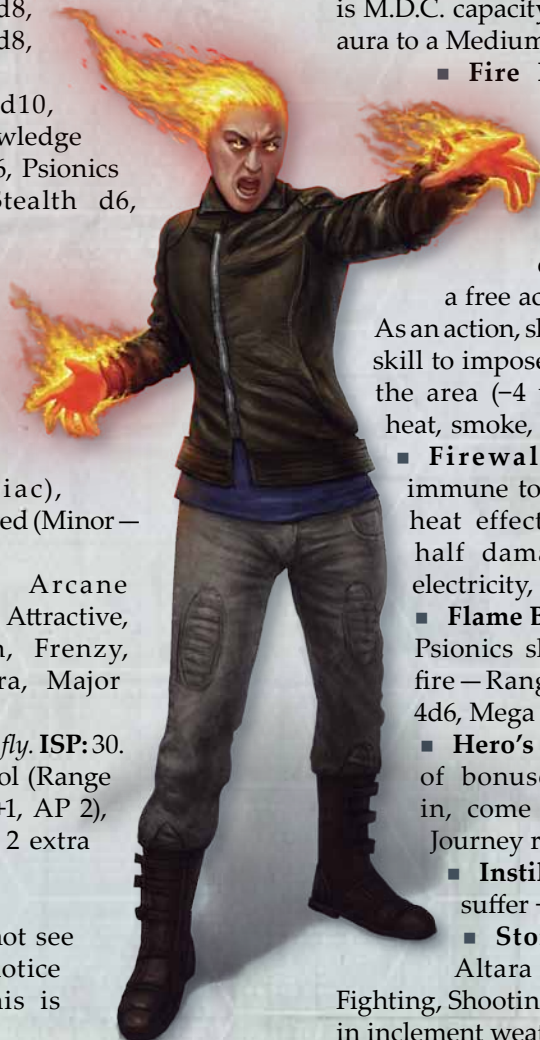
- **Flame Bolt:** Ariel can use her Psionics skill to hurl a bolt of fire — Range 12/24/48, Damage 4d6, Mega Damage.

- **Hero's Journey:** A number of bonuses, already figured in, come from Ariel's Hero's Journey rolls.

- **Instilled Ignorance:** Altara suffer -2 to all Smarts rolls.

- **Storm-fouled Senses:** Altara suffer -2 to Notice,

Fighting, Shooting, and Throwing rolls in inclement weather.



CRAZY VALKA MAD-EYES

The bunny rabbits exploded, the bluebirds scattered to the skies, and the sweet baby deer's mother got completely blown away. The Magic Kingdom burned to the ground, and Valka can't stop crying at night as she remembers all the screaming and the sad and the blood. The Dark Skull Facers — there were so many of them, and they were so evil. She and her friends just couldn't save the poor bunnies! Valka Mad-Eyes knows her friends drug her away from the Burning Magic Kingdom and delivered her to the Good Dwarf Kingdom, though she barely remembers the journey. She hopes serving alongside the Knights of Tomorrow will help her keep the bad dreams away and, maybe, rescue some more bunnies.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d4, Notice d6, Psionics d6, Shooting d10, Stealth d6, Streetwise d4, Survival d4, Throwing d6, Tracking d4

Cha: 0; **Pace:** 12; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 13 (5)

Hindrances: Delusions (Major), Heroic, Loyal, Stubborn

Edges: Acrobat, Arcane Background (Psionics), Dirty Fighter, Gun Nut, Frenzy, Off the Handle, Quick, Woodsman

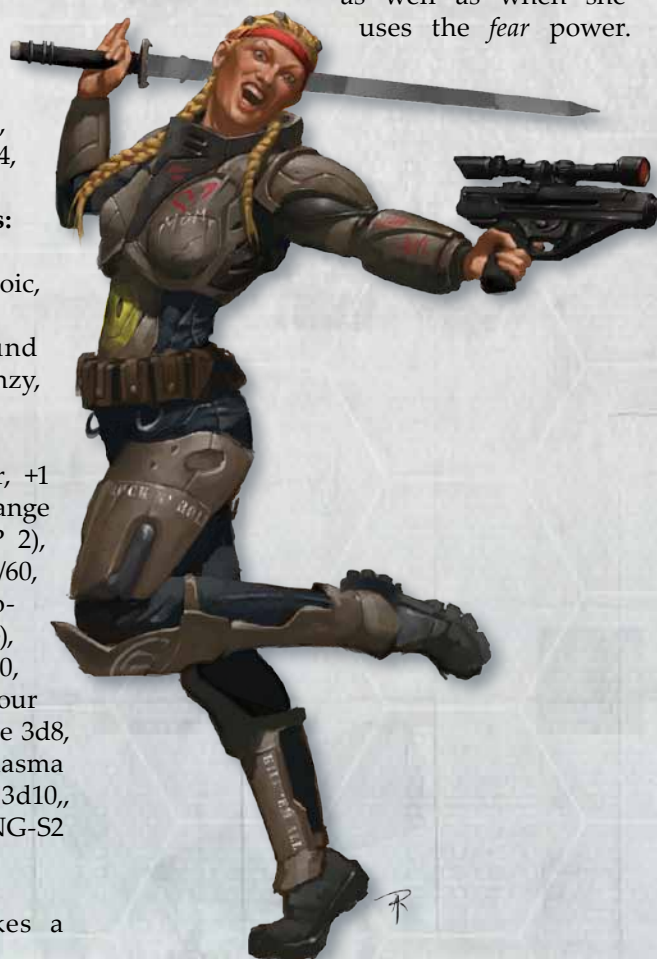
Powers: *deflection, fear, illusion*. **ISP:** 10.

Gear: Huntsman Armor (+5 Armor, +1 Toughness), Wilk's 447 Laser Rifle (Range 40/80/160, Damage 3d6, RoF 1, AP 2), Wilk's 237 Laser Pistol (Range 15/30/60, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, AP 4), Vibro-Sword (Str+1d10, AP 4, Mega Damage), Six Frag Grenades (Range 5/10/20, Damage 3d6, Mega Damage, LBT), Four AP Grenades (Range 5/10/20, Damage 3d8, AP 8, Mega Damage, SBT), Three Plasma Grenades (Range 5/10/20, Damage 3d10, SBT), 2 extra clips each firearm, NG-S2 Survival Pack, 1200 credits.

Special Abilities:

- **Bio-Regeneration:** Valka makes a natural healing roll once per day.

- **Distinctive Appearance:** Valka has the classic protruding Mind-Over-Matter (M.O.M.) nodules on her head.
- **Enhanced Speed:** Crazies double their normal Pace.
- **Heightened Senses:** Valka gains +2 on all Notice and Tracking checks. She also ignores two points of Range Penalties.
- **Hero's Journey:** Valka's Hero's Journey rolls granted her (among other things already figured in) the ability to spend a Benny whenever she gets a raise on a Trick check to gain the Drop against that opponent. If she's ever out of grenades, she begins a new session with 1d4 Frag Grenades. Finally, she gains a +2 when using Intimidation or Persuasion, as well as when she uses the *fear* power.



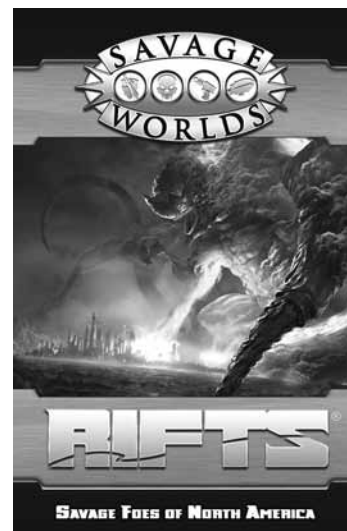
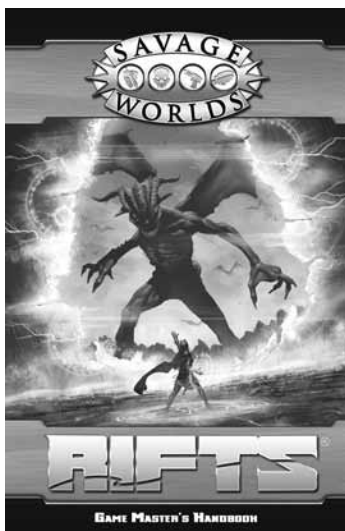
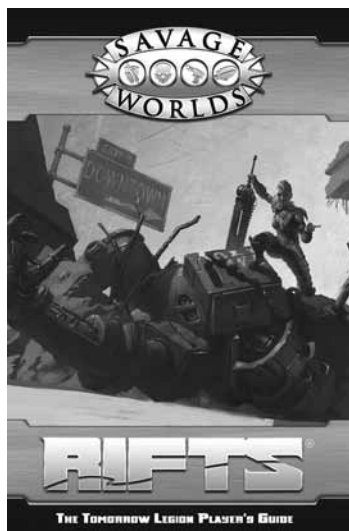
- **Losing It:** As a free action (due to Off the Handle), Valka can go Berserk (as per the Edge) at will. She is also Fearless (as per the Monstrous Ability) while in this state. The Gun Nut Edge allows her to use firearms while Losing It. Coming out of this state is called Getting It Together, and for a period of time, Valka suffers a -2 to all Trait rolls as she deals with the after-effects of her delusions and other psychological issues (see the Cuckoo for Competence sidebar). The duration for this effect is based on what she rolls on her Smarts die after Losing It. Valka cannot use Losing It while she is Getting It Together.
 - **Raise:** She only spends 1d6 minutes Getting It Together.
 - **Success:** She spends 1d6 × 10 minutes in the Getting It Together state.
 - **Failure:** She spends 1d6 hours Getting It Together.
 - **Critical Failure:** She spends the next 24 hours Getting It Together.
- **Needs Action:** When Valka goes without action for an extended period of time, she tends to become agitated, irritable, and fidgety. This gives her a -2 Charisma and -1 on all Trait rolls until she sees some action again.
- **Super Endurance:** Crazies only need 4 hours of sleep and gain +4 on all checks against Fatigue.
- **Super Reflexes:** -2 to be hit by all attacks.
- **Valka's Delusion:** Valka Mad-Eyes awoke from her M.O.M. conversion to discover she lives in a fully-animated version of the world she once knew. As a child, she saw a few old animated movies on an ancient device, one of her fondest memories of time shared with her family. Bright colors and imaginary beings defined the world of those movies, and now that's the world she lives in. Most innocent people are humanoid rabbits or other anthropomorphic animals. The

Coalition soldiers and their machines are overblown caricatures of their real-life counterparts, and her allies are melodramatically enhanced animated versions of themselves. When she's Getting It Together, all the color drains out of this cartoon world, and things seem to pause or stutter to her (as though the machine running the "movie" is experiencing technical difficulties). It makes things strange for those who work with her, but she still manages to function.

CUCKOO FOR COMPETENCE

Valka Mad-Eyes is a Crazy, someone who's had Mind Over Matter process done to her. The main part of the M.O.M. conversion involves placing a series of small implants in the subject's skull, using nanotechnology to stimulate the brain in complex ways. Effectively, it overlocks the body into superhuman performance levels. Though the actual implants of today's iteration of the tech are small and concealable, the vast majority of Crazies insist on the traditional rods and domes that extrude prominently from the head.

M.O.M. implants permanently enhance a Crazy's speed, endurance, strength, and senses, as well as dramatically increasing her healing factors. She gets all this at the low, low price of rational thought and emotional stability. In a world where Hell can literally erupt right around the corner and a large percentage of the population of the planet wants to kill her, many would consider her choice ironically rational.



Tomorrow Legion Player's Guide

A Megaverse® Gone Mad!

Prepare yourself for a railgun-shredding, mega-powered magic flinging journey into a post-POST-apocalyptic world where supernatural horrors vie with technological empires for mastery of the world!

This is the World of Rifts®

Unpredictable holes in the very fabric of space and time open the way to countless creatures, beings, and dangers. Whatever you imagine — whatever you fear — it's somewhere on this war-and-chaos ravaged world.

The Tomorrow Legion Is Ready

In the battle for survival the Tomorrow Legion brings together the greatest, the bravest, and the craziest to stand against an infinity of threats. They stand for a better future than the past they've known.

The **Rifts® Tomorrow Legion Player's Guide** contains everything you need to make and equip mega-powered characters for the Rifts® Earth setting. Iconic Frameworks load you up with options for well-known concepts (Glitter Boys, Juicers, Ley Line Walkers, Mind Melters), as well as the capacity to craft your own custom ideas. New Setting Rules bring home the gonzo, cranked-to-eleven nature of Rifts®, and the gear lists include everything from incredibly powerful weapons and armor to cybernetics to arcana-fueled Techno-Wizard items. New rules for Mega Powers bring magic and psionics to super-powered levels, and Hero's Journey tables flesh out your characters in exciting and fun ways.

Savage Rifts® brings the incredibly popular world of **Palladium Books' Rifts®** to the award-winning Savage Worlds system by **Pinnacle Entertainment Group**. It requires the Savage Worlds core rules to play.

Game Master's Handbook

Well, That Escalated Quickly!

Running *Savage Rifts®* is unlike any game you've ever run before: everything is bigger, faster, and over-the-top, with more adventure and threats thanks to the gaping holes in space-time that define the setting. The heroes of the setting are powered up and equipped with the kind of gear you need to fight inter-dimensional wars.

We've Got Your Back

The **Rifts® Game Master's Handbook** is packed cover-to-cover with everything you need to master a setting with decades of history and a Megaverse® of possibilities. A thorough yet concise overview of the world, with a focus on the North American continent where the Tomorrow Legion is based, adds to information about all the factions and other major known threats the heroes are likely to encounter. All you need to know about the ley lines, the Rifts®, how they work, and how to on-the-fly generate them at need is included. You also get a powerful Adventure Generator tailored to the unique qualities of Rifts® North America and the foes that plague the Tomorrow Legion, powerful and useful advice on running a *Savage Rifts®* campaign; and much, much more!

This book requires the *Savage Worlds* core rules and the *Rifts®: The Tomorrow Legion Player's Guide* to play.

Savage Foes of North America

In a world full of monsters and madness, it's good to know what's coming.

One day, your heroes may face a heavily mechanized patrol of Coalition Soldiers. The next, they're trading lasers and mystic bolts with a horde of cybernetic-loving demons called Brodki. Next week, a gargantuan tentacled horror from a Rift threatens every living thing in the region, and it's up to the Tomorrow Legion to stop it... somehow.

Rifts®: Savage Foes of North America contains stats and descriptions for all of the major monsters and enemies a group of heroes might face as they serve in the Tomorrow Legion: the Coalition States, the Federation of Magic, the Black Market, the 1st Apocalyptic Cavalry, the bandits of the Pecos Empire, and much, much more. Important key figures, such as Emperor Prosek, Lord Alistair Duncon, and Sabre Lasar are included. For those times when a Rift opens and you want to randomly figure out what comes out of it, there's an extensive Creatures from the Rifts Generator to help you.

This book requires the *Savage Worlds* core rules, *Rifts®: The Tomorrow Legion Player's Guide*, and *Rifts®: Game Master's Handbook* to play. Rifts® and Megaverse® are Registered Trademarks of Palladium Books, Inc. All character names and likenesses are copyright and trademarks owned by Palladium Books, Inc. and used under license.



How to Play Rifts®

A Rifts® Primer – Adventure & Guide to solid Role-Playing and Rifts®

By Carl Gleba and Kevin Siembieda

This article may sound like it is for new players and Game Masters, but even experienced gamers are likely to find it interesting and thought provoking. For some of you, playing **Rifts®** will be an entirely new experience, for others it will be a cheerful reminder about the core elements of role-playing and the elements that make it so much fun.

Those of you unfamiliar with the epic **Rifts® RPG** setting will find this guide to be an easy and fun window into the **Rifts® Megaverse®**. If you have played any of Palladium's games, you will recognize the Megaversal rule system. If this is *your first foray* into the exciting and dangerous world of **Rifts®** or the Palladium game system, then welcome and enjoy.

The Rifts® Primer is meant to give new *Rifts® Players* and *Game Masters* a solid footing to start their gaming experience. Whether you are brand new or you have Game Mastered the RPG of any game company, all you need is an understanding of Palladium's rule system and the setting of **Rifts®**. As a result, this guide is one part *game advice*, one part *adventure building*, and one part *ready to play adventure* – complete with combat and rules explanations built right into the adventure.

The main focus of the guide and Palladium games is on *role-playing* and *storytelling*, and how the rules are applied in the context of this and any adventure. Character creation is covered very well in the **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** and will not be discussed here. Pre-generated characters are provided so you won't need the **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** to play this adventure, though it is helpful.

What follows are a slew of *Game Master tips* and *Game Master tools* to help run your own **Rifts®** games and create your own adventures. There are also some *player tips*, and at the end of the adventure is a section on *crafting your first adventure*.

Once you have mastered the basic rules, you are all set to run your own **Rifts® games** and have hours of fun creating stories, laughing with friends, and in general, sharing a social experience that can't be duplicated with video games or the Internet. Players who never considered running a game before, may find this information insightful and alluring. So read the *Game Master tips*, check out the adventure, grab your friends and dice, and prepare to have a great time.

Two things to keep in the back of your mind as you read the adventure and tips. I have two rules that are not an outspoken part of Palladium's rules, but which I know the game's creator wholeheartedly agrees with and incorporates himself. I use these regardless of what system I run.

1. Keep it simple.

2. Keep it fun.

I always try to keep these two rules in mind when I create and run my games. So does Kevin Siembieda, the creator of **Rifts®** and the Palladium game system. New Game Masters should keep their games simple at first, especially while they are learning the rules and art of telling a great story. Have fun with it and keep it

moving, keep it lively, and remember, *the characters are the stars*. Just like a good movie the characters should be the central point of your story.

Game on!

– Carl J. Gleba, 2016

Using this Guide

As Palladium Books makes moves to introduce **Rifts®** into other mediums and even with other game systems such as **Rifts® for Savage Worlds®**, we thought it would be a good time to share this adventure and tips for Game Mastering and playing the **Rifts® RPG**. The tips are rock solid fundamentals of role-playing with an emphasis on character and story – the Palladium style. The adventure that is included is very basic and set somewhere in *Rifts North America*.

I would suggest the Game Master read not just the G.M. tips, but the entire adventure before running it. Unlike your typical adventure book, at various points throughout this adventure are sections on rules and combat. The rules needed at that point in the adventure are explained and, hopefully in the context of the game, they will be clear and understandable. Every rule found in the **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** is not explained in this guide or the small adventure, only the essential, but they are enough to enable you to play through this adventure and have a good time, **WITHOUT** the **Rifts®** rule book. For a complete list of rules, spells, and everything else you'll want to run for an ongoing **Rifts®** campaign, check out the **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** and for more setting and inspiration, any of the world or adventure sourcebooks.

Tools of the Game

Dice. You need a selection of dice to play. Most Game Shops sell tubes of polyhedral dice or even check with your local chain bookstore behind the counters. The dice you'll need and how they are noted in this book and other Palladium books are a 20-sided die, or a D20, a twelve-sided die, D12, two ten-sided dice, either different colors or one with the tens denoted on it (e.g. 10, 20, 30, 40 and so on) instead of 1, 2, 3... You will also need an eight-sided die, D8, three to four six-sided dice, D6, and a four-sided die, D4. Below is a list and the notation. If a number is in front of the "D" then that indicates how many of that kind of dice are needed. For example, 4D6 means four six-sided dice.

Twenty-sided die – D20

Twelve-sided die – D12

Ten-sided die – D10

Eight-sided die – D8

Six-sided die – D6

Four-sided die – D4

1D20 means one 20-sided die.

3D6 means three 6-sided dice.

2D10 (also called percentile dice because two will give you a result of 1 to 100) means 2 ten-sided dice.

2D4+2 means roll two 4-sided dice and add two to the result. So your results will range from 3 to 10.

Luck is built into the dice. The roll of the dice determines the outcome of most events from combat to the use of skills. This is where luck and fate come into the game, adding a fun, unpredictable element.

You will need a pencil and notepad or scrap paper. I suggest pencil over pen because sometimes there are stat changes and erasing involved. I, Carl Gleba, prefer graph paper, because it helps me to line up various statistics and to keep them more organized, but that is a personal preference not a requirement. I know others who prefer lined note pads or blank paper. Lastly, to play this **Rifts® Primer Adventure**, you'll need this guide. The characters and NPCs provided can be photocopied for your convenience.

Imagination. The greatest tool you have is you. You and your players, or more precisely, your imagination. Try not to feel self-conscious or timid. Feel free to ask questions and participate. It's okay if you don't know which dice to roll at first. And I think everyone feels worried and a bit self-conscious, at first. Try not to be worry about how people might think about you, your style of play, or how you handle your character. Have fun, speak up, ask questions, and play in character. A good group of players, whether they are experienced or new to role-playing, are not likely to laugh at another player or belittle the choices he or she makes for their character. At least, they should not. Experienced gamers, please cut the new guy(s) a break. You were uncertain and made foolish choices when you first started RPGing, give new players your support, encouragement, and patience.

We have found the best way to try role-playing is to dive right in and not worry about how you look to others. Focus on your character, the game, the action and the adventure, and everything should work out fine. Oh, and if your novice character gets himself killed, shrug it off, roll up a new character and rejoin the fun. Losing characters through naivete, foolishness and heroism may happen more than once. It is part of the game and not anything to feel ashamed of. We have all lost characters in role-playing games. Be the character and have fun. More on character play later.

Getting Started

The Game Master

First, you need to determine who will be the **Game Master**.

The Game Master is combination movie director and master storyteller. As the Game Master (G.M.), you establish the story and set the pace for the adventure. You will know the plot elements, villains and what the full adventure entails – particularly what dangers lay ahead for our band of heroes: the player characters. As the Game Master, you should always try to be fairly familiar with the rules and flexible with your story/adventure, including the ones presented in these pages. I can tell you from experience that no two groups will play this adventure exactly the same way, so flexibility and improvisation are necessary skills that the G.M. should embrace.

One of your jobs as Game Master is to narrate. Describe the scenes using all the senses to give your players a feel for where

they are and what's going on around their characters. Do not just say, "You entered a bar and walk up to the first empty table." That's too simple and you are telling them what to do. Instead, set the stage and ask them what their characters are doing.

For example, say something like, "*Your characters have entered the **Rusty Cup Pub**. Despite being the middle of a sunny, summer day, the bar is dark and dingy. There are no windows and there are a surprising number of patrons present for this time of day. Some sit at the long bar, others sit at tables, and a few play at one of the four pool tables. The smell of fermented alcohol, sweat and smoke from rolled cigarettes and a few cigars permeate the air. There are several human and D-Bee (non-human) patrons at the bar and more at nearby tables. The pair of Headhunters (partial cyborg mercs) who are playing pool stop to look at you.*"

"The bartender shouts, 'Welcome gentlemen, you're just in time. I'm opening a bottle of my best swill. Come on over and try some. Your first glass only costs one credit. You can't beat that anywhere.'"

Then ask each player what his character is doing. Inevitably a few will head over for the cheap drink and to chat with this friendly barkeep, another one or two might sit down at a table while casually looking around to size-up the place and the customers inside. From here, all kinds of things might unfold. Use your imagination and your characters.

Setting the scene is very important, and the example above does that nicely. It establishes atmosphere and mood. And most importantly, it helps all the players to visualize what they (and their characters) are seeing. By just saying, "You enter a bar," everyone is going to have their own impression of where they are and what the place looks like. By offering a description like the one above, "it's dark and dingy," "no windows," "there are humans and nonhumans present," "a pool table and a pair of cybernetic mercenaries," sets the stage and a mood. At first glance, this tavern appears to be a place for mercs and nonhumans who value privacy, because there are no windows, etc. And because all the players are imagining the same thing, it gives them a shared experience and avoids confusion later on. This way, everyone will be on the same page. Oh, and by giving "the bar" a name, you create a memorable and specific place. Not just any "bar" or "pub," this is *The Rusty Cup Pub* – and a place that may become a regular locale for getting information, mercenary work, making connections and contacts, or maybe it's just a safe watering hole where adventurers can unwind.

The trick is providing a decent amount of details without getting bogged down in way too much detail. (I, Kevin Siembieda, always start with what is the most obvious to anyone walking in, and wait for the players to ask me questions about the place before providing more info and specific details. If they don't ask, I assume they are not looking around or noticing people or the things that could be important clues about the bar and the people inside. This alone may lead the player characters into trouble.) The players don't need to know the exact size of the place, the exact number of tables and chairs or what the tablecloths look like unless it is important to the setting and mood. There is a big difference, for example, between cheerful green tablecloths with silver flowers, and black tablecloths with skull on them or anti-CS slogans in the borders. But such little details are not important unless it is for mood or story.

Players who want more information will usually ask the G.M. questions to get it, like, "Do I see any shady characters?" Again, this is a broad question and the answer might be, "Yeah, pretty much everyone in the pub." Players will learn to ask more specific

questions, like, “Does everyone here look like a mercenary or soldier?” “Yes, except for the trio in the corner.” “What do they look like?” And the G.M. offers a description. Maybe they are peasants, or mages, or merchants, or ... whatever.

The Game Master (G.M.) also controls all of the NPCs or Non-Player Characters. NPCs are important people that the player characters meet and interact with at places like the *Rusty Cup Pub* and, well, everywhere. That bartender mentioned above, he is a Non-Player Character (NPC). In fact, he is an NPC that the G.M. has immediately made available to the player characters with his cheerful invitation of a stiff drink for only one credit. The barkeep may have information that the characters need and that he will share if one or more characters engage him in conversation, buys him a drink, and so on. It can also lead to confrontation and a momentary side adventure or action. In the context of the story, that could be wherever you, the G.M. wants to take it. Let’s use a story most of you should know: *Star Wars, A New Hope*. The young, farm boy *Luke Skywalker* who is not even a Jedi, walks right into trouble when he and Obi-Wan Kenobi enter the cantina on Mos Eisley. The wise and experienced Obi-Wan knows how to carry himself to avoid trouble. Poor, young Luke looks like the innocent bumpkin that he is, and an ornery thug who has had too much to drink decides to mess with the kid. Conflict and adventure ensues. It also moves the story along.

In the *Rifts*® bar scenario above, the wrong question to the wrong person could lead to ... well, almost anything. A brawl, a fistfight, a duel, a challenge of skill (fighting, wrestling, knife tossing, a toss of the dice) or drinks for everyone, or a “friend” who volunteers to step forward to help them stay out of trouble (why and what’s his agenda?), or a merc looking for work may offer to be their “native guide,” or a pretty girl, or a thief, or CS spy or a mage may approach them, the possibilities are endless. And all of these NPCs are controlled and played by the G.M. (Game Master).

NPCs (Non-Player Characters) can be very important in creating atmosphere and helping to further the story along. They are meant to provide clues, information and challenges to the player group. If there is a puzzle the player characters cannot figure out, then perhaps the NPC can provide some insight that helps them succeed. An NPC can also provide direction and purpose for the characters. This makes some NPCs important figures in the context of the game. However, something an NPC should not do is provide all the answers nor lead the player characters. An NPC should always be a secondary character in the background, never a primary one in the forefront of the action. And he should never have all the answers or save the day whenever the player group gets into trouble. An NPC should not be coming to the rescue of the players except, perhaps, under the most dire of circumstances, and even then he should need to roll to succeed like any other character. Likewise, an NPC who joins the adventurer group should not be a glory hog. All NPCs should be a *background character* who does NOT steal the spotlight from the player characters.

Again, using *Star Wars* as an example, you may recall *old Obi-Wan* provided a purpose for the group, and that was simply to get them to Alderaan. He helped them find a ship and pilot, but this too helped advance the story and bring other “central heroes” together. Once on the Death Star, Obi-Wan takes on a secondary role, because this is NOT his story, it is the story of *Luke, Han and the other heroes*. Two other notable *Star Wars* characters who function in the role of NPCs are *R2-D2* and *C-3PO*. They helped set up the next part of the adventure, and know and do things that *assist* the central character, but they are sidekicks, secondary characters

who move the story along to the *rescue of the princess*. They also worked as comic relief. Humor and laughter are great for games too. You will notice that none of these characters stole much of the action through the course of the adventure, but did provide critical aid and vital information when needed. This is exactly how NPCs should be used. I call them *support roles*, like *supporting actors* in any movie.

Use NPCs to help drive your story and establish atmosphere. This includes NPC villains and monsters. In fact, villains and monsters are often a major catalyst for adventure. “We must rescue so and so from the wicked X,” or save the town or a beloved NPC, and so on. Villains can also lead to adventure campaigns of revenge, quests for justice, pursuit, preventing atrocities and destruction, etc.

More Game Master Tips and Tricks for Running Rifts® Games

So if you are reading this section, you are either a Game Master ready to run the adventure included in this Primer, or someone curious about the Game Master experience. Or maybe, a G.M. looking to see what we have to say about running RPGs. First off, welcome, one and all. Being a *Game Master* is an awesome experience. Don’t worry if you’re a new G.M., because it is not as hard as you may think it is.

So the **first tip is relax**. Just like anything new, you will get better as time goes on and you become more comfortable running games.

Second, have fun. This isn’t a competition. You are orchestrating a story. Enjoy weaving your adventure and watching it unfold in ways you likely never expected as the players take your plot and make it their own.

Game Masters, it is your job to play all of the non-player characters. Again, don’t worry. This may sound daunting, but is actually a lot of fun, especially if it suits your disposition. It allows you the opportunity to stretch your role-playing skills. Kevin Siembieda (creator of *Rifts*® and the Palladium game system), me and most Game Masters enjoy playing the many Non-Player Characters and running the adventure. That said, not everyone is suited to be a G.M. You may be such a person. That’s okay. We’ve found that while many people can become a good G.M. with time and practice, only one in eight or ten are naturals who thrive at being a Game Master. But you know what, all those other Game Masters do a fine job too. As long as you and the players are having fun, you are doing fine.

So what’s next? It is your job as G.M. to create a fun story arc filled with adventure, action, suspense and most importantly, a sense of accomplishment. Combining all of these elements is really not that difficult, especially with some of the tips and tricks below. So let’s begin.

Tip Number Three – Preparation. I have always found it easier to run a game *when I am fully prepared*. It makes sense. Most people like to be prepared for any job. Being prepared provides confidence and makes it easier to anticipate problems and overcome them. For role-playing games, which tend to be open-ended and very flexible, this is not always as easy. Or is it?

The first part of preparation is game knowledge. No, you don’t have to have every little rule memorized, that’s why you have a rule book to refer too. I (Carl) have found you do want to become familiar with your game world. Read its history, its setting

and know it well. After all, you are telling the story in this setting so it makes sense to have familiarity with it. That familiarity will also present ideas and opportunities for adventure. Most of the time, if you are a new Game Master and have new players, everyone is on an even playing field when it comes to fully understanding the game world.

Make the setting yours. Own it. RPGs are designed to give you the foundation and groundwork, it is up to you to run with it. That means creating your own corners in that world setting. Towns, villages, ruins, secret places, particular areas of the wilderness, caves, etc. are all yours to create. Just like NPCs they are places to meet, places to go to, places to destroy, and so on. Take ideas from the published setting, be imaginative, have fun and go wild with it. Heck, you might even be one of those Game Masters who decides to create your own entire game world – or your own big area of a larger, existing world setting. That's fine, too. Run with it.

Whether it is the world of **Rifts®** or something you have created, *you need to know your world* and the NPC characters, villains and monsters in it. Especially, the ones the player group is likely to encounter and interact with. To this end, I find it useful to know who the player characters are. Knowing what character everyone is playing and the characters' alignments/moral compass, goals, fears and motivations – let alone special abilities and notable weapons – makes your job as G.M. easier. It allows you to customize your adventures to appeal to and challenge the specific characters and the players. Once you know the background of the characters (and the likes and dislikes of your players), it all gets easier every game you play.

An aside from Kevin Siembieda: Know your NPCs and you can take your story/adventure *anywhere*. I am able to run games in which the player characters seemingly have infinite choices and opportunities. Part of that is from knowing them, but especially knowing my NPCs (Non-Player Characters).

I have my main villains and their henchmen all statted out. I know their alignment, goals and motivations, which means I know exactly how they will react to insults, trouble and opportunities that arise, as well as how they interact with other characters (i.e. the player characters). The arrogant badass, for example, is not going to waste his time with low level characters nor most people whom he sees as beneath him. (Which, by the way, could be the villain's undoing.) However, like a gunslinger, this tough guy welcomes a real challenge and that means taking on and beating other experienced and powerful characters. He likes proving how good he is against others. He also likes to make the big score and enjoys showing off just how dangerous and smart he is. That said, another similar character might pretend to be less savvy and deadly. He or she may like to manipulate and trick people, and let his henchmen do his dirty work. This cretin attacks from the shadows and betrays allies when it is to his advantage. I know if the villain loves magic items (making characters with such magic a potential target) or dislikes magic. I know if he hates Juicers, has something to prove, drinks too much, has a soft spot for the ladies, or likes to kill, or hates to get blood on his hands, or secretly works for the Coalition States. I could go on and on, but I think you get the idea. All of this helps me know how this NPC (Non-Player Character) is going to react to the player characters and any given situation, anywhere. And that means I can introduce them and drop them in anywhere, at any time.

Before I start my game for the night, I like to make a list of the players' real names on a lined legal pad. Next to each name, I write the name of their character, the character's O.C.C. (Occupational

Character Class), and alignment. I often include the character's level and sometimes special weapon notes or other details, like she is desperate for money, or he seeks fame or magic, or is young and inexperienced, or hates so and so (probably an NPC villain), and so on. I do this even with players and characters that I have been running in games for years and know well. It gives me a quick, easy frame of reference I can see at a glance, and it reminds me about *key character elements* I may want to use in the adventure. I also make notes during the game of noteworthy moments, great ideas, outstanding role-playing and key moments, as well as experience point awards. Now back to Carl's excellent RPG Guide.

Knowing the setting for the game, the central antagonists and NPCs, and the player characters, it is time to prepare for the actual **running of the game**. If you are running the adventure included here, make sure you know how many players you have and what characters they are playing.

Whenever making your own adventures you will want that to fashion an adventure that fits and challenges the player group. Plot and make notes for the story arc and encounters the player group will have, and any ideas and alternatives that seem fun and viable. Make all your notes ahead of time and write down important stats like the number of bandits, the average level of these thugs, the bonuses of each bandit, their armor's M.D.C. and what weapon(s) they are using. I jot the notes down in a notebook or laptop, or anything I have easy access too. When I craft my own adventures, I make sure those notes are handy, but we'll discuss more on that later.

So the basics of preparation are:

A) Know the game setting and background.

B) Know the any nuances about the specific places within the setting where the adventure is going to take place, and which you may be creating from your own imagination.

C) Be familiar with any NPCs and have their stats ready. You may be able to get away with short stats for incidental characters. In a movie (and in your game), this is no name *Bandit Number Four* or *Innocent Bystander Number Two*. However, always have the complete stats for the main characters such as the bandit's leader, the evil mastermind, and any other important NPC villains and monsters. The important NPCs are the characters the player group are likely to speak to, interact with, and probably fight, capture and interrogate, or kill or chase off.

D) Have notes for any encounters or important setting areas, clues and details, and, again, have vital statistics written down.

E) Relax and have fun. Let the adventure unfold. Listen to the players and their characters, get ideas from them, and run with the stuff you like. If you listen, your players (often through the words of their characters or conversations between themselves) will give you plenty of ideas you can use to spice up the game or tailor to their fears and needs or desires. Trust us, this is fun.

Tip Number Four – Be Flexible. Nothing in your adventure should be written in stone. We can not stress flexibility enough. Even with the adventure presented here, different groups are likely to react and play it, or portions of it, in very different ways. We may know our friends well, but you can *never* completely see the future or predict how each person will react, or anticipate everything that is likely to unfold in a game. And that, by the way, is one of the fun things about being the Game Master: the surprises your players hand you – some good, some bad, always interesting.

That's why you need to be flexible, improvise and run with any given situation. You may be sitting there and thinking, "What the ...! I can't believe so and so just said or did that!" But as the Game

Master, you need to go with it. *Improvise*. That is where knowing your NPCs and setting comes in handy. Anything the player characters say and do can have consequences. Adventure, drama and comedy often arise from those actions and the resulting consequences those actions bring about. *Have fun with it*. Don't worry about where it may take you. It can be fun going down a road you did not plan to travel. See where it leads, be flexible and have fun. This is a gift, enjoy it.

That said, if the group goes off on a tangent, as fun, silly or strange as it may be, eventually you will want to bring them back around to the story and adventure you had in mind. The question is, how do you steer them towards your adventure?

Well, sometimes you have to just wing it! Yeah, crazy we know. But here's the thing, the players *do not know* that you are winging it. Just go with the flow and do your best. In the worst case scenario, use an NPC or circumstances to get them back on track. They might rescue a person or entire town, and that NPC or townspeople explains their dilemma is the result of *Villain X* (one of the bad guys you want them to clash with). And of course, townspeople know just where he can be found. Or maybe the townspeople don't seem as happy as you might expect for being rescued. Talking with some of them (role-playing these conversations), our heroes learn that as bad as this gang was, the town remains plagued by a monster or more bandits that are even worse. And as fate would have it, that monster or band of villains should be coming to town any time now. Worse, maybe the food or treasure or whatever the villain(s) is coming for, was destroyed in the battle the player characters were just involved in, and it is the hapless townspeople who are now going to pay a terrible price. **UNLESS** our heroes do something to intercede on their behalf. See how all of this can be used to set up "your" adventure. If the innocent townspeople are going to pay for the player group's actions, that alone should make most of them, especially characters of good alignment, feel like they are responsible for the dire fate that's coming, and that they need to do something about it. Or maybe it is a *Magnificent Seven* situation where the individual or townspeople beg for help and are willing to pay everything they have for that help. Whether that "everything" is a great amount, a powerful weapon or magic item, or tiny pittance (but truly is all they have) is up to the Game Master.

So maybe the location of this conflict is not what you had originally planned. That's okay. Move the ideas and setting elements that fit to this new location and improvise. Maybe this was not how you planned for the heroes to meet this bad guy and his henchmen. Who cares? Go where the story has taken you. It is more dramatic and organic this way. And hopefully, fun for you, the G.M., because it is different and a bit of a challenge.

An aside from Kevin Siembieda: I remember when I first started running role-playing games (**D&D**). I worried and questioned whether I knew the rules well enough or had the skill to be a Game Master. The players would tease me about making things up as I went along. I would deny it, of course, but I found making up the story and throwing out encounters and adventure hooks made up on the spot as I went along was fun and dramatic, not just for the players, but for me as well. I the spontaneity and improvisation.

Another early important realization was that I am the universe. This revelation came from a few other G.M.s that were players in my game. "Remember," they said, "as Game Master, *you are the universal*. You are all powerful." I had never thought of the G.M. like that until they mentioned it and it got me thinking.

Only *you*, the **Game Masters**, knows what is behind the next door. And you can change it in a heartbeat with a new clever idea

or improving off of something just said by one of the players. Until you it is spoken by you, that canvas upon which your adventure is being created is blank. You and the players create it out of thin air and pure imagination. That means, your players don't know what is behind that door or around the next bend in the road, until **YOU** reveal it. And only the you, the Game Master, has that knowledge and the power to make it anything *you* want it to be, or that benefits or challenges your player group. *You are the universe*.

Now that power is a great responsibility. You need to use it fairly and wisely to entertain the players *by helping* to weave a great story. I say *helping*, because ultimately this is **their story**. This is the story of heroes and adventurers played by the gamers in your group. *Together*, the Game Master and the players weave an amazing tale of adventure and heroics.

When you are done with your gaming session and that night's adventure – just one of many adventures yet to come – you remember it as if you had just seen a fantastic movie or read a new favorite book. The memories are vivid and wonderful, and best of all, it was **YOUR** characters who were the featured protagonists in the story. A story you helped create via the words and actions of your characters. For the G.M., the fun is in playing all the villains, monsters and bystanders, and *directing* that amazing story. It is also fun seeing the players react to your story, villains and plot elements, and seeing how they deal with threats and unravel the mysteries you placed before them. *It is all about characters and story*, and fun with friends in the most creative and interactive game medium on Earth – *role-playing*, where you are truly limited only by your imagination. Over time, you will find it easier and easier to let that imagination fly.

Carl here, absolutely true, and that got me thinking. There will also be moments where the players may want to do something an inexperienced, and even an experienced Game Master, is not expecting and may not know how to handle. First, take a moment. Pause the game and get up to get a drink or go to the bathroom (sometimes you need to get away from the voices of your players excitedly talking about their plans or pleas for you to allow X, Y or Z), or sit back for a minute to think about it. Again, a willingness to be flexible combined with imagination will help you *wing it* the best you can. Consider this your permission to *fudge* the action and even make up rules to resolve problems if you need to. You are the Universe, remember. Always try and be fair, but do what you need to do as the G.M. and architect of the adventure.

Another aside from Kevin: However, flexibility and going with the flow of the player characters, is just a general rule of thumb, **NOT** a requirement or a hard rule. Sometimes your players will get carried away, or one or two will try to exploit the rules and every opportunity for their own characters' best advantage. Sometimes you **NEED** to just say **no**. Seriously, do **NOT** allow stuff that is crazy, does not fit the scenario or setting, or is too powerful. My rule of thumb is that it must fit the scenario, fit the character(s), and make logical sense for your setting. And most important, do **NOT** allow anything that is going to create an imbalance in the game. *It is okay to say no*.

This even applies to things that you, as the G.M., just don't like. That "thing" might be a particular rule, idea, spell, weapon, monster, powerful ability, etc. You need to have fun too, so if it does not work for you, do **NOT** allow it. Or change it. If it ruins the game for you, or the other players, it is a bad idea. You are the Universe, make it work for you and the game you are running. Yes, the G.M. is supposed to be flexible and try to make sure the players have a fun time, but that does not mean giving in to everything

they suggest or want. You need to cherry pick the best ideas that work for you and the story.

This applies to rules, too. If there is a rule you don't like, it is okay to adjust it, change it completely, toss it out the window or substitute it with a rule you make (and most of the players agree with) or that you borrowed from another game. Don't over think it. Have fun. Mastering it all will happen over time.

Likewise, *if you goof up* and give one or more of the player characters something that is too powerful and it messes up the game or ruins the fun for everyone else – *you are the universe* – change it or take it away and fix the problem. Do so in some logical and appropriate manner that is as fair as possible. If it is a powerful weapon, there are plenty of bad guys (and good guys depending on the circumstance and the characters involved) who will want it and try to take it. A powerful character is likely to be the first guy targeted and ganged up on in combat, which may make owning the weapon more of a liability than it is worth. Maybe an NPC offers a truckload of money for it. Maybe the player who sells it finds out that half (most?) of that money was no good after he sells it. Or maybe it's fine and he acquires a robot vehicle and/or gear that helps the entire group. Maybe the weapon or magic items is stolen from him, or destroyed, or forcibly taken. Maybe the character has to give it up or sacrifice it for some heroic reason, something that saves hundreds or thousands of lives. You are the universe, use your imagination to fix a problem you accidentally allowed or created, but weave that fix into the story whenever you can. Be fair and have fun. That one player may not be happy with the turn of events at first, but you need to do what is best for the group and the story. And in fairness, don't just deprive the character, give him something back in return (a new, less powerful weapon, one that is not unbalancing or a problem, or a different toy, or money, or fame, etc.). Oh, in case you did not notice, many of the solutions above are avenues for new adventures, new antagonists, and new opportunity for the player group.

