

Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER®

Your Guide to the Megaverse

January 2001 Issue

Luck, Fate, Charms & adventure

New magic items and spells

Rifts® Dark Techno-Wizardry™

Nightbane® Strangeness

Beyond the Supernatural™

LIONG
Palladium Fantasy®

Lone Star™ comic strip

KoDT, fiction, news and more ...

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

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The Rifter® Number 13
Your guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!

First Printing — January, 2001

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The Rifter™ #13 RPG sourcebook series is published by Palladium Books Inc., 12455 Universal Drive, Taylor, MI 48180. Printed in the USA.

Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER® #13

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Sourcebook and guide to the Palladium Megaverse®

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Special Thanks to *Matthew Enokson* for his suggesting the theme of this issue, and to the many contributors who helped to make *The Rifter 13* one of the best ever. Our apologies to anybody who got accidentally left out or their name misspelled.

Contents — The Rifter #13 — January, 2001

Page 6 — From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Kevin is on a *mission* to get books out in 2001. Not just any books, but those we've talked about for years. No kidding, that's what he says. Read it for yourself.

Art by *Matt Henegar*.

Page 7 — Palladium News

A *Rifts*® CCG coming this Spring and now (maybe), *action figures* too! Read all about it in this issue's news.

Page 8 — Rumor Killers

Geepers! Where do these rumors come from? Well, Kevin does his best to squash them. Plus a plug for Mike Dubisch's *Weirdling* #2.

Page 9 — Coming Attractions

A few product updates, hype and coming attractions for *Heroes Unlimited*™, *Rifts*® and *Palladium Fantasy*®. The bossman plans on heavy support for each of these lines (see the tentative and incomplete schedule on page six). In fact, he tells me he's shooting for a half dozen sourcebooks for each! Yeah, I'll believe it when I see it too, but I can tell you he's been working himself and us like mules to make it happen.

Read about the latest *Palladium Fantasy RPG*® books coming for the first part of 2001 on page 13. The accompanying artwork are illustrations from *The Eastern Territory* sourcebook. The artist is Kent Burles.

Page 14 — Knights of the Dinner Table™

Jolly Blackburn and the KoDT gang are BACK to say good-bye for now. Jolly and the folks at Kenzer & Company are just too busy to keep supplying us with this great comic strip. We'll miss it as much as you, but we understand and wish Jolly and the Kenzerites our best wishes.

You can continue to get your dose of KoDT on a monthly basis from the comic book available in hobby and comic book shops everywhere, or directly from Kenzer & Company, 1935 S. Plum Grove Rd., Suite 194, Palatine, IL, 60067. Tell 'em Palladium sent ya.

Page 16 — Palladium Megaverse®

Questions and Answers

This issue, Rodney Stott and Shawn Merrow address questions concerning *fate*, *luck*, *curses* and *healing*, um, not to mention Horror Factor and drinking booze. All really helpful material endorsed by Kevin Siembieda.

Artwork is by Wayne Breaux Jr.

Page 19 — Lucky Charms and Superstitions

Optional rules applicable to all Palladium games

Joseph Larsen offers some optional rules, thoughts and suggestions on luck and lucky charms (no, not the cereal, but objects said to bring a character good luck).

Artwork is by Tyler Walpole, the guy who will soon be doing the **D&D comic book** published by Kenzer & Company.

Page 22 — Nightbane®

P.C.C.: The Cursed

This is a really cool character idea by Shawn Merrow. Artwork by Wayne "I see you" Breaux Jr.

Page 24 — Beyond the Supernatural™

Optional O.C.C.s & ideas for BTS

James Calder presents the *Arcane Archaeologist*, the *Occultist* and *Cryptozoologist* as optional O.C.C.s for BTS, along with a few new lore skills. Kevin Siembieda thought they really fit BTS and said, "I love, em. I might even include a more elaborate version of them in BTS when I get around to doing the Second Edition" (hopefully the end of this year or early 2002).

Artwork by Wayne "spooky" Breaux Jr.

Page 30 — Beyond the Supernatural™

Living Numbers and Curses

Russell Brin presents some more wild, supernatural *optional* source-material for *Beyond the Supernatural*, including the ominous, Thirteen Entity, a new kind of magical being (a living manifestation) of numbers, and some curse magic.

Artwork by Wayne "I'm not a number" Breaux Jr.

Page 34 — Beyond the Supernatural™

The Fayfield Inn Adventure

Wow, more stuff for BTS! Adaptable to *Nightbane*®, *HU2*™, and *Ninjas & Superspies*™. Written by Russell Brin.

Artwork by Wayne "the insane" Breaux Jr.

Page 38 — The Palladium Fantasy

Role-Playing Game®

In the hands of Fate

Crystal Frasier presents the *Deck of Fate*, a powerful and rare magic item of incredible power. G.M.s, use it carefully if you include it in your game, and have fun.

Artwork by Tyler Walpole.

Page 45 — The Palladium Fantasy

Role-Playing Game®

The Thirteenth Tribe

Richard Thomassen presents adventure source material about the legendary 13th tribe of Wolfen people thought to be extinct.

Artwork by Tyler Walpole.

Page 49 — The Palladium Fantasy

Role-Playing Game®

The Thirteen Deadly Magicks

Thirteen new, optional, spells for Palladium Fantasy! 'Nuff said. Written by James Calder.

Artwork by Wayne Breaux Jr.

Page 54 — The Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game®

The Legend of the Thirteen Orcish Lords

Jon Thompson presents adventure source material for Palladium Fantasy about legendary Orcish Lords. Includes the optional High Orc O.C.C., Orcish Knight R.C.C., a new riding animal used by Orcs, and other fun stuff.

Art by Apollo Okamura.

Page 71 — Rifts®

Dark Techno-Wizardry

Bill Fellows offers some interesting, optional O.C.C.s and Techno-Wizard devices for use in Rifts®. Includes the Necro-Tech and Techno-Shifter, as well as building Techno-Horrors and various O.C.C. related powers and TW devices and guns.

Art by Kent Burles.

Page 85 — Rifts®

The Thirteenth Hour

Rick Wulf presents a strange little tale about strange happenings, the monstrous Rodian, dimensional travel and Techno-Wizard magic for expanding into adventures.

Art by David Black; page 96 art by Apollo Okamura.

Page 97 — Rifts® Lone Star Comic Strip

Ramon Perez gives us another, pulse-pounding chapter in the adventures of Johnny, Shakes, Cueball, and company as they find themselves at odds with the dreaded Doctor Bradford and the forces at the Lone Star Complex. Ramon Perez: Writer, Artist, and Letterer.

Ramon *promises* the shocking conclusion WILL appear in **The Rifter 14**. He's finishing it right now, to make sure. We can hardly wait.

Page 105 — Rifts® Phase World®

Hammer of the Forge

The 13th (of course) chapter in James M. G. Cannon's *Phase World*™ story. Artwork by Apollo Okamura.

Page 112 — Art

A cool illustration by *Apollo Okamura* to round out this issue. It just seemed to fit here, instead of our usual page six art.

The theme for lucky issue 13

This issue's theme is luck, charms, superstitions and the number thirteen.

Why? Because *Rifter*® reader and Palladium gamer, **Matthew "pickmybrain" Enokson**, gave us the idea. Way back in April or sometime, Matt e-mailed us and asked, "... will The Rifter® 13 have any significance based on luck?"

We thought it was a great idea, and solicited people to contribute articles based on luck and the number thirteen. You hold the end result in your hands. (And we think it's pretty good too.) Although it's impossible to maintain lines of communication with everybody who writes, e-mails or calls us, we *try* to read

everything sent in and enjoy getting reader comments, suggestions and input (keep those writing submissions coming too). Fan comments do help shape (to some small degree) the things we do, as **The Rifter #13** illustrates. Thanks for the idea, Matt.

The Cover

The cover to **The Rifter #13** is a painting done by Kevin Long for the interior of the **Rifts® RPG**. It depicts a swarm of Xiticix emerging from a dimensional Rift. You can't get any unluckier than that.

Optional and Unofficial Rules & Source Material

Please note that most of the material presented in **The Rifter®** is "unofficial" or "optional" rules and source material.

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

As for optional tables and adventures, if they sound cool or fun, use them. If they sound funky, too high-powered or inappropriate for your game, modify them or ignore them completely. All the material in **The Rifter®** has been included for two reasons: One, because we thought it was imaginative and fun, and two, we thought it would stimulate your imagination with fun ideas and concepts that the reader can use (if you want to), or which might inspire you to create your own wonders.

www.palladiumbooks.com — Palladium On-Line

Coming Next Issue ...

The Rifter™ #14

- The conclusion of the *Rifts® Lone Star* comic strip (or so we are told).
- Material for *The Palladium Fantasy RPG®*.
- Material for *Heroes Unlimited™*.
- Material for *Rifts®*.
- The next chapter of the *Hammer of the Forge™*.
- The latest news and developments at Palladium.
- Source material for the entire **Palladium Megaverse®**.
- New contributors and fun.

Convention Breaking News

Maryann & Kevin Siembieda will be guests at **Simcon**, March 22, 23, 24 & 25 in Rochester, New York. Come on down to chat, get autographs, hear panel discussions and game.

From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

I'm on a mission.

I intend to get a large number of the role-playing books we've talked about or promised over the years done and in the hands of gamers. Not everything, but a lot of them. I've made it my personal *mission* for the year. That means I'm shooting to get a lot of books out, not just for **Rifts®**, but for all of Palladium Books' major lines.

I know, you're thinking it's a nice thought, but Palladium never seems to hit its schedule. That's true, and I may blow this one too. However, that's my goal. To help keep things on track, I already have several books done and awaiting final editing and art assignments. By the time you read this, **Coalition Wars™ 5: Shadows of Evil™** will already be at the printers, **The Aliens Unlimited Galaxy Guide™** will be finished and awaiting artwork, **Coalition Wars™ 6: Final Siege™** will be half written, and Bill Coffin will be well on his way writing **The Northern Hinterlands™**.

The following list shows our ambitious schedule. Will I actually get all of this done? I don't know, but I'm sure going to try.

Note: The order of release may differ from these lists.

For Rifts®

Coalition Wars™ Five: Shadows of Evil™ (January)

Coalition Wars™ Six: Final Siege™ (March)

Rifts® Australia Two (Spring)

Rifts® Australia Three

Rifts® Dimension Book: Anvil Galaxy™

Rifts® Africa™ Two

and **The Rifter®** Sourcebook series (of course)

For The Palladium Fantasy RPG®

Eastern Territory™ (February)

Northern Hinterlands™ (March or April)

Old Kingdom Lowlands™ (Summer)

Old Kingdom Mountains™ (Summer)

The Land of the Damned™ (Summer)

For Heroes Unlimited™ 2nd Edition

Aliens Unlimited Galaxy Guide™ (February or March)

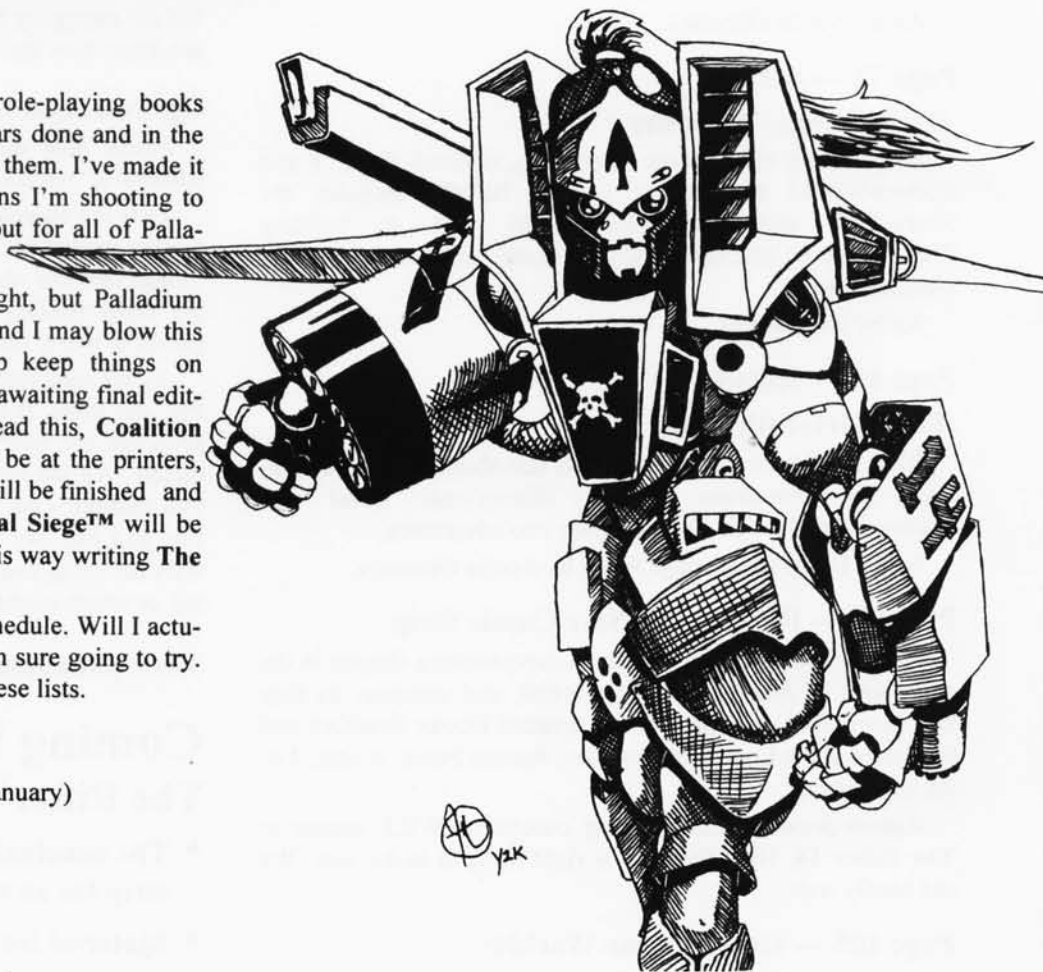
Hardware Unlimited™ (April or May)

The Mutant Underground™ (Summer)

The Nursery™ (Fall)

New Books

We have a number of new books in development, too. Including the **After the Bomb® Role-Playing Game**, several **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** titles and a few surprises I'd rather not reveal just yet (in case they get bumped into next year).



Licenses and Other Developments

Take a look at the **News** section and you'll see we are also trying to establish several licensing deals to generate product sanctioned and approved by Palladium Books, but actually manufactured and distributed by another company entirely. The first of these "licenses" is with a Collectable Card Game company known as **Precedence**. They are developing a **Rifts® CCG** that should be out this Spring. We are also "looking into" a possible toy deal to get **Rifts® action figures** produced, at least on a limited basis (don't know if that will be feasible yet), as well as exploring other avenues. Right now the focus for these licenses is on **Rifts®**. Why? Because **Rifts®** is our most popular game, but we anticipate potential licensing partners will start looking at Palladium's other product lines too.

That's what we are looking at and planning for the year. Hope all of you will come along for the adventure.

— Kevin Siembieda, 2001

News

By Kevin Siembieda (the guy who should know)

Rifts® Action Figures!?

We need help from our fans

Palladium Books is *considering* a licensing deal with a small, quality-minded toy company to design and manufacture **Rifts®** action figures for the “Collector’s Market.”

That means, the toys will be available only through comic book stores, hobby shops and other “specialty” stores. Of course, if they turn out to be a smash hit and sell like hot cakes on a cold day, then we could see the **Rifts®** action figures sneak into the mass market stores like *Toys R Us*, *K-B Toys* and others.

This interested party is talking about eight or nine inch figures with “McFarlane Toys” quality and detail (no it is not McFarlane Toys we are talking to).

The initial test market will probably be limited to 4-6 figures, with a follow-up set of another 4-6 figures. Estimated price: \$9.95 to \$15.95 each (final price not yet determined and will change depending on the quantity we think we can sell).

How can fans help? By answering a few questions.

1. Would you buy **Rifts®** action figures?
2. How badly do you want them? Extremely! Very! Sort of. Not much.
3. This is the *really* important question. Which 12 **Rifts®** figures would you like to see most?

You might think of it as, what if there were only 12 figures ever made, which ones would you want? No vehicles or giant robots, please (Glitter Boy size and smaller). Please list them in order of your preference. Feel free to list more than 12, or to do two separate lists, one for *good guys*, another for *bad guys*.

4. Please include any other helpful comments or suggestions you might have.

Send your response online to www.palladiumbooks.com

Or by mail to:

Palladium’s Toy List
12455 Universal Drive
Taylor, MI 48180

Please Note: We are only *considering* this license. There is NO signed contract, and we don’t even know if doing action figures is feasible. Actually, fan response will go a long way to help us make this determination (so please be honest and sincere in your responses). We look forward to your comments.

Rifts® Collectable Card Game

Coming March or April 2001

Palladium Books has signed a licensing agreement with **Precedence Entertainment** to produce a **Rifts® Collectable Card Game** (more commonly known as a “CCG”). These are colorful cards sold as both “decks” (the basic game) and “booster packs” (small packs of new cards with 11 to a pack).

The Head CCG designer at Precedence, *Kevin Tewart*, describes the company’s plans for the **Rifts® Collectable Card Game** as follows. Remember, this is a work in progress so there may be changes.

“As I see it,” said Mr. Tewart, “there is no safety, no security, and no rules on Rifts Earth. Magic, technology and the supernatural all coexist, often clashing in a world where anything is possible. The CCG will reflect that.”

“To draw a clear line in the many *conflicts*, the players helm one of the *major powers* on the planet — the Coalition States, Tolkeen, Free Quebec, Federation of Magic, New German Republic, ARCHIE-Three, and so on. Since conflict, plots and underhanded political maneuvering abound on Rifts Earth, *any* combination of hostiles will be possible, however, the initial deck and cards will focus on *North America*. Expansion sets will build upon the world just as the **Rifts® RPG World Books** do.

“Each player begins the game with a *Nation Card* that lists the composition of the starting hand, how many cards are drawn per turn, powers and resources generated each turn, and other important info. Each turn the player will have the opportunity to unleash specific forces against his enemy as well as attack his opponent’s *deck*! As is fitting of **Rifts®**, the last man standing wins (i.e. when an opponent runs out of cards/resources, he’s lost).

“But there is more to the game than combat. There are strategies and tactics involving the deployment of combat forces and building one’s resources. Even an infantry platoon can generate resources if the player devotes his energy to building rather than fighting. Some cards will also provide additional resources or special abilities, such as *city cards* and *key leaders* like Emperor Prosek, King Creed, Plato of Lazlo, Erin Tarn and others, all of which add to the power and capabilities of the hand.

“Future expansions for the **Rifts® CCG** will expand the world and scope of conflict to include the *Vampire Kingdoms*, *Federation of Magic*, *Triax* and the *New German Republic*, and much more. Best of all, each expansion, no matter what the geographic theme, will be fully compatible with one another. With time, the entire world of Rifts Earth will be laid out at the players’ fingertips!”

Will the CCG be Rifts®? The folks at *Precedence* seem to have a very good handle on the Rifts world. Mr. Tewart is a long-time **Rifts®** player, and everybody seems to be working hard to accurately capture the look and feel of **Rifts®**. There will be differences in the style of play and the goal of the game, of course, but from what we are seeing and hearing, I think the **Rifts® CCG** will be a fun game. How much it will appeal to role-players is yet to be seen.

Palladium Books will be offering *Precedence* input and suggestions while we continue to focus our energy on role-playing games. In fact, we have seven **Rifts®** products tentatively scheduled for release in 2001.

Precedence will be doing all of the game design, card layout, manufacturing and distribution of the CCG.

Card artwork will feature “new” paintings by many of *Palladium’s* talented artists like *John Zeleznik*, *Dave Dorman*, *Ramon Perez*, *Wayne Breaux*, and others (the exact lineup is not yet finalized). “Some” paintings by *Kevin Long*, *Keith Parkinson*, *Brom*, *Zeleznik* and *Breaux* will also be reprinted.

Tentative CCG release date: Nothing solid at the time of this writing, but probably March or April, 2001.

Retail Price: \$9.99 for the 50 card Starter Deck and \$2.99 per 11 card booster pack.

Rifts fans can help by providing *Precedence* with their suggestions and feedback. They are also looking for a couple dozen "play testers." Those interested can contact Precedence online at riftscg@eternity.com or by mail at:

Precedence Entertainment

Attn: Rifts Design Team

P.O. Box 28397

Tempe, AZ 85285

For up to the minute news and information, check-out Palladium's web site: www.palladiumbooks.com — that's where one can always find the latest happenings in the Palladium Megaverse®.

No Gen Con® for Palladium

Yes, we made money at Gen Con® 2000.

Yes, the new convention center is wonderful.

Yes, we love to meet and talk with the thousands of gamers who play our games.

No, we won't be going back in 2001.

This is NOT a protest or a boycott!!!! The folks at WoTC and the convention organizers treated us nicely, gave us a great booth location (thanks, again), and 20,000+ people seemed to have a good time.

The reason we aren't attending Gen Con® 2001 has to do with time. It takes as much time and energy to prepare for, attend and unwind from Gen Con® as it does to produce a medium-sized RPG book (costs almost as much too). We would rather stay at the office and work.

I know that probably sounds nuts, but it's true. We'd rather produce that one extra product to make several thousands of Palladium gamers happy than attend Gen Con® and meet a thousand fans in person. Especially this year, with my (Kevin Siembieda's) *mission* to get out as many of the books we've promised in the past as possible! I will not be dissuaded from this task! Not even by the allure of Gen Con®!

I know this news will disappoint some people, but we do anticipate attending **Marcon** (Ohio in May) and **Dragon Con** (Georgia in September), and somebody should have our books available for sale at Gen Con®.

Please Note: I'm not saying we will never attend Gen Con® — who knows what the future holds — but we won't be there this year. That much is for sure. Thanks for your understanding.

The Rifter #13 is the last appearance of KoDT

All good things must come to an end, and so it is that the **Knights of the Dinner Table®** will no longer grace the pages of **The Rifter®**.

Our dear friend, Jolly Blackburn, is just too busy to continue doing the comic strip for us. Jolly, the **KoDT Comic Book**, and **Kenzer & Company** are so successful that the ever increasing

demands on Jolly's and the rest of the Kenzer crew's time severely limit everything they can do (I know the feeling). This has forced them to focus on their own company's projects. And I can tell you, they have some awesome things in the works. Unfortunately, I can't tell you more because the Jolly-man has sworn me to secrecy, but it's way cool!

We want to thank Jolly Blackburn and Dave Kenzer for all of the new KoDT strips that have appeared in **The Rifter®** these past three years, and wish them the greatest success in all their endeavors. Try not to work too hard fellas, and keep up the good work.

The Lone Star comic strip does NOT conclude this issue!

Hey, remember last issue when I talked about why books are late? Well, here's the classic artist "can't make his deadline" scenario.

Ramon called a couple weeks before the strip was due to say how sorry he was, but that he just couldn't finish the comic strip this issue. It seems "life" just keeps getting in the way.

We can't be too disappointed with Ramon (and we hope you wouldn't be either) because he wants the comic to be epic, and refuses to take short-cuts (which is a good thing). In fact, we were going to surprise our readers with an extra long, 18 page, grand finale! Unfortunately, other commitments and "life" have prevented Ramon from finishing the story on time as he had planned. So the story (I am told) "will" conclude *next issue!*

Personally, I'm beginning to suspect that Ramon is enjoying to the comic so much that he's trying to find excuses for keeping it going. Those artists can be so tricky sometimes.

Rumor Killer #1: Palladium is NOT for sale!!!

Yeesh, every three to six months it seems like the rumor that *Palladium Books has been bought by Wizards of the Coast (or somebody)*, starts to fly around. In recent weeks the rumors have been hotter and heavier than ever. Well, it's not true. Palladium Books is NOT for sale! "It's mine, all mine, I tell ya! All mine! And I'm not selling!!!" laughed Kevin Siembieda in that maniacal way of his.

Seriously, we have NO plans or desire to sell Palladium Books. Period. If that should ever change (like when I'm a two hundred and five and considering retirement), I'll let you know, honest.

So until you hear otherwise from me or Maryann, Palladium Books is NOT for sale.

I suspect the most recent spate of speculation is rooted in the fact that a **Rifts® CCG** is coming out. Except it's being designed by *Precedence Entertainment*, not WoTC. I fear that news of a *possible Rifts®* toy line will spawn an entirely new line of rumors like Hasbro or McFarlane Toys is buying Palladium, which is NOT true.

I just don't know where these rumors come from.

Rumor Killer #2:

There's no Rifts® Movie

I regret to report that the increasingly frequent and excited rumors that a secret *Rifts®* Movie or television or cartoon series in the works are NOT true.

We continue to field calls from various entertainment companies, but we do not have any kind of movie or TV deal in place. Sorry. We'd love to see a movie too. So if you have an Uncle in the "Movie Business," tell him to give Palladium Books a call or to contact our agent, *Surge Comic Properties*.



Palladium freelance artist, Mike Dubisch, has kindly sent me a copy of his science-fantasy-horror comic book, **Weirdling #2**.

Wow! The story is entrancing. It becomes clear this issue that our heroine(?) is straddling two or three distinctly different dimensions or realities — one as a crewman on a spaceship, one in a monster filled Victorian-like England (or Europe), and who knows where or when else.

Mike does a masterful job setting things up so that the reader can not tell which reality is real (if either), who is friend, who is foe, or what will happen next. Our heroine could actually be living in two (or more) realities, or one or both might be a dream, or a drug induced fantasy. Or is it all some dark premonition or is she completely psychotic and locked away in an asylum somewhere?! Only time (and the next few issues) will tell. I, for one, can hardly wait!

If I have any criticism, it is that I, personally, don't care for how Mike's art style is becoming simpler and the line-work of his inking has taken on a rough and scratchy look. However, that's just a personal preference. I have to admit the roughness and simplicity often adds to the overall atmosphere of horror and starkness of life on the spaceship (with more detail in the Victorian scenes; clever, Mike). The actual story, story-telling and pacing are superb.

As I said when I plugged **Weirdling #1**, if you like horror and H.P. Lovecraft, you'll love this unusual black and white, comic book mini-series.

Best of all, the price for **Weirdling #2** is a mere three bucks (issue #1 costs \$8 and it is needed to understand the story). It's my impression these are special, limited edition comics too. If you're interested in trying one, send checks to Mike Dubisch at:

Fantastic Visions Studio
15 Sieber Road
Kerhonkson, NY 12446

(tell him Palladium Books sent you)

Note: The subject matter is best suited for a "mature reader."

Hey, Mike is showing some of his "monster sci-fi artwork" on exhibit till September 2001 at the JK5 Gallery & Botique, 475 Bedford Rd., Pleasantville, New York (914) 769-JK50. If you're in the neighborhood, check it out!

Coming Attractions

The Christmas Surprise Packages were a big success. Santa Kev & Maryann sent out dozens of printer proofs of **Heroes Unlimited™, 2nd Ed. "Hardcover" Limited Edition, Rifts® Silver Editions** (signed by the staff), some original art, dice bags, tote bags, and lots of other goodies. It's a lot of work but fun for most everyone. We hope everyone enjoyed the surprise and had a wonderful Christmas!

HU2™ Limited Edition

The signed and numbered, hardcover, collector's edition of **Heroes Unlimited™, Second Edition** is still available but selling fast.

- 600 signed and numbered copies were printed; only a couple hundred remain in stock.
- End sheets feature a specially commissioned double-page battle scene illustrated by *Ramon Perez*.
- Classy blue leatherette (imitation leather) cover stamped with gold foil logo.
- Interior pages are sewn and will not fall out.
- Signed and numbered by Kevin Siembieda and Ramon Perez.
- \$40.00 plus \$5.00 for postage and handling.
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- Written by Wayne Breaux Jr. and Bill Coffin
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Coming for Heroes Unlimited™

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(not necessarily in this order)

Rifts®

Coming for 2001

Coalition Wars™ Five: Shadows of Evil™ — January 26

Coalition Wars™ Six: Final Siege — March 19

Rifts® Australia Two — Spring

Rifts® Australia Three

Rifts® Dimension Book: Anvil Galaxy™

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- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- 112 pages — Cat. No. 842
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Coalition Wars™ 5: Shadows of Evil™

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

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

- The Coalition Army is rebuilding and on the move.
- Key places throughout Tolkeen described and mapped.
- Adventures and adventure ideas presented for each.
- Cyber-Knight outposts and refugee camps.
- Tolkeen Prisoner of War Camps.
- Coalition Death Camps.
- New villains, dangers and surprises!
- Cover by Dave Dorman.
- Interior Art by Perez, Breaux, Wilson, Johnson and Williams.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- 112 pages — Cat. No. 843
- \$12.95 — available end of January, 2001!



Coalition Wars™ 6: Final Siege

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

This big, 200+ page grand finale will be a March release. This is one book that can not be rushed.

- Tolkeen's secret weapons unveiled.
- Treachery, chaos, defeat and triumphant reign.
- All-out war to the bitter end!
- One wins. One loses. Be there!
- Cat. No. 844
- \$20.95 — Page count 200+ pages.
- Interior art by Perez, Breaux, Wilson, Johnson, Burles and Williams.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and Bill Coffin.
- Cover by John Zeleznik — wrap-around battle scene.
- Available mid-March!





The Palladium Fantasy RPG®

The Eastern Territory™

February or March 2001

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

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

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

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

The Northern Hinterlands™

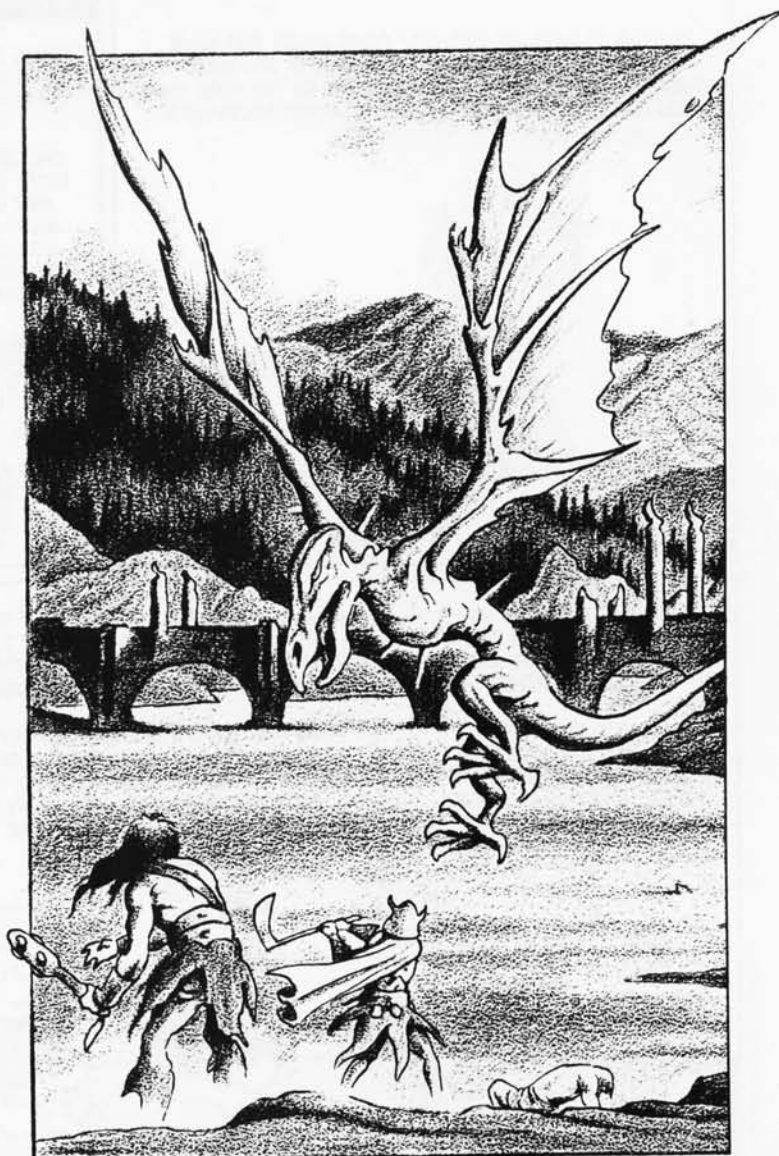
This will be a *prelude* to the **Land of the Damned** series, and will explore and map the area of the Great Northern Wilderness just outside the mountains that divides the Land of the Damned from the rest of the world.

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

The Land of the Damned™

The **Land of the Damned** is too large to cover in one book, so it will be presented as a series of "stand-alone" books that will explore and describe the various unexplored regions of this forbidding land. It will also reveal the strange creatures and beings who dominate the land (many extinct elsewhere in the world) and the powers that be.

- Begins Summer 2001. The first of several, stand-alone books to explore the **Land of the Damned** should see release in June, with another one following every 2-3 months.
- Art by Burles, Wilson, Breaux, Johnson and others.
- Maps galore.
- Written by Bill Coffin.



Knights of the Dinner Table™

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

AS YOU ENTER THE **MARKET PLACE** AND HEAD TOWARD **SEBASTIAN'S SHOP** YOU NOTICE THAT HE'S OUT FRONT **SWEEPING** THE STOOP WITH A BROOM. HE PAUSES FROM HIS **CHORE** TO MOP THE SWEAT OFF HIS BROW WHEN HE **NOTICES** YOU. A WARM **TOOTHLESS SMILE** FLASHES ACROSS HIS FACE AS HE **EXCITEDLY WAVES** AT YOU.

"GREETINGS, MY FRIENDS!! SO GLAD TO SEE YOU ARE IN **GOOD HEALTH!**"

GEE, **SEBASTIAN** SURE SEEMS TO BE IN A **GOOD MOOD** TODAY.

AND WHY WOULDN'T HE BE? WE SPEND A **FORTUNE** EVERY TIME WE VISIT HIM. THE GUY'S JUST **GIDDY** WITH THE THOUGHT OF GETTING HIS **MONEY-GRUBBING HANDS** IN OUR **POCKETS**.



PLEASE, PLEASE, MY FRIENDS! COME INSIDE AND HAVE SOME **CUT-LEAF TEA** AND **HONEY-MEG WAFERS!** THERE'S A **CHILL** IN THE AIR. WE'LL SIT BY THE **FIRE** AND YOU CAN TELL ME **ALL** ABOUT YOUR LATEST ADVENTURE.

A WEE BIT LATER...

OKAY, OKAY, FORGET THE **TENT PEGS** THEN. HOW MUCH DO YOU WANT FOR THE **BEDROLL**, THE **SHELTER HALF**, THE **FIFTY FEET OF ROPE** AND THE **BARREL OF SALTED PORK?**

OH.....GEE FOR YOU? MY **FRIEND?** LET'S SEE...THAT **PORK** CAME IN BY WAY OF **MULE TEAM** OVER THE **IRON-STA MOUNTAINS**. REALLY **CHOICE STUFF** FROM THE **GINGE STEPPES**. SADLY, IT'S IN SUCH **SHORT SUPPLY** AND ALL...

OKAY, I SEE WHERE THIS IS HEADING. HE WANTS TO **HAGGLE** IS THAT IT?

AND THEN WE CAN TALK BUSINESS.

I REALLY DON'T HAVE MUCH ROOM TO **WIGGLE**, ON THE PRICE.

WHAT A **CHISELER**



WHAT IS IT WITH THIS GUY? HASN'T HE EVER HEARD OF **PRICE TAGS?** WHY THE HELL DO WE HAVE TO GO THROUGH THIS **CRAP** EVERY TIME WE COME TO HIS SHOP? HIS PRICES ARE **OUTRAGEOUS!** AND HE HAS THE **NERVE** TO CHARGE US **FOUR SILVER** FOR THAT **TEA?** I THOUGHT IT WAS ON THE **HOUSE!**

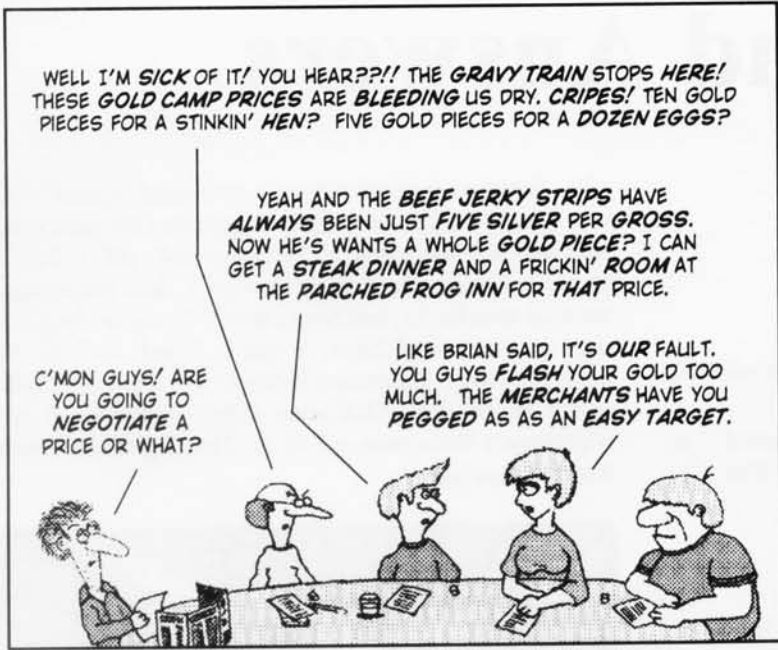
DAVE'S RIGHT. THIS **SEBASTIAN-DUDE** IS TAKIN' ADVANTAGE OF US. EVER NOTICE THAT **EVERY** TIME WE **HAGGLE** WITH HIM WE ONLY END UP PAYING **MORE?**

GUYS THIS ISN'T A MODERN **QUICKY MART!** NEGOTIATING A GOOD PRICE IS PART OF THE **CULTURE**. I'M SURE HE GOES THROUGH THE SAME THING WITH HIS **SUPPLIERS**. HE'S JUST PASSING ON THE **COST** TO US.

OH WE'RE GETTING **SOAKED** ALRIGHT. HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO **TELL YOU NOT** TO TELL THIS GUY ALL ABOUT OUR **DUNGEON CRAWLS?** HE'S ONLY **PRYING** TO FIND OUT HOW MUCH **GOLD** WE'VE FOUND.

THE GUY IS ONLY **SHAKING US DOWN** TO GET A **PIECE** OF THE ACTION.





WELL I'M *SICK* OF IT! YOU HEAR??!! THE *GRAVY TRAIN* STOPS *HERE!* THESE *GOLD CAMP PRICES* ARE *BLEEDING* US DRY. *CRIPES!* TEN GOLD PIECES FOR A STINKIN' *HEN?* FIVE GOLD PIECES FOR A *DOZEN EGGS?*

YEAH AND THE *BEEF JERKY STRIPS* HAVE ALWAYS BEEN JUST *FIVE SILVER PER GROSS.* NOW HE'S WANTS A WHOLE *GOLD PIECE?* I CAN GET A *STEAK DINNER* AND A *FRICKIN' ROOM* AT THE *PARCHED FROG INN* FOR THAT PRICE.

C'MON GUYS! ARE YOU GOING TO *NEGOTIATE* A PRICE OR WHAT?

LIKE BRIAN SAID, IT'S *OUR FAULT.* YOU GUYS *FLASH* YOUR GOLD TOO MUCH. THE *MERCHANTS* HAVE YOU *PEGGED* AS AS AN *EASY TARGET.*



FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! IS THIS WHAT I *ADVENTURE* FOR? TO RISK *LIFE AND LIMB* TRUDGING THROUGH THE *DUNGEONS,* FIGHTING ALL MANNER OF *HORRORS* FOR A LITTLE *GOLD* JUST TO COME BACK TO TOWN TO *GIVE* IT TO SOME *WORTHLESS,* *ZERO-LEVEL* MERCHANT WITH A *FAT BELLY?*

AMEN BROTHER! IT AIN'T RIGHT. THIS GUY IS MAKING MORE MONEY THAN *WE* ARE AND HE ISN'T EVEN *WORKING* FOR IT.

AT LEAST *WE* MAKE OUR MONEY THE *HONEST* WAY.

GUYS....IT'S NOT LIKE IT'S *REAL* MONEY.

YOU GOT THAT RIGHT.



WELL THAT CERTAINLY IS A *POOR ATTITUDE* TO HAVE. IF YOU THINK SO *LITTLE* OF YOUR GOLD HOW 'BOUT THROWIN' SOME OF IT OVER *HERE?*

LOOK, I DIDN'T FIGHT A *SWACK IRON* DRAGON FOR HIS *HORDE* JUST TO HAND IT OVER TO SOME *SCAM ARTIST.*

THEN WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST WE DO? HE'S THE *ONLY* GUY IN TOWN WHO HAS WHAT WE NEED.



A FEW MINUTES LATER...

HOODY HOO!!! I PUT MY *FOOT* ON HIS CHEST AND *PRY* MY *SWORD* OUT OF HIS CHEST. THEN I WIPE THE BLOOD OFF THE BLADE ON THE *SLEEVE* OF HIS TUNIC

FIREBALL COMING ON LINE, B.A.

I TAKE WHAT I NEED FROM BEHIND THE COUNTER AND LOAD IT UP INTO THE *CART* I FOUND IN HIS *SHED.* WE'LL *TORCH* WHATEVER WE CAN'T TAKE WITH US.

I'M SORRY I ASKED.

TO ALL OUR FANS AT THE RIFTER!®

DOING *KODT* FOR MY FRIENDS AT *PALLADIUM BOOKS* HAS BEEN A *BLAST!!* IT'S BEEN A *GREAT EXCUSE* FOR ME TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH MY OLD FRIENDS, *KEVIN, MARYANN, WAYNE* AND THE REST OF THE *CRAZY GOOFBALLS* I WISH I COULD HANG OUT WITH MORE OFTEN.

SADLY LIFE HAS GOTTEN A BIT *CRAZY* AND THERE ARE MANY DEMANDS ON MY TIME THESE DAYS -- SOMETHING HAD TO GIVE.

AS A RESULT *KODT* WILL NOT BE APPEARING IN *RIFTERS.* IT IS MY *SINCERE* HOPE THAT THIS WILL ONLY BE *TEMPORARY.*

IN THE MEANTIME I'D LIKE TO WISH THE *PALLADIUM STAFF* THE BEST OF LUCK. AND TO ALL THEIR FANS, "*SEE YOU SOON!*"

Jolly R. Blackburn
JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

Questions and Answers

Fate, Luck, Curses and Healing

By Rodney Stott and Shawn Merrow

For this issue, we have taken the Q&A away from combat, and into the realm of fate, luck, curses and healing.

Remember, any questions can be addressed to rstott@palladiumbooks.com, and on the Palladium Web Site there is a large list of questions and answers.

— Rodney Stott & Shawn Merrow

I am making up an NPC for Rifts®. Do I have to follow the guidelines for normal character creation?

No, you do not have to follow the rules for normal character creation. Non-Player Characters are considered plot elements and do not have to follow the rules for normal player characters. However, following the character creation guidelines may be useful for defining a character, just not required.

Many of the NPC's in various books follow this guideline, which can lead to confusion among players who think the NPC's follow the same rules as normal player character creation.

Are there any sort of Perception rules in Palladium?

Rules for Perception appeared in the *Nightbane RPG®* released by Palladium Books, but they haven't been printed in any other product.

To determine whether the character's perception finds something, the player must roll a 20-sided die. Add I.Q. bonuses (use the M.E. bonus table, but use I.Q. instead), and any O.C.C. and R.C.C. bonuses. Also, all characters get a +1 to Perception at levels 3, 9 and 15. The Game Master then compares the roll to the table below.

Situation

Easy

Roll Needed: 4+. Hearing a loud noise, finding a brightly colored object against a white background.

Moderate

Roll Needed: 8+. Looking for somebody in a well-lit area; hearing a slight noise.

Challenging

Roll Needed: 14+. Looking for something in a poor light; hearing something over a noisy background.

Difficult

Roll Needed: 17+. Finding something in the dark; hearing a snake sliding over a carpet.

Combining Perception Rolls with Skills

A number of skills, among them Prowl, Detect Ambush, Concealment, and Detect Concealment, all impact on Perception

rolls. When a perception roll is attempted against a skill roll, treat it as a combat roll; both characters (the person using the skill and the one using a Perception roll) roll a D20, and the higher roll wins. To quickly convert a skill percentage, divide the skill total by 15, and round down. Example: Roger is sneaking up on a Nightbane. Roger's Prowl skill is 70%; the Nightbane has a Perception bonus of +5. The Prowl skill is converted to +4. Two D20's are rolled. Roger's roll is 11; the Nightbane's Perception roll is 21. The Nightbane turns towards Roger, fangs bared...



Is there any way to avoid having to roll for Horror Factor?

The best way to avoid rolling against Horror Factor is not to encounter anything that needs a roll vs Horror Factor.

Some Game Masters use a house rule that reduces a particular type of creature's Horror Factor over time (generally by one point per encounter), and when it drops below 6 or so the character has become inured to the Horror Factor of the creature for most encounters.

Of course, depending on the circumstances, a save vs Horror Factor may still be required.

Is there a complete list of Saving Throws available?

Most applicable saving throws for each RPG are listed in the combat section of each of the main books.

But we have received several requests for a list of all of the Saving Throws, so we have decided to oblige.

Electrocution 14+
Extreme Heat/Cold 14+
Harmful Drugs 15+
Insanity 12+
Magic: Circles 16+ (all circles)
Magic: Fumes 14+
Magic: Ritual 16+
Magic: Spell 12+
Magic: Wards 14+
Pain 16+
Poison/Disease: Lethal 14+
Poison/Disease: Non-Lethal 16+
Psionics: Non Psionics 15+
Psionics: Major or Minor 12+
Psionics: Master 10+
Soul Drinking 14+

The Saving Throws for Wards and Circles in the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** were incorrectly listed as 13+ for Wards and 13+ for Circles.

The Saving Throw vs Pain is listed as 14+ in **Ninjas and Superspies™**, and female characters are +2 to Save vs Pain in **Rifts®**.

Other Saving Throws do exist, but they generally do not have a base number required and are treated in much the same way as combat rolls. These include Perception, Horror Factor, Possession, etc.

I would like to know what saving throws to use for gases.

It all depends on the type of gas involved.

KO/Tear Gas, etc. might require save vs Non-lethal Poison.

Nerve Gas might require a save vs Lethal Poison (maybe with a negative penalty).

Nitrous Oxide gas might require a save vs Harmful Drugs.

Magic Gasses generally require a saving throw vs Fumes (magic) or Magic.

Generally if the gas has a lethal effect a saving throw vs Lethal Poison should be used, it is not lethal a saving throw vs Non-Lethal Poison or Harmful Drugs is applicable.

Several character classes get a save versus Disease bonus but don't give a save target number. Also, does the character's P.E. bonus apply to this save?

The save target number is based on the disease itself. P.E. Bonuses apply to this save. Generally the save vs Disease is treated exactly like a saving throw vs Poison (and with the same target numbers).

Can my character take medication or get medical treatment to help relieve the symptoms of a curse that causes a medical condition?

No. While some treatments may have limited effect, all treatments will wear off very shortly after application if they do have any effect to begin with.

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

Yes, broken bones and torn tendons can be healed via healing magic, but permanent penalties cannot be healed/recovered from through the use of magic.

My character is a Wizard, and has just been given cybernetic augmentation that removes his magic abilities, is there any way to get this back?

Yes, it is possible to regain the lost magic ability. By having the cybernetics and bionics surgically removed, magic and psionic ability is restored.

However extensive bionic reconstruction cannot be reversed unless the technology exists to grow a new body for the character.

There is also a spell in **Coalition Wars™: Siege on Tolkeen™ One** called Ley Line Restoration (pg. 19) that can restore all missing limbs and organs.

The rules for Fatigue just don't seem to cut it in my group. Are there additional penalties I can impose on my players?

Apart from the standard penalties for Fatigue, rules for Sleep Deprivation can be found in the **Heroes Unlimited G.M.'s Guide™**. These rules greatly enhance the rules for fatigue and characters pushing themselves beyond normal limitations.

Are there any rules for bleeding?

Yes, generally each wound the character receives will cause one point of damage every minute until it is correctly treated. Damage is first subtracted from S.D.C., and then from Hit Points. Optionally, large wounds may do damage from blood loss (2 points per minute).

When a character is down to 15% of Hit Points left, only a medical doctor can save the character's life, as the bleeding is now internal.

When the character reaches 5% of Hit Points, they will pass out from Blood Loss, and finally when they reach 0 Hit Points they will sink into a coma.

What if my character is hit by a Mega-Damage weapon, and he is only S.D.C.?

Rules for surviving hits from Mega-Damage weapons can be found in **Coalition War Campaign™** under the Optional Guidelines for Fatal Injury Treatment (pg. 61).

How are attributes affected by old age?

In the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** there is a section entitled "Notes on Aging," which lists modifications for old age. These can be easily adapted for most races and game settings.



Are there any rules for drinking in Palladium apart from being totally drunk and alcoholism?

These appeared in **Rifts®: New West™** and some other Palladium titles.

Typical Characters (not heavy drinkers):

After 3 drinks: -6% to all skills.

After 6 drinks: -12% to all skills; initiative and all combat bonuses are -2, and reduce speed by 20%.

After 9 drinks: -24% on all skills and reduce speed, initiative, attacks per melee and all combat bonuses by half.

After 12 drinks (falling down drunk): -40% on all skills, reduce speed to 20% and reduce initiative, attacks per melee and all combat bonuses to 2!

Heavy drinkers can normally drink twice as much before feeling the effects.

Dwarves can drink 2.5 times the amount listed.

Supernatural creatures can drink 3 times the listed amount.

Greater Supernatural Beings can drink 4 times the amount listed.

Does having the Streetwise skill give bonuses to other skills, such as Gambling, Seduction, or Pick Pockets?

No, it does not give any bonuses to these skills (though they are all related). Instead it may be used as a precursor to using these skills, to see if it is appropriate.

A failed roll in this case might lead to misleading information about what action you plan to perform.

I.e., using Streetwise to recognize if the character you plan to pick pocket is a undercover cop, or someone you don't want to take on. If he fails the Streetwise roll he might not notice the undercover cop and pick his pocket, with the possibility of being caught in the act and being arrested.

I think I have given my players way too much money in the game, what can I do to redress this without seeming unfair, or backtracking the game?

It is hard to take something away after giving it to the players in a game, but apart from having it stolen or just disappear, there are a couple of options to reduce a fortune.

Inflation is a good way of reducing the spending power of money in a game. Basically if the characters are loaded, and others know about it, everyone will be after their share. This means prices would be inflated for them unless they conceal how much money they are carrying.

The same thing applies to cashing in large denomination coins. An Old Kingdom Dragon Coin may buy a entire warehouse of flour, but when you only need a bag or two, the miller might not be able change it for the characters.

Only in cities and trade centers will there be enough money and merchants to exchange large amounts of money, and the threat of inflation will be much lower. Of course, the number of thieves is higher, and a merchant will love to swindle the characters out of their money.

If the characters are far away from a city or a trade center, it could be an entire adventure or more in just traveling to the city to spend their money.

Another way of reducing the amount of money is through money-changing, as not every currency is the same. For example, Eastern Territories money is only half as valuable as Western Empire money, so if the characters come across several thousand Eastern coins, and want to spend it in the Western Empire, their money is only worth half as much.

Some places may only accept coin of the realm, so money-changers must be used, which can eat up 10-25% of the money.

Library of Bletherad™ (for the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®**) has a nice section on currencies, with optional rules for exchange and nice descriptions of the various currencies of the Palladium World.

In **Rifts®** the same thing applies. Sure, money may be stored electronically, but what good is 10 million credits to a farmer without a credit reader? Likewise, small kingdoms might have their own currency, and may not recognize some foreign currencies, or apply a exchange rate to their currency.

In remote places, barter and trade goods may be more valuable than money (though definitely more bulky).

What exactly can I do, as a Game Master? Can I make up weapons, settings, different planets, different dimensions, and/or different character classes than the ones in the books,

in order to fit certain campaigns or make things more exciting?

As G.M., you can do anything you want in your games, from creating new material, worlds, dimensions, magic and character classes, and even restrict and alter the game rules how you see fit. The most important thing, though, is having fun — both the G.M. and all the players.

Lucky Charms and Superstitions

Optional Rules for All of Palladium's Games
By Joseph Larsen

Introduction

Have you ever seen those movies where the characters have a good luck charm that they kiss, rub or put on before they go into battle? Do you have a good luck charm? Why is luck such a factor in our lives? Well, we grew up with it, and it is one of the favorite ways to describe the reason behind an uncommon event, whether good or bad. I once had a player try to dodge a life

threatening natural 20. Amazingly, he did with another natural 20! Even though he was lucky, would he have had a better chance if he had a lucky charm? Would luck have helped those who weren't so fortunate and took a fatal blow?

Well, chances are that you or someone you know might have a lucky charm in some form or another. It could have come as a gift, an heirloom, a sentimental item, or even a piece out of a survived situation. Because you have this, you believe that it keeps you from being blown around so much by the winds of fate. Losing this charm might cause you to believe that you you've lost that anchor that keeps you safe from those winds. Somehow the lucky charm seemed to keep you in a better position. Did it always work? Probably not always.

Does having more than one lucky charm help your chances? Or does it show your lack of faith in the one, so that you have a backup? Does your charm cancel any bad luck from other sources? Well, lets find out.

Three Factors

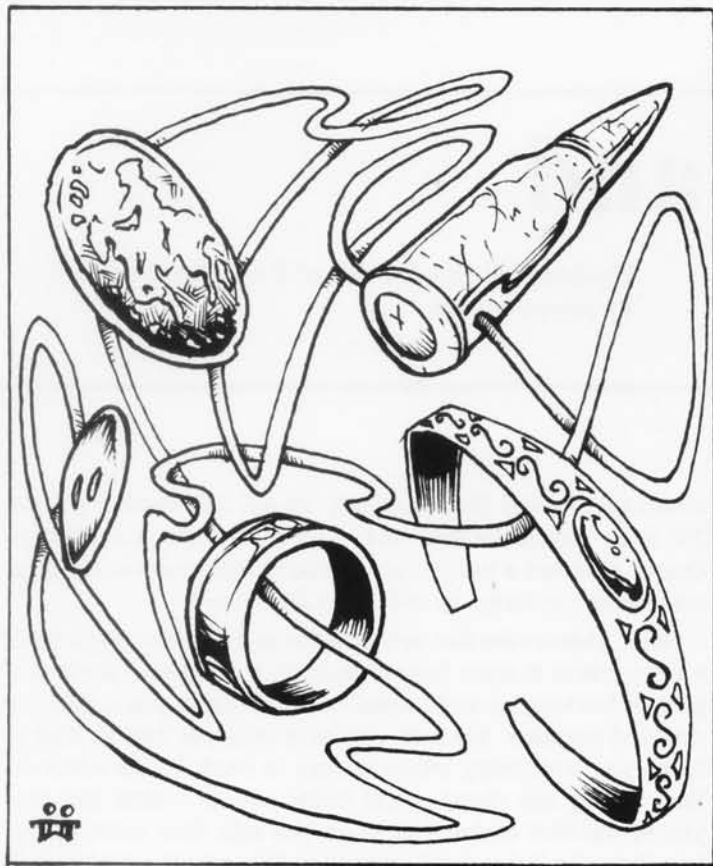
These rules for luck charms have three factors involved. These factors are a charm's believability, its rating, and its success.

The first is how strongly the character believes in his charm, or charms. This factor will determine the lengths that the character will go to protect, retrieve, or discard a charm. This is represented by a percentage, which is rolled, using percentile dice, in these situations.

This leads us to the second factor, which is the charm's rating on a scale of 1-10. The rating rises and falls as the charm succeeds or fails. Simple things in life do not usually cause the rating to change. It's the major things that happen which affect the rating. For some, surviving the recent battle might be significant enough. Multiplying the rating by 10 gives the believability mentioned above. That will give a percentage to roll against. This percentage rises and falls with the rating. The less the charm works, the easier it is to depart with it.



The rating determines the success of the charm. This is the third factor. It is how well the charm actually works. In extreme cases we can roll against the rating by rolling 1D12. (Whew, we'll never get a chance to roll a 13.) Three examples of when to roll against the rating are when a natural 1 is rolled, when a natural 20 is rolled, or in a situation when a character could die.



Using Charms for Luck

The following are just examples of what could happen in each instance. It is ultimately up to the G.M. to decide the outcome of successful or failed rolls.

If a natural 1 is rolled while shooting a rifle, this obviously is the lousiest miss possible. You might have tripped, the gun could have jammed, or you simply sneezed. This would be the perfect time to use your lucky charm. Roll 1D12 and try to roll equal to or below the success rate. If you are successful, well, maybe as you tripped you accidentally hit a tree, which came crashing down on that group of enemy Skelebots! Or maybe the trip sent your blast in another direction and you hit a different, unsuspecting enemy. In this case, your roll would be upped to an 8 without any bonuses and the target would have a -5 to dodge or parry the blast. If you roll a 1 while trying to dodge or parry and your luck is successful, then you take half damage because you stumbled in a way that your attacker wasn't expecting. In these situations, your charm's factor would go up by 1 point. You'll find yourself saying "Man! I'm glad I had that thing with me! It was worth jumping into that ice cold lake to retrieve!" You'll kiss it even more often now.

If a natural 1 is rolled and your luck roll fails, then you really blew it. Something drastic could happen that would affect you or your teammates. That shot could have hit the tree and exposed your secret weapon, or distracted your most powerful ally

for an attack or two! Your weapon could have slipped out of your hands. OOPS! Either way, you lose the next attack to recover out of sheer disbelief and frustration. Your charm's factor would go down by 1 point. "Dumb thing, I should have let that animal steal it! He'd be dead by now or have lost his home with this thing's luck!"

On the other end of the spectrum, if you roll a natural 20 while firing a shot and your luck is successful, then the shot does triple damage! Plus, even if the target rolls a natural 20 to dodge, you'll still hit him, but you'll only inflict normal damage. Chalk one up for the luck charm! If you are trying to dodge a critical strike (18, 19, or 20 in some cases) and you fail, but your luck roll is successful, then only take normal damage. In cases where double damage is not involved and it is not a life-threatening situation, then the luck roll need not be rolled. Game Masters may opt to do otherwise.

Rolling a natural 20 to strike and an unsuccessful luck roll will result in a shot that can only be dodged by another natural 20, but which only does HALF damage! In the case that your dodge was successful on a critical strike but your luck was unsuccessful, then you dodge successfully, but you lose an attack trying to recover from such a massive dodge. If your dodge was unsuccessful and so was the roll, then take double damage and lose the next attack. Subtract 1 point from the charm's rating. Dumb charm.

Acquiring Charms

Remember, if you use this rule, you must use it on both spectrums. Luck will always go both ways. Just cross your fingers and hope it goes in your favor.

Different objects become lucky charms for different reasons. These reasons are what provide the initial rating of the charm. Your character might notice a simple item in his possession whenever he does really well in battle. "I'm keeping this! I just noticed that every time I've had this, my shots are more effective. I just fight better" — SMACK! — He lays a big kiss on this item. These types of items start out with a base rating of 5.

Another common way of determining a lucky charm is because it was a sentimental gift. "It brought me luck and I want you to have it," or, "This was my father's. He didn't have it on that fatal day. That's why he died." These charms have a base rating of a 7.

Other ways people determine a lucky charm might include an object from a situation that was potentially lethal, but the character triumphed. Why, he does not know. "This bullet was fired at me at point blank range. For some reason, it didn't fire. I only found this out after I killed that guy. I'm keeping this! It was meant to spare me!" These objects have a base rating of an 8.

Religious objects offer a base rating of a 6 or 7, depending on where the character gets the object. Most other objects start out with a rating of 5.

Multiple charms will result in the average of the total factor of each item (add all ratings together and divide by the amount of charms used). The reason why this is done is because some charms aren't as lucky as others are, and therefore bring their bad luck as well. When a luck roll fails then that means that maybe one of the charms didn't work. Subtract 1 from one of the charms and readjust the average. When the luck is successful, then add 1 to one of the charms and readjust the average

again. As a rule, the whole average will go up 1 point once you gain as many points as you have charms. There is a max of 10 points.

As mentioned in the introduction, you see some people kissing their charms or doing other things before they go into battle. Kissing, rubbing or other forms of recognizing the charm will add a 1 to the charm for the duration of the current situation. Recognizing all of the charms in a group will bring the group value up by 1.

If a character loses a charm, then roll vs the charm's believability to see if there are any repercussions to the loss. Roll once a day for 5 days. First, each day that the roll is below the believability, the character will make an effort of finding the charm, and it will be a top priority for that day.

Second, if more than 3 rolls are higher than the believability, then nothing happens to the character. If the rolls are under the believability three times consecutively, then the character will be depressed and have a minus 2 to strike, parry and dodge and a -10% to skills for 1D6 days out of sheer hopelessness. After that time, then the character is no longer affected by the loss of that charm. Another charm may be tried during this time, but at a -2 on the rating. During this trial period, if it gains 2 points in rating, then they may adopt this charm without consequences. If not, then the new charm is not enough, and the effects last for 1D4 more days. Different charms may be tried as many times as wanted. Each will start with a -2 to its rating.

Superstitions

Another method of dealing with luck, whether good or bad, is by believing in superstitions. Superstitions often work as a type of formula. It is simply that if "A" happens, then "B" will occur, unless "C" is performed. For example, if A) you spill the salt, then B) you will have bad luck, unless C) you throw some over your right shoulder.

We all know of superstitions, and they differ from country to country and region to region. In the role-playing world, you may opt to use the ones from real life or make up your own. They may rhyme, be in the old language, or maybe the new slang. "Dude! Didn't you know that if you drop your board in the sand its bad luck? It means that you'll wipe out big time on your next ride. But that's only if you don't dust the sand off within the first minute. Pretty bogus huh, dude?" They can also be specific days, such as the dreaded Friday the 13th. It works for whatever kind of superstition you can imagine!

Superstitions work in the same way that charms do. They use the same three factors, which are believability, rating, and the success of the superstition.

The believability is how much the character believes in it. It will show if they will go to great lengths to avoid doing something that causes bad luck, do something that will give good luck, or perform "C" to prevent the bad luck from happening. This is also shown by a percentage.

The rating of the superstition is how often the character receives what he deserves according to the superstition. This may be by obeying the superstition or disobeying the superstition. You can learn how well a superstition works by not obeying it just as effectively as you can by obeying it. So, say you decide not to throw the salt over your shoulder and later that day you

need to use your luck. If your luck fails, then next time you'll remember to throw the salt over your shoulder. So up the rating 1 point.

A superstition's success rate has more ways of changing than a charm does. As described in the rating, this is because you might feel the effects by either not obeying it or obeying it. We still roll against the superstition's rating. But we would roll to see if the expected effect happens. In the above example where the salt is not thrown over the shoulder, you would roll under the rating to see if bad luck happened. If the roll were over the rating, then nothing would have happened. So the expected would happen if the roll was under the rating.

All superstitions start out with a 1D6 rating when adopted by a character. If a character has not adopted the superstition, they still roll the 1D6 for a rating. Then they might still have to roll against the rating, but with a +2 to their 1D12 die roll. The 2 bonus is added to the roll because they don't necessarily believe the superstition, but are aware that something could happen. If the expected effect still happens, then the rating still goes up by 1 point. If the rating goes up 2 points within 24 hours, then the character no longer has the bonus. This means that they believe in it now, whether consciously or unconsciously.

If the character only believes in superstitions and not charms, or doesn't have a charm, then if they think that bad luck is on the way and they roll below the believability, then they will have a -1 to strike, dodge, and parry. Plus they will have a -5% to skills.

Superstitions with Charms

If a character believes in both superstitions and charms, then they will have to combine the rules. When using luck, add 1D4 from a good luck superstition (max. 10) to the charm, or charms, for one day after the good luck superstition was performed. On the opposite end, if the superstition dictates bad luck, then subtract 1D4 from the charm, or charms. If the superstition is obeyed and bad luck is supposedly avoided, then no penalties or bonuses are added.

Notes

In the case that both the attacker and the target use luck and are successful, then the G.M. may opt to use the lower roll of the two charms. If they were still tied, then the result would be as if no luck was used at all.



Nightbane®

The Cursed P.C.C.

Optional Source Material for Nightbane®

By Shawn Merrow

Steve remembered the first time it happened. It had only been a few days after Dark Day when he saw his first monster. He was just walking down the street to get some lunch. At first he just stared in shock at the eight foot (2.4 m) tall creature with black spikes all over its body. After a second, Steve took off running in the other direction, screaming at the top of his lungs.

When he got home, he promptly got drunk and passed out. In the morning, Steve decided it must have been the stress of the last few days and he just thought there was a monster walking down the street. Since he figured he was sane now, he put his uniform on and hurried into the station. This was one of the days he worked desk instead of driving a patrol car around.

Steve's new grasp on sanity didn't last more than twenty minutes into the shift. Almost all of the upper staff had been replaced by monsters, and everyone else acted like nothing was going on. Even New York was not strange enough to consider the fact the desk Sergeant was suddenly a monster as something ordinary. He pretended to be sick and got the day off to think about was going on.

He went straight to the hospital to see if he was sick or had gone insane. The doctor just told him he was suffering Dark Day related stress, and that he should just take a few days off from work. Steve took the days off, and then went back to work. He vowed to act normally no matter what his fellow Police Officers looked like.

It was ok for several weeks, but he kept seeing more and more monsters around him. Then one day he saw a monster rip apart an old bum like a piece of paper. This was when the first part of his sanity snapped. It went downhill rapidly after this point. The next day, Steve decided he must make everyone see the monsters in their midst. The plan was simple: Go into City Hall and make them see the truth.

The news reported that night a lone Police Officer had entered City Hall and had started shooting at everyone in sight. The officer killed eight bystanders with his service pistol before being killed himself.

The Cursed P.C.C.

Throughout history, there have occasionally been born people who saw things differently than the average person. The people with this gift, or curse as most people referred to it, lived very stressful lives. The change usually happened at puberty, and only to a few in a generation. However, in the days after Dark Day many have gone through the change. The gift is to be able to see someone's true self, or in the case of Nightbane, their

Morphus. That means when everyone else sees a nice old man walking down the street, the Cursed may instead see a giant slug with tentacles coming out of its back. That's where the cursed part comes in. They have to treat the giant slug like the kind old man everyone else sees. This will, in most cases, after a while cause them to suffer from mental problems.

Note: Only a normal human will go through this change. It will not happen to Nightbane, and the person does not have enough P.P.E. to ever become a Sorcerer.

"The Sight": This is what the power is most often called. A person with this power will see what another person really is. This ranges from people using magic to hide themselves to any of the Nightlords' minions. It also includes Astral beings, and if they ever came across a Changeling they would see its natural form. Though they can see creatures using magic to make themselves invisible, they can not see magic itself. So a magic sword would just look like a normal sword to them. As stated earlier, this gift comes with a grave price. For every week after it starts, the character must make a roll to see if they have to also make a roll on the Cursed Insanity Table. The first roll is at 5%, and if it's passed goes, up another 3%. If they fail the roll then they roll on the Insanity Table below and start again the next week at 5%. However, if they go a whole week without seeing anything unusual, they do not have to add the 3% to the roll.

Cursed Insanity Table

- 01-19 Phobia: Open Spaces:** They develop such a fear of seeing monsters that they become to afraid to leave the house. If they have to go outside, roll on the Phobic Panic Table in the **Nightbane® RPG** (pg. 46) for every hour they are outside.
- 20-29 Neurosis:** Roll on the Neurosis table in the **Nightbane® RPG** (pg. 45).
- 30-45 Positive Alignment Change:** They decide to use their power to fight the evil of the world. They move one alignment closer to Principled. If they are already Principled they become a fanatic for their cause.
- 46-69 Obsession: Truth:** They become obsessed with getting people to believe them about the monsters hiding among them. Though at this stage, it will be just telling them about the monsters and pointing them out.
- 70-75 Negative Alignment Change:** The stress of everything they see starts to twist their minds. They move one alignment closer to Diabolic. If they are already have an alignment of Diabolic they start to suffer from Violent Outbursts (see below).
- 76-90 Affective Disorders:** Roll on the Affective Disorders table in the **Nightbane® RPG** (pg. 45).
- 91-00 Violent Outbursts:** This is where they decide the only way to show people the truth is to rub their faces in it. They



will usually do this by trying to kill the monsters in public places. Though it's also quite common for them to kill innocent bystanders in their killing sprees.

I.S.P.: They start out with very little Inner Strength Points. Take the M.E. as a base and add 1D6 to it. **Note:** Even though the character is a psychic, the Cursed will never develop any other powers. Considered to be a minor psionic.

P.P.E.: Most of the P.P.E. was burned up in the acquiring of their psychic powers. Permanent P.P.E. base is 1D4.

Attribute Requirments: None.

P.C.C. Skills: They come from all walks of life, so the skills will vary by the occupation of the character.

Speak/Literate in Native Language 98%.

Select 5 Work-related/Educational-related skills +10%.

Select 2 Domestic Skills +10%.

Hand to Hand: Basic can be selected at the cost of one related skill, Expert can be bought at the cost of two skills, and Martial Arts or Assassin (if of evil alignment) can be gotten at the cost of three skills.

P.C.C. Related Skills: Select eight other skills. Also pick a new skill at levels three, five, eight and ten. All new skills start at level one.

Communications: Any.

Domestic: Any (+5%).

Electrical: Any.

Espionage: Any.

Mechanical: Any.

Medical: First Aid and Paramedic only (unless the character is a Doctor; then any at +10%).

Military: None (unless the character is in the military; then any at +10%).

Physical: Any.

Pilot: Any (+5%).

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Any.

Science: Any.

Technical: Any.

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any.

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select six secondary skills from the list above. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the bonuses listed above. All new skills start at level one.

Standard Equipment: This will vary by the occupation of the character. They will usually have a place to live and a vehicle. Plus they will have about 1D6x1,000 dollars in possessions.

Money: \$3D6x100 in cash and savings.

Experience Chart

1. 0,000 - 2,040	9. 70,721 - 95,720
2. 2,041 - 4,280	10. 95,721 - 135,720
3. 4,281 - 8,760	11. 135,721 - 185,720
4. 8,761 - 17,720	12. 185,721 - 225,720
5. 17,721 - 25,720	13. 225,721 - 275,720
6. 25,721 - 35,720	14. 275,721 - 335,720
7. 35,721 - 50,720	15. 335,721 - 395,720
8. 50,721 - 70,720	

Beyond the Supernatural O.C.C.s

Optional Material for Beyond the Supernatural

By James Calder



Arcane Archaeologist

The Arcane Archaeologist is, like an archaeologist, a collector and researcher of rare antiquities. The Arcane Archaeologist is a little different, however. He or she searches for magical items from history. The character will collect and preserve arcane, magical, enchanted, holy and other mystical items from all around the world. Due to the rareness of such artifacts, the character will probably have to support themselves with mundane archaeology until the time comes when that one great find can be made.

No magical item is too small for this arcane researcher. The character will collect talismans, weapons, potions, charms, dolls, etc. Psi-Mechanic devices are relatively novel for the Arcane Archaeologist; theory abounds that while it is true that a special type of psychic must operate the devices, they are like

capacitors as they may be able to store the psychic ability it is used for.

Another, more shadowy aspect to this character is the fact that rarely are such items available by picking a spot and digging. There is a certain amount of thievery involved, and depending on the individual will determine whether this is for good or ill. Good Arcane Archaeologists will often work with local authorities and regulations (where just) to recover an artifact. These individuals will often return any found items to a benefactor or museum. Evil archaeologists will most likely steal an artifact and use it for their own personal power. Selfish individuals may sell the artifact to the highest bidder.

O.C.C. Abilities

1. Recognize Enchantment: The Arcane Archaeologist has the ability to determine whether an item is enchanted with magi-

cal or rune energy. The character bases the determination on knowledge and a gut feeling about the object. **Base Skill:** 35%, +5% per level of experience. The character may try to determine if an object is a Psi-Mechanic device (or in Rifts®, a Techno-Wizard device) at -40% penalty.

2. Understand Enchanted Item: This skill reflects the Arcane Archaeologist's ability to determine the use of a particular enchanted item. The character will be able to determine how the item is to be used but this does not guarantee the character that they will be able to use it. For instance, an enchanted sword that is able to cast a Globe of Daylight. The Arcane Archaeologist will be able to determine that this is the purpose of the sword, but the character will not automatically know how to do it. **Base Skill:** 20%, +4% per level of experience. A failed roll indicates that the character has no idea what the item does.

3. Curse Recognition: In the course of searching for these mystical artifacts, one will encounter wards against theft. The Arcane Archaeologist may determine if an item or its environment is cursed in some way. The character will be able to determine first, the type of curse, second, who the curse will affect, and third, a way to bypass or circumvent it. **Recognize Curse and Determine Curse Scope Base Skill:** 45%, +5% per level of experience. A failed roll to recognize indicates that the character misidentifies the signs of a curse. A failed roll to determine the scope of the curse will impart erroneous information about what the curse will do. **Base Skill to Bypass Curse:** 20%, +5% per level of experience. A failed roll indicates that the Arcane Archaeologist was not able to figure out a key to bypass the curse, or triggers the curse unexpectedly. Note, a success does not indicate the curse has a bypass; in fact, a success may reveal that the curse has no bypass.

4. Bonuses: +2 to save vs magic.

Note: While the character is a master of arcane items, the character can not cast spells and does not understand how to. The character will be able to use magical items, provided they are made to be used by mundane individuals.

Alignment Requirement: Any.

Base P.P.E.: 2D6.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 11.

O.C.C. Skills:

Read/Speak Native Language 98%

Mathematics: Basic 98%

Archaeology (+30%)

Lore: Magic (+25%)

Lore: Religion (+25%)

Detect Concealment (+15%)

Pick Locks (+15%)

History (+15%)

Research (+15%)

Hand to Hand: Basic may be selected at the cost of one "other" skill.

Hand to Hand: Expert may be selected at the cost of the two "other" skills. Hand to Hand: Martial Arts (or Assassin if evil) may be selected at the cost of three "other" skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select ten other skills, but a least two of them must be from the Science or Technical categories. It is recommended that several skills from the Wilderness category be taken; wilderness proficiency does not come part and parcel with the career! Plus select one additional skill at lev-

els three, six, nine and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communication: Any (+5%).

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Basic only.

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Basic or Automotive only.

Medical: Any (+5%).

Military: None.

Physical: Any.

Pilot: Any.

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Any (+10%).

Science: Any (+10%).

Technical: Any (+15%).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any.

Secondary Skills: The character gets to select six secondary skills from those listed. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonuses listed in parentheses. All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: The character begins with basic personal equipment such as a good, but inexpensive, automobile, an apartment or modest townhouse, and personal items. Depending on whether the character has a sponsoring organization, the character will have a number of pieces of equipment for finding magical artifacts; a shovel, paint brushes to wisk dust, pick axe, rope, backpack, test tubes, and several sets of clothing for digging. At the Game Master's discretion, the character may also start off with some minor magical artifact like a spell scroll or protection talisman. The character's desire to collect more will allow the character to amass a collection of artifacts.

The character may also need to rent or purchase excavating equipment like steam shovels. These are not included at character creation.

Money: 2D4x1000 in cash. 4D4x1000 in property (not including the personal property and items above).

Level of Experience Table: Use the table of experience for the Parapsychologist (**Beyond the Supernatural™**, pg. 20).

The Occultist O.C.C.

The Occultist is to a Parapsychologist what an acolyte is to a sorcerer; the Occultist is a dabbler and student of ancient lore, mysteries and mythology, often without formal education in the occult. Often, the Occultist is more open to the phenomenon than the Parapsychologist, simply because of this lack of scientific background.

The Occultist will collect reams and reams of books on paranormal phenomena and analyze prophecies from ancient texts. He or she will often become an expert on ancient history and lore as well as a non-professional expert on magic and mythology. The character will be an invaluable research assistant or researcher in the area of the paranormal, not just because of this knowledge, but also because of the impressive library the character will have.

O.C.C. Abilities

1. Understand the Principles of Magic: Like the Parapsychologist, the Occultist has a basic rudimentary understanding



of what magic does and how its practitioners perform it. This understanding includes the history of magic, the various types of

mystic philosophy, theories, known rituals, social structure and interactions, cults, supposed powers, links to the supernatural, and the purpose behind fundamental rituals and practices. The knowledge is specific enough for the Occultist to recognize when the magic is related to a particular school of magic, say like voodoo, necromancy, circles and wards. This knowledge, however, does not let the Occultist perform or cast spells of any sort, except via a spell scroll. The character may make a roll against the skill at -20% to determine if the spell is successful. **Base Skill:** 30%, +4% per level of experience. A failed roll indicates that the character does not recognize or misinterprets the meaning behind the magic.

2. Recognize Magical, Psychological, and Paranormal Phenomenon: Call it a sixth sense or a subconscious calling from years of studying, but the Occultist can recognize a magical, psychical or simply a paranormal phenomenon on sight. The Occultist will observe the phenomenon, and then recognize the ancient reference to such a phenomenon in one of the texts he or she has studied. **Base Skill:** 25%/40%, +5% per level of experience. The first percentage reflects the Occultist's ability to recognize the paranormal, and the second is to recognize the ancient source material. A failed skill roll indicates no recognition of the phenomenon.

3. Deductive Reasoning: Due to years of research and poring over ancient texts, the Occultist has the ability to connect seemingly incongruous events in history with prophecies and other elements from ancient texts (for instance, the relationship between Nostradamus' Hister with the 20th Century's Hitler). **Base Skill:** 35%, +5% per level of experience. A failed roll indicates no connection is deduced. Note to Game Masters: This, like the Research skill, should not be substituted for role-playing out deductions. Use this in conjunction with research.

4. Bonuses: +1 to save vs magic, +5 to save vs Horror Factor, +1 to save vs possession, +1 to save vs psychic attack.

Alignment Requirement: Any.

Base P.P.E.: 4D6.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 9. High M.E. is helpful, but not mandatory.

O.C.C. Skills:

Read/Speak Native Language 98%

Mathematics: Basic 98%

Lore: Magic (+30%)

Lore: Psychic (+30%)

Research (+20%)

Writing (+20%)

Select two languages of choice (+15%).

Select four other Lore skills of choice (+20%).

Hand to Hand: Basic may be selected at the cost of one "other" skill.

Hand to Hand: Expert may be selected at the cost of the two "other" skills. Hand to Hand: Martial Arts (or Assassin if evil) may be selected at the cost of three "other" skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select eight other skills, but at least two of them must be Technical. Plus select one additional skill at levels three, six, nine and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communication: Radio: Basic only.

Domestic: Any (+5%).

Electrical: Basic only.

Espionage: None.
Mechanical: Basic or Automotive only.
Medical: Holistic Medicine or First Aid only.
Military: None.
Physical: Any.
Pilot: Any.
Pilot Related: Any.
Rogue: Any (+5%).
Science: Astronomy and Mathematics: Advanced only (+5%).
Technical: Any (+15%).
W.P.: Any.
Wilderness: Any.

Secondary Skills: The character gets to select six secondary skills from those listed. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonuses listed in parentheses. All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: Varies. The Occultist will have basic personal items like a cheap car or truck, an apartment, and petty objects like jewelry and watches and the like. Most of the Occultist's money goes to funding his or her personal research into the paranormal.

The character will have a fairly good computer with Internet access, and a personal library of several hundred books on the paranormal and the occult (largely academic and/or non-magical in nature) ranging in nature from ghosts, werewolves, ESP, to "how-to" books on casting spells and prophesizing the future. The character will also have a collection of translations and/or notes on 1D4 very ancient texts of ancient lore or mythology (see the list below). These will either be copies or slightly inaccurate translations of the original text. The character will also collect various anti-supernatural weaponry like wooden stakes and a mallet, garlic, and a silver crucifix.

With the Game Master's discretion, the character may have access to some of the more commercially available ghost detection equipment available to the Parapsychologist, like Kirlian film and motion detectors.

Money: 1D4x100 in cash. 4D4x1000 in property (not including the texts mentioned above).

Special Texts of the Paranormal

This list is far from exhaustive. The Game Master is, of course, free to create their own ancient texts.

Siphoned Energies, by Jonathon Nigel Masters (1864). Masters was a noteworthy mage from Porthcawl in Wales who mysteriously disappeared after finishing *Siphoned Energies*. *Siphoned Energies* is essentially a "how-to" book on performing magical rites and spells. The book details the earliest conception of magic and the history of all the sorcerers of England and Wales. The most dangerous aspect of this book is that the original manuscript has every incantation inscribed in it from level one through seven. It is believed that Masters had intended to donate this book to the British Museum but met with an unknown fate prior to completion. Several apprentices to Masters managed to copy a few of the incantations down, and a few passages. There are approximately 140 sets of notes around the world. The original *Siphoned Energies* was never delivered to London nor has been seen since.

The Book of Onat'La, by Renaldo de Prato (1233). The Book of Onat'La is the foremost authority on summoning demons and spirits. Contained in the pages of this text are a complete list of demons and spirits. As well, it prophesied the coming of an undead legion lead by vampires and a theory(!) of the existence of a supreme intelligence that controls all vampires. de Prato, unfortunately, came under the watchful eyes of the Inquisition in Europe. The Vatican seized the copy of Onat'La and Prato was placed under house arrest until he died. The Book of Onat'La is believed to be still within Rome, although it is rumored to be nothing more than a myth. It is also rumored that Onat'La is the name of a vampire intelligence that de Prato had managed to contact and that de Prato was, in fact, a master vampire.

Electric Dreams, by Leslie-Lynn Bernard (1955). Leslie-Lynn Bernard was a science fiction author from the twenties and thirties who largely wrote about colonizing the Moon and on the people who lived in the Sun. During the Second World War, Bernard was a nurse in a New York hospital when she was rumored to have collapsed and had a vision of great streams of energy that course the Earth in "rivers of electricity." *Electric Dreams* is another science-fiction work where she claims that there are beings that can drain the energy of these mystical streams and turn them into useful energy. Occultists and some conspiracy theorists believe that Bernard, in fact, has clairvoyantly read *Siphoned Energies* and put it into a story. The story itself was not a very good one, and printing was stopped at 5,000. It is extremely rare and is, indeed, a clairvoyant copy of *Siphoned Energies*. The problem is, the story is a very cryptic translation of the original text.

Worlds Within Worlds, by Victor Lazlo. The controversial book by the now missing Parapsychologist, Victor Lazlo, tops many an Occultist's bookshelves. This book is heavily detailed in **Beyond the Supernatural™**.

Occultist Experience Levels

1 0 - 1,860
2 1,861 - 3,720
3 3,721 - 7,440
4 7,441 - 14,880
5 14,881 - 23,880
6 23,881 - 34,880
7 34,881 - 48,880
8 48,881 - 68,880
9 68,881 - 92,880
10 92,881 - 124,880
11 124,881 - 166,880
12 166,881 - 212,880
13 212,881 - 272,880
14 272,881 - 324,880
15 324,881 - 384,880

New Lore Skills

Lore: Alchemy

This skill provides the character with the knowledge of the history and the stories related to alchemy and magical-chemical transformation. This skill is not a replacement for the alchemy skill, but will provide the character with the knowledge about alchemy. The character will not be able to transform a substance

into another substance, but the character may try to recognize an alchemical transformation based on this skill at a -35% penalty.

Base Skill: 30%, +5% per level of experience.

Lore: Conspiracy

A comprehensive knowledge about the issue of conspiracy and cover-ups by world governments in the areas of the paranormal, UFOs, military, experimental testing, etc. by such participants as the FBI, KGB, CIA, and major world governments. The character knows the theories about the Roswell incident, Area 51, telekinetic weapons testing by the Russian government, the Illuminati, and drug and chemical weapons testing. **Base Skill:** 30%, +5% per level of experience.

Lore: Cults and Sects

This skill is a comprehensive study of the phenomenon of cults, sects, and occult religion. This includes the techniques of indoctrination as well as the identifying marks of the major cults. **Base Skill:** 30%, +5% per level of experience.

Lore: Science

This knowledge gives the character an in-depth understanding about the general overview and concept of the science and the history of the science selected. The character must select a different science each time this skill is selected. For instance, a character can select Lore: Parapsychology and Lore: Botany at the cost of two skills. This skill does not replace the Science skill, it just gives the character the knowledge of major discoveries and/or participants. **Base Skill:** 30%, +5% per level of experience.

Lore: UFOlogy

The unofficial study of UFO phenomenon. The character knows all the theories about extraterrestrial visitations as well as some of the theories involved. The skill also imparts knowledge about some of the more science-fiction aspects of the information (propulsion, weapons, abilities). The character will also know a little of the alien abductee theory and effects. **Base Skill:** 30%, +5% per level of experience.

Cryptozoologist O.C.C.

The Cryptozoologist is a scientist on a mission. For hundreds of years, man has seen things. Man has seen monsters and strange beasts that roam around the Earth that are seemingly normal and explainable, but not documentable; Big Foot, Loch Ness Monster, Ogopogo, the Yeti. What about those mythical monsters that seem likely to have existed, but have utterly have remained the domain of myth and legend, such as unicorns, flying horses, and gryphons?

The primary goal of the Cryptozoologist is that of a concerned skeptic; he believes there exist strange new animals to discover, and that the reports of these should not be ignored as myth or fantasy. The Cryptozoologist is a phenomenologist of sorts, and relies mostly on reports and eyewitness accounts for information.

The coelacanth is the most widely accepted justification for this branch of science. This prehistoric fish, long thought extinct, was caught in the 1930's by fishermen. The only problem with studying this is (like anything studied by the Parapsycholo-

gist), once proof is given for the extraordinary, it becomes mundane and the project of "normal" science.

O.C.C. Abilities

1. Recognize Fraud: As with any investigation where it may be beneficial for the truth to be hidden, the Cryptozoologist has a knack for figuring out the difference between a fraudulent and a genuine piece of evidence in the investigation of unknown animals. This comes from years of tracking animals and their kind and realizing that certain evidence is obviously inconsistent with experience. **Base Skill:** 30%, +5% per level of experience. A failed roll indicates that the Cryptozoologist cannot tell whether the evidence is real or fake. **Note:** This skill only applies to animal (including human) evidence such as tracks, droppings, and remains.

2. Bonuses: +3 to save vs Horror Factor from animals and animal-like creatures.

Alignment Requirement: Any.

Base P.P.E.: 3D6.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 11.

O.C.C. Skills:

Read/Speak Native Language 98%

Mathematics: Basic 98%

Cryptozoology (NEW; +30%)

Zoology (NEW; +30%)

Research (+20%)

Biology (+25%)

Hand to Hand: Basic may be selected at the cost of one "other" skill. Hand to Hand: Expert may be selected at the cost of the two "other" skills. Hand to Hand: Martial Arts (or Assassin if evil) may be selected at the cost of three "other" skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select ten other skills, but a least two of them must be from the Science or Technical category. It is recommended that several skills from the Wilderness category be taken; wilderness proficiency does not come part and parcel with the career! Plus select one additional skill at levels three, six, nine and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communication: Any.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Basic only.

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Basic or Automotive only.

Medical: Any (+5%).

Military: None.

Physical: Any.

Pilot: Any.

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Any.

Science: Any (+10%).

Technical: Any (+15%).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any.

Secondary Skills: The character gets to select six secondary skills from those listed. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonuses listed in parentheses. All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: The character begins with basic personal equipment such as a good, but inexpensive, automobile, an

apartment or modest townhouse, and personal items. The character will also have or have access to a research laboratory containing at least the following tools for the discovery of new animals: camera, 3 rolls of film, ruler, plaster mix, net, clipboard and paper (blank and lined), pens, pencils and compass.

The character will also have several texts detailing the myths and legends of several animal and animal-like creatures believed to exist in the world.

Money: 1D6x1000 in cash. 4D4x1000 in property (not including the personal property and texts above).

Level of Experience Table: Use the table of experience for the Parapsychologist (**Beyond the Supernatural™**, pg. 20).

New Skills

Cryptozoology

This is the science of piecing together physical, circumstantial, and theoretical evidence to hypothesize about the existence of "hidden animals." Scientists in this field examine bones, footprints, photographs, etc. to determine if a particular animal exists or not. Examples of theoretical animals include the Loch Ness Monster, the Sasquatch, and Oogoo. An example of an

animal that was found to exist after it supposedly disappeared is the coelacanth. **Base Skill:** 40%, +5% per level of experience. **Skills Required:** Biology and zoology.

Zoology

The specific branch of biology dealing directly with animals. Characters will know enough about mating habits, migrations, eating habits of most animals as well as the proper care for keeping animals. **Base Skill:** 40%, +5% per level of experience.



Living Numbers and Curses

Optional Adventure and Source Material for Beyond the Supernatural®

By Russell Brin

I'm Not A Number!

"I'm just like you and everyone else, a living, breathing, healthy being. I wake up in the morning and put my shoes on, and my shirt on, and my pants on just like you. I have dreams and desires and wants and needs just like you. So why am I treated differently?"

"I can't understand it. I try so hard to be accepted and fit in with everyone else. But it doesn't matter what I try, I still can't make myself fit in.

"I have my theories of why this is though. Do you want to know what I think? I think it's because people just don't want me around. For some reason, I make people uncomfortable. Something to that effect, actually. Perhaps it's because I don't have the 'people' skills that I need. For whatever reason, I am despised and persecuted by just about everybody. I guess that's how my life is and how it will always be. But I ask for just one simple little thing.

"Do not call me Thirteen!"

— An excerpt from an article that was written but never published by Victor Lazlo entitled "Mysteries in Numerology."

Here are some of Victor Lazlo's own thoughts on the number 13, from the same, never published volume "Mysteries in Numerology":

"Ah, the number 13. Quite interesting that it's a number which has long had a superstitious reverence in many societies around the world, even by people who normally don't believe in such things. Individuals who claim to have no mystic or religious bearings still avoid the number 13. Why the number 13? Why do so many people who still say they have no belief in the supernatural or magic, avoid this number? This bit of mankind's idiocy has plagued me for years.

"Yet the magic of the number 13 is very real. For whatever reason, perhaps an unprecedented event that isn't explained, the number of people who find fear in the number 13 has subconsciously channeled their geo-psychic energy into creating some magic in the number 13. The millions of people who regularly harbor some belief in the number 13 have allowed the number to take on a life of its own in some cases, especially in an item believed to be spiritual to begin with. Or in areas believed to be haunted with entities and other specters. My team and I are perplexed as to the existence of these entities, and even more perplexed as to the cause of the appearance of mysterious 'Thirteen Entities.' Apparently, most of these apparitions, spirits, ghosts, whatever you wish to call them, were actually born of people's apparent fear of the number 13! Perhaps this is behind the appearance of a number of creatures of legend.

"Along with this apparent corporal manifestation of the number 13, there are also curses that include the number 13. I

have seen too much already to callously discount this phenomenon, but I wonder, is it the number that has power, or the person behind it? Can someone with no mystic or supernatural awareness curse someone this way? If so, then the number does indeed have some very powerful significance, something that should be investigated, like so many other things."

Thirteen Entity

The Thirteen entity, despite having an odd name, is not a being to be laughed at. Despite Victor Lazlo's suspicion, the Thirteen entity is not in fact the manifestation of people's subconscious phobia of the number 13, but rather is a supernatural predator who feeds on fear. The being finds that the number 13 seems to promote fear in humans, so it uses that as a catalyst for its feeding. The entity will typically try to entice humans into fear by scrawling the number 13 on walls or tables, or leaving 13 apples in a bowl, or 13 sticks on the ground, or whatever correlation it can find. The being has powerful empathic abilities, so it will know when it has pushed the right buttons to generate a fearful emotion in its victim.

The being will stay and torment the same people for weeks and even months. The being is not so powerful as to be a threat to experienced paranormal hunters, but will be more than most common folk can handle.

Like most entities, the natural form of this being is invisible and ethereal, a small globe of energy that floats a few feet above the ground. It's not overly aggressive or dangerous, and will flee rather than fight a pitched battle. It prefers to feed in solitude without engaging in combat. But the being will use whatever is



available to it in natural powers to defend itself. All spells and psionic abilities to control entities work very well on this entity.

The Thirteen entity may seem quite similar to the poltergeist entity presented on pages 159-160 of **Beyond the Supernatural**®, but there are a couple of differences. One is that the Thirteen entity is more intelligent and possesses a greater range of psionic abilities than the poltergeist. They also tend to be solitary beings. Another is that they feed on fear, and do not feed on P.P.E. However they share the same vulnerabilities as poltergeists. It's quite possible for some entity hunters to think they are fighting a poltergeist when they are really fighting another entity altogether!

Entity: Thirteen

Horror Factor: 10

Alignment: Miscreant.

Size: About the size of a soccer ball; energy sphere.

Weight: None.

Armor Rating: None.

S.D.C.: Not Applicable.

Hit Points: 4D6+20.

The Eight Attributes: Not really applicable; I.Q. is about equal to 8 or 9, can show signs of cleverness and deviousness. M.E. is 4D6+10.

Natural Abilities: Invisible in its natural state, fly and hover, maximum speed possible is 40 mph (64 km), intangible and ethereal (travels through walls and other solid matter, but not energy), never tires, impervious to physical attacks, gases, and drugs, and very resilient to psionic attacks.

Psychic Abilities: Empathy, Empathic Transmission (Fear costs no I.S.P.), Telekinesis, See Aura, See the Invisible, Sense Magic (P.P.E.), plus four sensitive powers of choice.

Attacks Per Melee: Three with Telekinesis and Empathic Transmission.

Bonuses: +3 to dodge and +10 to save versus Horror Factor.

I.S.P.: 12.

P.P.E.: 5.

Note: Like most entities, the Thirteen entity can draw on the I.S.P. of the people around it to perform psychic feats. If there is no I.S.P. available, the creature will draw on the people's and animals' P.P.E. and convert it into usable Inner Strength Points (I.S.P.) at a rate of FOUR I.S.P. per every one point of Potential Psychic Energy (P.P.E.).

Living Numbers

Maybe there was something to Victor Lazlo's idea of humans' subconscious fears being born into a flesh-and-blood form. Living numbers certainly seem to point to this, as many of these bizarre beings don't even know how they came to exist! Unlike the Thirteen entity, many of these beings aren't inherently evil or destructive, but rather view themselves as being normal like anyone else, and most of them grow up never knowing their true origins.

So what's a living number? Whether by fluke or intention, it's a living incarnation of a number! Much like living spells, the appearance and abilities of these beings vary considerably. How they come into being also varies.

Some are slowly manifested in the same building where several superstitious people dwell and often just appear one day, ei-



ther to the family or outside the dwelling. They will usually feel like they belong in the family and will have a very strong kinship towards the building that effectively "spawned" them. They will know they are "different" than most, but won't be sure of why that is so.

Others will be born to a woman who is very superstitious, and the date of birth will usually have some mystic or religious significance, usually on a Friday the 13th or November 11th. These children will also be very number-oriented, and usually are extremely good accountants and mathematicians as well as schedulers (they have a head for dates especially). These particular living numbers will not know of their otherworldly origins, and view themselves as being completely normal and human.

Finally, the last are the results of powerful practitioners of magic whose superstitious natures outlasted them, or number-related living spells. These living numbers tend to be the most chaotic and volatile, because they know of their origins and are totally governed by them. So for example, a sorceress who always needed a glass of milk at midnight would go crazy at 11:58 if she didn't have any milk in the house, and it would send her running to the store so she would have some milk to drink at midnight. Since the number 13 is such a superstitious number, many of these beings will try to avoid the number (either by stopping at 12 or not doing anything on the 13th day of the month, or not choosing that number for any reason) at all costs.

Some Examples of Living Numbers

Greg Turner: Greg's always been called a hometown boy who will never leave, and that's fine with him. Considered by everyone to be average (all his attributes are average), he has a job as a supervisor at the local supermarket, only a few steps away from the house his family has owned for many, many years. Greg's always lived at that house. He bought the house from his parents and he and his wife have been there for the last 12 years. He wouldn't dream of being anywhere else, and Greg's wife knows that the house holds a special place for him. His family wasn't overly superstitious, but they always said that the number 13 was bad luck, as was crossing a black cat and

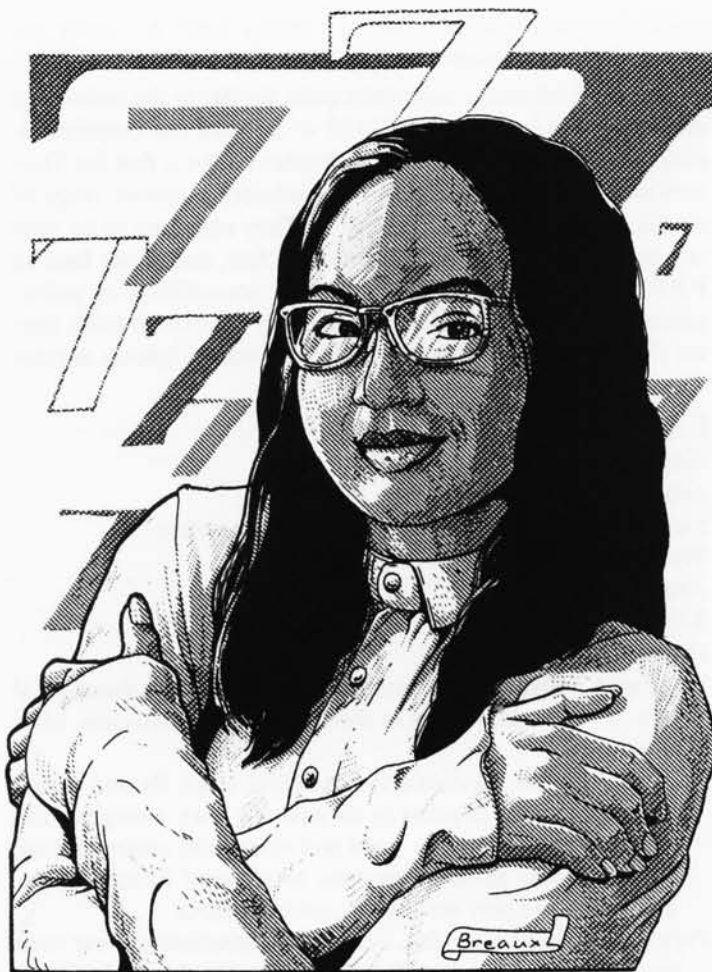
walking underneath a ladder. Even his grandparents were superstitious. He grew up with it all his life so he thought nothing of it. For now, he's happy with his quiet, unassuming life and doesn't expect that will ever change.