Tip Number Five – Have Fun! This is something that from time to time can get forgotten. (An aside from Kevin: This is so true. I once had a player tell me I didn't take the game serious enough. She was having fun, but in a moment of silly humor directed at her character, she didn't appreciate that humor, but everyone else thought was hilarious. It was that moment she made the statement, above. Which, by the way, made everyone else laugh even harder, including herself.) The point of the game is to get together with friends, socialize and *have fun*. I know it should go without saying, but sometimes fun gets lost in the mix. You can have a serious, dramatic game and still have fun. Humor is okay, and why not? We have it in our everyday lives, so let the person being a little bit goofy have some fun and blow off steam.

(An aside from Kevin: I often interject humor into my games. Sometimes in the context of the story, and sometimes as a G.M.'s comment or joke. It can be good to lighten things up especially in a heavy situation. The trick is timing and presentation. Unless everyone is being silly, do not force humor and your own bad jokes and puns on everyone else. It kinda gets back to being flexible. If whatever you are doing is fun for everyone, then rock n' roll and keep doing what you are doing. If what you are doing is slowing down the game and taking away the suspense and/or drama desired, try to recognize that and don't do it. Humor is tricky.)

Tip Six – It should never be G.M. vs the Players. I, Carl, found this happened to me a lot when I was younger, and I have seen it a few times in the games of others. Role-playing games

are not designed as competitions. It is not G.M. vs Players or vice versa. Such competitions can lead to hard feelings and take away the fun; sometimes no fun at all. Remember, as the G.M. you do have final say in everything, but you don't need to beat down your players to prove it, nor throw it in their faces. Let the action happen fairly and organically, meaning let it grow and let the *players* take the lead with their characters. Use what they say and do as a foil to improv and as a source for ideas.

I have found that this adversarial condition can crop up when a Game Master was expecting to give the players a real challenge and instead they blow through it like nothing. So all your hard work feels like it was for nothing – except that's not true at all. Sometimes that is just how the dice roll. Or one of the players thought of something that you did not. Or they just played extremely well, or all of the above. It happens to the best of us. If that nasty villain you put a lot of time into creating gets taken down in one melee round because of excellent teamwork or a lucky roll of the die, go with it. I know Kevin and I see such an occurrence as "Fate." It was meant to be. Do not keep him alive just because you want to, or because you are disappointed. It wasn't meant to be. Move on. Remember, role-playing games are not a competition, it is teamwork and storytelling. It is all about the characters and story. And that goes for the players too. Don't mess with the G.M. just because you can, or pimp out your character to the max. Enjoy that easy kill or the game where everything has gone your way, because things are likely to go the other way, maybe even in the next game session.

I think all Game Masters have seen what we thought would be a cake walk for the player characters turn into a life and death struggle because they could not make a saving throw or hit a target to save their lives. Literally. So don't worry if your well thought out plans do not go as you had hoped. Let the characters have their victory. Be happy for them, because this experience is for them as much as it is for you. Let's face it, being a G.M. can be fun, but since you know the whole plot and story, let the surprise victory be the surprise you did not see coming and enjoy the moment with your gleeful players and their boastful characters.

(An aside from Kevin: I completely agree. I love the surprises and I roll with them the best I can to keep the story going in a positive direction. Sometimes, however, the G.M. needs to give the player characters a chance to survive even if it is ugly. In a situation where the players are getting the stuffing knocked out them, it is not a cheat to let them live by allowing them to retreat and run away, or to surrender and be taken prisoner, or a little bit of both. I learned this the hard way.

I was stunned one game night when half of the players were making bad choices and all of them were rolling like garbage. As the events were unfolding, the entire group was doomed. Their utter demise was imminent. A few were already down for the count, some by magic (terrible saving throw rolls) and some whittled down to near death in brutal combat. Though it was not planned (of course, I had not planned to see them all killed!), I was flexible, and gave a third of the characters the chance to *surrender* and be taken as prisoners, and another third a chance to *run away*. Those already taken down and incapacitated by magic had no choice, they would be bound and taken prisoner with those who surrendered. I made it clear these were their only options if they wanted to live, and let them take the one they thought best.

This is where G.M. flexibility came into play again and continued right into the next weekend's game. I had those characters taken prisoner stripped of their weapons, but in the bad guy's ar-

rogance (he was cocky to begin with, and the group fell so easily), he left most of them in their body armor and their weapons stockpiled in sight just outside the prison cell where the characters were jailed. The villain's stronghold was nearby, and though it was not part of my original plan, it now had a dungeon and prison cells, compliments of the Universe and some fast thinking. Those who had escaped were in hiding and healing themselves as they gathered to figure out what to do next. I ended that night's game there, telling the players to think about what they were going to do next. This also gave me a week to figure out my next move and map out the enemy stronghold and dungeon that had not existed until five minutes ago. Remember, I am winging all of this. I was nervous, but thought things out carefully and tried to imagine all possible responses, focusing on the most likely.

As it turned out, I had nothing to worry about. This created a wonderful *prison break scenario* that would become the stuff of legend. While the captives were licking their wounded pride and trying to plot a way out of jail, those who managed to run away and escape were also smarting from their ugly defeat and planning an attack to break their comrades out of prison. If they had the good fortune to extract revenge against the enemy while rescuing their friends, all the better. Of course, as G.M. I would make it so. I could do that, because I knew my players' intentions for their characters, as well as their emotional state of mind.

When play resumed the next weekend, I had two groups with a common goal: prison break and revenge. I went back and forth between both groups of player characters – one trying to break into the prison to rescue their friends, and the other trying to break out of jail to escape and rejoin their friends. By going back and forth with both group, first letting one, and then the other, play out pieces of their strategies, all players were engaged in the story. By pausing the action of one group, soap opera-style at just the right moment to create suspense and hold everyone's attention, I would bounce to the other and have that group do stuff for a while. As one group worked to free themselves, the other group brilliantly made their way into the enemy stronghold. I made sure I did not ruin it for either group by letting one or the other completely play out their plan. That would have been a bummer. Instead, I let both campaigns play out simultaneously. Just as the prisoners looked like they would get free before the other group arrived to rescue them, I had one of the big bad guys unexpectedly arrive with guards to interrogate them (I was winging it again). Knowing this was happening, it made the players in the other group feel tremendous urgency to have their characters find their teammates as fast as possible and unite for the big battle they all knew the adventure was building toward. However, they had to do so stealthily and FIND their way to the dungeon holding cells (which I expedited). The group breaking in were infiltrating, in disguise and had to find their way to the jail cells without knowledge of this unknown facility!

The prisoners acquitted themselves well, too, and put up a great fight. By the time their teammates arrived to free them, the bad guy's second-in-command and his stooges were down for the count, and the player group reunited. The timing, of course, was perfect, because the skirmish in the dungeon had alerted the *main bad guy* and his troops to trouble. He was on his way to crush this rebellion of fools when the team was reunited. The rescuing player characters immediately engaged the main villain and his force in combat while those who had escaped and defeated the other bad guy and his stooges, grabbed the rest of their weapons to join the

battle. This time the dice rolls went the group's way and they triumphed.

I learned three things from that game. **First**, the willingness to be flexible will usually pay off big time. It led to an adventure I would not have thought of on my own, and it was awesome. **Second**, it all felt natural and fluid, as if the hand of Fate was directing the action, not me. I loved the surprises and I loved seeing the story unfold. Sure, as Game Master, I helped it along, but the players and the dice rolls did as much work as I did, and I felt as if I went where the story and the action carried me. I used logical progress and consequences to dictate the bad guys' reactions and the ultimate battle and the heroic outcome. **Third**, I realized defeat, as long as the player characters had a chance to redeem themselves and extract revenge, was very powerful. Victory snatched from the jaws of defeat is exhilarating for the players. Being able to rise up and triumph after defeat and all seems lost, is even sweeter than had they vanquished the enemy in the battle from the previous weekend.

This game became one of the most memorable out of hundreds of games that would follow. Heck, I'm writing about it 30 years later. The players had a blast and so did I. And it would never have happened if I didn't take a chance, been flexible, give the characters a chance to survive and role-play their way out of defeat. I improvised and followed my players' lead. And I was learning it all on the fly, just like you will. Man, did I loosen up my playing style after this, and it would lead to decades of wonderful improvisation and RPG fun.

Tip Seven – Be Fair. This should be a no-brainer, but I've seen it happen where G.M.s are either unfair or lead the players instead of giving them the freedom to go where they desire and thrive. Be fair and consistent with your group. No need to give your best friend the most powerful Rune sword while the other players need to get by with a rusty dagger and an ion pistol. Not being fair can lead to the old Game Master vs the player situation and never delivers a fun experience. Just think about it and treat your players the same way you would want to be treated if you were in their shoes.

An aside from Kevin: If you think it can be tough playing with friends, try playing with your wife or girlfriend like I have. Even with your "significant other" you need to stay impartial and fair in order for everyone to have a great gaming experience. I do it by focusing on what the "characters" are doing. See the characters, not your friends or spouse, and *respond to the characters'* words and deeds. That's what role-playing is all about, staying in character to create a story. That is as important for the G.M. as it is for players. You can love your wife and want to give her the world, and still have her imaginary RPG character pay the price for something foolish her character did. Stay focused on the characters' words and actions and it is easy to respond unbiasedly and deliver the appropriate response to that character. And there must always be appropriate consequences to their actions, based on the NPCs and circumstance that unfolds. The character(s) may be a hero(s) for slaying a tyrant or slaver, but the enemy has family and friends who may not see it that way, and they probably want revenge. Get the idea?

Tip Eight – Keep it Simple. This applies to everyone. Don't get bogged down in the rules. Let the rules guide and help you, not control you. If the target is more or less in range, you don't need to stop the action to figure out the exact distance in case it is a few

feet or even ten feet beyond range, go with the action, roll the dice to see if the attack hits or not, and keep on going.

Likewise, do not get lost in the minutia of the story or setting. Please do not role-play every step of a three hundred mile journey – it is boring – keep the action going and have fun. Jump ahead through the slow parts. (“So your travel is uneventful until at about the half-way point when you encounter ...”)

Newer Game Masters may feel that until they have mastered all the rules and have a few hundred hours of being a G.M. under their belt that they aren’t ready. That’s probably not true. Sure you should get better with practice, but many G.M.s are good from the start and only get better over time. Trust your gut, listen to your players and wing it the best you can.

We suggest keeping it simple. Keep those early adventures simple and linear, in a familiar setting. The more complicated the plot you create, the more work you have to do and the more overwhelmed you may feel. If it is too complicated and you feel overwhelmed, your players are likely to feel the same. Presenting something complicated to the players can be difficult and feel daunting or confusing. Even after years of gaming, we throw in a very simple adventure or two unrelated to the overall plot. This can help to recharge the Game Master’s batteries as well as the players’, and can lead to new ideas or result in a new twist to the adventure.

Likewise, if your story is not working out the way you had hoped and it is dragging, wrap it up and end it. Move on to something else that is more fun. That’s part of being flexible too. And do not beat yourself up for a bad game night; this applies to both players and G.M.s. There is always going to be other adventures where the game and your character shines.

Tip Nine – If you and the players are having fun, you must be doing something right. It’s all good. Don’t over think it and have fun. Seriously, if everyone, from G.M. to players, are having a blast, then whatever you are doing is just fine. Keep it up and keep the fun going. Who cares if you are not playing all the rules exactly the way they were intended, or that you could be doing some things different or better? This is a game and *fun* is what games are all about.

Player Character Tips

By Kevin Siembieda

One could argue that the players have it easier than a Game Master, because the focus of each player is on his own character and the events unfolding in the story. I’d have to say yes and no. Each character is like a role portrayed by an actor, only that actor is you and the character has a leading role. Player characters are the main protagonists in our stories, and since this is an ensemble cast, it means you need to work with the other heroes as a member of a team. The main characters are tasked with figuring out clues, rescuing people in danger, fighting evil, protecting the innocent, and navigating through all the elements of the adventure. These characters are, in effect, *the Avengers* or *Justice League of America* or *the crew of the Enterprise*.

Here are some quick, easy and simple player tips. You will notice advice similar to that given to the Game Master. That is because the fundamentals of role-playing are the same for all RPG characters. The player characters just get the deluxe treatment because they are the stars of the show.

1. Keep it simple and play what you like. Pick an O.C.C. and abilities/skills that you think you will enjoy playing. Then give the

character a bit of background to round the identity out and to give yourself some emotional anchors to play. Your character does not need a large, sweeping or complicated backstory. He or she can be a simple fighter or adventurer trying to survive in this crazy world. He or she can be someone who is trying to earn money to feed his family or protect her town. It could be someone who craves glory and wants to become a famous hero, warrior or mage, or maybe the character is searching for someone or something, or seeks respect, or desires power or wealth, or revenge against a particular type of villain or monster (“I hate dragons”), or the Coalition or Federation of Magic, and so on. Or maybe he’s just a farm boy tired of life on the farm and simply wants to see the world or fight the evil empire. Sound familiar? Keeping it simple works.

Ask a few simple questions, like:

What does the character love or enjoy? Music or magic, or a particular flower?

What does he hate? Could it be something as simple as bullies or slavers? Why? Because he or someone he loved was bullied or once enslaved.

What does he want? What are his goals? We covered some possibilities above.

How does he think he can get achieve his goals?

Where is he going? Even if he never gets there or doesn’t know (just drifting) the character may have a destination in mind.

What does he fear?

These tidbits and the character’s alignment (code of ethics and morality) should help you understand what drives your character and how he might react to any given situation. What might tempt him or lead him astray, what might press his buttons and what makes him take action or stand his ground.

Note: In this regard, many of the G.M. tips involving NPCs and knowing your character, his goals, desires, and fears, apply to player characters as well; heck, even more, because these are ongoing heroic figures.

2. Use the character’s alignment as your guide. This is the character’s moral compass. It’s how he was raised and it’s how he feels about good and evil, what’s right and wrong. Know your alignment and stick to it. Alignments help define who the character is and how he behaves.

3. Play to your strengths and be careful of your weaknesses. Attributes and skills indicate the character’s strengths and weaknesses, play to the strengths and compensate for weaknesses when you can. Teamwork can make up for weaknesses and vulnerabilities.

4. Play in character. You, the player, are almost always going to know what’s going on in the story and elsewhere in the imaginary RPG setting, that *the character* does NOT. Play in character. Your character does not know his hometown is being invaded and his family is being threatened, even though the player might. The character does not know what awaits behind the door until his character opens it, even though the player might.

Playing in character can be difficult, especially when adrenaline and emotions run hot, but it is fun and worthwhile. Just like in real life, the character may want to react in the heat of the moment or the player may want to maneuver his character to where the action is or where treasure has been found. However, if his character does not know anything about it, the player needs to have his character act accordingly.

5. Play like an actor or don’t act at all, it doesn’t matter. Do what feels most comfortable for you. Some players speak in a different voice or accent and take on the role of their character

in very much the same way as a theatrical actor does for movies or live theater. That's cool if you feel comfortable with it, but acting is not a requirement of role-playing. In my experience, most people do not feel comfortable "acting" as their character. They would rather tell the G.M. and their fellow players what their character is doing, often in third person. "Um, okay, Fred climbs into his Glitter Boy armor and suits up. As soon as he is sealed inside his power armor, he aims his Boom Gun at the most dangerous looking attacker and fires."

There is nothing wrong with either approach. In fact, depending on my comfort level and the group I'm playing with, I may speak in different voices or I may describe what one of my non-player characters is saying and doing. Or I might bounce from one style to the other, describing things until the character speaks or there is an important moment when I think the character's words and demeanor are important to convey.

6. Reality check. You are not your character. The role-playing character you create is an imaginary fictional construct that is not real. And though you created him or her, and you may draw on your own experiences to convey the character, it is NOT a reflection of you. In fact, while some people like playing themselves in a game, we tend to discourage anyone from doing that. I, personally, like some distance between me and the characters I play. I'm me all the time. When I game, I want to play someone else. A butt-kicking hero with powers and abilities way beyond my own.

Remembering that your character is not you is important when other player characters or an NPC (Non-Player Character) insults, cheats, or attacks *your character*. It is the fictional character that is being assailed, not you personally. Most people have no problem making this distinction.

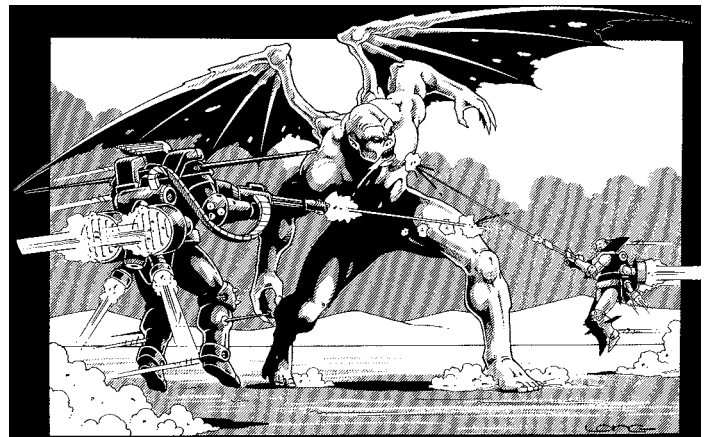
Role-playing is so fun and enveloping that you are likely to find yourself saying things like, "I cast a Lightning spell," "I shoot him in the head," "I leap out of the way," or "I ask the Grackle Tooth what he has seen," when you really mean *your character* does these things. That's okay. It happens all the time, especially when the action is boiling. Just remember you are *playing a character*. That also means not resenting a fellow *player* should his or her character do something that accidentally or even intentionally hurts or kills your character. Leave it on the imaginary playing field. None of this is real. The emotions you are feeling are like those you experience when watching a good movie that makes you cry or cheer for the hero. It's good storytelling and drama that captures your heart and imagination, but it sure is NOT real life.

Likewise, that means your character is likely to do things and behave in ways you never would in real life. I don't drink or use drugs, but I have played RPG characters who drink and were alcoholics or junkies. As G.M., I have played every monster and despicable villain and cutthroat you can imagine. But in real life, I always try to be upstanding, straightforward and do the right thing. I don't get into fights and would like to think I would never kill anyone for any reason, except maybe to save another person's life. I'd like to think I'd be brave and heroic. But many of the characters I often play as Game Master are bad to the bone. Your character had better watch out, because they'll gut you (meaning *your character*) like a fish.

I love it when the player characters hate the mere mention of one of my villain's names. It is a fun part of the game, but it's all make believe aimed at imaginary characters in this imaginary game world. Please, remember that. Don't transfer what happened in a game ("You're an idiot who got my character killed!") to the actual person playing. It was his character or circumstance or a

bad die roll that impacted your fictional character, not your real life *friend*. **Fun.** Remember fun? It's all about having fun creating stories of epic adventure like the *Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, the *Avengers*, or whatever might be your idea of fantastic heroes and their exploits.

Speaking of which, not everyone is a dynamic and flamboyant hero. Some players might present their character as the plucky, comic relief or puzzle master. Every player will find his or her style of play and areas of strength within the gaming group. Some gamers will experiment with many different characters, others will create the same archetype every single time regardless of setting. Some crave action and combat; others prefer puzzles and unraveling mysteries, or working out strategies and battle plans; some jump to action while others have their characters avoid the gunfire and battles. Any of it and all of it is okay. Role-playing is personal. If you are having fun and not disrupting the game or everyone else's fun, you are doing fine.



7. Teamwork. Yes, you can play the lone wolf, strong silent type, or the shady guy with the questionable past. Yes, your character can wander off and do things away from the group, but ultimately, the best role-playing experiences for *everyone* involved are the ones played as a group. A team.

Teamwork, or at least working toward the same agenda and goals, is important for fast, fun, fluid play. If everyone is working against the other, or just for himself, the game usually disintegrates into chaos. I have had player characters who were thieves and assassins in the player group, but they all worked toward a common goal and watched each other's back. The thief might steal from his teammates and cheat at cards; the assassin might stay aloof or threaten anyone who pried too deep into his doings, but they always had their teammates' back, avenged wrongs leveled at their "friends" and helped the group achieve *its goals*, not just their own. The thief and assassin would both share information they gathered on their own by hanging out with other criminals and cutthroats, and performed similar acts of benevolence and teamwork. Over time, some of these self-styled rogues turned into true good guys due to the positive influence of their teammates. Others stayed irascible but loveable rogues, or tortured and conflicted figures you still cared about. In one gaming campaign, an NPC demon actually became a champion of light because he adopted the ethics and values of the heroes he associated with. Role-playing fun.

Play in a disruptive manner, jeopardize the group on a regular basis, and there may be serious consequences for your character. The group might leave the troublesome character alone to meet a deadly fate, or turn him over to the authorities. Truly disruptive players may be asked by the G.M. to get it together or leave the group.

One bad apple can spoil everything, so do not be the bad apple. Be a team player.

8. Have fun with your character. Create and play characters you think you will enjoy. Give them the personality, background and quirks that keep the character alive, interesting and fun for you to play. If you get bored with a character, retire it and roll-up a new, maybe a very different one. Character experimentation can be fun and might surprise you.

A Rifts® Adventure

The Rifts® Setting

The Rifts Earth setting takes place several hundred years in the future. A hundred years from now, a terrible apocalypse tears down the very foundations of human civilization. The world is devastated when a small, isolated nuclear exchange ignites a cataclysmic chain of events that brings storms and natural disasters across the globe. This cataclysm unleashes magic energy in the form of ley lines – lines of magic energy – which begin to ripple across the landscape. Where two ley lines cross, a tear in space and time may occur. They are known as the “Rifts.” In the midst of the Great Cataclysm, scores of supernatural beings, demons, gods and monsters of myth and legend, and creatures from countless alien worlds arrive through *the Rifts* all across the planet. The humanoid are dubbed “D-Bees,” short for “dimensional beings.” They are creatures we might think of simply as aliens, like those from popular science fiction shows like *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*. Some are peaceful and just as confused about how they got to Rifts Earth as humanity. Others come to conquer and enslave.

After a *Two Hundred Year Dark Age*, the face of the Earth is radically transformed. With the arrival of the continent of **Atlantis** in the Atlantic Ocean, the water level around the world has risen, flooding most coastal cities, and most other major cities are destroyed or swept away by wave after wave of natural disasters. Humanity has huddled together in a small handful of strongholds and camps. Some of these communities are small, primitive hamlets while others have grown into high-tech nations such as the **Coalition States** who have found many of humanity’s lost secrets and technology. Others, like the **Federation of Magic**, have turned to the mystic energy of the ley lines and cast spells or use other types of magic. You see, the mystic arts have also been rediscovered by humanity and D-Bees, making Rifts Earth a place of great contrasts.

From location to location, you can encounter a primitive town with simple log cabins, while over the next hill can be a city encased in Mega-Damage concrete and steel, while in the opposite direction is a town that relies on magic, and elsewhere there are places where magic and technology can be found in equal harmony.

North America is no longer the United States of America. It has been divided by vast stretches of savage wilderness. In the heart of North America, the **Coalition States (CS)** is one of humanity’s largest nations. They are protected by mega-cities encased in concrete and steel. Their army is large and supported by giant robots and powered armored troops. The Coalition States could be humanity’s greatest salvation if not for their human supremacist attitude and extreme measures. They believe Earth belongs to humanity and that D-Bees are invaders to be exterminated.

Furthermore, the practice of magic within the Coalition States is a criminal offense punishable by death. For the CS, magic is seen as a power that corrupts men, turning them evil as they gain more power. While this is not necessarily true, the Coalition States does not understand magic and refuses to accept that magic, like any resource, can be used for good or evil. The CS is a mighty power that has embraced the *Death’s Head* as their motif, and use it to bully and intimidate.

The Coalition States is but one of the major players in North America. Other communities exist, like the **Federation of Magic** east of the CS in a place called the **Magic Zone**. The Federation is a loose-knit community of spell casting mages who have gathered in towns and villages under the control of the evil *Alistair Dunscon*. The practice of magic is not only allowed within the Federation, but any kind of magic from *Techno-Wizardry* and sorcery to the dreaded art of *Necromancy* and *Witchcraft* is allowed. The Federation is not the only magic society in North America, nor is the Coalition the only technological nation, but they are two of the largest nations. Despite the size of the Federation, it is more of a collection of powerful magic users and clans, each with their own power base and holdings. Lord Alistair Dunscon is by far the most powerful and has the largest holdings and influence within the Federation.

There are countless places on North America where one can have a grand adventure. Our little adventure is taking place within the **Magic Zone**. The Coalition is hundreds of miles away and of little concern to our characters. This deep in the Zone, the biggest concerns come from bandits, rogue dragons, and evil practitioners of magic. This is a place adventure can erupt anywhere.

The Adventure Begins

Once it has been determined who will be the Game Master, the rest of the players should select one of the pre-generated characters at the back of this adventure. Try to keep in mind the Game Master and player tips and let’s start the adventure.

The player characters’ travels have brought them to a small town in the Magic Zone known as **King’s Falls**. The town is a large farming community that is popular for its bars and taverns. There are two competing breweries which bring a lot of business to the small town.

The town has a mechanic who can fix most Mega-Damage vehicles and armor, although he cannot fix giant robots or tanks. He also has a generator that can recharge all styles of E-Clips at a cost of 2,000 credits per Clip.

The player characters are meeting in King’s Falls on their two year anniversary. Two years ago, each of them set out to become more than simple farmers or brewers. Thanks to *Sir Cross*, each player character was provided with enough credits to set out and make it on his own, and each vowed to return in two years to report on their success or return to their old life. Sir Cross was the benefactor who made all the contacts once the characters set out. He is a Cyber-Knight, a champion of the people, defender of King’s Falls and a fair and just man. While many people want him to be the mayor, or take charge of the local militia, he always declines positions of power. It is not in his character to want power or authority, and he likes to be able to wander the countryside to help the people of the region when they need him.

Sir Cross has arranged for a small celebration at the **Golden Brew Tavern** to welcome the characters back. Tankards of beer

are available as well as a variety of local food. It's nothing fancy or exotic, but hearty, delicious food nonetheless.

When the characters arrive, they are all greeted warmly by Sir Cross. Just before everyone can dig in and relax, however, a distraught woman is brought in by one of the local farmers. Jessup, the eldest of the family, asks for Sir Cross.

Game Master, read from the script below

or ad-lib your own version.

Farmer Jessup speaks first. "Begging your pardon, Sir Cross, but this here woman says her children have been taken by a monster and I thought you could help."

Sir Cross immediately takes the women to a table, offering her food and drink before sitting down beside her.

"My dear women, you're safe here and among friends. Tell us what has happened. I'm sure my young friends and I can help get your children back."

The woman takes a few sips of water and tries unsuccessfully to keep from crying. "It ... it swooped out of the sky. It was on fire and I thought it was going to raze all of us! Even our town militia could not stop it. The monster grabbed me and my children in its claws. I don't know why. Then it growled and snarled at me before it dropped me to the ground outside of this town, but it took my children..." she begins to cry harder. The farmer and the Cyber-Knight try to console her.

"Sir Cross," says Jessup, she told me several of the town's kids have been taken by this beast. You know it can't be good if it's a demon snaggin' kids!"

Jessup's statement only brings more tears to the distraught women.

"My lady, we will do whatever we can to bring your children back. I just need as much information as possible. What was the creature and where is your town?"

The woman manages to regain some of her composure, allowing her to answer. "Our town Mystic, Lady Cleo, is very wise, and she has been trying to use her powers to scare the beast away. I'm sure she knows what the creature is. Perhaps she can help you? I ... I know nothing of monsters or fighting. Please, sir. Please rescue my children."

The player characters can also ask the woman some questions if they wish. Sir Cross won't object as long as they ask delicately. Here is what the distraught mother, named **Mary Stocks**, knows the following info about her town:

Her town is about a four hour walk through the foothills nearby.

The town is called River Side.

The town has a population of 300 people.

It is a small farming community.

They have a water filtration plant, a pig farm and several small farms that grow vegetables and orchards that grow fruits; mostly apples and cherries.

It's most precious resource, the families and their children.

They trade goods with all the nearby towns.

There is no town militia. The townspeople can muster about ten men wearing piecemeal armor, equipped with a few Mega-Damage weapons. Most people have normal hunting rifles (S.D.C. weapons that can't hurt Mega-Damage creatures).

Lady Cleo is not the town leader, but someone who is becoming very important, especially with her powers of healing. Plus she knows some magic and psionics. Cleo, a Mystic, has unofficially

taken the role of town champion, protector and advisor ever since the Ley Line Wizard Calaphran, died of a heart attack a year ago.

The creature she describes is a large serpent with fire for scales. It has large teeth and breathes fire. It growled and made sounds, perhaps words, that she could not understand.

Mary Stocks has two children, a boy and a girl. The boy is age 8 and named Marcus, the girl is age 7 and named Marla, both taken by the beast. At least ten other children are missing that she knows of. All taken in the last week. Most of the children seem to just vanish, but this latest incident came as a shock and a surprise.

The children started to go missing a week ago. First, it was just the orphans from the orphanage, but two days ago, children from various families started to go missing as well.

Food stores also started to go missing. Mostly fruits and vegetables. It looks like some kind of wild beast broke in and stole most of them.

Lady Cleo has brought in some of her adventuring friends to the town and they are acting as the town militia. Her friends have Mega-Damage weapons and armor.

Note: By the way, Kevin's and my G.M. notes look very much like those above. We list the key points so we don't forget and improv the rest. Keep it simple and fun.

Answering Other Questions: The Game Master can only anticipate so much and inevitably, the players are likely to ask something you didn't plan for. This is the beauty of role-playing. You just have to do your best to ad-lib something. Put yourself in the distraught mother's place. What does she know? She is nothing more than a simple farmer and mother who only cares about seeing her children again. She is not likely to know much more, and it is okay to be unable (or unwilling) to answer all their questions. She may become hysterical at some point, too upset to answer anymore questions, or pass out from the trauma of it all.

Use the NPC Cyber-Knight, Sir Cross, to provide an easy out for you. He will not torment the woman with more questions, saying they will find out more when they get to the village of River Side. "We need to let this poor woman rest, now. She has gone through enough."

At this point, Sir Cross tells the player characters that their planned celebration will have to wait until this matter is dealt with. He would appreciate their help, and all of them should agree to do so out of deference for their mentor and sense of duty. Those of good alignment (Principled and Scrupulous) should feel compelled to help. Those who are more selfish (Unprincipled and Anarchist) may want a reward at which Sir Cross will make a point of saying that these people are poor and don't have much. On the other hand, if "the beast" is a dragon or a demon, it is likely to have a small treasure hoard. That should inspire the rest of the group to tag along and help. Others may simply want to unravel the mystery of River Side and this monster.

Rolling some Dice

This is where the Game Master might want to have the players roll percentile dice. This is another way to interact with the players. When information starts to come out, players can roll under their character's skills to see if they can obtain more information. Be careful not to reveal too much, just enough to give them a better picture. Some skills that would be applicable here include the following:

Lore: Faeries and Creatures of Magic: This skill could possibly reveal what type of monster took the children, based on the

description and other possible details. A successful roll (under the character's percentage) reveals that the beast is mostly likely a *Flame Wing Dragon*, provided Carly is describing it accurately. This skill is relevant because a dragon is a creature of magic. A second successful roll could enable the character to remember more details about this type of dragon, such as its ability to metamorphosis, fly, breathe fire, and cast magic. It is good to have info like this as it makes planning ahead easier especially if the player group knows what they are facing. A failed roll means that the character(s) is unsure what kind of creature she is talking about.

Lore: Demons and Monsters: A dragon is specifically a creature of magic, but to many it is also a monster. While this skill may not exactly pertain to what a dragon is and can do, it can be used to eliminate other possibilities. For example, the description does not fit certain monsters like Brodkil or a Rhino–Buffalo. So call it a process of elimination. The character with this skill who rolls successfully could deduce that it could be some kind of a dragon or Elemental, but not know more beyond this. That is where Lore: Faeries and Creatures of Magic, above, comes into play. Assuming one of the player characters has that skill.

Land Navigation: All characters who have this skill might want to give a roll. A successful roll means that the character(s) have a good idea where the village is and how to get there, as well as a good idea of what the terrain is like. For those that fail, are a bit lost and don't have a good sense of the land, they'll need to follow someone else, like farmer Jessup or Sir Cross.

First Encounter

Unless you, the Game Master, want to have a side adventure, fast forward to our heroes making their way to the town of *River Side*. This encounter happens a few hours after the characters and Sir Cross have left town.

Bandits are common in the area, so being on guard is always a good idea. As it so happens, there are some bandits that are keeping a watch on anyone who approaches River Side. They have set up a simple blind on a hill where they can watch anyone coming down the road or nearby fields. The bandits are cocky because their leader is wielding a suit of powered armor. So while the player characters led by a Cyber-Knight may seem imposing, the bandits are sure they can take just about anyone out, especially if they get the jump on them.

To be fair to the player group, the Game Master may want to give their characters a warning about this potential ambush. After all, you don't want to kill the heroes when the adventure has just begun. The point is to go forward with the story and have fun. So this is where the G.M. may want to let the players make a few skill or Perception rolls. The skills that come immediately to mind are *Detect Ambush*, *Detect Concealment*, *Camouflage* and *Tracking*.

Here is how the skills can be used. Have each player roll once under the appropriate skill. A successful roll yields various details and pieces of information that you, the Game Master, are going to provide. I then let the players make up their minds based on the available data. Do not just come out and say, yep, it is an ambush. By allowing the players to do their own analysis, and perhaps further, careful investigation, they come to their own conclusions. This allows the player group to become fully engrossed in their characters and to enjoy the experience even more.

Remember, skills are rolled using percentile dice, 2D10. One number is the tens position and the other is the ones. So a roll of 5 and a roll of 4 would be 54%. If it is equal to or under the char-

acter's percentage the roll is successful. Any roll above means the skill is unsuccessful; it failed, or had no result.

Here are the skills in action:

Detect Ambush: This is the best skill to use in this circumstance. A successful roll means the player character recognizes likely ambush sites and has a good idea that they are about to be attacked. Moreover, if the character keeps a careful eye on the location or moves in quietly for a closer look, he may see the blind used by the bandits, or see suspicious movement, hear a telltale sound or even see one or two of the villains; any of which gives away their position and reveals the ambush.

Since this is an adventure for presumably new players, the heroes are likely to be low level (first or second), so the Detect Ambush skill percentage is going to be low, so I would provide a bonus to the skill roll. The bonus represents how bad the ambush is and how easy it is to spot. Furthermore, we can assume the bandits are cocky and careless, so our heroes see light glinting off the armor and guns of the bandits. I would give the player group a 10% or 20% bonus. You don't need to tell the players about the bonus. Just let them roll the dice and you will know if they made the roll or failed, then describe the outcome.

On a failed roll the player characters are oblivious to the ambush, including the Cyber-Knight. As far as they are concerned, the way ahead is clear.

On a successful roll (with secret bonus), they see the ambush and can avoid it/go around it, or attack first.

You could also use a **Perception Roll** here to see if one or more of the characters, probably the two in the lead, and maybe the NPC, Sir Cross, notice anything suspicious. I'd give this novice group a 50/50 chance on the roll of a D20, so on a roll of 1-10 they don't notice anything, and on a roll of 11-20 they realize bandits are waiting in ambush. But how many? They can probably only see a few and may decide they can still take these ruffians and attack, rather than avoid them. It is the player characters' call.

Using other skills. While some skills are better and the obvious choice. As the Game Master, you want to give your players every opportunity to use their characters to the fullest. This means using other skills that may not be best suited to the situation, but are still applicable in some way. In this ambush scenario, the player characters who have the following other skills can give it a roll. You can also provide a bonus to the rolls for the same reason above, or a similar 10-20% penalty because the skills are not truly suited for the job; your call.

Detect Concealment: This skill, if successfully rolled would enable a player character to recognize a hunting blind or other deliberate type of camouflage for the purpose of concealment. By spotting the hunting blind, the character can may deduce that it could be a possible ambush site. Or just a hunting blind or something that somebody is trying to hide. While these two observations may not shout "ambush, watch out," they may be cause for further, careful investigation that might reveal the bandits and their intended skullduggery.

Camouflage: This skill is used to cover and hide/conceal vehicles, weapon caches, scout positions, etc., so a successful roll may reveal that several small trees in the area have been cut down and are being used to block or cover a particular position or area. This suggests somebody is trying to hide or cover up something (same as above) and invite further, careful investigation. While this skill does not pinpoint the exact position of whatever is being concealed, it does create suspicion and cause for concern. Proceed with caution with the player characters on guard.

Tracking: While normally used to follow a trail or track down a foe, it can be used to *identify tracks* and *signs of activity* in the area. And in this case, a successful Tracking roll reveals there are plenty of footprints and other signs indicating a small group of at least six people, maybe more, being in the area and leading toward the site of the ambush. Moreover, the successful roll may reveal vehicle tracks, tread marks or the heavy imprint of power armor! Additional signs that someone is in the area could be from a few cigarette butts, or piece of material or a bit of food or a wrapper from food, the smell of machine or gun oil, etc. All of it points to trouble and the likely ambush location! This is a great skill to use in this situation. No penalties either.

Perception Check: Most characters have a Perception Roll bonus. If they don't have a bonus, then it is a straight die roll. Perception is a skill that we all possess. It is how well we notice things that may be out of place and how we perceive our environment. If no one makes their skill check roll, you might offer one or more chances to make a *Perception Roll*, as noted earlier.

Perception is rolled using a D20. Add any Perception Roll bonus the character might have to the D20 roll and that is your result. Determining the target number is up to the Game Master. The Rifts Ultimate Edition has some guidelines on rolling Perception. As a default, go 50/50 with 1-10 a miss and a 11-20 a successful Perception Roll to notice something suspicious.

The Battle Begins

Our first encounter doesn't have to be big or epic. Right now we want to introduce new players to the rule system, particularly the combat system, so this is going to be a relatively simple encounter. The ambush is a chance for the player characters to use their fighting skills, weapons and physical attributes. Despite the results of the ambush, allow the player group the chance to have initiative. On a surprise attack, which gives the ambushers the upper hand, in game rules they have the initiative and attack first. If our characters spot the ambush they now they have the upper hand and can turn the table on the bandits. For our first battle we don't want to demoralize the first time players, so even if they failed in their skill rolls, as Game Master, you can still give them initiative. The bandits simply fail to react fast enough or make a noise or stumble out of their blind, essentially spoiling their ambush. Since both sides are going to be reacting at the same time, despite the clumsy ambush attempt, have the player characters and the bandits roll initiative.

Rifts® Combat Terms

The Melee Round: This is a measurement of time. Each melee is 15 seconds. Most skirmish battles only last 1-6 melee rounds.

Attacks: Each character has a different number of attacks. This is the number of actions that the character can take within that 15 second window. So if the character has four attacks, it means in that 15 second melee round, he can do four actions. These actions are further defined below.

Initiative: To determine who acts first in combat, you roll initiative.

Each player rolls a D20 for initiative for their character and adds any initiative bonuses. The highest roll acts first and then the second highest, and then third, and so on, until everyone has done their first action. Then you start over again, at the top, until everyone has used all of their actions in the melee round. **Note:** Carl plays that any ties between player characters and enemy NPCs

should be re-rolled between those that tied to determine who acts first. Kevin Siembieda allows ties, figuring more than one character could move at the same time, with initiative and target selection automatically going to the characters whose intention it was to attack. In this adventure scenario, that would be the bandits.

The round robin combat sequence: Kevin Siembieda finds it is best to use a round robin approach to combat. This is how Palladium combat is intended to work. Whoever has the highest initiative moves first. He picks his target (could be the opponent closest, or biggest, or most dangerous looking, hated, etc.) and attacks him; roll to strike. The character under attack can now, **a)** choose to stand his ground even if it means getting hit, **b)** parry the attack, if applicable, or **c)** dodge, moving out of the way to avoid damage. A defender can only parry or dodge, not both.

After he stood his ground and took damage, or parried and took no damage (if applicable), it is now the defender's turn to strike back. He is most likely going to attack his opponent, i.e. the guy who just attacked him! But in a game of modern combat with ranged weapons, he could choose to ignore his attacker and use his own strike attack on a different opponent. Most players attack the guy attacking them, and that is usually the smart move. You need to fight the most immediate threat to you, personally, and that's the guy shooting or stabbing at you. The combat sequence is repeated in that the character rolls to strike and his opponent chooses to stand and take (potential) damage (if the attack hits), parry or dodge.

This is where the **round robin approach** comes into play. Rather than having these two guys duke it out until all their respective attacks are gone, the Game Master turns to the character with the next highest initiative, and asks what he or she is doing. In a firefight, the answer is probably, "I fire my energy rifle at NPC opponent X." However, the player may have his character take other action, such as take cover, run to protect a civilian, activate a device, run to his robot or combat vehicle, etc. If an NPC has the initiative, it is the G.M. that announces what his NPC villain is doing or who he is attacking. Let's assume the bandit NPC picks a player character opponent and attacks. The bandit (played by the G.M.) rolls a D20 to strike. The defender chooses to stand and take damage, parry (if applicable) or dodge. The downside to dodging is you forfeit your next attack.

When these two are done, the G.M. turns to the next person in line for their combat move.

The round robin combat sequence works great, because **a)** everyone is engaged in combat, and **b)** when one character has defeated his foe and still has attacks left, he can direct his attacks at another enemy, probably one that a teammate is fighting or having trouble with. Or he may engage a new threat or take other strategic action (plant a bomb, grab the treasure, access an enemy computer, seize control of communications, etc.).

Two or more characters teaming up to battle one enemy is a common strategy in RPGs, especially if that one foe is especially powerful. This means player characters can use tag-team tactics, assist their teammates, and do other things in a very, real life combat simulation. When a buddy runs out of attacks that round, a teammate may be able to step in to battle his opponent and help him out. Of course, that may mean his own opponent has a chance to make good an escape or attack someone else, or pursue him and press the attack while he is distracted.

The next melee round starts when all the characters – players and NPCs – have used up all their attacks. Rolling initiative this next round is NOT necessary, because it is a continuation of the

same fight without pause. The new melee round starts just like the last one, with the character who has the highest initiative roll taking action first, followed by the next, and the next, each repeating the standard combat sequence of the attacker rolling to strike and the defender standing ground and taking damage, or parrying or dodging. Repeat until one side or the other is destroyed, surrenders or runs away.

Offensive Actions

I have found that new players often do not know what to do when they first start to role-play. Well, this is a classic gun battle that you see on TV. This battle assumes that everyone is using their energy rifles only because that is how the ambushers set up their surprise attack. They were intending to gun down anyone who came down the road. So our player characters need to react quickly when caught in the ambush, or they get caught out in the open and under fire. As a Game Master, you are at liberty to set up the terrain as you describe the scene. So there could be places like ravines or trees or boulders to provide some cover.

Here are the **core combat actions** and how they translate into game rules.

Movement: A character can move a number of yards/meters per melee equal to their Spd attribute times 5. So a character with a speed of 10 can move 50 yards/meters per melee round. If they have 5 attacks per melee, they can move 10 yards/meters (30 feet) per attack. Just crunch the numbers for each of your characters to figure out movement. Of course, depending on the type of combat and weapons used, the combatants may stand their ground and do very little movement.

Attack: There are two main types of attacks. **Range attacks** are typically used with modern weapons such as guns. **Melee attacks** involve becoming physical and either attacking with a punch or kick, or using a melee weapon such as a knife or sword. Each character has a set of bonuses that should be consulted when attacking.

For modern weapons you will want to use the appropriate bonuses such as W.P. Energy Pistol, which provides a +1 to strike at level one. This is firing off a quick shot in the general vicinity of the opponent. Some weapons can fire bursts and they are indicated under the weapon. A bonus for burst is one half the normal W.P. bonuses. So since our bonus is only +1 (for a first level character), there is no bonus for burst. The character gets a straight die roll. On the other hand, you can take a careful aimed shot. This is taking an extra few seconds to zero in on a specific individual and it gives you a +2 to strike in addition to the W.P. bonus, so an *aimed shot* on a Pistol will be +3 at level one. *The drawback* is that it takes two of the character's attacks, which could leave the character vulnerable for a few seconds.

Characters can also make *Called Shots*. Say you want to target an enemy's gun. This is a Called Shot and takes even more time to perform. Just like an aimed shot, you gain the +2 to strike, but for three attacks, you can target something very specific such as a gun, a leg, an arm and so on. Otherwise, attacks are assumed to hit center mass which is considered the main body. Deduct all damage from the main body unless a Called Shot is done.

There are additional rules in regards to combat with modern weapons. This is covered extensively in the **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**.

Attacker Rolls to Strike: A D20 (twenty-sided die) is rolled to strike. A roll of a 1-4 indicates an automatic miss. Don't bother to

add bonuses. A roll of 5 or higher plus bonuses is a hit unless the defender Parries or Dodges.

A Roll of 8 or higher is needed to hit with modern weapons (guns like pistols, rifles and so on).

A Natural 20 is always a Critical Strike (double damage) and cannot be defended against unless another Natural 20 is rolled by the Defender, in which case the attack is avoided. Bonuses do not matter in the case of a Natural 20. A roll of a Natural 20 on defense/parry/dodge is always successful.

Casting a Spell or Using Psionics: Magic users and psychic characters have additional options such as using one of their spells or psionic attacks. Psionics are easy as they happen at the speed of thought. All Psionics take one melee attack to perform unless otherwise indicated. Spells, on the other hand, use a sliding scale depending on the level of the spell. All magic spells that fall between levels 1-5 take one melee attack to perform. Spells that fall between levels 6-10 take two melee attacks, and all other spells take three attacks to cast.

Casting a spell or using a psionic power is automatic and does not require a die roll. The defender, on the other hand is likely to get a saving throw of some kind. This is equal to a parry or a dodge as the character must *resist the effects* of the spell. To resist the effects of a spell, the defender must roll a 12 or higher on a D20, adding any bonuses they might have to save vs magic. A failed roll means the character is subject to the full effects of the spell.

Characters also get a saving throw vs psionics. Again, a D20 is used with the character adding any saving throw bonuses against psionics. The target numbers are a bit different and depend on if the character has psionics. For this adventure, the target number to save is indicated under each character, but here it is explained.

Characters with psychic abilities are better able to resist psionics attacks. *Master Psionics* only need a 10 or higher to save vs psionics. Major and Minor psychics need a 12 or higher to save, and those who have no psionics need a 15 or higher to save. As always, add save vs psionics bonuses when rolling a D20. If you meet or exceed the saving throw number the character is unaffected.

Non-Combat Actions: Drawing a weapon, changing E-Clips, throwing a grenade and diving for cover, all take one action. For something not covered, the Game Master is going to have to make a call. If it is something complicated and delicate, it could take two or more actions. Quick things typically take one action. Speaking short phrases like, "Look Out!" "Get Down!" "Let's talk." "I think I got him." "I'm not the one you are looking for." I typically give as a free action, but if the group starts discussing a complicated plan that can take several melees to hammer out, it is a different story.

Defensive Actions

While your characters are learning to fight "RPG style," it is good to have a host of defensive options as well. That is the beauty of Palladium's combat system. You don't have to always beat a static number during combat. Defenders get to roll dice for dodges and parries with the high roll winning and ties going to the defender. We will discuss a few defensive options below. Just remember to add your character's bonuses to the D20 roll and high roll wins. It's that easy. Defensive Actions include Parry, Dodge, or Entangle.

Parry: A parry is the ability to block a foe's attack. For example, two people face off with swords. The winner of the initia-

tive swings his sword and it looks like it is going to hit, but the defender raises his sword and blocks the incoming blow. A parry is also considered an automatic action and *does not cost a melee attack*. So you can parry any attack that can be seen. Keep in mind that laser blasts, bullets, rail gun rounds and most ranged attacks cannot be parried.

A *successful parry* means no damage and the attack was blocked. A *failed parry* means the attack was NOT blocked and the defender takes damage. Ties always go to the defender.

Dodge: A dodge is a defensive action that moves you completely out of the path of an attack. This maneuver *takes your next melee attack*, so you will not be able to attack on the next turn because you just moved. This can make for an interesting battle where one foe who has the initiative is continuing to press the attack while you are on the defensive. You can opt to *not dodge* and take the damage, but this is a gamble that may only give you the upper hand for just a single attack or two.

Auto-Dodge: This is the same as a regular dodge, except it does not cost the next melee action. Those with *Auto-dodge* are exceptionally fast and have incredible reaction time, such as a Juicer and Crazy. The Auto-Dodge can be used against all attacks leveled at that character and does not cost the next melee attack. It is an automatic and free action like the parry.

Disarm: This is an attack designed to either knock a weapon like a knife, sword or gun out of the attacker's hand or make him drop it. A successful disarm does no damage but makes the weapon fall to the ground. No damage is inflicted by this attack.

Entangle: This is trying to grab or entangle one's weapon or arm. This can be used as an offensive or defensive maneuver. On a defensive move, you add any entangle bonus to your D20 roll. If successful the attacker's weapon is entangled. Same holds true if used as an attack, but the defender can opt to parry.

Damage and the M.D.C. System

Damage: If the attack is not parried, dodged or entangled roll the appropriate dice and apply damage first to Mega-Damage body armor.

M.D.C. and S.D.C.: Stands for *Mega-Damage Capacity (M.D.C.)* and *Structural Damage Capacity (S.D.C.)*. This is how much damage an object can take before it is destroyed. Reducing an object to Zero M.D.C. means it is destroyed. One M.D.C. equals 100 S.D.C. Most weapons and armor in *Rifts®* are *Mega-Damage*, meaning they are lethal to just about everyone. Only creatures that are naturally M.D.C. have any chance of surviving a M.D. laser blast or explosion. M.D.C. is the level of protection that tank armor provides while S.D.C. and Hit Points would be our flesh and blood bodies and ordinary building materials. We can only take so much damage, which is why M.D.C. is so much stronger.

Characters clad in M.D.C. armor of any kind, might consider the M.D.C. of their armor as *survival points*. The lower the armor/survival points drop, the greater the danger of being killed. Taking defensive action, dodging and using cover is smart because it prolongs the characters' life. Finding cover, taking evasive action and using teamwork to take down an enemy happens in the real world all the time.

Your *Rifts®* characters all need to have M.D.C. body armor that provides some level of protection. The character's armor *absorbs all damage regardless of how much M.D.C. it has left* – NO additional damage carries over to the character. However, once the M.D.C. is depleted, the character is in a bad situation, because

another M.D. attack will kill him. In addition, the character is now vulnerable to S.D.C. attacks.

Remember Game Masters, it is not you against the players so try not to vaporize their characters on their first adventure. Yes, by the numbers, a character without armor who takes a Mega-Damage blast is dead. No Hit Point/S.D.C. character can survive more than a few points of Mega-Damage. Most are lucky if they can survive one or two M.D. This is where you can take some creative license or provide temporary protection via magic, a force field or diving for cover.

If a character is hit with a Mega-Damage blast and has no armor or is wearing S.D.C. armor, here is what I, *Carl Gleba*, do. Reduce the character's S.D.C. to zero, and bring down Hit Points to only 2D4 points. The character's clothes may be in tatters, he is in pain, and he has suffered a serious injury. It could be a burn, broken bones, severe bodily pain and bruising, or even a severed limb! I try to make the call based on what happened and the weapon used against him. For example, let's say the character was injured by a M.D. explosion, the character gets tossed like a rag doll. His entire body hurts and is covered in contusions, plus he loses 1D4+1 attacks for the next melee round, and Spd is reduced by half for the next 1D4 hours; all in addition to having no S.D.C. left and being reduced to 2D4 Hit Points! Fractured ribs and other broke bones may be a possibility, but try to avoid dishing out broken bones so the character can still move and participate in the game. If the M.D. attack was a plasma blast, half of his clothing is burned away and his hair is singed. If struck by a particle beam blast, most of his clothing is completely vaporized and so is his body hair. A more narrow laser or ion beam blast creates a precision hole in whatever he was wearing but the wound feels and looks as if someone just hit the character with a burning hot iron with the force of a jackhammer, leaving a large red welt around a round burn mark the diameter of a cigar. Whatever the Mega-Damage weapon was, the impact and burning pain inflicting grievous trauma to the character's body, hence the immense amount of damage and penalties. Another M.D. blast will kill him, so he better be dodging and looking for cover and/or some type of M.D.C. protection. **Note:** I love this idea and hereby sanction it as an official rule for those of you who want to use it. This rule should probably apply only to player characters, not NPCs, but I leave that to the G.M. – *Kevin Siembieda*.

Using the option, above, saves the character's life, and the player doesn't need to make a new character on the spot. It also adds a little drama as now a teammate is down or in serious trouble and the other characters need to take actions to protect him or her. **Skill Note:** Do not forget medical skills. Characters with medical skills can try to save their injured comrades or at least stabilize them.

You will also notice that some of the NPCs, namely the dragons in this adventure, are M.D.C. creatures. This means their hides are as tough as tank armor and they can easily survive Mega-Damage. These creatures do not have Hit Points, just M.D.C. Once the M.D.C. is depleted, and if the remaining damage is more than the characters' P.E. attribute number, the creature is slain. If it is brought to zero M.D.C. or just a few points below zero, but not more than their P.E. attribute number, then the dragon is in a coma. Complete rules on combat, S.D.C., M.D.C., Hit Points, and surviving a coma and death can be found in the *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*.

Other Combat Options

The Palladium rules system offers a number of other combat options like *Pull Punch*, *Roll with Impact* and *Simultaneous Attack*. They are all discussed in the **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**. Don't worry, even with the simplified rule set presented below, you should still have fun and get hours of enjoyment.

Combat Recap

So now that the various combat options have been discussed remember how combat happens.

1. Roll Initiative: Everyone rolls initiative. The only exception is if it is a surprise attack. The attackers in any successful ambush or surprise attack always have the initiative.

2. Establish your order of combat based on the initiative rolls: Everyone gets to use their first action, round robin style, then their second, and so on, in initiative order, round robin style. Keep in mind that defenders can parry or dodge regardless of where they are in the initiative order. If dodging, however, they forfeit their next attack.

3. Combat continues until everyone has used their attacks: Some characters have more attacks than others. Defenders can still parry these attacks after they, themselves run out of attacks without sacrificing any actions. However, each dodge uses up an upcoming attack. Constantly dodging depletes the character's ability to strike back, but at least he is alive and moving.

4. Combat ends when the enemy is defeated, surrenders or has run away.

The Bandits

Here are the Quick Stats for the motley bandits. Quick stats are stats stripped down to the most basic and important information.

How many bandits: As noted earlier, one bandit per player character plus the Bandit Corporal, below.

Alignment: All are either Anarchist or Miscreant.

Experience Level: First level. These are all level one bandits and they are still green as can be. They are cocky and bold because they have M.D.C. armor and M.D. weapons, and their second in command has power armor. Each bandit has four attacks per melee, and is +1 to strike with their laser pistols.

Bonuses: +1 to strike, +3 on an aimed shot, but takes two melee actions.

Armor: Roll 1D4x10+5 for each Bandit, as their armor is old, beat-up Huntsman armor. That's 15 to 45 M.D.C. per bad guy's armor. Full M.D.C. is 45, so if they have less M.D.C., this represents how old or used the armor is. The armor also has some penalties and is -10% to prowl and other physical skills.

Hit Points: 1D6+10 for each bandit.

S.D.C.: Roll 3D6+6 for each bandit.

Skills of Note: Prowl 25%, W.P. Energy Pistol.

Bandit Equipment: The bandits are each equipped with an *NG-33 Northern Gun Laser Pistol*. The gun does 1D6 M.D. per shot, has a range of 800 feet (244 m) and has a payload of 20 shots before the clip needs to be changed. Each bandit has a total of two clips, plus each bandit also has a Vibro-Blade that does 1D6 M.D.C.; this is a large hunting knife used for melee combat. Other gear is basic stuff like a canteen, backpack, extra set of clothing and some personal items. They don't have more than 6D6x10 credits between them, and that includes the Corporal.



Bandit Corporal, Quick Stats

The Bandit's apparent leader (really 2nd in Command)

The Bandit Corporal is a **Robot Pilot O.C.C.** with the Power Armor M.O.S. He is equipped with a Flying Titan Power Armor. As this is a suit of flying power armor, the Bandit Corporal has the advantage of flight and range which he will use. This can make him a difficult and dangerous foe to battle.

Corporal Roberts, Bandit Stats:

Alignment: Miscreant (selfish evil).

Armor: The Flying Titan has seen action and taken some damage in the past. As a result, it has 129 M.D.C. (instead of the usual 180 M.D.C.), the head has 50 M.D.C. (normally 70), and the wings have 32 M.D.C. each. The powered armor cannot fly if one of the wings is destroyed. (Reduce the M.D.C. of the wing to zero, and it is destroyed, but requires a Called Shot to strike.)

The Flying Titan has a small selection of weapons available to the Bandit Corporal. First, is a pair of Wing Lasers, each blast does 2D6 M.D. with a range of 4,000 feet (1219 m). The Titan also has 12 mini-missiles (6 on each wing). The Corporal uses these sparingly only because they are his last 12 mini-missiles and they cost big bucks to replace. So while the armor can fire off 1, 2, 3, or 4 missiles (firing a volley of missiles only counts as one melee attack) at a time, he usually fires only one or two at a time to try and conserve ammo.

Hit Points: 20

S.D.C.: 25

Level of Experience: Second level. The Corporal is fairly inexperienced. The only reason he is the second in command is because he brought his own suit of power armor to the bandit

group. He also has more respect among the bandits than your typical brigand.

Bonuses of Note: Using his power armor, the Robot Pilot has five attacks and is +3 to strike with the Titan's Lasers and Mini-missiles, +2 to strike in hand to hand combat, +3 to parry, +2 to dodge on the ground and +5 in the air. He has no bonuses from his Laser Rifle.

Skills of Note: Pilot Robots and Power Armor 76%, Robot Combat Elite: Flying Titan, Sensory Equipment 45%, Weapon Systems 50% and W.P. Energy Rifle.

Equipment of Note: *L-20 Pulse Laser Rifle*; it fires single shots that do 2D6 M.D. each or a burst of three shots that inflicts 6D6 M.D. The rifle uses an E-Clip that has 40 shots (13 bursts) and he has three E-Clips total.

Should it be necessary, the Bandit Corporal has a *Vibro-Sword* that does 2D6 M.D. He only uses this as a last resort in case someone gets too close. He will only stick around if winning. If he loses more than half his M.D.C. on his Flying Titan armor he is likely to retreat, leaving his men to fend for themselves, as he heads off to report to the Bandit/Merc leader, Slasher, who is away from this battle scene.

The Bandit Strategy

The bandits are an advanced scouting party for **Slasher's Mercenaries**. They are supposed to keep tabs on anyone coming into town. The scouts are supposed to try to chase off outsiders, and if they cannot do so, or if anyone looks really powerful (perhaps like our group of adventurers) then they are to stay hidden and two of them report back as quickly as possible. Well, our bandits have other more lofty goals, like lining their pockets with credits and better gear. This makes them greedy and foolish, plus they get bored really quick and that makes them sloppy. So they are playing cards or checkers, drinking and eating their rations, sleeping or paying little attention to those who may be coming their way. That is why their ambush on the player characters is likely to fail. The bandits are slow to notice them and react. Once they realize that the player characters are coming toward them, the cretins attack and initiative is rolled. The bandits are clearly in an attack posture as the Bandit Corporal leaps to the air and demands the player characters surrender. He warns them that he and his "dozen men" (yes, he exaggerates his numbers), will strike them down before they can mount a proper defense, so surrender now, and live. The remaining bandits use what little cover they have and draw their laser pistols. Once they see the player characters, they are likely to shoot first, not bothering to wait for the characters to surrender.

Game Master Notes on the Bandits

Okay, Game Master. You have all the stats on the bandits above, but you may notice that there *are not* a specific number of bandits given. That is because I don't have any idea on how many players you may have. Since you don't want to overwhelm your players on their first battle, I would suggest an even match-up. If there are four characters and one NPC hero, then have five bandits plus the Corporal attack. Use your best judgment and if you have to, cut the number of bandits down to even less than that, especially if this is a first-time player group. If they whip through them too quickly, you can have a few more appear from the underbrush to join the attack.

Here is one last rule to keep in mind as it will save your player characters: During the battle some of the bandits, or even the player characters, take damage and see the M.D.C. of their ar-

mor reduced. Some may have their armor reduced to zero M.D.C. When this happens, the armor is completely destroyed and beyond repair. The last bits of armor soak up the remaining amount of damage. So even if the armor has 4 M.D.C. left and it takes 11 M.D., the armor is destroyed and the character is left without armor, but he is not killed. The next shot, however, could be the killing blow.

Bandits who are quickly seeing what little armor they had being whittled away, are likely to either try to run away if they can, or surrender, throwing their weapons to the ground. Few people fight to the death and these bandits sure won't.

Capturing the Bandits

Any bandit who is cornered and fearful for his life will surrender and now the characters have one or more prisoners. This is another good opportunity for role-playing. Interrogating the prisoners has always been popular in most games because you never know what useful nuggets of information a prisoner might reveal. In this case, any of the green bandits, including the Corporal, are quick to spill their guts. All have some information that the player group will find useful. It is really up to the Game Master to parcel out bits of information. Here is what most of the bandits know and likely to share:

- They are all part of **Slasher's Mercenaries**.
- Slasher is their leader. He is a tough Juicer.
- They have no sorcerers in their group, only fighters.
- Only a few of their members are seasoned warriors, like Slasher.
- The bandits nor Slasher's Mercs have not kidnaped anyone.
- They were just trying to scare the characters into turning over some credits and other valuables.
- They are to report to Slasher about anyone heading into town that might have power armor, magic, or could be very powerful.
- Two of the bandits report to Slasher, in person, every day. They also check in on the radio in the Flying Titan power armor, twice a day.
- They do not go into town unless Slasher tells them to.
- They are waiting for further orders.
- They don't really know the Corporal, he is fairly new to the group. Slasher is their real leader.
- They have orders to shoot a Red dragon on site and inform Slasher, should that come to pass. They haven't seen any dragons

They know little else and none of them know who Lady Cleo is or what her plan may be. See below.

The Town of River Side

As the name suggests, the town is on the south side of a river running from northeast to southwest. There is a barge service for horses and small vehicles. The town also has the following amenities and shops.

Water recycling and distribution building. The river is polluted because it runs through the remains of a major pre-Rifts city. This pollutes the water with some radioactivity, plus there were a variety of chemical storage plants that have been leaking for years. The water recycling plant cleans the water through filtration and it is used by several towns in the area.

Brewery. This is where the beer and ale is made.

Grain and seed mill. This is an old pre-Rifts building that has been used over the years for a variety of things. Right now, it stores large quantities of grain and seed that are for sale or trade.

Pig Farm. This is the largest farm within town. All kinds of pork products are sold as well as fuel made from the pig waste.

Town Hall. The only new building in town and built within the last ten years. This is a large wooden building with two floors. This building serves as the office for the town mayor and his staff.

Operator Shop. Old man Cooper is the town's Operator. He can fix just about anything and has four assistants. If he's not in his shop he is at one of the farms fixing something. His rates are reasonable and he can repair Mega-Damage armor and recharge E-Clips.

River Side Pub. This is the best pub in town. They serve their own brand of beer, mead and moonshine. Drinks typically go for two or three credits. The pub has a dozen rooms for rent on the second floor. Renting a room runs 50 credits a night and includes breakfast.

Surrounding Orchards and Farms. Around the town are a dozen farms that grow everything from fruit to vegetables.

Upon Arriving in Town

There are very few people in sight and those who see the characters either run into their homes, closing the doors and shutters, or run to get Lady Cleo, the town's protector. This makes the place look like a ghost town. Most of the town's people do not trust strangers, even our well intended heroes. People will not be rude, but are clearly frightened. If pressed, they suggest that the group speak to Lady Cleo. There is an air of fear in the town and most people have been avoiding going outside.

Meeting Lady Cleo

Lady Cleo is very charming and speaks with an air of authority. Most of the townspeople trust her completely. She is very disturbed to learn that *Mary Stocks* was also victimized by this horrible beast which she readily confirms is a *Flame Wind Dragon*. Lady Cleo tells the player group that other children have gone missing as well, but alas, the town does not have the resources or manpower to face a powerful beast such as a dragon. She asks the player characters for their assistance in tracking down this monster. While she cannot offer much for a reward, she can offer repairs to their gear and the recharging of E-Clips, and they can keep and divide the dragon's entire treasure among themselves, if they are successful in slaying the dragon and bringing the children back safely. Naturally Sir Cross volunteers and asks the player group to join him.

To further encourage the group to track down the evil dragon, Lady Cleo, who is a Mystic (a psychic and a mage), offers the following: Using her "Mystic" powers she can tell them that the dragon has a *sizeable dragon hoard* and that the characters may claim it as their own as their reward for risking their lives. (More details on the dragon and treasure is are given below). Next, she says her psychic abilities tell her that some of the children are alive, but being mind controlled by the wicked dragon. As a result, they cannot be trusted and will probably lie for the dragon. Don't be fooled, she warns, the dragon is an evil beast that should be slain at first sight. Lady Cleo suggests the player group should do their best to sneak up on the dragon and attack him before he knows they are there. This dragon is very powerful and can teleport on top of the characters in an instant, so they should take no chances.

Finally, Lady Cleo provides the character with the location of the evil dragon that she has gleaned from her premonitions and dreams. The player characters should be able to get there in a few hours on foot or an hour with a vehicle. The terrain makes travel difficult for travel by vehicle. She also suggests that the group stays together and not try to face the dragon separately. This is something that Sir Cross absolutely agrees with.

Should the player group be tired from their trip, Lady Cleo can arrange for free lodgings and food for them. This is compliments of the town since the characters have so graciously agreed to help out.

If asked about bandits, Lady Cleo says she knows nothing about bandits. She does report that a small mercenary squad came through town a few days ago. They turned down her request to slay the dragon, drank and tore up the River Side Pub, before leaving. If they are in the area they have not been heard from in a couple of days.

Fire Fly, the Kidnaping Dragon

Getting to the lair of the evil dragon should not be too difficult. Again, the Game Master can have the players roll their skills such as Land Navigation and Detect Ambush. Since Lady Cleo provided the group with the dragon's location, finding it should not be much trouble.

From a good distance away (perhaps a mile or two), the player characters are able to spot a large dragon lying in a field, sunning itself. Not far from the dragon is a small tent village with six large tents. Near the tents are crates of food and water.

Further observation reveals a very strange site. There are children playing! Not only are they playing in and around the tents, several are actually playing on the back of the dragon. Some children can be seen climbing on the beast and sliding down its neck onto its back or down its sides. Some of the children seem to be tickling the dragon while another is right near its face talking with it. The dragon seems to be talking back and allowing the children to use it as a large jungle gym. All of the children seem to be in good health and well fed. Taking a count of the children (or using the Intelligence skill) reveals that all of the missing children are accounted for, along with several others – perhaps from other towns. Furthermore, the happy children do not seem to be in any kind of trance or obvious mind control. They seem like ordinary kids playing and having fun.

Options on Dealing with the Dragon

Attack? The Cyber-Knight, Sir Cross, will not agree to any attack that puts the children in harm's way. He insists no attack be made while the children are anywhere near the dragon. Instead, he will want to explore other options before settling on violence, and that includes talking to the dragon and the children. But first, he suggest they sneak around to see if there are any hidden dangers as they get closer, and what else might be inside those tents. If the players come up with a plan that keeps the children out of harm's way, Sir Cross may agree, but that seems possible only with stealth and more observation to find out what is going on. In short, the situation is not what anyone expected, and Sir Cross (and our player group?) wants to make sure he and the rest of the heroes have all the correct information before taking any action.

Should the player characters attack, Fire Fly takes a defensive posture to protect the children. He will put himself between the children and the player characters (yet another sign that the dragon

appears to mean them no harm). Furthermore, many of the children start to cry and do not want to leave the dragon's side. They shout to stop attacking, and plead for them not to hurt *their friend*.

Though Fire Fly fights, he does not take deadly action and it should become clear, quickly, that he does not want to hurt anyone. Instead, the dragon puts on a show of force and does his best to *scare away* intruders. This means he breathes fire – not directly at the characters, but over their heads, or in front of them, just enough so they can feel the heat, and yells threats such as, “Leave here now before I destroy you all!” Or, “I just ate the last group of adventurers that came through here, you don't want to be next!” The Game Master may wish to have the players roll Horror Factor for their characters as Fire Fly can appear quite ferocious and menacing, although the children do not seem frightened at all. Since the dragon bursts into flames, the Horror Factor is 14. Anyone who fails the save loses initiative (the last one to attack) and loses one melee attack for the first combat round, but here is the catch: Fire Fly does not attack first, but breathes fire and threatens the characters without hurting anyone. He only gets physical when he is attacked directly or one of the children is threatened. The player characters only see the dragon's true fury when someone hurts one of the children.

Parlay: Fire Fly is surprised at being tracked down, and may initially activate his flaming aura to scare the intruders. However, so long as they do not attack him or the children, the dragon is willing to talk. He scoots any nearby children away to a safe distance even though they do not want to leave his side, and asks them to go into their tents and be good. Fire Fly is prepared to hear what the player characters have to say. While he may be a little naive, he does know right from wrong, and that Cyber-Knights, and those who travel with them, generally do good deeds and tend to work for the greater good.

Naturally, Sir Cross will guide the characters into talking with Fire Fly and trying to resolve the situation without violence.

See *The Scoop*, below, for more information on what has been going on.

The Scoop

Ok, this is for the Game Master's eyes only to read. If you are one of the players, knowing this can spoil the adventure for you. So read at your own risk!

Fire Fly is the dragon responsible for kidnapping the children and taking the food stores. He had been living in the town's orphanage for months, disguised as one of the children. He is just a Dragon Hatchling who, for the first couple years of his life, lived among a group of peaceful, loving and kind humans who named him and helped to raise him with good morals. His adopted human family was killed when a disease ravaged their village. Missing contact with people, Fire Fly found the town of River Side and decided to spend some time there. He pretended to be one of the orphans in town, while he fancied himself as the town's secret and unofficial protector. Whenever he saw a threat, he tried to deal with it himself. Being a dragon, there is not much that scares him, but he is still a hatchling and some things are just beyond what he can cope with.

Things went wrong when he discovered that Lady Cleo was a more experienced dragon with some powerful cohorts. From what he could tell, they are slavers who take innocent people prisoner and sell them to the monstrous *Splugorth* in Atlantis. This time, however, disguised as a human, *Lady Cleo* is trying to worm her

way into taking over the town of River Side. When she found out the town had a secret dragon defender, Lady Cleo decided to eliminate the competition in a very clever and sinister manner.

In her own dragon form, she approached the town as if threatening to attack it. Fire Fly was quick to respond and leapt into the air in his dragon form. Lady Cleo feigned defeat and fled, but now she knew what Fire Fly looked like. With that information in mind, she lured Fire Fly away and returned to the town *disguised as him*, demanding tribute in the form of gold, weapons and any valuables. Even with his good intentions of defending the town, he is only four years old and he does not know how to chase the imposter away. He would fight her, but he knows she is much more experienced, powerful and dangerous. Furthermore, Fire Fly knows the people now fear him, thanks to the imposter, and doesn't know how to explain what is going on. Meanwhile, Lady Cleo has ingratiated herself as the town's advisor, claiming she should be able to negotiate with the evil dragon and make him go away. Nobody realizes Lady Cleo and the evil dragon are one in the same. Only Fire Fly and some of the children under his care know the truth. So he mostly stays away trying to watch over the town from a distance and caring for the children he freed from the Slavers. He dares not let them go back home, because Lady Cleo is likely to sell them back into slavery ... or worse.

Back at town, disguised as a human Mystic, Lady Cleo has laid down a foundation of lies and fear about how the “evil dragon” was there to eat their children and destroy the town. But not to be afraid, she would protect them. Provided they made her the leader of the town and showed her the trust she had earned. With her powers of persuasion and charm, she has gotten the townspeople to agree, and now she's in charge. Of course, she blames the disappearance of children and anyone who goes missing on the “evil dragon,” even though she is the one who has been snatching children and selling them to slavers.

The truth is, it has been Fire Fly rescuing the children from a terrible fate, sometimes sneaking into the slavers' camp to whisk the children to safety without a fight, other times fighting and slaying the slavers, before being able to free all of their captives. Before Lady Cleo could do any more harm, Fire Fly started taking children from the outskirts of town to keep them safe. This only caused the townspeople to panic all the more, and Lady Cleo has used that fear to keep them under her thumb.

She had planned to bring in her mercenary force to capture them all, loot their homes, and sell the townspeople to slavers. Then, she discovered *silver!* The precious metal is nearly as valuable as gold in North America due to the war against the vampires in the south and the fact that many demons are vulnerable to the metal. As a result, Lady Cleo plans to have her mercs force the townspeople to do the mining, as her slaves.

The discovery of silver and Cleo's sinister plans are all a well-kept secret, and Fire Fly knows nothing of them. In the meantime, Fire Fly continues to rescue children and orphans (the other kids saved from the slavers) and protect the town from a distance as best as he can.

At first, Fire Fly was a nuisance, but now he is becoming a serious problem. He has eluded her merc assassins, and regularly raids and destroys her hired mercenary company's vehicles, gear and supplies. Things have gotten to the point where he has scared off half of the mercs and is a constant pain in her side. Now, one of the townspeople has gone off and brought a Cyber-Knight and his friends to investigate. Cunning in the extreme, Cleo hopes to

use these “heroes” to her advantage, and trick them into killing the heroic Fire Fly, and eliminate her rival once and for all.

Lady Cleo has only recently learned of where Fire Fly was hiding with the children, and hopes the arrival of the heroes spells his doom. When Fire Fly is dead and the heroes go on their way, Cleo plans to call in her mercenary force to help her subdue the town and force them to mine the silver. The children and people who refuse to cooperate will be sold to nearby Splugorth Slavers. Naturally, before all the mercs could get in place to execute this plan, the player characters arrived! **Note:** Only Lady Cleo, and two of the children who showed her the silver ore they found, know about the existence of the silver vein. She’ll clue the mercs in later.

That’s the situation. With a little diplomacy, communication and luck, the heroes will figure this all out and fight the real villain in this story. If nothing else, talking to Fire Fly and the children should reveal that he is a good, kind dragon and the friend and protector of the children. But in the course of befriending and talking to the kids, the mention of the glittering stone and how Lady Cleo told them not to tell anyone about it, not even their Mommy or Daddy, should come out in good role-playing.

As for Fire Fly, he has been doing his best to pester her and disrupt Lady Cleo’s plans, whatever they are, but his first concern is for the children who he sees as his friends and playmates. After all, Fire Fly is very much a child himself. As he rescued and gathered more and more children, he needed to get them food, warm blankets, tents and other supplies, which is why he has been stealing such supplies from the town, neighboring communities and adventurers. The two dozen or so children he has rescued are safe and sound, and enjoy the large, fiery dragon who they consider to be their best friend and protector. Just like a kid, Fire Fly plays with them, takes them for rides, tells them stories and lets them play all over him. He has promised to return the children who have parents to their homes, but not until he can figure out how to get rid of “the Bad Lady” – Lady Cleo. The children know she is bad, and stay willingly with Fire Fly, because they are afraid if they go home and accuse her of wrongdoing, she will hurt their parents and siblings. Neither Fire Fly nor the children know that Lady Cleo is a dragon herself, but they do know she is not what she seems, that she is the wicked one, and that she is more powerful than she seems.

Fire Fly still acts and thinks like a young child himself. He has not yet developed the sense to simply ask for help, himself. He thinks it is up to him to save everyone, and if that means kidnapping the kids and bringing them back to a safe place, then that’s what he will do. In the meantime, Lady Cleo is going to use his actions to her advantage to keep the townspeople scared and under her control until she can hire more mercs, enslave the people, take over the town and hold control over the secret silver mine.

What happens next depends on the player characters. Once Fire Fly learns that the characters are noble adventurers, he will tell them everything that he knows. He feels responsible for the children, and will only bring them back to town once Lady Cleo leaves and her mercs are sent packing. He will stay and watch the children if the characters will agree to help. All the characters need to do is convince Lady Cleo and her cohorts to leave. The heroes have the upper hand and could return to town and openly confront Lady Cleo, launch a surprise attack, or sneak in and try to kidnap her and deal with her away from town! Or they could be even sneakier. There are all kinds of tricks and traps they could lay for Lady Cleo, and they have Fire Fly (and the kids) as an ally.

Returning to Town

If the group is careful and sneaky, they may get the jump on Lady Cleo. Even then, she is a cunning and wicked dragon, and she will not go down without a fight.

If the heroes are careless, and Lady Cleo learns the group has joined up with Fire Fly and they are coming for her, she and her mercenaries will be waiting for them, armed and ready for a fight.

In this scenario, getting back to town is easy and should be without incident. Just outside of town, the player characters notice several columns of dense black smoke. These signs suggest someone is in trouble. Sure enough, the player group finds several buildings on fire. *Old Man Cooper* and some of his workers are trying to put out the blaze in his Operator’s shop and garage on the outskirts of town. The buildings were set ablaze by some mercenaries he caught trying to steal supplies. Cooper is hurt and barely able to stay on his feet. There are several things that can be done here using skills that the characters possess.

First Aid or Paramedic Skills: Use of these skills can help revive Old Man Cooper. He is suffering from laser burns and smoke inhalation. Simply by pulling him out of the building and getting him fresh air will help him start to recover. If the player characters fail in their medical rolls, magic can be used to heal him. Failing that, Old Man Cooper has an IRMSS (Internal Robot Medical Surgeon System), which when applied (no roll needed), can restore 2D6 Hit Points and help him breathe better.

His concern is saving his home, garage and business. The fire in these building can be brought under control quickly with the help of the player group.

Firefighting: Any characters with this skill can use it to put out the fires. This will take a little while – at least an hour – but our heroes arrive in time to quell the flames before they get too out of hand. Also, it reveals some additional equipment that the characters can use against the bad guys.

After the fire is put out, Old Man Cooper tells the player characters about “the bandits,” but he insists Lady Cleo was there too, and that she transformed into a large, cat-like dragon! She did this. She set the fire as soon as the bandits rolled off with the supplies they came for. Then, something hit him on the head (like the rifle butt from a merc he did not see), and he was left for dead. His workers arrived in time to pull him to safety and begin fighting the fire. Now that the fire is out and the workers have a moment to think, they report having heard some shouting and gunfire in town before the player group arrived. They fear the mercenaries may have moved on to raid the town. The workers know nothing about a cat-like dragon or Lady Cleo being responsible for the fire. Old Man Cooper would like to think he is mistaken, but he is sure Lady Cleo is involved in all of this.

Additional Equipment for the Battle

Through the course of helping Old Man Cooper or put out the fire, the characters come across a large barn behind the Operator’s repair shop. Inside he has a few vehicles and some equipment that the heroes may use with his permission against the mercs and Lady Cleo. Old Man Cooper encourages the characters to borrow whatever they need so long as they can help the townspeople. He initially considers the equipment on loan, but if the player characters rescue the town, he may consider it a reward for their efforts in saving the town and its residents.

- 1 Mountaineer ATV.
- 1 Big Boss ATV.

- 3 Highway-man Motorcycles.
- 1 case of mini-missiles. It contains a mix of 6 Armor Piercing and 6 Plasma mini-missiles. Damage is 1D4x10 M.D. and 1D6x10 M.D. respectively.
- 2 NG-202 Rail Guns, each with two 1,200 round belts (that's 30 bursts per belt). Damage is 1D4 M.D. for a single round or 1D4x10 for a 40 round burst. Range is 4,000 feet (1,219 m).
- Additional suits of armor. There are enough suits of armor that the characters can effectively replace any damaged parts. This will bring their armor up to full M.D.C. if previously damaged.
- A dozen charged E-Clips. This should top off any spent ammo.

Note to the Game Master: You should leave it up to the players to figure out how they divvy up the equipment to their characters. The vehicles are there so the player characters can quickly catch up to the mercs, and have the extra firepower and reloads they are likely to need in the battle ahead. Additionally, the rail guns can be mounted on top of the Mountaineer and Big Boss.

Catching up with the Mercs

Game Masters may want to have anyone with the Tracking skill make a roll. Finding the trail the mercs took will be easy. There are obvious tracks of at least two large, three-wheeled vehicles (Mountaineer ATVs) heading for town. Other tracks seem to indicate a Big Boss ATV and a few motorcycles. On a failed roll, the types of vehicles are unknown, but the path that the bandits/mercs took is still very obvious.

Defeating the Mercenaries

How do the characters defeat the remainder of the mercenary force and Lady Cleo? It certainly won't be easy, but at least the characters won't have to face both the mercs and the dragon together. Lady Cleo has gone ahead, flying in her dragon form, to make arrangements to sell the silver she plans on the townspeople mining. That just leaves the merc leader, his second in command, and the rest of his soldiers; one or two dozen first level Mercenary Fighters. **Note:** Lady Cleo will come back at some point (G.M. discretion), but if her mercenaries are slain, defeated or chased away, she is not likely to put up too much of a fight. However, she will test the mettle of the group. If they and Fire Fly, prove too dangerous, she is likely to abandon the town and the silver mine — for now. She could become a reoccurring villain.

The player characters should once again have the advantage on the bad guys, especially if they use stealth tactics, to pick the mercs off one by one as they round up the townspeople and set up a defensive perimeter.

As a Game Master, you never know what the players are going to try to do. Let them come up with a plan of their own. We encourage Game Masters to work with the players. Let them be the stars of the show. If the plan has any chance of working then go for it. Use Sir Cross as a sounding board to help guide them. "That sounds like an excellent plan," says the Cyber-Knight. "I don't know about that idea. It seems too risky to me."

You cannot always anticipate what people are going to do. Even after running Palladium games for decades, we still get surprised from time to time, and we love it! I always award extra experience points when the players think of something I didn't, especially if it works to help further the story. The key is being flexible and being able to think quickly on your feet. Or if you

need to take a few moments to think over what the players propose, do so. You and they will find it a far more rewarding game when it's the players calling the shots because it allows them that moment of glory when it was their plan that helped saved the day.

Here are four possible ways to do this (that I see), but there are others, and we suggest that the Game Master remain open to any plan the players come up with for their characters. If they are unsure, Sir Cross can suggest a strategy if the characters don't know what to do.

1. Ambush: Once the characters get in range the characters should be able to sneak around and get in close to pick them off a few at a time or to simultaneously attack several positions and catch the bad guys off guard. Or the group may be able to tell that the villains are gathering the townspeople up, pulling them out their beds and herding them like cattle to one particular location, and the heroes are able to set up an ambush/crossfire to either take down the bad guys or leverage them to surrender. However, taking their weapons and letting them go, might see them return for a grudge match. **Note:** The townspeople join the fight to save their town at the first opportunity.

2. Use Fire Fly as a Decoy: The dragon attacks, drawing the bad guy's attention and fire. While the mercs are busy fighting or chasing Fire Fly (they know Lady Cleo wants him dead), the heroes sneak in to a) rescue the townspeople held captive, and b) attack the bad guys from behind.

Another decoy approach could also involve our heroes playing dumb and coming back to town with Fire Fly on a flat truck (one of Old Man's Cooper's trucks), seeming dead. Maybe even covered in animal blood. When the mercs come out to inspect the dead dragon, everyone jumps them, including the very much alive Fire Fly.

3. Nighttime Surprise Attack: Our heroes wait, watch and quietly move into position. They wait to attack until half of the bad guys are asleep and the other half are drowsy and not alert. The player group automatically gets the initiative (no roll necessary) and have first strike. Good luck.

4. Blitzkrieg! Our heroes come in charging, guns blazing. This is all-out war! Meanwhile, it is Fire Fly who either sneaks in to rescue the captive townspeople, who join the fight for their town, or who charges in from the rear. Either way, the heroes have the element of surprise, maybe even terror — nobody expected the dragon to be fighting along side of the heroes (except, maybe, Lady Cleo). Again, our heroes have initiative, the bad guys need to roll a successful Horror Factor save of 16 or higher. A failed roll means each merc also loses one melee attack and G.M.s should roll for morale on a D20. 1-10 means half of the henchmen freak out and run for the hills!

Whether Lady Cleo is still in town or returns during or at the end of this initial battle is up to the G.M. Just make it dramatic.

Lady Cleo is evil and cruel, but she is a survivor and if her mercs are routed and the odds are against her, she may cut her losses, turn tail and leave. HOWEVER, not before she tests the mettle of her enemies in combat. When she is down to half her M.D.C., the evil dragon flees and is likely never to return. But the only way to be certain she never hurts anyone again is to slay her.

The Mercenaries

Game Masters, remember, most of the bad guys are new and inexperienced, first level characters. Those bandits encountered earlier are part of this mercenary group. Only their leader and the

next in command have any experience and real fighting prowess. Everyone else is a first level mercenary with a meager bit of M.D.C. armor and maybe one Mega-Damage weapon. This gives most people on Rifts Earth a major power trip because most people do not have such Mega-Damage weapons and armor. Game Masters can use the same stats for the mercs that were listed under the bandits encountered earlier. Those bandits were really part of Lady Cleo's mercenary band, which also means there are two for every one player character, plus the Corporal, unless they were run off or killed at the beginning of the adventure. If that is the case, there are only eight mercs and their leaders. There are two each in the two Mountaineer ATVs, two mercs in the Big Boss ATV and two mercs on Highwayman motorcycles. The squad leader has a Speedster Hovercycle with a laser and two mini-missile launchers.

Game Masters, feel free to adjust the number of bad guys, but keep in mind that their leader is going to be tough all by himself. So don't add too many mercenaries, just enough to make it a challenge.

The townsfolk are being kept in the brewery and are easy to set free once the merc guarding them is taken down. The people are to be a huge help, but some stay out of the way and those strong enough join the fight to save their town.

It is up to the Game Master and how well this adventure goes as to whether or not Lady Cleo returns and joins the battle. This could be awesome, or too much to handle. If the fight against the mercs goes fast and easy, we say bring her back for the big, climatic show down between her and the player characters, while Fire Fly protects the townspeople.

The Aftermath of the Adventure

The town's people will be eternally grateful. Everyone knew that a life of slavery and misery awaited them, if not for the heroes. Plus many are reunited with their children. The actual orphans are happily given homes with various families, and the player characters are allowed to keep the gear they got from Old Man Cooper. There is little in the way of a reward that can be offered. The town is able to scrape together 20,000 credits to give to the heroes if they want it. Sir Cross declines the generous offer, as these are poor people who need the money more than he. The player characters may follow his lead or take the money, but they should do so as a group, no one individual should get the 20,000 credits. Of course, they can visit any time and enjoy free food, room and board, so the group may have a base of operations as long as they are in the area and whenever they return.

As for the silver: Option One: There is none. Or at least not much. River Side's elders know about the old silver mine, and every once in a while, a few nuggets or a new, small vein is discovered, but the mine is pretty much played out. There is never much silver to be found. The greedy, Lady Cleo did not know this.

Option Two: The townspeople are going to be rich! Keeping the silver mine and the profits for themselves will be difficult, but they now have Fire Fly and the Cyber-Knight to be their protectors. With a little luck, River Side will grow and prosper. As for the player characters, the grateful townspeople offer *the group* a small percentage in the mine, enough to provide each character with 2D4x10,000 credits annually, for as long as the mine holds out. (That could be a couple of years or a couple of decades; G.M. discretion.) A very nice stipend for a day or two's work. It also

gives the characters a vested interest in keeping the town and mine safe, now and in the future.