Milly Thompson: Milly's not a happy camper. Her spells were not supposed to rebel on her! Much to her chagrin, her Transferal spell at the 13th hour decided not to return to its master. The spell decided the taste of freedom and power was too much, and instead left its former master! Now the spell, realizing the symbolic 13th hour, has become obsessed with the number and avoids it at all costs, believing that it was that number which caused the original Milly to lose control. Thus, the Transferal spell (which believes itself to also be Milly Thompson), fearing that the number 13 will cause itself to lose control, will not use the number for any reason. Milly the Spell possesses the following abilities (which are greater than living spells because the spell retained the knowledge and experience of the original spell caster, as well as her P.P.E.): **Alignment:** Miscreant. **Attributes:** I.Q. 13, M.A. 9, M.E. 12, P.S. 12, P.P. 14, P.E. 12, P.B. 11, Spd. 11. **P.P.E.:** 63, **Hit Points:** 56, **S.D.C.:** 24, **Level:** 9th. Spells include (no rituals): Blinding Flash, Befuddle, Detect Concealment, Turn Dead, Impression, Paralysis: Lesser, Fire Bolt, Seal, Compulsion, Negation, Transferal, and Banishment. Some additional *special abilities* for Milly the Spell include being impervious to possession, mind control and Horror Factor, and her P.P.E. level, aura, and experience level cannot be sensed even by magic! Milly the Spell has a phobia towards the number 13. While not the toughest character, Milly the Spell can be formidable in her own right. **Note:** The original Milly is still alive, although stuck with first level spell abilities and only 4 P.P.E. She'd try to kill Milly the Spell, but she's afraid she would be no match for the living spell.

Victoria Gerrald: Considered by many to be one of the most brilliant vice presidents of finance Tiger Gas has ever had, Victoria's gift for numbers has many amazed and profoundly impressed. She's always enjoyed working with numbers, not so much on a relational or theoretical level as most mathematicians enjoy, but on a practical level. She always knew she was going to be involved in finance somehow. Her mother and father were both financial wizards and she inherited much of the same attributes and philosophies. She never considered her parents very superstitious or religious, although her birth date of July 7, 1977 is quite odd. So is the fact that her parents try to have everything in 7's (7 cats, 7 cases of cola, 7 pillows), and that she also has an attraction towards the number 7. So her husband is 77 inches tall. She is 5 foot seven, and 177 pounds. She makes \$77,777 a year. But she considers this normal, and thinks that her origins are as humble as the next person... after all, don't you always take the 7th month off and feed 7 birds on the 7th hour of the 7th day of the week?

Using Living Numbers in a Campaign

Living numbers can be interesting if used appropriately in a campaign. Some of the more obvious examples are those who commit crimes on a certain hour of a certain day, or who attack/kill people with specific attributes or who are born on specific days of the week or month. There will always be something that links all the crimes together, and it will typically be numerical in nature. Some living numbers will also be intangible, waiting and pleading for some numerical requirements to



be fulfilled to allow them to become human (relatively speaking, of course). Others will be lost and confused, and may only be able to communicate through numbers. Ultimately these rare beings should be used sparingly, if at all, and make for a good catalyst for solving other crimes. Using a living number as a player character is possible, as their unique look on life and his or her often-strong obsession towards numbers can make it a challenging but enjoyable role-playing experience.

The Curse of Thirteen

There are actually four curses involved here, and three can be cast by someone with no mystic knowledge whatsoever! These curses vary in power, but can all be damaging to some degree. They include: Numeric Curse, 13 Curse, Black Curse, and Mysterious Accident Curse.

Numeric Curse

Range: Special.

Duration: 1 hour per level untrained; 1D6 months per level for a mage or mystic.

Saving Throw: Standard.

P.P.E.: 30

This curse can be cast a number of ways. However it usually involves drawing a Star of David (a 6-pointed star made up of two triangles bisecting each other) and a dot in its center, and placing either some hair, blood, or nail clippings of the person to be cursed in the middle. Then a candle is lit on each point, at each bisecting junction of the two triangles making up the star, and at the center (which totals 13 candles). The curse is then

willed on the individual (no matter where they are) who has their hair, blood, or nail clippings in the middle. The exact way the curse is cast is unknown, although the stronger the desire of the person trying to inflict the curse, the greater the chances of success. This is one curse that can be cast without any mystic knowledge on the part of the person doing it. However, this can be dangerous, because each time this ritual invocation is cast there's a 30% chance of failure, and a 20% chance of instead summoning a poltergeist, or worse, a 15% chance of summoning a minor demon or devil! (Note: It's conceivably possible to summon both poltergeists and minor demons or devils). The P.P.E. to cast this ritual is 30, which typically means that only a group or coven of individuals has a chance of being successful.

So what happens when one is stuck with a numeric curse? Numbers stop making sense. The victim will have no sense of money or time, or any ability to understand numeric concepts ("Huh? Subtraction? Isn't that under a tank?").

13 Curse

Range: Special.

Duration: 1 hour per level untrained, or 1D6 months per level for mages and mystics.

Saving Throw: Standard.

P.P.E.: 25

This curse involves writing the person's name 13 times, then sacrificing 13 black cats under a full moon, while chanting "I Curse <insert true name>" thirteen times. At the end, if the target fails a save versus ritual magic, he or she will be cursed, no matter where that person is. This curse has a 25% chance of failure, and the same chances as the Numeric Curse of summoning unwanted visitors. The P.P.E. requirement to cast this ritual is 25, which typically means that a group is likely needed.

The result of this curse is that whenever the character encounters the number 13 (i.e. if he's on 13th Avenue, 13th in the shopping line, etc.), some minor problem will affect him or her. Some examples are being hit in the head with a falling branch, a bank machine breaking down when he gets to the checkout, something in his bag/shopping cart spoils, etc. Nothing overly hurtful or damaging will affect him.

Black Curse

Range: Special.

Duration: 20 minutes per level untrained, but 2 months per level for mages and mystics.

Saving Throw: Standard.

P.P.E.: 45

This curse requires being in a secluded area and lighting black candles, in a circle, while holding onto a vial of blood of the intended victim. While the candles burn, the person must continuously chant "I curse <insert true name>," and at the moment that the candles burn out (typically 1D4 hours later) the vial must be smashed on the ground. At that instance, the victim gets to save versus magic to avoid the curse. The curse only has a 10% chance of failure (because of the duration of the chanting, which really focuses the individual doing the curse), but has a 40% likelihood of summoning unwelcome visitors (same as Numeric Curse)! The P.P.E. required to cast this ritual is 45, which means a group is almost always required, especially for those without any mystic knowledge at all.

The result of this curse is that the vision of the victim slowly "dims." The victim will feel as if the sun is slowly going down and everything will appear dark, such as if he was wearing very strong sunglasses. Over time, the darkness will get longer and deeper, to the point where everything will appear only as deep blues, purples, blacks, and greens. Even looking into the sun will not blind him! One thing the cursed victim will not notice, but which will be apparent to everybody else, will be that his skin will darken, slowly at first, until he's nearly jet black. Note that only his skin changes color, not his hair, so he could have pitch-black skin while having red or blond hair. This could make the victim very noticeable in a group or crowd, and the loss of vision makes reading and seeing shapes incredibly difficult (victim is -4 to strike, parry, and dodge any attacks due to his poor eyesight). Duration is 20 minutes per level for those who have no mystic training, but 2 months per level for mages or mystics.

Mysterious Accident Curse

This is the only new curse that must be cast by a trained mage or a mystic. Due to the more formal training required, once this spell is learned there is NO chance of failure or summoning unwelcome guests. It functions like most other standard Palladium spells.

Range: Special.

Duration: 1D4 weeks per level of the mage.

Saving Throw: Standard.

P.P.E.: 65

This curses the victim of the spell to have mysterious accidents befall him or her. The caster of the spell must have some piece of the victim (hair, nails, and/or blood) while chanting the mantra for the curse. Then no matter where on Earth he is (this curse doesn't work if he's not on Earth), he will be struck by the curse if he fails his saving throw versus spell (not ritual) magic. The types of accidents that may plague the victim are dog attacks at odd times (such as the neighbor's Chihuahua attacking), a roof shingle hitting him in the head, or slipping on a piece of wet cement. The effects should not be overly damaging or harmful, but if the victim isn't careful, some of these minor accidents may happen at very bad times. Some of these can be played for humor as well.

Use of Magic by Non-Magic Characters

Not every individual that uses magic is a spell caster. After all, the expenditure of P.P.E. can be unconscious and the existence of the Natural/Genius shows that non-mages can learn to channel their P.P.E. into other areas. So how does a non-mage cast spells? Well, they can't cast magic that requires years of study, to learn all the intricacies of affecting the space-time continuum and reality in entirely unnatural ways. But with sufficient willpower and desire, it's possible for the non-mystically enabled character to generate a spell-like effect. This should not be overused, and is NOT something the character can control; often it's a heat-of-the-moment type of emotion that triggers the effect.

Victor Lazlo offers the following observation:

"Time and time again, we have seen amazing feats performed by normal humans in crisis situations. Normal humans lifting heavy logs and cars off of crushed victims, individuals going into a burning house and rescuing trapped residents, and even children surviving falls that should have been instantly fatal. How does this happen? How are these supposedly normal people performing these feats? I have my own theories. One is that each person has a certain amount of geo-psychic energy within themselves, such as that which permeates the ground in ley lines and is stored at some transitional places of power and rips in space. Somehow, these people are able to channel that geo-psychic energy without realizing it. Now, if humans are able to channel their geo-psychic energy in such ways, no wonder the Earth has been such an attractive hunting ground for supernatural beings. Why else would a planet, seemingly small and isolated like Earth, become visited by so many supernatural beings through history? Humans would make great pawns and slaves, with our reservoirs of geo-psychic energy that remain largely untapped. Those who lurk in the shadows fear only those rare individuals who have learned to control their geo-psychic energy.

"But I'm straying from the topic, I'm afraid. If humans can somehow unconsciously channel their geo-psychic energy, the question is, 'Are humans always leaching away small portions of geo-psychic energy?' Could the whole Earth, including plants, humans, animals, and the water and rocks, all be connected in a huge cycle of geo-psychic energy that flows much like the seasons and weather patterns also flow, invisible but present nonetheless? I'll have to do more studying on the cycles of geo-psychic energy, and hopefully my writing will not be so unfocused when I start on it again."

Some notes on when to use random mystic abilities:

- Life and death situation.
- Self-sacrifice and great emotional trauma.
- The spell effect is appropriate for the situation at hand (i.e. an Impervious to Fire or Banishment would not be applicable to a drowning victim).
- The person using the effect usually uses it on his or her self to help someone; *not* to get the effect, then do nothing with it.
- The character has no control over the ability gained (G.M. decides), and P.P.E. is burned up using the ability.
- Even in certain crisis situations, sometimes the ability will not work; it is not something the character has any control over, so it should be used sparingly and the player shouldn't use it as a crutch thinking it will happen every time. In fact, this phenomenon generally will not happen to any given person more than once in a lifetime, and most people never experience it at all.

Welcome to Fayfield Inn, May Your Stay Be a Pleasant One

Beyond the Supernatural® Adventure, Adaptable to Heroes Unlimited™, Nightbane®, or Ninjas and Superspies™

Introductory Note: This adventure is suitable for a small group (2 to 4 players) of low to medium power. It's also a non-urban adventure, and the outdoors nature and change of pace may appeal to some players.

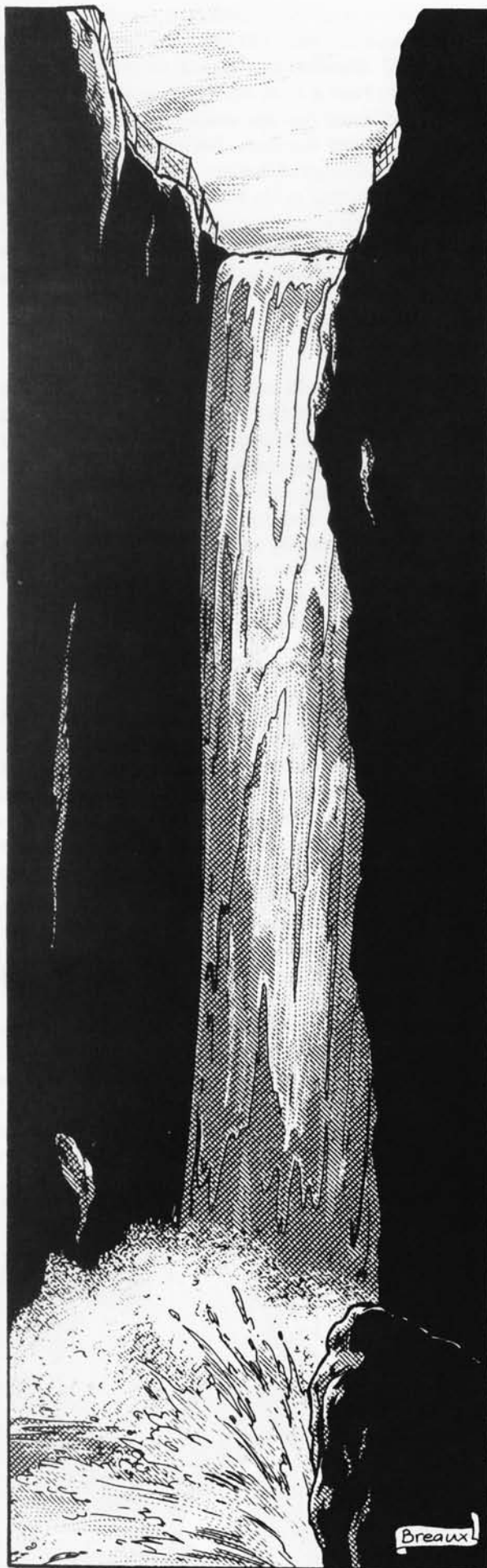
Introduction

Whether it is a group of travelers (in the case of a Victim campaign) or some supernatural/paranormal investigators sent to this quiet, serene area to investigate recent strange happenings, they will all have to check into the Fayfield Inn. The reason is simply because it's the only accommodation in the area in which to stay. The next nearest place to stay is approximately 60 miles (100 km) away. Despite the recent happenings, the Inn is packed, and tourists from all over are visiting to enjoy the natural splendor of the scenery, as well as the spectacular hikes, trails, waterfalls, flora, fauna, and wildlife in the area. Due to the sensitive ecology, there is no RV Park or campground nearby and traffic is limited to the highway and the Inn's parking lot. Near the Inn is a small gas station as well as a store selling the usual tourist stuff like T-shirts, mugs, soda, candy, potato chips, cigarettes, and all the other confectionery items one would expect. At first glance, this would seem to be a nice, cozy little area bustling with activity and a light and hectic atmosphere.

Sequence of Events

If the Players are seasoned and experienced paranormal investigators, then they will be called here by the family of one of the deceased travelers or tourists, or perhaps the highway patrol or state/local government called them in. One group that will *not* want investigators sneaking around is the owners of the Fayfield Inn.

Apparently, there have been a few instances of tourists going a little nutty and doing crazy things. All have resulted in fatalities. A total of 17 apparent suicides have occurred here in the last 9 months. Most have thrown themselves over the edge of the ravine and into the rocks where the waterfall meets the river below. Investigators have found no correlation between any of the suicides, and none of the victims knew each other. Due to the fact that tens of thousands of visitors have been to the area, the government has decided not to shut the place down, but a number of controls are in place. One is that all the paths are fenced in to keep people from falling into the water below. Not that this has stopped the suicides from happening.



Once They Get There

As soon as the players arrive, the owners of the Fayfield Inn, Maurice and Lauryn Danaight, along with their daughter Kessie (age 17) and son Patrick (age 14), will greet the Player Characters and will be friendly and very cooperative. Any magical or psionic senses will reveal nothing, and the owners will appear to be genuinely caring and wishing to stop the suicides, which bother them immensely. They will have free lodging at the Inn for the duration of their investigation, and the Danaight family will be very courteous hosts.

Digging Up Dirt

Digging up background info on the 17 suicide victims won't reveal much. Players are free to explore all possibilities. All 17 of the victims appeared to be of sound mind to their family and friends before and during their trips. None had any previous mental trauma or prior criminal records. It seems that the only thing the victims had in common was that they had come here to see the Fayfield Falls, the biggest tourist attraction in the area.

Trips and Tours Around the Area

Taking a hike around the area will be a nice day trip for Players who enjoy expanding their minds and experiencing new things. Many signs point to the founders of the town and history of the falls, and the warm water that flows from the Fayfield River through the falls, down to the River below. All of the hiking trails are sturdy and packed and have been well traveled. The views are spectacular and one can see why there are so many visitors to the area each summer. Signs and guided tours also detail the various plant and animal life in the area and the critical nature of the ecology that is preserved by the unusually warm water of the Fayfield Falls. This allows some of the plants to grow year-round, even when there is snow on the ground. The highway travels alongside the Fayfield River, before the river takes a bend over the Fayfield Falls then disappears beyond view as it weaves into the marsh and forest below.

Taking a tour of the Inn won't reveal too much, either. It has two levels, and a total of 40 rooms. All the rooms are accessed only in the interior of the building; there are no exterior doors except for the four emergency exit doors, at the two ends of each hallway. 20 rooms are on the main level, and 20 below. The stairwell to connect the top and bottom floors is in the middle, which means that the stairwell separates the 10th and 11th rooms. The rooms themselves are nice and neat, but nothing spectacular or unusual can be found in any of them. The office is small but orderly and is next to the 1st room.

There is nothing unusual about the gas station or the tourist-shop nearby either. Without being able to find anything obvious, it's up the players to find something very much out of the ordinary.

What To Do Now

If the players take their time and wait, in 1D6 days there will be another apparent suicide. It seems this latest victim, Joe Jenkins, walked out of his room at 4:00 a.m. and leapt off the top of the guardrail into the river, and fell over the Fayfield Falls, like most of the rest. He was wearing his boxer shorts and housecoat when he was found. His wife and kids are shocked and traumatized, and can't believe anything like this would hap-

pen to them. An Object Read on the housecoat would reveal that he was suffering terrible mental torment at the moment he got up and left the bed. There is definitely a feeling that Joe was not himself at that moment. If the players decide to check what room the family was staying in, they'll discover they're at Room 13. Hmm... check it out?

It would seem that Room 13 definitely is an unlucky number. Apparently, all the suicide victims stayed in that room! Why hasn't any other investigator noticed that? Because that's "superstition" and "nonsense." Since magic, ghosts, and monsters aren't something most conventional investigators take seriously, these suicides have gone unsolved. The question now is, what do the players do?

Let's Visit Room 13

If the players decide to investigate the goings-on in Room 13, they will be in for quite a surprise. All Psychic Sensitives and Latent Psychics will feel a great evil presence even before they get to the room, but will have NO clue of what they are about to experience. They may suspect a Poltergeist or even a Syphon Entity, but that couldn't be further from the truth. Indeed, the story of how the antagonist came into being is something very few characters will ever encounter.

Journey Back in Time

Approximately 12 years have passed since the original construction of the Fayfield Inn. The owner at the time was Maurice Danaight, who was also an amateur mage. He tried a variety of spells and became rather arrogant in his power and ability. His wife and young daughter were drawn into his web of increasing madness and quest for power. Eventually he tried to perform what he thought was the ultimate spell, both in terms of power and also as a way to avoid expensive surveillance systems; the Id Barrier. After casting the ritual, he cooed and grinned at the success, but when he tried to dispel it, he realized that the Id Barrier was the one who was grinning! Thinking his wife had tricked him somehow, he grabbed a knife and killed her. The Id Barrier then cast an apparition on Maurice who believed he was facing a demon and leapt through a window to escape it; unfortunately he landed badly and broke his neck. The Id Barrier then only had the daughter Kessie left. Realizing she'd make a good pawn in his games, he trained and conditioned her. Using her and his powerful illusionary powers, the Id Barrier (calling itself Fayfield) disposed of the bodies and all the evidence.

No investigation was ever conducted, because after all, Maurice and Lauryn are both still alive and happy. In reality, they are powerful illusions that appear natural to everyone around them. Even Patrick is an illusion. Kessie IS human and alive, but so conditioned that she could never survive without Fayfield's guidance and direction. Fayfield has survived this long without being discovered, but his evil nature and desire to torment humans is starting to tip his true nature off. He's subjected the victims to terrible hallucinations and trauma, causing them to go crazy and commit suicide. Fayfield is not stupid, and will fight using his fake illusionary abilities, and Kessie will die for her master as well.

Final Drama

Inevitably, the players will want to try and destroy Fayfield. Fayfield is limited to the Fayfield Inn and cannot leave it (still bound there by the original Maurice's willpower) but is NOT limited to Room 13! He just chose that room for irony's sake. He is powerful and cunning, and will not be easily defeated. A combination of teamwork and magic would be able to take him down, provided the players play smart. If the Fayfield Inn is destroyed, Fayfield will be free to leave and go wherever he pleases. The death of Kessie will mean nothing to him, as he is totally and completely evil. His and Kessie's stats follow.

Fayfield

Alignment: Diabolic

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 17, M.A. 7 (14 to Kessie), physical attributes not applicable as Fayfield is an energy being.

Personality: Fayfield is sadistic, and desires to torment and bring madness to those whom visit the Fayfield Falls. He has no love of humans and simply exists to exert his will over them. He hates being stuck to the Inn and longs to leave and cause unrest and insanity to those in more populated settings.

Hit Points: 53 (1D6 per level of the spell).

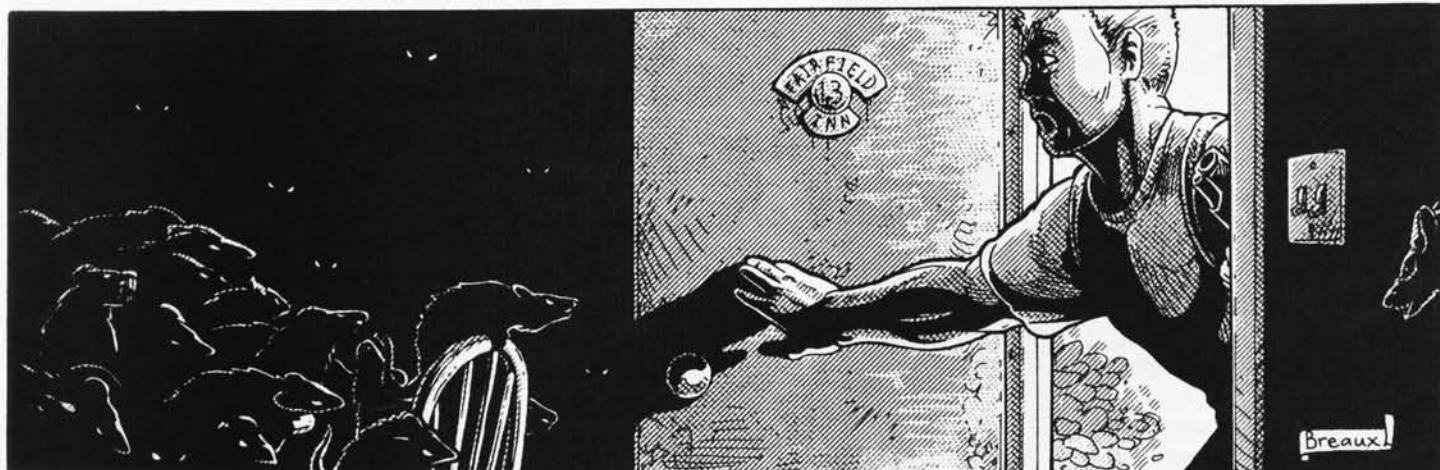
S.D.C.: 14 (1 per level of the spell).

Horror Factor: 14 when visible.

P.P.E.: 180 (half the cost of the original spell minus the four apparitions he has going).

Natural Abilities: Can turn visible at will (natural form is invisible), see the invisible, float in midair, impervious to Horror Factor, mind control, possession, and all illusions, and can teleport to any room in the Fayfield Inn!

Special Magical Powers: These are based on the original miscast spell: Fear, Multiple Image, Horrific Illusion, Appari-



tion, Agony, Hallucination, Temporary Insanity. Note that in the case of the Apparition ability, Fayfield has such control that he can create effectively *permanent* apparitions; however, creating the permanent apparitions costs 30 P.P.E. that can't be recovered until the apparition is destroyed; he currently has 4 apparitions going. Also, these false apparitions won't appear as false until they attack, at which point the defender gets to save versus magic to try and see through the apparition.

Combat: 4 attacks per melee via illusionary abilities and magic. He has no physical attacks at all.

Bonuses: +6 to save versus psionics, +3 to save versus magic. Impervious to all physical attacks, only magic and psionic attacks have any results. Note that he's impervious to all entity-control spells, although spells like Banishment, Constrain Being, and similar are effective.

Special Vulnerability: The only spell that Fayfield truly fears is Dispel Magic Barrier, which can instantly kill him! However, he gets a +7 to save against this spell, but if he fails, he's instantly dispersed, so he tends to fear spell casters most of all.

Weapons and Equipment: As an energy being, they are of no use to him.

Kessie Danaight

Alignment: Miscreant

O.C.C.: None. **Experience Level:** 2nd

Attributes: I.Q. 4, M.E. 12, M.A. 15, P.S. 14, P.P. 14, P.E. 11, P.B. 17, Spd. 12.

Personality: Kessie is attractive, but her mind has been totally destroyed by Fayfield so that she cannot think on her own. Under his guidance she can be very seductive, charming, and friendly, but will turn on the characters in an instant and feels no remorse over having to kill. She will not betray Fayfield. She appears as an attractive, brown-haired girl with a fair complexion who likes wearing shorts and tank tops outdoors and usually wears her hair in twin braids or a ponytail.

Hit Points: 17

S.D.C.: 9

P.P.E.: 8

Special Abilities: Kessie's mind has been totally altered by Fayfield, which makes her impervious to possession, Horror Factor and illusions, as well as Empathy, Telepathy, and all types of mental communication. Although not in telepathic contact with Fayfield, she has been his underling long enough to know what he wants, and when he gives her missions, she obeys to the letter and always attempts to carry out his instructions. In many ways, she is his living zombie.

Skills of Note: Hand to Hand: Basic, W.P. Knife (+1 to strike, parry, and throw), Prowl 35%, W.P. Automatic Pistol, Climb 50/40%, Basic Math 40%, Language: English 80% (illiterate!), and Identify Plants and Fruits 35%.

Combat: 2 attacks per melee.

Bonuses: +2 to pull/roll, +2 to parry and dodge. No bonuses against magic or psionics.

Weapons: Usually carries a knife with her, typically nothing else. Never wears armor.

Note: Kessie isn't a strong fighter by any means, and most characters could easily defeat her. However, Fayfield won't send her in to fight unless it's a last resort situation, and usually with the victim suffering from the Agony spell so he or she won't put up much of a struggle for Kessie.

Aftermath

If the characters defeat/destroy Fayfield and/or Kessie, then the apparitions of the family will also vanish. But wait, didn't he have FOUR apparitions? The family was three, so who's the fourth? It's the G.M.'s call on the fourth apparition, who may appear out of nowhere to attack the characters during the climactic fight. It's possible that the characters may THINK they killed Fayfield, only to have him reappear later. Everything will continue on the same, and the new owners who move into Fayfield Inn will run the place likely without any further trouble, unless the new owners are foolish enough to play with magic that they do not understand.

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Palladium Fantasy RPG[®]

In the Hands of Fate

Optional Source Material for The Palladium Fantasy RPG

By Crystal Frasier

Special Thanks to Austin Eliazar

*Know ye this,
Who disturb mine latch,
And play with Magicks
Beneath this hatch,*

*That Chances within,
These powers great,
Be controlled by no Force,
But the Hand of Fate*

— *Inscribed on the cover of the Chest of Fate*

Note: The Deck of Fate is a powerful, albeit uncontrollable, relic from times long since forgotten. Its very presence in any game can severely throw off a campaign (trust my personal experience on this one). Still, it can be a fun and exciting element to throw into a game, and a fun way to pass a few sessions when the Game Master doesn't have a full adventure ready. Likewise, the Deck of Fate can be an excellent way to bring together a party and start off a campaign (as the group's collective draws from the deck are likely to give a Game Master plenty of adventure and campaign ideas).

Countless unique, magical relics of the Palladium world can be traced to what has long been known as the Time of a Thousand Magicks, an era of metaphysical knowledge and might unparalleled since. Countless magical traditions and orders rose to power, only to be forgotten a generation later, leaving nothing behind but a handful of books or artifacts to tell their tale.

One of these flash-in-the-pan groups that truly seems to have left a unique mark on the Palladium World were the enigmatic Fate Priests. This unlikely order of wizards and priests preached the value and power of Fate itself above all else, for even the gods themselves were affected by the whims of the Three. Their firmest belief is that Fate would reward her own and protect over their chaotic group for eternity. Yet, ironically enough, they shunned organized worship at the same time, believing that it was pointless to try and alter the Fates' opinions one way or the other, and it was pointless to assume lesser beings such as traditional gods could intercede in Fate's affairs. It is believed

that for more than a century, the Fate Priests fought a private war against all organized religion under the leadership of their founder, a mad Elven wizard by the name of Isua Lazar. Using their chaotic, unpredictable, and ever-changing tactics to strike blow after blow against organized priesthoods and churches, they quickly became hunted by everyone from the Church of Light and Dark to the Order of Dragonwright.

Ironically enough, it was not their enemies that would put an end to the Fate Priests, but a chance eruption of a ley line storm which slaughtered their members and scattered a small handful of survivors to the four corners of the planet to eventually be hunted down alone. Lazar himself died of a heart attack while evading captors three days later. Done in by a twist of fate.



The Deck

The Priests of Fate have left a legacy nonetheless. Their greatest magical accomplishment, the legendary *Deck of Fate*. Believed to be some arcane mockery of rune magic, this deck of thirty-five individually-constructed cards houses powerful magicks brought together by the order's greatest Elven, Dwarven, and Human mages and artisans. Each individual card is a work of art unto itself, carved from the most unlikely or difficult of materials, enchanted with the equivalent magic of any rune weapon, and empowered by the soul of a willing priest.

The entire deck's power is focused and controlled by the *Chest of Fate*, a tiny but ornate box carved from an unknown, dark green wood and inlaid with bronze and ebony. The six inch by eight inch by five inch (15x20x13 cm) chest holds the Deck while it rests and between its current owners' draws, as well as regenerates cards from the Deck after they have been drawn and their magical power expended (any card drawn and used will be regenerated by the Chest within 1D4 days). The cover is sealed with a tiny steel locking mechanism that defies all attempts to be picked or pried apart, but can be opened with a gentle touch.

In the thousands of years since its creation, the Deck of Fate has found its way into countless lives, bringing success and power to some and defeat and humiliation to others. It is believed that the collapse of more than one ancient civilization can be attributed to Lazar's legacy. The last *known* owner of the cards was the legendary Captain Cornwall Ironside, a Dwarven sea captain during the Elf-Dwarf war who was also said to be in control of five magical rune sails that made his ship and crew indestructible. Ironside, reportedly a notorious gambler, was said to have won the Deck from a Night Stalker dragon in a game of dice, and drawn his Fate Cards over the course of nearly one-hundred years. He finally decreed that the Deck would be buried in his tomb with him before he could draw his final card. The location of Ironside's tomb remains a mystery even today, and the ultimate "fate" of the Deck remains unknown.

The Powers

The Deck of Fate is an incredible source of magical energy, trapped in physical form by magicks long since forgotten. When first discovered, it rests within the Chest of Fate, whose own powerful magics serve to hide both auras, making the entire set appear mundane until opened. When a new "owner" touches the lock for the first time, the inscription in bronze on the Chest's cover twists and changes into the character's native language for a moment, then twists again to reveal the instructions:

*'Fore this mighty
Lid be swung wide,
One must state his Greed
For what might lie inside.*

*Pick for yourself a number
That lies 'tween one and four,
Or else choose none to draw
And bother this box no more.*

At this point, an owner must declare a number, anything between one and four. If they choose a higher number, or if noth-

ing is said, the lid will simply refuse to open. The box can be picked up and the procedure repeated, but once the character has stated the number, it is set in stone. Likewise, if a being responds "None," then the Chest's lid will never open for them.

The "owner" has just informed the Chest how many Fate Cards they wish to draw from the Deck of Fate. Once it knows, it will allow its lid to be opened by that person. Inside is simply a velvet-lined box with a deck of 3 inch by 6 inch (8x15 cm) cards sitting in the center. The deck cannot be removed or tampered with, but the top card can be removed. Once it is, or if anyone other than the owner reaches for a card, the lid will slam shut again (the Deck can, however, have more than one owner at any given time; an entire party may even "own" the Deck).

The Deck's owner can draw his cards as quickly or as slowly as he or she desires, pulling all at once or waiting days, weeks, or even years between draws. Once they have drawn as many Fate Cards as they stated upon finding the Deck, though, they are forever barred from it and can never open or draw from the powers of Fate again.

The Cards

Whenever a character pulls a card from the Deck of Fate, roll randomly on the table below to determine what it is. Note that once a card is drawn and used, the Chest will regather its magical energies and rebuild the card at a random point within the deck within 1D4 days (if the same card is drawn again before that time, simply reroll).

From the back, every card looks alike (making it impossible to know which card rests atop the Deck until it is drawn).

01: The Dragon Card: This card is carved from the purest gold and features an ornate dragon head carved on its surface. Upon being drawn, the card leaps from its master's hand, landing face-up on the ground. Moments later, a full-sized adult dragon is forced through the tiny surface of the playing card. Roll randomly for the type:

01-10: Basilisk
11-14: Chiang-Ku
15-19: Cockatrice
20-29: Fire
30-38: Great Horned
39-48: Ice
49-56: Hydra
57-66: Kukulcan
67-70: Lo-Dox
71-80: Night Stalker
81-85: Serpent of the Wind
86-95: Thunder Lizard
96-97: Pair of Ultucan
98-00: Wooly

Naturally, the dragon, regardless of alignment, will be somewhat displeased about being summoned (after all, how would you feel if a band of hamsters in aluminum foil summoned you magically?), but the magic of the card will prevent the creature from harming its owner or any of his or her close allies. To add insult to injury, the power of this Fate Card compels the dragon to obey any orders of its possessor for 2D4 hours, after which the card vanishes and the dragon is free to do as it will. The dragon is not the victim of true mind control or possession and



is still in full control of its senses, body, and personality, it simply cannot refuse to do anything the card's possessor asks (aside from suicidal acts or giving away its hoard), regardless of how much it doesn't want to.

Of course, once the magic elapses and the Dragon Card vanishes, the summoned dragon remains and is now fully in control of itself! In the case of good-aligned dragons, it is possible (so long as the character explains that the summoning was an accident and treats the wyrm with the respect it deserves) that he or she will leave with no hard feelings, and perhaps even on friendly terms. In most cases, however, the unfortunate soul who drew the card, as well as any friends or family, will either wind up a greasy smear or have a dragon plotting to ruin their lives.

This is arguably the most powerful (and most troublesome) of the Fate Cards, possessing the ability to not only summon, but partially control a full-blown creature of magic; an entity only a half-step below a god!

02-04: The Star Card: The Star Card is forged from raw iron, with a glowing, yellow-white star imprinted in its center. After it is drawn, the iron will crumble away, leaving a glowing star hanging in the air before the drawer.

The Star Card has the power to grant the user ONE wish according to his or her heart rather than words, meaning that unlike the wishes granted by a Jinn, the wish granted by the Star Card will be exactly what the user desires, never twisted or manipulated (of course, the recipient could easily discover later that their wish isn't everything they wanted). The wish must be used quickly, as the star will begin to flicker after 1D4 minutes, and vanish completely two minutes later. Once the card's owner makes their wish, the star immediately vanishes.

There are some limits to the power of the wishes the Star Card can grant: It can grant great wealth (hundreds of thousands of Gold, though transporting that kind of wealth could be difficult), as well as grant vast tracks of land, choice property in a city, or even official title in a nation (nothing greater than the equivalent of a Dukeship in a large and powerful kingdom, or Prince in a small one). Likewise, it can strike dead any mortal being the drawer knows and has met personally (though it isn't very subtle; the victim generally convulses as their innards are magically fried). It can give the character any item (including magical items, but not rune weapons and similar relics) that he or she has ever seen.

The card can even send the drawer as far forward in time as they would like, though it cannot send the user or anyone else back through time or alter past events. The only exception to this rule seems to be recent events relating directly to the Deck of Fate itself (such as "I wish Corith had never drawn the Death Card" or "I wish I hadn't drawn any cards yet").

This card's magic can cast any common Wizard spell (not spells of Legend), Elemental spell, Necromantic spell, or illusion, at 20th level power! In addition, the Star Card can also grant permanent versions of any of the following spells on the drawer or anyone he/she has met personally: Globe of Daylight, See the Invisible, Sense Magic, Chameleon, Climb, Weightlessness, Faerie Speak, Float in Air, Impervious to (Any), Invisibility: Greater, See Wards, Sense Traps, Astral Projection, Blind, Charismatic Aura, Repel Animals, Shadow Meld, Swim as a Fish, Charm, Eyes of Thoth, Fly, Superhuman Strength, Superhuman Speed, Animate Object, Compulsion, Fire Fist, Reduce Self, Tongues, Words of Truth, Agony, Animate and Control Dead, Globe of Silence (on a person or area), Invulnerability: Limited, Witch Bottle, X-Ray Vision, Eyes of the Wolf, Love Charm, Age, Speed of the Snail, Mute, any Metamorphosis (the change is permanent; the character cannot change back and forth) and any Curse.

There are several things that the Star Card CAN NOT do: It cannot influence, summon, kill, or control gods, demon/devil lords, dragons, and similar powerful beings. Likewise, while the card can raise a person's power, it cannot grant infinite power, merely a boost (wishing to be a more powerful mage will grant a boon of 1D6x10 P.P.E.; to be a more powerful psychic 1D6x10 I.S.P.; wishing to be more powerful or experienced in general will give the character a boost of 1D4 levels). The card cannot raise anyone from the dead who is beyond the reach of the Resurrection spell (though the spell has a 90% success ratio), and if asked to bring such a person back, it will reanimate their corpse as a zombie (as per the spell). Finally, the ultimate call on this is up to the G.M.; if he thinks that a wish the player character wants is too far beyond the power of this card, then it cannot be granted.

05-07: The Death Card: This card is marked with a bleach-white human skull, its jaws held wide open as if laughing, printed on what looks to be a half-rotted death shroud wrapped over weathered wood. The character will drop the card ("Hey, did anybody see where it went?") as they watch a Specter of Death rise from the earth before them to take their soul beyond the reach of even the strongest magic: The next life.

Fighting the Specter is useless, as it isn't alive, merely a physical manifestation of death itself (similar to an Elemental).



Physical blows will pass harmlessly through its eerie, wraith-like form, and magic and psionics have little effect on an emotionless being made mostly of shadows.

There is hope, however: The rules of the universe allow a character confronted by a Specter of Death to challenge it to any contest. The prize: Their soul. The contest can be anything of the victim's choosing: A game of chess, a race, a trivia competition, a game of baseball, drinking, a CCG, whatever. Keep in mind though that Death has the wisdom of the ages on its side, and is very good at nearly everything. The trick to surviving is either being the best ever or to figure out what Death cannot do.

08-10: The Faerie Card: Without a doubt the most interesting card, the Faerie Card is made from pink rubber and features a very lifelike Faerie in profile. The card does nothing until stretched, when it will snap in half, releasing something small and glowing that flies too fast to get a good look at. It will circle the drawer several times, giggling like the tinkle of broken glass, and finally vanish with seemingly no effect. Of course, we all know how likely a Faerie is to leave without having any fun...

The Faerie spirit summoned by the Faerie Card takes up residence in one of the drawer's magical items (anything that requires an activation to use; if the character possesses no such item, then the Faerie will simply hide in a bag or boot and infest the first such item that comes into the character's possession). The next time the owner attempts to use their item, they will again hear giggling as the Faerie's curse affects them for the first time! The effects of the Faerie Card transform the given item into a cursed item (preventing the character from ridding themselves of it), as well as creating an interesting physical transformation that switches on or off every time the item is used.

Roll on the following table to determine what transformation takes place. The change remains permanent until the item is used again, which causes the character to change back to nor-

mal... Of course, the next time the item is used, it happens all over again. Usually, the curse inflicts the same transformation every time, but a few Faeries (about 20%) are "overactive" and will cause a different transformation every time.

01-10: Gender switches! No effect on stats, but the character's clothes and armor aren't likely to fit properly, and then there's always the issue of unwanted attention from the now-opposite sex.

11-20: Hair stands straight up or shoots straight back, as if electrified, and takes on a strange hue:

01-20: Bright Red

21-40: Golden

41-60: White

61-80: Blue

81-00: Black with White Streaks

21-30: Race switches! The character randomly transforms into another species, losing any natural abilities they once had, but gaining the natural abilities (but not any bonuses) of another. This transformation does NOT alter the character's stats. The G.M. should determine the new species or roll randomly:

01-10: Human

11-20: Elf

21-30: Dwarf

31-40: Wolfen

41-50: Coyle

51-60: Kobold

61-70: Gnome

71-80: Orc

81-90: Ogre

91-00: Goblin

31-40: Skin color changes to some horrible, gaudy color.

41-50: The character's body makes rude noises whenever they run, leap, swing a weapon, etc.

51-60: Voice raises several octaves, making the character sound like he or she is breathing helium.

61-70: Small birds (usually hummingbirds or pigeons) constantly hover around the character and perch on his or her shoulders or head. When the curse is turned off, they will fly off. While this can be annoying (the constant humming is enough to drive more than one adventurer mad) and embarrassing (covered in droppings), it does provide an emergency food source.

71-80: The character shrinks to six inches (15 cm) tall and sprouts a pair of gossamer wings (giving him/her the ability to fly at a speed equal to the Spd attribute). The real problem here is that their clothing and equipment doesn't shrink with them.

81-90: Glows softly, while some sort of neon-colored phrase appears on the chest, shining through clothing and armor.

91-00: The character's flatulence is loud, but smells like baking brownies. This probably wouldn't be so noticeable if he or she didn't pass wind every 1D4 minutes.

11-13: The Eye Card: The only thing on this ruby card is a large, sinister, yellow eye with a slitted pupil. Moments after being drawn, the unholy eye blinks once, and the card vanishes in a puff of sulfurous smoke.

To the character who drew the card, it may seem that nothing whatsoever has happened. In fact, something very severe has

just taken place: Somewhere, somehow, a Demon or Dyvil Lord has just taken notice of the character's existence!



14-16: The Jinn Card: The Jinn Card is made from beaten bronze and its surface is covered with oil discoloration that appears to be a face appearing from swirling, rainbow smoke. The power of the card reaches into the plane of Hades and summons forth a Jinn (random color) and binds it to the drawer, as per the Curse. See page 323 of the *Palladium Fantasy Role Playing Game* for full details.

17-19: The Angel Card: The Angel Card is painted beautifully with oil pastels on a traditional canvas that magically remains as stiff wood. The praying angel on the face shimmers softly as the drawer is bathed in a holy light. If the character is of Good or Selfish alignment, they will gain one experience level. If the character is of Evil Alignment, they lose one level. (If the drawer is first level, then they become zero-level, with negative experience points equal to what is required to reach second level. The character loses all O.C.C. abilities and bonuses, including spells or psionics, retaining only their "other" and secondary skills. Once the character earns their way up to zero experience points, they will become first level.)

20-22: The Ancient Card: The Ancient Card is carved from timeless granite, with the image of an old, bearded man supporting himself on a cane. When placed on the ground (the drawer will feel the urge to do this), rays of light will shine out and the old man will appear, hovering in the air before the card's master, and ask "What is it you wish to know?"

The Ancient Card will answer any one question the character has and is quite close to omniscient. Wise guy characters will

discover that trying to stump the card with philosophical or unanswerable questions is pointless, as the old man will deliver a lecture upon philosophies for the next 1D6 hours, effectively answering the question (but leaving everyone even more confused).

23-25: Sun Card: This beautiful card appears to be made from finest Dwarven steel and depicts a stylized sun in beautiful metallic foils. After being drawn, the card will crumble itself up, finally appearing as a small gift wrapped in metallic foil.

Within the wrapping is a small magical item! The item itself can be anything of the G.M.'s choosing: Ring, brooch, wand, glove, monocle, bracelet, necklace, etc. The magic allows the item to cast a certain spell as often as 1D6 times per day (roll once during the item creation). To determine what spell the item can cast, roll 1D4 to determine the level, then either roll randomly or select a spell from that level.

The character's new magical item is in no way bound to him once it is unwrapped, and can be stolen or given away as easily as any other possession.

26-28: The Eclipse Card: When drawn, the Eclipse Card looks identical to the Sun Card, but that changes quickly as a black ball moves across the face to obscure the center of the sun. Once this happens, a destructive force wave erupts from the card, knocking down everyone within 1D6x5 feet (1.5-6.1 m) and destroying all glass, crystal, and magical items within 10 feet (3 m)! The only items that are spared are powerful relics such as rune weapons (not to mention the Deck and Chest of Fate).

29-31: The Dyvil Card: A sinister card made from mahogany and painted delicately with oil pastels, the Dyvil Card displays a crouching Deevil whose eyes glow sinisterly as the drawer is surrounded in gale-force winds and three claps of thunder ring out. If the character is of Evil alignment, they will gain one experience level, but if Good or Selfish, they lose one full experience level. (If the drawer is first level, then they become zero-level, with negative experience points equal to what is required to reach second level. The character loses all O.C.C. abilities and bonuses, including spells or psionics, retaining only their "other" and secondary skills. Once the character earns their way up to zero experience points, they will become first level.)

32-34: The Joker: This card, forged from raw Palladium, features a middle-aged, mustachioed man wearing glasses and a jester's hat. Sinister laughing fills the drawer's ears as he or she realizes that they must now draw two additional cards!

35-37: The Suicide Card: A rather frightening visage of a young woman fallen over a bed, bleeding from the wrists. The card itself is made from lead and seems heavier than physically possible. This card has a 50-50 shot at either imparting one random insanity or shocking the character to the point of curing one they already possess.

38-40: The Waxing Card: This simple onyx card is one of the most desired. It features a simple, quartz half-moon which slowly grows larger. When the moon is full, it will bathe the drawer in its light, reducing their age by 2D6 years!

41-43: The Waning Card: This obsidian card looks almost identical to the Waxing Card, complete with the quartz half-moon. However, with the Waning Card, the moon grows smaller and smaller, finally bathing the drawer in shadows when it vanishes, aging him or her by 2D6 years.

44-46: The Dream Card: The Dream Card has the same shiny, iridescent quality as abalone or oyster shell, and though there is no definite image on it, one can almost make out any number of images in its swirling surface. This powerful magic makes the drawer's fondest dreams come true, instantly changing the world around him or her to fulfill their greatest desire. If the character always wanted a quiet family life, they will discover that they have a lovely wife (or husband) and caring children, not to mention a comfortable home and source of income. If they have always desired power, they will find themselves in command of an army, or wielding mighty magic, or ruling the Western Empire! While this may seem a bit odd at first (the character's entire world has just changed, after all), most people will quickly become comfortable in their new setting (it is, after all, what they've always wanted).

The Dream Card is not as powerful as it may seem, though. This "dream come true" that is granted to the character is just that: A dream! Immediately after drawing the Dream Card, they will collapse into a coma and begin their dreaming. To the character experiencing it, everything is perfectly realistic, and their dream world slowly but surely shifts and remolds itself to continually adapt itself to their newer dreams and desires. To any onlookers, however, the character seems gravely ill and cannot be woken by shaking, violence, or even magic or psionics! Powers such as Empathy will reveal that the character is happy, and Telepathy will grant a simple and fuzzy view of the character's enchanted sleep, but prove unable to arouse them.

The only way to break the Dream Card's spell is for the character trapped in the dream to *want* to leave their paradise behind and wake up. Since they don't even realize their world is nothing more than a dream, this is more difficult than it sounds. Someone from the real world must enter the character's dream and convince them, 1) That they are living in a dream, and 2) To wake up and leave everything they ever wanted behind.

Entering the dream is difficult, but the magical nature of the sleep raises a few possibilities: Astral projection can be used to enter the dream for short periods of time, but the character must return to his or her body before the duration is up or be trapped in the sleeping character's dream forever. The Gate Card can be used to create a portal directly into the dream, and the Wish Card can either do the same, or simply be used to wake the character. Finally, the spells and psionics presented in **Nightbane Book One: Between the Shadows** can be used to enter the character's dream. Adventurers are forewarned, however, that the Dream Card will fight back, sending as much of the dream world against them as it can without directly disturbing its victim.

47-49: The Lovers Card: This card has the power to create for the character their true love. A being is brought into existence by this silver card who is born in love with the character and whose personality and appearance are ideal for him or her. The lover can be of any of the Optional O.C.C.s (usually a Vagabond) and any race, though almost always (97% of the time), they are the same race as the drawer.

It is important to note that the Lovers Card only creates a person who is in love with the drawer, not a servant or love slave. The lover possesses a mind of his/her own and will leave if mistreated, ignored, or abused.

50-52: The Syvan Card: This wormwood card is carefully etched with the image of a man in a mask. As the drawer watches, the etching slowly moves as the man removes the mask, revealing a hideous, twisted face. Witnessing the entire process drains the youth and innocence from the drawer, reducing their P.B. by 1D6.

53-55: The Gate Card: The Gate Card is incredibly simple: When viewed from the back, it is identical to every other Fate Card, but when viewed from the front, this emerald card has a hole through it!

The Gate Card has the power to open a doorway to anywhere its drawer wants to go, though characters are advised to think carefully, as this card, like all others, can only be used once. The transit can be instantaneous, or if the character desires, the gateway created can be left in place for up to 12 hours, allowing for a return trip. The range is unlimited and can even allow journeys to other planes of existence.

56-58: The Castle Card: The Castle Card is carved from solid granite and features a lovely keep and grounds. It transforms in the drawer's hand from stone to a parchment scroll: A land deed to a nice keep or castle, as well as 2D6x10 acres of land.

59-61: The Beggar Card: The tattered and weather-beaten Beggar Card features nothing but a hobbling man or woman dressed in rags. When drawn, a dark ripple washes over the character, causing their mundane items to crumble like dust and scattering anything magical to the four winds, leaving them nothing but tattered rags that were formerly their adventuring clothes. To make matters worse, characters will soon discover any holdings in banks or stored in castle vaults siezed, stolen, or missing, private property or houses will befall horrible misfortune, and vehicles or riding animals will meet a similar fate. The character must essentially start over again, but not for a time, as any possession they acquire for the next 2D6 weeks will similarly crumble, rot, or disappear.

62-64: The Mount Card: Carved from ebony, the Mount Card displays a an ivory-white warhorse, decked in full barding, rearing up. Within moments, the card will buck and flex, ripping itself from the drawer's grasp and floating into the air. With a flash of light, an animal, complete with saddle, appears before the character. Roll to determine the animal type (appropriate stats can be found in **Monsters and Animals, 2nd Edition**):

- 01-15: War Horse
- 16-25: Jumper Horse
- 26-40: Race Horse
- 41-50: Zebra
- 51-60: Elephant
- 61-65: Tiger
- 66-80: Mule
- 81-85: Pegasus
- 86-90: Griffin
- 91-98: Diatryma
- 99-00: Other*

The mount is always an exceptional member of its species, with above average stats and the highest possible intelligence. It is completely loyal to its master, the drawer, even if he or she has no idea how to handle or ride such an animal. It will attempt to obey its master's intent, but there exists no supernatural means of communications, only a rough empathy. The animal

appears the perfect size to comfortably seat its master (which may easily result in a gnome riding a five foot/1.5 m tall elephant or a troll mounted on 20 foot/6.1 m Griffin), though the size difference does not significantly affect the animal's attributes.

*Other typically results in the creation of a rather unusual mount, usually an animal very inappropriate for the situation, though interesting nonetheless. This usually results in giant riding chinchillas, enormous bluejays, a saddled hyena, or some similar form of oversized animal. The strength of these animals is markedly higher than standard for their species, roughly the equivalent of a riding horse.

65-67: The Taunt Card: An ordinary playing card, crafted from heavy paper, featuring nothing but a fool sticking out his tongue. The Taunt Card is a bust; it provides no magical effect though it still counts as one of the character's draws. On the brighter side, this is the only card that remains in the character's possession after being drawn (the Chest of Fate will create a new Taunt Card within hours), aside from the Soul Card, making for a nifty souvenir.



68-70: The Claw Card: The Claw Card is cast from wrought iron, with the impression of a demonic claw on its surface. As the drawer stares into it, the claw will leap to life, grasping the drawer firmly and drawing them through the card into a dark fate. The victim of the Claw Card finds him- or herself deposited in the dungeon of a random Demon or Dyval Lord. Freedom is still a possibility, but a distant one, and will require either striking a deal with the keep's demonic master, escaping (a very remote possibility), fighting one's way out (an even

more remote possibility), or having good friends who can somehow track the drawer down and free them.

71-73: The Black Cat Card: The Black Cat Card, delicately carved from one solid piece of mistletoe, displays a calm and aloof black cat staring out at the viewer. The card's power summons an animal to the drawer and forges a link between the two, identical to that provided by the *Find Familiar* spell, even if the character has another familiar already (the original link remains, but the two familiars are likely to be very competitive and even violent towards one another). The animal type will usually be appropriate to the character's personality.

74-76: Moon Card: A smokey quartz card with a large, white quartz circle in the center, the Moon Card is hauntingly beautiful, leaving the character with a strange longing for the full moon, but otherwise having no effect before vanishing.

What the character will not be aware of is that the card's magic has infected them with lycanthropy, transforming them into a werewolf under the full moon. The character isn't likely to discover this for quite some time, only being aware of strange nightmares at first.

77-79: The Ahnk Card: Forged from tin in mockery of the then-fledgling Church of Light and Dark, the Ahnk Card displays the symbol for life and light. Any undead creature drawing this card is instantly destroyed, but any other creature drawing this card is bathed in a pure, white light, healing them of all damage, erasing scars, wiping out any diseases, regenerating lost limbs, and removing any curses afflicting them! Alternatively, the character can attempt to control and direct the light to shine on another person, delivering the same effects, or even be used to resurrect the recently dead (identical in effect to the spell). The target character must be within line of sight and the chance to successfully take control of the light and shine it on another is 50%, plus 1% per point of M.E.

80-82: The Gem Card: Made from a diamond and featuring an eight-faceted gem made from eight different valuable stones, the Gem Card vanishes moments after it is drawn with a clap of thunder. Moments later, the drawer is assaulted by a rain of 1D100 gems of varying types falling from the sky, pelting him or her and anyone within three feet (.9 m), inflicting 1D6 points of damage for every ten jewels. The stones are of varying types, from simple quartz and onyx to diamonds and emeralds, and are worth an average of 2D6x5 gold each (multiply this result by the number of gems to determine the total value of the shower).

83-85: The Elf Card: Delicately crafted from purest silver and painted with pigments from exotic rainforest plants, the Elf Card displays a young Elven woman seated and playing a harp. A soothing music drifts over the character, lulling them into a relaxed state and gently refining their features. The drawer's P.B. is increased by 1D6, and for the next several hours, the character will feel at ease and relaxed.

As this card, like the rest of the Deck, was crafted long before the Elf-Dwarf War, it has no adverse effects on Dwarves.

86-88: The Jilted Lovers Card: This card appears identical to the Lovers Card, above, but with one dramatic difference. While the mate created by this card's magic is everything the character desires, they harbor a deep, secret hatred of them, and while they will appear loving and loyal to the card's drawer, they will secretly work to undermine his or her deeds and eventually kill them. Keep in mind that the lover isn't necessarily

evil, but their raw, irrational hatred of their counterpart drives them to extreme lengths.

89-91: The Golem Card: The Golem Card, carved from serpentine and displaying a sturdy, steadfast-looking guard, draws on whatever materials are available nearby to create a golem protector for the drawer. Most likely, the magic will seek out a pre-existing structure to animate, such as a statue, gargoyle, relief, or similar stone or metal work, but if nothing is available, it will fashion a crude humanoid figure from stone within the earth. The card's power automatically drains two permanent S.D.C. from the character to imbue the structure with life force.

The golem is loyal only to its master and will obey and protect them even after death. See the spell on page 213 of the **Palladium Fantasy RPG** for full details.



92-94: The Basilisk Card: True to its namesake, this pyrite (fool's gold) card transforms its drawer into solid stone, without benefit of a saving throw! As with a Basilisk's gaze, a Stone to Flesh spell can restore the character to normal, but they are helpless to prevent any misfortune that happens before the spell is cast.

95-97: The Fruit Card: The Fruit Card, printed on woven reeds, summons into existence a lovely basket of fruit for the character, which includes 2D4 apples, 1D6 pears, 1D8 peaches, 1D4 mangoes, 1D4 coconuts, 3D6 walnuts, 1D4 pineapples, and 2D6 bunches of grapes. The magical nature of the summoned fruit will keep them fresh, crisp, and perfectly ripe for up to three full months!

As a special benefit, characters will make an amazing discovery when they crack open the coconuts: Each one contains 1D4 pearls, worth 30 gold apiece.

98-00: The Soul Card: Quite possibly the most dangerous card in the Deck of Fate, this blank, whitish card formed from an unknown, crystalline material, takes on a soft glow as it absorbs the drawer's very soul! The card's magic binds the character's soul within it permanently (a new Soul Card is formed by the Chest, while the one drawn remains in existence), but miraculously leaves the character alive. However, it is wise to carefully guard this new possession, as whoever controls it can control the character's soul!

Whoever possesses the card wields incredible power over the drawer: By carefully bending the card, they can inflict ungodly pain on the character whose soul is contained within, preventing any actions other than falling to the ground and screaming, while inflicting 1D6 points of damage directly to Hit Points. Additionally, whoever possesses the card can cast spells through it (for good or ill) to affect the character's physical body, regardless of how far away they may be. Finally, by simply tearing the card in half, the character's soul is shattered, killing them instantly and dashing any hopes of resurrection. Needless to say, a character should be very careful over who possesses this card, or even who knows about it for that matter.

Should the character die by any means other than having the card torn in half, the Soul Card will lose its glow and become inert. Normal resurrection can be attempted, with the usual chance for failure, to reunite the lost soul with its body. However, casting the Resurrection spell through the inert Soul Card will instantly return the character to life, though their soul will be returned to its prison within the card itself.

Thirteenth Tribe

Return of the Algor Range Huntsmen?

Optional Source Material for
The Palladium Fantasy RPG®

By Richard Thomassen

Recent History

The destruction of the Algor Range Huntsmen tribe was one of the defining moments of the Wolfen Empire. It is remembered by the Wolfen with shame, and yet as a lesson as to why the tribes must stand united as an Empire.

Since its foundation, there have always been Wolfen from outside the borders of the Empire who wander from the vast northern wilderness into its civilized lands — individuals, families, occasionally even a whole wandering village or clan. These wanderers have always been accepted and entered into the various tribes of the Empire.



It was with some concern that it was noted that for over a year none of the “old blood” had emerged from the wilderness and entered the Empire’s tribes. Investigation revealed that a priest named Gramual, claiming to be a member of the Algor Range Huntsmen, had started to rebuild the destroyed tribe from both the lost wanderers and the Empire’s Wolfen outcasts.

The Empire was curious at first, and invited Gramual to a meeting of the Empire’s oldest priests and Shamans. He knew their secret ways that only the most powerful tribal shamans would know. It was at this gathering that he claimed leadership of the Huntsmen, being the last of the tribe. He proved himself to the Empire and its elders, and the Algor Range Huntsmen were reborn.

Within a year, the Empire was beginning to regret its decision.

The Huntsmen grew rapidly. Rather than embracing the civilization of the Empire, they reverted to the old ways of self-sufficiency and warfare. Wolfen from the wilderness thought this was the correct way to act, and chose to join the Huntsmen, rather than endure the stifling laws and rules of the Empire.

The Tribe Today

The Algor Range Huntsmen are considered the weakest of the tribes, not even recognized as a true tribe by some. They are considered vagrants, splintered and divided over much of the Northern Wilderness, but they would form a massive and comparatively heavily armed army if they were drawn together under one banner.

In the days before the Empire, the tribes use to roam the Northern Wilderness, not anchoring themselves permanently to

one spot to strip the land of all its fruits until it was dead. The stronger tribes would claim large tracts of land as theirs to hunt, or occasionally to herd animals or grow crops; the weakest tribes had to make do with constantly roaming the great forests, searching for food, water and other resources. With expansion of the Empire, the non-Wolfen tribes that gather under its banner, and the preparations they make for war with the Domain of Man, there is increasing competition for the great forests’ space and resources. The Empire has been forced to limit each tribe’s ancestral land with well defined perimeters, leaving each tribe a home and ensuring the Empire has enough land to feed and arm its people.

The Huntsmen have not reacted to this well. Unwilling to settle down to the one area that the Empire has assigned to be their own, and aware that the entire tribe could be considered a threat and crushed, the Huntsmen Tribe has been splintered by Gramual into clans. Constantly on the move, these groups of Huntsmen have acquired reputations as superb guides and trackers, but also spies and thieves.

Families, sometimes entire clans, travel in caravans made of carts and wagons to make their movement easier. These caravans, which are often pulled by wildebeest or oxen, have become synonymous with the tribe. When travelling becomes too hard, such as in the winter, several caravans will draw together to form a camp, which will be fortified against the outside.

For the rest of the seasons, the clans of the tribe travel. Their movements have brought them into contact with humans, whom Gramual has insisted are not the enemy of the Tribe (“The enemy of my enemy...”). Traders have purchased the trappings of man, specifically arms, armor and horses, often paid for with gold earned as mercenaries and even laborers.

True Blood

The tribe has only one member that has pure "Huntsmen" blood if Gramual's claims are to be believed — himself. However, in the years that he has ruled the tribe he has sired many children with those whom he considers to have some traits of the original tribe. Gramual has over thirty children that are known of, many of whom are starting their own families. Despite this, the Huntsmen can not shake off their reputation for having "weak blood".

A lot of Gramual's children have rapidly gained positions of power within their clan. Many of these positions of power are as Priests, following Gramual's teachings, and spreading the words of his old, vengeful god.

The artificial Wolfen language, derived from the old tribal dialects, is the only common language amongst the Huntsmen. Some of the tribe's old tongue is known thanks to the teachings of Gramual, but it is mostly reserved for religious and official ceremonies.

Truth and Lies

Most of what Gramual has claimed is true; he is the last known member of the Algor Range Huntsmen, and as such is one of the oldest Wolfen alive today, and he is a Priest. His aims are far from pleasant, however.

In the days of the Algor Range Huntsmen, Gramual was a Dark Priest, rapidly rising in power within the tribe. The source of his power was his worship of the Old Ones. When his hideous crimes were discovered before he could claim control of the tribe, Gramual fled to other planes of existence, searching for a means to dominate his tribe and gain the power only the heads of tribes wield.

Returning what he initially thought was only a few years later, Gramual was both delighted and dismayed to discover the destruction of his tribe and the passing of the years (well over fifty, closer to a hundred). With nothing else left in the world, Gramual vowed to destroy the Empire that had been born through the death of his tribe — the people that were to be his to command.

He started his campaign by gaining the knowledge of the tribe's shamans so that he could validate his claims of leadership. He did this through summoning, questioning, and torturing the spirits of shamans and tribal leaders, until their secrets were his.

Once the tribe was his, he ensured it remained scattered and traveling. This way, he can use them as a giant information network, able to spy on both the Empire and the Eastern Kingdom of Men.

With this knowledge, he has been able to feed information and lies (often sold as stolen secrets) to the Coyles and the human mercenary companies prowling the disputed lands, inciting them into violence against the East and the Empire, escalating the war.

Gramual, Witch Priest

of The Algor Range Huntsmen

O.C.C.: Priest of Darkness, 9th level.

Alignment: Aberrant in day to day dealings, but Diabolic when it comes to his plans for revenge.



Quick Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 6, M.A. 17, P.S. 38 (Supernatural), P.P. 18, P.E. 24 (Supernatural), P.B. 8, Spd. 46.

Hit Points: 69

S.D.C.: 250

P.P.E.: 66

Magic: Dark Priest prayers and powers. 7 Dark Priest spells.

Spell Strength: 13.

Combat Bonuses: 9th level Assassin Hand to Hand. W.P.: Spear and W.P.: Knife at 9th level. Damage is 6D6+23 from strength, plus an additional 2D6 with Lechtor, doubled against mortal and supernatural foes! This does not include hand to hand bonuses, or the damage bonus against mortals with Lechtor.

Horror Factor: 14 when enraged.

Unnatural Abilities: All natural abilities of a Fenry Wolf.

Through his travels, Gramual has been rewarded the equivalent of a Witch's Pact of Physical Power, and has been spiritually bound with the Fenry Wolf that was his familiar. This gives him the following powers:

All Healing, Sensitive and Physical abilities. I.S.P.: 70.

Witch's Pact: Super Tough, Supernatural Strength & Endurance and double damage to mortals, impervious to poison and toxins, bio-regenerate 1D4x10 S.D.C. and 4D6 H.P. per minute.

Lechtor, Greater Unholy Spear

Indestructible, giant black-shafted, leaf-headed spear. Dark red glow. 12 feet (3.7 m) long.

+5% to all Gramual's prayers.

Additional Damage (+2D6).

Monster Slayer (+6 vs mortal, double vs supernatural).

Radius of Protection.

Other items of note: Leather Armor of iron, brace of large knives. Amulet of Secrecy — makes wearer undetectable to any detection spells or powers, such as Detect Evil, Sense Magic or Presence Sense.

Gramual is a Large (9 feet/2.7 m tall, 400 lbs/180 kg) Wolfen with Jet black fur, streaked with gray. His dark brown eyes glow red when he is enraged, but he tries to conceal this under the large cowl he has taken to wearing over his toughened leather armor. He speaks the modern Wolfen tongue with an incredibly thick “old world” accent, making him sometimes difficult to understand (-10% to language skills, -20% when angry, and careless with his speech).

He is an incredibly tough warrior thanks to his supernatural enhancement, and could conceivably kill all but the hardest warriors in a single blow. He is not stupid enough to underestimate the power of numbers or the challenge of magic. His main weakness would be his vindictive personality, which would drive him to almost any length for revenge when he feels he has been wronged.

Hook, Line and Sinkers

Tales From a Strange Land

Hook: The party is approached by a scribe (human or Wolfen) who wants them to help him travel with a caravan of the new Huntsmen tribe to study them.

Line: Getting on the right side of the Huntsmen to journey with them is going to be hard enough. More cautious characters may decide to track a part of the tribe and survey them from a distance, which will leave the party struggling to survive in the Northern Wilderness as well as keep tabs on the tribe.

Sinker: The scribe is a spy for the East or the Empire, looking for knowledge of the dangerous tribe. Selling their secrets to the scribe is likely to buy the characters the tribe’s hatred. Should Gramual discover their true quest (e.g. finding reports they are writing), then he may use the opportunity to feed false information to the enemy, or kill the characters as a warning to others.

Rock and a Hard Place

Hook: Whilst traveling in the disputed lands, the characters are approached by a desperate Algor Range Huntsman. He needs food for his family which are hiding in nearby woods, and can’t leave due to the danger of discovery by the East or Coyle forces.

Line: What to do? Let the Huntsmen starve, or help them and risk getting caught helping an enemy of the Domain of Man?

Sinker: There are no false pretenses here. The Huntsman’s family has been hiding for weeks and is on the edge of starvation. However, characters should be aware that this far into the disputed lands they can not be up to any good, and they will avoid answering such questions, claiming they travel where their noses take them. The Game Master could well take this opportunity to let the player characters’ actions have a direct effect on them: If lost in the wilderness in the future, the Huntsman could save them if he himself is saved. Alternatively, if slain and looted, the trophies they carry from the bodies could mark them as enemies of the Algor Range Huntsmen. Even walking

away from the situation could have the same happening to them in similar circumstances.

Yes, That’s My Dagger

Hook: The characters are arrested on the boarder of the Domain of Man or Wolfen Empire for assassinating the local militia captain.

Line: The characters have been arrested because a prominent item (probably a weapon) of theirs has been found at the murder scene. The weapon in question was lost several weeks before by the characters, stolen by some Huntsmen.

Sinker: This is a setup, plain and simple. The characters must first prove their innocence, then should find the back-stabbing Huntsmen, either for information or good old fashioned revenge.



If You Go down to the Woods Today...

Hook: Whilst traveling in the Northern Wilderness or disputed lands, the characters come across a prominent Wolfen performing what can only be “black magic.”

Line: The characters should come across Gramual in the wilderness performing sacrifices to the Old Ones. If he finds he has been discovered, he will attack prominent opponents, but will leave them for dead without checking, as he will be eager to flee the scene (via magic if possible), leaving Priests, guards or summoned minions of darkness to “clean up.”

Sinker: Now the characters have witnessed first hand what the leader of the Huntsmen is like. What do they do with the information, and what proof do they have? This could ultimately see them pursuing Gramual into the Northern Wilderness and a showdown with him and his personal guards.

Example NPCs

Typical Algor Range Huntsman

Typical Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 12, M.A. 7, P.S. 15, P.P. 12, P.E. 14, P.B. 10, Spd. 14.

Typical Levels: 3rd to 4th — life is hard, and the Algor Range Huntsmen learn quickly and get tough, or die young. Leaders of groups and families are likely to have an additional level, whilst champions have an additional two.

Mercenary Warrior (3rd Level Mercenary)

Typical Attributes: P.S. 20, P.E. 18, Spd. 20. All other attributes typical for Wolfen.

Hit Points: 34, **S.D.C.:** 40. Worn studded leather armor (A.R. 13, S.D.C. 25).

Bonuses: +5 to parry and dodge, +2 to strike, 4 attacks per melee round (Martial Arts hand to hand and Boxing). W.P.: Spear (+2 to strike and parry, 3D6+5 damage).

Skills: Wilderness Survival 55%, Land Navigation 42%, Prowl 40%, Track & Trap Animals 35/45%, Track Humanoids 45%, Detect Ambush 50%, Animal Husbandry 50%.

Scavenger/Vagabond (4th Level Vagabond)

Typical Attributes: M.E. 14, P.E. 16, Spd. 20. All other attributes typical for Wolfen.

Hit Points: 27, **S.D.C.:** 30. Worn soft leather armor (A.R. 10, S.D.C. 16).

Bonuses: +2 to parry and dodge, 3 attacks per melee round (Hand to Hand: Basic), W.P.: Blunt (large club; +2 to strike and parry, 3D4 damage) or W.P.: Knife (large knife; +2 to strike and parry, 2D6 damage), W.P. Archery (large short bow; +2 to strike, 2D6 damage, rate of fire 4).

Skills: Animal Husbandry 70%, Wilderness Survival 55%, Land Navigation 46%, Track & Trap Animal 40/50%, First Aid 50%, Identify Plants and Fruits 45%.

Rogue or Spy (3rd Level Thief)

Typical Attributes: I.Q. 16, P.S. 18, P.E. 18, Spd. 20. All other attributes typical for Wolfen.

Hit Points: 30, **S.D.C.:** 35. Worn hard leather armor (A.R. 11, S.D.C. 26).

Bonuses: +2 to strike, 3 attacks per melee round (Hand to Hand: Assassin), W.P.: Knife (+1 to strike, +2 to parry, 2D4 damage, often poisoned).

Skills: Wilderness Survival 45%, Land Navigation 42%, Prowl 55%, Track Humanoids 40%, Detect Ambush 45%, Pick Pockets 50%, Intelligence 42%, Streetwise 42%. Use and Remove Poison 49/41% and Sniping (+2 strike on an aimed shot) for trained killers.

A typical traveling group consists of 1D4+1 carts, caravans, pulled by either beasts of burden or the travelers. Each cart will carry a family unit, consisting of 1D4 adult Wolfen, and 1D6 young. Two thirds of a group will be Scavengers/Vagabonds, the remaining third Warriors. Very few will be Rogues.

Sting in the Tail

Whilst he is a Dark Priest of the Old Ones, Gramual doesn't want to see them returned to Palladium, as he has seen terrible worlds destroyed by such powers. However, if his plans are thwarted, his tribe effectively destroyed, and he somehow is left alive (Gramual is not adverse to running from a lost battle), he will start looking for the key to unlock them from their slumber.

The Thirteen Deadly Magicks

Optional Source Material

for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®

By James Calder

"It's been a long time since anyone has asked me about the lost magic said to wake up the Old ... shhh. I forget that sometimes it's bad luck to even invoke their name. Let's just call them 'them.' Well, I'm not too sure about you but there's this old book that recounts that there are 13 spells that will unlock their magical slumber. I have a book somewhere in here that ... let me see if I can remember if I can't find it.

"There are eight spells said to unlock the process. 'Key spells' they are called, and each one contains an essence or a fragment of the Old ... 'their' power. Each one is unremarkable in itself, causing a bit of nastiness I'm sure, but other than that, somebody could cast them and not realize what they are doing. Calling on 'their' power though tends to make the caster a little

funny, if you get my drift. Takes a bit of their sanity with them. At any rate, as the story goes, these spells are what need to be cast first. If you don't cast them, the next five don't even exist as far as I can gather.

"The next four are elemental spells, but not ones the Warlocks use. As the elements are the near perfect embodiment of chaos, these destructive spells use portions of the elements and of a couple of 'their' power. So, you'll have one element plus the focus of two of 'them.' Amazing, I'd say, if it were true.

"Lastly is the ultimate spell of chaos. This one, it is said, brings down the very heavens in a tumultuous blast of entropy. Like that last sentence, eh? Heh heh. Thought of it myself. Not sure what it does. If I can find that blasted book, I'll show you the story.

"But of course, it is just a story."

G.M.'s Note: What follows is a possible way for the Old Ones to be reawakened in the Palladium universe. The follow-

ing spells are keys to unlocking their slumber. In most cases, the spells are out of reach for the average player to be able to cast, but could be just right for their diabolical arch-villain. Understand also that this need not be the way the Old Ones are awakened, and may be just a legend, which could lead to interesting adventures in trying to prevent a villain from using the magic which, while destructive and very powerful, will not release the Old Ones.

For more information on the Old Ones, see **Palladium Fantasy RPG Book II: Old Ones**, pages 7-10.

“The Thirteen Deadly Magicks” is a legend that’s been around for about a thousand years. For millennia, rumors held that the key to unlocking the slumber of the ancient Old Ones has ranged from rituals performed by the Minotaur chaos priests to a great ancient artifact scattered in pieces across the Megaverse. This legend is one that surfaced when adventuring scholars discovered a parchment in the ruins of an abandoned temple.

The parchment, as the legend goes, details the fragmenting of the Old Ones’ power across the Megaverse, and says that the essence of each of the Eight lies locked in the magical words of thirteen spells referred to as the Thirteen Deadly Magicks. The thirteen spells are broken down by “function.” There are eight Key Spells, four Elemental Awakening Spells, and the final Spell of Chaos.

The Thirteen Spells

It should be noted that there are a fixed number of these spells, and that destroying one merely creates another copy elsewhere. Either in the rambling writings of a madman, or in the research of an ancient dragon-mage, the spell will be re-crafted, as the essence of the Old One cannot be destroyed.

The Eight Key Spells

The Eight Key Spells, as they are collectively known, are eight regularly powered spells that directly invoke the essence of the Old Ones. It is said that with a casting of each of these spells, it slowly draws a portion of the Old Ones’ power back to reality. It is also said, that with each casting of these spells, the caster is slowly driven to the edge of insanity, as his or her mental endurance is eaten away at with each calling of power. It is said that until each of these spells is cast at least once, the other five deadly magicks cannot be cast.

As each spell is cast, the caster delves deeper into insanity — an attribute of the Old Ones that spawned this hideous magic. After each casting, the caster must roll to save vs insanity (must roll under their M.E. attribute) or develop one insanity instantly. As each spell has the effect of reducing the caster’s Mental Endurance, take note of their bonuses to save vs insanity after the spell casting.

As these spells are largely unremarkable, there may be a copy existing in treasure hoards, innocuous spellbooks, or in the attics of ancient sages.

Price of Power

Range: Self.

Duration: 1D6 melee rounds.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: 10, +1 point of M.E. permanently, per 30 P.P.E. points in casting cost of the subsequent spell, rounded up (see below).

Level: 15.

Old One Invoked: Xy (Power Incarnate).

This spell, unbridling the Great Old One’s power, will allow the mage to cast one other spell, regardless of level or cost, for a mere 10 P.P.E. plus possibly, his sanity. Expending the 10 P.P.E. points will unlock the magic of the next spell. Only after the caster willingly loses himself to the casting by giving up his grip of reality, will he be able to flow the magic through himself at no cost. This power comes at the price of 1 point of M.E. per 30 P.P.E. points in casting cost. A wizard may, if he chooses, dilute the *Price of Power* with his own P.P.E. base to defray the cost of the spell. The wizard has 1D6 minutes to cast the second spell or lose 1 point of M.E. permanently just for invoking Xy.

For example, a wizard casting *Price of Power* in order to cast a *Summon & Control Storm* spell without fronting any extra P.P.E. will have to pay 10 P.P.E. plus 9 M.E. points ($260/30 = 8.67$, or 9 when rounded up). The same wizard casting *Price of Power* and diluting the *Summon & Control Storm* with 100 P.P.E. points of his own would pay 10 P.P.E. plus 6 M.E. points ($160/30 = 5.33$, or 6 when rounded up).

Of course, only a fool would use this spell if he had the P.P.E. to spend. Or would he? Sanity may seem a small price when a *Sanctuary* spell can be cast for 10 P.P.E.

Harbingers of Despair

Range: 20 foot (6 m) area, up to 100 feet (30.5 m) away, centered on a target.

Duration: 1 minute (4 melees) per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Special; save vs Horror Factor for the first effect, and save vs ritual magic for the second.

P.P.E.: 75.

Level: 10.

Old One Invoked: Netosa (Suffering, Despair, the Undead).

Harbingers of Despair functions similar to a *Fear* spell with a slight twist. Like the *Fear* spell, this enchantment creates a sensation of fear over a particular area as defined in the range. Anybody within the area or entering the area must save vs Horror Factor 16. A failed roll has the same effect as the *Fear* spell. The second effect, whether the first save was successful or not, attaches the *Fear* spell central to the individuals that have entered the area or were in the area when the *Harbingers of Despair* was originally cast. That is, if the character fails to make a subsequent save vs ritual magic, the *Fear* effect will follow, and move with the victim as its center. It then essentially becomes a moving *Fear* spell.

Diabolic Conception

Range: Touch.

Duration: Instantaneous.

Saving Throw: Save vs ritual magic.

P.P.E.: 125, +1 point of M.E. permanently.

Level: Ten.



Old One Invoked: Agu (Life, Birth, Rebirth).

This spell gives the caster the unenviable ability to impregnate a humanoid capable of giving birth, with a creature of pure evil. Upon a successful casting completion, including the touching of a subject, the expenditure of P.P.E. and of one permanent point of Mental Endurance, the victim of this spell will be carrying a demonic entity until birth. The creature will grow and develop within the subject for a period of 1D6 months before the birth occurs. This spell duplicates a summoning of a lesser demon, and protection from a lesser demon.

The creature will appear to be a member of the same species as the "mother," but will have demonic characteristics of a Succubus or Incubus. Upon birth, the offspring will see the mother as the summoner who brought it to this plane, and attempt to kill her immediately.

Covet

Range: Touch or within 10 feet (3 m).

Duration: 1 hour per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Save vs ritual magic.

P.P.E.: 65, +1 point of M.E. permanently.

Level: Ten.

Old One Invoked: Al-vil (Envy, Jealousy).

When this enchantment is cast upon a person or an item, all individuals failing a save vs ritual magic within eyesight of the object or individual targeted by this spell will instantly crave and desire the subject, and will go to any means to obtain the

object of their desire. If the target is sentient, he or she is immune to the effects of this casting (that is, they will not desire themselves). The feelings the victims of this enchantment feel will be those of envy for the target and the desire to woo the individual away from others. If the target is inanimate, they will try to wrest control of the target away from its possessor. The caster of the spell is also immune to the effects.

Shadow of Death

Range: Touch or within 10 feet (3 m).

Duration: 1 day per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Save vs ritual magic.

P.P.E.: 100, +1 point of M.E. permanently.

Level: Ten.

Old One Invoked: Erva (Darkness, Death).

Like a far-reaching *Feign Death* spell, *Shadow of Death* causes the target of the spell to appear dead. All signs of life will be missing, such as heartbeat, pulse, breathing and movement. The victim of the spell is for all intents and purposes truly dead and, if cast by a powerful mage, will appear as such for some time. This magic also has the effect of obscuring most detection spells like *Sense Magic* or any spells used to detect life, like *Sense Aura*.

In addition to appearing dead, the victim of the spell will also react as though they were dead to other spells and rituals affecting the dead. For instance, the victim of *Shadow of Death* may be animated through an *Animate & Control Dead* spell and subsequently turned through *Turn Dead*.

The true horror of this spell, is that the victim is not dead, and is completely conscious and aware of all that is happening to him or her. They are quite helpless, should a ceremony or funeral take place. Once the duration has elapsed, they will return to a normal state — wherever they are.

At All Costs

Range: Touch or self.

Duration: 1 hour per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None; save vs ritual if on an unwilling victim.

P.P.E.: 125, +1 point of M.E. permanently.

Level: Ten.

Old One Invoked: Ya-ahk-met (Power, Light).

This spell helps the target of the spell to persevere extreme conditions and damage. The cost? The target of the spell will sustain no damage so long as there are living, breathing creatures nearby. Each point of damage inflicted on the target is immediately applied to a random creature within 30 feet (9.1 m) per level of experience. A successful save vs magic by this alternate victim reduces the damage by half. The target of this spell cannot choose the alternate victim.

For instance, a 10th level Wizard casts *At All Costs* on himself and is subsequently assaulted by a *Fire Bolt* spell. The 5D6 points of damage is subsequently applied to his Ranger companion (determined randomly), who crumples to the ground in burning agony while the Wizard stands unscathed in the face of their enemy.

This spell is a redirection of damage, not a redirection of attack types. So, for instance, if a creature only affected by magic weapons is the only creature in range, it will still suffer damage, even if the target of the spell is attacked with non-magical

means. The initial attack doesn't have to be effective against the secondary victim, just the initial target/recipient of this spell.

Hatemonger

Range: Touch.

Duration: 1 hour per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Save vs ritual magic.

P.P.E.: 80, +1 point of M.E. permanently.

Level: Ten.

Old One Invoked: Tarm-kin-toe (Hatred, Treachery, Vengeance).

The target of this spell becomes the target of uncontrollable hatred and violence by strangers and friends alike, for what may appear no reason. This spell will not affect gods, godlings, demon lords, entities, elementals, or alien intelligences. Anybody within a 20 foot (6.1 m) radius will react with great animosity towards the character, depending on his or her relationship with the character. Strangers may hurl insults or objects (like tomatoes or stones) at the victim. Friends may take the opportunity to steal from the victim or bully them. Remember, even best friends can grow to loathe the character.

Hostile forces, racial enemies (whether ancient or modern), and individuals disliking the victim will immediately harass and attack the target of this spell, regardless of the situation. For instance, two warring parties may be brought together to declare a truce when a soldier enchanted with this spell sparks another outbreak.

Complete strangers and neutral third parties will act with great disdain towards the character, unable to interact without hurling insults or small objects. They may even accuse the victim of a small transgression like shoplifting, or commit an obscene gesture towards them, sparking a fight or confrontation.

Friends, loved ones and acquaintances will grow weary of the victim, believing their ally of conspiring against them, hurting their cause, or generally just behaving poorly. A confrontation at some point may be inevitable or the victim may be driven off.

Once the duration has passed, the enchantment ends and the people who previously acted against them will remember all that has transpired. They will know that at one point they disliked the victim for some reason, but will not know why as the magic has ended and their cloudy memories take over.

Wasting

Range: 60 feet (18.3 m), +5 feet (1.5 m) per level of experience.

Duration: 3 melee rounds, +1 melee round per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Save vs ritual magic.

Damage: Reduce S.D.C. and Hit Points by half.

P.P.E.: 95, +1 point of M.E. permanently.

Level: Ten.

Old One Invoked: Ya-blik (Pestilence, Betrayal, Pain).

This spell, when cast, has the effect of simultaneously casting the *Age*, *Agony*, and a *Life Drain* spells. At the same time, the victim will immediately be incapacitated with pain and lose all attacks per melee, and cannot move or speak (losing all combat bonuses and skill rolls). The character will appear to age immediately to the maximum limit of their species, thus reducing all of their physical attributes by half (P.S., P.P., P.E., P.B. and Speed). This is all in addition to losing half of their total remaining S.D.C. and Hit Points.



Once the spell duration has elapsed, the target will require 1D4 hours to regain their composure; physical attributes and combat bonuses will return to normal after that time. They will return to their normal age and the pain will stop immediately upon cancellation of this magic. The victim will regain S.D.C. and Hit Points at the standard rate.

What Happens Now?

If all eight Key Spells have been cast somewhere by anybody, then the four Awakening Spells detailed below will come into existence at the four corners of the realm. There is a 1% chance that a Warlock will be aware of their appearance, sensing that elemental power of some significance is present. It is also at this time that divine intervention may come about to prevent the next five castings. Priests may receive prophetic dreams.

The Four Awakening Spells

These four spells harness the powers of the elements. Their purpose is to cause a great disturbance in the mortal plane, in the hopes that they will awaken the Old Ones from their slumber. These four spells will not appear in the mortal world until the eight Key Spells have been cast.

While elemental in nature, these spells are not available to Warlocks.

Fiery Avatar

Range: Self.

Duration: 1 hour per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: 2000, +5 points of M.E. permanently.

Level: Legend.

Element Invoked: Fire.

Old Ones Invoked: Ya-ahk-met and Tarm-kin-toe.

Fueled by the lust for power given by Ya-ahk-met and consumed by the hatred of Tarm-kin-toe, the caster of *Fiery Avatar* becomes a living juggernaut of fire. The caster takes on the appearance of a giant Fire Elemental towering some 40 feet (12.2 m) tall, but maintaining a resemblance to the caster. The caster gains all the abilities and physical attributes of a Major Fire Elemental, except that the avatar cannot keep itself from automatically setting fire to any combustibles it touches (perhaps due to its uncaring state of being). Combustibles within a 50 foot (15.2 m) radius also have a 50% chance of igniting.

The avatar is immune to fire, heat, poison, drug, and disease attacks, in addition to being immune to water-based attacks. Water merely turns to steam upon impact with the *Fiery Avatar*. The caster consumed by this spell will attack all that surrounds him, including friends, in a hail of fiery fury. The caster cannot control himself in this form, short of destroying all around him.

Due to the overwhelming brightness of the avatar, due to Ya-ahk-met's power, characters attacking the Fiery Avatar are -2 to strike.

Nefarious Vacuum

Range: 1,000 foot (305 m) radius, +100 feet (30.5 m) per level of experience.

Duration: 1 month per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Ritual; if the victim saves, they may try to escape the vacuum. Victims may roll every 30 seconds until they fall unconscious.

P.P.E.: 3000, +5 points of M.E. permanently.

Level: Legend.

Element Invoked: Air.

Old Ones Invoked: Netosa and Erva.

This spell is more than just an amplified version of the sixth level spell *Vacuum*, though they do share some common similarities. This spell rips a hole in the atmosphere, causing a jet-black vacuum to form in a 1,000 foot (305 m) radius over the target, which will cause a void to remain for 1 month per level of caster. Those caught in the vacuum will choke and gasp for air, dying from suffocation within 6 minutes. The darkness perpetuated by the vacuum is as inky black as the outer space it is connected with. No light, either magical or natural, can penetrate this darkness.

Victims that succumb to the effects of the *Nefarious Vacuum* are raised as the undead as though they were raised via an *Animate & Control Dead* spell cast by the caster of this spell.

Torrential Flood

Range: Affects a 300 foot (36.6 m) radius and can be cast up to 500 feet (152.4 m) away.

Duration: 3 hours per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: 2000, +5 points of M.E. permanently.

Level: Legend.

Element Invoked: Water.

Old Ones Invoked: Al-vil and Ya-blik.

With this spell, the dual powers for betrayal and treachery unleash their wicked focus on those near water. For every hour this spell lasts, the water levels in the target area will spontaneously rise by one foot (0.3 m). This water can be from a lake, a river, or an ocean. A 10th level mage casting this spell will cause water levels in a 300 foot (91.4 m) radius to rise by 30 feet (9.1 m) — certainly enough to engulf most houses along a river. The flooding that results will certainly level or destroy most seaside towns and cause endless damage to larger coastal cities. This spell defies the laws of physics (duh!), and only the water affected will rise. Those outside the spell's range will see a huge column of water rise up out of the surrounding water, spreading to flood any land within the area of effect, but stopping as if running into an invisible wall at its borders.

Spells like *Calm Waters* will not affect the *Torrential Flood* spell except to make the waters not choppy or as torrential — they will still rise.

Sinkhole

Range: 100 foot (30.5 m) radius, plus 100 feet (30.5 m) per level of experience, up to 500 feet (152.4 m) away.

Duration: Permanent.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: 2000, +5 points of M.E. permanently.

Level: Legend.

Element Invoked: Earth.

Old Ones Invoked: Agu and Xy.

With this effect, the ground in the target area collapses in a gigantic "sinkhole" effect. The earth caves in below all that stands upon it and drops at a staggering pace; all that will remain is a crater. The ground drops straight down 10 feet (3 m) per level of the caster. Structures on the land that is sunk will be 10% destroyed per 10 feet (3 m) sunk. Characters will suffer standard falling damage when falling into the crater. Those on the edge may roll to dodge to attempt to get off before the *Sinkhole* takes effect.

Strangely, and perhaps due to Agu's influence, all plant life will remain unharmed (unless a stone or other humanoid-made structure lands on it), and the land that is affected remains untainted by evil.

What Happens Now?

The four elemental spells have caused great amounts of destruction, likely inciting some response from major governments like Timiro and the Western Empire, depending on where they are cast. Once all four spells have been cast, the Minotaur are awakened and realize the time is coming soon. Minotaur attacks and appearances will increase. It is about this time that the Final Spell of Chaos will come into reality.

If the Gods are not involved by this time, they will be now, sending minions and messengers to hunt for the final spell.

The Final Spell of Chaos

This spell, as the legend goes, is the final spell that will awaken the Old Ones from their slumber and raise an army of Minotaur warriors and chaos priests.

Note: This spell is extremely powerful and obviously should not be cast by regular player characters. The P.P.E. cost alone should be enough to prevent anybody save the Gods themselves from casting it. Realistically speaking, the Gods would not likely willingly release the Old Ones.

Reign of Entropy

Range: Self, moving outward from the caster to reach 100 miles (160 km) plus 20 miles (32 km) per level of experience. This spell could turn the Timiro Kingdom into a mass of chaos!

Duration: Permanent.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: 10,000, +10 points of M.E. permanently.

Level: Legend.

Element Invoked: All.

Old Ones Invoked: All.

This final spell unleashes the power of all the elements and all of the Old Ones combined. All those within the area of effect, save the caster, are immediately affected as though a great casting of *Havoc* has taken place. Those failing a save against ritual magic immediately suffer 1D6 points of damage directly

to Hit Points, as well as suffering -3 to initiative, strike, and parry, -6 to dodge and roll, -6 to save vs Horror Factor, and reduce attacks per melee and skill proficiencies by half, for as long as they remain in the area effect of the spell. An evil taint will never leave the area.

In addition, this spell summons 400 Minotaur (20% of which are Minotaur Priests of Chaos — see **PFRPG Book II: Old Ones**, page 14) to the area who are said to be the holders of the final summons buried deep within their subconscious. These Minotaur are immune to the other effects of the spell. The Minotaur will not rest until 400 are brought to the center of the casting to finish the spell. This may mean a long and lengthy battle.

If the Minotaur make it to the center of the casting area, they will begin a rhythmic chant in their own tongue and it is at this time that Xy will awaken inside Thoth. How Thoth reacts to Xy's presence or memories is unknown. At this point Thoth will know he is Xy.

What Happens Now?

Thoth knows he is Xy. The remaining seven Old Ones have awakened. Ya-blik and Al-vil may believe Xy is dead and will assume control of the pantheon. Perhaps Thoth will remain Thoth and lead the gods against his old followers. This portion is left to the G.M., to decide the fate of the Megaverse.

The Legend of the Thirteen Orcish Lords

By Jon Thompson

It started in bloodshed, and it ended in bloodshed. Since their passing, no race in this world has exceeded them in courage... or in pride. However, their time was long ago, and today they stand forgotten. Even the kindred of their race do not remember. All that remains is the mere shadow of a legend. Yet there was a time when the earth shook and the heavens echoed with the thunderous battle cry of the High Orc.

They were a noble race, despite their hunger for conquest. Their features were fair and proud, and their grace in battle was rivaled by few. Among the monstrous races, songs of praise and valor were sung about them. Among the higher races, only ignorant stories and myths were known, and if not for the twisted hand of fate, this may have been their undoing. For an enemy who is aware of the power of the High Orcs stands a small chance against them. An enemy unprepared is an enemy defeated.

Optional Source Material and Adventure for The Palladium Fantasy RPG®

The High Orcs first appeared during the latter years of the Elf-Dwarf War. They served as military leaders and soldiers in the Elven army. It is not known where they came from — if they were created, if they came from another plane, or if they were simply born — but it was on the battlefield that their presence came to be felt. They were natural leaders and superb fighters. The lesser races flocked to them and followed them unquestionably, their Orcish brethren in particular. This suited the Elves and their allies well, and the High Orcs were deployed as elite warriors. However, by the time they came into wide use, the war had fallen apart so much that little record was left of their presence in any of the battles at all.

In fact, the High Orcs are all but completely ignored in most historical records. The only one remaining is a slight, but obscure reference made in the *History of Strange Races* by the estranged and exiled Gromek scholar, Xklyssen. It reads:

"...And as the dusk of the war approached, when the sky was ablaze with fire and the rivers had been run red, a new warrior strode forth onto the battlefield. They bore the features of the rugged Orcs, yet they weren't touched by Orcish hideousness, but instead the grace of the Elves. When the trumpets sounded, these warriors flew into battle with rage and skill to match the gods. But their page in the book of history would soon be crumpled, as fate had allotted that their time would be short..."

When the war was over, the recuperating Elves quickly rejected the High Orcs and sent them on their way. It seems that the High Orcs had developed (or been born with) an incredible sense of pride and were more than indignant about being forced to serve the other races. When they were being used as soldiers this was fine. But when the war was over, the High Orcs wanted to do nothing more than continue warring. This was the last thing on the minds of everyone else, so they were sent out into the newly born wasteland of The Old Kingdom to fend for themselves. Had the Elves been weak enough, then the High Orcs would simply have revolted against them right then and there. However, the depleted army was still a force to be reckoned with, so the High Orcs left, taking a sizeable force of lesser Orcs along with them.

In the wastelands life was harsh, but the High Orcs managed well. They led their brethren bravely, and after a few centuries, had established a small kingdom that was flourishing rapidly. Yet, the High Orcs did not want to sit peacefully minding their crops. They wanted conquest. The Elven nation had used them then rejected them, and soon they and everyone else would regret that they'd ever heard the word "Orc" before in their lives.

The Legend

In the history of Palladium, the number 13 has always been a powerful, but ill-fortuned phenomenon. One finds the 13 (now 12) tribes of the Wolfen to the north, the 13 Sons of Nor in the West, and the 13 Daggers of Chaos in the South. Yet at no time was this number more ill-fated or more powerful than in the case of the 13 Orcish Lords.

When the High Orcs broke away from their former rulers, the Elves, there were thirteen leaders among them. Each of these leaders founded and became leader of a respective clan. It was into these clans that the Orcish nation was divided. This structure created a powerful and dynamic force, whereby each clan interacted the others almost flawlessly. Each clan had its primary function, and each performed it well.

The lesser Orcs played their part well, too. It can't be stressed enough what excellent leaders the High Orcs were. They had an innate ability to coordinate and lead warriors more expertly than some of the greatest generals that the Elven or Dwarven empires had ever known. The lesser Orcs were natural followers, and the combination of the two was indomitable.

As said before, the High Orcs were a proud people, and they were unified in their vision of global conquest. They sought to establish the "Chumras Orka" — ancient Orcish for *The Orcish Empire*. After building up their resources, the Orcs set to conquering The Old Kingdom.

The Battle of Balraga

In short, the Orcish conquest went very smoothly. The strength of the lesser Orcs combined with the prowess of the Orcish Knights and the skill of their leaders led to many swift and bloody victories. In a short time, a very large portion of The Old Kingdom fell under the Orcish flag. The higher races, such as the Elves and Dwarves, simply fled or hid, too busy rebuilding their empires to even consider trying to fight this massive force.



No serious resistance was met until the Orcs went up against the Giants. After the war, the Giants had set about to a similar task as that of the Orcs, only they lacked the organization to see it happen so swiftly. They were occupying the area that would later come to be called The Baalgor Wastelands. The Giants had enslaved many of the monster races themselves and were not about to let these lowly Orcs waltz in and steal the empire that was destined for them.