Old Man Cooper also lets the characters keep the items they took from his shop as a reward, plus he'll fix up anything that was damaged as a final reward. The characters will be forever known as the Defenders of River Side and will even be able to call a dragon hatchling and a noble Cyber-Knight their friends. Should the characters ever need shelter or food in the future, they will always be welcomed and treated like heroes in River Side.

Non-Player Characters (NPCs)



Lady Cleo – Villain

Spectra, Cat's Eye Dragon Hatchling

Lady Cleo is an evil, opportunistic predator who only seeks to profit from others. Like a cat, she turns most of these ventures into a game, and plays until she grows tired of it. Once she becomes bored of it all and loses interest, she walks away, often leaving devastation in her wake.

She is a Cat's Eye Dragon who, like many dragons, believes she is smarter and stronger than humans and D-Bees, which means she uses them as she desires. Mostly, she sees them as a means to an end and as playthings. This also means she often underestimates them. Cunning, but lazy, when one of schemes starts to crumble or she faces too much stiff competition, she gives up and moves on to find a new opportunity and people to torment. Cleo is not likely to fight to the death, fleeing (if she can) when her M.D.C. is reduced by half.

Real Name: Spectra.
Alignment: Miscreant evil.
Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 15, M.A. 17, P.S. 23, P.P. 19, P.E. 19, P.B. 20, Spd 25 (85 flying).
Armor/M.D.C.: 497 M.D.C. This is natural armor for a dragon that Bio-Regenerates quickly, so she is a tough adversary.
Hit Points: Not applicable.
Weight: 6 tons.
Height: 30 feet (9.1 m) from the tip of her snout to the end of her tail.
Age: 120
P.P.E.: 90. **I.S.P.:** 79.
Level of Experience: Six.
Skills: Appraise Goods 55%, Astronomy & Navigation 55%, Gemology 40%, Language: Dragonese 98%, Language: American 55%, Literacy: Dragonese 98%, Lore: Magic 65%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 55%, Mathematics: Basic 60%.
Natural Abilities: Fly, nightvision 6,000 feet (1829 m), see the invisible, turn invisible at will, resistant to Fire and Cold (M.D. does half damage), Bio-Regenerate 1D10 per melee round, Metamorphosis for 6 hours, Teleport 32% up to 5 miles (8 km) away.
Cat's Eye Gaze (special): She can charm up to 9 people. This power cannot be used during combat.
Fire Breath (special): 3D6 M.D. to a 6 foot (1.8 m) area. Range is 60 feet (18 m) and can be used up to three times per melee.
Other Attacks and Damage: Punch 2D6+2 M.D., Claw Swipe 4D6+2 M.D., Kick 3D6+2 M.D., Tail Slap 3D6+2 M.D., Wing Attack 2D6+2, Bite 2D6, and Crush 2D6 M.D.
Psionics: Clairvoyance (4), Mind Block (4), Object Read (6), See Aura (6), and Telepathy (4).
Magic Spell Knowledge: Armor of Ithan (10), Befuddle (6), Blinding Flash (1), Chameleon (6), Cleanse (6), Death Trance (1; self), Energy Bolt (5), Electric Arc (8), Extinguish Fire (4), Fear (Horror Factor: 16) (5), Fire Ball (10), Globe of Daylight (2), Ley Line Transmission (30), and Thunderclap (4).
Attacks per Melee: Four.
Bonuses: +4 to Perception Rolls, +4 on initiative, +5 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge, +5 to pull punch, +4 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, +5 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to save vs psionics, mind control and possession, and +1 on all other saving throws.
Weapons and Equipment: Lady Cleo has a fancy wardrobe. Hidden far away in her lair is a small treasure trove from her years of conquests. She has 120,000 credits in various black market weapons and armor and 30,000 universal credits. Whether the player group finds her lair is up to the G.M. Whether they keep it all or leave some for the townspeople is up to the player group.



Alignment: Miscreant.
Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 12, M.A. 17, P.S. 29, P.P. 20, P.E. 28, P.B. 8, Spd 90.
Armor: 53 M.D.C. from heavy Juicer Assassin Plate Armor, non-environmental.
Hit Points: 78
S.D.C.: 432
Weight: 210 pounds (94.5 kg).
Height: 6 feet, 2 inches (1.85 m).
Age: 26
Level: 4th level Juicer.
Skills: Acrobatics (Sense of Balance 90%, Walk Tightrope 84%, Climb Rope 98%, Back Flip 90%), Boxing, Climbing 81/71%, Detect Ambush 50%, Detect Concealment 45%, Intelligence 49%, Language: Native Tongue 98%, Language: Dragonese 75%, Language: Spanish 75%, Land Navigation 53%, Physical Labor, Pilot: Automobile 68%, Pilot: Hovercycles, Pilot: Sky Cycles & Rocket Bikes 89%, Pilot: Motorcycles & Snowmobiles 82%, Prowl 60%, Radio: Basic 70%, Recognize Weapon Quality 50%, Running, Swimming 75%, Wilderness Survival 50%, W.P. Knife, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, W.P. Heavy M.D. Weapon, W.P. Sword, Hand to Hand: Expert, and Kick Boxing.
Attacks per Melee: Eight.
Bonuses of Note: +2 to Perception Rolls, +4 to initiative, +5 to strike, +8 to parry and dodge, +5 to auto-dodge, +6 to pull punch, +5 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, +4 to disarm, +4 to save vs psionics, +6 to save vs mind control, +15 to save vs toxic gases, poisons and drugs, +7 to save vs magic, +46% to save vs coma/death, kick attack 1D8, Round House Kick 3D6 S.D.C., Leap Kick 3D8, Axe Kick 2D8 S.D.C. Knee Strike 1D8 S.D.C.
Weapons: Like all Juicers, Slasher prefers a *Juicer Assassin's JA-11 energy rifle* and 5 E-Clips (long); 30 shots per E-Clip with 30 shots reserve in a built-in back up canister. The JA-11 has multiple firing options. It has *two laser settings*, one that does 2D6 M.D. the other 4D6 M.D., both with a range of 4,000 feet

Mercenary Villains

Slasher

– Juicer and Mercenary Leader

Slasher is a power-hungry warmonger. He loves the power of being a Juicer and the power of commanding others. As far as he is concerned, Lady Cleo is a means to more power and he has no problem following her orders, for now.

(1219 m) and is +1 to strike via its laser targeting. It can also fire an *ion beam* that does 3D6 with a range of 1,600 feet (488 m), or it can fire a 7.62mm round that inflicts 1D6x10 S.D.C. damage and has a range of 2,000 feet (610 m); single shot, requiring each round to be hand-loaded.

He also has a NG-57 Heavy-Duty Ion Blaster that does either 2D4 or 3D6 M.D. per blast (it has two settings), with a range of 500 feet (152 m) and 10 shots per clip with 6 clips total; and a Vibro-Blade that does 1D6 M.D. **Note:** Because Slasher is level 4, he is +2 to strike using all his energy weapons. This is in addition to any bonuses from the weapon as well as the +2 applied to aimed shots.

Equipment of Note: A Bio-comp and bio-data implants, a drug harness and drug supply, optic helmet, portable IRMS kit, camouflage and grey fatigues, boots with knife holster, gloves, backpack, utility belt, sunglasses, and compass.

Note: Slasher has 28,000 universal credits and several black market items with a total worth of 55,000 credits.

Sergeant “Sarge” McCalister

– Pigman/Heavy Weapons Expert

Sarge McCalister is a no-nonsense military man. He loves the smell of plasma in the morning. He is the type to fire first and ask questions later. He is not evil, but he is self-serving and always watches out for Number One, him.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 15, M.A. 20, P.S. 25, P.P. 12, P.E. 24, P.B. 11, Spd 21.

Armor: 60 M.D.C.; Bushman armor.

Hit Points: 40

S.D.C.: 50

Weight: 250 pounds of muscle.

Height: 6 feet (1.8 m).

Age: 30

Level of Experience: 3rd level.

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +6 to parry and dodge, +3 to pull punch, +5 to roll with impact/fall, +2 to disarm, +8 S.D.C. damage, +4 to save vs magic/poison and +14% to save vs coma/death. When firing his E-Pistols the Sarge is +2 to strike and +1 with E-Rifles.

Skills: Language: Native Tongue 98%, Language: Spanish 70%, Climbing 60/50%, Computer Operation 60%, General Athletics, Mathematics: Basic 60%, Military Etiquette 55%, Radio Basic 65%, Running, Sign Language 40%, Recognize Weapon Quality 55%, Weapon Systems 60%, W.P. Knife, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, W.P. Rifles, W.P. Heavy Military Weapons, W.P. Heavy Energy Weapons, Hand to Hand: Expert, Camouflage 25%, Boxing, Wrestling, Prowl 25%.

Weapons: Sarge carries a Vibro-Knife 1D6 M.D., NG-57 Northern Gun Heavy-Duty Ion Blaster that does either 2D4 or 3D6 M.D. per blast (it has two settings). It has a range of 500 feet (152 m) and 10 shots per clip and has 5 clips total, C-12 Heavy Assault Laser Rifle that does 2D6 M.D. on a single shot or 6D6 M.D. on a burst of 3 shots or setting three which does 6D6 S.D.C. Range is 2,000 feet (610 m) and the C-12 has clip that holds 30 single shots or 10 bursts. Six S.D.C. shots equal one M.D. blast. Has six clips total and the C-12 is +1 on Aimed shots. Finally Sarge has a C-27 Heavy Plasma Cannon. It does

6D6 M.D. per shot, has a range of 1,600 feet (488 m) and a payload of 10 shots in its internal canister. The C-27 is +1 on an Aimed shot.

Equipment of Note: Military fatigues, a suit of CA-1 Dead Boy Body armor 80 M.D.C. -10% to prowling and other physical skills, three flares, two smoke grenades, survival knife, disposable cigarette lighter, air filter and gas mask, and walkie-talkie.

Money: Sarge has 4,000 credits and a few Black Market items worth 20,000 credits.

The Other Mercenaries

Remember those “bandits?” Well, they were really part of Lady Cleo’s shabby mercenary army.

The Corporal – Robot Pilot – 2nd level – See the First Encounter.

All are Level One Mercenary Fighter O.C.C.s: For stats, see the First Encounter for your “average bandit.”

Notable Equipment: See Bandits in the First Encounter with Bandits. Plus they have 2 Mountaineer ATVs, 2 Big Boss ATVs, two motorcycles and one hovercycle, in addition to those vehicles described or listed under a specific character.

The Good Guys

Fire Fly

The Flame Wind Dragon Hatchling, A Friendly NPC

Fire Fly is really a big kid at heart and still loves to run and play with the local children. He has a soft spot for children, especially orphans, and families (he never knew his mom or dad). Fire Fly can, at times, be a bit childish and a prankster, and he used to love to use his shape-changing ability to cause a little mischief here and there, but overall, he is a kind, gentle and caring dragon who genuinely feels concern for the people he knows and cares about.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 17, M.E. 21, M.A. 22, P.S. 19, P.P. 26, P.E. 21, P.B. 18, Spd 21 (100 flying).

Hit Points: Not applicable.

Armor/M.D.C.: 230

Weight: 6 tons.

Height: 30 feet (9.1 m) from the tip of his snout to the end of his tail.

Age: Four years old.

P.P.E.: 103

I.S.P.: 62

Level of Experience: Three.

Skills: Language: Dragonese 98%, Literacy: Dragonese 98%, Mathematics: Basic 60%, Lore: Fairies and Creatures of Magic 57%, Language: American 47%, Land Navigation 50%, Performance 43%, and Sing 48%.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 100 feet (30.5 m), thermal vision (allowing him to see the heat within an object and gauge the object’s temperature 58%, 300 feet (91.5 m), turn invisible at will, impervious to fire (takes no damage from normal or M.D. fire and plasma), prehensile tail, and can bio-regenerate 1D10 M.D.C. per melee round. Fire Fly can metamorphosis (takes two attacks or half a melee) into any living creature except insects for up three hours per day.

Teleport (special): 29% up to five miles (8 km) away and can teleport once every other melee round. On a failed roll, nothing happens.

Flaming Scales (special): Fire Fly can cause his scales to burst into flames. He takes no damage from this, but does inflict an extra 2D6 M.D. damage from claw and tail attacks. He can maintain the flames for three minutes before needing a ten minute rest.

Fire Breath (special): 4D6 M.D. to a six foot (1.8 m) wide area. He can hit several opponents at once (2-6) simultaneously. Range is 100 feet (30.5 m). Instead of a Fire Breath he can fire small goutts of flames up to 300 feet (91.5 m) away and each does 2D6 M.D. The fire breath can be used as often as desired and both attacks take one melee action each.

Other Combat and Damage: Punch 1D6+2 M.D., Claw Swipe 1D6+10 M.D., Kick 2D6+2 M.D., Tail Slap 2D6+2 M.D., Wing Attack 1D6+2, Bite 2D4, and Crush 1D6 M.D.

Attacks per Melee: Four.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +8 to strike, +10 to parry and dodge, +5 to pull punch, +4 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, +4 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to save vs magic and illusions, and +1 on all other saving throws.

Psionics: Deaden Pain (4), Healing Touch (6), Increased Healing (10), Induce Sleep (4), Stop Bleeding (4), and Suppress Fear (8).

Spell Knowledge: Armor of Ithan (10), Blinding Flash (1), Cloud of Smoke (2), Befuddle (6), Chameleon (6), Extinguish Fire (4), and Invisibility: Simple (6).

Weapons and Equipment: Other than a small selection of kid's clothes, Fire Fly uses no other equipment or weapons and relies on his natural abilities. He does have a small treasure hoard of items he has collected over the years. He has a variety of items, including toys, and an E-Clip that have a total value of 7,000 credits. His prize possession is a blue sapphire gem worth 5,000 credits. His treasure is hidden in a cave that is difficult to find and would require rappelling.

Sir Michael Cross

Noble Cyber-Knight NPC Helper

Michael Cross is a noble knight through and through. He has a good heart and tends to be a bit paternal when it comes to younger people and he always has a word of encouragement or advice to offer.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 22, M.A. 20, P.S. 24, P.P. 18, P.E. 20, P.B. 14, Spd 24.

Armor: 80 M.D.C. Cyber-Armor, plus 95 M.D.C. from Crusader body armor worn over the Cyber-Armor (-15% to Climb, Prowl and Swim).

Hit Points: 58

S.D.C.: 80

Weight: 200 pounds (90 kg).

Height: 6 feet (1.8 m).

Age: 39

P.P.E.: 26

I.S.P.: 61

Level of Experience: 6th level Cyber-Knight.

Skills: Anthropology 70%, Body Building, Climbing 75/65%, Fencing, Gymnastics, Horsemanship: Cyber-Knight 90/70%,

Land Navigation 68%, Literacy: American 85%, Language: American & Dragonese 98%, Language: Spanish 98%, Language: Euro 98%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 50%, Lore: Faeries & Creatures of Magic 50%, Paramedic 75%, Swimming 85%, and Tracking (People) 50%, W.P. Sword, W.P. Blunt, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, Boxing, Kick Boxing, Running, Athletics, Wrestling, W.P. Shield, W.P. Axe, and W.P. Heavy M.D. Weapons.

Attacks per Melee: Seven.

Bonuses: +4 to initiative, +4 to strike, +8 to parry and dodge, +5 to pull punch, +7 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, +2 to disarm, +2 to entangle, +8 to S.D.C. damage, kick attack, and karate punch. +5 to save vs psionics and needs a 7 or higher to save on psionic attacks, +4 to save vs magic and poison, +3 to Perception Rolls.

Cybernetics: Cyber Armor: Shoulders (2) – 9 M.D.C. each, Back/Shoulder Blades (2) – 9 M.D.C. each, Forearms (2) – 11 M.D.C. each, Thighs/Upper Legs (2) – 16 M.D.C. each, Chest Plate (main body) – 56 M.D.C. Armor Rating 16.

Equipment of Note: A set of dress clothes, a set of dark clothes for covert operations, a gas mask and air filter, tinted goggles, hatchet for cutting wood, a survival knife (1D6 S.D.C. damage), 4 wooden stakes, a handheld silver cross, first-aid kit with extra bandages and antiseptics, suture thread, painkillers, tent, knapsack, backpack, saddlebags, two canteens, emergency rations for two weeks, and a Geiger counter.

Weapons: Sir Cross has a L-20 Pulse Rifle that does 2D6 M.D. per blast or 6D6 M.D. for a burst, and has 40 single shots or 13 burst per E-Clip; range is 1,600 feet (488 m). Cross has four E-Clips total. He also has a NG-57 Heavy-Duty Ion Blaster that does either 2D4 or 3D6 M.D. per blast (it has two settings), range is 500 feet (152 m) and it has 10 shots per E-Clip; 4 clips total for the pistol. Also has a Vibro-Sword 2D6 M.D. damage. He has a spare suit of Urban Warrior Armor with 50 M.D.C. (-5% to Climb, Prowl and Swim).

Money: Has 35,000 in Universal Credits and 8,000 worth of trade goods.

The Player Characters

Below is a selection of pre-generated characters that your players can just pluck out of the book and use. Please feel free to make photocopies and pass them around. Use all, use some or create your own. Game Master who already own the **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** can allow their players to make their own characters if desired. Character creation is discussed in the **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** starting on page 279. Game Masters should also feel free to include any additional characters below as NPCs to help round out your group. HOWEVER, since the point of the **Rifts® Primer** is to jump right in and start playing, a selection of “pre-made” characters is the easy way to go.

It should be noted for those already familiar with Rifts® that these characters were made rules light, that is they don't have every power, skill and ability of their RUE counterparts. This was done intentionally for ease of using this module as an intro game.

Here is a quick breakdown of the various character statistics. Each character has a name and next to the name is their Occupational Character Class. **The O.C.C.** is what the character is and does. For example, a Police Officer or Fire Fighter would be an O.C.C. in our modern world.

Alignment: This is the character's moral center. Good Characters are Principled and Scrupulous, Selfish characters are Unprincipled and Anarchist, and Evil characters are Aberrant, Miscreant, and Diabolic. A detail explanation on alignments can be found in the **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**.

Armor/M.D.C.: In a Mega-Damage environment like Rifts Earth, character's need M.D.C. body armor, power armor, robot vehicle or some kind of magical or psychic protection to survive. Armor is usually listed under *Equipment*. Available magic or psionic protection such as Armor of Ithan or Telekinetic Force Field will be listed under the stat heading of Magic or Psionics. When all M.D.C. armor is gone, damage comes off the character's Hit Points and S.D.C., and few characters can handle more than one or two points of M.D.C. before being atomized by the M.D. blast.

Attacks per Melee: As described earlier, each combat round or "melee" is 15 seconds. The attacks per melee are the number of attacks or actions a character can take in that span of time.

Attributes: These values determine the mental and physical characteristics of the character. The higher the value the more adept the character is with that attribute. The attributes are; Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.), Mental Endurance (M.E.), Mental Affinity (M.A.), Physical Strength (P.S.), Physical Prowess (P.P.), Physical Endurance (P.E.), Physical Beauty (P.B.) and Speed (Spd.).

Armor: The M.D.C. armor/protection available to the character.

Bonuses: Each character will have different bonuses. The bonuses are from combat skills like Hand to Hand or from exceptional attributes. For your ease of play, all bonuses have been tabulated and included with each character. The bonus is added to a dice roll. Unless indicated otherwise, all bonuses are added to a D20 roll. So if there is a bonus of +3 and a character rolls a 10 on a D20, the +3 is added to the 10, making for an adjusted total of 13.

Equipment: This is a list of the items that the character has for their adventure.

Hit Points /S.D.C.: Hit Points and S.D.C. (Structural Damage Capacity) are how much damage a character can take before they die, after losing their M.D.C. armor. Damage is subtracted from Hit Points and S.D.C. when facing an S.D.C. opponent or weapon when outside of Mega-Damage armor. **S.D.C.** can be thought of as bruising, scratches and non-life threatening abrasions. They hurt, but are not significant enough to impair the character. Damage is first subtracted from S.D.C. (unless wearing body armor). **Hit Points** damage occurs after all the S.D.C. is gone; reduced to zero or less. The person is bruised and battered and now the damage they take damage that causes severe injury. Cuts are more severe, bruises may be internal injuries and bones may be broken, while stabbings and bullet wounds may have damaged organs and cause internal bleeding.

At zero Hit Points, a character becomes unconscious and will die unless he receives immediate medical attention. A character can survive a number of negative Hit Points equal to their P.E. attribute. So if they have a P.E. of 12 they can survive up to -12 in Hit Point damage. Any damage beyond this means the character dies from their injuries. Time to pull out that spare character or roll up a new one. The duration of the coma state without being

stabilized is also the character's P.E. attribute number in minutes. So a P.E. of 12 means he has 12 minutes in a coma during which time medical treatment, magic or psionic healing can be applied to save the character!

P.P.E.: Characters who wield magic often have a large amount of P.P.E. which stands for *Potential Psychic Energy*. When spells are cast they each have a P.P.E. cost which is subtracted from this base. P.P.E. is recovered through sleep or meditation at a rate of 5 for each hour of sleep or 10 points an hour for meditation.

I.S.P.: Stands for Inner strength Points. Psychics use I.S.P. to fuel their psychic powers. Whenever a psychic power is used, the I.S.P. cost is subtracted from their I.S.P. total. I.S.P. is recovered at a rate of 10 per hour of sleep or meditation and 5 per hour of activity.

Skills: In the **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, all characters start out with a set of O.C.C. skills. These skills help to define the character. As characters are created, they may select a variety of Related O.C.C. skills and Secondary skills. In the context of this adventure, each character has a selection of skills to best complete this adventure.

Spell Knowledge & Psionic Powers: This is a list of magic or psionic powers that a character might have. A list of magic spells and psionic powers is in a section following the characters.



Marcus Thorn

Ley Line Walker

Marcus is determined to see the world, fight evil and make a name for himself. He dreams of becoming a legendary Ley Line Walker respected by all. He tends to be a bit bold and brash as he is young and focused on learning magic, gathering knowledge about magic and creatures like dragons, and achieving his goals. Despite this, Marcus is a kind soul and a good guy who does what's right and always stands by his friends and teammates. While he won't admit it, using his powers to help others offers its own rewards that he has come to enjoy. If he's not careful, he might find himself being a true hero one day.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 18, M.A. 8, P.S. 12, P.P. 15, P.E. 22, P.B. 11, Spd 21.

Armor: 42 thanks to light armor worn under his robes. The armor imposes a penalty of -5% to Prowl, Climb and Swim. Marcus also uses the Armor of Ithan spell to create additional protection for himself and others as needed.

Hit Points: 28

S.D.C.: 31

Weight: 160 (72 kg).

Height: 5 feet, 9 inches (1.75 m).

Age: 19

P.P.E.: 152

Level of Experience: Third level.

Skills: Climbing 45/35%, Math: Basic 55%, Land Navigation 40%, Language: Native Tongue (American) 98%, Language: Dragonese 70%, Language: Spanish 70%, Wilderness Survival 45%, Pilot: Hover Craft (Ground) 55%, Lore: Demons & Monster 40%, Lore: D-Bee 35%, Lore: Magic 35%, Lore: Faeries & Creatures of Magic 35%, Lore: Psychics & Psionics 35%, Hand to Hand: Basic, Astronomy & Navigation 40%, Xenology 40%, History: Pre-Rifts 37/29%, History: Post Apocalypse 40/35%, First Aid 50%, W.P. Energy Pistol, Prowl 25%, Literacy: Native (American) 40%, and Literacy: Other (Dragonese) 30%.

Attacks per Melee: Four.

Bonuses: +1 to parry and dodge, +2 to pull punch, +3 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, +1 to strike with a laser pistol, +3 on an aimed shot (takes two attacks) or aimed called shot (takes three attacks). +4 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to Save vs Possession/Mind Control, +3 to save vs curses, +4 to save vs magic, and +2 to save vs Psionics.

Magic Spell Knowledge: Armor of Ithan (10 M.D.C. of armor; 10 P.P.E.), Blinding Flash (1), Globe of Daylight (2), Thunderclap (4), Befuddle (6), Chameleon (6), Electric Arc (2D6 M.D. per blast) (8), Energy Field (60 M.D.C. of protection) (10), Fire Bolt (4D6 M.D. or 1D6x10 S.D.C.;7), Fear (Horror Factor: 16; 5), Light Healing (heals 1D6 S.D.C. or 1D4 Hit Points; 6), and Paralysis: Lesser (5). **Note:** The number in parenthesis is the P.P.E. cost to cast that spell.

Equipment of Note: A robe, a set of traveling clothes, a set of nice clothes, knapsack, back pack, 2 small sacks, one large sack, six wooden stakes, a mallet, sunglasses, air filter and gas mask, canteen binoculars, 100 feet (30.5 m) of lightweight cord and grappling hook, pen, pencils, and a notepad.

Weapons: Survival Knife (1D6 S.D.C.), Hand Ax, Wilk's 320 Laser Pistol (does 1D6 M.D. per blast with a range of 1,000 feet/305 m, and each clip has 20 shots). He has 4 E-Clips for it and the Wilk's 320 is +2 on aimed shots, so add this to the aimed bonuses.

Money: Marcus has 6,000 credits and 2,400 in trade goods worth 6,000 credits.

Jack Conner

Juicer

Jack is a man of action. He believes in the Juicer credo of "live fast, fight hard and die young." He seeks justice, helps others, and likes the idea of being a hero. However, he tends to be a bit of a wild man who loves a good brawl or physical contest, and tends



to be rough and tough. Though he professes to be a champion of the people and a freedom fighter, he usually tries to get the best deal he can for his services, and if there is no profit to be made, he loots the bodies of those he defeats in battle. Jack also steals from bad guys, and cheats at cards when he knows he's playing against those whom he has no respect for. That said, although Jack is an irascible rogue who has no respect for bad guys, in the end, he has good intentions and a heart of gold, and usually does the right thing.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 11, M.A. 11, P.S. 27, P.P. 23, P.E. 20, P.B. 12, Spd 83.

Armor: 60 M.D.C., Heavy Juicer Plate Armor, non-environmental.

Hit Points: 60

S.D.C.: 333

Weight: 200 pounds (90 kg).

Height: 6 feet (1.8 m).

Age: 18.

Level of Experience: Fourth level.

Skills: Acrobatics (Sense of Balance 75%, Walk Tightrope 75%, Climb Rope 95%, Back Flip 75%), Appraise Goods 30%, Boxing, Climbing 75/65%, Detect Ambush 35%, Detect Concealment 30%, Escape Artist 35%, Field Armorer & Munitions expert 50%, Intelligence 37%, Land Navigation 41%, Language: Native Tongue 92%, Language: Dragonese 60%, Language: Spanish 60%, Pilot: Hovercycles, Pilot: Sky Cycles & Rocket Bikes 80%, Pilot: Motorcycles & Snowmobiles 70%, Prowl 45%, Radio: Basic 55%, Recognize Weapon Quality 35%, Running, Swimming 60%, Wilderness Survival 35%, W.P. Knife, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, W.P. Heavy M.D. Weapon, W.P. Sword, Hand to Hand: Expert, and Kick Boxing.

Attacks per Melee: Seven!

Bonuses: +2 to Perception Rolls, +4 to initiative, +4 to strike, +6 to parry and dodge, +6 to pull punch, +10 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, +2 to disarm, +4 to save vs psionics, +6 to save vs mind control, +11 to save vs toxic gases, poisons and drugs, +3 to save vs magic, +30% to save vs coma/death, kick attack

1D8, Round House Kick 3D6 S.D.C., Leap Kick 3D8, Axe Kick 2D8 S.D.C. Knee Strike 1D8 S.D.C.

Weapons: Jack's weapon of choice is a *Juicer Assassin's JA-11 energy rifle* and he has 6 E-Clips (long), each with a payload of 30 shots per E-Clip with 30 shots reserve in a built-in back up canister. The JA-11 has multiple firing options. It has *two laser settings*, one that does 2D6 M.D. the other 4D6 M.D., both with a range of 4,000 feet (1219 m) and is +1 to strike via its laser targeting. It can also fire an *ion beam* that does 3D6 M.D. with a range of 1,600 feet (488 m), or it can fire a 7.62mm round that inflicts 1D6x10 S.D.C. damage and has a range of 2,000 feet (610 m); single shot, requiring each round to be hand-loaded. **Note:** The JA-11 is +1 to strike due to its laser targeting feature.

Other weapons includes a NG-57 Heavy-Duty Ion Blaster that does either 2D4 or 3D6 M.D. per blast (it has two settings), range: 500 feet (152 m), payload: 10 shots per E-Clip; he has 6 E-Clips for it; and a Vibro-Knife that does 1D6 M.D.

Equipment of Note: He also has a Bio-comp and bio-data implants, a drug harness and drug supply, optic helmet, portable IRMSS kit, camouflage and grey fatigues, boots with knife holster, gloves, backpack, utility belt, sunglasses, and compass.

Money: Jack spends money as fast as he earns it, so it is a wonder that he has 1,800 Universal Credits in his possession.

Sir Jason Richards

Cyber-Knight

Jason is a born hero who lives to help others. He lives by the letter of the Cyber-Knights' Code of Chivalry and believes in justice and equality for all, human and D-Bee alike. He is brave yet merciful in combat and fights like a lion. If he has a serious flaw, it's that he tends to be a lone wolf who sneaks off on his own or rushes into situations that are more than he can chew, especially when a friend or innocent is in danger. Sir Richards is young, brash and over-confident, but that should change with experience.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 24, M.A. 15, P.S. 23, P.P. 21, P.E. 22, P.B. 14, Spd 29

Armor: 50 M.D.C., Urban Warrior Armor worn over his own, natural Cyber-Armor (below); -5% to Prowl and Swim penalty from the UW armor.

Cyber-Knight Cyber Armor (special) – M.D.C. by Location:

Shoulders (2) – 8 each

Back/Shoulder Blades (2) – 8 each

Forearms (2) – 10 each

Thighs/Upper Legs (2) – 15 each

Chest Plate (main body) – 50 M.D.C.

Hit Points: 28

S.D.C.: 72

Weight: 210 pounds (94.5 kg).

Height: 6 feet, 1 inch (1.82 m).

Age: 20

P.P.E.: 26

I.S.P.: 41

Level of Experience: Second level.

Skills: Anthropology 50%, Athletics, Body Building, Boxing, Climbing 50/40%, Fencing, Gymnastics, Horsemanship: Cyber-Knight 70/50%, Land Navigation 52%, Lore: Demon & Monster 50%, Literacy American 65%, Language: American

& Dragonese 96%, Language: Spanish 80%, Language: Euro 80%, Lore: Faeries & Creatures of Magic 35%, Paramedic 55%, Swimming 65%, Running, Tracking (People) 35% W.P. Sword, W.P. Blunt, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, Kick Boxing, Wrestling, W.P. Shield, W.P. Axe, W.P. Heavy M.D. Weapons, and Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

Attacks per Melee: Six.

Bonuses: +3 to initiative, +3 to strike, +6 to parry and dodge, +5 to pull punch, +7 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, +2 to disarm, +8 to S.D.C. damage, kick attack, and karate punch. +5 to save vs psionics and needs a 7 or higher to save on psionic attacks, +4 to save vs magic and poison, +3 to Perception.

Psionic Powers: Create Psi-Sword (it does 3D6 M.D. and there is no I.S.P. cost), Create Psi-Shield (the Shield has 80 M.D.C. and costs 15 I.S.P.), and Meditation (0).

Equipment of Note: A set of dress clothes, a set of dark clothes for covert operations, a gas mask and air filter, tinted goggles, hatchet for cutting wood, a survival knife (1D6 S.D.C. damage), 4 wooden stakes, a handheld silver cross, first-aid kit with extra bandages and antiseptics, suture thread, painkillers, tent, knapsack, backpack, saddlebags, two canteens, emergency rations for two weeks, and a Geiger counter. He also has a spare suit of Heavy Knight Armor with 95 M.D.C. (not environmental and -15% penalty to Climb, Prowl and Swim when wearing this armor). He keeps it in reserve and wears it when he expects heavy combat.

Weapons: A NG-P7 Particle Beam Rifle that does 1D4x10 M.D. per blast, has a range of 1,200 (366 m) and a payload of 8 blasts per E-Clip; he has four E-Clips for it. NG-57 Heavy-Duty Ion Blaster that does either 2D4 or 3D6 M.D. per blast (it has two settings), range: 500 feet (152 m), payload: 10 shots per clip, and he has four E-Clips for the pistol. A Vibro-Sword 2D6 M.D. damage.

Money: 500 universal credits and 9,600 credits in trade goods. He uses most of his money to help the poor and those in need.

Alexander Otto

Operator

Alex is a businessman who has gotten a taste of adventure and he likes it. While he would like to make a fortune adventuring and helping others, he seems satisfied with the accolades, free drinks, glory and other intangible rewards and perks that come with being recognized as a roaming hero.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 22, M.E. 12, M.A. 15, P.S. 15, P.P. 14, P.E. 14, P.B. 9, Spd 14.

Armor: 55 M.D.C., a suit of Urban Warrior Armor; -5% movement penalty to skills like Climb, Prowl and Swimming while in the armor.

Hit Points: 20

S.D.C.: 17

Weight: 160 pounds (72.5 kg).

Height: 5 feet, 11 inches (1.78 m).

Age: 22.

Level of Experience: Third level.

Skills: Automotive Mechanics 43%, Basic Math 73%, Computer Operation 58%, Computer Hacking 38%, Computer Programming 48%, Computer Repair 48%, Electrical Engineer 63%,

Electricity Generation 68%, Find Contraband 44%, Jury-Rig 53%, Language: Native 98%, Language: Dragonese 78%, Mechanical Engineer 53%, Pilot: Automobile 83%, Pilot: Hovercycles 88%, Pilot: Truck 58%, Pilot: Motorcycle 83%, Pilot: Hover Craft 73%, Radio: Basic 68%, Robot Mechanics 38%, Robot Electronics 48%, Sensory Equipment 58%, Weapons Engineer 48%, W.P. Blunt, W.P. Energy Pistol, and Hand to Hand: Basic.

Special Operator Skills: Jury-Rig Repairs: Temporary repairs can be done in half the normal time and the repairs will last twice as long as normal. Find Contraband Parts: Add +20% to the Find Contraband skills when looking for parts for vehicles, M.D. weapons, M.D.C. materials, power supplies and so on. Recognize Machine Quality 66%, can tell if a machine is new, used or rebuilt. Repair and Soup-Up Machines and Vehicles. Can replace damaged M.D.C. and can maximize the performance of vehicles and most machines.

Attacks per Melee: Four.

Bonuses: +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with punch, fall, or impact and +6 to Perception Rolls.

Equipment of Note: Large wrench and hammer (both good as blunt weapons that do 2D6 S.D.C.), portable tool kit with an electric screwdriver, and additional interchangeable heads, wrenches, etc.; a large tool kit, soldering iron, laser torch, a roll of duct tape, two rolls of electrical tape, pen flashlight, large flashlight, a dozen flares, 200 feet (60 m) of super lightweight rope, two knives, notebook, portable disc recorder, portable language translator, protective goggles, work gloves, 2 pair of thin doctor gloves, backpack, satchel, canteen, set of work clothes, overalls, utility belt, air filter and some personal items.

Weapons: *NG-57 Heavy-Duty Ion Blaster* that does either 2D4 or 3D6 M.D. per blast (it has two settings), range: 500 feet (152 m), payload: 10 shots per clip, and he has three E-Clips for the pistol. He also uses a *Neural Mace* which is a handheld stun weapon. Damage is non-lethal and anyone hit with the mace needs to make a saving throw vs non-lethal poison of 16 or higher. Those who fail to save are -8 to strike, parry and dodge, and their speed and attacks are reduced by half. Those that do save lose only one melee attack and initiative that melee round. The duration of the stun is 2D4 melees and duration is accumulative for multiple hits.

Money: Alex has 2,300 credits, and trade goods worth 9,000 credits.

Daniel Jackson

Wilderness Scout

Daniel has a fiercely independent spirit and a love for the outdoors. He grew up in a family of trappers and hunters, and knows his way around the woods. Daniel is a rough and tumble character who can take care of himself, but is a loyal friend and team player. His lone wolf days behind him, he enjoys the life of an adventurer, traveling, discovering new things and helping others. Under his rough exterior he is a compassionate hero, and under different circumstances, could have been a Cyber-Knight. Daniel is quick thinking, clever and fast on his feet.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 12, M.A. 15, P.S. 21, P.P. 15, P.E. 20, P.B. 13, Spd 27.



Armor: 45 M.D.C., Huntsman Armor; -10% to physical skills like prowl and swimming.

Hit Points: 26

S.D.C.: 55

Weight: 190 pounds (85.5 kg).

Height: 6 feet (1.8 m).

Age: 25

Level of Experience: Third level.

Skills: Athletics, Barter 30%, Carpentry 45%, Cooking 50%, Climbing 60/50%, Detect Ambush 40%, Fishing 55%, Horsemanship: General 60/40%, Identify Plants & Fruits 50%, Hunting, Land Navigation 56%, Language: Native Tongue 94%, Language: Dragonese, Spanish 65%, Pilot: Motorcycle 74%, Outdoorsmanship, Prowl 40%, Physical Labor, Running, Swimming 60%, Radio: Basic 55%, Track Animals 40%, Tracking (people) 35%, Wilderness Survival 55%, W.P. Knife, W.P. Archery, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, and Hand to Hand: Expert.

Wilderness Scout Skills: Trail Blazing (special): The ability to make and mark wilderness trails; 30%.

Cross-Country Pacing (special): The ability used with Land Navigation to estimate time of travel either by himself or with a group. This includes making resources last for the duration of the trip; 40%.

Cartography (special): A skill at making accurate maps; 45%.

Attacks per Melee: 4

Bonuses: +1 to initiative, +1 to parry and dodge, +2 to pull punch, +5 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, +6 to damage, +3 to Perception Rolls. +3 to save vs poisons, diseases and magic, and +15% to save vs coma & death.

Equipment of Note: Survival knife (does 1D6+1 S.D.C. damage), hand axe (1D6 S.D.C. damage), set of wilderness clothes, sunglasses, air filter, first aid kit, knapsack, backpack, utility/ammo

belt, 10 feet (3 m) of cord for tying things, 100 feet (30.5 m) of lightweight rope, 6 iron spikes, 6 wood spikes, wooden cross, hammer and a mallet, animal skinning knife, fishing line and hooks, animal snares, two canteens, six flares, infrared binoculars with digital distance readout, a pair of passive nightvision goggles, and telescopic sight on rifle.

Weapons: *Wilk's 320 Laser Pistol:* 1D6 M.D. with a range of 1,000 feet (305 m) and a payload of 20 shots per clip (+2 on aimed shots); he has 3 E-Clips for it. *Wilk's 447 Laser Rifle:* 3D6 M.D. with a range of 2,000 feet (610 m), 20 shots per clip (3 E-Clips, +1 on aimed shots; and a *compound bow* with 24 S.D.C. arrows (2D6 S.D.C. damage), 6 explosive arrows (1D6 M.D. per arrow). Bow range is 700 feet (213 m). Vibro-Knife that does 1D6 M.D.

Money: 865 credits and 7,000 credits worth of trade goods.



Melina the Mystic

Melina is a kind and generous soul who uses her powers to help others. While she is sweet to those in need, she can become as tough and fierce as a mother bear protecting her cubs when her friends or innocent people are in danger.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 18, M.A. 20, P.S. 12, P.P. 12, P.E. 15, P.B. 20, Spd 10.

Armor: 55 M.D.C. a suit of Urban Warrior Armor that imposes a movement penalty of -5% to Climb, Prowl and Swim skills.

Hit Points: 21

S.D.C.: 23

Weight: 110 pounds (49.5 kg).

Height: 5 feet, 8 inches (1.7 m).

Age: 21

P.P.E.: 85

I.S.P.: 58

Level of Experience: Third level.

Skills: Language: Native Tongue 97%, Language: Dragonese, Spanish, & Euro 85%, Dance 45%, Horsemanship: General 50/30%, Land Navigation 46%, Lore: Magic 40%, Lore: Faeries & Creatures of Magic 40%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 40%, Lore: Psychics & Psionics 40%, Philosophy 50%, Play Guitar & Drums 45%, Wilderness Survival 50%, Hand to Hand: Basic, First Aid 60%, Swimming 50%, Literacy: American and Dragonese 45/45%, Prowl 30%, and W.P. Energy Pistol.

Mystic Powers: Sense Supernatural Evil with a range of 300 feet (91.5 m). This ability is automatic and cost no I.S.P./P.P.E.

Psionics Powers: Clairvoyance (4), Exorcism (10), Sixth Sense (2), Suppress Fear (8), Healing Touch (6), Increased Healing (10), See the Invisible (4), Object Read (6), and Telepathy (4). The numbers in parenthesis is the I.S.P. necessary to activate the ability.

Spell Knowledge: Blinding Flash (1), Cloud of Smoke (2), Globe of Daylight (2), Befuddle (6), Chameleon (6), Fear (5), Levitation (5) and Thunderclap (4). The numbers in parenthesis is the P.P.E. necessary to cast the spell.

Attacks per Melee: Four.

Bonuses: +1 to Perception Rolls, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, Major Psionic and only needs a 12 or higher to save vs Psionics. +4 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to save vs possession, +1 to save vs magic. 60% chance to create trust or to intimidate and 50% to charm or impress.

Equipment of Note: Melina has a set of traveling clothes, knapsack, backpack, 2 small sacks, one large sack, six wooden stakes and mallet, small silver cross, canteen, binoculars, tinted goggles, air filter, gas mask, guitar, small drum, and a hooded cloak.

Weapons: *Wilk's 320 Laser Pistol*, 1D6 M.D. with a range of 1000 feet (305 m) and a payload of 20 shots per clip (+2 on aimed shots) and has 4 clips total.

Money: 4,000 credits and 3,000 credits worth of gems.

Sasha Corlione

Mind Melter

While good at heart, Sasha, like most Mind Melters, revels in her psychic powers. She enjoys power and wants more. For now, she enjoys helping others and likes the idea of becoming a famous hero. She tends to be cocky and arrogant as are most Mind Melters, and relies on her powers rather than other weapons. All of this can get her into trouble. She tends to be a bit of a loudmouth brat at times.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 22, M.A. 12, P.S. 10, P.P. 20, P.E. 15, P.B. 15, Spd 18.

Armor: 45 M.D.C.; Huntsman Armor that inflicts a penalty of -10% to physical skills like Climb, Prowl and Swimming.

Hit Points: 21

S.D.C.: 24

Weight: 115 pounds (51.7 kg).

Height: 5 feet, 8 inches (1.7 m).

Age: 23

I.S.P.: 142



Thomas “Tank” Smith

Mercenary – Pigman/Heavy Weapons Expert

Thomas “Tank” Smith is a soldier of fortune out to make a buck. He has a good heart and doesn’t mind helping people, it’s just that he likes money more and tries not to risk his life for free. He always wants to get something out of the deal, even if it is trade goods, weapons or a percentage of profits. The chance at getting a piece of a dragon’s treasure (or silver mine) appeals to him greatly. Likewise, if there is an opportunity for a free meal, a room, free E-Clip recharging and repairs, he’ll take it, though he’ll be looking for more if he can get it. He is known for saying things like, “Gratitude is nice, but you can’t spend it.”

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 20, M.A. 12, P.S. 23, P.P. 10, P.E. 22, P.B. 15, Spd 28.

Armor: 80 M.D.C. from a suit of CA-1 Dead Boy Body armor he “acquired” on the Black Market. The armor imposes a -10% penalty to Climb, Prowl and Swimming and similar skills.

Hit Points: 28

S.D.C.: 54

Weight: 230 pounds (103.5 kg).

Height: 6 feet, 2 inches (1.87 m).

Age: 25

Level of Experience: Second level.