The war got nasty. Thousands were lost on both sides. The Giants held a large and formidable force, yet, despite the smaller numbers and size of the Orcs, they were able to keep the war at a stalemate. In fact, the Orcs had even taken a slight edge. Eventually, the battle boiled down to one key siege against the Giants' capital city of Balraga. The fight was very evenly matched, but one thing was quite clear: With the combined effort of the thirteen clans, the Orcs would most likely win. Divided, however, they would surely fall.

Xersus and the Raging Bear Clan

And this is where the curse of the number thirteen presents itself. One of the cardinal rules of Orcish life under the High Orcs was that no Orc would ever bow down to one of another race. The Orcs were meant to rule the world and bow to no one. Yet, somehow, things went horribly wrong for the Raging Bear Clan. The thirteenth clan fell under the leadership of a non-Orc, a Troll named Xersus. How this happened is rather complicated and sketchy. One of the factors was an open movement policy among clans (meaning that one could switch clans) and an open door policy about letting other respectful (albeit slightly inferior) races gain clan member status. What ultimately may have cinched it was the Orcish reverence for physical strength, of which Xersus had plenty. The leader of the Raging Bears died, and Xersus somehow managed to take his place. The war was in such full heat that no one even had time to raise any questions about it until it was far too late (it happened literally days before the final battle, and it's speculated that the heads of the other clans might not have even known).

Unfortunately for Xersus, the one thing he truly lacked was courage. When it came time to storm Balraga, the thirteenth clan fled under the direction of Xersus. Though the remaining twelve clans fought bravely, the battle was ultimately lost. The majority of the lesser Orcs were killed in the fray, and every last High Orc was slaughtered. The Giants were taking no chances, and the High Orcs were to be killed with impunity. The members of the Raging Bear Clan, including Xersus, were hunted down and executed afterwards.

Thus, the Orcs lost their only bid for world domination, and their noble brethren race was obliterated. All that remained were the lesser Orcs, destined to become the work and fighting forces of half the Palladium World, for without their natural-born leaders, they became little more than pawns for others.

The Orcs Today: What's Left

All that remains today of the Orcish people are the lesser Orcs. They serve primarily as mercenary fighters and manual laborers for many kingdoms around the world. The lesser Orcs

had always been natural followers, and when their destined leaders fell, they simply began to follow the leadership of others. Even in the places where the Orcs live free, it is usually under the leadership of another race. The few instances where modern Orcs live independently and under their own rule are rare and isolated.

The true shame is that the Orcs have retained almost nothing of this legend. There are only a few rare scholars in the world who know anything of it. The only thing that the Orcs retained was a fierce superstition regarding the number thirteen. They fear it intensely and will have nothing to do with it.

However, there are a few little things that were passed down from the High Orcs themselves. These include some of the basic tenets of Orcish philosophy (such as "might is right"), as well as some of their physical attributes (apparently the Orcs were not quite as strong or as fierce before the High Orcs made their appearance).



The Thirteen Clans

Even before it became official, before the High Orcs' exile, there had always truly been thirteen respective clans among their people. During the war there were thirteen "generals" (though they weren't given status as true generals by the Elves) who were the primary leaders. Each leader had his own strength and primary duty. The Orcs that flocked to them tended to follow in the footsteps of their leaders, adopting and pursuing their aptitudes.

During the war, these thirteen factions operated codependently. This coordination of abilities is, in part, just what made them so deadly. Instead of simply hurling themselves at their foes in mass numbers (the strategy most often em-

ployed with Orcish troops), the High Orcs used strategy to pit the Orcs against the enemy to the best of their individual abilities. The thirteen clans were as follows:

The High Fist Clan: The greatest strategists, and the primary military leaders among the clans.

The Dorn Riders Clan: This clan specialized in the mastery of the Dorn (described below) and was, for the most part, made up of cavalry units.

The Blazing Hammer Clan: These Orcs were craftsmen, and very fine ones indeed. Their weapons exceeded those of Kobold build and may have even rivaled some Dwarven work.

The Clan of the Dark Circle: This mysterious clan was composed of magic users. About seventy percent were Wizards and thirty percent Warlocks; all were High Orcs (Lesser Orcs could only serve as assistants). This clan was by far the smallest, but was also one of the most powerful.

The Clan of the Red Blade: This clan was made up primarily of Priests and Holy Crusaders of the god, Lopnel. The majority of the Orcs in the thirteen clans claimed allegiance to this god, and this clan served as their spiritual leaders.

The Dripping Fang Clan: This is an odd clan that was second smallest in size, next to the Clan of the Dark Circle. They were of a wide variety of classes, and all were avid worshipers of Tark, the Spider Goddess. Though this god symbolizes treachery, the worship of these followers centered around the Orcs' disdain for other races. They glorified themselves as the poison that would destroy the world.

The Clan of the Jagged Crown: These Orcs were of the oldest and noblest blood. They served as the traditional and hierarchical leaders of the clans.

The Blue Hair Clan: This was a clan of fierce, yet madly inventive warriors. They were known for many unexpected victories. Their namesake comes from a tradition of all members dying their hair a deep azure blue.

The Clan of the Tunnel Crawlers: The members of this mysterious clan lived primarily underground, and they inherited many of the attributes of other subterranean races. In the war against the Dwarves, they were a prime asset.

The High Step Clan: This clan gains its namesake for living in the higher, more hilly regions of the Orcs' occupied territory. This clan was a bit more peaceful than others and was responsible for such things as farming and other civil duties.

The Clan of the Flaming Skull: This clan was very small and featured the most elite of the Orcish warriors. All were maniacs, and all were near unstoppable in battle.

The Clan of the Golden Sky: The members of this strange clan were primarily Druids, with a few Beastmasters and Warlocks mixed in. Despite their reverence for nature, they were known as one of the most vicious clans in battle.

The Raging Bear Clan: This was the thirteenth and final clan, the weak link that broke the chain. They revered physical strength more than all other clans. This and their more open attitude on clan membership are what the Troll, Xersus, used to take command and ultimately lead the High Orcs to their downfall.

The Orcish Doctrine

Before the time of the High Orcs, the Orcish people didn't really have too strict a code of beliefs. They had spent so much time enslaved, that most had simply adopted the beliefs of their masters. After the High Orcs came along, a general philosophy was adopted by the Orcs. Some of the general attitudes had already been there, but it took the High Orcs to awaken these things. Despite the passing of the High Orcs, some (but not all) of these attitudes are still held onto today.

- Might makes right.
- The weak exist only to serve the strong.
- There is no good or evil; there is only the will of those strong enough to rule.
- Orcs are among the noblest of races, such as the Elves and the great Titans.
- No Orc shall bow his head before any other, save another Orc.
- There is no honor in cowardice and weakness.
- The will of all Orcs shall be the will of every Orc.
- The leaders of the clans shall speak the word of the clans, and their word shall be law.
- Peace and harmony are weakness; conquest is the only true existence.

Orcish Vocabulary

Here are a few tidbits of the ancient High Orcish language, a derivative of the original Orcish tongue. A few of these words still survive today.

Chuma Tuncha: Might is right.

Ras: War

Ex: Slaughter

PunRas: Fealty (literally: War son).

Junganae: To honor.

Jun: Honor

Gihael Orka: Glory (particularly Orcish glory).

Chumras Orka: The Orcish Empire (literally: The mighty Orcish war).

The High Orc

Optional Player Race

The High Orcs were truly a legendary race. The fact that they have been completely wiped from the history books is a tragedy to both the Orcs of today as well as the many other races of Palladium, for their history holds wisdom for all. They were the ultimate race of noble warriors, and perhaps their only fate could have been extinction. For if they had lived, then they would have surely reshaped the face of the world through their conquests.

All High Orcs followed a strange sort of honor, whereby strength and all things Orcish were respected above all else. They were divided into clans, but their society was truly a communal one. Clan membership was based upon an individual's strengths and aptitudes, and membership was fluid, so one could switch clans if necessary. This divided everyone up properly and put them to use to the best of their abilities, making the Orcish nation powerful and dynamic as a whole.



Women served as virtual equals to the men in clan status. Though they seldom served in leadership positions, they could do just about anything else. They could become soldiers, even knights, and were at the front lines charging alongside the men in most battles.

Despite their racial pride, the High Orcs held a certain degree of tolerance for other strong races (such as Trolls and Giants), and it was this that ultimately undid them. If the Orcs had been a more stubborn and less tolerant people, then their fate may have been much different.

One thing that should be noted is that the High Orcs were around for quite a bit of time. The story of their downfall seems short and moves quickly, but in truth, they had been around for a couple of centuries before their passing. About half of this time was spent serving the Elves and the other half on their own. Thus, the High Orcs did develop a bit of history and tradition among their people before they passed.

Note: Working this race in as one available for the players would be difficult. Most likely, the player would be the victim of some bizarre magical spell or occurrence, and was transported from the past into the present day. These stats are provided primarily for NPC use in the following adventure, although Game Masters who wish to incorporate High Orcs into their current campaigns are encouraged to do so.

Alignment: Any, but tend towards Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 3D6, M.E. 2D6, M.A. 3D6+2, P.S. 4D6+4, P.P. 3D6+3, P.E. 4D6+2, P.B. 2D6+4, Spd. 3D6.

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 25 plus those gained from O.C.C.s and Physical skills.

Average P.P.E.: 3D6

O.C.C.s available to High Orcs: Any but Monk, Long Bowman, Palladin, Diabolist, or Summoner. Most tend towards Men of Arms classes, Orcish Knight (see below), or the Noble Optional O.C.C. No psychics were known to exist.

Horror Factor: 11 to lesser Orcs, 7 to any others who might know of their legend.

Physical Appearance: They appear very similar to normal Orcs, yet more refined. They are taller, averaging 6 to 8 feet (1.8 to 2.4 m) in height. Their skin is fair and their features smooth and attractive. They have hooked noses that point downward, and proud, pronounced jowls. Their hair is orange and very fine; most grow it long and style it fashionably. Their ears are very long and point straight up along the sides of their heads.

Size: 6 to 8 feet (1.8 to 2.4 m).

Weight: 180 to 300 pounds (81 to 135 kg).

Average Life Span: From 50 to 90 years, about the same as a normal Orc.

Natural Abilities: They possess all of the abilities of normal Orcs and more. They have night vision of 40 feet (12.2 m), superior day vision, and a superb sense of smell (Track Blood Scent and Recognize Scent of Others same as a normal Orc).

Natural Leadership: The High Orcs are born leaders, and lesser beings tend to flock to them. Their mental affinity bonuses are effectively doubled when leading any lesser Orcs. Other monster races are treated as normal, but are still highly susceptible to the leadership abilities of these beings. Most humans, Elves, and other higher races find this ability intimidating and are put off by it.

Bonuses: +1 to roll with impact and +4 to save vs Horror Factor. Clawed hands inflict 2D4 damage +P.S. bonus, and a bite attack does 1D6 damage without the P.S. bonus.

Magic: Any O.C.C. but Diabolist or Summoner.

Psionics: None.

Enemies: Hate humans, Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes, Changelings, and most other "higher" races. Are obsessed with conquering and ruling these beings.

Allies: Regularly work with other lesser races, such as Goblins and Hob-Goblins. Will respect other races of strength and creatures of magic, but will not follow them. They are not truly comfortable in any alliance unless they have a firm upper hand.

Habitat: The High Orcs enjoy a much greater standard of living than other Orcs. Their homes and dwellings tend to be nice and well built, though rather militant in appearance. Their whole society is geared toward war, so many luxuries are often sacrificed in favor of practicalities.

Favorite Weapons: The favored weapon is the skell (explained below), the traditional weapon of their people. Many other weapons are used, however, those that do the most brutal or cruel damage are their favorites.

Other Notes:

1. They are steadfast and will not serve or be enslaved by any other race or people.
2. They are obsessed with conquering the world and establishing the Chumras Orka.
3. They tend to worship evil and selfish gods, though they don't truly have a concept of good or evil. They see only strong

and weak, and good gods are most often seen as weak because of their temperance.

4. They will use any type of armor and equipment, but prefer that which is geared towards heavy warfare. They prefer equipment that is well made, and love magical items.

5. They are actually quite skilled craftsmen, capable of constructing all manner of items, from sturdy homes to superb weaponry.

6. They are just as cruel and menacing as normal Orcs when dealing with weaker races. They tend to show strong races opposed to their cause the honor of a quick death. They have a rough sense of honor when dealing among each other, which revolves around strength and courage.

Orcish Knight O.C.C.

The Orcish Knights were among the fiercest warriors to stalk the Palladium world. The raw fighting ability of the High Orc was tremendous enough to begin with, but when tempered with proper training, it became something to truly be afraid of. During the Elf-Dwarf War, the High Orcs developed a rigid system of combat, which utilized a special style that exploited all of their strengths, while compensating for any weaknesses. It revolved around the mastery of a single weapon, the skell, a sort of buckler-lance hybrid, and the mastery of mounted combat atop the beast known as the Dorn.

Though they are termed "Knights," these warriors are not truly like Knights in the conventional human sense. There was not a special code of conduct to which only the Orcish Knights adhered. Instead, the Orcish Knights were the ultimate enforcers of the Orcish philosophy. In particular, their two primary doctrines were Might and Conquest, both of which they pursued hungrily. All other Orcs looked up to them as the noblest and most courageous members of their race.

Only High Orcs could become Orcish Knights. The lesser Orcs simply could not handle the special training and skills involved. Likewise, other races were certainly not given the privilege of learning these special abilities.

The Knights were used extensively as special forces fighters during the end of the Elf-Dwarf War, and it was their strength and grace that won the Orcs so many battles during the later Orcish conquests. It is really quite ironic that they were fated to disappear from the history books, for their strength and skill were truly legendary.

Special Abilities of the Orcish Knight

1. Mastery of Skell: The skell was the special weapon of the Orcish Knight. Among Orcs it was seen as the symbol of the elite. The weapon was very unique, and nothing similar has been utilized by any other race since. The basic structure was of a large, spiked gauntlet with two fins protruding from the top and bottom, forming a sort of buckler. Protruding from the back of the fist (just above the knuckles) was a long, thin, slightly curved blade. It was slightly hooked and spiked at the end, and was about three feet long. The weapon was oftentimes used in pairs, and it was perfect for hacking, slashing, stabbing, parrying, and even hooking. Thus, it could be used as a shield, a long sword, a rapier, or even a makeshift lance if necessary.

W.P. Skell: Good for both short- and long-range combat; lightweight and quick. This skill is limited strictly to this class only! Bonuses: +1 to strike and parry at levels 1, 3, 6, 9 and 12. +1 to damage at levels 3, 7 and 12.



2. Mastery of Dorn: The Dorn is a strange beast of burden that had been used by the Orcs for centuries. Its performance was acceptable when it came to labor, but it excelled in battle, especially when under the command of warriors specially trained in its use. An Orcish Knight mounted atop a Dorn was a fierce opponent indeed. Since the days of the Orcish conquest, these beasts have all but disappeared. More about the Dorn is described below.

Horsemanship: Dorn: This is effectively the same as Horsemanship: Knight, except that it strictly applies to the Dorn.

3. Might and Conquest: These are the two cardinal principles of the Orcish Knights, and earning up to these two ideals is precisely what they lived for. All was done in the name of Gihael Orka, Orcish glory.

4. War Cry: The Orcish Knights possessed a special war cry that had a very powerful effect on all fellow lesser Orcs fighting alongside them. The cry was given in the name of Chumras Orka, and all Orcs who heard it were charged with a supernatural zeal and lust for battle. **Bonuses:** +2 to initiative, +1 to strike, parry, and dodge, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +1 additional attack per round, and +2 to damage. Affects all lesser Orcs within 15 yards/meters.

5. Other O.C.C. Bonuses: +1 to initiative, +2 to damage, +1 additional attack per round, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor at levels 1, 3, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14.

Orcish Knights and Armor

Orcish Knights may wear any type of armor, but tend to prefer those that offer the most protection while still offering a reasonable amount of movement. Full scale mail is a favorite. They suffer -10% to prowl and -15% to climb/scale walls while in full splint or plate or -5% to prowl or climb/scale walls while in scale mail or chain. No penalties are suffered while mounted.

Alignments: Any, but many are Aberrant.

Attribute Requirements: P.S. 12, P.E. 10, and P.P. 11 or higher.

O.C.C. Skills:

Athletics (General)

Climb/Scale Walls (+10%)

Forced March

Heraldry (Orcish) (+20%)

Horsemanship: Dorn

Languages: Native tongue at 98% plus one other at +10%.

Military Etiquette (+15%)

Wilderness Survival (+10%)

W.P. Skell

W.P. Two others of choice.

Hand to Hand: Expert

Hand to Hand: Expert may be changed to Hand to Hand: Martial Arts or Assassin (if evil) for the cost of one "other" skill.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select eight other skills at level one, plus one more at levels three, six, nine and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Language and Literacy only.

Domestic: None.

Espionage: Any (+5%).

Horsemanship: Exotic or General only.

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: Any (+10%).

Physical: Any.

Rogue: Any (+10%).

Science: None.

Scholar/Technical: Any.

Weapon Proficiencies: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select four secondary skills at level one, and one additional skill at levels five, ten and fifteen. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not gain the bonuses listed in the parenthesis. All secondary skills start at first level and are limited in selection just as all others.

Starting Equipment: Varies. All basic equipment is provided freely by the clan. New equipment may be gained through trade or conquest.

Armor: Favor full splint (A.R. 16, S.D.C. 82).

Weapons: One or two skell and a utility knife.

Money: Starts with none, as it is unnecessary among the clans (everything handled through bartering), but it may be (and often is) gained through conquest.

New Weapon: Skell

The weapon is more or less like a spiked gauntlet, with two fins that project from the sides and serve as a buckler. A long, semi-arched blade projects from the back of the fist. It is roughly three feet (.9 m) long. It is unique to the Orcish Knights, and no other race of people has learned its use. Damage: 2D6+2.

New Monster: Dorn

The Dorn is a somewhat strange, mounted beast that was despised by all save for the High Orcs. They used to roam the lands of the Old Kingdom in small, predatory packs. They were known for destroying crops and murdering livestock, and most considered them to be pests.

The Orcs saw a powerful mounted creature just waiting to be tamed. In truth, these beasts share quite a bit in common with the Orcs. They have a natural aggressive tendency towards all weaker creatures and are known to attack lesser beings out of sheer aggression. They revel in the pain and suffering of war, and took very well to being trained as war mounts for the High Orcs. The relationship established between them was mutually beneficial, and a sort of bond was forged between them.

Since the passing of the High Orcs and the ending of the Elf-Dwarf War, these creatures have fallen strongly into decline. They are hunted as pests by most people, as their hides and meats are worth very little. At present there are a few herds left, which are facing extinction.

Animal

Alignment: Considered Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D6 (average animal intelligence), M.E. 1D6+2, M.A. 1D4+1, P.S. 3D6+9, P.P. 2D6+12, P.E. 3D6+3, P.B. 1D4+2, Spd 3D6+20.

Hit Points: P.E. +50.

S.D.C.: 3D6+100.

Natural A.R.: 11

Horror Factor: 9



Average P.P.E.: 3D6

Natural Abilities: Superb vision and hearing, night vision 30 feet (9.1 m), track by scent at 82%, aggressive nature towards weaker creatures.

Attacks Per Melee: 3

Damage: 2D6 by bite, 1D8+4 by claw, or 3D6+8 by kick (counts as two attacks).

Bonuses: +1 to strike, +3 to dodge, +6 to save vs Horror Factor. All are in addition to physical attribute bonuses.

Special Bonuses: These are special bonuses that the creature gains when used as a mount by an Orcish Knight specially trained to ride it.

One additional attack per round (generally used for maneuvering), +1 to strike, +2 to damage, and fearless.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: 35 years.

Size: 4-5 feet (1.2-1.5 m) tall, 5-6 feet (1.5-1.8 m) long, 300-400 pounds (135-180 kg).

Habitat: These creatures still exist in rare pockets in the Old Kingdom. They are extremely resilient and take well to rough climates.

Enemies: None per se.

Allies: None. The High Orcs were the only beings capable of domesticating these animals.

Physical Appearance: A large, four-legged creature with rough, grey skin and little hair, except for an orange mane that runs down its back. They have long necks and heads that are *somewhat* horse-like, however the features are all distorted and somewhat demonic. Their maw protrudes forward with a large, tusk-ridden underbite. Instead of hooves they have large, splayed claws.

Value: Little to any other than the High Orcs.

Orcish Soldier O.C.C.

This is a lesser Orc that has been trained under the leadership of Orcish Knights. They are primarily the same as a regular Soldier, however with slightly different skills and a few bonuses due to more masterful training.

Orcish Soldier O.C.C.

Alignment: Any.

Attribute Minimum Requirements: P.S. 10, P.E. 10.

O.C.C. Bonuses: +1 to initiative, +1 to strike, parry, and dodge, +1 attack per round at level 6 (in addition to those gained from hand to hand), +1 to save vs Horror Factor at levels 1, 3, 7, 10 and 13.

O.C.C. Skills:

Climb/Scale Walls (+5%)

Forced March

Body Building & Weight Lifting

Languages: Native tongue at 98% plus one additional of choice (+10%).

Military Etiquette (+15%)

Track Humanoids (+5%)

Prowl (+10%)

Wilderness Survival (+15%)

W.P. Shield

W.P. Two of choice.

Hand to Hand: Basic

Hand to Hand: Basic can be changed to Hand to Hand: Expert for the cost of one "other" skill or to Martial Arts or Assassin (if evil) for the cost of two "other" skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select two additional skills from the categories of Military, Espionage, or Wilderness, as well as seven other skills of choice at level one. Select one additional skill at levels three, six, nine and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Sign Language only (+5%).

Domestic: Cook and Fishing only.

Espionage: Any (+5%).

Horsemanship: General or Exotic only (+5%).

Medical: First Aid only (+5%).

Military: Any (+10%).

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics.

Rogue: None.

Science: Mathematics only.

Scholar/Technical: Any.

Weapon Proficiencies: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select four secondary skills from the previous list at level one, and two at levels four, eight and twelve. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not gain the bonuses listed in the parentheses. All secondary skills start at the base skill level and must be chosen using the limitations imposed by the above list.

Starting Equipment: Clothing, boots, gloves, belt, bedroll, backpack, two small sacks, and a water skin.

Armor: Starts with a suit of either chain mail (A.R. 14, S.D.C. 44) or studded leather (A.R. 13, 38 S.D.C.) — player's choice.

Weapons: Starts with a dagger, shield, and a primary weapon of choice, usually something large and sharp.

Money: None to start, but may be gained through pillaging later.

The Second Coming

An Adventure of High Orcish Mayhem

Note: The following is an adventure that incorporates the High Orcs into any modern **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** setting. It can be run with characters of any level, but it is recommended for those of mid to high level, as the scope is very grand. This could be run as an isolated adventure, a series of adventures, or even an entire campaign. At the very least, this could be the staging point for G.M.s to introduce the High Orcs into their campaign.

It is a little known fact that during the last moments of the battle of Balraga, the leaders of the Orcs sounded a retreat. They realized that the battle was lost and sought to recuperate and fight another day. Unfortunately, the cry went unheard by most of the troops. The only ones who retreated were the leaders themselves, who were all members of the High Fist clan, as well as those Orcs close enough to them to hear the call.

All of the other clans were slaughtered in the battle, and it was assumed that the High Fist was slaughtered as well. However, this is not so. They retreated to the command station, where they met up with the few reserve troops that had not been deployed. A contingent was sent out by the Giant forces to hunt them down, and they might have succeeded... had they ever found them.

What happened to the Orcs when they regrouped was strange indeed. They huddled together in darkness, their leaders standing ready to lead them to safety, when a strange figure appeared before them. It was enormous, with a body like a lion, the wings of an eagle, and the darkened face of a man. All recognized it for a Sphinx. It was decorated with jewelry, its hair braided with tassels, and its body covered in strange tribal designs. It eyed them all slowly and carefully.

Then it spoke, "The cord of your fate has been cut. Time has decreed an end to the noble race of High Orcs and the Chumras Orka. Your battle has been lost, your war come to an end. Beyond these woods lies your doom."

The creature motioned with a jeweled paw to the damp forest behind him. The Orcs looked on, and its appearance had suddenly changed. Never had the wood looked so grim and uninviting. The Sphinx paced over to the path which they were about to take and sat next to its entrance. He motioned again, and a large, glowing door appeared to the other side of him.

"Fate has decided your end, but Fate is a gambler. And where there are gamblers, there are cheaters. I am Raat, the Riddle Weaver, and I have come to set you free. Two fates lie before you — one that has been cast for you, and one that shall be determined by yourselves. Choose that which you wish."

Phrased this way, it is easy to imagine which fate the Orcs chose for themselves. They marched fearlessly into the portal.



Raat the Riddle Weaver

Raat is a very mysterious figure. He has made his appearance in virtually every history book. His appearances occur at all manner of times, in any number of places, and in events which more often than not seem to have absolutely nothing to do with each other. If there are any beings who know exactly what Raat's intentions or motivations are, then they are certainly not speaking up. Raat is pretty much a mystery to all. No one knows who he is, where he came from, or even exactly what he is. His appearance and the fact that he appears at so many different times in the history books (with appearances in all eras, stretching almost all the way back to the beginning of recorded history) suggests that he is either a time-traveling Sphinx or an *extremely* long-lived Sphinx. Some speculate that Raat is not a single being, but instead a secret tribe of Sphinx that has been around for thousands upon thousands of years. Then again, there are plenty who say that he (or she) is not a Sphinx at all, but rather the manifestation of a god or something else entirely.

To put it simply, mystery is Raat's game. As his title suggests, he is the master of riddles (and yes, he is THE master; no one can beat him, not even the gods), and he delights in both meeting and dealing out mental challenges with others. He is a strange character who can be found anywhere at any time. He doesn't seem to recognize any sense of good or evil (alignment would be considered Anarchist), and he has never been affiliated with any other creature, being, religion, or anything else.

Stats are not presented for Raat because he is a straight up NPC. If anyone ever attempts to confront him he will cast **Raat's Riddle** (a spell of legend of his own creation) on them. Victims may save versus magic. Those who save are knocked unconscious for 1D4 hours. Those who fail are overcome by a perplexing riddle of deep personal significance. They can do absolutely nothing but pursue solving this riddle (completing no actions other than contemplation and research) and are stricken with it for 1D10X1000 days (so it could take decades to solve it). It would take the combined effort of several gods to even come close to catching this elusive and powerful figure.

Exactly what Raat is doing here is, as you might have guessed, a mystery. He saw the fate of the High Orcs, and he decided to intervene. What he did was to spirit them away into a pocket dimension for safekeeping. They are later released upon the world, and that's where this adventure begins.

Orcs on the Loose

The adventure begins when the High Fist Orcs and the other survivors are released from their stasis in the present day. They appear in the same exact place that they left off, except the landscape is much different from what it used to be. They are in the wastelands of the Old Kingdom, just outside the borders of a small kingdom known as Aieer. The forest is gone, a burnt waste, and the rest of the landscape is rocky and barren.

The Orcs waste no time, however. Under the leadership of the High Fist Orcs, they quickly establish a command post and begin preparing to secure the region. Once the leaders have taken stock of the area, they will begin amassing forces and preparing to begin the Chumras Orka again. As far as they are concerned, their being spared their previous fate can only be a sign that the Chumras Orka is meant to be.

The Orcish Forces:

322 High Orcs (including 200 Orcish Knights)

1,232 Lesser Orcs

405 others (mix of mostly Hob-Goblins, Trolls, and Ogres)

Almost all of these forces are ready for battle (remember, they just came from one), but some are injured and will require a bit of rest. Also note that this won't be the sum of the Orcish forces once things get rolling, as the High Orcs are actively looking for more recruits to fill their ranks. They could easily amass a few thousand more if necessary.

Notable Persons

Manus Trebelium, the EnheilRas

He is the head of the High Fist Clan and the general of the Orcish forces. His title translates literally as The Warmaster. Manus is a true-born general, and his tactical skills and expertise are among the best in the realms. He fights fearlessly and mercilessly, always leading his troops into battle himself. His only flaws are his impatience and his occasionally short temper.

Manus has taken the present situation in stride. He just watched his entire army fall in battle, the majority of his people slaughtered before his eyes, and now he has been magically whisked away to an unknown time and place without any rhyme or reason. By all intents and purposes, his situation might seem dreadful, even desperate. To him, this is only a setback.

The fact that his troops have been slaughtered doesn't matter to him. As long as blood still pumps in his veins and a single Orc will follow him, he will keep fighting. His one objective is the Chumras Orka. Until he has accomplished this, he will stop at nothing, and he will let absolutely nothing get in his way or hold him back.

Manus recognizes that he and his troops are in the same place that they left, but he realizes that things have changed and he doesn't quite know what to make of it. His first objective is to establish a firm base of operations, prospect for more troops, then establish a solid plan for conquest. If he plays his cards right, then all of that should go very smoothly.

Manus appears as most High Orcs do. His features are fair and noble with a strong, determined look about them. He has black streaks in his hair, which he wears long and tasseled. He always wears fine armor and clothing bearing the symbol of his clan (a clenched fist embossed over a red sun). In person he exudes a rather majestic energy, and anyone who interacts with him will know that he is a natural and true-born leader.

Title: EnheilRas (Warmaster)

O.C.C.: 10th level Orcish Knight

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 11, M.A. 17, P.S. 22, P.P. 19, P.E. 24, P.B. 13, Spd. 29

Hit Points: 75, **S.D.C.:** 41

Attacks Per Melee: 5

Bonuses: +5 to roll, +4 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to initiative, +9 to damage, +3 to pull punch, +5 to parry and dodge, +4 to strike, +2 to disarm, +5 to save vs magic/poison, 45% trust/intimidate (includes physical attribute bonuses).

Other Combat Info: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts. Karate kick (2D4 damage), snap kick (1D6 damage), roundhouse kick



(3D6 damage), crescent kick (2D4+2 damage), backward sweep, jump kicks, body flip/throw, leap attack (critical strike), critical strike on unmodified 18, 19 or 20, paired weapons.

W.P. Skell (+2 to damage, +4 to strike and parry), W.P. Knife (+4 to strike, +4 to parry, +5 thrown), W.P. Archery: Short Bow (+7 to strike, +1 to parry, ROF: 7), W.P. Blunt (+4 to strike and parry, +2 thrown), W.P. Targeting, W.P. Siege Weapons (+3 to strike).

Weapons: *The Skell of the EnheilRas:* A magical weapon that has been handed down among the leaders of the High Fist clan for generations. It was originally created during the Elf-Dwarf War by a rogue Dwarven craftsman. It is a pair of identical skell of flawless creation. They are black with marbled green streaks. The weapons are magical and emit a strong aura to those who can sense such things. They are magically indestructible and virtually weightless. It is said that when they are worn by an Orc of true purpose, their wielder may not be slain while in combat. It is surmised that "true purpose" means pursuing the Chumras Orka, but that has yet to be put to the test. The user gains an additional +7 to strike and parry with them due to their superb craftsmanship and magical enchantments. They do 4D6+6 damage each.

Bow of Reaching: A magical bow given to Manus by his father. It has all the decorations of the High Fist Clan and is a superbly crafted weapon. It is magically enchanted to shoot double the normal range of 340 feet (103.6 m; 680 feet/207.2 m total). The bow does normal damage, but Manus likes to use magical fire arrows (he has about a hundred of them), which burst into flame upon firing and do 1D8+4 damage with a 50% chance of lighting any combustibles.

Armor: Orcish splint. Constructed by High Orcs and crafted perfectly to Manus's body, this armor provides full protec-

tion, but with minimal penalty to movement. A.R.: 16, S.D.C.: 102; penalties: -5% to prowl, -10% to climb/scale walls.

Magic Items: Other than his weapons, Manus always carries a few superior healing potions (2D6 H.P. & 4D6 S.D.C. restored), as well as a Ring of Invisibility, and a pair of Boots of Mystery, both of which he won in battle.

Money and Other Equipment: Manus carries little else with him except for a soldier's essentials. He always makes it a point to wear fine clothing or fine adornments (when in armor).

Ignex Max, the DanRas: His title means Warfather, and he is the oldest and most respected warrior of the clan. He is quite old, however, quite beyond his prime fighting days. When he was younger, Ignex was the bravest and strongest warrior in the army. He is single-handedly responsible for many victories. His current position is one reserved for just such warriors, and he serves as a war counselor to the EnheilRas, Manus. Manus respects Ignex more than anyone else in the world, and takes his advice very seriously.

Trabian Riil: Trabian is the army's Master Tactician. He acts as a strategist and coordinator alongside Manus. He is a Fire Warlock and a brilliant military genius. He was a very unlikely choice for the position (because he's not a fighter), but Manus trusts his judgement. The two of them work very well together.

Teel Ikorum: Teel's title is The Father of the Knights. It is an honorary position as leader of and spokesman for the High Fist Clan's Orcish Knights. He is a very dignified warrior, who believes in honor and the Orcish cause. He distrusts magic and bears an animosity towards Trabian.

Riga and The Juggernauts: These are a group of mad holy crusaders of Lopnel, who are led by a High Orc named Riga. They are all-out berserkers, and they are the fiercest warriors in the army. Manus has used them very well for strategic purposes in many battles.

Arana of the Deadly Kiss: Arana is a slim and sexy female High Orc who also happens to be a skilled Assassin. She has been responsible for the mysterious deaths of many foes. All but the innermost circle of leaders are completely unaware of this. Arana poses as Manus' sole concubine.

Delgon: Delgon is the surrogate son of Manus (who has no natural children). He is a respected warrior in the army, yet he tends to be very private and keeps to himself. One reason is that he bears a great secret. Delgon is a powerful Mind Mage. He is a total anomaly among his people, who tend to show absolutely no psychic aptitude. Only Manus knows of this, and he has put Delgon's skills to use several times.

Belca Bristleback: Belca has the title of Pointblade. It is a position given only to the mightiest of lesser Orcs. The reward for having this position is the honor of charging point in every battle, something which Belca relishes. He is an exceptional warrior, who manages to come out of virtually every battle unscathed.

Orcish Plans

The army's plan is very simple. They are to establish a base of operations, increase their forces, then continue the Chumras

Orka. They have re-emerged in the outskirts of a kingdom called Aieer, which is situated in the Old Kingdom, just north of The Land of the South-Winds. Their first step is to conquer the small, nearby town of Eldenhill and use it as an initial base camp. Then they will branch out to other towns, and when their forces are ready, they will launch a full-scale assault on the capital city and claim the land of Aieer for themselves. From there, they will most likely use it as a staging point for an invasion into The Land of the South-Winds.

Aieer

Aieer is a very interesting little kingdom. In the past decade it has done very well, and everything is looking up for it. The kingdom is small, consisting of a capital city and numerous little towns that surround it. The kingdom is situated along a pass between the mountains that runs down to The Land of the South-Winds (Note that this is not the only pass between the mountains that moves south; there are others). The capital is located to the south, nestled up alongside a mountain within a few miles of the pass. The terrain stretches out into a valley below the capital, and the kingdom's influence extends for about a thirty mile (48 km) radius down from the capital. All of the towns within this area have pledged steadfast allegiance to the King, Aeolius.

The reason that these towns have pledged such strong allegiance is because the lands under the protection of King Aeolius have been prospering very well as of late. These towns exist on the verge of a monster-infested wasteland, yet the lands are verdant, the crops are prospering, and the monsters have been kept at a distance.

As you may have guessed, there is something going on behind all of this. King Aeolius is a fairly adept Earth Warlock with a very deep secret. He has found something ancient and supremely powerful lurking in the catacombs of his castle. He has tapped into this being's force and used it to help his kingdom prosper, fertilizing the land and driving away pests. Yet, if anyone were to know where this prosperity was coming from, they would surely shun it.

Years ago, during the Elf-Dwarf War, a very powerful Elven Warlock dwelled in this castle. He was dedicated to the war effort and spent years in research, studying to improve his summoning abilities to help the fight. His results went beyond anyone's wildest dreams. The Warlock actually managed to summon an entire Earth Elemental Intelligence into this realm — that's right, not just a fractured piece of an Elemental Intelligence, but the whole enchilada. Unfortunately, Elemental Intelligences are nowhere near the docile and cooperative servants that their splintered essences are. They are horrible, raging beasts, and they are powerful beyond powerful.

Once the being was summoned, everything went awry. The Elemental Intelligence went about rampaging and killing everything in sight. After much hardship, the Warlock and several other magicians were able to subdue the beast. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the enchantment cast on it by the Warlock, the Intelligence lost its ability to return to its home realm. It was trapped here. The most the magicians could do at the time was to lock it away deep within the catacombs of this fortress. Before too long, the war ended, the castle was abandoned, and the being trapped there was forgotten. It has remained there to this day.

More than anything else, this being wants out. It wants to return to its home dimension and considers its imprisonment in this realm both degrading and insulting. Being locked up in a basement for several millennia has not made things any better. Being an Earth Warlock, Aeolius was able to sense the being, then later communicate with it and eventually tap into its power. Aeolius saw this as a great opportunity to allow his kingdom to grow and prosper.

The Intelligence has simply been using Aeolius to find an escape. With any luck, it figures this little human might stumble upon a way to let it out and, Aeolius being a devout Warlock, the Intelligence assumes that the human will let it out as soon as possible. This is not true. Aeolius has actually discovered a method for releasing the creature (it was buried in another part of the catacombs), but he will not do so. He wants to keep using its power for his kingdom, and he fears what the Intelligence might do if it were freed. Of course, he has not let the Intelligence know that he has this means of releasing it.

The unfortunate thing is that Aeolius is not the strongest of men. If his kingdom were seriously threatened and if times became desperate enough, then he just might do something both drastic and foolish, like letting the Intelligence free.



King Aeolius

Title: Aeolius, Sovereign King of Aieer

O.C.C.: 7th level Earth Warlock

Alignment: Unprincipled

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 9, M.A. 19, P.S. 12, P.P. 11, P.E. 17, P.B. 17, Spd. 13

Hit Points: 45, **S.D.C.:** 13

Attacks Per Melee: 3

Bonuses: +2 to roll, +2 to pull punch, +2 to parry and dodge, +1 to strike, +2 to damage, 55% trust/intimidate, +1 to save vs magic/poison, 35% charm/impress.

Other Combat Info: Hand to Hand: Basic. Kick attack (2D4 damage), snap kick (1D6 damage), critical strike on natural 19 or 20.

W.P. Shield (+3 to parry, +1 to strike), W.P. Blunt (+3 to strike and parry, +1 thrown), W.P. Knife (+4 to strike, +3 to parry, +3 thrown).

Weapons: Flaming ball and chain (4D6+3 damage).

Armor: Leather of Iron (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 300), Shield (S.D.C. 300, magically weightless).

Magic items: Eye of the Eagle gem, Cloak of Shadows, plus has more within his treasure vault.

Money and Equipment: Has all of the resources of a modest kingdom.

Spells of Note: Chameleon, Rock to Mud, Wall of Clay, Dig, Encase Object in Stone, Animate Object, Quicksand, Travel Through Earth, Little Mud Mound, Travel Through Stone, Petrification, River of Lava, and many more.

Notables of Aieer's Court

Andraxus: A fairly powerful court Wizard. He's a very scholarly and straightforward magician, who is utterly loyal to the throne and the royal family. He knows nothing of the Elemental Intelligence, but suspects that something is up.

Gar Rawnet: A seasoned Soldier and the general of the army. He is fairly skilled as a leader, but has yet to face a truly powerful opponent. Most of his battle strategies are supplemented by magic, so he lacks a bit in sheer troop tactics.

Pel Lightreaver: A notable Palladin and the King's honorary champion, Pel is a loved local hero. He is a very upright nobleman, who believes in a fair fight.

Ala Aeolius: A mildly adept Wizard and cousin to King Aeolius, she has long been a supporter of his and frequently works to further his causes from the shadows. Unbeknownst to the King, she is aware of the Intelligence in the catacombs.

Jaricus Telkiis: A local noble of some importance who has been appointed the minister of the interior. He has a long standing reputation for disagreeing with King Aeolius politically.

Menex: Menex is the court Assassin. He is very good at what he does, but he's been out of practice lately because the King doesn't prefer cruel tactics. Menex has no qualms about killing, but he is loyal to the throne. For the most part his skills have been put to other uses.

Tying the Players In

There are a lot of ways that the players can be tied into this adventure. Below is presented a list of ideas for getting things going.

- They are hired by the kingdom of Aieer to investigate and deal with this Orcish menace. Perhaps the King or one of the members of the court has heard of the players' exploits in other lands.
- A local town pleads for their help as they are coming under Orcish attack.
- A wandering peddler (actually a psychic) tells them a rumor of an army on the rise and great treasures to be had in the south.
- The players are in a tavern, and they overhear a conversation between a couple of military men from the Eastern Territory.

They are scouts investigating rumors of a new, powerful military force in the area. They are prospecting for recruits for their war.

- The players are hired by a local family to recover an heirloom that was taken by the Orcs during one of their initial raids. The item is a weapon which has become a favored weapon of one of the high command.
- A player character is buying a chicken in a local market when a trumpet sounds and the Orcs attack.

Whatever way they get involved, one of the first steps is going to be for the players to investigate. Remember that no one has ever heard of these High Orcs. Any word the players hear is purely rumor and hearsay. The only people who might know anything are the refugees from the towns that have been overrun.

Bilrik the Cunning

Indeed, rumors do travel fast, even in the barren wastelands of the Old Kingdom. This is especially true for those who keep their ears to the ground. Bilrik the Cunning is just such a character. He has a rather sordid and interesting past. Bilrik is a Jotan who used to live in the mountains in the city of Gurthasi Tor. Unfortunately for Bilrik, he was the runt of the litter and had always occupied a rather low place on the status ladder in the Giant city. He adapted well, however, and is far more cunning than most other Giants, even the Nimro.

Yet, in the city of Giants, size rules. Bilrik did the best he could, but all he could ever get himself into was trouble. He later left Gurthasi Tor for fear of persecution. Yet, his eyes had always been set upon power in the kingdom of Giants. So he absolved to strike out on his own in the wastelands and the surrounding Old Kingdom to see what he could do. His plan was to amass some sort of power, then later return and take his proper place as one of the respected of the city.

Bilrik became the leader of a small "kingdom" not too far outside of the Baalgor Wastelands. We say "kingdom" because it's really more of a collection of tribes that pledge allegiance to him. They are organized loosely into a spread out set of war camps. The band tends to migrate, and they happened to have been a bit south when the High Orcs made their appearance.

Bilrik is always one to keep up on rumors, and he is aware of two things. First, he knows that some sort of strange Orc breed is organizing the Orcs and leading an attack on the kingdom of Aieer. Second, he knows that something monstrous is hidden beneath the capital of Aieer. He doesn't know what, but he knows it's bad and he'd love to unleash it to see what it does.

So, Bilrik has decided to approach the situation in his usual sly manner. He has offered an allegiance between himself and the Orcish army. The Orcs are very weary of Giants, but they recognize the value that his allegiance could bring. Furthermore, Bilrik has something that they badly want: siege engines. He had captured a few from an enemy and hadn't been able to put them to use. He will offer to lend them to the Orcs, along with some of his troops, in return for some support later on. The Orcs have pretty much decided that an alliance with a Giant is bad, but the siege weapons are well worth it. Knowing how hard it is to storm a castle by foot, they have resolved to accept the alli-

ance for now and decide for themselves where it will stand once Aieer has been conquered.

This is bad for Aieer. With heavy artillery like this, the Orcs are going to stand a very good chance of succeeding in conquering the kingdom. Something must be done, and it must be done quickly.

Morgan the Emissary

Birik is certainly not the only foreigner interested in this conflict. The Land of The South-Winds has been watching their neighbor, Aieer, very closely. They recognize the pivotal point Aieer occupies geographically and have been trying to bully them into an agreement for years. There is a network of spies and informants in place throughout the region, and the news of the Orcish attacks has reached home quickly. To deal with the situation, they have sent an emissary to negotiate, investigate, and interfere if necessary.

His name is Morgan, and he is a sly, shifty Elven noble. He is aware of the Orcish force, and he believes that if something is not done, then Aieer is certainly doomed. The Land of the South-Winds doesn't want that to happen, because they realize the strategic vantage point the Orcs would have for launching attacks against their own kingdom. Thus, Morgan has decided to step forward and deal with the situation.

Unfortunately, as an emissary he never deals with things directly. Morgan is a manipulator. He immediately recognizes the valuable position of the player characters and approaches them, encouraging them to get involved. Morgan has plenty of information and will be glad to steer the players in any direction necessary.

Morgan's ultimate objective, however, is not to stop the Orcish invasion. It's to force Aieer into signing a trade agreement with The Land of the South-Winds. This agreement has been presented to King Aeolius numerous times before, and each time it has been rejected. Aeolius believes that the agreement will make Aieer subservient to its neighbor at least in some way. And he's right. The agreement is far more beneficial to The Land of the South-Winds than it is to Aieer. What the neighboring kingdom really wants is a safe buffer between itself and the Old Kingdom, as well as the right to keep a military

- He estimates the Orcish forces to be around 5,000. (He's way off on this one.)
- He believes that Aieer is holding back, but he doesn't know why. He informs the players that King Aeolius and his nobles are a band of pompous, stuck-up fools, that will most likely squander their kingdom. (Morgan's also a bit off on this one. The nobles of Aieer are very kind; Morgan just doesn't like them.)
- He will gladly pay the players for any information they can gain, especially info that indicates Western Empire involvement. He is also interested in any specimens or artifacts that they might bring back. (Morgan is using the players as another set of his moles.)
- He makes it clear that The Land of the South-Winds will not get directly involved. Furthermore, he will absolutely not give any further assistance other than advice and counseling.

What Morgan knows and won't tell the players:

- That Aieer is expected to fall.
- That The Land of the South-Winds really does have a good idea of what kind of card King Aeolius is hiding.
- That they want Aieer to be weakened by this attack so that they will be forced into some sort of trade agreement.
- That a large force of troops from The Land of the South-Winds is being amassed in case things go poorly.
- He won't reveal anything he tells anyone else. Morgan is very shrewd with his information.

The Ruins

One of the first things that Manus did upon being freed was to send scouts out to all of the old Orcish camps. Naturally, the High Orcs that had occupied them were long gone. However, these sites weren't entirely empty. Among several of them remained ruins of what once was. The different sites are described below. With the exception of The Shrine of Lopnel, the contents of these locations are left open to the individual Game Master. They could be filled with monsters, treasure, historical artifacts, or nothing at all. These ruins may be used as just a side excursion, or they may turn into an entire series of adventures unto

that would have put him in a very safe place. Unfortunately for Dorin, he was attacked as he was casting it, and it went awry. Only half of the spell went off, transporting his body to another dimension, but leaving his spirit here. He has since been trapped within the catacombs of the shrine, wandering alone.

The centuries have changed Dorin a great deal. He is not the hard-headed, blood-thirsty Wizard that he once was. He has become a withdrawn prisoner of his own fate. He no longer respects, nor clearly remembers, the Orcish values that he held in life. In fact, he has become rather morose, and the wisdom he preaches is resigned and nihilistic.

The players may encounter him at any given point wandering about in the catacombs beneath the shrine. If Dorin runs into them he will provide little reaction, walking past them as if they were a regular feature of the dungeon. If pursued, he will converse with them casually as if he were a living resident of the complex. Dorin is a treasure trove of information on High Orcish lore and history; unfortunately he is quite mad and difficult to communicate with. He will respond to conversation, but is absolutely incapable of holding onto any single thought for more than a few seconds, when he will veer off on some random tangent. If the topic of the Chumras Orca is brought up, then Dorin will tell them to give up their fight (notice that he speaks to them as if they too were Orcs). He has come to a dark realization that his fate is the true fate of the Chumras Orca. Once the world has been conquered, there will be nothing left to do but wander the halls in eternal boredom.

If the players are persistent, then they might be able to learn a little bit about Manus from Dorin as well. Dorin knew Manus fairly well and knows that his only weaknesses are his lack of patience and his temper. Remember, however, that all of this information will come only in pieces as Dorin rambles, and it may take hours to put together anything useful.

Dorin appears as he did in life. He is a noble looking High Orc with hair dyed jet black. His body is draped in elaborate robes that are covered in unrecognizable mystic symbols. His body is translucent, however, and clearly spiritual. He is incapable of interacting with the environment by any means other than speaking, and he cannot be banished from this location by any means short of an act of a god.

Orca: These are the ruins of what was the Orcish capital city. The city was not large, but it was designed very efficiently and was capable of housing a very large population in its day. Anyone passing through the city would assume that it was an Elven fort from the days of the war.

The Blue Cave: This cave was the home of the Blue Hair Clan. The walls of the cave are all a deep azure blue, a coloring which comes from the rock that the clan used to dye its hair. It is rumored that strange beasts used to, and perhaps still do, occupy the deepest regions of this cave.

The Cave of the Flaming Pit: This is a cave that runs deep within the mountains of the Old Kingdom. It had originally been occupied by Dwarves, but they abandoned it for fear of the demons that were rumored to dwell within it. The Blazing Skull Clan later made its home here. In the deepest part of these caverns lies a pit with a bright orange flame in it that blazes eternally. It was said that the spirits of all Blazing Skull clansmen would return to this pit upon their deaths.

The Dorn Forest: The Dorn Forest was the original home of the Dorn Rider Clan. The Dorns flourished in this forest in the days of the High Orcs, and it is one of the few places that these creatures still dwell today. The only beings capable of tolerating the presence of the foul Dorns are a tribe of evil Faeries.

The Dark Circle: This is a circle of Stonehenge-style stones atop a hill nearby the Shrine of Lopnel. All of the stones are jet black and covered with unknown symbols. This is the only visible reminder of the Dark Circle Clan.

The Hall of Blazing Hammers: As the title would imply, this was the home of the Blazing Hammer clan. No one knows where these ruins are located, but it is rumored that buried there is a great treasure trove of Orcish weapons and loot.

Small Town Conquests

Once the Orcs have situated themselves and investigated their surroundings, the next step will be to be to conquer some of the outlying towns as they move in towards the main castle. This is not going to prove difficult. Most of these towns have very little in the way of defenses. Aeolius has been using his spells and his Elementals to rid the area of monsters, so over the past few years, defenses have grown weak. The small military presence there will not stand a chance against the Orcish forces.

If the players have made themselves openly involved, then King Aeolius will plead with them to help save his people. Unless the players are particularly crafty, then their strategies will most likely revolve around evacuating the people and saving as many as possible. The Orcish force is a freight train that simply can't be stopped once it gets going. The situation will be made worse by the fact that Aeolius will recall all of his troops to his castle once several towns have been conquered, in an effort not to lose his entire force. The people will be left defenseless and will certainly need help. This is a good opportunity for some direct confrontations with the Orcish forces as well as some opportunities for crafty strategies and tactics by the players.

Stopping the Alliance

At some point, the players may realize that it would be quite beneficial to attempt to put a stop to this alliance between Bilrik and Manus (provided they learn about it). Doing so will actually be quite difficult, but it would greatly increase Aieer's odds in the oncoming battle. Presented here are a few possible methods by which this may be attempted:

- The players may attempt to buy Bilrik off. This would not be cheap, but Bilrik is always prospecting for wealth.
- The players could attempt to simply interfere with the lines of communication between the two, perhaps by slaying or capturing the emissaries that Bilrik sends.
- The players could go before the High Orcs and try to convince them that joining with a Giant is bad news. This is probably not going to be easy, since the Orcs will recognize the players as enemies and will kill them on sight. However, they do have their doubts about the alliance, and if they grew suspicious of Bilrik somehow, they would call it off.
- The players could attempt to destroy or disable the promised siege engines while en route to Manus' camp. This is a good

strategy, but only Manus and a select few will know the route by which they are coming. Obtaining this information could be deadly indeed.

Assassination Attempt

If Bilrik at any time suspects the players of trying to interfere with either his or Manus's plans (note that he probably will, since he manages to keep so well informed of things), he will play one of the cards that he keeps up his sleeve. He has in his service a band of assassins known as the Black Four. They are a group of four Changeling Assassins and masters of disguise. Together they are one of the greatest assassination forces in the world, and how they came to be in Bilrik's employ is an absolute mystery. However, they are steadfast and loyal to him, and he will dispatch them to eliminate the player characters before they can do any real damage. The exact circumstances of the assassination attempt are up to the G.M. Their stats are provided below.

The Black Four

The Black Four are a group of Changeling martial artist Assassins who do most of Bilrik's truly dirty work. They are all extremely talented and would each provide a formidable match on their own. Combined, they are nearly unstoppable. Their background is as shady and mysterious as they are. It is rumored that they were trained as court Assassins in the Western Empire, but left for unknown reasons. They are all quite happy in the employ of Bilrik and seem to truly revel in the work he gives them.

The four are all adept in disguise, espionage, and combat. As presented here, all are pretty much equal in these regards (just use the same stats for each), however G.M.s are encouraged to add a little flavor to the mix by giving each their specialties.

One important thing to note is that none of the four will fight to the death in any situation. Although they are all loyal to Bilrik and his wishes, they are not stupid. Besides, that's not to mention that Bilrik wouldn't want them dead either, regardless of the importance of the target. They're simply too valuable to be lost. Thus, any one of them will avoid certain death situations and will do everything possible to get himself out of any tight spots. Each has his own magical items for use in just such a situation.

Title: The Black Four

O.C.C.: 6th level Assassins

Alignment: Diabolic

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 22, M.A. 19, P.S. 17, P.P. 21, P.E. 10, P.B. 10, Spd 11

Hit Points: 31, S.D.C.: 15

Attacks Per Melee: 3

Bonuses: +2 to save vs telepathy, mind control, and Horror Factor, +3 to roll, +3 to pull punch, +6 to parry and dodge, +5 to strike, +2 to disarm, +2 to damage, +4 to save vs psionics, +5 to save vs insanity, trust/intimidate of 55%.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, all kick attacks, all jump kicks, critical strike on 18-20.

W.P. Chain (+2 to strike, +1 to parry), W.P. Archery (+4 to strike, +1 to parry), W.P. Sword (+3 to strike, +2 to parry, +1 thrown), W.P. Knives (+2 to strike, +3 to parry, +3 thrown), W.P. Missile Weapons (+3 to strike), W.P. Whip (+2 to strike/entangle, +2 to damage), W.P. Paired weapons.

Weapons:

#1: Sickle and Chain of Slicing: A martial artist's weapon enchanted to do extra damage. Damage: 3D4 S.D.C.

#2: Nunchaku of Impact: A pair of numchuks that release a powerful explosion on impact. Damage: 2D4+4 S.D.C.

#3: Blades of Stealth: A pair of invisible short swords that provide +3 to initiative and +2 to strike and parry. Damage: 2D4 S.D.C.

#4: Flaming Knives of Dorson: A set of six magical



throwing knives with flaming blades. Each teleports back into its sheath after being thrown. Damage: 2D4 S.D.C.

Whip of Ensnaring: A whip enchanted to entangle opponents, providing +4 to entangle. Damage: 1D6 S.D.C.

Armor: Leather of Iron (styled as black soft leather). A.R. 15, S.D.C. 250.

Magic Items:

#1: Two potions of Turn Self to Mist, a brooch of Fly as the Eagle, a Cloak of Invisibility, and Pixie Dust.

#2: A Ring of Metamorphosis: Sparrow, a Cloak of Guises, Boots of Fleetness, and a Ring of Chameleon.

#3: A Ring of Teleportation, a Cloak of Shadows, 2 Chasers, and a potion of Multiple Images.

#4: A Necklace of Shadow Walking (performs Shadow Walk, as per the spell, at 10th level proficiency, 5 times a day), a Cloak of Shadows, and 3 Smoke Bombs.

Assault on Castle Aieer

This is the final battle and will most likely be the ultimate culmination of this adventure. The exact scope of the battle is left open, but it will be very large. A lot is riding on this battle, and if it goes poorly then a heck of a lot will go wrong. Most notably, the Elemental Intelligence will be released from the catacombs and start rampaging.

As it stands, everything is pretty much in favor of the Orcs. The High Orcs were not considered the best of warriors for nothing, and they can make short work of even Aieer's best soldiers. What's worse is that Aieer is quite unprepared for an assault of this magnitude. The outlying villages stand little chance if any, and it would take some truly ingenious work to keep the Orcish army from advancing to this point. Castle Aieer is, however, a sturdy stronghold, and what's left of the nation will be able to hold out in there for quite some time.

If the players have done something to upset or ruin the alliance between Bilrik and the Orcs, then the odds are about even. If the alliance has not been stopped, and the Orcs have possession of Bilrik's siege weapons, then Aieer is at a strong disadvantage. King Aeolius will defend the castle with his magic and the best of his resources. However, if the tides turn, and it looks like Aieer will lose the battle, then Aeolius will become desperate. Most likely he will release the Elemental Intelligence in a last ditch effort to stop the Orcs. Of course, he does not realize the full ramifications of this action and actually believes that he might be able to reason with the Intelligence once it's released.

The potential for this individual battle is unlimited. It could last days or weeks, depending on how things go. This leaves it open for all sorts of adventures, ranging from reconnaissance and espionage missions to full-scale battles. It's all up to the players how they want to handle it and make themselves a part of it. King Aeolius will certainly welcome any help that they can offer. It must be noted that the day before the siege begins, Morgan will slip out of the castle and go about his way. Thus, he will not be available to the players during the final conflict.

Elemental Intelligence

The Elemental Intelligence is a being of supreme power. This is why it was originally summoned, and it is only by a horrible twist of fate that such a ticking time bomb was imprisoned here.

Needless to say, when (and if) the Intelligence is released from its prison, it will be more than angry. An Elemental Intelligence has no qualms whatsoever with offering a portion of its essence to a devout Warlock or even a Summoner with the power to draw from it. However, imprisonment is absolutely outrageous. The Intelligence is absolutely incapable of understanding why such a thing would be done to it. This is a state of being that makes absolutely no sense to it. It has never been imprisoned before, nor has it ever imagined anything like it. Even when it splinters a piece of its essence, that shard is not truly imprisoned, as it is almost always set free very shortly.

So, if the Intelligence escapes it is going to go on a destructive rampage, destroying everything in sight until it feels satisfied. And who knows when that will be? The point is that if it is set free it will be completely unpredictable and nearly unstoppable. Its power exceeds that of a Major Elemental by leaps and bounds and would rival that of even a god's avatar.

When it is released it will use the castle and the surrounding landscape to form a body (which will be absolutely huge). Before it leaves, it will imprison King Aeolius, its servant, inside of it (in a part of the castle) to take along. What exactly will happen to him only fate knows.

Earth Elemental Intelligence

Alignment: Anarchist, but will be considered Diabolic when it awakens.

Relevant Attributes: I.Q. 18, P.S. 80, P.P. 32, P.E. N/A, Spd 180 max. **Note:** Despite a high I.Q., it is still an alien being, basically the same as a regular Elemental, but with much greater problem-solving abilities.

Size: From 20 to 100 feet (6.1-30.5 m) tall, usually 100.

Weight: 50 to 300 tons.

Natural A.R.: 19

Hit Points: 8000, **S.D.C.:** 18,000

P.P.E.: 4500

Horror Factor: 18

Natural Abilities: Same as a Major Earth Elemental, but Bio-Regenerates 1D6x100 S.D.C. per round, no Dimensional Teleport, and Stone Shower does 1D6x10 damage.

Natural abilities in energy form: Same.

Vulnerabilities: Killing the body doesn't necessarily mean death. It only sets it into energy form. It will form a new body within 1D6 hours. While in energy form it can only be destroyed by a silver rune weapon driven through it. This will release a blast that does 2D4x1000 damage to *everything* within a 1000 foot (304.8 m) radius. Everything within 1000 feet (304.8 m) beyond that suffers 1D6x100 damage. Note that the Intelligence is not stupid and will try to avoid being destroyed at all costs.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +4 to strike and parry, +6 to pull punch, +6 to roll, +9 to save vs magic, +6 to save vs poison, impervious to Horror Factor, possession, and ALL mind affecting abilities.

Attacks per melee: 10 by hand or 4 by magic.

Damage: 1D4x10 on a restrained punch, 3D6x10 on a full strength punch, and 6D6x10 on a power punch (counts as two melee actions). Strength is considered supernatural.

Magic: Knows all Earth Warlock spells at 20th level proficiency, all Fire and Water Warlock spells levels 1-4 at 6th level proficiency, those other spells common to Major Earth Elementals, and possibly even a few others.

Psionics: Telepathy and Possession only. Unlimited usage and range of Telepathy. Possession is as normal for all Elemental Entities (see **Dragons and Gods**), however it is unlikely to use this attack right away, since it's a little more set on obliterating things with its fists.

Resolutions

As with any adventure, there are innumerable ways this could all turn out. Listed below are just a few possible solutions.

- The players stop the Orcs successfully. Play happy music and roll the credits.
- Raat shows up in the end and does something. If the Intelligence is released, he might kill it or even capture it (he probably could if he wanted to). If the Intelligence hasn't been released, then there's no telling what he'll do.
- The Warlocks of the Southern Consortium show up to deal with the situation. They are a band of Warlocks whose leaders dwell secretly in The Land of the South-Winds. They know of the Intelligence and just might be able to help re-

lease it to its own dimension. Those who show up are the four leaders, each 12th level Warlocks of their respective elements.

- The players lose. This is a definite possibility, but note that there are different levels of loss in this case. The players might simply lose to the Orcs, yet manage to keep the beast from being released, for example.
- The Orcs retreat. It's very important to note that the Orcs definitely won't fight to the death in this battle. They will flee and regroup later if things go poorly for them. Manus has just watched his old army get slaughtered and isn't about to lose another one. If the beast is released, the call to retreat will be sounded instantly.
- Morgan returns. Except this time he's got a small, but skilled armed force (mostly Knights and a few Palladins) with him from The Land of the South-Winds. Their help will be appreciated, but they will want something in return when it's over.
- 1D6 gods show up to deal with the Elemental Intelligence. Which ones appear and exactly how they deal with it are up to the G.M.

Dark Techno-Wizardry

Optional Source Material for Rifts®

By Bill Fellows

The war against Tolkeen has unleashed dark magics upon the world. The desperation found only in war has historically led to many scientific and military advancements. The atomic bomb is one example; the Necro-Tech and the Techno-Shifter are two others. Both of these O.C.C.s combine the arts of the relatively benign Techno-Wizard with a darker mystical pursuit. The results are both fascinating. Some speculate that among the many tragedies of the war, the development of these dark disciplines may have the most destructive long-term consequences.

Necro-Tech O.C.C.

Necromantic Techno-Wizardry has its roots in the past collaborations between Necromancers and Techno-Wizards. Such collaboration has produced such horrors as the feared Murder-Wraith, the Undead Juicer. The practice of Necromantic Techno-Wizardry is fundamentally the same as Techno-Wizardry, in that Necro-Techs imbue common technological items with magical power. Instead of using crystals and such as foci for their power, however, tissue from dead organisms is utilized. Mages of all sorts have long recognized the inherent magical properties of some dead organisms. In the Palladium World, for example, bones from creatures such as dragons are used for a variety of mystical devices.

Many of the creations of the standard Techno-Wizard can also be manufactured by the Necro-Tech, albeit with a gruesome flair. For example, a Wing-Board may have the skeletal remains of Gargoyle wings built into the structure, a communications band may have a "battery" of sorts with a few deceased human

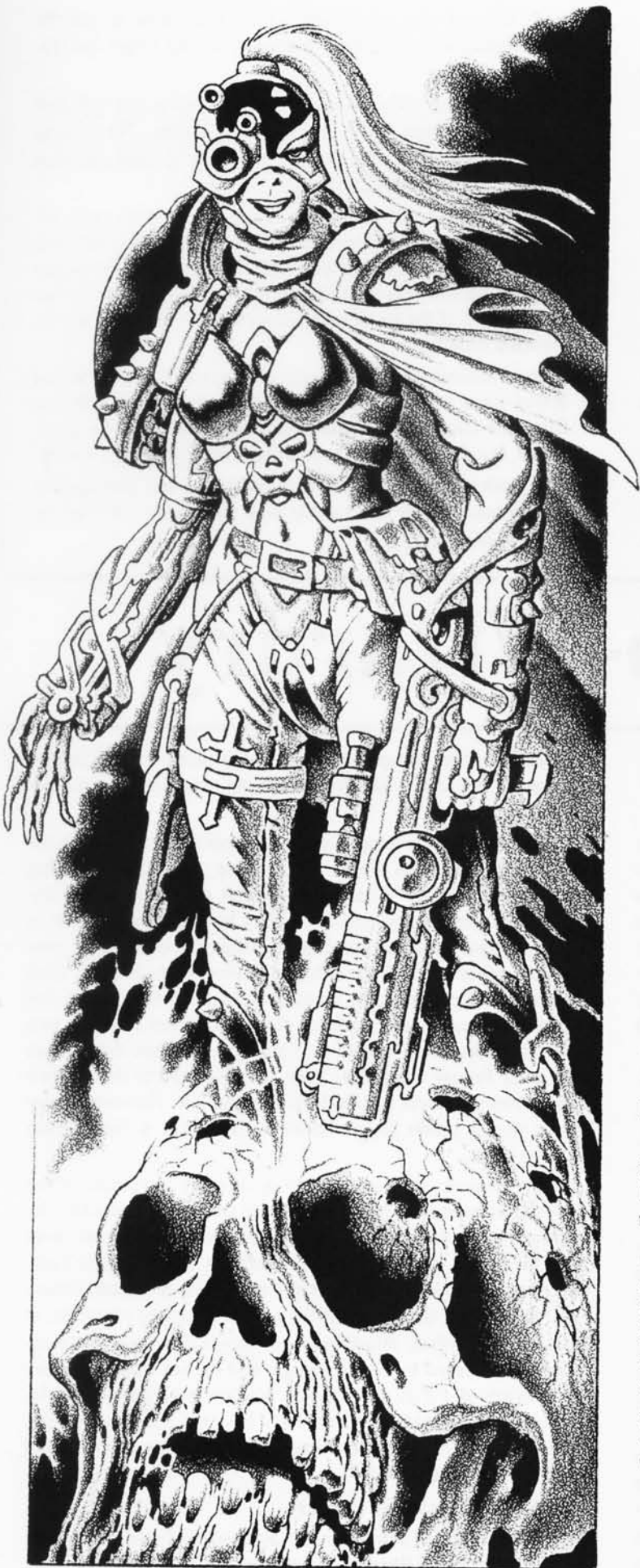
tongues in it. The component pieces may need to come from a creature of magic or a supernatural being, depending on the desired effect.

They have also developed some Techno-Wizardry feats hitherto unseen on Rifts Earth. They have created functioning Necromantic Techno-Wizard bionics that do not seriously impair a spell-caster's abilities. Also, they have discovered how to build monstrous robotic zombies to wreak havoc on their enemies. As revolting and terrifying as Necro-Tech may be, such creations have proved to be invaluable when combating the Coalition. They can gather a dozen fallen Coalition soldiers, turn them into something out of a nightmare, and set them loose upon their former comrades. They can also tend to their fellow Tolkeenites who have lost limbs during the war. However, many mages would prefer to go limbless than have a Necro-Tech work on them.

Some veterans of the campaign against the Horsemen of the Apocalypse cannot help but notice the similarities between the Nightmare Zombies that the Horseman, Death, would set loose upon the world, and the hideous creations of the Necro-Tech. Some even wonder if Necro-Techs are agents of Death. Others have pointed out that many of their other creations resemble, at least on the surface, Bio-Wizard devices. Of course, those devices are powered by living beings, and do not usually require an infusion of P.P.E. to activate, whereas all Necro-Tech devices are empowered by the dead and have a P.P.E. requirement. War, for the time being, has silenced any concerns people might have with the Necro-Tech.

Necro-Tech Psionic Powers

1. The Necro-Tech Has the Following Psionic Powers: Mind Block, Speed Reading, Total Recall, and Telemechanics.



2. **I.S.P.:** Roll 4D6 plus the character's M.E. number to determine the base Inner Strength Points. The Necro-Tech is considered a minor psionic, so he receives another 1D4 I.S.P. per each additional level of experience.

3. **Saving Throw Versus Psionic Attack:** As a minor psychic, the character needs a 12 or higher to save versus psionics.

Necro-Tech Magic Powers

1. **Initial Spell Knowledge.** The Necro-Tech has a solid understanding of the principles of magic. They are able to draw upon the usual sources of magical energy, such as ley lines, and many use blood sacrifices to power their objects. In their twisted minds, this is efficient since the sacrifice is likely to be used as a component in the device as well. Like other Techno-Wizards, they have limited spell-casting powers. All spell ranges, durations, M.D.C./S.D.C., and damage are half when cast as a spell or ritual rather than channeled through a TW device. Furthermore, spells that are not listed under "Available Common Spell Magic" from page 106 of **Rifts® World Book 18: Mystic Russia™**, cost twice as much P.P.E. for the Necro-Tech to cast.

A Necro-Tech is primarily interested in spells that will help power his nefarious devices. Animate Body Parts, Fragile Bone to Stone, Fragile Bone to M.D.C. Bone, and Bone and Joint Bonding are the Necromantic spells the Necro-Tech knows, and Blinding Flash, Telekinesis, Energy Bolt, Fuel Flame, and Animate/Control Dead are the common magic spells they know.

2. **Learning New Spells.** Additional spells or rituals can be learned in the usual way. In addition to the common magic spells available to conventional Techno-Wizards, they also have access to Necromantic spells, including the Bone Magic that was introduced in **Rifts World Book 18: Mystic Russia™**.

3. **Magic and Other Bonuses.** +6 to save versus Horror Factor, with an additional +1 at levels two, six and ten. +1 to save versus magic at levels three, seven, ten and thirteen. +1 to spell strength at levels four, eight and twelve. +2 to the M.E. attribute.

4. **P.P.E.:** Like all men of magic, the Necro-Tech is a living battery of magic. Permanent Base P.P.E.: 2D4x10 in addition to the P.E. attribute. Add 2D6 per each additional level of experience. The Necro-Tech is able to draw P.P.E. from ley lines, nexus points, and other people.

Horror Factor

The Necro-Tech engages in activities most foul, without hesitation. As such, these mages radiate a Horror Factor! At first level, the Horror Factor is 6, and add one at levels four, ten, twelve and fifteen.

Also known as: Necromantic Techno-Wizards.

Alignment Restrictions: Any, but most will be Anarchist or evil. The Necro-Tech engages in some truly disturbing behavior, but at the same time have the ability to be great healers. However, to fully take advantage of this character's abilities, an evil alignment is necessary.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 12, M.E. 15 or higher. A high P.E. and P.P. are also suggested, but are not mandatory.

O.C.C. Skills:

- Literacy (+10%)
- Carpentry (+10%)
- Computer Operation (+5%)
- Computer Programming (+5%)

Computer Repair (+5%)
 Basic Electronics (+15%)
 Mechanical Engineer
 Paramedic (+5%)
 Read Sensory Equipment (+10%)
 Mathematics: Basic (+20%)
 Mathematics: Advanced (+5%)
 Lore: Demons and Monsters (+15%)
 Language (select one additional language, +10%)
 Hand to hand combat must be selected as an O.C.C. Related Skill. Hand to Hand: Basic costs one skill selection, Expert counts as two, and Martial Arts or Assassin (if evil) counts as three skill selections.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select six other skills. Plus select two additional skills from the following list at level three, two at level six, one at level nine, and one at level twelve. All new skills start at first level proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%).
 Cowboy: None.
 Domestic: Any.
 Electrical: Any, but each skill counts as two selections.
 Espionage: Wilderness Survival only.
 Mechanical: Any, but each skill counts as two selections.
 Medical: First Aid only.
 Military: Any.
 Physical: Any, except Boxing, Wrestling, or Acrobatics.
 Pilot: Any (+5%).
 Pilot Related: Any (+5%).
 Rogue: Any (+5%).
 Science: Any (+10%).
 Technical: Any (+10%).
 Weapon Proficiencies: Any.
 Wilderness: Any.

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select five secondary skills from those listed, excluding those marked "None." These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in parentheses. All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: Work overalls, set of nice clothes, tinted goggles, sunglasses, multi-optics band, magnifying glass, pocket flashlight, large flashlight, six signal flares, mini-tool kit, knapsack, backpack, 1D4 small sacks, one large sack, pocket mirror, silver cross, eight wooden stakes and mallet, canteen, binoculars, air filter and gas mask, pocket laser distancer, pocket digital disc recorder/player for recording his observations, and a hand-held computer. Note: Like the Techno-Shifter, the Necro-Tech has little use for the aviator gear worn by many Techno-Wizards.

One suit of light M.D.C. body armor that has two special TW features of the player's choice, excluding Invisibility and Impervious to Energy. Necro-Techs are very fond of Coalition "Dead Boy" armor, both old and new styles.

Weapons include a survival knife, magic energy converted energy rifle, and energy pistol with two extra clips of ammunition.

One Necro-Tech converted Wing-Board (including those found in **Siege on Tolkeen™ One**). The Necro-Tech may also start with a light M.D.C. vehicle of the player's choice, with one additional magic feature.

Money: The Necro-Tech starts with 1D6x100 in credit, 2D4x1000 in black market items, and 2D4x1000 in other supplies (body parts).

Cybernetics: Starts with none and will avoid getting cybernetics except for medical reasons. May consider getting Necro-Tech bionics if desired.

Insanity: Like their Necromancer brethren, Necro-Techs suffer from insanity, although to a lesser extent. Roll once on the following table at levels five and ten.

Necro-Tech Insanity Table

Roll percentile dice.

01-45 No insanity.

46-55 Obsession: Likes to torture, hurt and kill others.

56-60 Phobia: Gods of Light.

61-65 Obsession: Coalition soldiers, the live ones.

66-75 Obsession: Experimentation, constantly tries to create new monsters.

76-85 Phobia: Fears Necro-Tech monster creations.

86-95 Phobia: Ancient dragons.

96-00 Roll for random insanity.



Special Necro-Tech Powers

Necro-Tech Devices

The Necro-Tech is able to manufacture most Techno-Wizard creations, with certain modifications as described above. These modifications can include new spells and different components. In most cases, appropriate dead body parts are substituted for the standard Physical Requirement. For example, if quartz crystals were called for in the traditional device, crushed bat skulls may be needed for the Necro-Tech device. Game Masters should use their imaginations when determining the appropriate components.

The following Necromantic Techno-Wizard devices are exclusive to the Necro-Tech O.C.C.:

Necro-Tech Bionics

Through a combination of sorcery and medicinal skill, the Necro-Tech is able to return to amputees some of their lost abilities. Normal bionics and cybernetics carry a heavy cost for

spell-casters and other magic using beings. Necro-Tech bionics are one alternative to this problem.

Basically, Necro-Tech bionics are animated skeletal remains that are magically grafted to the body of the amputee. NT Bionics do not interfere with magical or psionic powers, which makes them very attractive to spell-casters and psychics. As part of the creation process, the recipient of the new limb must permanently expend some of his own P.P.E. or I.S.P. After that, the recipient will be able to use the new limb without difficulty. The sense of touch is magically duplicated at 64%.

The strength or speed of the limb is that of the recipient. Supernatural strength may be added to the limb during the creation process, at the option of the recipient, for an extra cost.

NT Bionic Hand

A skeletal hand that is grafted to the body of the recipient. The hand is usually from the same species as the recipient, although others could be used. Wires and cables of various sorts are attached to the bones, displaying the element of technology used in its creation.

P.P.E. Cost: 40 (80 for a supernaturally strong hand). Spells Needed: Animate Body Parts, Bone & Joint Bonding, Fragile Bone to M.D.C. Bone, Energy Bolt (and Superhuman Strength). Physical Requirements: Skeletal hand. Time: 1D4 days. Cost: 40,000 (80,000) credits.

M.D.C.: 10

Supernatural strength option: P.S. 24 (supernatural).

Permanent P.P.E./I.S.P. cost to the recipient: 5; 10 for supernatural (double for I.S.P.).

NT Bionic Arm

A skeletal arm that is grafted to the body of the recipient. The arm, like the hand, is usually from the same species as the recipient, although others could be used. Wires and cables of various sorts are attached to the bones, displaying the element of technology used in its creation.

P.P.E. Cost: 80 (120 for a supernaturally strong arm). Spells Needed: Animate Body Parts, Bone & Joint Bonding, Fragile Bone to M.D.C. Bone, Energy Bolt (and Superhuman Strength). Physical Requirements: Skeletal arm. Time: 2D4 days. Cost: 70,000 (100,000) credits.

M.D.C.: 25

Supernatural strength option: P.S. 30 (supernatural).

Permanent P.P.E./I.S.P. cost to the recipient: 10; 15 for supernatural (double for I.S.P.).

NT Bionic Leg

A skeletal leg that is grafted to the body of the recipient. The leg is usually from the same species as the recipient, although others could be used, provided they are the same length. Wires and cables of various sorts are attached to the bones, displaying the element of technology used in its creation.

P.P.E. Cost: 60 (90 for a supernaturally strong leg). Spells Needed: Animate Body Parts, Bone & Joint Bonding, Fragile Bone to M.D.C. Bone, Energy Bolt (and Superhuman Strength). Physical Requirements: Skeletal hand. Time: 2D4 days. Cost: 80,000 (120,000) credits.

M.D.C.: 30

Supernatural strength option: P.S. 30 (supernatural).

Permanent P.P.E./I.S.P. cost to the recipient: 10; 15 for supernatural (double for I.S.P.).

Build Techno-Horrors

(Adapted from the "Create Monster Zombies" power of the Death Walker O.C.C.)

A Techno-Horror requires the use of multiple bodies, at least three, and takes two to eight days to finish. During the building process, the Necro-Tech stitches arms, legs, and other limbs from various beings to the body of another. Extra heads may also be added. The result is a mishmash of incongruous parts that vaguely resemble the originating body. Wires and cables connect the body parts, and strange machines with unknowable purposes are added for good measure.

Often, animal and monster corpses are rebuilt with a humanoid head or heads, or several animals are stitched together to create a chimera-like amalgamation. Likewise, humanoid corpses can be rebuilt with animal heads or limbs. Giant-sized Techno-Horrors can also be created, but require much larger bodies and an additional two days of work.

The maximum number of heads, arms, and tails a Techno-Horror may have is four, plus one per every other level of experience, starting at level two. This means a first level Necro-Tech may create a Horror with three arms and a head, or two arms and two heads. The maximum number of legs it can have is equal to the maximum number of heads, arms, and tails. Wings may be added to the Techno-Horror, too, but each counts as an arm, and two wings are necessary for flight. Flight is provided magically, so the wings need not be fully intact; skeletal



wings are okay. Possibly, jets or hover fans can also be included in the mix.

Range of control over the Horror is limited to 100 feet (30.5 m) per level of experience, but the Horror can venture beyond that if so commanded by its master. After completing its task, it will return to the mage for further instruction. P.P.E. cost is 300 for a normal-sized Techno-Horror, and 600 for giants, plus 20 P.P.E. temporarily imparted to the Horror for the duration of its existence. The powers and abilities of the Horror are as follows:

- I.Q. 8, P.S. 24, considered to be supernatural, P.P. 20, P.E. is effectively unlimited, P.B. 4, and Spd. 14. Giant-sized Techno-Horrors receive an additional bonus of +10 to P.S., +2 to P.P., and +10 to Spd. Additional legs above two provide a Spd. bonus of +2 per leg. Winged Horrors can fly at a Spd of 28, +10 for giants.
- Punch and kick damage depends on the supernatural P.S. attribute. Claws add an additional 2D6 M.D. Tentacle, tail, and bite attacks inflict half damage.
- M.D.C. is 2D6x10 for human sized Horrors, plus 10 per level of the Necro-Tech. M.D.C. for giants is 4D6x10, plus 15 per level. Damage is regenerated at the rate of 1D4x10 per hour, but only if there are spare "parts", such as corpses, pieces of body armor, and so on lying around for it to add to its mass. Once reduced to zero M.D.C., the Horror will collapse, as if dead. It is not, and will rise again unless its M.D.C. is reduced another 40 points.
- Horror Factor: 14, 16 for giants.
- Attacks per melee are equal to the combined number of arms, heads, and tails of the creature.
- Combat bonuses are: +2 to initiative, +3 to strike, +4 to parry and dodge, and +1 to entangle. An additional bonus of +1 to strike and parry is gained with every arm or tentacle beyond the first two.
- Impervious to fear, drugs, poisons, and any magic or psionics that can only affect a living body.
- Skills are limited to climb 75/65% and swim 50%. Tails and tentacles add a bonus of +5% to either skill, per appendage. Flippers add a bonus of +20% to swim, but impose a penalty of -5 to the Speed attribute on land.
- Possesses 10 P.P.E. drawn from the Necro-Tech. If the monster is destroyed, the P.P.E. is immediately returned to the mage. On the other hand, if the Necro-Tech is killed, the monster will fall to pieces (literally).
- Can be held at bay by the Banishment spell or Circle of Protection.
- Silver and fire inflict Mega-Damage to the Horror equal to their normal S.D.C. damage. Mega-Damage fire or magical fire inflict double normal damage.

P.P.E. Cost: 400 (600 for a giant). Spells Needed: Create Zombie, Bone & Joint Bonding, Fragile Bone to M.D.C. Bone, Call Lightning. Physical Requirements: Many corpses (different species are fine), cables, wires, a brain from a sentient creature, and whatever else needs to be added, such as jet engines, wings, and so on. Time: 2D4 days. Cost: 500,000 (1,500,000 for a giant) credits.

Other devices unique to a Necro-Tech are certainly possible. What other vile creations will the Necro-Tech be responsible

for? How about a rail-gun like weapon that shots bones instead of regular metallic rounds? Computers powered by dead brains? Use your imaginations!

Techno-Shifter O.C.C.

The Techno-Shifter is the newest branch of Techno-Wizardry to develop in North America. They were originally simply Techno-Wizards who studied summoning magic. The coming war between Tolkeen and the Coalition States, and the rediscovery of a long lost spell, were the genesis of this new discipline.

The Techno-Shifter is quite different from its cousin, the Techno-Wizard. Techno-Shifters are not spell casters of any kind. They are totally incapable of casting spells or performing traditional ritual magic. Instead, they infuse their Techno-Shifter Devices with certain spell and ritual magics throughout a Device's creation, like a sort of several-days-long ritual. The "spells" that they learn are never cast, just magically programmed into the devices they create.

The Techno-Shifter concentrates his abilities in two spheres: summoning and enslaving. The first of these, summoning, is similar to the abilities of some traditional mages, such as the Shifter or Summoner. The TS Summoning Platforms are the only devices that a Techno-Shifter can create without enslaving some supernatural being. These amazing devices are able to summon supernatural beings from other dimensions and force them to appear before their would-be masters. The magic energy expended and some of the materials needed for summoning, are often identical to the Palladium Summoner O.C.C.'s summoning circle magic. Many scholars of the arcane believe that this is an example of parallel evolution in magic: Two completely unrelated schools of magic that developed under similar environmental conditions, producing nearly identical outcomes.

Enchanting various objects through the enslavement of supernatural energy beings is the Techno-Shifter's second sphere of power. Techno-Shifters are able to create devices that are similar to traditional Techno-Wizard devices, except they rely upon these energy beings for power. Any spells included in their creation are only to control the entity involved and to focus the being's powers. Since these devices are powered by a self-renewing energy source, they can be used by anyone, without the need for a P.P.E. or I.S.P. infusion.

It is this power that outsiders find most alarming. This awesome power resembles Bio-Wizardry and Rune Magic. Some speculate that the Techno-Shifters are on the cusp of uncovering all of the secrets of those dark, lost arts. In reality, they are centuries away from such discoveries, if they will occur at all. The Techno-Shifter is limited to energy beings for the devices they produce, and even then, they are unable to change or harm the creature in any way, just imprison it and channel the creature's power. The Splugorth will not debate these fine points; they will consider these devices to be a primitive form of their guarded science of Bio-Wizardry. Should a Splugorth learn of these Techno-Shifter devices, they will begin a campaign to eradicate all Techno-Shifters in the Megaverse. It is only a matter of time until a Techno-Shifter device makes it to the haunted spires of Atlantis!

In spite of the dangers inherent to Techno-Shifting, they are in high demand. Tolkeen is making a concerted effort to recruit



as many of these mages as possible, to supply them with supernatural troops to aid their forces against the Coalition onslaught. Also, the businessmen at Stormspire are actively seeking Techno-Shifters to add to their workforce. Techno-Shifters are still very rare, with only a few hundred scattered throughout North America, with dozens of others exploring the Megaverse.

Techno-Shifter Magic Powers

1. Initial Spell Knowledge. The Techno-Shifter is unlike most magic O.C.C.s in that he is unable to cast any spells. Instead, he converts both traditional spell magic and ritual magic into a Techno-Shifter machine that is used for summoning supernatural creatures, and in some cases, binding these creatures to a machine.

A Techno-Shifter is interested primarily in summoning and controlling spells. In some cases, spells that have no apparent relation to summoning or controlling will also be mastered. For example, a Techno-Shifter may learn Energy Field as a component spell for containing an energy being of some sort in one of his devices. The Techno-Shifter does not ever actually cast a spell or perform a ritual, per se. Rather, the construction of the device is itself the ritual, with the magics being constantly woven into its creation. The final P.P.E. creation cost is the catalyst that brings all of the enchantments together.

At the first level of experience, the character knows the following spells fundamental to summoning/controlling and creating Techno-Shifter Devices: Summon Entities, Control/Enslave Entities, Constrain Being, Immure Entity, Ensorcel, Domination, Protection Circle: Lesser, Energy Field, Enchant Weapon, and Energize Spell. At third level, the character learns Summon Lesser Being.

2. Learning New Spells. Other spells/rituals can be learned in the usual way, but should have some application to summoning/controlling. For example, perhaps Dimensional Portal could combine with summoning magics to summon a large numbers of a specific creature.

3. Magic and Other Bonuses. +4 to save versus Horror Factor, +1 at levels two, five, nine and twelve. +1 to save versus magic at levels three, seven, ten and thirteen. +1 to ritual strength at levels seven and fourteen. +1 to the M.E. attribute.

4. P.P.E.: Like all men of magic, the Techno-Shifter is a living battery of magic. Permanent Base P.P.E.: 3D6x10 in addition to the P.E. attribute. Add 2D6 per each additional level of experience. The Techno-Shifter is able to draw P.P.E. from ley lines, nexus points, and other people. The high P.P.E. cost of their creations drives many Techno-Shifters to blood sacrifice!

Techno-Shifter Psionic Powers

5. The Techno-Shifter Has the Following Psionic Powers: Mind Block, Speed Reading, Total Recall, and Telemechanics.

6. I.S.P.: Roll 4D6 plus the character's M.E. number to determine the base Inner Strength Points. The Techno-Shifter is considered a minor psionic, so he receives another 1D4 I.S.P. per each additional level of experience.

7. Saving Throw Versus Psionic Attack: As a minor psychic, the character needs a 12 or higher to save versus psionics.

Also known as: Techno-Summoners.

Alignment Restrictions: Any, but most will be Anarchist or evil. The Techno-Shifter not only summons supernatural creatures, he also enslaves them, binding them to some device

against their will, an act most good-aligned characters would not even consider. A good aligned Techno-Shifter simply would not be able to take full advantage of his abilities.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 15, M.E. 16 or higher, P.E. 12. A high P.P. is also suggested, but is not mandatory.

O.C.C. Skills:

Literacy (+10%)
Carpentry (+10%)
Computer Operation (+5%)
Computer Programming (+5%)
Computer Repair (+10%)
Basic Electronics (+15%)
Mechanical Engineer (+5%)
Read Sensory Equipment (+10%)
Astronomy (+10%)
Mathematics: Basic (+20%)
Mathematics: Advanced (+5%)
Lore: Demons and Monsters (+15%)
Language (select one additional language, +10%)
Hand to hand combat must be selected as an O.C.C. Related Skill. Hand to Hand: Basic costs one skill selection, Expert counts as two, and Martial Arts or Assassin (if evil) counts as three skill selections.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select eight other skills. Plus select two additional skills at level three, two at level six, one at level nine, and one at level twelve. All new skills start at first level proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%).
Cowboy: None.
Domestic: Any.
Electrical: Any, but each skill counts as two selections.
Espionage: Wilderness Survival only.
Mechanical: Any, but each skill counts as two selections.
Medical: First Aid only.
Military: Any.
Physical: Any, except Boxing, Wrestling, or Acrobatics.
Pilot: Any (+5%).
Pilot Related: Any (+5%).
Rogue: Any (+5%).
Science: Any (+10%).
Technical: Any (+10%).
Weapon Proficiencies: Any.
Wilderness: Any.

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select five secondary skills from those listed, excluding those marked "None." These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in parentheses. All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: Work overalls, set of nice clothes, tinted goggles, sunglasses, multi-optics band, magnifying glass, pocket flashlight, large flashlight, six signal flares, mini-tool kit, knapsack, backpack, 1D4 small sacks, one large sack, pocket mirror, silver cross, eight wooden stakes and mallet, canteen, binoculars, air filter and gas mask, pocket laser distancer, pocket digital disc recorder/player for recording his observations, and a hand-held computer. Note: The Techno-Shifter does not tend to favor the aviator suits common to Techno-Wizards. They are generally much too grim for such frivolity. However, some will still don the aviator suits to conceal their true nature.

One suit of light M.D.C. body armor that has two special TW features of the player's choice, excluding Invisibility and Impervious to Energy. Cannot start out with "Ghost Armor" but may be added later at player's discretion.

Weapons include a survival knife, lesser Elemental energy rifle, and energy pistol with two extra clips of ammunition.

The vehicle of choice is usually a light M.D.C. pickup truck used to haul their summoning platforms.

Money: The Techno-Shifter starts with 1D6x100 in credit, 1D4x1000 in black market items, and 2D4x1000 in crystals and gems.

Cybernetics: Starts with none and will avoid getting cybernetics except for medical reasons. May consider getting Necro-Tech bionics if desired.

Special Techno-Shifter Powers

Summoning Magic

The Techno-Shifter can build amazing machines that have the power to pluck supernatural creatures from their native dimensions, and make them appear before the character! Perhaps even more amazing is that the machine grants the Techno-Shifter control over these monsters, at least for a limited amount of time.

These machines come in a variety of shapes and sizes, depending on the outlook and personal style of the Techno-Shifter and the type of creature to be summoned. However, all of these devices have the following in common. They must be some sort of platform that provides enough room for the summoning Techno-Shifter to stand upon. The Techno-Shifter stands upon a protective circle that has precious gems and quartz about the circumference, and wires and cables leading from various points on the circle to the portal.

When the platform is activated, a Rift tears open immediately before the Techno-Shifter and a being then steps through the Rift into our world. The summoned creature is unable to enter the circle where the Techno-Shifter stands, while the Techno-Shifter enjoys a bonus of +6 to save versus any attacks the creature may level, and is immune to its Horror Factor. As soon as the Techno-Shifter leaves the circle, he is vulnerable to any and all attacks of the summoned creature, and re-entering the circular area will do no good. Note that the Techno-Shifter can make the circular area as large as he desires, and can include others, such as other summoned creatures or fellow adventurers, within its protection.

As soon as the summoned creature appears, a battle of wills ensues. To save versus submission, the summoned being must roll above the Techno-Shifter's M.E. three out of five times. Rolls are made on a 20-sided die and the M.E. attribute bonuses and bonuses to save versus mind control are added to creature's roll to save. The higher the Techno-Shifter's M.E., the more difficult it is to save. A natural, unmodified 20 is always a save. If the summoned being fails to save, then it is totally obedient to the Techno-Shifter, obeying all commands except to reveal its true name or to commit suicide.

If the summoned being wins the battle of wills, the Techno-Shifter may attempt to force the creature back through the portal. The being must make a saving throw versus ritual magic (16 plus any bonuses the character has gained) in order to remain in this world. Of course, if the creature does not want to stay, it can leave voluntarily. Elementals will always leave. If the summoned being makes that saving throw, it is free to do as it pleases, except enter the protected circle. This is where having helpers can be of great assistance to a Techno-Shifter. A Boom Gun can be quite persuasive to even the most powerful of creatures!

Lesser beings can try again to break free from control after one month has passed, but at that point the creature has a bonus of +1 to its saving throw versus submission, as the being has had time to observe and study its master. For every month that the creature does not challenge its master, it acquires an additional +1, for a total possible bonus of +10. If the being loses its challenge, it loses all bonuses to save and must wait another month before it can start the process again.

A greater being can try to break free from control after two weeks have passed, with a bonus of +1 to its saving throw versus submission. Greater beings get a bonus every two weeks, and can have an accumulated bonus of +14! This makes keeping greater beings under control for a long time quite risky.

There are other factors that can break the Techno-Shifter's control. The submissive being may roll to break free of his master's control each time one of the following situations occur, even if it is the same day. As always, the creature must roll over the Techno-Shifter's M.E. attribute three out of five times to win this renewed battle of wills.

- The Techno-Shifter is unreasonably cruel; +1 to save.
- The Techno-Shifter humiliates or makes the creature extremely angry; +2 to save.
- The Techno-Shifter uses deadly force against the being; +8 to save.
- The command is repugnant; +2 to save.
- The command is extremely repugnant or strictly contrary to the being's alignment; +6 to save.
- The submissive being is commanded to kill a loved one; +10 to save.
- If commanded to commit suicide, it does not have to obey and is +16 to save.

The Techno-Shifter is able to release its servants at any time. However, what the former slave does then is up to the G.M. Some, like Elementals (unless it has Elemental brethren entrapped in TS devices the Techno-Shifter owns), will leave. Others, like demons or particularly malignant entities, may attack or torment their former master. Should the Techno-Shifter die, all summoned beings are immediately released, except those entrapped within TS devices.

The Techno-Shifter has the following control limits:

First Level: One lesser being can be controlled.

Second Level: Same as first.

Third Level: Same as first.

Fourth Level: Two lesser beings can be controlled.

Fifth Level: Two lesser beings or one greater being can be controlled.

Sixth Level: Same as fifth level.

Seventh Level: Three lesser beings or one greater being and one lesser being.

Eighth Level: Same as seventh.

Ninth Level: Four lesser beings, two greater beings, or one greater and two lesser.

Tenth Level: Same as ninth.

Eleventh Level: Five lesser beings, two greater beings and one lesser, or one greater and three lesser.

Twelfth Level: Same as eleventh.

Thirteenth Level: Same as eleventh.

Fourteenth Level: Six lesser beings, three greater beings, two greater beings and two lesser, or one greater and four lesser.

Fifteenth Level: Same as Fourteenth.



TS Summoning Devices

These are descriptions of the summoning devices/platforms that are available to the Techno-Shifter. Note that some of them require spells that the Techno-Shifter must acquire sometime in the future at his expense. Additionally, a Techno-Shifter may summon as many beings as desired (assuming he has the P.P.E. and resources), but may not be able to control all of them; see the control limits above. These devices can be used more than once, but must be broken down in order to be moved, and one-half of the original P.P.E. creation cost must be spent to reactivate the platform when it is reconstructed. A non-Techno-Shifter may be able to use a summoning platform,

but only after receiving explicit instructions from the device's creator and expending double the amount of P.P.E. or I.S.P. Even then, the success rate is only 66%.

Summon Lesser Entities: This summoning platform will allow the Techno-Shifter to summon the following types of entities/entity-like energy beings: Poltergeists, Syphons, Haunting Entities, Tectonic Entities, Lesser and Common Astral Entities, and similar, less powerful beings. Standing in the designated circle and expending 100 P.P.E. or 200 I.S.P. activates this device.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 200. Spells Needed: Summon Entity, Protection Circle: Simple, Control/Enslave Entity. Physical Requirements: A spherical quartz crystal worth 1500 credits, plus 1D4x1000 credits in parts. Time: 1D4 days for initial construction, 3D4 hours if rebuilding it.

Summon Greater Entities: This summoning platform will allow the Techno-Shifter to summon the following types of entities/entity-like energy beings: Possessing Entities, Loas, Greater Astral Entities, Beings from the Dreamstream, Rift Entities, and similar, powerful beings. Standing in the designated circle and expending 150 P.P.E. (800 for Rift Entities) or 300 I.S.P. (1600 for Rift Entities) activates this device. Rift Entities cannot be controlled for longer than 5 minutes. They are summoned only as a final component for a Rift-Entity device. The Techno-Shifter had better hope that he rolls successfully against his TW Device Construction Skill!

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 350. Spells Needed: Summon Entity, Protection Circle: Superior, Control/Enslave Entity, Ensorcel. Physical Requirements: A spherical quartz crystal worth 10,000 credits, plus 1D6x1000 credits in parts. Time: 2D4 days for initial construction, 3D4 hours if rebuilding it.

Summon Lesser Elementals: This summoning platform will allow the Techno-Shifter to summon the following types of Elementals: Minor Elementals of all types, Leaf Rustlers, Phantoms, Little Mud Mounds, Flame Friends, and Little Ice Monsters. Standing in the designated circle and expending 150 P.P.E. or 300 I.S.P. for Minor Elementals activates this device. Only 75 P.P.E. or 150 I.S.P. needs to be expended for the other lesser Elementals.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 220. Spells Needed: Summon Lesser Being, Protection Circle: Simple, Constrain Being. Physical Requirements: An emerald, an onyx, a ruby, and a sapphire, worth 500 credits apiece, plus 1D6x1000 credits in parts. Time: 1D6 days for initial construction, 3D4 hours if rebuilding it.