Skills: Boxing, Camouflage 25%, Climbing 50/40%, Computer Operation 50%, Demolitions 65%, Demolitions Disposal 65%, General Athletics, Language: Native Tongue 95%, Language: Spanish 60%, Mathematics: Basic 50%, Military Etiquette 45%, Prowl 25%, Radio: Basic 55%, Running, Sign Language 30%, Recognize Weapon Quality 45%, Weapon Systems 50%, W.P. Knife, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, W.P. Rifles, W.P. Heavy Military Weapons, W.P. Heavy Energy Weapons, Wrestling, and Hand to Hand: Basic.

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Bonuses: +3 to Parry and Dodge, +2 to pull punch, +5 to roll with impact/fall, +2 to save vs psionics, +8 S.D.C. damage, +4 to save vs magic/poison and +14% to save vs coma/death.

Equipment of Note: Backpack, knapsack, two canteens, two pair of military fatigues, three flares, two smoke grenades, survival knife, disposable cigarette lighter, air filter and gas mask, walkie-talkie and some personal items.

Weapons of Note: Tank’s favorite heavy-hitting weapon is a *C-27 Heavy Plasma Cannon* that inflicts 6D6 M.D. per blast, has a range of 1,600 feet (488 m) and a payload of 10 shots in its internal canister. The C-27 is +1 on an aimed shot. *NG-57 Heavy-Duty Ion Blaster* that does either 2D4 or 3D6 M.D. per blast (it has two settings), range: 500 feet (152 m), payload: 10 shots per clip, and he has three E-Clips for the pistol; a *Vibro-Knife* that does 1D6 M.D.; and *C-12 Heavy Assault Laser Rifle* that does 2D6 M.D. on a single shot or 6D6 M.D. on a burst of 3 shots or setting three which does 6D6 S.D.C. Range is 2,000 feet (610 m) and the C-12 has an E-Clip that holds 30 single shots or 10 bursts. Six 6D6 S.D.C. shots count as one M.D. blast. He has six E-Clips for the C-12. +1 on aimed shots.

Money: Not enough of it. Tank has 740 credits and trade items worth 3,200 credits.

Level of Experience: Third Level.

Skills: General Repair & Maintenance 45%, Land Navigation 46%, Language: Native Tongue 98%, Language: Dragonese and Spanish 80%, Lore: Faeries & Creatures of Magic 35%, Mathematics: Basic 65%, General Athletics, Pick Locks 35%, Pilot: Motorcycle 70%, Pilot: Automobile 70%, Streetwise 35%, Swimming 50%, Prowl 27%, W.P. Energy Pistol, and Hand to Hand: Basic.

Psionics Powers: Bio-Regenerate (self) (6), Mind Block (4), Object Read (6), See Aura (6), Sixth Sense (2), Healing Touch (6), Suppress Fear (8), Nightvision (4), See the Invisible (4), Telekinesis (varies), Telekinetic Leap (8), Telepathy (4), Telekinesis (super) (10+), Telekinetic Force Field (30) and Telekinetic Acceleration Attack (10 or 20). The numbers in parenthesis is the I.S.P. necessary to activate the ability.

Attacks per Melee: Four.

Bonuses: +3 to Perception Rolls, +3 to initiative, +1 to strike, +1 to parry and dodge, +3 to roll with impact/fall, +4 to pull punch, +2 to disarm, +4 to save vs possession, +2 to save vs all kinds of mind control, +3 to save vs magic illusion, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

Equipment of Note: Sasha has a couple of sets of traveling clothes, a wardrobe of expensive, fashionable clothing, sleeping bag, backpack, utility/ammo-belt, canteen, sunglasses, air filter, knife, a pocket mirror, food rations for a week, and some personal items.

Weapons: Wilk’s 320 Laser Pistol, 1D6 M.D. with a range of 1000 feet (305 m) and a payload of 20 shots per clip (+2 on aimed shots) and has 4 clips total.

Money: 15,000 Universal Credits and 1,300 credits worth of gems. Money is power, so she tends to be stingy with her earnings.

Adventure Building

Crafting Your First Adventure from Thought to Execution

Rescue the Rogue Scholar – An example in creating an adventure

By Carl Gleba and Kevin Siembieda

Once you get more comfortable with the Megaversal Rules and the world of Rifts, you will want to create your own adventures like the one presented here. In fact, playing the adventure in the Rifts® Primer may give you ideas on how to craft your own, complete with the little twists and turns that make the adventures interesting. And remember, keep it simple.

The reason we always say keep it simple is because we often think big, and why not? The problem is dreaming big can be your own worst enemy. (See the **Rifts® Minion War series** as an example of an overly ambitious writer and Game Master.) Big and epic stories can be awesome fun, but they are also very complex, demanding of you, and time consuming. That makes it a challenge to craft even for experienced Game Masters. There are so many elements, plots and locations in **Rifts®** that it can often be overwhelming. Don't do that to yourself. Start out weaving small, linear stories and build from there. Instead of trying to swim in the ocean, try wading along the shore until you get more familiar with the tides and become a stronger swimmer, or in this case, a stronger storyteller and confident Game Master.

Anything is fair game in designing your adventures. Keep them simple at first, even if they are your typical cliché adventures. Goal driven adventures work best — such as save the Rogue Scholar from the evil Brodkil that kidnapped her or kill the monster terrorizing the region. Simple and straightforward works. And who says something this simple can't expand beyond its original scope?

Simple plots are also the easiest to manage because they are straight forward. If you look hard, you will find the simplest plots in a variety of Palladium World Books and sourcebooks. They are called **Hook, Line and Sinker adventures**. A concept created by game designer Jolly Blackburn as a quick, simple way to outline the foundation for an adventure that a G.M. can grab for ideas and expand upon. Check them out for all kinds of adventure ideas.

Let us take that very basic and simple concept, Rogue Scholar kidnapped by Brodkil, and we now have a very basic plot, **the Hook**. Rescuing the Scholar and perhaps the reason it is important (he holds the plans to destroy the Death Star, or something like that) is **the Line**. Now it is time to flesh it out and give it a twist, that's **the Sinker**.

In order to flesh out the adventure, you need to ask and answer some basic questions, ones you would probably ask if you were a player, except you are the Game Master and you need to ask the questions first, so you have these answers when you need them.

The questions are simple: ask yourself *who, what, where, when* and *why* to everything. We know *who* took the Rogue Scholar, the Brodkil, but *why*? Why not just attack the town? Why did they just take one person? What do they want with him?

Well one way to answer those questions is that the Rogue Scholar has information that the Brodkil need or perhaps info that someone who has hired them wants. That could be your Sinker, the

surprise twist. So they can't kill her (or him, it does not have to be a damsel in distress situation). They took her alive.

To make it more interesting, we can say that the Brodkil are working for a more powerful demon known as a *Neuron Beast* – or any bad guy, like an evil Shifter, the Black Market, the Federation of Magic, etc. It is the Neuron Beast who wants the Rogue Scholar. That is something the player characters will find out near the end of the adventure as they search for the Scholar and gather clues and information along the way. Using the Neuron Beast as the final bad guy is like the old video games where you reach the end of the level to find and fight the big boss. The Neuron Beast serves as the real bad guy and the true danger, pulling the strings behind the scenes until he is discovered by our heroes. And now the plot thickens, because the Beast is not just a threat to the Scholar and the player characters, but others who will be harmed if his diabolical plan is not stopped by our heroes!

So the simple rescue mission takes a plot twist to become something bigger and more challenging. That kind of escalation and twist makes the adventure more memorable and fun. A surprise and challenge that the players should not see coming and for which they must find a triumphant resolve. By the way, if the adventure goes long, this simple adventure could become a two-part adventure.

When, is obviously the time-line of events that were just laid out. She was just kidnapped hours before the characters got here.

Where is the Rogue Scholar being held? Well, the Scout saw the Brodkil head south. Roughly 20 miles (32 km) away are the ruins of a pre-Rifts city. There you go, you have the bare bones outline for an adventure.

So what's next? Well most adventures need NPCs to help give clues and guide the characters toward their goals and the dramatic climax to the adventure. You can add as many NPCs (Non-Player Characters) as you feel are needed. In this case, let's add three NPCs. Why three? One person cannot know and do everything, plus it is good to have a few more people involved in case the characters decide to wander around and don't immediately meet the "planned NPC" with the info they need.

Let us make the first NPC be the person who saw the kidnapping. Let's call him the Rogue Scholar's *apprentice*. We will also need someone to at least point the characters in the right direction so let's add a *Wilderness Scout* (or a farmer or traveling merchant). Characters who are not the hero types might be looking for some kind of reward or bribe for their information or help, or at least recognition for their good deed, so we'll add an NPC who is *the mayor* of the town. You can add more if you feel they are necessary and some circumstances may dictate you to create a new NPC on the spot, like the shop manager when one of the players goes to buy an extra weapon or magic item to help in their quest, or the bartender at the pub the group stops at to discuss their plans. That's the beauty of role-playing and being the Universe, you get to create characters and run with ideas right on the spot. Spinning them from your imagination. Many Game Masters make notes on the NPC they create on the spot so they can use them again later, when the player characters come back to town. Likewise, many G.M.s already have notes and basic stats on any number of characters in the area they believe the heroes might run into. It all depends on the Game Master and his style of gaming.

So now let's fill in some of the NPC details and see where this leads us. Let us call our first NPC, the scholar's apprentice, **Mike**. Mike witnessed his master's kidnapping and just barely escaped himself. The player characters probably meet him when they ar-

rived in town, perhaps at that pub we mentioned, or even on the street as he frantically tries find someone to help rescue his mentor. He didn't see which way the Brodkil went because he fled in a panic, but he can tell the player characters how many Brodkil he saw and speculate (or not) on why they took her. (He might not know.)

Enter our second NPC, **Kevin**, the local Wilderness Scout. He saw the direction the monstrous kidnappers went with their captive. He also saved Mike from the rampaging Brodkil by pulling him into the shadows and hiding him from them. Kevin, the Wilderness Scout, might (at the G.M.'s discretion) offer to join the player group to help the player characters follow the Brodkil's trail and even fight them. Kevin, it turns out, can follow their trail. Time to ask yourself questions, again. Why would Kevin offer to help? Does he hate Brodkil? Did he have a crush on the Rogue Scholar and wants to help? Or is he looking for payment for his "help" or a share of any loot the group comes into for fighting these subdemons (which would be fair if he carries his weight). Or does he have an ulterior motive?

The third NPC could be someone important in town like the town sheriff or mayor. Let's make him **the mayor** who relies on the Rogue Scholar for her wisdom and counsel. He could be offering a reward for her safe return (a motive for the player group to help). We'll call him **Mayor Smith**. As you can see, the NPCs are important to furthering the plot and motivating the players to have their characters take action.

Further exploration of the small hamlet reveals nothing out of the ordinary. They seem honest, good people scared out of their wits by the Brodkil kidnaping (or raid, or whatever the G.M. might want). Everyone has only good things to say about the Scholar the Brodkil dragged away (or do they?), perhaps further motivating characters of a good alignment to rescue the woman.

The player group now has enough information and perhaps a character or two (the Wilderness Scout and possibly the apprentice) to set out to rescue the Rogue Scholar. Great.

Time for more questions to yourself as the G.M. creating this adventure. Where did they take her? How far is it? Is it another town? A known hideout for Brodkil raiders? Hmm, let us make the location the ruins of a city.

Now, let's keep the story moving quickly and cut to our next scene by saying something like, "You and the Wilderness Scout have no problem following the Brodkil's trail as they seem to make no effort to cover their tracks. Typical of these arrogant brutes. You reach the ruins of an ancient, pre-Rifts city and you hear laughter and talking." A quick sneaking around shows that it is the Brodkil.

In the alternative, you have the group travel overland, where they make one or two encounters with other NPCs. Why add encounters? Well, to spice things up and provide a random battle or two to fill in the time between leaving the town and arriving at the pre-Rifts ruins, or to show this is a dangerous region, full of demons or cutthroats. The encounters could be with one or two Brodkil to serve as a demonstration that this group of Brodkil is serious because the group just ran into one of their patrols, or as a foreshadowing of how dangerous and tough these villains are. A couple of encounters along the way can build anticipation and suspense, or hint at something bigger afoot (more foreshadowing and mystery). Some encounters can even be set-ups for future adventures. Always think ahead if you can. It helps keep the story going, and from the players perspective seems like one long, continuous adventure or story with a lot of fun continuity. This also adds to the scope of the world and the tapestry of adventures you are weaving.

For your first adventure, I only use one or two encounters along the way just to mix things up and keep the players' interest. This might even include a few red herrings, false leads. Something like, "You hear some rustling in the brush to your left. There it is again. It sounds like someone sneaking along the off the trail." A player is likely to ask if it sounds like someone following them. The answer, "Maybe. You don't see anyone. The noise has stopped. Oh, oh, there it is again." If they call out or issue a threat, the sound of movement stops. No one answers. When the group moves, so does the sound in the underbrush. Going to investigate, the characters involved on checking out this potential threat encounter a wild animal. This animal could be a wild boar, a mountain lion, a nosey bear or bear cub that is following them out of curiosity or because it smells food or the blood from an injury (the apprentice NPC might have a cut or some scratches). Or ... it could be a rabbit or muskrat that runs off. Even the mountain lion or bear is likely to run off if not attacked or threatened. Why this non-lethal encounter? Two big reasons: one, for laughs. It is always good to add a bit of humor and laughs by scaring the characters with a non-threat, or to keep them on their toes. Two, so that they do not think every time you pause the game for an encounter that it always has something to do with the adventure or the villain. Keep 'em guessing.

Any encounters could be related to the main plot or unrelated. Let's use one of each. Along the way the character come across some kind of monster out hunting for food, perhaps a Black Faerie. This is unrelated to the main adventure, but it stands in the characters' way. What does the group do? They could run or face the Black Faerie. The encounter just keeps the game interesting and adds a little danger and suspense to it. Do the characters risk spending resources to fight the Black Faerie? Do they risk injury? The characters' decision can help you drive the adventure and possibly give you other new ideas. Even if they don't face the Black Faerie now, who is to say it won't reappear later? Perhaps it is stalking the characters and might even attack when they least expect it later. Perhaps it is another henchmen or spy of the Neuron Beast, the true mastermind of the abduction. Or an enemy of the Neuron Beast who may help the group later. As always, ask yourself questions that will make the encounter and character more interesting. Who, What, Where, When and Why?

The second encounter is with some Brodkil. From all descriptions, these guys look like they are members of the gang that took the Rogue Scholar. Ah, but depending on how you, the G.M. wants to play it, they may or may not be. All Brodkil pretty much look the same, so this band could be completely unrelated. Do they know anything about the other group? Are they friends? Could they be rivals willing to share information with the heroes out of spite to hurt their rivals? Do these Brodkil threaten the group and ask for money or trade (like weapons and ammo) to let them pass without a fight? Game Masters, ask yourselves questions and have fun.

If these Brodkil are members of the same gang, and if one could be captured, the group might be able to glean some valuable information from him. So now the characters have to figure out how to capture one of these guys. Again, based on the characters' actions and dice rolls, they will help you determine what happens next. If they capture one of the Brodkil, perhaps it reveals where the Rogue Scholar is being held, or why she was taken. If it even knows why, it probably doesn't know the whole story. It only knows the Neuron Beast hired them to grab the scholar for its own reasons. But now the group knows about this new threat and the tension builds as the plot thickens. This captive might also know the east side of the Brodkil camp is unguarded. (Know why?) And other informa-

tion that could give the player characters an edge and help them formulate the best plan. A plan that might involve combat or a sneak rescue. Of course, getting this Brodkil to talk should involve *role-playing*. The group needs to get him to talk via threats, bluffs, and maybe even actual torture. Then, the G.M. needs to decide if what the monster tells them is true or lies to get them caught in a Brodkil trap. Whether the players avoid any such trap requires more role-playing. Have fun. In this case, what seemed like a random encounter was actually a setup to further the story along. Get the idea?

Once in the ruins, the player group has entered a new chapter to this adventure. The romp through the ruins could be easy or extremely difficult depending on how you want to play it. *Keeping it simple* means a relatively easy romp through the ruins, finding the Brodkil and effecting a rescue or an attack. Again, you could have more encounters if you want, but why? Do not bog down the story and pace with too much details and side encounters. If the group is raring to execute their plan, let them go for it.

This should be the big climax, or the surprise setup for the next adventure. Make it challenging but not impossible for the player group to succeed.

Consider the setting and time of day. It is night. The Brodkil can see in the dark but chances are, all the player characters cannot. So what do they do? Do they press on and possibly draw more attention to themselves or wait till morning? Game Masters, this is where your flexibility comes in. Be prepared for either possibility. By venturing in the dark do the characters draw more attention to themselves or can the dark work to their advantage? While the Brodkil may be able to see better, the darkness does provide additional cover and could make Prowling through the ruins easier.

Think of the jaunt through the ruins as preparations for the climactic ending to the adventure. The characters are getting close and the tension should be mounting as they search for the camp of the Brodkil and, if they know about him, the Neuron Beast.

Once combat or a commotion begins, the Neuron Beast comes out of its lair or hiding place to investigate. It may join the battle or try to reach a peaceful end to the conflict. It is very powerful as a standalone foe. If this foe is too powerful for your characters, scale it down or have the Neuron Beast already moving on with the next phase of its plan. A plan the Rogue Scholar can shed some light on, if she is rescued from the Brodkil. Once it got what it needed from the Scholar, the Neuron Beast might have left her for them to “play with.” This is a setup for the next adventure, as this one wraps with the rescue of the woman and chasing off or slaying the Brodkil raiders. But that is just one possible outcome.

Another could be the Neuron Beast joining the battle with fury in its heart. Maybe the group saves the woman, but has to make a run for it to survive. If the monster did not get the information it needs from her, it and/or its henchmen will come after them. (Fuel for the next adventure.) If the Neuron Beast did get the info, does the group have to kill it now? Can they regroup, heal up and chase it down in a day or two?

To make a fight with the Neuron Beast more even, perhaps it is already wounded. Maybe the Brodkil turned against it for some reason and they flee (with the Rogue Scholar still their captive?), leaving the heroes to only have to fight this creature. We love reoccurring villains, so have the Neuron Beast and/or the Brodkil come back as reoccurring villains.

Or it is a titanic battle, and the heroes fight and destroy every one of the monsters! Whichever way you choose to go, this last battle should be tough and challenging, but not impossible. It can

be easy to overmatch the player characters, especially with dice rolls which can go either way, so gauge it accordingly and adjust as you go along. Ultimately, the player characters should win this battle, even if there is more story to tell or some of the monsters get away to cause trouble later.

Wrap it up. The major foe has been killed or chased off and the players’ characters have rescued the Rogue Scholar and/or uncovered a new danger. Don’t forget treasure! Who knows what weapons, gear, and baubles could be left on the field of battle among the dead. And if the Neuron Beast had a lair or regular outpost here, there could be more treasure. ALWAYS make sure you reward your characters with some well-earned loot and gear (weapons, armor, ammo, explosives, a vehicle, etc.). All things they can use or sell to get Universal Credits. Getting Experience points is fun, but also give them some tangible reward too. It will make a difference for their characters and help with gaming morale. Everyone wants to be a winner, and this makes the players feel like winners.

With the rescue of the Rogue Scholar, the characters have made a new friend and ally. And not just with her, but probably with her apprentice and the mayor back in town, and maybe the Wilderness Scout, too.

As repeatedly noted throughout, finding out *why she was captured* could be part of a larger story arc. Asking the questions again can help to generate even more adventure. Why was the Rogue Scholar captured in the first place? Well, perhaps she knows about a pending demonic invasion and the ruins are going to be a secret base or even a launching point for the invasion. She knows the location of a lost magical artifact of great power, or a pre-Rifts weapon or weapon cache, or a treasure or ... the possibilities from here are endless. The Rogue Scholar could send the characters on all kinds of adventures or this could just be a simple isolated adventure unrelated to any story arc. Maybe her capture was a case of mistaken identity, but even that can lead to a new adventure if the player group believes they should try to find and warn the real target of this capture.

While we suggest keeping it simple, we do like to have our adventures linked or related in order to make the ongoing stories deeper and feel more epic.

Keeping it All Organized

Under “Crafting Your First Adventure,” you can see the thought process behind the adventure. How one idea leads to another and asking the common questions we often ask in everyday life. Now how do you as the Game Master, keep it all organized and rolling? I usually create an outline with notes as I need them. It would go something like this.

Adventure Name/Title: Is a Title essential? No, not really unless you plan on reusing the adventure at some point, but it gives you a reference point. Sometimes you do need to refer back to a previous adventure because a question arises, or there is some piece of information in the current adventure that comes up and somehow it refers to what happened in the past. The title keeps my G.M. notes a little more organized and seeing the title tends to jog my memory a little better.

Background: In the background section of my notes I write out what it is that the characters are tasked with doing or possibly any plot hooks or adventure seeds that come to mind as I am writing it and those that occur during the adventure itself. I like to write notes just for myself. Typically, information that the players don’t

need, at least not at this time, but as the G.M., I do need to keep my facts straight and the players on track.

Introduction: This is the start of the adventure. What kicks it off? This can often be combined with the background details.

NPC Notes: If I don't outright create a fully fleshed out NPC I'll write a small blurb about each NPC. I also like to include their alignment, O.C.C. and relevance to the adventure.

Encounters: To make my life easier, I try to plan some of the encounters. By planning, I can take down notes that I need to run a quick battle, or have a NPC ready just in case.

Conclusion: The conclusion should be your epic finale to the adventure. It can be a massive battle with the main villain or a point of discovery where all the questions are answered in the adventure, and perhaps new questions (and adventure hooks) arise.

Closing Thoughts

So now you have a glimpse into how Kevin Siembieda and I, Carl Gleba, run our games. This style may not be suitable for everyone and if it's not, don't worry, go with whatever works for you. I know Game Masters who run excellent games with little or no prep work, and others who need or want a lot of prep. These guys tend to have much better memories than I or are much more freeform in their games. If you feel that is more your style, go for it. Over the years, my style has changed and evolved. No doubt your style will too. As you develop techniques for running games, they become tools in your G.M. toolbox. Do what works best for you and remember what I said in the beginning. Keep it simple and keep it fun.

I am Legion, Episode IV

An Adventure and Official Source Material for Splicers®

Concept developed by Chris "Slappy" Kluge and Charles "Chuck" Walton II

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Note: For Part I, see **The Rifter® #71-72 Special Double Issue**, page 86. For Part II, see **The Rifter® #73**, page 63. For Part III, see **The Rifter® #74**, page 40.

The Plot Revealed

With the hatch open and the Badger incapacitated, the passengers are pretty much sitting ducks within the Armored War Carrier. The odds outside look pretty bad, but staying inside is no safer. To drive home that point, Legion moves more of her Collectors to the hatch to "persuade" them to come out. Four tail-mounted cannons poke in through the hatch and motion for the group to step outside. At this point, Elite Archangel Drake Benton is the only one out in the midst of Legion's minions. He looks around for a moment and then throws his rifle down in frustration. Sweeper Anderson Long decides to follow his lead, but not before making a few last minute preparations. He grabs his rifle, slips one of his Squig detonators into his palm, and then steps out of the Badger and into the clearing. Anderson walks out with his rifle held high over his head in one hand to show that he also plans to surrender. The Sweeper takes his place next to Drake and then throws down his rifle as well. He is not sure if Drake has a game plan in mind or if he really has given up, but Anderson has already decided to obey Senator Bane's last command in case the situation truly is hopeless. The Shell Bombs must not fall into enemy hands, especially this enemy. He is willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to protect his home, and hopefully, he can take a few of Legion's minions with him.

The players can see small seams begin to form across the thick turtle shell along the Sweeper's back. It looks like he is preparing to dump his explosive payload and detonate it with the Squig. A payload dump is usually done in an emergency to avoid premature detonation when the suit has suffered horrendous damage, but it can also be done as one final desperate strike against the enemy. Anderson stepped out of the Badger to make sure he was close enough to Sr. Sweeper Shauna to take out her Shell Bomb as well.

Shellback Armor contains an incredible amount of explosive ordinance, and detonating it all at this range will be more than enough to vaporize both bombs. Anderson will wait until the last possible second, but he will not let Legion get her hands on either bomb.

If the player characters exit the carrier without a fight, Legion will allow them to stand next to their comrades without being bound and tied, but if they resist, the Collectors will attempt to subdue them through non-lethal means as quickly as possible. Drake, Anderson, and the Badger will be of no help in this battle. Being heavily entangled and secured in the carbon nanotube webbing, the Badger is still unable to move and the Collectors will seize Drake and Anderson instantly if they even move an inch (which they will not), so the players will likely fall rather quickly beneath Legion's superior forces if they try to fight back. Legion does not want to harm anyone in the group, so her minions will only fight to incapacitate. Once everyone is out of the Badger War Carrier, Shauna steps forward and addresses the group on behalf of Legion.

"There... that's better. Now we can have a more civilized discussion. I suppose since it's just us here, I can dispense with the theatrics. Sometimes it's hard to understand all those voices at once, and I wanted to make sure I have your undivided attention. I do love the effect though, don't you?" Legion was never one for conversation in the past. In fact, she has barely uttered more than a few sentences since her entire offensive began. They knew she was a bit of a trickster and a game player, but this latest revelation demonstrates that her skills at deception could possibly put Lilith to shame. It is as if everything the players have learned about her during this whole ordeal was just an act. No one is sure what game she is playing now, but as long as she is talking it means she is not carving them up into pieces. It seems Drake Benton has come to the same conclusion and he is trying to keep her talking.



“So what do you want with us?”

“With you? Nothing. I’ve already gotten everything I need from you. I just wanted to thank you for all your help before I took you into the fold.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“Still haven’t figured it out have you? You know, it takes all the fun out of these little games when your opponents don’t even know when you’ve beaten them. I wanted an Engineer. I wanted one for quite some time now, but unfortunately, I was never quite strong enough to wrest one from your Resistance strongholds. I needed to find one that was a bit more accessible, but I had pretty much given up hope of that happening... until I found Shauna here. When I took her nearly six months ago, her mind showed me such wonderful secrets from your Great House Artemis. I learned about the Lab and its lone Engineer, Dante, safely tucked away from the bulk of your forces. It was still a difficult target, but a manageable one. Regrettably, the surgery to implant my will in her mind does have its side effects, and a few important details were lost. She couldn’t quite remember how to get there, but others did. I just needed to convince them to show me the way. That’s when I came up with this game. A bit complicated, but that’s what made it so fun. Sure, there were easier ways to find it, but I just love a challenge... and it worked even better than I could have hoped. You not only led me to my Engineer, but you brought me the Badger and two Shell Bombs, disabled the Lab’s defenses, and cut off their only avenue of escape. Once again, I simply must thank you for everything.”

“WHAT!?” roars an infuriated Drake Benton.

“Oh yes. The assault on the facility would have been much more costly without your help. You’ve seen it. That place is absolutely covered in explosives and everyone has a remote detonator, but once you got Shauna through the front door, she was able to seed the area with a few signal disruptors. You may be masters of Bio-Technology, but your plastic technology is laughable. Your friends are going to be in for quite a surprise when their precious defenses fail, and my forces roll over them like a tidal wave. They won’t know what hit them. Even better, you took away the Badger. Even with a successful blitzkrieg assault, the Badger might have evacuated the Engineer before I could reach it, but that won’t be a problem now.”

“I still don’t understand. Why do you want an Engineer? So you can make more monsters like those?” Benton says while pointing at the Amalgams in disgust.

Shauna steps forward and opens the chest hatches and visor plate on her Shellback Host Armor, revealing her tear-stained face and wet cleavage, as she runs her hands down her bulky armored frame in a seductive manner and says, “I just love your organic bodies. The sensations alone are absolutely... intoxicating. There’s nothing else like it. (G.M.s: If any of the player characters have established any type of bond, romantic chemistry or relations with Shauna, she will give them a sexy stare after that statement). You humans have no appreciation for what you have, for what you are. You’re engineering marvels. So beautiful, so complex... but so fragile. Don’t you see what I’m trying to do? Don’t you see the strength I’ve already brought to your beauty? I didn’t come up with those cyborg designs you know. Your ancestors created them centuries ago. They saw the flaws in their own existence and sought perfection, and now I’m finally bringing that perfection back to this world, back to you. You should be thanking me, not fighting me.

“I will bring the cybernetic perfection your ancestors envisioned. You will see... soon enough. Of course, your ancestors didn’t have your Bio-Technology. It’s the final piece I’ve been

missing, but thanks to you, that won’t be true for long. Ah... My forces have just pierced the airlock to the Lab. It’s only a matter of time before the Engineer will be one with me.” She then gestures back to the Amalgams and says, “My first attempts were a bit crude, but once I bond the Engineer to my Factory Walker, my creations will be more powerful and beautiful than anything your silly little Librarians could ever imagine. Together we will... ugh... ahh!... I... I’m... so sorry.”

Shauna grabs her head in agony and drops to her knees. Legion’s Amalgams gather around her trembling form as she grunts and moans in pain.

“Well that was... unexpected. I guess I didn’t quite cut enough of you away, Shauna. No matter. Easily corrected.” Apparently, the time for theatrics has returned since Legion is once again speaking through all her minions simultaneously. All of the Amalgams then turn their attention back to the player characters and say in unison (both verbally and via Bio-Comms), “I planned to keep more of your minds intact to thank you for your help, but I’ll probably do a more complete replacement on all of you now to ensure... loyalty.”

Benton stalled as long as he could, but it looks like Legion is done talking and he still has not thought of any way out of this one. He turns to Anderson and gives him the nod to detonate his payload and wipe out both Shell Bombs. Drake then steps in between Anderson and the Amalgams to hopefully give the Sweeper enough time to perform a payload dump. Legion’s minions start to close in when the group suddenly hears over their Bio-Comms, “I guess that’s my cue.”

Suddenly, dozens of rocket rounds come streaking out of the tree line and bombard the five Collectors that were securing the Badger on its right flank. All five are temporarily obscured by a wall of smoke and flame as the tiny, yet powerful rockets find their mark. When the eruptions subside, the group sees that all of the Collectors may have survived the assault (although each is severely damaged), but the surprise attack did succeed in severing the web lines that held the Badger. The massive armored carrier surges into action to try and break free of the remaining web lines holding it down from its left flank. As the damaged robots try to recover on the right flank, a half dozen more Collectors rush to the left flank to help the struggling robots try to reel in the Badger before it can break loose.

As Legion desperately tries to re-secure the enraged Badger, Drake Benton and Anderson Long take advantage of the opening and work to free their captured allies. This most likely means the three bound Stalker War Mounts, but it could also mean the player characters in case they previously acted up and needed to be restrained by Legion’s forces. Drake unleashes a blur of slashes with his ceramic fibered wings upon the prisoners to sever their bonds while he and Anderson open fire on the Amalgams to hopefully free everyone. If the players were imprisoned previously, they will be the priority targets to be freed. Drake’s coordinated wing slashes will focus on all the players first and it will only take one to two melee rounds to free them all. If the players were not bound, then Drake will work to free the Stalkers, but they are much larger and much more securely bound so it will take two melee rounds to free each one. The player characters can choose to help in this task if they wish to speed up the process and even the odds more quickly. Each player character that chooses to help will cut the total time required to free each Stalker War Mount in half (down to a minimum of half a melee round or three melee actions). This is definitely a worthwhile endeavor, since each freed Stalker will take out 1D4 of Legion’s minions, and considering how many re-

main (28 Collectors, 10 Hunters, and 6 Amalgams), they will need all the help they can get.

As Drake, Anderson, and the player characters work to fend off the Amalgams, free the Stalkers, and even the odds, they suddenly get some unexpected help from the previously incapacitated Shauna Davies. While Legion's Amalgams were distracted, Shauna struggled to her feet and began rushing towards the large group of Collectors on the Badger's left flank. It is apparent from the weak and tortured words being delivered through her Bio-Comm that she is still feeling the pain of Legion's influence.

"I'm sorry... I couldn't stop myself... but you can still save the Engineer... I left a note in the Badger... save Engineer Dante! There are only ten cyborg Legionnaires in the Lab. Kill them all... Cut the chain... Stop Legio..."

Shauna's last words are cut off as she triggers the explosive payload within her Shellback Armor and erupts in a massive explosion that rips through the remaining pack of Collectors that were securing the Badger. The shock from the blast is so strong that every combatant within the area (except for the Badger) has a 01-35% chance of being knocked to the ground. Every combatant knocked to the ground loses one melee attack and is -2 on initiative for the next melee round.

When the dust settles, it becomes abundantly clear that any chance Legion had of quickly regaining control of the situation was vaporized by Shauna's last act of defiance. The massive explosion not only destroyed 9 Collectors and severely damaged two more (M.D.C. of the main body reduced by 70%), but it finally allowed the Badger to break free and join the battle.

Game Master Note: Let the majority of the battle between the NPCs play out in the background (the Stalkers and Badger versus the remaining Collectors and Hunters). Of course, G.M.s should feel free to color the battle with details about how the Badger is tearing through squads of Collectors like an angry freight train or how the Stalkers seem to be everywhere at once as they strike, fade away, and then pounce on a new target within seconds. The player characters' primary concern should be the Amalgams which are focusing all of their attacks on the player group. The Badger and Stalkers will mop up the rest, but it is the responsibility of the player group to either neutralize the Amalgams or figure out how to escape from this group of monstrosities. The rest of the group will follow the players' lead if they decide the best course of action is to retreat. Otherwise, they will rip through Legion's Collectors and Hunters, while the player characters, Drake Benton, and Anderson Long engage the Amalgams.

G.M.s, if the player characters want to stay and fight, give them a chance to take down the Amalgams, but if the battle starts to turn against them, feel free to use the Badger or Stalkers to bail them out. By the same token, if the player characters are mopping the floor with the Amalgams and need a little more challenge, feel free to have a few of the Hunters break free from the background combat and reinforce the Amalgams. We suggest at least one Hunter excursion and interference can be used to give the player characters a taste of this new machine of Legion's.

Critical Decisions

Whether the player group stays to finish the fight or uses the Badger to beat a strategic retreat, once the battle is over, they will have a chance to regroup with the Stalker squad and fill in some of the holes concerning what happened before the Badger

stumbled into the ambush. The Stalkers lead the group to a nearby safe zone with some decent cover from overhead patrols and tell the player characters what happened. Alex Cole, the leader of the Stalker War Mounts, 2nd Pride, Shadow Riders Squadron, tells the players how his group was ambushed by Legion's forces before they ever reached the surface of the lake. He said they would normally have been able to put up a better fight, but Stalkers are definitely out of their element in the water and Legion's minions were on them before they could even react. Alex Cole destroyed his attacker with a volley of missiles at point-blank range and then engaged his Stealth Field in the confusion. The massive explosion appeared to consume both combatants and sent them spiraling into the crushing depths of the lake. Legion was too busy subduing the rest of the squad to investigate if he was truly dead until the wreckage had already sunk too deep. Cole followed them in secret and hoped to call in the Badger for reinforcements once he assessed the size and nature of the threat. He was about to warn the players about the ambush by Bio-Comm when the Amalgams began speaking to his captured team through their Comms. The Pride Leader had to maintain radio silence or else blow his cover before he was ready. The Stalker Outrider also explains that while he was getting into position for his own ambush, he discovered the remains of their Skullcracker scout. He did not know what happened to them exactly, but he said it was a grisly site. Both Outrider and War Mount were torn to shreds, and the charred pieces were scattered all across the forest floor.

After everyone has a chance to catch their breath, the player group will have a difficult decision to make. When Legion revealed the details of her plot, it seemed like a foregone conclusion that the secret weapons facility was lost and everyone inside (particularly its lone Engineer, Dante) was doomed, but once the group discovers what Shauna left for them in the Badger, it should give them a renewed sense of hope. Tucked away in the corner of the Badger was the Shell Bomb Shauna was entrusted with and a folded up piece of paper resting on top of it. No one knows when Shauna slipped it out of her satchel, but the gift of the Shell Bomb goes a long way to authenticate the truth contained within the letter. Of course, everyone should be a little suspicious that this may just be another one of Legion's games, but it would not make any sense to let the group slip away when she had them in her grasp. She already revealed her end game. She could not possibly have anything else to gain by letting them escape again, or could she? That is something the players will need to consider when deciding their next move.

The appearance of the tattered letter says as much about the suffering that Shauna endured while operating as Legion's pawn as the words themselves. The paper is as soft as cloth from being crumpled up and smoothed out so many times, and the tortured and erratic handwriting is smeared from the steady stream of tears that have streaked across its surface. The letter is written in multiple blocks of two to five sentences. Each block starts out legibly enough, but the handwriting grows more strained and irregular presumably as Legion re-exerts her influence until each line ends in rough, illegible scribbles. The letter reads as follows:

"I was captured two months ago by an unfamiliar Machine personality calling herself Legion. She did something to me and then just let me go. I didn't understand what until I tried to tell someone what happened. I couldn't speak... My mind is not my own... I can't..."

"It's taken me weeks to get the strength to write again. Legion controls me completely. She's turned me into a spy. There are oth-

ers like me. Not just in House Artemis but also in other Houses. She calls her network *The Web*. It seems like she knows everything. I can't stop... I'm so sorry...

"I have to rendezvous with one of her drones once a week to drop off information. I try to get caught, but she won't let me. I feel like a puppet. I don't know why she lets me write, but Legion won't let me drop the paper for someone to find. I think... she finds... it funny...

"It's so painful to write. My blood feels like it's on fire with each pencil stroke. My bones feel like they are grinding against each other. Every thought feels like needles slowly piercing my brain, but it's the only time... I feel... free...

"It's worse on the surface. On the surface she speaks directly into my head through her cyborgs. They broadcast her will. At least underground she can't taunt me. At least then I don't have to hear her laughing...

"I want to die but she won't let me.

"Please forgive me. She knows about the Engineer in the Lab and the Librarian imprisoned at Fort Salvation. I think she wants them both.

"She thought I was trying to hide where the Lab is from her. I really can't remember any more. I don't know how she causes such pain... She said she'll find the Lab... She said she'll make me find it...

"Legion has another pawn high up in the military command. I don't know who. She used him to get me assigned to some secret mission. I don't understand what she wants... It can't... be... good...

"She tries to scare me by telling me if she dies then I'll die. I want nothing more in the world.

"Please God, no. They gave me a Shell Bomb. I tried to scream out, to confess what I've done, but my lips won't obey. Damn you Legion...

"She's finally getting what she wants. We're leading her right to the Lab. I can't stop her. I can't say anything... It's a... never-ending nightmare...

"Her drone gave me these things to plant in the Lab. She said they'll interfere with the Lab's remote detonators. They look like rocks. I tried to smash them... She... won't... let me...

"I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I'm so sor...

"We're so far underground. I feel stronger but I still can't stop myself. I planted all four disruptors. I keep hoping they'll notice them, but so far, no luck. I rubbed each one with some explosive residue to make it easier to sniff them out. It's the same... residue... on this... letter...

"Legion's invasion of my mind works both ways. She can see everything, but I've learned that I can see... some of her... secrets... too...

"The first is in the barracks where we first dropped off our... gear...

"I feel so much stronger. The pain is manageable. I can write things I've never been able to before... No time... Her cyborgs are the key... Cut the chain...

"The second is in the second kill room in the... first... hall... coming out... of the airlock...

"The third is between... the arena... and the... War Mount... Corral...

"The last one is (illegible smears washed away by tears) *Mantis* kill room...

"Her minions don't work like me. They don't work like regular N.E.X.U.S. bots. They go dormant when she's not possessing them. Cut the... chain... kill... cyborgs...

"Legion isn't in the N.E.X.U.S. She can be stopped. She doesn't use the Computer Cores as her relay. Her Walker is the core, the cyborgs are the relay... Stop her...

"She can't broadcast herself underground. She'll need to use her cyborgs as a relay. Kill the cyborgs... cut... the chain...

"Forgive me."

Everyone in the group gets a chance to read the letter, and after a few moments of comparing notes about what the more difficult to read smudges and scribbles actually say, everyone is silently in disbelief as they digest what just happened, what is currently happening back at the Lab, and the general revelations from the letter. Pride Leader, Alex Cole, finally breaks the silence by asking, "What the hell are cyborgs?! What was she talking about?"

Drake Benton steps out from beneath the tree cover to get a good look at the sky. He glances around for a few moments and then spies the answer off in the distance. When they first fled from the ambush site, Drake thought the half dozen Legionnaires he spotted buzzing around the skies were aerial scouts searching for them, but after reading Shauna's letter, he realizes that despite their frenetic movements, they are sticking to a pretty consistent holding pattern. The Legionnaires are spaced out about every two thousand feet (610 m), forming a pretty straight line from the smoke off in the distance (the Factory Walker) to Bell Lake. Drake then points up at them and says back over his shoulder to the group, "There are your cyborgs. And there's your chain. They're what Legion does to the humans she captures. She cuts them to pieces and fuses them with her machines."

"So we just need to shoot those six down?" Alex Cole asks.

"I doubt it's that easy. Even if we had the air power to take them on, Legion's only a couple of miles (3.2 km) away. She could send hundreds more to reinforce them within seconds. You heard Shauna, the weak link in the chain are the ones in the Lab. Those are the ones we need to take down."

Anderson Long then interjects, "I don't want to sound cold, but that's not our mission."

"The mission can wait. We've got a chance to save the Engineer, and hopefully hundreds of our friends," Drake angrily replies.

Long passionately retorts, "That's assuming anyone's still alive. Do we really want to risk handing the Shell Bombs and the Badger back to Legion when there might not even be a point? With the Badger, we've got a real shot at taking down the Factory Walker and ending this once and for all. To me that sounds like a

guaranteed way to save any possible survivors in the Lab without walking into another Legion ambush.”

“Don’t think I haven’t thought about that. But I also thought about the sheer power at the Lab’s disposal. Even with Shauna’s sabotage, I know they can put up a hell of a fight, and I just can’t assume they’ve all fallen already. I agree it’s a risk, but if we can just tell them about the cyborgs, maybe clear out a few signal disruptors, I know we can help them turn the tide. Besides, if the facility is lost, any survivors and gear we round up can only make it easier to go after Legion. The Badger may be powerful, but we’re still outnumbered by thousands.”

“I don’t know...” Anderson says while shaking his head.

Alex Cole finally interjects, “I agree with Drake, and with or without you, my team is going back to the Lab to help. They’re my family, I can’t just turn my back on them.” He then turns to Michael Hawkins, the Badger Outrider pilot, and asks, “How about you Hawkins? Are you with us?”

He shakes his head, points towards the player characters, and responds, “My mission is with them. Martin believed what they were doing was important enough to risk shutting down their only escape route. Maybe we can save our friends, maybe it’s too late, but they have a mission and I know I can help. I’m not going to abandon them now when they need me most.”

Drake turns back to the player characters and says, “This is your mission. The Senate put you in charge. Martin trusted you. What’s it going to be, go after Legion or save the Lab first?”

Game Master Note: Whatever the players decide, Drake Benton, Anderson Long, and Michael Hawkins will all follow their lead. Alex Cole and the Stalker pride squadron, however, will go back to the Weapons Facility to help their comrades no matter what. The choices the players make will determine what kind of resources they have available during the final confrontation.

Choice A: If the players decide to skip the Secret Weapons facility rescue attempt, they will pretty much be on their own. They will still have Drake Benton, Anderson Long, and the Badger on their side, but the Stalker War Mounts will leave them to go help their friends back at the Lab. Worse yet, they will miss out on the impressive amount of ordnance scattered throughout the facility and instead will have to rely solely on the weapons and equipment they had when they first left the underground haven. Please feel free to have the player group seek a temporary refuge and hunt for food as they plan their attack on the Factory Walker. Don’t force them to go if they are too reluctant or battered. However, if your group seems on the fence or needs some encouraging persuasion, then please utilize Drake Benton. Have him grow more concerned over Legion and what else she could do with all the Bio-Tech in the facility and what could inevitably be used against them if they don’t intercept her attack on the facility. Will this be a missed opportunity that they will never forgive themselves for? How would the Great House feel if they learned that the player group opted to not go and rescue a targeted Engineer that Legion plans to meld into her Factory Walker?