Summon Greater Elementals: This summoning platform will allow the Techno-Shifter to summon the following types of Elementals: Major Elementals of all types, Spirits of Light of all types, and Jinn of all types. Standing in the designated circle and expending 200 P.P.E. or 400 I.S.P. activates this device.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 400. Spells Needed: Summon Lesser Being, Protection Circle: Superior, Constrain Being, Ensorcel, Fingers of Wind, Throwing Stones, Ignite Fire, and Create Water. Physical Requirements: An emerald, an onyx, a ruby, and a sapphire, worth 5000 credits apiece, an iron wire to be laid about the circumference of the mage, plus 3D4x1000 credits in parts. Time: 2D6 days for initial construction, 4D6 hours if rebuilding it.

Summon Lesser Demon or Deevil: This summoning platform will allow the Techno-Shifter to summon the beings known as lesser Deevils or Demons, the lesser Russian Archaic

Demons, the Dar'ota, Dimensional Ghouls, Malignous, Gargoyles/Gurgoyles, and similar lesser-powered supernatural beings. Standing in the designated circle and expending 150 P.P.E. or 300 I.S.P. activates this device.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 250. Spells Needed: Summon Lesser Being, Protection Circle: Simple, Constrain Being, and Ensorcel. Physical Requirements: A diamond worth at least 5000 credits, a silver wire laid about the circumference of the circle, plus 2D4x1000 credits in parts. Time: 2D4 days for initial construction, 3D4+2 hours if rebuilding it.

Summon Greater Demon or Deevil: This summoning platform will allow the Techno-Shifter to summon the beings known as greater Deevils or Demons, the greater Russian Archaic Demons, Spider Demons, Gargoyle Lords/Mages, and similar greater supernatural beings. Standing in the designated circle and expending 300 P.P.E. or 600 I.S.P. activates this device.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 400. Spells Needed: Summon Lesser Being, Protection Circle: Superior, Constrain Being, Ensorcel, Domination, and Expel Demons. Physical Requirements: A diamond and emerald worth at least 10,000 credits each, a silver wire laid about the circumference of the circle, plus 3D4x1000 credits in parts. Time: 3D4 days for initial construction, 5D4 hours if rebuilding it.

Techno-Shifter Devices

The Techno-Shifter, like his cousin, the Techno-Wizard, is able to add an element of magic to technology. Unlike the Techno-Wizard, the Techno-Shifter does not weave a variety of spells into a conventional device for a desired effect. Rather, the Techno-Shifter imprisons an energy being of some sort within a device, drawing upon its natural abilities and magic for a desired effect. This new technology is disturbingly reminiscent of the dark art of Bio-Wizardry. Some speculate that Techno-Shifting is, in fact, the first step towards rediscovering Bio-Wizardry and Rune Magic. It differs from Bio-Wizardry, however, in that the being imprisoned can only be an energy creature, and is not harmed or changed in any way, and the device draws upon abilities the creature already has.

TS devices come with many inherent dangers. First, the entrapped being is usually quite unhappy with its situation. If the device is damaged, there is a chance that the enslaved being will escape and attack whoever was using the device! The chart below shows the chances of escape (note that for an immured entity, the device must be totally destroyed before the entity can escape):

Roll every time the device is struck.

- 91-100% of M.D.C. remaining — 0% chance of escaping.
- 76-90% of M.D.C. remaining — 10% chance of escaping.
- 51-75% of M.D.C. remaining — 25% chance of escaping.
- 26-50% of M.D.C. remaining — 50% chance of escaping.
- 01-25% of M.D.C. remaining — 90% chance of escaping.
- 0% of M.D.C. remaining — 100% chance of escaping!

Also, users of TS devices powered by Elementals need to fear Warlocks and other Elementals. Most will do whatever they can to free their imprisoned brethren. Most adventurers would be wise to simply hand any Elemental devices over to the offended character.

Even constructing a TS device can be a dangerous activity. At the end of the construction/enchantment of the device, the Techno-Shifter rolls against his TW Device Construction Skill. If the roll is a failure, the summoned creature is free. The Techno-Shifter then has to deal with a useless device and perhaps an angry energy being.

TS devices have the advantage of being able to be used by anyone. Even the Entity-Powered Devices, which need P.P.E. or I.S.P. from an outside source, can be powered by a non-magical, non-psyched character.

Entity-Powered Devices

Probably the most common and safest of TS devices, Entity-Powered, or EP, Devices enslave an entity of some sort and harness its power. This feat is primarily accomplished through the Immure Entity spell. This ancient spell, recovered by a group of Techno-Wizards, was the catalyst for the creation of the Techno-Shifter O.C.C. A Techno-Shifter will never share or teach this spell to a non-Techno-Shifter.

Immure Entity

Range: Touch or 20 feet (6.1 m).

Duration: Instant; imprisonment is indefinite.

Saving Throw: Standard.

P.P.E.: 200

Level: Considered a Spell of Legend.

This invocation is not a summoning ritual, but is extremely useful in directing and controlling supernatural "entities." Immure Entity can actually imprison an entity inside an object. The act of imprisonment can be punishment, or as part of a scheme. An imprisoned entity still retains all of its abilities, although it is trapped. Consequently, a seemingly harmless ring or medal could contain a Poltergeist, Trapped Entity, or a Possessing Entity, which can still use its abilities to help or hurt. The immured entity must obey the mage who imprisoned it, and cannot strike out at him while imprisoned.

There are only two ways to free an immured entity. By convincing the mage who trapped it to release it by canceling the magic, or by destroying the object in which it was imprisoned. To prevent easy escape, the mage will usually use a hard, durable substance, such as metals, stones, gems, or M.D.C. materials, but any non-living substance can be used.

Use of this spell in conjunction with other spells and rituals can have a number of different effects. Some possible EP Devices are listed below. See also the Entity Bio-Wizard Weapons in **Rifts® World Book 21: Splynn Dimensional Market™**. A Techno-Shifter may be able to duplicate most of those devices, although the device will likely be weaker than the Bio-Wizard device it is based on.

Like those Bio-Wizard creations, all EP Devices need P.P.E. or I.S.P. from others. Each attempt to draw upon another person's I.S.P. or P.P.E. is considered a psychic attack and the intended victim must roll to save versus psionic attack. A successful roll to save means that the entity did not get any energy and the entity must use its own energy. A failed saving throw means that the entity can steal 20 I.S.P. or 5 P.P.E. from that person. A person, such as the device's user, may give energy up voluntarily, in which case there is no saving throw.



Ghost Armor

Body armor and power armor up to eight feet (2.4 m) tall can be enchanted to become Ghost Armor. Ghost Armor is armor that has an immured Tectonic or Possessing Entity. Such armor can be further enchanted with up to four standard TW enhancements. Only one entity can occupy a suit of armor at any given time.

Tectonic Ghost Armor

This armor can be animated and act independently of a wearer! This type of Ghost Armor typically has three uses:

1. As a soldier/helper.
2. As a thief/assassin. The armor is sold to or stolen by an unsuspecting character. When the character is defenseless, the armor will animate, attack/kill the character, steal his items, and return to its true master.
3. As a last line of defense. If the armor's wearer is knocked unconscious, dies, or slips into a coma, the armor can animate and take the body to a location away from harm.

Armor that is not being worn and is inhabited by a Tectonic Entity is considered to have double the M.D.C. of a normal suit of such armor, as the entity will continue fighting until every scrap has been destroyed. The entity will fight on after losing its head, having an arm ripped off, or with a huge, smoldering hole in its chest. The entity does not feel pain.

Quick Statistics:

I.Q.: 10, M.E.: 10, M.A.: 10, P.S.: 36, P.P.: 10, P.E.: N/A, P.B.: N/A, Spd.: 30 (20 mph/32 km).

M.D.C.: Depends on the suit of armor. 1D6x10+30 for the entity itself.

Horror Factor: 14, if its opponents realize its true nature.

P.P.E.: 10

Natural Abilities: Impervious to poison, toxins, drugs, gases, heat, fire, and cold. Normal vision. Can fly in energy form and possess inanimate objects. See **Rifts® Conversion Book One** for a complete description.

Psionic Abilities: I.S.P. base is 20, but the entity can draw I.S.P. and P.P.E. from others as stated above. Empathy, Mind Block, Presence Sense, See the Invisible, See Aura, Sixth Sense, Telepathy, and Telekinesis at 4th level ability.

Magic Abilities: None.

Combat: Four by hand to hand combat or three by psionics.

Bonuses: +1 to initiative, +2 to strike, parry, and dodge, critical strike on unmodified 20, +1 to save versus psionics, +2 to save versus magic, and +10 to save versus Horror Factor.

Damage: As per weapon, or may inflict 4D6 M.D. from punches and kicks.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 120. **Spells Needed:** Immure Entity, Ensorcel, and Transferal. **Physical Requirements:** A suit of armor, several quartz crystals worth 100 credits each, and a Tectonic Entity. **Time:** 1 day.

Possessing Entity Ghost Armor

This armor's only purpose is to dominate its wearer. The Techno-Shifter may have any number of reasons for this. This type of armor gives no bonuses to its wearer. After the victim dons the armor, the entity will begin attempting to gain control. After gaining control, it will proceed with whatever mission its true owner had ordered. See **Rifts® Conversion Book One** for details on this malignant entity.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 150. **Spells Needed:** Immure Entity, Ensorcel, and Transferal. **Physical Requirements:** A suit of armor, several quartz crystals worth 100 credits each, and a Possessing Entity. **Time:** 1 day.

False Rune Weapons

These TS Entity-Powered weapons have an immured Syphon Entity. They are not indestructible, or as powerful as even the weakest Rune Weapons. They usually take the form of swords or staves, but any ancient melee weapon is possible. Many Techno-Shifters carve strange looking symbols along the weapon in an attempt to make it look like a true Rune Weapon.

Weight: Same as a regular, non-magical item.

Mega-Damage: M.D. equivalent of S.D.C. weapon. A sword that does 2D6 S.D.C. would now inflict 2D6 M.D.

M.D.C. of the Weapon: Depends on the weapon. If S.D.C. materials were used, then the weapon will be S.D.C., if M.D.C. materials were used, then it will be M.D.C.

Powers: Unlimited Telepathy (no cost) between the device and its owner, Empathy, Empathic Transmission, Mind Block, Presence Sense, See Aura, See the Invisible, Sixth Sense, Levitation, Bio-Manipulation, and Hypnotic Suggestion. Equal to a sixth level psychic.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 600. **Spells Needed:** Immure Entity, Ensorcel, Transferal, Power Weapon, Energize Spell. **Physical Requirements:** A weapon of some sort, but which cannot be made of plastic or other synthetic materials, a single, large quartz crystal worth at least 1000 credits, and a Syphon Entity. **Time:** 3 days.

Rift Entity Devices

A Rift Entity is an incredibly powerful, utterly alien being first described in Rifts Index 1. Its motives and thought processes are utterly alien and unknowable. No one, including the Techno-Shifter, knows the Rift Entity's origin. It was entirely by accident that Techno-Shifters discovered that they could summon these creatures and use them as components for very powerful devices. Strangely, the beings do not seem to mind imprisonment, as it may give them temporary release from their maddening existence, but if freed they go on a destructive rampage that will last 4D6 minutes before they must leave this dimension.

Ley Line Energy Rifle

TS Ley Line Energy Rifles fire bolts of ley line energy just like those unleashed during a ley line storm. These blue-white lightning bolts can be tremendously effective against creatures of magic.

Weight: 10 lbs (4.5 kg).

Mega-Damage: Special. Humans and D-Bees struck by the bolt suffer the following consequences: 1D4 S.D.C. damage, lose initiative and one melee attack, lose 1D6 P.P.E., and is teleported 2D6x10 yards from its current location (nowhere innately dangerous, like the sky). True creatures of magic, like the dragon, sphinx, gods and godlings, and many demons, lose initiative and two melee attacks, suffer 4D6 M.D. and lose 6D6 P.P.E. points. Getting hit by such a bolt may (44%) transform any creature into their true shape. The effects are cumulative. For example, should an Elemental get

hit twice by this weapon in one round, it will lose four attacks, 12D6 P.P.E., etc.

M.D.C. of the Weapon: 22.

Payload: 10 shots per day.

Range: 200 feet (61 meters).

Rate of Fire: Equal to the user's melee attacks.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 1000. Spells Needed: Immure Entity, Energy Field, Ensorcel, Transferal, Power Weapon, and Power Bolt. Physical Requirements: Energy rifle, a diamond worth 50,000 credits, and a Rift Entity. Time: 4D6 days.

Rift Generator

A bulky, immobile device that the Techno-Shifter can use to safely traverse the Megaverse! The Rift Generator opens a dimensional gateway to any dimension that the Techno-Shifter has visited before, with 100% accuracy. If the Techno-Shifter has never been there, but has extensive knowledge of the dimension, a Rift opens that is 78% likely to be the correct dimension. If the Techno-Shifter has only second-hand knowledge of the dimension, the Rift is only 36% likely to be the correct dimension. Luckily, the gateway will remain open, as a two-way dimensional portal, for as long as the Techno-Shifter desires. Of course, while the Techno-Shifter is exploring the new dimension, something may decide to explore his dimension. Unlike most TS devices, the Rift Generator needs an infusion of 100 P.P.E. or 200 I.S.P. to activate.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 2000. Spells Needed: Immure Entity, Energy Field, Protection Circle: Superior, Ensorcel, Transferal, Dimensional Portal. Physical Requirements: Crystals and jewels worth no less than 1 million credits, a Rift Entity, plus 1D6x10,000 credits worth of other materials. Time: 1D6 months.

Elemental Devices

TS Devices powered by Elementals are among the most powerful and versatile in the Techno-Shifter's arsenal. With Elementals acting as a supernatural power supply, the Techno-Shifter is able to make many powerful creations.

As mentioned before, using TS Elemental Devices can be hazardous to one's health. All Elementals and Warlocks can automatically sense the entrapped Elemental. If a Techno-Shifter fails a battle of wills with an Elemental and has an Elemental-powered device in the area, the Elemental will not leave and may fight to the death to free its comrade. Also, note that these devices do not utilize the Immure Entity spell, and as such, the entrapped Elemental may escape if the device is damaged.

Elemental Mystic Generator

Creates an electrical generator that is powered by a Fire Elemental to create electricity.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 20 for a small generator that could power a good-size house, 50 for a medium generator that could power an office building, and 200 for a large generator that could power a small town. Spells Needed: Ensorcel, Constrain Being, Energy Field, Energize Spell, and Impervious to Energy. Physical Requirements: A Flame Friend, Minor Fire Elemental, or Major Fire Elemental, and 2, 4, or 8 rubies worth 10,000 credits each, plus 5000, 10,000, or 20,000 credits' worth of equipment. Duration of

Charge: Indefinite. Time: 2D4 days, 4D4 days, or 2D4 weeks, respectively.

Elemental Projection Rifles

Elementals can be built into weapons that can have a variety of effects. These weapons' effects are altered by ley lines and nexus points in the same way a ley line or nexus point would affect a spell. They are so expensive because they are independent of an external power source. Note that they do not need to be "rifles" but can be built in a variety of different designs.

1. Air Elemental Rifle (Lightning Rifle): An imprisoned Minor Air Elemental powers this rifle to produce a lightning bolt.

Weight: 8 lbs (3.6 kg).

M.D.C. of the Weapon: 18.

Mega-Damage: 3D6 M.D. per bolt. Four bolts per melee.

Payload: 20 bolts per day.

Range: 1000 feet (305 meters).

Rate of Fire: Equal to the user's melee attacks.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 100. Spells Needed: Ensorcel, Constrain Being, Energy Field, Power Weapon, Transferal, and Call Lightning. Physical Requirements: Energy rifle, a sapphire worth 10,000 credits, and a Minor Air Elemental. Time: 3D6 days.

2. Air Elemental Rifle: An imprisoned Minor Air Elemental powers this rifle to produce an effect identical to the Wind Rush spell.

Weight: 8 lbs (3.6 kg).

M.D.C. of the Weapon: 18.

Mega-Damage: Can be directed at a specific target or general sweep (maximum width: 20 feet/6 m). Any caught in the wind are helpless and unable to attack or move forward for one melee round. It takes an additional melee to recover, and 1D8 to recover all of the loose items blown away.

Saving Throw: A roll of 18-20 saves one from losing balance or losing items.

Payload: 10 rushes per day.

Range: 120 feet (36.6 meters).

Rate of Fire: Equal to the user's melee attacks.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 100. Spells Needed: Ensorcel, Constrain Being, Energy Field, Power Weapon, Transferal, and Wind Rush. Physical Requirements: Energy rifle, a sapphire worth 10,000 credits, and a Minor Air Elemental. Time: 3D6 days.

3. Air Elemental Rifle (Wind Cannon): An imprisoned Major Air Elemental powers this rifle to produce a Wind Blast.

Weight: 14 lbs (6.3 kg).

M.D.C. of the Weapon: 25.

Mega-Damage: 2D4x10 M.D. per blast. Two blasts per melee.

Payload: 6 blasts per day.

Range: 2000 feet (610 meters).

Rate of Fire: Equal to the user's melee attacks.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 300. Spells Needed: Ensorcel, Constrain Being, Energy Field, Power Weapon, Transferal, and Wind Rush. Physical Requirements: Energy rifle, a sapphire worth 50,000 credits, and a Major Air Elemental. Time: 2D6 weeks.

4. Earth Elemental Rifle: An imprisoned Minor Earth Elemental powers this rifle that fires stones in rapid succession, like a machinegun.

Weight: 10 lbs (4.5 kg).

M.D.C. of the Weapon: 20.

Mega-Damage: 4D4 M.D. per attack.

Payload: 16 attacks per day.

Range: 800 feet (244 meters).

Rate of Fire: Equal to the user's melee attacks.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 100. Spells Needed: Ensorcel, Constrain Being, Energy Field, Power Weapon, Transferal, and Throwing Stones. Physical Requirements: Energy rifle, an onyx worth 10,000 credits, and a Minor Earth Elemental. Time: 3D6 days.

5. Earth Elemental Rifle (Sand Blaster): An imprisoned Minor Earth Elemental powers this rifle that unleashes a Sandstorm.

Weight: 10 lbs (4.5 kg).

M.D.C. of the Weapon: 20.

Mega-Damage: None. Instead, a Sandstorm erupts from the muzzle, like a flamethrower. Victims caught in the blast will find their vision impaired to a distance of about 5 feet (1.5 m) and the stinging sand hurts unprotected eyes and flesh. Victims lose initiative and two melee attacks, and are -5 to strike, parry, and dodge. Radar and motion detectors are useless. Speed is reduced by 75%, talking without covering the mouth is impossible, hearing is reduced by half, and 1D4 S.D.C. is inflicted.

Payload: 10 attacks per day.

Range: 200 feet (61 meters), in a conical spray.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the user's melee attacks.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 100. Spells Needed: Ensorcel, Constrain Being, Energy Field, Power Weapon, Transferal, and Barrage. Physical Requirements: Energy rifle, an onyx worth 10,000 credits, and a Minor Earth Elemental. Time: 3D6 days.

6. Earth Elemental Rifle (Medusa Rifle): An imprisoned Major Earth Elemental powers this rifle that emits a petrification ray!

Weight: 20 lbs (9 kg).

M.D.C. of the Weapon: 28.

Mega-Damage: Special. Victims must save versus magic (12 or better) or be transformed into a stone statue! The effects are instant and permanent, unless a mage casts Stone to Flesh on the affected character.

Payload: 1 attack per day.

Range: 100 feet (30.5 meters).

Rate of Fire: One shot per day.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 800. Spells Needed: Ensorcel, Constrain Being, Energy Field, Transferal, Power Weapon, and Stone to Flesh. Physical Requirements: Energy rifle, an onyx worth 50,000 credits, and a Major Earth Elemental. Time: 2D6 weeks.

7. Flame Thrower: An imprisoned Minor Fire Elemental powers this rifle to produce a mystical flamethrower.

Weight: 8 lbs (3.6 kg).

M.D.C. of the Weapon: 18.

Mega-Damage: 6D6 M.D. to an area of 6 feet (1.8 m).

Saving Throw: Targets are -2 to dodge.

Payload: 12 blasts per day.

Range: 120 feet (36.6 meters).

Rate of Fire: Equal to the user's melee attacks.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 100. Spells Needed: Ensorcel, Constrain Being, Energy Field, Power Weapon, Transferal, and Fire Gout. Physical Requirements: Energy rifle, a ruby worth 10,000 credits, and a Minor Fire Elemental. Time: 3D6 days.

8. Fire Blaster: An imprisoned Minor Fire Elemental powers this rifle to shot fireballs.

Weight: 10 lbs (4.5 kg).

M.D.C. of the Weapon: 16.

Mega-Damage: 4D6.

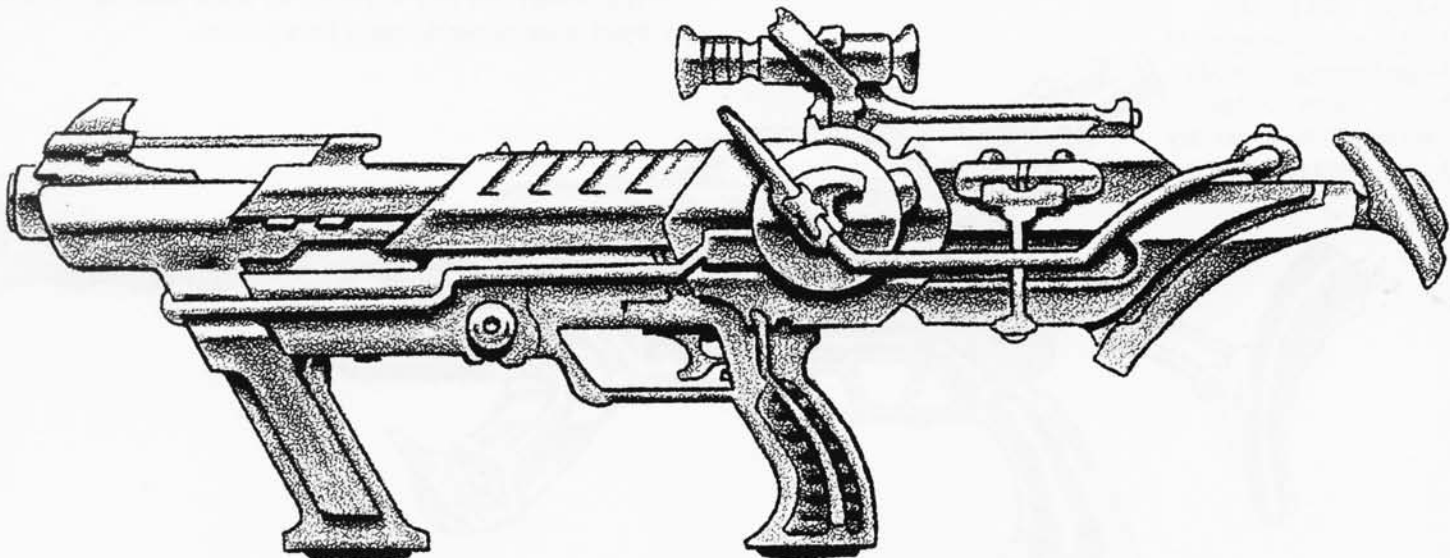
Saving Throw: Dodge.

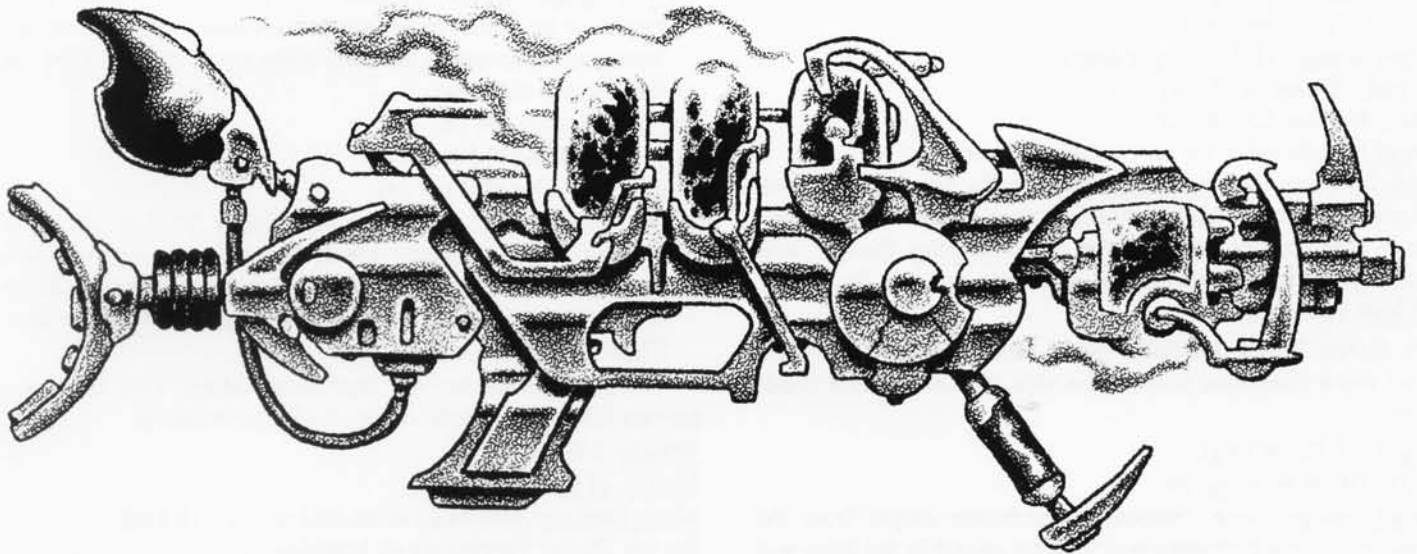
Payload: 10 blasts per day.

Range: 600 feet (183 meters).

Rate of Fire: Equal to the user's melee attacks.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 100. Spells Needed: Ensorcel, Constrain Being, Energy Field, Power Weapon, Transferal, and Fireball. Physical Requirements: Energy rifle, a ruby worth 10,000 credits, and a Minor Fire Elemental. Time: 3D6 days.





9. Lava Cannon: An imprisoned Major Fire Elemental powers this rifle to produce a jet of lava!

Weight: 26 lbs (11.7 kg).

M.D.C. of the Weapon: 32.

Mega-Damage: Lava erupts from this cannon, and affects a 6 foot radius (1.8 m). Damage is 1D6x10 for the first round, and 3D6 M.D. for the next 1D6 rounds as the lava cools. Any optics that may have been covered by the lava are rendered useless, as the lava hardens to volcanic rock. Any unprotected beings also suffer -2 to strike, parry, and dodge due to the intense pain and constricted movement.

Saving Throw: -2 to dodge.

Payload: 5 blasts per day.

Range: 200 feet (61 meters).

Rate of Fire: Equal to the user's melee attacks.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 400. Spells Needed: Ensorcel, Constrain Being, Energy Field, Power Weapon, Transferral, and Firequake. Physical Requirements: Energy rifle, a ruby worth 50,000 credits, and a Major Fire Elemental. Time: 3D6 weeks.

10. Ice Pistol: An imprisoned Minor Water Elemental powers this sidearm to expel shards of ice.

Weight: 6 lbs (2.7 kg).

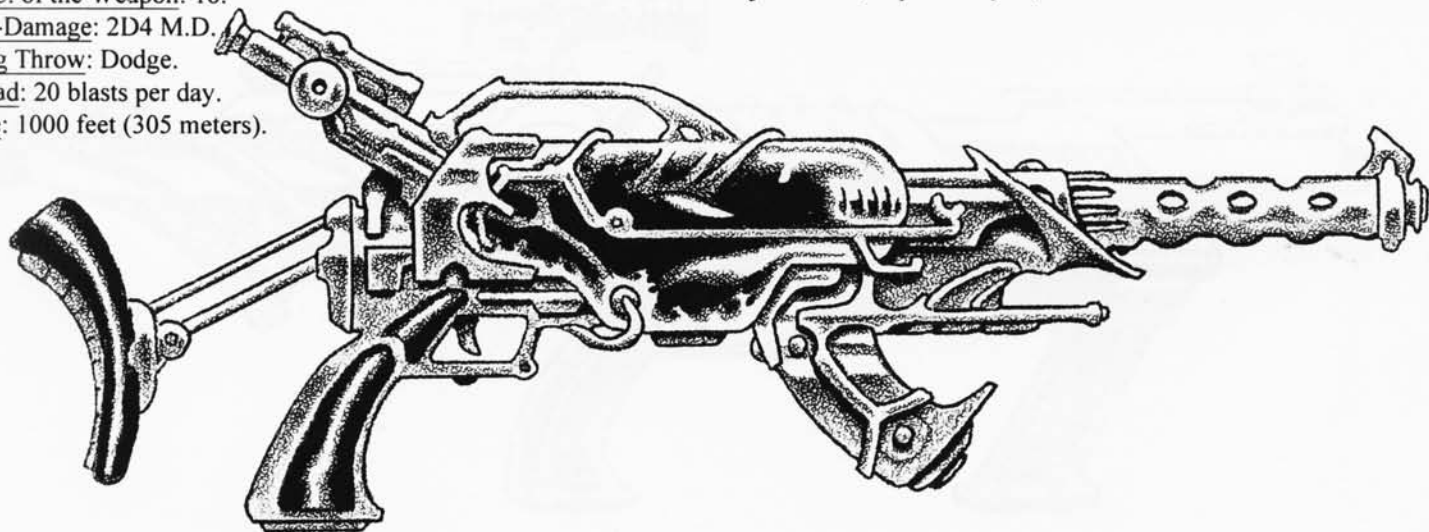
M.D.C. of the Weapon: 16.

Mega-Damage: 2D4 M.D.

Saving Throw: Dodge.

Payload: 20 blasts per day.

Range: 1000 feet (305 meters).



Rate of Fire: Equal to the user's melee attacks.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 100. Spells Needed: Ensorcel, Constrain Being, Energy Field, Power Weapon, Transferral, and Ice. Physical Requirements: Energy rifle, an emerald worth 10,000 credits, and a Minor Water Elemental. Time: 3D6 days.

11. Water Elemental Rifle: An imprisoned Minor Water Elemental powers this rifle to shoot a stream of water.

Weight: 10 lbs (4.5 kg).

M.D.C. of the Weapon: 18.

Mega-Damage: None. Instead, this makes an excellent anti-vampire weapon. Does 6D6 H.P. to the undead per blast.

Saving Throw: Dodge.

Payload: 30 blasts per day.

Range: 600 feet (183 meters).

Rate of Fire: Equal to the user's melee attacks.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 100. Spells Needed: Ensorcel, Constrain Being, Energy Field, Power Weapon, Transferral, and Create Water. Physical Requirements: Energy rifle, an emerald worth 10,000 credits, and a Minor Water Elemental. Time: 3D6 days.

12. Water Elemental Rifle: An imprisoned Major Water Elemental powers this rifle to project an arctic blast that encases an object in ice, as per the spell, Encase in Ice.

Weight: 22 lbs (9.9 kg).

M.D.C. of the Weapon: 28.

Mega-Damage: None. Instead, this attack will encase an object or body part in ice that has 10 M.D.C. and inflicts 4D6 S.D.C. to exposed flesh. The ice will remain until it is broken or melts.

Saving Throw: Dodge.

Payload: 20 blasts per day.

Range: 600 feet (183 meters).

Rate of Fire: Equal to the user's melee attacks.

Initial Creation Cost in P.P.E.: 300. Spells Needed: Ensorcel, Constrain Being, Energy Field, Power Weapon, Transferal, Ice, and Wind Rush. Physical Requirements: Energy rifle, an emerald worth 50,000 credits, and a Major Water Elemental. Time: 2D6 weeks.

There are numerous other devices that the Techno-Shifters may create. They are almost certainly at least involved in the creation of Glittermounts and TW Ironhorses (See **Rifts® New West™**). Many speculate that the feared Juggernauts that Tolkeen has recently unleashed upon the world are creations of the Techno-Shifter. This is unlikely, since such a terrible feat is likely beyond even the Techno-Shifter's formidable abilities.

The Thirteenth Hour



Optional Source Material for Rifts®

By Rich Wulf

From the Journals of Sir David Stelheim

There are certainly more glorious assignments for a young knight than to be assigned guardian of a monastery. In fact, it was a punishment. I was a temperamental youth, and tended to argue with my betters. It was expected that I would live out my life in obscurity as guardian to the cloistered mystics, but soon I found myself thrown into the center of events that would shake our tiny kingdom.

Elizabeth Kintaro was one of the few women who lived among the mystics, and she was as new to the order as I. I admit I had lost my heart to her, and found myself making pathetic excuses to stand on duty wherever she happened to be meditating

or working. She did not notice my nervous smiles, so absorbed was she in her work. How fortunate that she was, as well, for her studies soon led to an incredible discovery. This particular order of mystics specialized in dealing with the powers of numbers and time, but their calculations were becoming increasingly inaccurate in the last few months. Elizabeth had found the reason why. Time, as we knew it, had been altered.

Madness? Perhaps. The same skepticism that echoes through your mind now was reflected upon the faces of the monks upon hearing Elizabeth's theories. I supported her despite their cynicism, but I fear perhaps I did not do so entirely out of intellectual curiosity. Unfortunately, my support amounted to little, as I was an unwelcome visitor. Though technically I was a guardian, in truth my presence had been forced upon the order so that my lord, a man prone to superstition and wary of magic, could keep an eye on the supposedly peaceful mystics. Elizabeth pressed on nonetheless, promising the order that she could indeed prove her theories. She was given the chance to do so. For my support of her claims, I was allowed to participate in the ritual.

On that fateful night, at fifty-nine minutes and fifty-nine seconds after midnight, our perceptions of reality were changed forever. Elizabeth finished the final incantation and in an instant, the world became a frozen sculpture. With the exception of ourselves, all around us had become immobile and discolored, as if encased in grey amber. The air was difficult to breathe and as thick as syrup. The monastery reverberated with a strange, disorienting whine that I was to later learn was the normal sounds of the night frozen for a single instant in time. Elizabeth, myself, and the three monks who had participated in the ritual were unaffected. We looked at one another in wonder.

"How have you done this?" I asked Elizabeth.

"I did not," she replied. "I discovered it this way."

"Found it?" asked another of our order, an aged wizard named Yosef Killgrave. "What is 'it'?"

"This place," she said, waving her hand to indicate our surroundings. "This time. As I have told you, time has been altered. A single hour has been stolen from the night. A Thirteenth Hour."

"Nonsense," another man scoffed. "There has never been a thirteenth hour!"

"Perhaps there was," Elizabeth replied. "Man was not always master of the world. Perhaps it has been gone for many ages, and we only sense it now that it is prepared to return."

"How do we escape this place?" I asked, gasping as I cut my finger on the razor-sharp edge of a flower petal. There was something claustrophobic and utterly alien about our situation, and I could not hide the fear in my voice.

"You cannot escape time, David," Elizabeth said with a bright smile. "Patience."

With that, she sat and plucked a book from her pocket. She calmly read as the rest of us explored the strange place our familiar monastery had become. I stayed by Elizabeth's side for a time but could not help my curiosity. I stepped through the open door into the hallway, where I found a young maidservant frozen in mid-step, a tray of steaming soup in her hands. Even the steam was frozen in place. When I passed my hand through the cloud, it rippled and quickly returned to its original form like the surface of a pond.

I was carried away by the wonder of frozen time and was thus badly startled when the maid screamed in terror, dropping the tray and shattering the bowl. I apologized and helped her clean the mess, then quickly excused myself in embarrassment as Elizabeth chuckled from the doorway. When the hour ended, everything had returned to normal. To the maid's eye I had sprung into being out of nowhere. Extraordinary.

Even as my mind struggled to digest what I had seen, Elizabeth posed an even more vexing question when we met for breakfast the next morning. If an hour had truly been stolen from the night, then who had stolen it? And why were they returning it now?

No one could answer that, but we all agreed that whatever force was mighty enough to steal time was a power to be feared. I suggested we report the matter to my master, Lord Ruthgar, immediately. The mystics were wary of dealing with men of war, but I would brook no argument. If the Thirteenth Hour posed a danger to the land, Lord Ruthgar and the Order of the First Star needed to be notified. I set off to tell him what had happened at once, and was pleasantly surprised when Elizabeth set forth at my side. When I asked her why she did so when the others of the brotherhood had not, she smiled. "You offered me aid when you owed me none, David," she said. "I can only return the favor."

Lord Ruthgar was dubious when we presented the tale. Though I gave my solemn oath that we spoke the truth, I was hardly surprised by his reaction. Ruthgar feared and hated magic, and probably believed that I had, in some measure, been corrupted or fooled by the mystics. When I claimed that an hour had been stolen from the night, we were turned away to the sounds of raucous laughter.

The laughter stopped when Elizabeth wagered her life that she could prove the tale. Ruthgar was a gambling man, and so he agreed. Elizabeth offered to take him to the Thirteenth Hour, but Lord Ruthgar refused to participate in any magical rituals. Left on her own to prove her story, Elizabeth took Lord Ruthgar's favored deck of playing cards and shuffled them as she watched the clock. As the clock struck one, she vanished. Ruthgar raised a curious eyebrow, but before he could even speak, a cry erupted from the courtyard. We rushed out to find Elizabeth seated on the ground beside an elaborate house of cards. The guards reported to Lord Ruthgar that she and her creation had appeared from nowhere in the blink of an eye. Elizabeth placed Lord Ruthgar's final card and turned to us with a satisfied grin.

Ruthgar could not dispute what his eyes had shown him, and admitted that there may be some measure of truth in our tale. As we told him more, he believed us more, and eventually allowed his trusted lieutenant to accompany Elizabeth into the Thirteenth Hour to verify our claims. At the time I was glad. I did not notice the fierce light in Ruthgar's eyes. My lord did not see the danger posed by this rift in time. He only saw opportunity. Our tiny kingdom had many enemies, and Ruthgar hoped to use the Thirteenth Hour as a weapon, shipping troops or spying upon his enemies beyond observation. Elizabeth was outraged by Ruthgar's requests to escort his spies into the Thirteenth Hour so that they could scout enemy terrain. She refused any further contact with Ruthgar's knights and returned to the monastery without me.

So Ruthgar turned to me, asking if I could find another way into the Thirteenth Hour. I did not wish to defy Elizabeth, but I had sworn an oath to my lord and was forced to obey it. I had seen the ritual often enough, and knew a few mystics who were less scrupulous than Elizabeth. In time, we were able to enter the Thirteenth Hour once again.

Once our mystics had mastered the ritual, I was placed in charge of all scouting missions into the Thirteenth Hour. I was proud of the honor of the assignment, though my shadowy exploits would bring me little fame. I found the Thirteenth Hour a place of endless wonder, but the more experienced knights who traveled with me were frustrated by its limitations. The simplest object became immovable in frozen time. A group of strong warriors would find their progress halted by a simple curtain. Exhaustion came quickly from breathing the torpid atmosphere. The twisting of light and sound was disorienting and at times, quite frightening. This was not the worst of it. An even greater danger yet faced us. We would soon discover the culprits that stole an hour from the night. Rather, they would discover us.

Some months later, I was leading a scouting party of twenty Knights of the First Star, along with one of Lord Ruthgar's mystics. The small village near the castle was frozen in the amber of lost time, but we had become more or less used to the oddity. As we passed the church, I saw a flicker from the corner of my eye. At first I believed it to be a trick of the light, and moved on.

A second later, ten men were dead, slain by some slaving beast that exploded from the bowels of the church.

I am unfamiliar with demons, but this creature who sprang upon us was unlike any I ever imagined. It seemed crafted of shadow, sinew, and fear. Its bones pierced its flesh in multiple places, providing claws of jagged bone and plates of hard armor.



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I could not see much more on that first encounter; it moved too quickly and I was busy fighting for my life. The creature leapt upon me as it slew the last of the knights, jagged claws hooking deep into the flesh of my throat. It did not kill me, but merely fixed its pale white eyes on mine.

"Little man," it said. I was startled to hear it speak, its voice cloaked in a nearly indecipherable echo. "We are coming, little man. In one year, the Thirteenth Hour returns to the night, and the Children of Rodian shall return with it." It released its grip upon my throat, jagged claws tracing the front of my robes to rest above my heart. The muscles in the creature's arm tensed as it prepared to tear open my chest.

The village clock tower struck one. The demon was gone. I had survived.

When I staggered back into the castle to deliver my report, Lord Ruthgar banned further exploration of the Thirteenth Hour. He summoned my Elizabeth and the other mystics to seek their advisement. I had hoped that Elizabeth would be happy to see me, or relieved to hear I had survived certain death, but she was only angry. I had gone against the wishes of her order and used the Thirteenth Hour for my lord's gain. Despite her anger, she agreed with us on one regard. We could not ignore the threat posed by the Children of Rodian. If creatures like the one that had slain my brothers were hiding within the Thirteenth Hour and preparing to invade the world, then we had no other option but to stop them.

Exploration into the Thirteenth Hour was banned except for small scouting missions sent to find signs of more Children of Rodian. Most did not return. One man returned with hair of ghostly white, shivering uncontrollably, describing "a sea of shadow demons stretching to the ends of the sky." Ruthgar received the news gravely. The Knights of the First Star swore an oath on that day, that no demon would set foot on our lands until the last one of us was dead. With that, we began the dark business of preparing for war.

For months, we trained our armies and forged weapons of magic with which to fight the demons. We always worked in secret, carefully concealing any signs of our progress before the stroke of one o'clock so that the demons would not see what we had been up to. Lord Ruthgar forged alliances with hated enemies and buried ancient feuds to buy allies, and when nearly a year had passed, our armies stood ten thousand strong. The mystics began to train an unprecedented number of students in the ritual that opened the gate to the Thirteenth Hour. Our plan was not to wait until it was too late, but to attack the demons on their own ground, within the Thirteenth Hour.

On the eve of the anniversary of the first attack, all was ready. The mystics began the great spell, and I readied my sword. Each mystic carried five knights into the Thirteenth Hour, and when we arrived the Children of Rodian were ready. As the shattered scout had reported, the demon horde was a veritable sea of darkness. They surrounded the castle, stretching to every horizon. At the head of the great horde stood a monstrous, cackling beast wearing a talisman of bright gold, the only color I had ever seen in the Thirteenth Hour. As soon as we appeared, we knew the battle was lost. There was no way we could succeed against so many.

What did we do, you ask?

We fought. A knight does not flee in the face of adversity. A knight laughs at death. The demons seemed surprised at our bravery, for our initial attacks crushed their front ranks. After that, the battle was savage. Fighting against an unknown opponent in a world utterly alien to our own, the prospects were not bright, but we did not surrender. Four knights fell for every demon and it seemed we would be crushed before the hour had ended. The mystics were slain to a man. I saw one strike down Elizabeth and attempt to carry her away, but I slew it in turn and protected her unconscious form with all of my strength.

Lord Ruthgar himself sprang into personal combat with the one who bore the talisman. Ruthgar met the creature blow for blow but in the end the demon was stronger. The demons seemed to grow pensive and anxious, and fought with even more berserk fury as Ruthgar's battle drew to its climax. Ruthgar's sword was knocked from his hands, but he seized the demon lord about the throat just as its claw lodged deep in his abdomen. The demons cried out in triumph, and the clock struck one.

The demons were gone. I glanced around in confusion. The Thirteenth Hour was gone, and the demons had remained within it. Had they decided not to invade?

Then I saw my lord fall, clutching the talisman of the demon king in one hand. I rushed to his side, as did the handful of knights who had also survived. As I knelt to comfort my dying master, I was surprised to see him smile.

"My lord?" I said, regarding him curiously. I had never seen Lord Ruthgar smile.

"Don't look at me so, Stelheim," Ruthgar laughed, a trickle of blood spilling from his torn lips. "We have won."

"We have lost," I said, holding out one hand to indicate the knights that remained. Ironic, that there were thirteen. "The demons remain in their hour, but there is nothing that stops them from returning tomorrow. There are not enough of us left to fight." A lie might have been better to comfort the dying man, but I could not bring myself to mince words.

"We no longer need to fight," Ruthgar said with a chuckle, and he held forth the demon king's talisman. It seemed to be an hourglass, filled with a sparkling, golden fluid. "Keep it safe, David," he added, his breath a dry rattle. As I took the talisman from my master's hands, his eyes closed and did not open again.

I could feel myself mesmerized by the dancing fluid. It was almost as if I was staring into the depths of eternity. "What is it?" I asked.

"Time," Elizabeth said, limping forward to stand at my side. "The talisman contains the hour the Children of Rodian stole from the night. When the demon held it, the Children of Rodian were able to exist in the Thirteenth Hour. So long as you hold it, they are trapped there."

I stared into the hourglass, watching the swirling liquid for a moment. An idea struck me, then, and I knew what I had to do. I turned to the other surviving knights. "Brothers," I said. "Do you remember the oath we made?" They returned my gaze without flinching, and did not answer. There was no need to answer. All of them had seen Hades at my side, and knew that the demon hordes of Rodian could never be allowed freedom.

I picked up a sharp stone and drove it into the upper half of the hourglass. Elizabeth cried out in shock and tried to stop me,

but it was too late. I tipped back the hourglass and drank a mouthful of time. The magic was cold and bitter in my mouth, but I passed it on to the next knight, who did the same, until all thirteen of us had drunk.

"What are you doing?" Elizabeth cried. "You have no idea what consequences..."

"What could happen?" I interrupted. "If it takes our lives, then we have given no less than our brothers. This is the only way." I could feel my arms burn as the magic entered my veins. I knew we had made the right decision, but nothing would ever be the same. In that moment, the Knights of the First Star were no more, and the Knights of the Thirteenth Hour were born.

So it began.

The talisman's magic entered into my blood and the blood of the twelve who drank with me. Each night, we enter into the Thirteenth Hour, where the demons hunt us ceaselessly. We have adapted well to the strange environment of the Thirteenth Hour, as well as any human could. Elizabeth has been indispensable in her knowledge of magic, and always fearlessly enters the Thirteenth Hour at our side. Eventually, I came to realize that I loved her and she returned my love.

It is Elizabeth's theory that so long as any knight who carries the magic of the talisman survives, the demons will remain sealed. It seems the task will not be done within our generation, either, for now that our son has come of age he has begun to enter the Thirteenth Hour as well. Perhaps our duty will go on forever.

I am an old man now, and not long for this world. I can only hope that the next generation can carry on the tradition. So long as the bloodline of the Knights of the Thirteenth Hour continues, we shall be safe from that which lurks between the moments of the night.

The Thirteenth Hour

The Thirteenth Hour does indeed exist today, centuries later, and poses a very real danger for the denizens of Rifts Earth. The original theories of Sir David and his order, that the Thirteenth Hour was "stolen" from the night, may or may not be true. The few modern scientists and mages aware of the phenomenon believe it is far more likely that the Thirteenth Hour is merely a pocket dimension superimposed over Earth. It can only be entered for an hour at a time (no more, no less), and time is strangely compressed there. To a viewer on the outside, those who enter the Thirteenth Hour seem to emerge only a fraction of a second after leaving. Other than this, the Thirteenth Hour is a carbon copy of Earth. It seems to be a "frozen" Earth where time holds still, but a great many things are different.

1) Distorted Light — Everything that is "frozen" by the Thirteenth Hour (not a visitor or a Rodian demon) is colored in tones of grey. Further, light is oddly warped in general. An observer standing on a flat plain will have the distinct impression that he is standing at the bottom of a great bowled valley due to this effect. For this reason, the Thirteenth Hour can be extremely claustrophobic, even in open areas.

2) Distorted Sound — The Thirteenth Hour is filled with a constant whine, believed to be frozen sound. It has also been theorized that this is actually the sound of the fabric of the

pocket dimension, resonating in harmony with Earth. Sound also carries farther in the thickened air, though those unaccustomed to the background noise will not be able to notice the difference. Both Rodian demons and Knights of the Thirteenth Hour are adept at tuning out the background static, allowing them to home in on any clumsy visitor stumbling about.

3) Frozen Matter — Everything that is not attuned to the Thirteenth Hour becomes "frozen" there. All solid and liquid objects become totally indestructible and immovable. A ball in midair will remain in midair, not budging from its place no matter how much force is directed against it. At the end of the hour, everything returns to the way it was before with no loss of momentum. A traveler in the Thirteenth Hour can walk across water with no problem, but had best cross quickly before the hour is up and he sinks. For some unknown reason, gases are not frozen in the Thirteenth Hour, but are immobile. A traveler can pass through a cloud of smoke with little difficulty, but the cloud will quickly return to its original shape after they have passed. Fire and other energy sources are immobile, but intangible, and retain their heat. Anyone foolish enough to walk into flames will still get burned.