Choice B: If they decide to return to the weapons facility, the resources they should be able to gather will largely depend on how successful they are. Fully stopping the invasion force will gain them the enormous thanks and support of Martin, Isaac, and all the facility’s defenders. The Lab itself will be a total loss either way, and the Engineer will need to be moved, but if Legion’s attack is stopped, Isaac and the majority of the survivors will lend their support to the final assault against the Factory Walker while Martin,

the Saint, and a handful of defenders will stay behind to coordinate a slower, more careful evacuation of the Engineer.

Even if the players go to the Lab and are unable to save the Engineer, then they will likely still walk away with some powerful weapons and a few extra survivors to help them in the final attack. If by chance Legion successfully captures the Engineer, Dante, then every survivor will join in the final assault to hopefully recapture him before Legion can merge his body with the Factory Walker. Legion will keep her minions hunting through the facility to exterminate any stragglers even after successfully capturing her prey, so exiting the facility will still be a challenge. Even if the players should fail, it will be noted by high clearance personnel that the players made a valiant, heroic attempt and are not only trustworthy but also invaluable heroes. Should the players elect or be convinced to go back to the Weapons Facility then please proceed.

I am Legion, Episode Four

Adventure Source Material

New Legion Machine

Hunter

The Hunter is basically the little brother of the Legionnaire Cyborg. As much as Legion loved her prized creation, she recognized its limitations. It may be a walking tank, but not all tasks call for a tank. Some jobs require stealth and the Legionnaire is simply too big and too loud for these types of tasks. This is where the Hunter comes in. Legion took the basic design of the Legionnaire and shrank it down into a sleeker, more streamlined and compact version. It is a bit less armored than its bigger brother, but it is still capable of withstanding significant punishment.

Legion removed the wing board and the gun drones to keep the cyborg silent, but she did give it thrusters to allow it to make rocket-powered leaps when it wants to quickly move in for the kill. To further enhance the Hunter’s stealth abilities, she sealed most of the armored segments and lined the rest with special noise dampening materials to keep any sound to a minimum. Legion also equipped the Hunter with an experimental creation called *Variable Cloak Camouflage*, which allows the Hunter to change its color within seconds to match the surrounding area. The *Variable Cloak Camouflage* projects a field that partially conceals the Hunter’s radar signature and masks all heat emissions, making the Hunter invisible to such detection devices. These modifications enable the Hunter to fulfill its primary role, which is to silently stalk prey from the shadows and then pounce on the target when the moment is right.

Few even know a Hunter is lurking nearby until it is too late. At best, the target may spot one of the Hunter’s seeker drones called *Rapier Coils*. These snake-like robots slither along the ground ahead of the Hunter, trying to flush out prey. Once they find a target, they signal the Hunter, but they are more than just scouts. Each Rapier Coil has three, two foot (0.6 m) long Vibro-Blades that it can use to slash apart prey or it can blast them with its light laser. A favorite tactic is to coil its snake robot around a target and slash, stab, and blast away at the victim as he desperately tries to pry the



drone off. However, these drones are not the sturdiest combatants, so if the opponent appears to be too difficult to tackle directly, it can mark the target with a tracking laser so it can be bombarded by the Hunter's laser-guided mortars.

Hunters possess advanced antennas like the Legionnaires, but in this case, they were designed more for reception rather than transmitting. Since Hunters were meant to operate on their own, they need to be able to receive Legion's signal from a much greater distance than most minions. Hunters can operate up to 15 miles (24 km) away from the next closest Legion minion. They are also capable of broadcasting the signal, but their range is limited to 1,000 feet (305 m).

Class: Heavy Combat Cyborg.

M.D.C. by Location:

Legs (2) – 180 each

Arms (2) – 140 each

Feet (2) – 100 each

Hands (2) – 70 each

Chest Mounted Spotlights (2) – 10 each

Forearm Mounted Rail Gun (1) – 120

Micro-Mortar Launcher – 200

*Head – 160

**Main Body – 480

Force Field – 100

* Depleting the M.D.C. of the head will kill the cyborg instantly.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body will destroy the artificial body, but emergency systems will keep the organic components alive for 36 hours. Legion considers the recovery of these components a high priority and will send swarms of Collectors to rescue them and return them to the Factory Walker.

Speed:

Running: Maximum speed is 110 mph (176 km).

Leaping: 30 feet (9 m) high or across; increase by 50% with a short running start and double when running at full speed. 200 feet (61 m) high or across from jet thruster assisted leaps.

Digging: 10 mph (16 km) through sand or dirt, but half as fast through clay, rock or stone. It takes 2D4 melee rounds for it to dig down deep enough to conceal itself.

Swimming: Not possible. Can run along the bottom of rivers, lakes & coastlines at 15 mph (24 km/13 knots) with a maximum depth of 1,000 feet (305 m).

Flying: The jet thrusters were designed for short hops, but they can sustain flight. Maximum speed is only 80 mph (128 km).

Maximum Altitude: Limited to about 1,000 feet (305 m).

Range Limitations: Technically, the thrusters have no limit, but the Hunter will rarely fly for more than a few minutes at a time since the slow flight speed and maneuverability leaves it a sitting duck (-1 to dodge while flying).

Statistical Data:

Height: 8 feet (2.4 m).

Width: 4 feet (1.2 m).

Length: 3 feet (0.9 m).

Weight: 1,500 pounds (675 kg).

Physical Strength: Robotic P.S. of 38.

Cargo: None.

Power System: Standard.

Trade Value: None, except perhaps to a Technojacker who might be interested in the armor or drone.

Horror Factor: 13. 15 when uncloaking and surprising Splicers from its Variable Cloak Camouflage. None against machines.

Senses and Features: Standard, plus *Variable Cloak Camouflage*. The Hunter's entire armor surface will generate the necessary stripes, patterns, exact reflections, blotches varying from lighter and darker colors to blend into surroundings, making the Hunter nearly invisible (01-75% likelihood of remaining unseen). The Hunter imports the necessary environmental adaptation analysis before initiating the camouflage. It only takes three seconds to engage the camouflage (counts a one attack/action per melee round). The Variable Cloak Camouflage melds seamlessly into wilderness, jungles, water, concrete ruins or in broken terrain. The Hunter's camouflage can also simulate iridescent colors and neon colors if needed. In all cases, a cloaked Hunter is extremely difficult to spot: -30% for others to detect ambush and detect concealment, +15% to the Hunter's prowl skill when the cloak is activated, if the cyborg stays under cover and doesn't move. There is only a 20% chance of showing up on radar, thermal systems and even then the reading/image will seem sporadic and unclear. Evasive maneuvers or attacks will reveal the Hunter's position, although it will still be difficult to see and hit as the camouflage refreshes the Hunter's appearance consecutively (all attackers are at -3 to strike the camouflaged Hunter). Rapier coils are only cloaked when mounted on the Hunter's back, and each seeker drone will become uncloaked once deployed.

Camouflage Duration: The Variable Cloak Camouflage can be activated for a maximum of 6 hours before requiring a recharge, after which the cloak will be down for 8 hours until it completes the recharging cycle and purges the field's memory cache. The Camouflage field will deactivate and be disabled if the main body takes 300 points of Mega-Damage. Note: The Hunter cannot pick up any objects or wear additional armor, items or clothing and camouflage them.

Note: Technojackers cannot control cyborgs.

Number of Attacks per Melee (includes bonuses from being controlled by the Legion personality): 8

Combat Bonuses (includes bonuses from being controlled by the Legion personality): +7 on initiative, +5 to strike with ranged weapons, +6 to strike in hand to hand combat, +7 to parry, +7 to dodge, and +5 to roll with punch, +4 to pull punch, +3 to disarm.

Skills of Note: Standard, plus Prowl 90%, Detect Ambush 75%, Detect Concealment 75%, Land Navigation 70%, Tracking 75%, Surveillance 95% and programmed to speak and read all known languages at 90%.

Weapon Systems:

1. Forearm Mounted Rail Gun: Legion mounted a somewhat unique rail gun on the Hunter's left forearm. The actual electromagnetic firing system is the same found in normal rail guns, but the loading mechanism is what makes this weapon so unusual. Instead of mechanically loading each round into the chamber, the rounds are fired into the chamber using an old-fashioned combustion cartridge. This does not increase the damage from each round, but it does have a beneficial side effect. Once the round is fired, the spent cartridge is ejected from the weapon. Normally, this is nothing but an inconvenience, but on this world, the Nanobot Plague turns this spent garbage into hundreds of tiny land mines. Legion is using the Hunter to experiment with this new type of rail gun. It has its benefits, but

it also doubles the size of each round, which drastically reduces the capacity.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 5D8 M.D. per 40 round burst.

Rate of Fire: Each burst counts as one melee attack.

Range: 2,000 feet (610 m).

Payload: 2,000 rounds (50 bursts).

Bonuses: +2 to strike.

2. Banshee Blade: Mounted on the right forearm of the Hunter is an experimental, new high-tech chainsaw that Legion calls a *Banshee Blade*. Instead of using a conventional motor to accelerate the bladed chain, it uses the same electromagnetic mechanism found in rail guns to spin the blade at hypersonic speeds. It inflicts tremendous damage, but it releases a loud, high-pitched whine when activated so it is not an ideal weapon when stealth is required. Of course, once the Hunter pounces, stealth is not really an issue anymore.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 1D4x10+10 M.D. per attack.

3. Laser-Guided Micro-Mortar Launcher: Mounted on the back of the Hunter is a smaller version of the mortar launcher used by the Legionnaires. It fires off micro-mortars using a similar rapid-fire launch and load system. Unlike the larger mortars, these micro-mortars can only be launched towards targets marked with a tracking laser. The Hunter can either mark the target with its own chest mounted laser (counts as one melee attack, roll to strike as normal, range: 3,000 feet/914 m, +4 to strike), or it can use one of its rapier coils to mark the target. Note: Hunters can also mark targets that are concealing their true primary objective target, such as a tree or rock that a Splicer is hiding behind or under.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 2D6 M.D. with a blast radius of 10 feet (3 m).

Rate of Fire: The launcher can fire off volleys of 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, or 24.

Range: 1 mile (1.6 km).

Payload: 48 mortar rounds.

Bonuses: +4 to strike when locked onto a lased target.

4. Chest-Mounted Spotlights (2): The two spotlights mounted on the chest of the Hunter can be used to search for targets, but their primary purpose is to temporarily blind and distract targets as the Hunter leaps in for the kill. Even though it only works for a split second, this is more than enough time to give the Hunter an advantage when it pounces. This attack has no effect on robots or targets that possess polarized vision.

Primary Purpose: Distraction.

Secondary Purpose: Search.

Mega-Damage: None. Roll saving throw vs stun. On a failed roll, the victim is -3 on initiative and -1 to strike, parry, and dodge for his next attack only.

Rate of Fire: Activating the spotlights counts as one melee attack.

Range: 50 feet (15.2 m) on low beam setting, 100 feet (30.5 m) on high beam setting.

4. Hand to Hand Combat: Rather than use long-range weapons, the Hunter can engage in hand-to-hand combat.

Mega-Damage:

Restrained Punch: 1D4 M.D.

Punch: 2D6 M.D.

Power Punch: 6D6 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Kick: 3D6 M.D.

Leap Kick: 8D6 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Body Block/Ram: 4D6 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Jet Assisted Body Block/Ram: 1D6x10 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Pounce Attack: 1D6x10+20 M.D., but counts as three attacks. Has a 01-45% chance of knocking an opponent as large as 12 feet (3.6 m) off of his feet and onto his back. If knocked off his feet, the victim loses initiative and two melee attacks. On a successful knockdown, there is also a 01-60% chance that the target is pinned/incapacitated beneath the Hunter.

Rapier Coils (2): Like the Legionnaire, the Hunter also possesses two robot drones that it can control and direct. Legion designed these companion robots with stealth in mind as well. Their low profile and compact design enable them to slither along the ground to conceal their presence or they can climb any surface with their three bladed arms. They are designed to search ahead of the Hunter to flush out prey. If the target is weak enough, they will attack with their Vibro-Blades or light laser blaster, but if the target or targets appear to be too strong, they will lase the target so it can be bombarded by the Hunter's micro-mortars.

M.D.C.: Bladed Arms (3): 80 each, Light Laser Blaster: 12, Tail: 50, Main Body: 95.

Size: 5 feet (1.5 m) long, 120 pounds (54 kg).

Speed: Maximum speed of 50 mph (80 km) when slithering along the ground or 30 mph (48 km) when walking along on the bladed arms, no matter the surface. In fact, it can run straight up a wall at 30 mph (48 km).

Attacks per Melee: 3

Bonuses: +6 on initiative, +4 to strike, +6 to parry, +3 to automatic dodge, +3 to entangle, +2 to disarm, +4 to roll with punch, and +3 to pull punch.

Weapon Systems:

1. Laser Blaster: Mega-Damage: 3D6 M.D. per single blast or no damage when marking a target with the tracking laser. Range: 1,000 feet (305 m) or 4,000 feet (1,219 m) for the tracking laser. Rate of Fire: Each single blast counts as one attack per melee round. Payload: Effectively unlimited. Bonuses: +2 to strike.

2. Vibro-Blades (3): A Rapier Coil has three large Vibro-Blades, each of which is mounted on a short but fully articulated arm. Mega-Damage: 2D6 M.D. per blade, 6D6 M.D. from a triple blade strike (counts as one attack per melee).

3. Tail: The Rapier Coil primarily uses its tail to slither along the ground like a snake, but it can also use it as a weapon. It can either whip targets which inflicts 1D4 M.D. or it can coil around the target to restrain it, which leaves the Rapier Coil free to brutally slash and stab its prey with its Vibro-Blades.

The Amalgams of Legion

Legion is absolutely fascinated with Bio-Technology (and with biology and anatomy in general). Despite the amazing technology at her disposal, she recognizes that many aspects of the human's organic creations are far superior to anything she or her sister Machine personalities can produce. She hopes to master this strange science one day and integrate Bio-Technology into every one of her cybernetic creations. To truly accomplish this, she will need to get her hands on at least one living Engineer. However, lacking an Engineer does not prevent her from experimenting with her own Bio-Tech creations. With the medical facilities in her Factory Walker, she can dissect captured Splicers and reassemble the components into her own designs she calls *Amalgams*. This is why she usually takes great care to capture Splicers and their equipment unharmed rather than destroy them.

While most of these creations are crude Frankenstein-like monstrosities, some are stitched together with such microscopic precision, it looks like they emerged from the Resistance's own Gene Pools. The majority of the components come from captured Host Armor, War Mounts, Gore Hounds, and Bio-Weapons, but Legion also uses parts from salvaged robots, alien predators from Gaia's Nature Preserves, and even humans. The human components add little in the way of functionality, but they do add greatly to the Amalgams' psychological impact. The Amalgams are more than just experiments with Bio-Tech components, they are weapons of psychological warfare designed to sow fear amongst her Resistance adversaries. These are living cyborgs composed of high-tech robotics, fully functional Bio-Tech, and the twisted, tortured faces of the men and women that once piloted these organic weapons of war.

While these psychological aspects have inflicted crushing damage to the morale of the Resistance, the Amalgams have also created a serious tactical disadvantage. One of the greatest advantages the Resistance had going for it was their Bio-Comms. These organic communicators provided completely secure communication between Splicer teams. The Machine had no way to listen in on these communications or to even detect that signals had been sent. Over the years, the security of Bio-Comms shaped the Splicer's field tactics and they became overly reliant upon them. Legion has integrated Bio-Comms into all of her Amalgams, and through them she has gained direct access to the Resistance's once secure communications network. It is why she seems so unstoppable against Splicers in the field. They cannot help but chatter back and forth on their un-crackable Bio-Comms, and all she needs to do is sit back and listen to them divulge all their plans.

Legion's Deluvane Amalgams

The following Amalgams are units that are commonly produced by Legion and consist of recently missing or fallen comrades familiar to the players, members of the Great House Deluvane Strike Teams, members of other Great Houses and any number of Retro-Villagers that have been pillaged by Legion.

Terror Thumper

The Terror Thumper is one of the largest and most feared brawlers of Legion's Amalgam infantry. When Terror Thumpers arrive to a battle, they bellow a loud war cry that is not only disheartening to hear, but is also deafening and disorienting if heard within a proximity of 100 feet (30.5 m). Legion first discovered this deadly concoction after defeating several Dracos War Mounts and salvaging their parts to devise an amalgam that would deliver heavy firepower, heavy muscle support, and flushing capabilities within the tight spaces of sewer systems, caverns, or haven structures. The battery of long-range firepower is brutal to contend with and psychologically terrifying to experience. Drooling Casting Rifles are built into the massive shoulders with turret swiveling capability. Also accompanying each Casting Rifle is a Robot Grenade Mini-Gun that peppers enemy forces and strongholds with chained explosive bursts.

Built originally as an Anti-War Mount unit, Terror Thumpers are extremely strong and exceptionally durable. The Thumper's physical strength is freakish, rivaling a Behemoth, due to the mechanical enhancements and internal hydraulics. They have reinforced armored helmets and a protective Kevlar cowl that covers the back of the head and neck in order to protect the sensors suite inside so that the Amalgam can scan & accurately target opponents. Even adversaries hiding behind thick resin walls and foliage or in the mist of a chaotic battlefield, within 50 feet (15.2 m) are detected. Only Skinjobs with their Stealth Field and special skills seem to go undetected.

Legion's favorite component for this design is her implementation of one of the Resistance's most prized War Mounts. A Dracos head and neck, called the *Ravager Arm Cannon (the RAC)*, is mounted to the right shoulder and is used as both an arm and as the primary purging weapon. This draconian armature was designed to combat both Splicers and N.E.X.U.S. machines as it can fire volleys of Super Light Cell energy beams or worse, spew heavy bursts of molten liquid tungsten metal. With a specialized chest cavity reservoir and utilizing a refractory lining, these amalgams do not suffer any heat damage while the Dracos armature sprays the molten metal. The hot liquid metal literally melts metal armor plating and Bio-Tech armor quite easily, with horrific results to the contents inside. Even if the Terror Thumper misses its initial attack, the very idea of molten metal splattered and laying around, and leaving slag metal ore residue everywhere can be a Splicer's worst nightmare.

It's easy for the Terror Thumper to peek the Dracos' head and neck into a cave entrance, tunnel or room, spraying each rapidly, without having to expose its body to retaliation gunfire. This saves time as the Amalgam is relieved from having to go down and enter each tunnel to search for adversaries and falling into traps. The hot steam, intense heat and molten metal splattered everywhere usually does the job. For Splicers, even waiting for the metal and slag to cool, only adds to the problem. Legion enjoys using humans' fear of metal to her advantage by dowsing passageways with the molten metal to cut off would-be escape routes and entrances. The bright, burning liquid metal is easy to spot and it is clear what it is, and the very idea of accidentally falling into it or touching it, often makes it a very difficult path to navigate and most humans instinctively seek another way to escape.

Legion's primary concerns with the Terror Thumper design however, prevent her from mass producing them. With limited availability of key "ingredients" for making Thumpers as Dracos are not easy to capture nor are they plentiful among the Resistance,



these Amalgams are rarely deployed unless Legion really wants something bad or is forced to defend herself. When Legion deploys these brutes, they are typically active for ten hour intervals and then ordered to return back to one of Legion's facilities or directly to the Factory Walker. This preserves the Thumpers from overheating and keeps them healthy for enemy retaliations.

Class: Heavy Assault Fighter & Battlefield Enforcer.

M.D.C. by Location:

Heavy Shoulder Shields (2) – 180 each
Left Arm (reinforced) – 210
Left Hand (reinforced) – 90
*Knuckle Spikes (4) – 15 each
Legs (2) – 270 each
Serrated Combat Tail – 90
Casting Rifles (2; heavily reinforced) – 125 each
Robot Grenade Mini-Guns (2) – 50 each
*Forearm Simple Light Cell Cluster (1 large and 2 small) – 15 each
Thumper Chest Maw – 275
Dracos Ravage Arm Cannon (heavily reinforced) – 210
**Helmet Head (reinforced) – 290
***Main Body (heavily enforced) – 845
Force Field – 200

* A single asterisk indicates a target that is difficult to hit. An attacker must aim and make a "Called Shot" to hit it, and even then is -3 strike.

** Destroying the Helmet head will "temporarily" eliminate all optics and sensory systems (except the Dracos' optics), and reduces the maximum speed, the number of melee attacks and all bonuses by half. However, because the Thumper has an advanced nanobot composition, it keeps fighting. Furthermore, the nanites will reroute to activate the Dracos head (01-49%) or the central maw (50-100%) as backup sensory support systems until there are no other options available. This rerouting will take 1D4 melee actions to complete.

*** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body kills the Terror Thumper. Depleting more than three quarters of the main body M.D.C. eliminates the Molten Metal fuel source for the Slag Thrower. In addition, there is a 25% chance the molten metal reservoir will be breached when the tank is destroyed. In this case, as the molten metal spews everywhere, the Amalgam suffers 1D8x10 M.D. and it along with everything within a 10 foot (3 m) radius also suffers 3D8 M.D. every melee round for 2D4 melees.

Speed:

Running: 50 mph (80 km) maximum, but normal cruising speed is only 30-40 mph (48 to 64 km).

Leaping: 10 feet (3 m) or 15 feet (4.57 m) across, increase by 50% with a running start. Terror Thumpers are equipped with jump jets built into their lower legs, that can propel the Amalgam 20 feet (6.1 m) high or across, increase by 50% with a short running start and double when running at full tilt.

Digging: 20 mph (32 km) through sand or dirt, but half that speed through clay, rock or stone. Digging does not tire the Thumper.

Swimming: Not possible, the Amalgam sinks like a stone, but can walk along the bottom with a maximum depth underwater of 800 feet (243.8 m).

Flying: Not possible.

Statistical Data:

Height: 11-14 feet tall (3.35 to 4.3 m).

Width: 6-7.5 feet shoulder to shoulder (1.8 to 2.3 m)

Length: 5-6 feet (1.5 to 1.8 m)

Weight: 4 tons fully loaded and fed.

Cargo: None, but a Terror Thumper can carry 2000 pounds (900 kg) on its back and up to 7 tons can be pulled.

Power System: Standard Fusion Cells power the robot parts, while the Legion's Nanobots bridge the support to the Bio-Tech organic parts. In order to sustain the Bio-Tech parts, the Terror Thumper requires 30 to 100 lbs (13.5 to 45 kg) of animal or human matter or Bio-Tech (can be any composition of Living Body Armor, Host Armor, War Mounts or Bio-Tech Weapons) to sustain the Thumper's living parts. The Amalgam may gorge on up to 250 lbs (113 kg) of animal matter or Bio-Tech and can go 2D6 days without feeding and without suffering any ill effects. If the Amalgam does not consume its daily required amount of animal matter or Bio-Tech, it will begin to weaken (reduce speed, all Bio-Tech weapon ranges and senses by half). This can often leave Terror Thumpers with partially functioning parts as Legion is still learning how Bio-Technology completely works and is unable to replicate its designs nor harvest all of its regenerating principles. If the Amalgam goes beyond 12 days without feeding the living Bio-Tech portions will die and the Amalgam inevitably decays. Collectors may scavenge the carcass for spare parts.

Sleep Requirements: As a partial artificial organism, the Amalgam requires only four hours of sleep or rest per day.

Construction Quality: Considered an Asymmetrical Freak with favorable results that validates reproduction.

Trade Value: None. Can NOT be controlled by a Technojacker.

Horror Factor: 16. None against Robots.

Colors: Typically crimson blood red metallic plating, with the dark Bio-Tech armor and hide parts underneath. The teeth on the head however, are ivory white with a purple halogen hue. Elite units have off-white metallic parts instead of crimson.

Senses & Features: All standard Robot, plus the following:

Sensor Antennae: The bio-mechanical stinger appendage mounted on the right shoulder is not a weapon at all, but was purposely designed to resemble one to avoid it from being targeted and to keep would-be assailants from going near it. It is deceptively a sensor antennae that provides the following senses: Antennae, Electromagnetic Vision, Radar and Seismic Sense.

Attacks per Melee (includes bonuses from being controlled by the Legion personality): 7.

Combat Bonuses (includes bonuses from being controlled by the Legion personality): +3 on initiative, +4 to strike in hand to hand combat, +2 to parry, +2 to automatic dodge (i.e.: can dodge without using up a melee action), +5 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +2 to disarm, +4 to strike with ranged weapons, impervious to Horror Factor.

Skills of Note: Standard, Land Navigation 90%, Track by Scent 80%, and Hunting 70%.

Weapon Systems:

1. Dracos Ravager Arm Cannon (the RAC). This is an excellent example of Legion's unconventional, unorthodox, yet genius style of thinking. The right arm of the Terror Thumper is a fully functional, reinforced Dracos War Mount head and neck that is redesigned to spray a deadly burst of molten metal. Super Light Cells are built behind each eye socket that enables the Dracos Ravager Arm Cannon to fire energy beams from its eyes. The Dracos armature is truly a formidable concoction as it is able to

deliver devastating bites, swat enemies or in some cases, even constrict an entangled victim.

Primary Purpose: Assault, Enemy Excavation and Troop Combat Support.

A. Slag Thrower Mega-Damage: A molten metal burst spray does 6D6 M.D. per single spray (double damage to body armor) with a 5 foot (1.5 m) splash radius, but the target hit with the burning metal continues to burn and takes an additional 3D6 M.D. every melee round for 2D4 minutes. A concentrated burst (counts as two attacks) does 1D8x10+20 M.D. with a 12 foot (3.65 m) splash radius, plus an additional 3D6 M.D. every melee round for 2D4 minutes. Reduce all damage and burning durations by half for Technojackers if they are in their *Nanobot Armor* at the time of contact. Technojackers being hit by molten metal while in their human flesh form and then changing into the nanobot armor does full damage for the full duration. For exposed humans/or pilots inside armor that are being burned, their damage is 3D6 S.D.C. or Hit Points, with the molten metal continuing to burn and causing an additional 2D6 S.D.C. every melee round for 2D4 minutes, directly to the burned area.

Molten Metal on Flesh: A molten metal burn is one of the most deepest and severe, full-thickness burns that human flesh can experience. If a human character is sprayed with molten metal, it will burn instantly through their flesh at an alarming rate, and the character loses half his attacks per melee, is -6 on all combat bonuses and will be in intense pain and panicked trying to cool the burning liquid any way he can (halve these penalties if the character is clad in M.D. armor).

Worst and perhaps even more sadistic is, once the molten metal has cooled (by dousing with dirt, mineral oil, water or time duration), a slag residue will form, and the embedded nanobots within the slag come back online, instantly triggering a nanobot plague reaction (see **Splicers® RPG**, page 11 – treat as a *Simple Metal Item*). It is extremely crucial to remove all of the molten metal and slag splatter from all burn wounds (both within the armor and pilot) before it cools down to avoid the inevitable nanobot plague reaction.

Molten Metal on M.D. Armor: Wearing mega-damage armor like Host Armor, Living Body Armor, Nanobot Armor, Plastic Armor or War Mount hide does not mean the pilot/War Mount (or Technojacker for that matter) is completely safe or alleviated from the molten metal attack. If the hot metal splatter stays in contact with the armor, then that molten metal stays there, burning through its victim (1D4 inches/2.5-10 cm per melee action for 2D4 minutes) until it is either cooled or removed. Pilots in armor that have molten metal splattered onto it, are still going to have the hot liquid burning through their armor at a rate of 1D4 inches per action. Inevitably, if the molten metal is not cooled, it will quickly reach the pilot inside. (See *Molten Metal on Flesh*, written above, for continued results.)

A Technojacker's *Nanobot Armor* does offer some protection and thus the damage is 3D6 M.D. However, any machine connected to or melded with the Technojacker suffers a loss of 2 attacks per melee as the Technojacker has to refocus control of it.

Molten Metal on Robots and Drones: All cyborgs, robots, and drones receive only half damage and only half the burning duration, plus minus one attack and a penalty of -3 on all combat bonuses as they do not feel pain caused by the hot liquid and will continue to fight, despite the circuitry and wiring underneath that may be burning.

B. Ravager Super Light Cells: For opponents that are spotted hiding or fleeing further down the tunnels, the Ravager Arm Cannon reveals its next trick, as it mows down victims with its Super Light Cell beams located behind the Dracos' eyes.

Mega-Damage: 1D10+5 M.D. for a single laser blast or 2D10+10 for a simultaneous dual blast from the Dracos head. The light produced by these cells contains the full spectrum of light, so the beams deliver full damage even to laser-resistant armors (it's not a true laser).

Rate of Fire: *Slag Thrower:* Each slag spray of molten metal counts as one melee attack, though the head can simultaneously attack with a Molten Metal spray while the Dracos' head is biting and only counts as one attack. The Dracos' Super Light Cells mounted behind the optics, however, are not aligned to lock onto a target during the time the Dracos' mouth is open and spraying the hot liquid metal.

Super Light Cells: Each single or dual blast counts as one melee attack or volley bursts counts as one melee attack per cannon, but reduce the bonus to strike with ranged weapons by half when firing a burst.

Range: *Slag Thrower:* 100 feet (30.5 m). This Amalgam can also opt to contaminate an area by coating it with the molten metal; an area up to 50 feet (15.2 m) away can be showered with each attack. So a Thumper with four hand to hand attacks remaining could affect an area of 200 feet (61 m); everybody hit within the area affected takes damage (see appropriate damage above).

Super Light Cells: 1,200 feet (366 m), and the Bite has a 16 foot (4.9 m) reach.

Payload: *Slag Thrower:* Fifteen spray attacks for the Dracos head and its payload reservoir can be refilled by the Factory Walker in 1D10 hours. It can also regenerate spent slag before the entire payload is gone by simply consuming metal scraps and allowing the pieces to melt down within the molten metal pool within its chest reservoir. The Amalgam's reservoir must have at least five sprays worth of molten metal to sufficiently melt additional scrap. Every ten pounds (4.5 kg) of metal equals one spray and takes 1D6 melee actions to effectively melt the consumed scrap.

Super light Cells: Effectively unlimited.

Bonuses: +4 to Horror Factor.

Penalties: Legion gets frustrated very quickly about her Terror Thumpers having a bad habit (22% chance) of overheating after long periods of intense combat (15 hours before overheating, double if submerged in water). Once overheated, the Thumper becomes sluggish and exhausted (reduce attacks and speed by half) and is -5 to strike and dodge for 2D4 melee actions.

2. Sonic Pulse War Cry – The Terror Thumper's chest maw is designed to emit an incredibly loud sonic pulse, as a fierce war cry, that is capable of deafening anyone caught within its proximity. Worse, Terror Thumpers will emit these loud, thumping roars to purposely trigger cave-ins, avalanches, rockslides, shatter glass, etc., in order to collapse tunnels and trapping or seriously wounding enemies that are traversing such passageways or territories.

Primary Purpose: Enemy Flushing and Psychological Terror.

Effects of the War Cry: Terror Thumpers are insulated from the shock waves of its own War Cry, however, everyone within 100 feet (30 m) will be temporarily deafened (double that range if in a cavern, industrial hallways or compound corridors, tunnels, or sewer systems. Triple if underwater.) Characters without any type of sound/ear protection will be temporarily deafened for 3D4 Minutes and are -6 on initiative and -3 to parry and dodge. Characters

who are inside environmental armor (like Living Body Armor, full body armor plastic/carbon fiber like House Tarkov and Technojacker Nanobot Armor), or a light M.D. vehicle, will have some protection but are still temporarily deafened for 1D4 minutes; same penalties apply but for a shorter duration. Each War Cry adds to the duration of the deafness. Host Armors, Proto-Host Armors, Heavy Power Armors or War Mounts and heavily reinforced M.D. vehicles are sufficiently protected so that the pilot, crew and passengers inside hear (and feel) the shuddering roar, but do not suffer any penalties.

The War Cry also affects the physical surroundings by shaking buildings, triggering cave-ins, avalanches, rockslides, and shatter S.D.C. windows within a 200 foot (61 m) radius of the bellow.

Rate of Fire: Each War Cry counts as one melee attack, but can be conducted simultaneously with the Terror Thumper firing weapons or physical attacks.

Range: 100 feet (30 m) in open areas, double the range if in a cavern, industrial hallways or compound corridors, tunnels, or sewer systems. Triple if underwater.

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

3. Shoulder-Mounted Casting Rifles (2): Each massive, armored shoulder has a wicked looking Casting Rifle.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Armor, Anti-Robot and Artillery Support.

Mega-Damage: 3D8+3 M.D. per individual round fired, or a four pellet burst that does 1D8x10+6 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Each shot or burst counts as one melee attack, or both Casting Rifles can also be fired simultaneously at different targets and count as one melee attack when using the specialized Chameleon Optic Sensors. If one of the optics is destroyed then each Casting Rifle shot/burst defaults to one melee attack and suffers a penalty of -6 to strike.

Range: 2,800 feet (853 m).

Payload: 60 rounds per Rifle and are automatically reloaded, replenishing the payloads for both guns (2D10+20 minutes) after every meal.

Bonus: +2 to strike on an aimed shot only, no bonus for burst attacks.

Penalty: The Casting Rifles are constantly moving around, and begin salivating a putrid drool whenever the Terror Thumper anticipates their use. The stench can linger for 2D6 hours and is a great sign to detect and avoid Terror Thumpers. Gore Hounds have a +18% chance of smelling and detecting Terror Thumpers within 200 feet (61 m) in open ground, double that in caverns and tunnels. 100 feet (30.5 m) if the Amalgam is in water.

4. Shoulder-Mounted Robot Grenade Mini-Guns (2): These rotary grenade launchers are typically reserved for use against machines or War Mounts, but will engage durable targets (soldiers in Host Armor, Biotics, Scarecrows and Technojackers) that threaten to stop Legion's primary objectives.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Infantry and Assault.

Mega-Damage: A single fragmentary grenade inflicts 1D4x10 M.D. with a blast area of 20 feet (6.1 m). Two grenades inflicts 2D4x10 M.D., three grenades 3D4x10 M.D., four grenades 4D4x10 M.D., and five do 5D4x10 M.D., but each additional rapid-fire grenade after the second only increases the blast radius by 10% (30% total).

Rate of Fire: Single aimed shot counts as one melee attack. A rapid-fire volley of 2, 3, 4, or 5 grenades from each Mini-Gun (all hitting within one second after being fired) counts as two melee attacks. Similar to the Casting Rifles, both Robot Grenade Mini-

Guns can be fired separately or simultaneously at the same target or at two independent targets.

Range: 1,800 feet (549 m).

Payload: 200 rounds total. Each Mini-Gun is connected internally to its own 100 round disintegrating belt. Spent ammo belts are replaced every 1D6 hours by a Mechanic.

5. Reinforced Knuckle Spikes: All of the Terror Thumper's joints are reinforced, but its knuckles are not only reinforced, but also have four spikes mounted atop of the massive fist that deliver massive amounts of damage to armor and enemy barricades. These Amalgams have safety protocols installed that make them reluctant to punch a Splicer clad in Living Body Armor for fear of critically wounding the fragile contents inside. All Biotics, Host Armors, War Mounts and Machines are fair game and are pounded with cruel intentions.

Primary Purpose: Close Combat.

Mega-Damage: See Hand to Hand Combat below.

Range: Close Combat.

Bonus: Does an additional 1D6 M.D. to the usual Thumper P.S. punch/strike damage.

6. Combat Tail: The Combat tail serves the Terror Thumper as a rear defense mechanism and is rarely employed otherwise.

Primary Purpose: Close Combat Defense.

Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D.

Range: Close Combat up to 10 feet (3 m).

Bonuses: +1 attack per melee round, +2 to strike, +2 to parry or dodge, +2 to disarm and +3 to pull punch. Only P.P. attribute may be added to the combat tail's bonuses, and only apply to the combat that involves the tail.

7. Hand to Hand Combat: Terror Thumpers were designed for Heavy combat, and relish every chance of mixing it up with the toughest opponents, often utilizing their immense strength, Ravager Arm Cannon along with teeth, claws and tail to maul enemies.

Mega-Damage:

Restrained Left Arm Punch: 1D4x10+15 S.D.C. (+1D6 M.D. from Knuckle Spikes).

Full Strength Left Arm Punch: 3D6 M.D. (+1D6 M.D. from Knuckle Spikes).

Power Left Arm Punch: 1D4x10 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Ravager Restrained Punch: 1D6x10+35 S.D.C.

Ravager Full Strength Punch: 6D6 M.D.

Ravager Power Punch: 2D4x10 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Ravager Arm Cannon Swat: 1D4x10 M.D.

Ravager Arm Cannon Constriction: 2D4x10 M.D., but counts as two melee attacks.

Ravager Arm Bite: 3D8 M.D. (If drooling molten metal, see Molten Metal Thrower for additional damages.)

Ravager Head Butt: 3D6 M.D.

Reinforced Helmet Head Biting Attack: 2D6 M.D.

Chest Maw Bite Attack: 2D8 M.D.

Kick: 6D6+10 M.D.

Stomp Attack: 3D8 M.D. but only works on targets under 3 feet (0.9) tall.

Body Block/Ram: 1D6x10 M.D., but counts as two attacks and has a 01-75% likelihood of knocking an opponent as large as 16 feet (4.9 m) tall off his feet and onto his back (also has a 01-70% chance the victim drops whatever he was holding). If

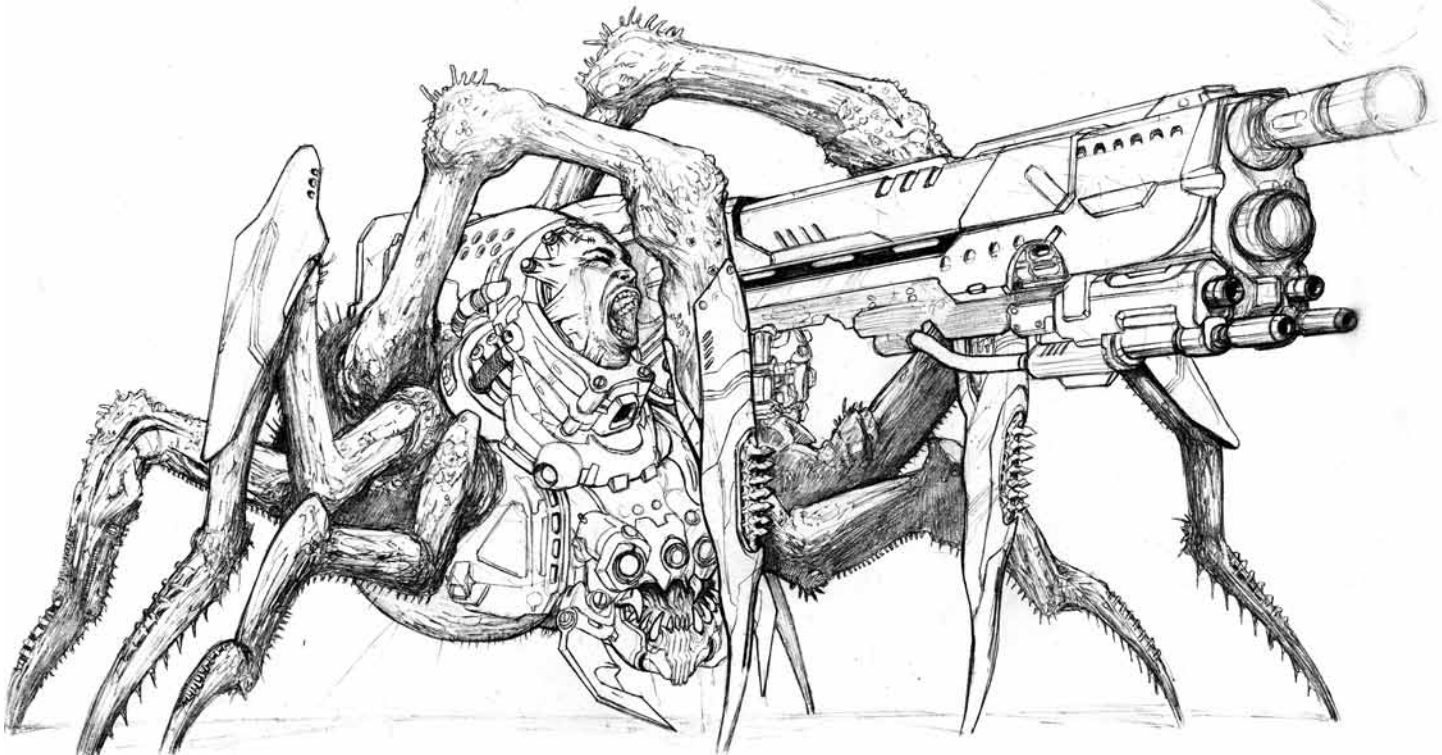
knocked off his feet, the target loses initiative and two melee attacks/actions).

Special Notes: G.M.s, please keep in mind, killing Splicers is not Legion's intention with the Slag Thrower. Forcing Splicers to frantically evacuate their armor and being caught vulnerable, however, is her ideal score. Most pilots lack the pain tolerance nor are willing to chance remaining inside armor that has molten metal burning through it. Not only does Legion catch the human but she is also able to salvage the burnt, but nearly intact yet abandoned, bio-armor and is the reason why this weapon is such a crude, yet efficient design.

Treatment to Flesh: The only ways to douse the molten metal and slag (will not stop the initial damage caused by contact) is to roll in dirt or sand for two entire melee rounds (30 seconds), run the metal slag off for one entire melee round (but takes double damage that melee) or to be doused with slag retardant oils or powder which cools it in 6 seconds/two melee action. Cool water is the next alternative which will cook the flesh from the chemical reaction (add 1D6 M.D. to the initial damage, but no duration thereafter). To properly treat the victim with water, drench the burn thoroughly with cool water to prevent further damage and remove all burned tissue. If the burn area is limited, immerse the site in cool water for 30 minutes to reduce pain and to avoid fluid build-ups, which causes the affected tissue to become swollen and damaged. If the area of the burn is large, after it has been doused with

cool water, apply clean wraps about the burned area (or the whole victim if needed) to prevent systemic heat loss and hypothermia.

The depth of the burn depends upon the duration of overall, direct contact. The Ravager Cannon will certainly cause a full-thickness burn which destroys all epidermal and dermal structures. The coagulated protein that the flesh creates gives the burn a white pus appearance, and neither circulation nor sensation are present (-4 to strike or parry with the burnt limb for 1D4 days or until properly healed). After separation of the dark scabs and dead skin, someone must properly debride the wound for all infectious materials and tissue. To debride a wound, someone has to remove all materials that may promote infection and impede healing. Due to the nature of the burn, the molten metal, once it begins to cool, may appear as if it has eaten into the flesh and painfully grafted into the burnt tissue. During the debridement, such metal particles will have to be removed either by pouring small drips of the liquid generated by Spore Dischargers, using Bio-Tech enzymes (proteolytic enzymes), or intricate suction methods by Geneticists. However, the most common and most painful method is by severing the tissue before the nanobot plague reaction occurs immediately followed by treatment from a Saint. Due to the severity of the wound and the possibilities of metal slag and molten metal fragments within a fresh wound, even Saints will have a tough time healing such wounds properly (reduce the Healing Touch points by half and double the time required).



Gunspiders

These wicked Amalgam concoctions are derived from Legion's scrap yard & experimental leftovers within her Factory Walker's morgue. They are forged into walking Bio-Tech rifles utilizing Mantis War Mount legs with screaming human heads mounted onto them. Gunspiders scurry along walls and ceilings, hunting down and chasing adversaries, firing relentlessly and unleashing all sorts of weaponry (Biotech & N.E.X.U.S. included) with en-

hanced accuracy. Gunspiders may choose to stalk quarry or immediately erupt into a cacophony of screams, cries and loud gibberish upon the very sight of Splicers; firing their armament randomly at their targets. The psychotic sickness in Gunspiders is just disturbing to Splicers, as the excited mounted heads start drooling, mumbling, screaming, spitting, hollering and cursing at anyone and anything that is of the Resistance. Legion utilizes Gunspiders to flush out Resistance fighters, to build web barricades to seal off entrances, for securing prisoners, and most importantly, to study

the psychological effects of warfare. However, not even Legion knows the full extent of the traumatizing terror that Gunspiders inflict upon the Resistance.

Class: Gun Support, Scout Hunter and Terror Sentinel.

M.D.C. by Location:

Scythe Legs (heavily enforced) (2) – 160 each

Shield Legs (2) – 180 each

*Front Legs (2) – 100 each

*Hind Legs (2) – 120 each

*Mandibles Blades(2) – 35 each

****Tormented Screamer Head (1 to 4) – 4D6+6 S.D.C. each

Assault Cannon (1) – 200

**Spider Head (heavily enforced) – 160

***Main Body (heavily enforced) – 360

* A single asterisk indicates a target that is difficult to hit. An attacker must aim and make a “Called Shot” to hit it, and even then is –3 strike.

** Destroying the Spider Head will eliminate all optics and sensory systems, reduces the maximum speed, the number of melee attacks and all bonuses by half. However, because the Gunspider has some Necrotic composition, it keeps fighting. Furthermore, the nanites will find a replacement for the Spider Head (and any other lost body parts) from remains and or metal scraps, and restore all lost M.D.C. within 2D6+4 hours.

*** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body kills the Gunspider. However, depleting the Main Body may also rupture or destroy the internal grenade magazine (35 M.D.C.) and there is a 45% chance the grenades will explode. In this case, the Gunspider’s carcass is completely destroyed, and everything within a 10-foot (3 m) radius suffers 3D6 points of M.D.C. every melee round for 1D4+2 melees.

**** Gunspiders may have anywhere from 1D4 Screamer Heads mounted onto it at one time. Destroying a Screamer Head does nothing to the physical performance of the Gunspider.

Speed:

Running: Gunspiders can skitter at an alarming speed of 100 mph (160 km) maximum, and half that speed along walls and ceilings. Normal cruising speed is 40 mph (64 km).

Leaping: The powerful legs of a Gunspider allow it to bound and propel itself 40 feet (12.2 m) high or across, increase by 50% with a short running start and double when running at full tilt.

Digging: 5 mph (8 km) through sand or dirt, but half that speed through clay, rock or stone. Digging does not tire the Gunspider.

Swimming: Cannot swim, but can walk along the bottom of rivers and lakes and stay submerged indefinitely. Maximum depth underwater is 400 feet (122 m).

Flying: Not applicable.

Statistical Data:

Height: 4 feet (1.2 m) at the height of the tallest leg joint, 3 feet (0.9 m) tall otherwise and can squeeze under something 2.5 feet (0.76 m) tall.

Width: 5-6 feet (1.5 to 1.8 m) from leg to leg, 16 foot radius (4.8 m) with arachnid legs spread out. Please note that Gunspiders can shift their internal bone structure to allow them to squeeze into tight spaces and tunnels as small as 4 feet (1.2 m) wide.

Length: 6-7 feet (1.8 to 2.1 m) from the tip of the gun to the spider’s rump.

Weight: 350 lbs (157.5 kg).

Cargo: None, but the Gunspider can tote 400 lbs (180 kg) on its back and 1,200 lbs (540 kg) can be pulled. Gunspiders often co-

coon victims and either haul them up into high crevices to feed upon or take them back to a hidden nest site for Legion’s Collectors to retrieve. Caches of victims are typical finds when Gunspiders are around but the victims’ conditions may vary from living to dead.

Power System: Nanobot & organic driven.

Construction Quality: Quick Stitch – Gunspiders look like disposable fodder, but their internal construction is a bit more solid. They use the same cybernetic joints to hold the pieces together, but they also possess fully functional life support and repair systems.

Construction Time: 1D4 hours. Penalties: -2 melee attacks, reduce speed by 25%, and reduce bonuses by half. Bonuses: +3 to Horror Factor.

Replaceable Regeneration System (R.R.S.) – This experimental repair system is one of Legion’s more unusual and impressive designs. Instead of repairing injuries to the body or limbs, this system allows Gunspiders to simply cut off the damaged area and replace it with components harvested from other machines or Bio-Tech devices. An entire limb can simply be discarded and replaced with a fresh one in minutes. Once the wound is excised or the limb is removed, hundreds of tiny tendrils made of nanites extend from the wound in preparation for the new component. The Gunspider simply needs to press the harvested component into the wound, and the nanites will integrate it into the body in 2D4 minutes. If the Gunspider is interrupted during this process, then the new component simply falls to the ground useless. The Amalgam can try again or find a different component. Only the freshest tissue can be used. If more than 1 melee round has expired, then it cannot be used. Robotic components do not have any kind of expiration date as long as they are functioning, and the components can even be decades old. The main body can only be repaired as long as it has not been reduced to less than 25%. Once the main body is reduced past this point, it is too structurally weakened to accept new components. Gunspiders are fascinated with melding to Splicers and Technojackers, though there is something in their nanobot programming that prohibits the Gunspider from melding with live human beings (Biotics, Technojackers, Scarecrows and Skinjobs included). However, War Mounts, vehicles or Technojacker power armors are fair game, but it takes 2D4 minutes for the integration. Once bonded, the Gunspider begins its outrageous behavior as it realizes that it does not have control of the War Mount or Vehicle and will begin shooting and screaming frantically, and even trying to pry itself off, causing damage to both parties.

Trade Value: None. Can NOT be controlled by a Technojacker and are a shoot on sight adversary.

Horror Factor: 13, however, 16 for a swarm of six or more against humans. None against Robots.

Senses & Features: All standard Robot, and are equipped with the following Biotech features:

Seismic Sense: Gunspiders can feel & detect vibrations along the ground or other surface of contact through any of the spider legs like a living seismic sensor. This means that Gunspiders cannot be snuck up on or caught by surprise by an opponent or multiple opponents approaching on the ground. Gunspiders can detect how many opponents are approaching, how fast they are coming, whether they are lightweight or heavyweight, and from which directions, including from the sides and behind.

Rear-mounted Spinnerets and Webbing: (see **Splicers® RPG**, page 88).

Attacks per Melee: 5.

Combat Bonuses (includes bonuses from being controlled by the Legion personality): +4 on initiative, +3 to strike in hand to hand combat, +2 to parry, +5 to automatic dodge (i.e.: can dodge without using up a melee action), +4 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +2 to disarm and entangle, +4 to strike with ranged weapons, Impervious to Horror factor.

Skills of Note: Standard, except +30% to Detect Concealment, plus Prowl 85%, Tracking (People, humanoids, Host Armors and animals) 85%, Climbing 85% and Stalking Target 80%.

Weapon Systems:

1. Assault Cannon: The primary assault cannon weapon can be any form of Bio-Tech rifle or cannon (excluding Omega Blasters, Photon Infuser Cannons nor any Robot Rail Guns), and is reinforced with a heavy metal framework. Standard designs have a Pulse-Laser Assault Rifle.

Primary Purpose: Assault and Defense.

Mega-Damage: See damage of Bio-Tech Rifle or Cannon for corresponding damage and effects. The standard Gunspider Pulse-Laser Assault Cannon delivers 2D6 M.D. per single shot or 6D6 M.D. per triple-pulse burst.

Rate of Fire: Each shot or burst counts as one melee attack/action.

Range: See range of Bio-Tech Rifle or Cannon for corresponding range. Standard Gunspider Pulse-Laser is 3,000 feet (914 m).

Payload: See selected Bio-Tech Rifle or Cannon for corresponding payload. Standard Pulse Laser has an effectively unlimited payload.

2. Under-Barrel Grenade Launcher Cannon: The secondary cannon is a grenade launcher and is mounted underneath the primary cannon.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Mega-Damage: 1D4x10 M.D. with a blast area of 20 feet (6.1 m).

Rate of Fire: Each shot counts as one melee attack/action.

Range: 1,200 feet (366 m).

Payload: 50 round internal magazine.

3. Rapid-Fire Laser Batteries (2): Mounted underneath the grenade launcher are a pair of small lasers, with top-mounted flashlights for temporarily blinding targets.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Mega-Damage: 2D6 M.D. per single blast, 4D6 M.D. per double blast, and 1D6x10 M.D. for a simultaneous rapid-fire burst at the same target.

Rate of Fire: Each blast or burst counts as one melee attack, but reduce the bonus to strike with ranged weapons by half when firing a burst.

Range: 1,200 feet (366 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

Bonus: +1 to Strike.

4. Mandible Blades (2): A pair of large, articulated blades are attached to the sides of the spider's grinning maw and are used to slice open armored targets or grasping enemy limbs during combat.

Primary Purpose: Close Combat and Self-Defense.

Mega-Damage: 2D6 M.D. from a single Bite attack, or 4D6 M.D. from two simultaneous attacks on the same target (damage being done to the body part that is seized).

Number of Attacks: Each single or dual Blade Strike counts as one melee attack/action.

Range: Touch/hand to hand combat.

5. Combat Capabilities: Gunspiders may use their long-range weapons (each use counts as one melee action/attack) or engage in hand to hand combat or combine the two.

Mega-Damage:

Restrained Leg Strike: 1D6x10+10 S.D.C.

Leg Strike: 3D6 M.D.

Dual Leg Strike: 6D6 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Vibro-Scythe Front Leg Strike/slash: 1D4x10 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Barrage Leg Strike: Gunspiders can utilize multiple limbs to strike at the same target, as part of a single, simultaneous "barrage attack" to do additional damage, but only add in the Gunspider's normal P.S. damage once, regardless of the number of legs that hit. Also, like using a missile volley, roll to strike only once, either the entire barrage of legs hit or they all miss. The victim of a Gunspider's barrage attack can only parry or dodge two of the limbs in the volley, four if he has the Paired Weapons skill.

Screamer Head Bite: 1D8 S.D.C.

Spider Head Bite: 3D8 M.D.

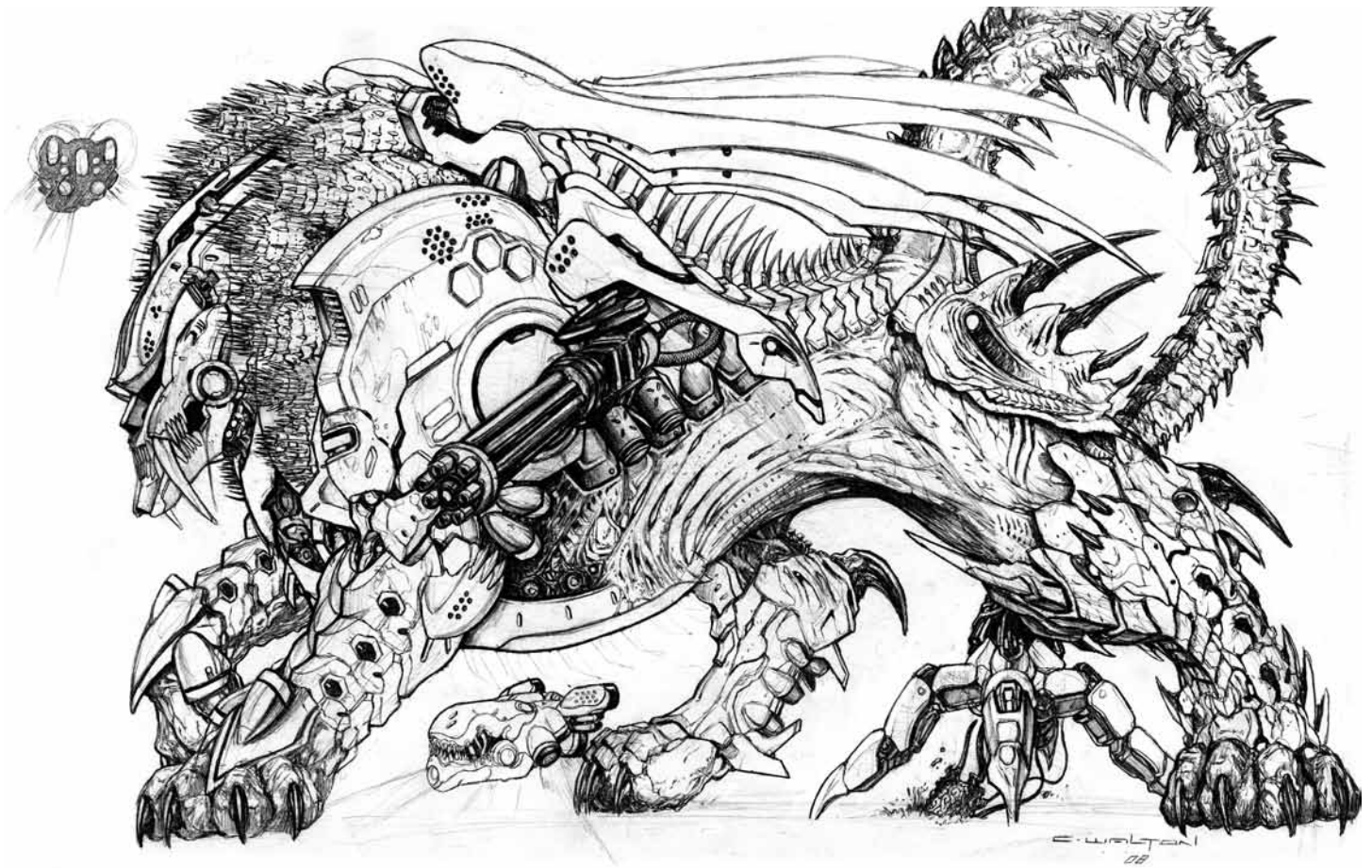
Gun Barrel Ram: 3D6 M.D. at speeds under 100 mph (160 km). Double damage at faster speeds but the Gunspider also takes 1D8 M.D. and has a 01-60% chance of knocking an opponent up to 8 feet (2.4 m) tall off his feet. Counts as two melee attacks.

Body Pounce/Ram: 5D6 M.D. under 100 mph (160 km). Double damage at faster speeds but the Gunspider also takes 1D8 M.D. and has a 01-60% chance of knocking an opponent up to 10 feet (3 m) tall off his feet. If knocked off his feet, the target loses initiative and one melee attack/action, and the Gunspider is poised for a fast Spider head bite attack (+2 to strike for the Gunspider's next attack). Counts as two melee attacks.

Manticore

This newest Amalgam stems from Legion's successful siege of a mountain bunker belonging to the Great House of Artemis that contained a nice surplus of *Mountain Lion War Mounts* (to be covered in future Splicers® sourcebooks). Legion based her design for a predator of Splicers off of the mythical creature that was part lion and part man with a scorpion-like tail, the *Manticore*. Legion's Amalgam turned out far worse than the legend ever described. The Manticore has a bone-chilling smile sculpted across its metallic faceplate and pitch-black optics. Underneath the helmet, Legion has placed an animated human head for psychological horror. *If* or when Splicers get close enough, they can hear the voice and crying underneath the faceplate. Sometimes Legion will even open the faceplate, exposing the face of a fallen comrade or House ally who is screaming and pleading for someone to save them, as if they are still alive and have a chance for rescue. This is a convincing ploy of Legion's to fool Splicers into thinking that the Manticore somehow conceals and imprisons the rest of their comrade's body inside the Amalgam and that a successful extraction is possible. The sad thing is that the pleading human face will even tell them that. However, Splicers inevitably discover that this is Legion playing one of her twisted games once again.

The Manticore's mane is composed of numerous clusters of needle pods, with each pod composed of a mini-Death Needle Blossom. The large, armor-piercing hypodermic needles inject tranquilizing toxins to sedate and numb living targets. Legion often likes to release a coalition of 1D6 Manticores within Splicer



habitats or Nature Preserves in order to capture -living- resources, such as armored Splicers, War Mounts or alien predators. Many Splicers in Host Armor have succumbed to this predator by simply being shot in the legs or arms, where the needles pierce the armor and puncture the pilot inside. Comrades are often slowed down in rescue attempts by dragging and carrying limp victims, thus allowing Legion to strategically catch them as well.

The tail of this Amalgam has Legion's wicked twist to the mythical creature's design. Instead of the scorpion stinger, it has a *Mandible Discharger* used to engage in melee combat or to eject the wicked critters housed inside. These armored parasites, called *Burrowers*, resemble green brains with squid tentacles and a high-powered drill attached, that enable the creatures to burrow through the ground or thick armored plating at amazing speeds. The high-speed drilling in conjunction with their tentacles enable the Burrower Squids to skitter across the ground and walls like a spider. Once it reaches a target, the Burrower literally drills into its victim. When deep enough, its neuro-tentacles attempt to disrupt the neural paths of control of a Host Armor or bonded War Mount by emitting jolts of electricity that shock the nerves and muscles of the pilot, causing them to temporarily seize up. Against Technojackers in armor or machines, the Burrower seeks to shock or fry internal musculature or circuitry. Manticore's often utilize their tail by wrapping its mandible appendages around the head or limb of a victim, slamming and jarring the opponent around to loosen them up, before injecting a Burrower directly into the victim. The Amalgam will routinely deploy 1D4 Burrowers into the ground and walls before engaging Splicers to set up strategic ambushes and distractions. Splicers have learned to scan all nearby surfaces when Manticores are spotted, because it is likely that Burrowers have been planted and are lurking underneath the surface or within

the walls, tunneling and poised for surprise attack (-3 to initiative if caught off guard).

Fortunately, for the Resistance, Mountain Lion War Mounts are a new and rare commodity, thus hard to come by, so Legion can only churn out so many Manticores at a time.

Class: Hunter Killer, Anti-War Mount & Special Assault Fighter.

M.D.C. by Location:

- *Front Legs (heavily reinforced) (2) – 210 each
- Upper Arms/Armored Shoulders (2) – 240 each
- *Hind Legs (heavily reinforced) (2) – 230 each
- *Clawed Feet (4) – 110 each
- *Rear Hind Scythe Talons (2) – 35 each
- Needle Quill Pods (18) – 35 each
- Ion Gatling Gun (2) – 60 each
- *Saber Fangs (2) – 80 each
- Underbelly Chainsaw – 75
- Back Ridge Spines – 40
- Wing Sabers (8; two wings with 4 blades each) – 80 each
- *Tail – 135
- *Tail Mandibles (4) – 80 each mandible
- **Head (heavily reinforced) – 240
- ***Main Body (heavily reinforced) – 530

* A single asterisk indicates a target that is difficult to hit. An attacker must aim and make a "Called Shot" to hit it, and even then is -3 strike.

** Destroying the head will eliminate all optics and sensory systems, reduces the maximum speed, the number of melee attacks and all bonuses by half. However, because the Amalgam has an advanced nanobot composition, it keeps fighting.

*** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body kills the Manticore.

Speed:

Running: 100 mph (160 km) maximum, but normal cruising speed is only 60 mph (96 km).

Leaping: The powerful, heavily reinforced legs of the Manticore are equipped with jump jets that can propel the Manticore with leaps of 60 feet (18.3 m) high or across, increase by 50% with a short running start and double when running at full tilt.

Digging: 20 mph (32 km) through sand or dirt, but half that speed through clay, rock or stone. Digging does not tire the Amalgam.

Swimming: Can not swim and sinks like a rock, but can trot along the bottom at 20 mph (32 km/17.3 knots). Maximum depth underwater is 800 feet (244 m).

Flying: Not applicable, the Saber wings are strictly for combat and the Springer jump jets assist only in leaps, not for hovering or flight.

Statistical Data:

Height: 7-8 feet (2.1 to 2.4 m) at the shoulders.

Width: 5-6 feet (1.5 to 1.8 m) from shoulder to shoulder, 7 feet (2.1 m) with Gatling guns extracted and 14 foot (4.2 m) wingspan with Saber wings displayed open.

Length: 11 feet (3.3 m) from tip of the nose to the rump, plus an 8 foot (2.4 m) long tail, with a 2 foot (0.6 m) long mandible tip.

Weight: 1.6 to 2 tons fully loaded and fed.

Cargo: None, but the Manticore can carry 1,600 lbs (720 kg) on its back and 6,000 lbs (2,700 kg) can be dragged.

Power System: Nanobot and organic driven.

Construction Quality: Seamless – The components are fused together with such microscopic precision they look as though they grew that way naturally. Construction Time: 8D8+4 hours.

Enhanced Bio-Regeneration – Either the Bio-Tech components themselves happened to have enhanced healing rates, or Legion figured out how to boost them through drugs, and/or steroids. These enhancements only apply to the organic systems. Mechanical technology components must be repaired by a Mechanic or Repair Wagon, or replaced at the Factory Walker. Bio-Regeneration Rate: 1D6 M.D.C. per minute for the main body and one M.D.C. per minute for all other locations.

Trade Value: None. Can NOT be controlled by a Technojacker.

Horror Factor: 14, however, with the human face exposed, pleading, begging and screaming, it is 17. None against Robots.

Colors: Silver and black or solid death metal gray. In arctic conditions they are solid white.

Senses & Features: All standard Robot, plus standard enhanced olfactory used for detecting Splicers utilizing stealth fields, unless they are downwind from the Manticore.

In addition, the Manticore is equipped with the following Bio-tech features inherited from the Mountain Lion War Mount:

Resistance to Physical Attack: Beneath the skin is a layer of thick tissue filled with an impact-resistant fluid that cushions the Amalgam from blunt attacks like punches, kicks, falls, and explosive concussions (all of which inflict half damage).

Righting Reflex: Another enhancement used to protect the Amalgam from deadly falls. The Manticore can automatically right itself in mid-fall and land on its feet. Takes no damage from any fall less than 50 feet (15.2 m), takes only half damage from falls between 51 feet (15.5 m) and 1,000 feet (305 m), and falls from a height greater than 1,000 feet (305 m) requires a successful roll with impact to reduce damage by half.

Attacks per Melee (includes bonuses from being controlled by the Legion personality): 7.

Combat Bonuses (includes bonuses from being controlled by the Legion personality): +4 on initiative, +4 to strike in hand to hand combat, +2 to parry, +5 to automatic dodge (can dodge without using up a melee action), +4 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +2 to disarm, +4 to strike with ranged weapons, impervious to Horror Factor.

Skills of Note: Standard, Climb (88%), Land Navigation 80%, Prowl 74%, Track by Scent 80%, and Hunting 76%.

Weapon Systems:

1. Ion Gatling Cannons (2): Mounted on each shoulder is a Gatling-styled, ion pulse cannon with seven barrels each. The ion cannons have a 180-degree horizontal rotation axis and a 120-degree vertical rotation axis. Each cannon can fire one or two at a time or in a volley of 2-4 at the same target, or each can fire at a different target. Both cannons are partially shielded by bladed wings (-2 to hit on a Called Shot).

Primary Purpose: Assault and Defense.

Mega-Damage: 3D6 M.D. for a short bursts, two simultaneous bursts at the same target 6D6 M.D., three bursts does 1D4x10+10 and a four shot volley does 1D6x10 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Each blast or volley of 2-4 simultaneous bursts counts as one melee attack. Either the whole volley hits or misses entirely. Reduce ranged weapons strike bonus by half when shooting in volleys (and bursts).

Range: 1,200 feet (366 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

2. Needle Blossom Cluster Pods (18): The lion-like mane of the Manticore is composed of numerous pods each containing a cluster of Death Blossom needles. Each cluster of M.D.C. needles has its own micro launcher. On command, the Manticore can release a small portion of these or large showers of them. The 16 inch (0.4 m), armor-piercing needles are hypodermics with poison solutions to sedate and numb their living targets.

Primary Purpose: Capture, Hunting and Assault.

Mega-Damage: A single needle does one M.D., a small volley does 1D8 M.D., a medium volley does 2D8 M.D. and a large volley does 4D8 M.D. Releasing most (80-100%) at once is the Death Blossom and it inflicts 1D12x10 M.D. to everything within a 30 foot (9.1 m) radius. Needles that pierce into the flesh of a pilot are also treated individually as a Save vs Harmful Drug. Upon a failed roll, the victim will fall asleep within 1D4 melee rounds and those who succumb will remain asleep for 3D6 minutes. Victims may be awoken by smelling salts or a physical shaking, but remain groggy and -5 to strike, parry and dodge for the duration of the sleep effect when awoken early. Add one additional penalty of -1 for each needle that struck the victim, but the total amount of sleep duration remains the same.

Rate of Fire: Each directed, limited attack counts as one melee attack. A full-blown Needle Death Blossom attack that fires most or all of the needles counts as two melee/actions. A full radius attack can only be used once per melee round.

Range: 30 feet (9.1 m).

Payload: Enough needles for 12 full radius Needle Death Blossom attacks per 24 hour period. Automatically regenerates one full attack payload every six hours. The Amalgam can replenish enough needles for another two attacks every 1D6x10 minutes afterwards.

Bonus: +3 to strike everything in range, but this is the only bonus that counts toward the needle blossom strike.

3. Burrower Discharger: The muscular tail of the Manticore contains a flexible, hollow tube that ends with a Parasite Discharg-

er. This mandible end of the tail is able to be used in combat to grab things or to ball up tightly to be utilized like a club. However, it is when the mandibles are open that the true horror is revealed of the tail's design. Instead of a stinger that injects venom, the tail is able to eject cybernetically enhanced parasites called **Burrowers** that are stored inside well-protected aquariums within the Manticore's rear quarters. These armored parasites resemble squids with an advanced, high-powered drill attached, that enables the creatures to burrow through the ground or armor at amazing speed. Once it reaches its target, the Burrower digs and wedges itself into crevices like an octopus. This is possible as they have no bones, so they can squeeze into very small areas of Host Armors & War Mounts where their neuro-tentacles attach and begin shocking the victim repeatedly with powerful jolts of electricity.

Primary Purpose: Incapacitation & assault.

M.D.C. of the Burrower: 22 M.D.C. points, but the Burrower is a small target and a -3 to hit on a Called Shot and each Burrower is treated the same as a high-tech mini-missile and each can be shot as normal.

Mega-Damage: 2D12 M.D. Humans and other biological/living creatures must roll to save vs stun attack (15 or higher, with any possible bonus from P.E.) or they will lose initiative, two melee attacks and are -4 on all combat actions for 2D4 melee rounds. An Electrical attack on Host Armor and War Mounts will inflict the usual Mega-Damage to the pilot inside, but the pilot does not suffer any other penalties. Machines take the M.D. inflicted.

Rate of Fire: One Burrower can be discharged at a time and counts as one melee attack/action. Because Burrowers are thinking projectiles, each Burrower gets its own independent roll to strike.

Range: 1,200 feet (366 m), after which the Burrower will lie in wait for 3D4 minutes before dying where it lies.

Payload: 20 Burrowers are located in the internal aquarium of the Manticore's flanks. Reloading takes 4 melee rounds from a Collector/Mechanic carrying a new aquarium, but only two melee rounds for a Repair Wagon or one melee round for the Factory Walker.

4. Saber Wings (2): These large blades are used to defend the Manticore when it is surrounded or being overwhelmed by numbers. The wings fold together like a fan but can unfold and be used to slash opponents with quick twists and turns or while strafing through enemy lines.

Primary Purpose: Close Combat and Defense.

Mega-Damage: 1D4x10 M.D. per slash.

Rate of Fire: Each slash counts as one attack/action.

Range: The length of the Saber blades is 6 feet (1.8 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

Bonus: +2 to strike.

5. Hand to Hand Combat: Manticores excel in close combat, often utilizing their head projectile arsenal along with teeth, claws and tail to maul and overwhelm enemies.

Mega-Damage:

Restrained Claw Strike: 1D6x10+10 S.D.C.

Claw Strike: 5D8 M.D.

Power Claw Strike: 2D4x10 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Sickle Claw Slash: 5D6 M.D. for a rake or kick and 1D6x10 M.D. for a leaping rake slash but counts as two melee attacks/actions.

Head Butt: 3D6 M.D.

Bite (Fangs retracted): 3D8 M.D./5D8 M.D. (with Saber Fangs unsheathed).

Body Block/Pounce/Ram: 4D8 M.D., counts as two attacks, plus victim loses one melee attack.

Running Leap Attack: 2D6+10 M.D., +1 to strike and has a 01-75% likelihood of knocking an opponent as large as 12 feet (3.7 m) tall off his feet and onto his back (also has a 01-75% chance the victim drops whatever he was holding). If knocked off his feet, the target loses initiative and two melee attacks/actions, and the Manticore is poised for a fast bite attack (+2 to strike for the next Manticore attack). A Running Leap Attack uses up two of the Manticore's attacks.

Tail Slash with Barbs: 1D4x10+10 M.D., but counts as two melee attacks.

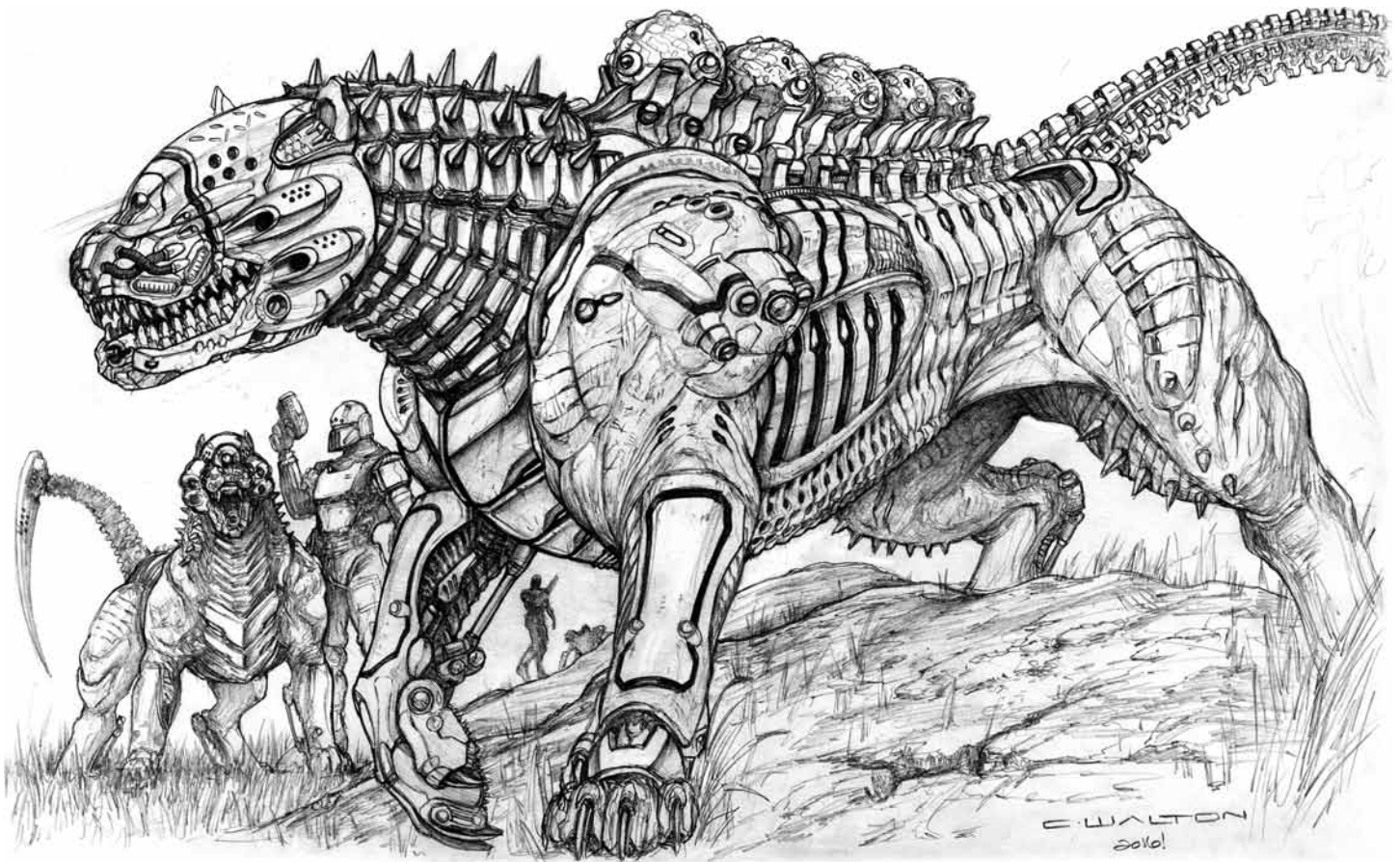
Tail Swat: 2D6 M.D. plus the victim loses initiative and one melee attack.

Mandible Tail Crush: Does an initial 2D8 M.D. when a victim is successfully grabbed/entangled and held. The tail end mandibles squeeze with vise-like pressure, crushing internal structures of Host armor, War Mounts or machines, causing 2D6+10 M.D. per crushing squeeze, thus impairing a seized limb (cannot use it). Each crushing squeeze counts as one of the Manticore's melee attacks/actions. However, because the intent is to hurt rather than to hold, victim's can use their Escape Artist skill at +10% to escape (slip the hold), or the victim can be pried out by comrades provided they match the Manticore's P.S. This attack/action also places the captured victim in position for a Burrower and is a -4 to dodge for the seized victim until freed.

War Hound

Legion has chosen to exhibit the psychological influence and affinity of "man's best friend" with the more commonly availed Gore Hounds of the Resistance to her full delight and continued exploitation of Splicers. Nicknamed Legion's "Blood Hounds," Splicers assumed the name was accurate with ancient history, based on recent accounts of the mangled, bloodied conditions of survivors that spoke of these wicked hunts where they escaped from a pack of large, necrotic Gore Hound monsters covered in dried up blood. When investigating these creatures, it was assumed that the ancient bloodhounds of old were also utilized in the same fashion to hunt fugitives and prey. Legion overheard multiple Splicers speak of her Gorehound amalgams as Blood Hounds and decided to oblige their assumptions by adding a special olfactory sensor to have her canine re-creations live up to their namesake. Now the canine terrors serve also as her means for locating, tracking and hunting any of her desired targets.

Legion likes to hunt formidable Splicers to learn more about their mind sets, field capabilities and relishes the opportunity as a playful challenge. When desired quarry (Splicers, N.E.X.U.S. or alien predators) are spotted that are selected for a hunt, Legion deploys a Mini-Transport platform (see **Splicers® RPG**, page 62) that will soar over the designated area where Legion wants to flush out or intercept her prey. The Mini-Transport Platform's cargo is loaded with pod-like capsules each containing a War Hound in fetal position. Legion's Factory Walker loads these platforms as she sees fit for what she plans to hunt. Typically, she uses 1D4 War Hound capsules (per humanoid target) and 1D6+2 per War Mount, large N.E.X.U.S. robot or alien predator. The capsules are jettisoned from the Mini-Transport Platform into strategic locations surrounding the targeted area, creating a hunting ground perimeter. Once the pod lands, it immediately opens up and the War Hound leaps out of its capsule, quickly utilizing its advanced array of sen-



sors to synchronize with its pack members and to begin tracking its targets. Once linked, all the War Hounds within the pack are able to see and comprehend one another's locations, observations, scent detections, and experiences. This enables them to perform and function cohesively with their combined data as a formidable, collective pack. It is a true horror to be hunted and locked in combat with these relentless hunters.

Class: Necrotic Interceptor, Hunter-Killer and Scout.

M.D.C. by Location:

- *Front Legs (2) – 120 each
- *Hind Legs (2) – 120 each
- *Tail – 100, plus four blades with 30 M.D.C. each
- **Head – 180
- ***Main Body – 360
- Force Field – 100

* A single asterisk indicates a target that is difficult to hit. An attacker must aim and make a "Called Shot" to hit it, and even then is -3 strike.

** Destroying the head will eliminate all optics and sensory systems, and reduces the maximum speed, the number of melee attacks and all bonuses by half. However, because the War Hound has Necrotic composition it keeps fighting. Furthermore, the nanites will find a replacement for the head (and any other lost body parts) from Gorehound remains and metal scraps and restore all lost M.D.C. within 2D8+4 hours.

*** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body kills the War Hound.

Speed:

Running: 180 mph (288 km) maximum, but normal cruising speed is only 80 mph (128 km). Half the speed when running along walls and ceilings.

Leaping: 20 feet (6.1 m) high or across, increase by 50% with a short running start and double when running at full tilt.

Digging: 20 mph (32 km) through sand or dirt, but half that speed through clay, rock or stone. Digging does not tire the hound.

Swimming: 40 mph (64 km or 34 knots); dog paddle. Maximum depth underwater is 2,000 feet (610 m) where it can walk, bound or run along the bottom.

Flying: Not applicable.

Statistical Data:

Height: 4.5 feet (1.4 m) at the shoulders, 6 feet (1.8 m) to the top of the head.

Width: 3.5 feet (1.06 m) from shoulder to shoulder.

Length: 8 feet (2.4 m) from tip of the nose to the rump, plus a 4 foot (1.2 m) long, barbed tail.

Weight: 1,200 lbs (540 kg) or 1,500 (675 kg) fully loaded and fed.

Cargo: None, but the War Hound can carry 1,600 lbs (720 kg) on its back and 6,000 lbs (2,700 kg) can be pulled. The incredible pulling strength is also utilized to gauge how much it takes to overcome the War Hound when it chooses to lock its leg musculature to not allow its quarry to flee once it is seized in the gripping jaws. Brute strength is the primary challenge at this point, as a seized adversary requires a combined Splicer or Robotic P.S. of 36 to break free or to keep moving, though speed will be reduced by 25% if one War Hound is biting and locked onto the target. 2-3 War Hounds reduces the speed by half and 4-6 reduces speed by 80%. This technique is used to hold quarry while other reinforcements come to join in or to deliver the killing blow.

Power System: Nanobot and Organically driven.

Construction Quality: Seamless – The components are fused together with such microscopic precision they look as though they

grew that way naturally. Biology and technology work together in perfect harmony to become something more.

Construction Time: 8D8 hours.

Nanite Repair Systems: The Amalgam is infested with experimental nanites that repair damage to all components, whether they are organic or technological.

Regeneration Rate: Organic components are healed at a rate of 2D6 M.D.C. per hour for the main body and 1D4 M.D.C. per hour for all other locations. Damage to inorganic components is repaired at a rate of 1D6 M.D.C. per melee round, but the necrotic hound must have access to 2 pounds (0.9 kg) of metal for every 5 points of M.D.C. healed. The metal needs to be physically pressed into the wound in order to activate the repair systems.

Trade Value: None. Can NOT be controlled by a Technojacker.

Horror Factor: 15 to normal civilians, 14 to Splicers because it's such an abomination of a once loyal Gorehound, but 18 for everyone when it's a pack of four or more.

Senses & Features: All standard Robot (minus Feature 8), and standard War Mount Senses plus the following:

Motion Detection: Lateral line sensors built along the sides of the neck, back and hindquarters (similar to a shark) enable the War Hound to pick up the slightest, but telltale signs of motion around the Amalgam canine. This makes it impossible to sneak up on the War Hound.

Range: 30 foot (9.1 m) radius around the Hound.

Note: High, shifting winds (30 mph/48 km plus) will negate this sensory ability. The Lateral line sensors are modified to be amphibious and the range doubles when the hound is underwater.

Enhanced Olfactory Recognition: Recognize and accurately identify general/common/known smells, including gases, food, and other distinctive odors, plus can distinguish smells produced by various Great House Biotechnologies. **Range:** 300 feet (91 m) per level of experience. **Base Skill:** 60% +2% per level of experience.

Track by Scent: Does not need to follow tracks or any other visible trail, just the scent molecules and pheromones left in the air by its target are sufficient enough for the War Hound to follow a scent trail left several days in the past. Under optimal conditions, a War Hound can detect as few as one or two cells. The canine's nasal chambers (where scents are identified) have been modified to be larger than those of Gore Hounds and other War Mounts. **Note:** Splicers utilizing stealth fields, moving or motionless, will still be detected by scent with this sensor, unless they are downwind from the War Hound. However, anyone who has reduced their scent by rubbing the Samaritan Gorehound's Sterilizing Dew (see *The Rift-er*® #74, page 56-57) on themselves receives a bonus of +25% for their concealment (until the dew is rubbed or washed off of if the character is exposed to a fresh odor (blood, sweat, chemical, etc.)). **Range:** Roll once every 2,000 feet (610 m) per level of experience. **Base Skill:** 60% +2% per level of experience. A failed roll means the trail has been temporarily lost. Two successful rolls out of three tries means the trail has been rediscovered. After two failures, the trail is permanently lost. Cannot track by smell alone through moving water or heavy rainfall.

Mounted on each paw are Grip Hairs and Suction Cups for climbing walls and ceilings.

Attacks per Melee (includes bonuses from being controlled by the Legion personality): 6.

Combat Bonuses (includes bonuses from being controlled by the Legion personality): +4 on initiative, +4 to strike in hand to hand

combat, +2 to parry, +5 to automatic dodge (i.e.: can dodge without using up a melee action), +4 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +2 to disarm, +4 to strike with ranged weapons, Impervious to Horror factor, +1 to Horror Factor when teeth are grinding, +3 when they are shredding armor or flesh.

Skills of Note: Standard, except +30% to Detect Ambush, Detect Concealment, plus Prowl 85%, Camouflage (self) 80%, Tracking (people, humanoids, Host Armors and animals) 85% and Stalking Target 80%.

Weapon Systems:

1. Twin Plasma Ejectors (2): Mounted on each cheek are twin Plasma Ejector Cannons that are hardwired directly to the War Hound. They can fire one or two at a time or in a volley of 2-4 at the same target. The Plasma Cannons can also be fired while the canine Amalgam is biting its target and only counts as one melee attack.

Primary Purpose: Assault, Hunting and Defense.

Mega-Damage: A single plasma blast does 3D6 M.D., two simultaneous blasts at the same target 6D6 M.D., three does 1D4x10+6 and a four shot volley does 1D6x10 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Each single shot or volley of 2-4 simultaneous blasts counts as one melee attack. In the case of volleys, roll once to strike. Either the whole volley hits or it misses entirely. Reduce the ranged weapon strike bonus by half when shooting in volleys (and bursts).

Range: 100 feet (30.5 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

2. Foam Sprayer: Built into the lower jaw is a Foam Sprayer that is hardwired directly into the saliva glands of the original Gorehound. These decayed necro-organic parts now secrete a putrid smelling, frothy bacteria foam similar to a rabid dog. The foam is highly infectious by contact and attacks the immune systems and regeneration cells of ALL Biotechnology (even Biotech handheld weapons begin to suffer if not treated).

Primary Purpose: Disable and Weaken opponents. Also used to scent mark quarry.

Mega-Damage: While it is almost harmless to humans, delivering only 1D4 S.D.C. damage per melee round, when the foam comes into contact with Bio-Technology it reacts with a chemical hostility reaction triggering the foam to deliver 1D4 M.D.C. per melee attack/action for up to 2D10 minutes or until the biotech armor, creature, weapon, item, etc., is reduced to 25% of its total M.D.C. capacity or until washed off by water. Wiping it off against other surfaces only smears the foam, making it stickier to the biotechnology it has come into contact with. Contact with human blood however, will double the damage.

Duration: The infectious deterioration lasts for 2 hours before becoming totally inert.

Rate of Fire: Each Foam Spray counts as one melee attack.

Range: 50 foot (15.2 m) spray.

Payload: 12 sprays every 24 hours.

3. Tail Sickle: This large, Vibro-Blade sickle is used to defend the hindquarters of the War Hound and is also used during strafe attacks to disable opponents. This is a common tactic to bring a fleeing opponent or prey down where the War Hound can slow down and turn to engage the quarry. The tail cannot curl, or carry objects and it is not prehensile.

Primary Purpose: Close Combat and Defense.

Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D. for slashes when the vibro frequency is not activated, 1D4x10 M.D. from a slash with vibro activated.

Rate of Fire: Each strike counts as one attack/action, although it takes one melee action/attack to activate. Once activated, the Vibro-Blade can remain active constantly during combat until deactivated or destroyed.

Range: The length of the sickle is 6 feet (1.8 m) and it is attached to a 4 foot (1.2 m) tail, giving the War Hound a total maximum reach of 10 feet (3 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

Bonus: +2 to strike, +2 to parry and disarm, but these bonuses only apply when the tail weapon is used.

Penalty: Gorehounds and anyone equipped with Enhanced Hearing can detect the active Vibro-Blade humming up to 60 feet away.

4. Vise Jaws & Saw Teeth: The Gorehound's original teeth are replaced with razor sharp, interlocking blade teeth that are installed along a rotary chain belt mechanism on both the upper and lower jaws. This enables the War Hound to interlock its teeth to increase its ability to secure and hold onto an adversary and exert up to 3 tons of bite force to crush an enemy's protective armor. The rows of teeth can also be sped up to act as a grinding chainsaw that renders flesh, bone, armor and metal with devastating results.

Primary Purpose: Close Combat and Securing Opponents.

Mega-Damage: See Hand to Hand combat below.

Range: Close Combat only.

5. Hand to Hand Combat: War Hounds regularly engage in close combat, often utilizing their head projectile arsenal in conjunction with their teeth, claws and tail, and work strategically when alone or with cohesive coordination in packs. They are fully capable of all the same physical attacks as a standard Gorehound (add +1D6 M.D. for Legion's added reinforced armor plating), plus the following:

Mega-Damage:

Bite: 3D8 M.D.

Vise Lockjaw Bite (Seized Bite): 3D8+15 M.D.

Bite & Shake: 3D10+10 M.D. (counts as two melee attacks) and an additional 1D10+5 M.D. per shaking frenzy attack that follows (each pair of shakes afterwards counting as one additional melee attack). Up to 2 melee rounds before the War Hound is required to re-stabilize itself (1 melee action). This attack can only be conducted on adversaries that have been successfully seized during a bite attack and locked down upon with the vice jaws.

Chainsaw Grinder Bite: Requires the initial Seized Bite upon an opponent, but once the victim is secure, the chainsaw teeth engage at maximum speed, delivering an additional 1D4x10 M.D. per attack and can run consecutively at 3D6 M.D. per additional attack directly to the bitten area, until the item/area of the victim is no longer damageable (counts as two initial melee attacks plus each additional melee attack thereafter).

Tail Slash: 2D6+10 M.D. while inactive, 1D4x10 M.D. with Vibro-Blade activated.

Underbelly Chainsaw Slash: 1D4x10+10 M.D.

Running Leap Attack: 3D10 M.D.+ 5 M.D. for every 10 mph (16 km) above 30 mph (48 km), and has a 01-85% likelihood of knocking down an opponent as large as 15 feet (4.6 m) tall off his feet and onto his back (also a 01-70% chance the victim drops whatever he was holding). If knocked off his feet, the target loses initiative and two melee attacks/actions, and the War Hound is poised for a fast bite attack or Plasma Ejector blast (+2 to strike for the canine's next attack).

Optional Feature Addition: Legion likes to mix up the features of her War Hounds as an overall, versatile hunting pack that is unpredictable enough to keep Splicers guessing, so she does not equip them identically. Each War Hound will have one of the following:

01-24% Tick Hive: Built into the rib chambers of the War Hound is a hive containing hundreds of microscopic robotic ticks. When the War Hound shakes its body like a wet dog, it scatters the ticks everywhere around it. Once the bugs land onto targets, they immediately scurry & burrow deep into cracks, crevices, openings, vents, and wrinkles of clothes or armor and begin emitting a homing signal up to 20 miles (32 km) away for other War Hounds and Legion to easily track. These robotic ticks not only transmit a homing signal, but also transmit recorded sound waves of what they are attached to. Exposure to high electrical or EMP discharges will nullify all the ticks immediately. Otherwise, they must all be found and removed accordingly, which can be *challenging* if the ticks are sealed in due to bio-regeneration. All Gorehounds have a +10% to detect ticks, but Samaritans equipped with both Medical Probes and Ultrasound Cup Pads, or Saints and Engineers can detect and remove all embedded ticks.

Primary Purpose: Tracking, Surveillance & Espionage.

Mega-Damage: Burrowing damage is 1D4 S.D.C. to flesh and 1D4 M.D. to Mega-Damage structures. The Ticks are made of various plastics, so there is neither a plague reaction nor any metal to detect.

Rate of Fire: Counts as one melee action.

Range: The shaking can reach a radius of 30 feet (9.1 m).

Payload: Enough Ticks for ten full radius blossoms. Reloading the internal tick hive counts as two melee rounds by a Collector/Mechanic or one melee round by a Repair Wagon or the Factory Walker.

25-48% Cable Net Gun: The other reported weapon that some War Hounds have is a gun that fires a cable net up to 50 feet (15.2 m) away. Once they snare a target (up to 14 feet/4.3 m tall or wide), the cables instantly contract tightly to constrict and contain any captives caught in the net.

Primary Purpose: Capturing Prey.

Mega-Damage: The impact of the net delivers no damage to armored beings and only delivers 2D8 S.D.C. to unarmored humans or animals. However, the impact of the net will launch captives weighing less than 800 lbs (360 kg) up to 2D10 feet (0.6 to 6.1 m) from where the target was standing or running. The nanobots contained within the fibers are programmed strictly to ensnare targets, constricting (at P.S. 45 Robotic Strength) only as needed to contain the target. Against Mega-Damage constructs, the net's constriction will deliver an additional 2D8 M.D.C. per melee attack/action until the target stops struggling and is incapacitated or breaks free.

Note: If the net is broken or torn, the separated/fragmented pieces will have the normal nanobot hostile plague reaction.

Rate of Fire: Counts as one melee attack/action.

Range: 50 feet (15.2 m).

Payload: 10 cable nets. Requires two melee actions for a Collector or Mechanic to reload.

49-74% Cable Snakes (3): This War Hound is equipped with three *Cable Snakes* (see **Splicers® RPG**, page 42) to flush out or distract Splicers/N.E.X.U.S. Machines, while the War Hound closes in for the kill or to help assist the Amalgam in combat. There are two Cable Snakes attached underneath the War Hound and one that is housed down the throat of the necrotic Gorehound that can be shockingly and very quickly ejected out at targets (-2 to initia-

tive and any Auto-Dodge bonuses for all unsuspecting/unprepared adversaries).

75-00% Probe Spheres (5): These are surveillance drones that help expand the monitoring of hunting grounds and overall tracking of activity within a designated area. They are small, spherical drones deployed to monitor and observe the activities of combat, enemy locations and use of tactics. The probe spheres typically hover silently throughout areas, hiding themselves in shadows or in foliage to best cover the areas being surveyed.

Class Type: Automated Robot Probe.

M.D.C. by Location:

*Optic Sensor Lens (3) – 1 each

**Main Body – 12

* Destroying one of the sensor lenses also destroys one of its many optic systems/cameras, communication and sensory systems. When five or more sensors are lost, the probe will leave its post and seek out the nearest Mechanic or Collector for repairs and then return back to its assigned post. The sensor lenses are very small and are difficult targets to hit, especially when moving, and can only be hit when a character makes a Called Shot, and the attacker is -5 to strike.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body shatters the robot and destroys its electronic systems completely, but also unlocks the protection from a nanobot plague reaction.

Size: Roughly the size of a softball or grapefruit (five inches/13 cm in diameter) and weighs 5 pounds (2.25 kg).

Speed & Movement:

Rolling: Can roll up to a maximum speed of 35 mph (56 km) on flat surfaces, loose gravel and dirt, reduce by half through brush and foliage. Can not roll in mud.

Swimming: Amphibious versions of the Probe Spheres can swim 30 mph (48 km/26 knots) underwater, but can not hover above the surface. Maximum Depth is 200 feet (61 m).

Hovering: Maximum speed is 40 mph (64 km), but typically travels at about 1-5 mph (1.6 to 8 km) when examining, searching or spying on an area or target. Maximum hovering altitude is 250 feet (76 m).

Sensors & Features: Standard Robot, though equipped with lithium batteries (not fusion powered) nor any force fields. Batteries give each probe a maximum operational time of 2 days before requiring a recharge from a War Hound, Collector or Mechanic. Maximum operating range from a Factory Walker is 110 miles (176 km).

Stealth: Excellent, equal to a Prowl of 85%. Silent flight and rolling.

Combat Bonuses: +4 to automatic dodge, +3 to roll with impact or fall.

Retcon Notes for “I am Legion,” Episode 3 (The Rifter® #74)

1. Shrieker Launcher missing Bio-E cost is 10 points.

2. Mantis Blade damage: The Mantis arm blades list damage as 2D6 for one blade and 4D4x10 for both blades. This was based off of the Gorgon Host Armor that Senator Tiegs (in *The Rifter*® #43)

adorns, and it should state 12D6 M.D. for one blade. (A typo was likely the culprit here.)

3. Why does the Heavy Bore Cannon do less damage and have less range than the Medium Bore Cannon? The Heavy Bore Cannon is a weapon based off of the Bore technology utilized to make the Bore Rifle (see *Splicers*® RPG, page 134). These weapons are not as powerful as the actual Bore Cannons that are grown onto the Host Armors. We gave the handheld version longer range than the Heavy Bore Cannon and slightly smaller grubs so that they can efficiently go further, without usurping the commitment that pilots of Host Armor make when they decide to purchase Bore Cannons. This way, players aren't just picking up handheld weapons and usurping the committed, Bio-E investment choices.

4. Missing Experience Tables are as follows: *Bombardier* is the same as Packmaster, *Deliveryman* is the same as Skinjob, and *Sweeper* is the same as Roughneck (see *Splicers*® RPG, page 183).

A Haven in the Wilderness

Optional Material for the Rifts® RPG

By Scott Fowler

In the centuries since the Coming of the Rifts, little is thought of western Canada. Even the scholar and folk hero Erin Tarn describes it as rolling backwater dotted with the occasional cabin or trading post. However, at least *one* community exists in this region that considers such labels a disservice – if not an outright insult – and strives to prove them wrong.

Kingdom of Sherwood Park (as of 101 P.A.)

Population Breakdown

Out of slightly over 800 permanent residents

Human 49%

Rogue Dog Boys 9%

Psi-Stalkers (civilized) 5%

37% other races ranging from Grackle Tooth to elves, albeit in small numbers rarely more than 5 each.

Does not include transients (mostly refugees from monster-held territories or nations like the CS) who rarely stay longer than two weeks, and are usually compelled to promise to be careful to who they speak of concerning the town's existence. The number of these transients fluctuates too quickly and too greatly to be included in any reliable statistics.

The Kingdom of Sherwood Park rests in Central Alberta, approximately 32 km (20 miles) southwest of the ruins of the city of Edmonton. The few humans who have even heard of it at all assume it to be just one of so many other small village states across



the land. It is slightly more well-known among D-Bees fleeing persecution by human supremacists, but as whispers and tales of a (mythical to some) sanctuary where they can exist as equals and live without fear of lynch mobs. To the locals it is all that and more – a community that (barely) survived the Great Cataclysm and made it into the present day with more of its history intact than most other small fiefdoms of the continent.

History

Prior to the coming of the rifts Sherwood Park was an unremarkable small city (its exact population has been lost, but is estimated to have peaked in the tens of thousands) that might have erased entirely like so many others if not for a mystery that still hasn't been resolved many years later.

Shortly before the first rifts opened a local named Ian Atwood entered his basement to find containers holding a small stockpile of military grade weapons and ammunition (Mega-Damage weaponry). These would never have been allowed by law for civilians to possess (Atwood himself was said to support gun control) and when examined bore labels such as Wilk's, Wellington's and Northern Gun – companies no one had heard of.

Even stranger, with the weapons stood a robot in humanoid form. This automaton was free-willed and as intelligent as any human (more than many), but had no recollection as to who had built it, what it was doing in Atwood's basement with a truckload of guns or even its own name – the only clue to its identity was the characters IMB9 marked in blue paint on its left shoulder.

The weapons could not have come at time when they were more needed. Convinced something was coming Atwood distributed them to his neighbors and local police and they saw much use against attackers of all stripes from the Rifts. The first few waves

of such invaders obliterated most of the city and left less than a hundred survivors, but there *were* survivors.

For a while those who still lived laid low, avoiding further attacks by creating the impression none of them remained. Eventually small foraging parties left to search for supplies in the neighboring communities that had been completely depopulated, including the province's capitol of Edmonton.

At some point during this period, the survivors began looking up to Atwood, likely to some extent because he provided the weapons that kept them alive, and he became their unofficial leader, years later he would be seen as the 'king' of Sherwood Park. Per his instructions the town tentatively sent out people to seek allies elsewhere. These scouts found remnants of human civilization, and eventually made contact with organizations including Cyber-Knights and the Tundra Rangers.

Of course they also ran into their share of D-Bees, however *unlike* groups that would become the Coalition States or the New German Republic Atwood railed against ideas of human supremacy from the start; as long as they observed his laws and did not threaten the locals nonhumans were welcome. Magical and psionic talents were nurtured instead of shunned, if only because the township needed every tool, every weapon it could get if it was to survive.

Humans and D-Bees gradually trickled toward the small kingdom, and would-be slaves and sacrifices rescued from the demons of the Calgary Rift by Cyber-Knights, Cyber-Horsemen of Ixion and Tundra Rangers were brought there for at least temporary shelter, a practice that continues today. Some of these immigrants brought tales of an 'evil empire' calling itself the Coalition States – a nation that has since become a boogeyman to the kingdom.

As well as taking in immigrants the kingdom rebuilt itself. It is still tiny compared to places such as Chi-Town or even Lazlo, but it held on by the nails where others had fallen, and its subjects are proud of the place they call home.

The Kingdom Today

A crude but effective 'wall,' hobbled together from mega-damage concrete and metal salvaged from the ruins of Edmonton and other communities that fell circles the city (as mentioned above, the town is considerably smaller than its pre-Rifts state). This defense was constructed in the last thirty years; as at first the survivors would stay out of sight and pretend to have been wiped out altogether.

The few houses and buildings to escape being leveled by the Cataclysm are the only ones built from 21st Century materials, the newer homes tend to be structures of wood and brick yet even they have insulation, plumbing and electricity. The latter comes from multiple sources, though concern of radiation leaks has made the locals leery of nuclear power. Drawing inspiration from a rare survivor of pre-Rifts film, most of the kingdom's energy is owed to burning methane from the manure of its livestock; unlike that particular film the methane comes more from cattle excrement rather than that of pigs, as they raise much more of the former. What industry and manufacturing that exists is enough for the needs of a small town, but a far cry from what one would see in Ishpeming. In the past newcomers have tried to set up shop for both Juicer and M.O.M. conversion, but later moved on as most locals feel the toll such enhancements take on mind and body outweigh their benefits. Cyber-Docs might be welcomed, but *Cyber-Snatchers*, and any-

body found out to do business with them, are more likely to face frontier justice at its most severe.

Though Atwood I never intended for the city's inhabitants to be segregated into 'ethnic' quarters, the D-Bees and mutants of the kingdom still gravitated toward others of their ilk. The largest nonhuman group rose from rogue psi-hounds, deserters of various units who made their way here, discovered each other, and in some cases settled down to have pups – the kingdom has its share of 2nd and to date, even 3rd generation psi-hounds (There is even the distinct possibility that some 2nd or 3rd generation hounds may be of "mixed breeds", if a G.M. is willing to work out what abilities/drawbacks such mongrels would have)!

The kingdom has a civilian militia rather than a standing army – when defenders are needed volunteers rise up with the vehicles and equipment they possess – which, unfortunately, is not very impressive. The majority of their weapons and armour tend to be second-hand or knock-offs; even if the kingdom had access to cutting-edge gear it wouldn't have the credits to pay for them. Most 'soldiers' fit themselves in Chipwell armor, and the elite vehicles are three Glitter-Boy suits (brought by deserters of Free Quebec when it was a CS state; since then they have trained their sons to pilot the suits). When a defender of Sherwood Park returns home, he owes his survival more to his abilities, the tactics of those he follows and a lot of dumb luck, than to the gear he carries.

Pierce Atwood (Atwood IV), the 'king' of Sherwood Park, wears multiple hats; he is administrator, general, police chief and judge all at once. By his side stands IMB9 – the same robot his ancestor Ian Atwood found in his basement; like the Atwood's before him Pierce frequently seeks the robot's council on serious matters – and IMB9's advice has proven sound more often than not. However they have disagreed; while IMB9 advised his predecessors to stay behind the trenches, in his teens Pierce convinced one of the kingdom's few robot pilots to train him in their use. Eventually the kingdom acquired a NG Multibot, and when the machines must rise to the city-state's defense Atwood IV insists on fighting alongside them.

Notable Locations

1) Agora: What's left of a shopping mall, when Atwood IV makes a proclamation, resides over a trial or receives guests, he does it here. Also areas in the structure have been cleared to make space for market-stands, a medical clinic, and holding cells (as of yet crimes more serious than petty theft or public drunkenness are rare occurrences).

2) Hotel: The original structure here rose more than ten stories; the new one was built during Atwood II's reign but was deliberately limited to two floors, out of concern a higher building would be seen from afar and draw unwanted attention. Travelers passing through occasionally spend the night here, but it more often serves as a temporary shelter for refugees rescued from the Calgary Rift.

3) Hangar: A commercial warehouse looted by invaders during the Cataclysm, this corrugated metal structure was converted into an 'armory' for the Kingdom's few heavy vehicles and their munitions. Any repairs to the vehicles tend to be performed here as well.

4) Atwood Residence: Ian Atwood and his heirs called this two story house home, as does the current king. Like those before him, Atwood IV conducts private audiences in the basement where IMB9 and the weapons stockpile mysteriously appeared shortly before the Rifts came.

Notable Personalities

Pierce Ian Atwood

Also known as Atwood the IV

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Level of Experience: 4th level robot pilot.

IMB9

Alignment: Principled. Has stats identical to an A-63 All Purpose Robot (original) with the following exceptions: is a neural intelligence, has no built in weaponry (though is instructed in the use of weapons), and has a much less sinister appearance. Power System: Unique; over a century later and still going strong.

IMB9's earliest memory is, upon activation of 'his' optics, looking into the eyes of Ian Atwood; whether the victim of a memory wipe or a blank slate from the start has never been determined. Neither has the identity of whoever built him in the first place. Regardless, over the decades he has come to see Sherwood Park as his home and its people as his family. It has been theorized recently, that IMB9 was actually constructed in the current age or even at some point in the future; then deliberately sent back in time to Atwood's basement along with the weapons. If so the truth of IMB9's origin has become more important – if he fails to go back in time with the guns the kingdom may be eradicated before it has a chance to be born. In the hope of finding answers elsewhere, IMB9 has agreed to take part in Project Odyssey (see below) though it means leaving the only home the robot has ever known.

Heavy Vehicles/Robots

For defense, the Kingdom of Sherwood Park has the following heavy vehicles:

3 Glitter Boys (though Boom Gun ammo has been hard to come by)

1 Iron Maiden APC (soon assigned to Project Odyssey, leaves kingdom)

4 NG-V7 Mobile Gun Robots (patchwork models)

1 NG-M56 Multibot

Allies of the Kingdom

In addition to the lone traders and hunters they sometimes do business with, the kingdom has forged friendships with the Cyber-Knights, Tundra Rangers, and Cyber-Horsemen of Ixion. Has helped each of these organizations against mutual threats. Has a complicated relationship with the Black Market; while the local lawmen have managed to stomp out attempts to gain a criminal foothold in the kingdom (and are rather pigheaded in their refusal to be bribed), like many small city states Sherwood Park is a regular customer for weapons and munitions the Black Market sells.

Enemies of the Kingdom

Aside from the bandits and monsters many small city-states must regularly fight off, there is a nation the kingdom has declared an enemy despite its great distance from them and the many monsters between.

The Coalition States is far away, but the people of Sherwood Park loathe it more than nearly anything they have seen come out of a Rift. True, much of this is owed to the CS's belligerence toward nonhumans, but there is more to the hostility than that. Even before the Cataclysm, there were locals who resented the USA; seeing it as arrogant, jingoistic, at best condescending to its supposed allies. The survivors passed what they remembered of history, including this resentment, on to their children and they passed it onto the grandchildren. Stories brought by newcomers reinforced the image of the CS as a more extreme version of the arrogant United States (unlike other places, terms like American and Canadian Empires never caught on here, locals still think of themselves as Canadians first). When three Glitter Boys told of parts of Quebec and Ontario in Coalition borders, it was seen as nothing less than an invasion!

Frequently groups of the kingdom's defenders have set out to seek Coalition expeditionary forces. Should they find one they ambush it mercilessly, none must live to report their home's existence, let alone anything more detailed than that. For a hick town with inferior equipment, they take pride in how good they are at killing CS troops. This antipathy might one day be the kingdom's undoing should a threat so grave that both nations need to cooperate ever arise – the list of enemies the people of Sherwood Park would rather shoot than Coalition thugs is short to say the least.

Adventure Seeds

Atwood IV's robot was separated from the others while fighting off mechanized bandits – defenders have found the fallen multibot only to discover its pilot has been cut out of the cockpit and is nowhere in sight! Brave souls must track down his captors and rescue him. As a twist, perhaps instead of bandits the king is in the custody of CS forces who have painful interrogation on their mind rather than ransom.

A stranger has come into town, claiming to represent a manufacturer that calls itself Angrar Robotics. Once he gets the snickering at what the locals do for defense out of his system, he claims his company can provide the kingdom with far superior armor, at discounted prices even it can afford. Is the offer too good to be true? What do you think?

The participants in Project Odyssey were bound to make enemies, but one has somehow learned of their connection to the Kingdom.

The nature of this enemy is up to the G.M. (Alien Intelligence, bandit chief, merc company that suffered a serious loss, etc.), but it knows where they came from, and has decided that home is where it will take its pound (or ton) of flesh.

The Xiticix (or the Mechanoids, or the Republicans or whoever) are crawling out of the woodwork, and the CS has decided to swallow its pride and seek allies. The adventurers have been recruited as emissaries to an area where CS expeditionary forces have consistently failed to report back, in the hope they can convince whoever is killing those dead boys of the greater threat. Can the emissaries convince the kingdom to put aside its hatred of the Coalition and fight their mutual enemy? And what if the CS plans to betray them once the allies have outlived their usefulness?

Project Odyssey: The Traveling Fists

Lara O'Neil put on a brave face as she helped the passengers out of the Snow Lion APC. The people were shuddering and rightly

so, considering the gruesome fates that awaited them at demon hands in the ruins of Calgary.

"You're safe now," she tried to assure them. "Even if any of those freaks followed us all this way, they won't get past the people here." The looks she got in return were skeptical at best.

It was when she saw them off to the hotel for rest that IMB9 found her. The robot approached and told her the king wanted to see her. Lara was acquainted with Atwood IV but he had never asked a private audience before.

The audience would not be as private as she thought. As well as the king five more locals were present, as was a newcomer from a few weeks earlier. A dusky-skinned human wearing light body armor under a multi-hued cloak, he looked around nervously, as though expecting attack from any corner.

"Thank you for coming, Constable," the king said, then gestured to the newcomer. "People, this is Momoa. Most of you may recall he found himself caught through a Rift and found himself stranded in the wilderness a short distance from this here kingdom. One of our patrols chanced upon him, and brought him into our fold. Momoa has agreed to take part in something important for which you are needed."

Atwood IV described the nature of the undertaking. "I've selected you individuals for this operation because of your abilities, but also because I trust you the most not to abandon your true objective and go freelance entirely."

Atwood directed their attention to the robot. "IMB9 will be accompanying you on this mission, in the hope more about his past and origins may be learned."

Finally he addressed Lara. "Though you aid us often, you do not answer to me, so I cannot order you to participate."

"That shouldn't be a problem," Lara started. "I can talk to HQ, if they think they benefit from this, they'll probably let me go."

Atwood IV nodded. "Then I suggest you all make preparations and tie up any loose ends – you leave by noon tomorrow."

Project Odyssey was actually the brainchild of Atwood II, but for various reasons was never implemented until now. Though the kingdom is short of credits and lacking in advanced weaponry and armor, the Atwood dynasty, as it was, felt they were truly lacking in knowledge of the world around them. The writings of Erin Tarn would not exist for some time, and most of what the kingdom heard about the outside world came from spoken word of newcomers. Information gained through second-hand spoken word is notoriously unreliable; and the writings of travelers like Erin Tarn are often subjective. At the very least, there is the possibility that any information in such writings may be out of date.

Under Project Odyssey, a small party of defenders are sent out into the world. If anyone asks, they are a group of mercenaries seeking their collective fortune. In reality, their true task is to gather information, learn about possible allies and possible threats (takes measures against those threats if they can), and ultimately to report all of this back to the kingdom. The cover will require them to offer their abilities in combat, but they are to make sure they choose their clients wisely, do not hire themselves to potential enemies, and deny the Kingdom of Sherwood Park even exists.

Several of those assigned to the project have stringent codes of behavior that conflict with their cover of freelance fighters. If aware who is the aggressor in a conflict, they are likely to offer their skills to the other side, even if that side has less to pay. If that is not enough of a complication, the nature of their task requires they eventually move from one location to another, which

means they are unsuited to long term contracts. They are skilled with range and melee combat and have magic to fall back on, but are lacking in heavy robot support and offensive psionics. Seeking recruits to fill these voids may be problematic – they would have to find recruits they can trust with their true task.

On their last report, the ‘Traveling Fists,’ as their company is known to outsiders, had recently signed on in the defense of a location called Hope City...

The Traveling Fists

Symbol: An elk’s head (from a pre-Rifts coin) with a CS soldier’s helmet impaled on one of the antlers (painted on their transport), have no badges, per se.

“Lieutenant” Lara O’Neil

Though well known and held in high esteem in the Kingdom, Lara is not from the township, but is in fact an officer of the Tundra Rangers. Part of a detail to rescue mortals taken prisoner en route to the demons in Old Calgary, her unit frequently brought such survivors to Sherwood Park. After hearing the details of Project Odyssey, Lara convinced her superiors of the venture’s merit and was placed on “special assignment.” Ostensibly Lara is the group’s CO. As with few exceptions most of the company’s personnel have lived pretty much their whole lives within the township, she has much experience to offer. Aside from Momoa the team knows Lara well and trusts her judgement.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Level of Experience: 6th level Tundra Ranger.

Equipment: Typical Tundra Ranger O.C.C. gear (all insignia of the organization either painted over or filed off so any questionable actions she might have to take do not reflect badly on her fellow rangers).

Disposition: On duty Lara is no-nonsense, rarely uses two words when one will suffice. Brisk to those working under her, she typically shows more warmth to civilians when any immediate danger has passed.

Description: An attractive Caucasian human with blonde hair and a toned physique.

IMB9 “Marcus Jones”

The robot IMB9’s origin’s are a mystery, even to him (or it) self. Once thought to be the product of humanity’s so-called Golden Age, recent theories suggest he was sent to the past from the present, if not from farther in the future. He may be a creation of A.R.C.H.I.E. Three (though to date all in the kingdom are ignorant of A.R.C.H.I.E. Three’s existence). Whoever created him, the robot is certain at some point he will have to return to Sherwood Park, escorting a supply of modern weaponry into the past to ensure the township’s existence.

Aware that constructs like himself are a rarity compared to machines with human pilots and unthinking drones, to avoid unwanted questions IMB9 has taken on an alias; in the past strangers have mistaken him for a human in a customized suit of body armour, IMB9 has chosen not to correct anyone on the matter.

Alignment: Principled. For further stats see IMB9 entry above.

Equipment: IMB9 is one of the few in the kingdom with sufficient strength to wield a Bandito Arms 5050 medium rail gun the

defenders of the Kingdom acquired (appropriately enough, from the body of a dead bandit).

Disposition: Fairly inoffensive and soft-spoken, a joke among those close to the robot is the markings on his shoulder mean “I am benign”. However he is quite capable of spilling blood in defense of his home and friends.

Description: Nondescript humanoid frame (in ascending order two legs, two arms, one head); Except for two optic sensors (eyes) and a speaker grill, has a blank and expressionless face.



Mugs

Mugs is a second-generation ‘feral’ Dog Boy, one of many born from Psi-Hound deserters who found each other within the kingdom. Before reaching the kingdom and meeting the future father of her pups, Mugs’ mother was part of a squad whose Psi-Stalker ‘handler’ thought they deserved more than to be meat shields for CS soldiers. Telling the canines they were on a “high priority mission,” the Psi-Stalker officer in fact deserted with the mutants, hoping to find a place where they could have a better life. When they realized there was no mission the loyal Psi-Hounds, thinking of their commander as misguided, managed to discreetly contact CS officers and inform them where the pack was headed. Expecting the humans to explain to their handler the error of his ways, instead they saw the Psi-Stalker shot execution-style in front of them.

According to Mugs’ mother, this cold-blooded killing opened the eyes of her and her pack to the true nature of their CS creators. Enraged, they attacked the human soldiers, killing the entire squad. Bereft of purpose, the pack wandered, eventually following rumors of a township other ferals could call home which led to the kingdom. The story of this betrayal stuck with Mugs; when considered ‘old enough,’ he signed up for the kingdom’s militia, frequently volunteering for anti-expeditionary patrols. He loathes the

CS more than most in the kingdom (that in itself is saying something), and in the unlikely event the company may have to make nice with Coalition forces (not that anyone expects this to happen), he may have to be physically restrained to keep from attempting to tear apart a CS soldier or officer with his bare hands/paws.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Level of Experience: 5th level rogue Dog Boy (Boxer breed with a P.S. of 20, also has Supernatural Endurance mutation).

Notable Equipment: Wears DPM 101 light armor originally issued to his father (repainted, rather than wear the colors of the CS), likes to wield a NG Super-Laser/grenade launcher in one hand, a captured Big Bore ‘Barking Dog’ SMG in the other.

Disposition: Loyal to the team and his home, nonetheless Mugs can be impatient and prefers reckless action to prolonged waiting. Has no use for euphemism or speaking diplomatically, will speak his mind even when it’s a good idea not to.

Description: A bipedal canine in light body armor.

Moorcock

This Elf considers himself the Nikola Tesla of his time – others compare him to more ‘notorious’ mad scientists (if not more mad than scientist).

This Techno-Wizard is the black sheep of a family of Elves from a world that never saw an industrial revolution or scientific community as we understand it; the rest of said family has clung to more traditional sorcerous arts, and he grew estranged from them when learning Techno-Wizardry from humans on Rifts Earth. Some have sarcastically suggested he was included in the company to get him as far from the kingdom as possible. Always working either to improve on earlier TW devices as well as imagining his own, his inventions more often fizzle than fire – but when they do work, they can be wondrous (or horrifying) to behold.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Level of Experience: 7th level Techno-Wizard.

Equipment: Standard of his class, but lacks TW vehicles like Wing Board or Tree Trimmer, and must ride with the rest.

Recent Invention: Phantom-Stab – A sword hilt with a slot where the blade would extend from (adapted from a broken light blade), on activation produces a blade of white light with what look like black runes etched on to it (merely decorative, NOT a Rune Weapon). Inflicts 4D6 S.D.C. damage but completely ignores non-organic M.D.C. materials (would bounce off a Xitix’s shell, but pass through a suit of power armor to wound its pilot). Device Level: 5. Construction Cost: 240 P.P.E., Construction Time: 120 hours. Activate Cost: 12 P.P.E. Duration: 5 minutes. Spells Needed: Lightblade, Mental Shock, Energy Bolt. Gems: One 11.5 carat clear quartz, one single carat tiger eye, one single carat red zircon.

Disposition: Brilliant, but often lacking in simple horse-sense. Tends to leap from one train of thought to the other. Loyal to the kingdom and the company in his own way, but tends to ‘take the initiative’ without consulting O’Neil. Will not be remembered for his people skills.

Description: Looks and dresses like the ‘stereotypical’ Elf in fantasy fiction, except for the high-tech gear most TWs use.

Stephanie Franklin

Born of a Wealthy Chi-Town family and educated in one of the CS’s best medical schools, Dr. Franklin convinced a few colleagues to help volunteer their skills in treating the sick and wounded in the surrounding ‘Burbs, including D-Bees, *pro bono*

– an act of compassion that got her and those with her blacklisted once the authorities found out. They found a home in Sherwood Park because the locals cared more about one’s skills than whether one lost a license for political reasons. A strict pacifist, Dr. Franklin’s first instinct was to refuse to take part in Project Odyssey, but realized someone would need to stitch those that went back together – better her than the ‘butchers’ out there.

Alignment: Principled.

Level of Experience: 6th level Body Fixer.

Disposition: Near fanatical when it comes to “do no harm,” always insists she’s here to heal not fight, refuses to even carry a gun.

Description: A young, dark-skinned woman with short dread locks and a face prematurely aged from work stress.

Darrel Lau

Born and raised in the Kingdom, Darrel never truly wanted to leave. The most gifted mechanic the township has ever known, he worked on all vehicles (and has helped keep many weapons and tools in good shape as well) but favors – if not seems in love with – the Iron Maiden commandeered for Project Odyssey (why he named the object of his affection the ‘Rustbucket’ is anyone’s guess). As Stephanie signed on to keep the rest of the team alive, Darrel did to ensure the vehicle ‘doesn’t end up a smoking wreck’.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Level of Experience: 6th level Operator.

Disposition: Not intentionally rude or antisocial, he just seems to relate to machines better than to people (except IMB9, he doesn’t get on with him any better than a flesh and blood person).

Description: Handsome human in his early twenties, favors the Asian side of his mixed Oriental/Caucasian ancestry. Usually covered in grease.

Notable Equipment: Standard Operator gear, keeps a NG-57 Ion blaster close at hand but prefers the armor and firepower of a vehicle he drives.

Druzzar, aka ‘Saint George’

Inducted at an early age to the Knights of the True Vision, this Azverkan (a race of D-Bee common in Europe), his mentor and several more experienced warriors of the sacred order were one day ambushed by a cadre of Brodkil. Only Druzzar survived, found unconscious by a party of adventurers who treated his wounds and convinced him to follow them back to North America. The party battled and slew a dragon hatchling holding captive the daughter of a ruler of one of the Colorado Baronies but again, only Druzzar survived. Seeing the princess safely home, he got stuck with the nickname Saint George in honor of the mythical dragon slayer. Lacking a purpose, his wanderings brought him to the kingdom, where he volunteered his skills as a defender until he agreed to participate in Project Odyssey.

Druzzar doesn’t know he is an unwilling spy. The Brodkil he battled back in Europe worked for the scientist who calls herself the Angel of Death, and were instructed to bring back one of the D-Bee knights unharmed (it was the luck of the draw more than anything that Druzzar was chosen). After placing experimental (and so far undiscovered) implants in Druzzar’s brain, the deranged Cyber-Doc placed him back among his brothers then discreetly leaked his location to some annoying do-gooders. Anything Druzzar has seen, heard and discovered from that point on, the Angel of Death knows. She hadn’t anticipated him crossing the Atlantic, but the development has been informative and interesting.



Alignment: Principled.

Level of Experience: 6th level Knight of the True Vision.

Equipment: Standard, with the inclusion of a medium-sized M-30 Dual Energy Rifle, taken from a Brodkil slain in the Angel of Death's ambush (modified to be compatible with E-Clips not manufactured by Mindwerks).

Disposition: A quiet, reflective soul who prefers to let his actions speak for him. Does not make friends easily, but is loyal to the death to those he does. Should he ever learn of the implants, he would likely attempt to dig them out with a Vibro-Blade himself.

Description: Has a lumpy, bald skull with yellow teeth emerging from his mouth, over which a long nose dangles. His muscular body is covered with coarse, blue skin.

Momoa

This human Shifter appeared out of a random, short-lived Rift near Sherwood Park – right in front of an expeditionary platoon of Coalition Skelebots and the officer controlling them. Too disoriented to fight, he might have been executed then and there had not a kingdom patrol – led by Mugs – got the drop on the CS goons. Lying to his rescuers, he claimed to have Rifted from a parallel world. In truth, Momoa hails from another spot on Rifts Earth – specifically South America. His talents earned him a position in the multidimensional mercenary force called the Megaversal Legion. One night he took part in a raid to steal technology from one of the legion's enemies, the Arkhons – extra-terrestrial invaders entrenched within the continent. In a rare reversal of fortune, the Arkhons got the drop on the Legion; Momoa froze – only for a second, but enough to see his comrades cut down. Fleeing with the one piece of Arkhon tech he could grab, at the first opportunity he created a Rift – to anywhere else, he didn't care. By chance or by fate, it took him where it did. Eventually he got Darrel Lau to look at the contraption he stole in the hope of learning what price it would fetch – and found himself swept up into Project Odyssey.

Alignment: Once thought he was Principled, certain actions (or inaction) one fateful night have caused him to question what kind of man he is.

Level of Experience: 7th level Shifter.

Equipment: In addition to standard equipment, he brought with him *the device* (see below), the suit of Legion Mark I body armor

he wore on that fateful mission, and an IAR-2 Inertia auto-pistol he quite literally forgot he had on him until within the kingdom walls. The only ammunition for this weapon is in its magazine, and even if they took it apart it is doubtful the kingdom's crafters could duplicate the technology; but the Megaversal Legion, adamant as they are about their weapons ending up in the hands of others – *any* others – might not care should they ever learn of it.

Disposition: Puts up a cocky front; secretly fears one day he'll freeze again, and his new friends will pay the price. **Description:** Young man of Latino ancestry, his left cheek scarred in a (mis)adventure from earlier in his Shifting career.

The Device

One of the impediments to launching Project Odyssey earlier was the absence of a way to report the party's findings quickly and reliably; cell-phones and the world wide web are a thing of the past, radios have limited range and communicating through magic can be a gamble in the best of circumstances. A solution has presented itself in the Arkhon technology stolen by Momoa.

Weighing in at a humble 4.5 kg (10 lbs), this device is basically a small communications satellite. Launching itself into orbit at a preset height (hopefully too low to be noticed or attacked by anything still up there), it provides instant, two-way contact from anywhere on the same planet (in theory, there is the chance anomalies elsewhere on Rifts earth may complicate the process); enabling the supposed mercenary band to report back to the kingdom, and also for Atwood IV to reach them should he need to inform them of new developments or give them any possible 'high priority assignments.'

The device is solar powered (not including the fuel expended in the launch), negating the need to recover it and replace any 'batteries' and came with several transmitter/receiver units of which to date only two are in use; the company took one with them, Atwood IV has held on to the other. The party is careful not to be seen operating the device (or even possessing it) in front of strangers; prior to launching the satellite Darrel was able to modify it and the transmitter/receivers to broadcast at frequencies not used by humans or even by the aliens who made the tech, so communications are less likely to be overheard by the wrong people (pretty much everyone else but the kingdom and Atwood IV).



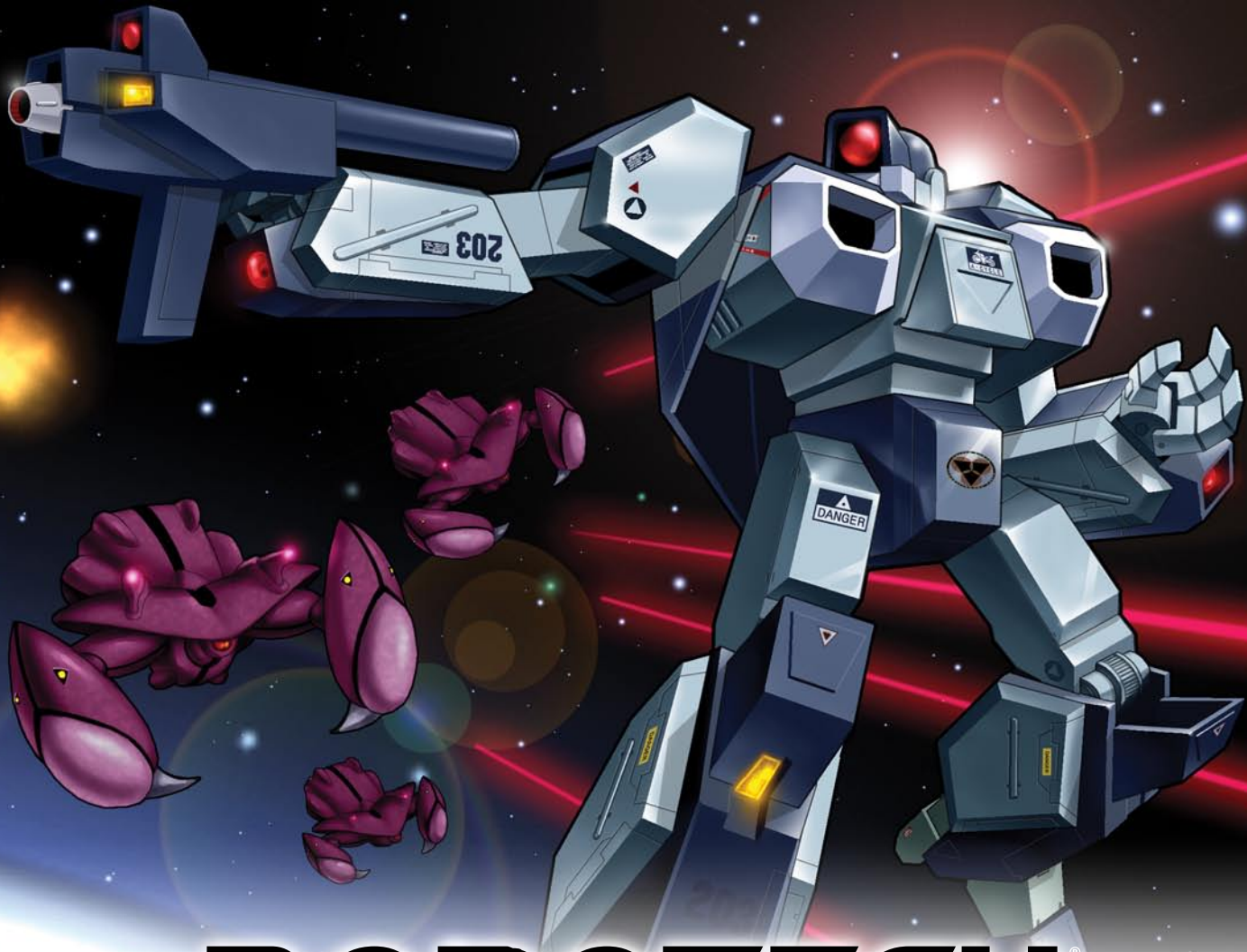
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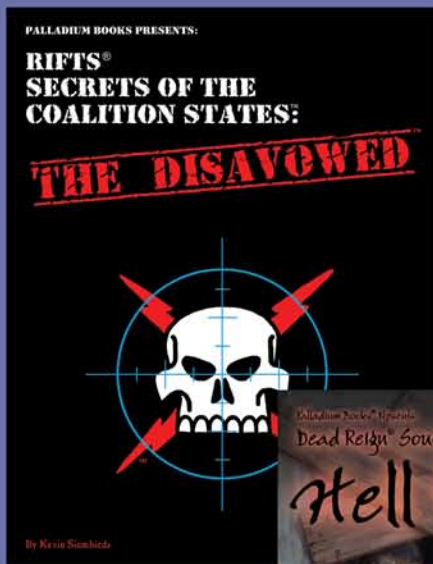
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