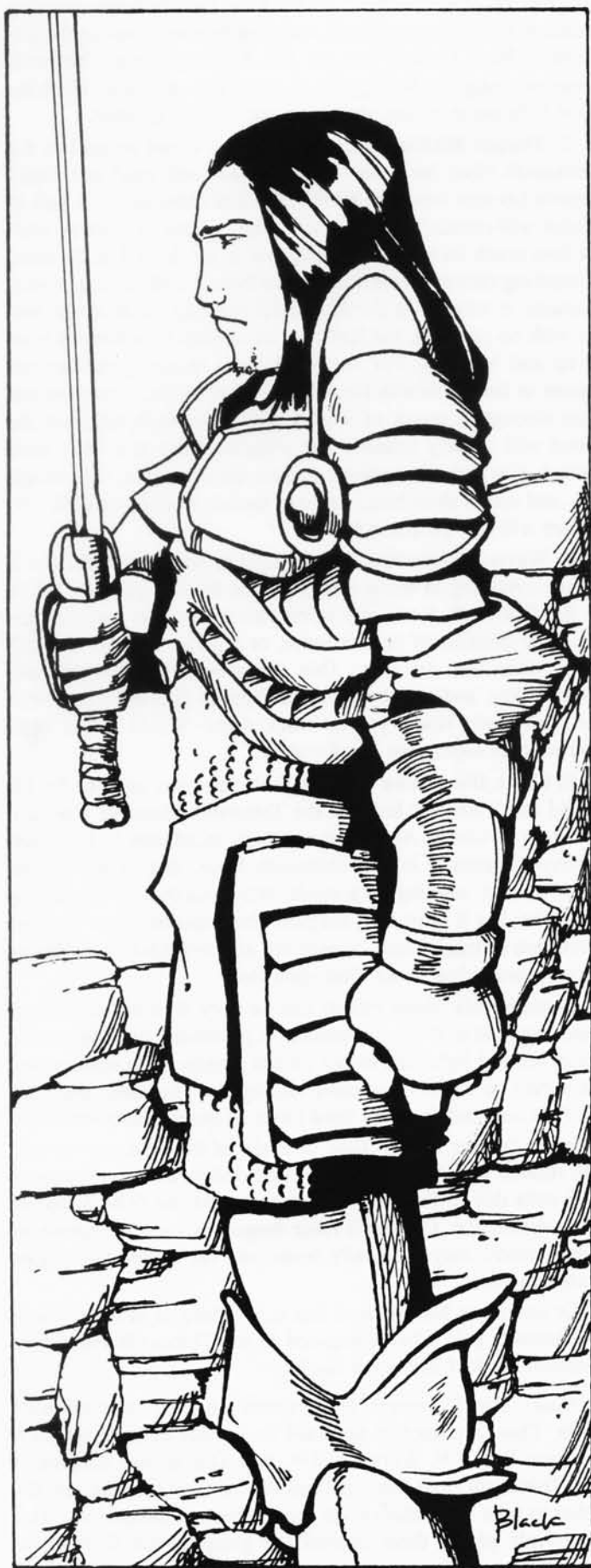
4) Warped Time/Space — Ironically, the Thirteenth Hour is quite unyielding to those who bend the laws of physics. While in the Thirteenth Hour, any effect that allows dimensional portals, manipulation of time or space, or passage through solid objects, does not function. This includes Rifts, teleportation, intangibility, and astral projection. Simply put, once you're in the Thirteenth Hour, you're stuck there. You'd better hope you're stuck someplace comfortable.

5) Clock Disruption — Though it was never an issue for Sir David and Ruthgar's knights, the Thirteenth Hour has a strange effect on all clocks. Any clock more advanced than an hourglass behaves erratically in the Thirteenth Hour, displaying random times or even moving backwards. Why exactly this happens is unknown, but it must be a magical phenomenon since no other electronic or mechanical devices are affected. Only hourglasses keep accurate time in the Thirteenth Hour.

Cumulatively, these effects can be very draining on visitors unaccustomed to the environment. In particular, the background noise, warped light, and heavy air can rapidly drain stamina and set nerves on edge. Characters visiting the Thirteenth Hour for the first time will become tired twice as quickly as normal, are prone to "seeing things" (due to tricks of the light and sound), and receive a -6 to strike, parry, and dodge, and a -15% to all skill rolls due to the alien environment. At the G.M.'s discretion, visiting the Thirteenth Hour frequently over the course of many months may eventually lessen or even completely negate these penalties.

Of course, as bad as all of this is, the dangers of these "natural" hazards pale when compared to the Thirteenth Hour's inhabitants — the Children of Rodian.

Note: The Thirteenth Hour seems only to exist on Rifts Earth. Thus, it cannot be accessed from other dimensions (such as Phase World™, Wormwood™, etc). One or two Knights of The Thirteenth Hour have realized this, to their surprise, and decided to take their chances in these alternate dimensions. This effectively places them beyond the grasp of the Children of Rodian forever, but creates new problems as the Knights struggle to survive in their new homes.



Knight of the Thirteenth Hour O.C.C.

For centuries, the descendants of the knights who followed Sir Ruthgar have protected the secret of the Thirteenth Hour. Their ability to enter the Thirteenth Hour was passed on to their children, and, in time, their numbers grew. At the height of their power there were several hundred knights. At this time the power of the Rodian demons was at a low ebb, with hundreds of well trained warriors armed with modern weapons entering their realm nightly. The Children of Rodian were at a distinct disadvantage — their foes merely had to fight for an hour each night, while for the demons the war was continuous. At the end of each hour, the knights would take note of the position of their demonic foes and then organize an ambush for the next night. It seemed as if it would not be long before the knights finally won the victory they had been denied centuries before.

Then came the time of the Rifts. Hidden among normal society as they were, the catastrophe struck the knights as hard as everyone else. Only a handful survived the apocalypse, and some were separated from their brethren for generations. Many knights were never found. It is believed that some descendants of these lost knights may yet live, cursed nightly by a power they do not understand.

Though the Children of Rodian are few, they are no less dangerous. Rodian, the god of the demons, still slumbers and may awaken at any time. The knights have maintained their old ways, surviving through secrecy. During the Thirteenth Hour they keep themselves alive by running or hiding, fighting only when there is no other option. By day they struggle for anonymity, hoping to draw no attention to the secret they carry. Even on Rifts Earth, there are few who are aware of the Thirteenth Hour's existence, and the knights prefer to keep it that way. However, to this day the Knights of the Thirteenth Hour have an ingrained sense of honor. For many, this honor will not allow them to step aside in the face of evil, whether that evil be the Children of Rodian, the Splugorth, or the Coalition. A few Knights of the Thirteenth Hour have even stepped forward to become heroes.

Abilities of the Knights of the Thirteenth Hour

1.) Enter the Thirteenth Hour — Every night the character automatically shifts into the Thirteenth Hour at 12:59 and fifty-nine seconds, whether he wants to or not. An hour later, he returns to the normal timestream at 1:00. His clothing and any equipment he can reasonably carry shift into the Thirteenth Hour along with him. Anything dropped or left behind while in the Thirteenth Hour will return to the normal timestream wherever he left it.

2.) Adaptation — The Knight is accustomed to the hostile environment of the Thirteenth Hour, and is no longer disturbed by the light, sound, or atmosphere. He receives none of the normal penalties for operating in the Thirteenth Hour. In addition,

this training makes the knight a somewhat harder individual than most. He gains +2 to P.E., +10 S.D.C., and +2 vs Horror Factor. In addition, the character is used to operating on a twenty-five hour schedule, so gaining an extra hour each night will not tire or disorient him.

3.) Sense Time — All Knights of the Thirteenth Hour have an uncanny sense of time, even from birth. The character can sense the exact hour, minute, and second at any time of the day, even in the Thirteenth Hour. This strange ability is believed to be the direct result of the magic that flows through the veins of the Knights.

4.) Open the Thirteenth Hour — When a Knight reaches level 3, he has mastered the process of entering the Thirteenth Hour to the point that he can attempt to bring others along with him. For every point of P.P.E. the character spends, he can bring along an extra ten pounds. The entire weight of an object must be accounted for; an object may not be partially taken. All such objects must be in physical contact with the knight, and unwilling creatures cannot be affected with this ability. (But those unaware of what the knight is up to are fair game.)

5.) Enhanced P.P.E. Base — The legacy of the knights gives them a slightly stronger P.P.E. base than most: 1D4X10. Add 1D4 per each additional level of experience, beginning at level 3.

“Lost Knights”

It is possible that a few descendants of the original Knights may have survived the catastrophe of the Rifts, but were never discovered by their brethren. If the G.M. allows for such a character in their campaign, they begin with all of the above abilities but do not have the skills or restrictions that follow. Instead, they have the following limitations: They must be human, and they cannot be master psychics, men of magic, or any other character class with supernatural powers or magical abilities. The magic that is already in their blood does not mix well with other sorts of power. These characters will lean toward warrior, City Rat, and Vagabond type character classes. If a true Knight should stumble over such a character, you can bet that he'll do his best to educate his poor lost cousin on the true nature of their duties (whether the character wants the Knight to do so or not).

Knight of the Thirteenth Hour

Alignment Restrictions: Any, except Diabolic or Miscreant. Tends to lean toward good alignments.

Attribute Requirements: None, though a high P.E. and M.E. are suggested in order to deal with the rigors of the Thirteenth Hour.

Race Restrictions: At the present time, all the Knights are human. The burden of the Knights is linked to blood, and the original Knights were human.

O.C.C. Skills for Knights of the Thirteenth Hour

Speaks and is literate in American (+25%).

Speaks one additional language (+15%).

Basic Math (+15%)

Lore: Thirteenth Hour (+25%)

Land Navigation (+10%)

Tracking (+10%)

Physical: Two of choice (+10% where applicable).

Espionage or Military: Two of choice (+15%).

Prowl (+20%)

W.P.: Two Ancient of choice.

W.P.: Two Modern of choice.

Hand to Hand: Expert (can be changed to Martial Arts at the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill).

O.C.C. Related Skills: At first level the character can select eight other skills plus one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Radio: Basic only.

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: None.

Espionage: Any (+10%).

Mechanical: Basic only.

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: Any.

Physical Any (+5% where applicable).

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Any.

Science: Any.

Technical: Any (+5%).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: The character gets five secondary skills from the list above, excluding those marked “None,” at level one, and one additional skill at levels 2, 4, 8, 10 and 12. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in parentheses. All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

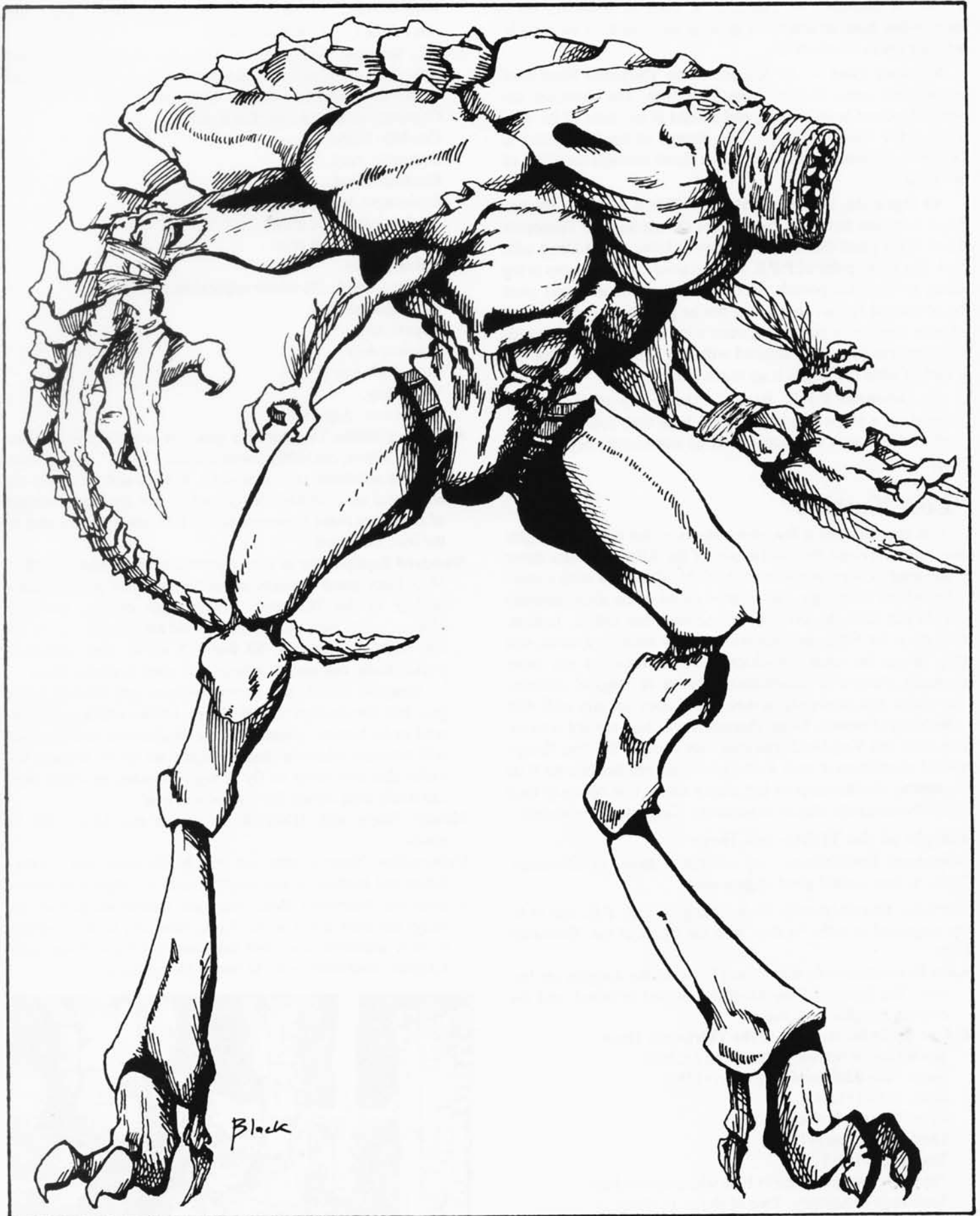
Standard Equipment: A suit of personalized medium to heavy M.D. body armor (usually painted in tones of grey for camouflage in the Thirteenth Hour), dress clothes, traveling clothes, utility belt, knapsack, first-aid kit, sunglasses, air filter, flashlight, canteen, 50 feet (15 m) of rope, compass, pocket knife, one week's rations, and some personal items.

Weapons include one ancient weapon, one modern handgun, and one modern rifle of choice. Modes of transportation tend to be horses, automobiles, or small hover vehicles that will not draw attention. Some Knights are drawn towards vehicles that can hover or fly at high altitudes, in which they can easily hide during the Thirteenth Hour.

Money: Starts with 3D4X100 in credits and 1D4X1000 in goods.

Cybernetics: None to start, but may be acquired later. Cybernetics and bionics do not interfere with a Knight's ability to enter the Thirteenth Hour (they are considered part of his body) but their effect on his P.P.E. base will limit his ability to draw additional mass into the Thirteenth Hour. Thus, most Knights avoid them or try to obtain bio-systems.





Children of Rodian

The Children of Rodian, or Rodians as they are sometimes called, seem to be natives of the Thirteenth Hour, the demonic spawn of whatever force was able to create such a strange wrinkle in the fabric of time. Rodians are vaguely humanoid in shape. Their dark flesh seems strangely resistant to light, causing them to appear as creatures of pure shadow. Their bodies are extremely deformed, sprouting bone through the flesh in areas to serve as armor and slashing weapons. Rodians seem savage and monstrous, but in reality, they are quite intelligent. They merely see mankind as prey, animals not worth parley or mercy. Rodians have extraordinarily sharp memories and carry all knowledge of their culture orally. Every living Rodian is a warrior, so their leaders are their "officers." The leaders of the Rodian horde also serve as a sort of clergy, leading the demons in their worship of their father, Rodian, the dark god that they believe stole the Thirteenth Hour from the night long ago.

In the times before their defeat by Lord Ruthgar and the Knights of the First Star, the Rodians were a proud and arrogant race. They used the Thirteenth Hour as a staging ground, hiding while they slowly built an army great enough to one day lay siege to the Earth. On that day, it was said, Rodian himself would awaken and lead his children to victory. Unfortunately, on the eve of their victory, the Talisman of the Thirteenth Hour was snatched away. Rodian did not awaken and the demons were trapped forever. It was a sobering experience, and it has taught the Rodians not to underestimate mankind.

Now, the Rodians are a very bitter race. They have seen the world change over the centuries, seen other conquerors rise to sweep over the Earth while their own numbers have dwindled. The Rodians know that there is little chance that they will ever rule the Earth now; it is more likely some other race of demons or other invaders will destroy it first. Some Rodians have given up entirely, contenting themselves with hunting whatever Knights of the Thirteenth Hour they can catch and using their intangibility to hide deep in the Earth before the hour ends.

Other Rodians have not given up hope. They learn everything they can about Rifts Earth, snatching peeks at books left open, glancing over computer screens left running, learning snippets here and there and interrogating any Knights foolish enough to let themselves be caught. They know that the Earth has become a place rich in magic, and thus rich in opportunity. It is only a matter of time before one or another of the great sorcerer kingdoms of Rifts Earth discovers the passage to the Thirteenth Hour as the mystics of old once did. The Rodians will not attack these men of magic as they did the knights. Oh, no. They have seen the greed and desperation in the eyes of the hunted sorcerers of Rifts Earth and know they could prosper much more by forging an alliance. Once the foolish mammals have found a way to release the Children of Rodian from their prison, they can easily be disposed of.

NPC Villains — Not available as player characters

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 3D6, M.E. 2D6, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 4D6+5, P.P. 4D6, P.E. 5D6, Spd 4D6. Attributes are considered to be supernatural.

Size: Twelve to eighteen feet (3.6 m to 5.4 m) tall.

Weight: 2000 lbs (900 kg).

M.D.C.: 1D4X100 (1D6X1000 S.D.C. in S.D.C. environments).

Horror Factor: 14

P.P.E.: 2D4X10

Average Life Span: Unknown. The strange effect the Thirteenth Hour has upon time seems to make them effectively immortal, unless killed prematurely.

Natural Abilities:

Intangibility: The Rodian demons can pass through matter frozen by the Thirteenth Hour at will. This allows them to survive as their environment changes at the end of each hour, preventing them from being harmed as objects appear suddenly in the space they are occupying. Rodians cannot use this intangibility to pass through other Children of Rodian, or anything that is not frozen by the Thirteenth Hour. They cannot pass this intangibility on to anything that they are touching; it is entirely restricted to the Rodian's body.

Adaptation: Much like their foes, the Knights of the Thirteenth Hour, the Children of Rodian are unaffected by the strange environment of the Thirteenth Hour, and suffer no penalties for their activity there.

Tracking: Children of Rodian have an excellent sense of smell, allowing them to track prey within the Thirteenth Hour. They are also quite skilled at separating the scent of those who exist and move freely within the hour from the frozen scents of those outside. (Frozen odors are slightly "stale" to those with keen noses.) **Range:** Roll once for every 1000 feet (305 m). **Base Skill:** 50% +5% per level, but will drop by 30% if the Children of Rodian should ever escape the Thirteenth Hour.

Experience Level: Average 1D4+3.

Psionic Powers: See Aura, Sixth Sense, Sense Magic.

I.S.P.: 1D4X10 +1D6 per level.

Magic Powers: None.

Combat (Natural Abilities): Three hand to hand attacks at level one, plus one attack at levels three, five, seven and nine.

Damage: Claws inflict 4D6 M.D. (3D6 plus P.S. bonus on S.D.C. worlds).

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +3 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +3 to roll with impact, +2 to pull punch, +3 to save vs magic, +6 to save vs Horror Factor. Add +1 strike at levels three, six and nine. Add +1 to parry and dodge at levels three, five and eight. All these are in addition to attribute bonuses. (Hand to Hand combat skills are not applicable.)

Vulnerabilities/Penalties:

Sealed within Thirteenth Hour: The Children of Rodian exist only for one hour each night, for as long as the Thirteenth Hour exists. At the end of each hour, they simply vanish, returning to existence again the following night in exactly the same place and position they were previously in. For the demons, no time seems to pass at all. It is merely as if the world itself changes with each hour. While their mastery of the Thirteenth Hour gives them great freedom, it is also a great impediment. The knights of the Thirteenth Hour frequently lead the Rodians into open areas near the end of the hour so they can easily remember their positions and ambush them with greater firepower the following night.

Strangers to the day: The Children of Rodian wish for nothing more than to escape the prison they have created. However, if the demons *do* ever manage to escape the Thirteenth Hour, they will be weak and vulnerable for the first month or so as they adjust to the thinner atmosphere and other environmental issues. For the first month after a demon returns to the real world, he will have the exact same penalties suffered by a character venturing into the Thirteenth Hour.

R.C.C. Skills

Speaks Rodian language at 98%.

Speaks one language of choice at +5%.

Tracking +30%

Prowl +30%

Lore: Thirteenth Hour: +15%

R.C.C. Related Skills: Children of Rodian are a bit baffled by the outside world, and as such, their selection of skills is greatly limited. Select two other skills, from the following categories only. Plus select one skill at levels three, five, seven, ten and twelve.

Domestic: Any.

Medical: First Aid only.

Physical: Any.

Technical: Any except Computer.

W.P.: Any Ancient.

Secondary Skills: The character gets four secondary skills from the list above, excluding those marked "None." These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in parentheses. All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

The Complication

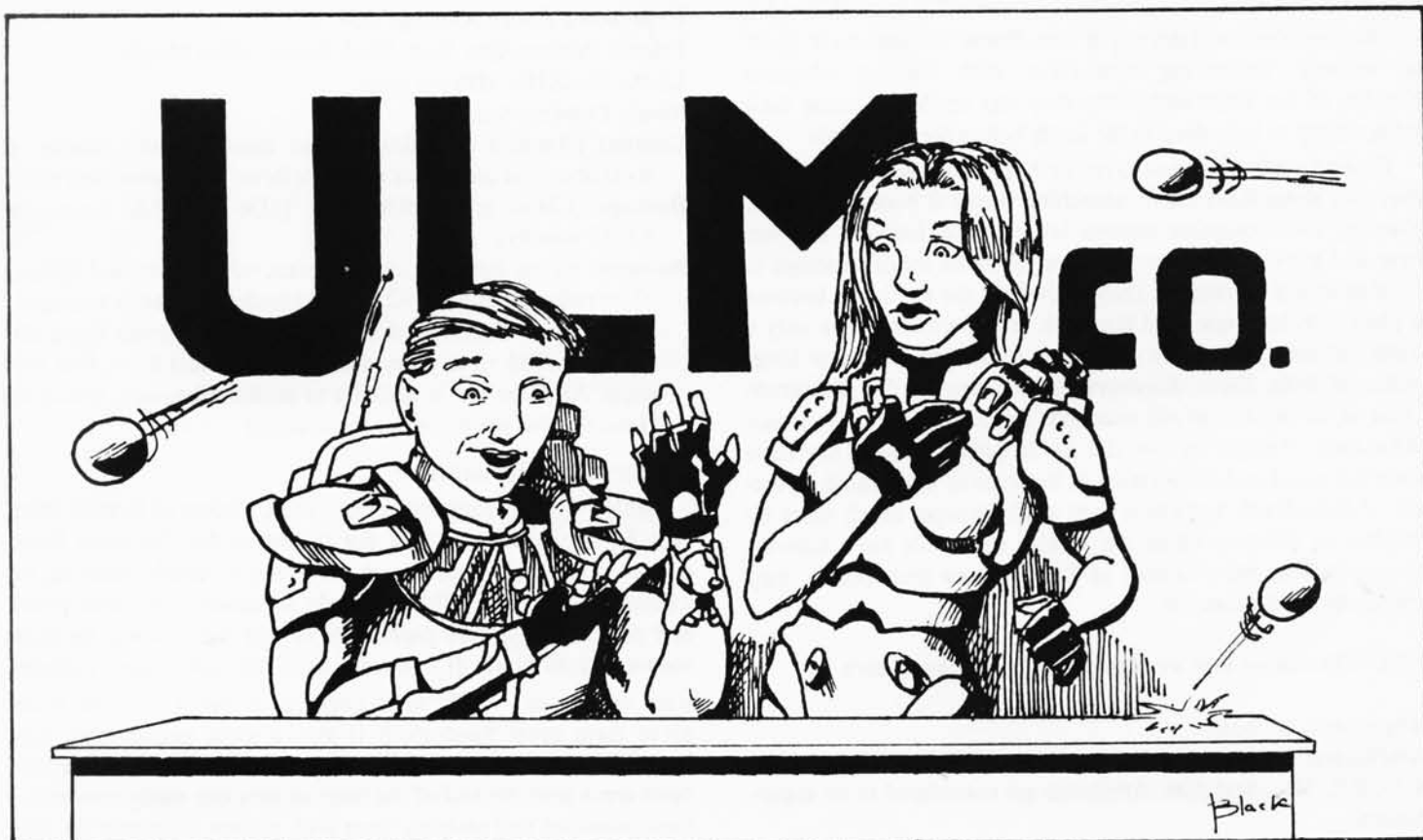
(Or "Techno-Wizards Always Screw Things Up")

"Hello. My name is Stenopenolsian Ulm, and perhaps you have heard of me. I am the master of the future kingdom of Ulm. At present, we are merely a small village on the outskirts of the Magic Zone, inhabited by myself and a few of my students. But just wait!

"One day. One day, we shall be great. One day, I am certain. For many years, I have claimed as much and others would laugh at me. Soon the laughter will stop. Oh, yes. We have found the ticket to greatness and must only wait for it to be validated. Our studies have unlocked the key to a strange new world, undreamed of by even the greatest Shifters and masters of Temporal magic. We call this power the Thirteenth Hour.

"Imagine, if you will, a power that could let you travel unseen and unheard by your enemies for an hour each night, a power great enough to allow you to proceed into the heart of Chi-Town undetected, a power that could allow you safe passage even through the deadliest wastelands of America. Would you not pay any price for such a power? We can give you that power, and our price is not so great.

"Yes, I and my associates at Ulmco, based in the future kingdom of Ulm, can grant you said power. There are certain drawbacks to the land we have discovered, granted, but we believe the advantages far outweigh the quirks which we have yet to iron out. Simply step into our showroom and I can show you a few of our newer models."



Stenopenolsian Ulm and Ulmco

Since the coming of the Rifts, the Knights of the Thirteenth Hour have feared the possibility of a kingdom strong in magic discovering a portal to the Thirteenth Hour. For this reason, the Knights have tried to keep a close eye on Lazlo, Tolkeen, and the Magic Zone, dreading the day that their secret will be exposed.

Oddly enough, the first mages to discover the Thirteenth Hour were not those of a rich or powerful kingdom, but a fly-speck village. The leader of the village, a Techno-Wizard with delusions of grandeur, accidentally discovered the Thirteenth Hour during an explosively disastrous experiment with Temporal magic. Stenopenolsian Ulm was not exactly certain what he had stumbled upon at first, but soon realized the potential gold-mine he had found.

After exploring the Thirteenth Hour for a few months and determining it to be relatively safe, Stenopenolsian rushed into the production of equipment that could carry people and equipment into the Thirteenth Hour. He began selling small devices to the city of Tolkeen at exorbitant prices. Small devices designed to stop functioning after several months, so his customers would be forced to buy from him again. Ulm has been careful to hide the location of his village from his customers, for he fears industrial espionage (or worse). Thus far, he has sold eighteen Wrist-Gates and a dozen or so of each of the other Thirteenth Hour devices listed in the following section, and has become quite a wealthy man.

Unfortunately, Ulm is not aware of the true danger of his situation. He is not even aware of the existence of the Children of Rodian. They have seen Ulm and his customers wandering through the Thirteenth Hour, but are keeping a low profile for now. They know that neither Ulm nor the others are powerful enough to break the seal on their prison, and are waiting for one who can.

Incidentally, in a matter that is surely unrelated, a few of Alistair Dunscon's servants recently obtained a Wrist-Gate. Its former owner had been a Tolkeen spy who remained in their territory too long and was caught flat-footed when the Thirteenth Hour ended. Dunscon himself was quite impressed when the device was delivered into his keeping. He has only used the Wrist-Gate once, but he has ordered the mages to find the one who created the device so that he can obtain more.

The Knights of the Thirteenth Hour are completely unaware of Ulm's discovery of the Thirteenth Hour, and no doubt would do everything in their power to see the Wrist-Gates and other Thirteenth Hour technology destroyed if they became aware of it.

New Ulmco Techno-Wizard Devices

Currently, none of the following devices can be recreated outside of the kingdom of Ulm. Only Stenopenolsian and his students know the secret process involved in creating Thirteenth Hour technology, and they aren't sharing. Anyone who does figure out how to create any of the following can count on eventually drawing the attention of the Knights of the Thirteenth Hour, who would prefer the Thirteenth Hour to simply be left alone.

Wrist-Gate

The simplest of the Ulmco Thirteenth Hour devices, the Wrist-Gate appears at first glance to be nothing more than a normal wristwatch with a few odd, colorful crystals attached around the face. The Wrist-Gate must be charged in advance with either 15 P.P.E. or 30 I.S.P. As the Thirteenth Hour begins, a charged Wrist-Gate activates automatically no matter who is wearing it. The Wrist-Gate will draw itself, the creature wearing it, and whatever equipment they are carrying into the Thirteenth Hour. Once there, like all watches, the Wrist-Gate ceases to function until the Thirteenth Hour is over.

Energy Requirements: 15 P.P.E. or 30 I.S.P. for one charge.

Cost: 400,000 credits. (The Wrist-Gates are very difficult to build. Among those who are aware of their existence, the demand for these devices is very high.)

Hood-Gate

Named so because it resembles a hood ornament once mounted on the front of a vehicle, the Hood-Gate is a small, silver grandfather clock with many long wires extending from it. It is usually attached to a large vehicle via a magnet at the base and the wires are wrapped around the outside to tie in the back. (The Hood-Gate must be attached externally.)

A charged Hood-Gate will automatically draw itself and the vehicle to which it has been attached into the Thirteenth Hour. Once there, the Hood-Gate serves no further purpose and can be detached and put away in order to keep it from being damaged.

Energy Requirements: 50 P.P.E. or 80 I.S.P. for one charge.

Cost: 500,000 credits for a model capable of carrying 1.5 tons into the Thirteenth Hour. An extra 100,000 credits will buy a Hood-Gate that can cover an extra ton, up to a maximum of 6.5 tons. Vehicles larger than this cannot be affected by a Hood-Gate (at least not yet).

Thirteenth Hour Hat

This device does not grant any ability to enter the Thirteenth Hour, but it is produced by Ulmco as a giveaway with the purchase of their products, and is very popular with their Tolkeen customers. The Thirteenth Hour Hat resembles an oversized, silver fedora with tinsel hanging down around the edges of the brim. While worn, the fedora specifically filters out the disorienting sound and light effects of the Thirteenth Hour and thins the air so it is easier to breathe. So long as the hat is worn, the negative effects of traveling through the Thirteenth Hour are negated. The hat is so specific in its function that the sound and light filters are useless in the normal world, though it will still thin the air around the wearer's head when worn.

Cost: 15,000 credits. Ulmco usually throws one of these in as a bonus feature with the purchase of a Wrist-Gate or Hood-Gate.

Thirteenth Hour Clock

Another minor device of note, this invention is designed to overcome the Thirteenth Hour's strange effect upon time-keeping devices. The Thirteenth Hour Clock is simply an hourglass within a small glass sphere, affixed within another, larger sphere. No matter how the device is turned, the hourglass spins so that it remains upright and keeps correct time. It only keeps time for an hour, but an hour is as long as it's needed. The Tolkeen spy who was captured while wandering Dunscon's outer territories did *not* purchase one of these, though in his final moments he probably wished that he had.

Cost: 5,000 credits.

Grey-Tone Cloak

Created with a strange variant of the Chameleon spell, the Grey-tone cloak causes the wearer's clothing, skin, and equipment to all appear in tones of grey. In the Thirteenth Hour, this can create the illusion that the wearer is merely part of the environment, another normal person frozen in time (if he holds still). Since Ulmco and their Tolkeen customers believe the Thirteenth Hour to be uninhabited, this is not a particularly popular item. Once the Children of Rodian are discovered, expect the price on this one to skyrocket.

Energy Requirements: 10 P.P.E. or 15 I.S.P. per fifteen minutes of use.

Cost: 20,000 credits.

Human-Ball

The following item has, in fact, not yet been invented, and will not be invented by Ulmco until they discover the existence of the Children of Rodian. For the purposes of completeness, it is presented here.

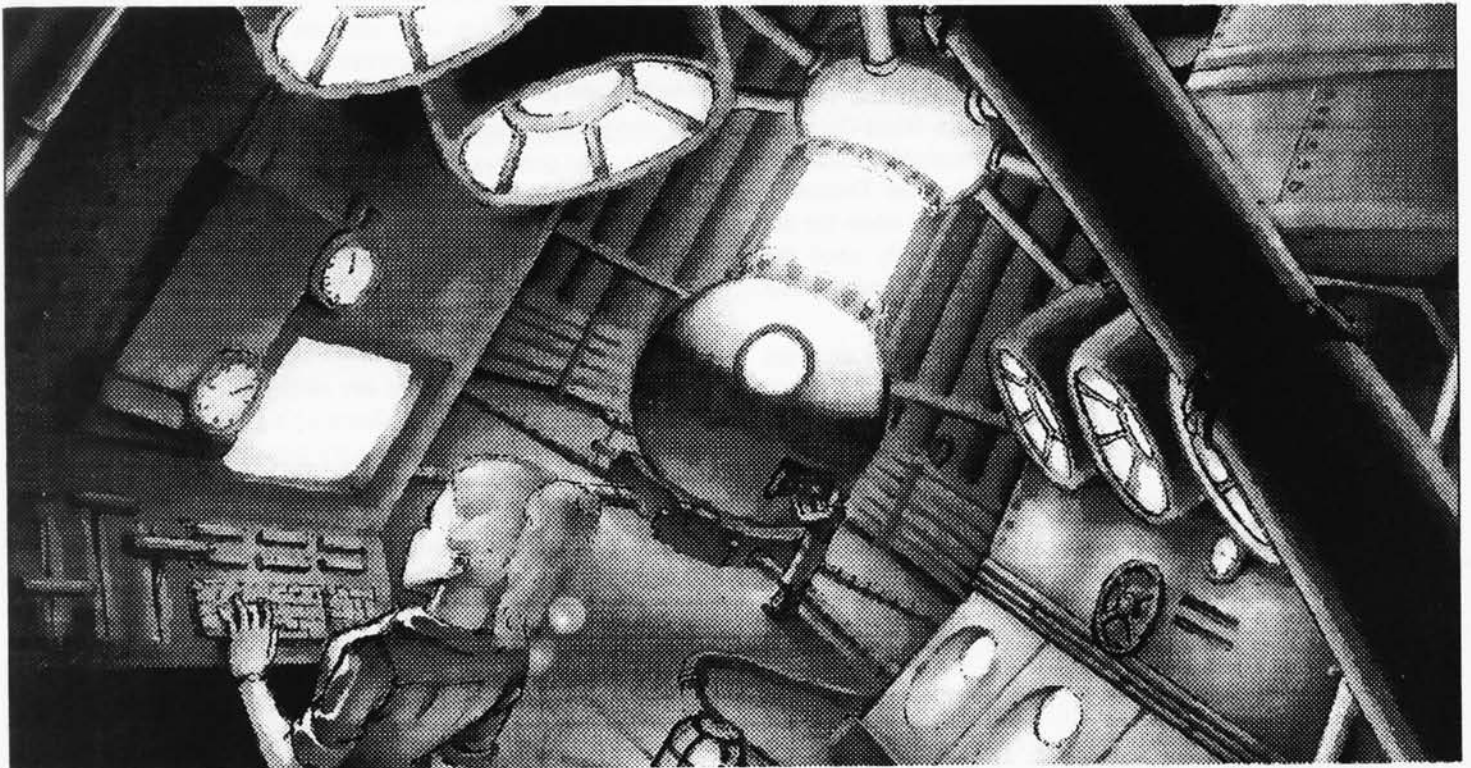
The Human-Ball is a rather odd, one-use item. It is a ball made of some sort of ultra-dense rubber, mixed with artificial blood. Throwing the ball against a hard object (i.e. any surface in the Thirteenth Hour) will cause it to bounce for up to an hour. Once it begins to bounce, the ball begins to release the scent of blood, undetectable by normal senses. To the Children of Rodian, the Human-Ball is an irresistible target, and they will gladly hunt after it, believing it to be a wounded traveler. Meanwhile, the true visitor can head in the other direction and hope that the demons don't stumble over his scent as well.

Cost: 10,000 credits per ball.

The Thirteenth Hour in Other Palladium Worlds

The ideas presented here can easily be adjusted to any of Palladium's campaign worlds with few adjustments. Simply replace the skill selections of the Knight of the Thirteenth Hour O.C.C. with skills more appropriate to the campaign and everything should be fine. The Children of Rodian make excellent villains for any of these genres, providing unpredictable opponents for adventurers, paranormal investigators, or even super heroes.

In a **Nightbane®** campaign, the Thirteenth Hour *does* exist in the Nightlands, though the Children of Rodian only exist in Earth's Thirteenth Hour. The Thirteenth Hour of the Nightlands seems strangely uninhabited and very, very quiet. Many groups who visit claim that it is entirely safe and totally free of danger, but just as many do not return at all when the hour is done. The Nightlords and the Children of Rodian are aware of one another, but both groups could care less. The Rodians are unable to enter the Nightlands and the Nightlords are unable to enter the Thirteenth Hour. The Nightlords admit the Rodians could be potential allies or powerful enemies, but at the moment, their limitations make them beneath consideration.



A RACE AGAINST TIME...

HELLOOOO
WANNA SHOOT
SUMP'THIN'
HERE!

c h a p t e r s e v e n  BY RAMÓN PÉREZ



HOLD
TIGHT
CUEBALL



ARE WE TAKING
THIS THING DOWN
OR WHAT !?



NO! THE
AISHWARRA IS FEEDING
OFF OF MOSES. IF WE KILL
IT, IT WILL DRAIN HIM
COMPLETELY TO SAVE
ITSELF.



THEN HOW
DO WE SAVE
HIM ?



DIST
IT HAS FEEDING SACKS WHERE IT CARRIES..

SPD.
17.3 KM
HR



FOUND HIM!
LIKE A BABE IN
A MOMMA'S
BELLY!

SHOULDN'T
BE A PROBLEM TO
GET HIM. WE JUST
HAVE TO GET IN
CLOSE.

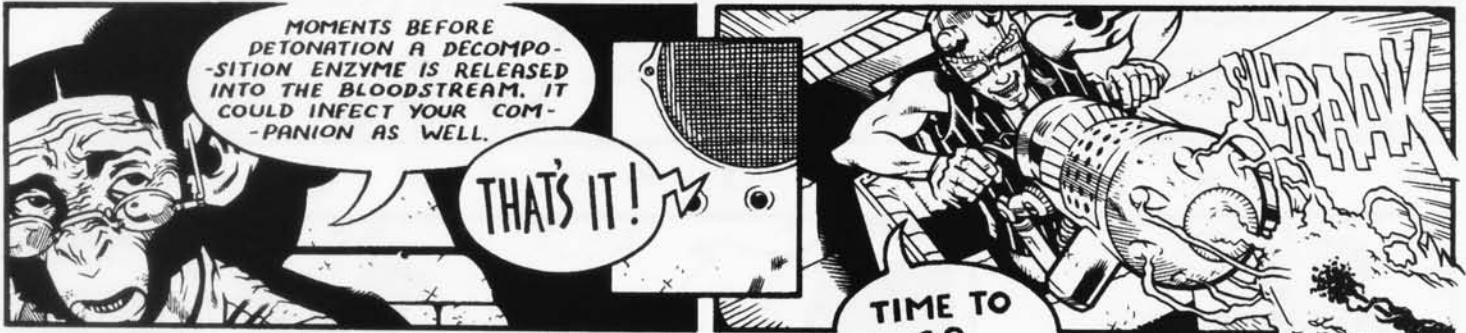
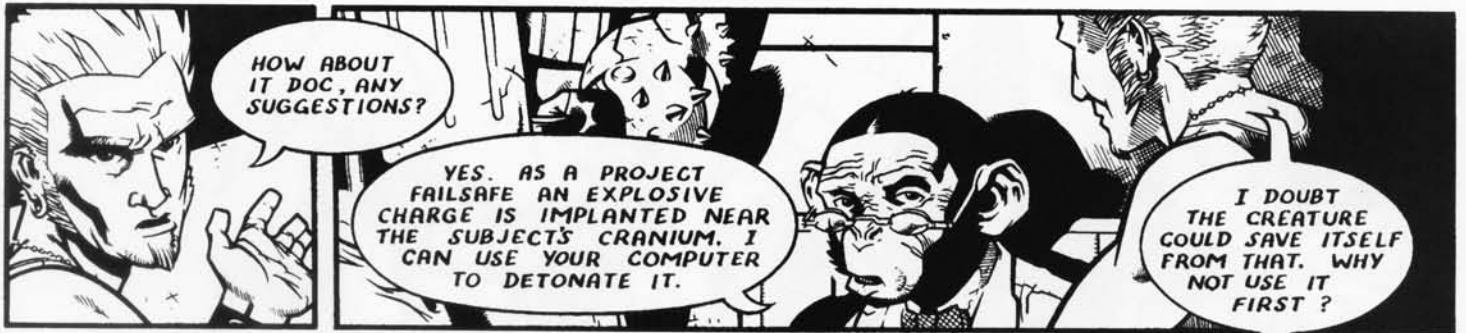


TRIGGER
FINGER IS
ITCHY!!



OKAY,
WE SAVE MOSES.
SIMPLE.

HOW DO
WE KILL IT?



THE REMAINS OF ROOM 7C ...



A.4. FILES SELECTED
22.7 MB OF DISK SPACE OC
DELETE ALL FILES?
YES



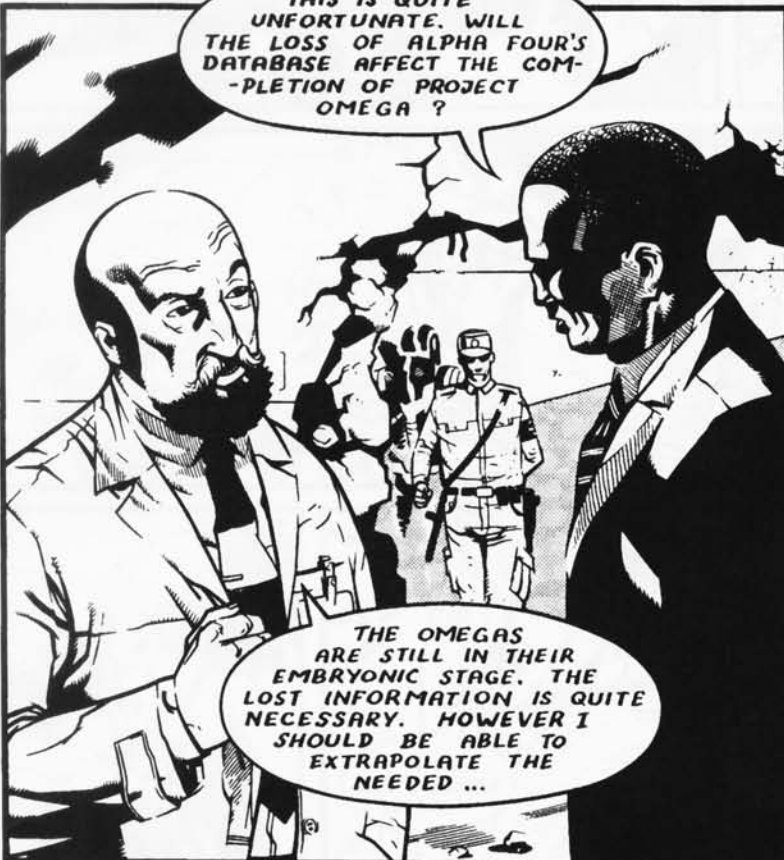
DR. ALEXANDER.



HAS THERE BEEN ANY SUCCESS?



THE UNIT IS BADLY DAMAGED. I'VE BEEN UNABLE TO RETRIEVE ANY OF ITS FILES.



THIS IS QUITE UNFORTUNATE. WILL THE LOSS OF ALPHA FOUR'S DATABASE AFFECT THE COM-
-PLETION OF PROJECT OMEGA?

THE OMEGAS ARE STILL IN THEIR EMBRYONIC STAGE. THE LOST INFORMATION IS QUITE NECESSARY. HOWEVER I SHOULD BE ABLE TO EXTRAPOLATE THE NEEDED ...



EXCUSE ME DOCTOR.

SIR, YOUR PRESENCE IS REQUIRED WE HAVE DISCOVERED A SECURITY COMPROMISE.



VERY WELL.

DOCTOR, ONE LAST ORDER OF BUSINESS. INITIATE THE FLATLINE SIGNAL.



CRAPOLLA!
THE BIG GUY'S
GETTING
AWAY!

ACTUALLY
HE'S A SHE.

BUUUUTCH.



WHAT'S THE
DAMAGE?



SUPPORT
STRUT'S BEEN
FRACTURED AND
ONE OF THE
HYDRAULICS
IS SHOT.

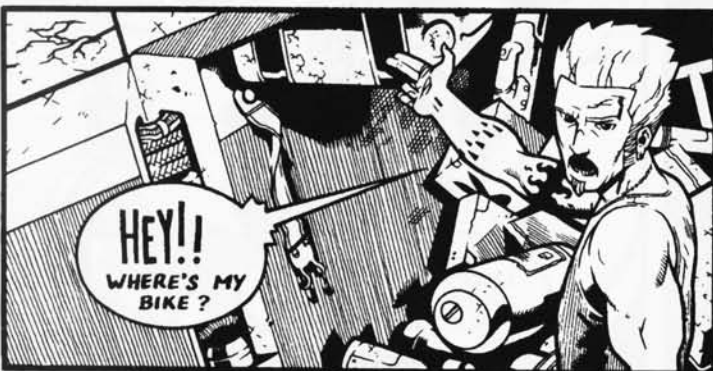


DAMN SHAKES.

CAN YOU
FIX IT?

I'LL NEED
ABOUT TWENTY
MINUTES.

YOU'VE
GOT TEN.



HEY!!
WHERE'S MY
BIKE?



AND
WHERE'S THE
NUTJOB?



SON OF
A...





SPEAKING OF SHAKES...

HERE I COME
TO SAVE
THE DAY

HEY
PUMPKIN!

BIP
BIP

FEH! ... AND
I THOUGHT THEY
SMELLED BAD ON
THE OUTSIDE.

SKREEL!

DOH!

CHOOM



The Hammer of the Forge



By James M.G. Cannon

Chapter Thirteen Downtime

"Following the debacle on Delian-4, Vulcan's first encounter with Elias Harkonnen and Quajinn Huo, the young Knight journeyed with his companions to the Wolfen homeworld, Motherhome. There they laid the fallen Cosmo-Knight Lothar to rest. Friends and family from throughout the Three Galaxies attended the services, and Caleb was taken aback at the realization that Lothar had possessed an extended family, including children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Indeed, the ship Lothar had used to ferry Caleb around the Three Galaxies had been loaned to Lothar by his great-grandson, a merchant of no small means.

"Besides Lothar's family, Caleb also met a few more representatives of his own illustrious order, the Knights of the Cosmic Forge, and other friends and allies from Lothar's past, including the Wolfen shaman Koguk, the chancellor of the Fraternity of Stars, Airin Vallstoff, and Brother Tandostiir of the Celestial Monks. To say Caleb was overwhelmed would be stating it lightly. He was much relieved when he left Motherhome in the company of Doctor Abbot and Kassiopaea Acherean. They took a charter flight to Kassy's home, Alexandria, in the United Worlds of Warlock. There, they each dealt with the loss of Lothar in their own way."

— Excerpt from *Caleb Vulcan:
Before the Fall*, by Gymnos Terrice

The plate glass window exploded into a million shards, spraying the room with flakes of crystal as a metallic form forced its way inside. The hostages, a dozen humanoids of various species, instinctively dropped to the ground and huddled in fear, while the Ogre terrorists, bristling with weaponry and rage, began firing at the intruder. Streamers of light zipped across the room to spatter harmlessly off the crimson and black armor of the Knight.

"Throw down your weapons," boomed the Knight, brandishing a massive hammer in his hands. The Ogres ignored his command, continuing their useless barrage. One of them, however, realized the futility of the attack, and indiscriminately grabbed a

hostage, jamming the barrel of his gun into her midsection. Another Ogre produced an explosive device, waving it at the Knight and threatening to set it off. If he did so, everyone in the room, on the top floor of an Atlantean high-rise, would be killed.

The Knight hardly appeared to move; one moment the Ogre with the explosive was upright, swearing in Gobblely, and the next moment he was sailing across the room, knocked off his feet by a thrown hammer. At the same moment, the Ogre holding the hostage was slammed by a blaze of light emanating from the Knight's dark visor. He clattered to the ground, leaving the hostage unharmed.

The other four Ogres took a moment to assess the scene. Their weapons were useless against the attacker, and their two boldest comrades had been taken out in less than a second. Before they could react, two more of their number were knocked senseless by the Knight's flashing fists. The remaining duo dropped their weapons simultaneously, holding up their hands in surrender.

The Knight eyed them momentarily, and then checked the hostages. "Is anyone harmed?" he asked. His deep voice possessed a metallic edge, as if the helmet itself were talking.

"They beat Master Kylos rather badly," said one of the men, "but most of us are okay."

The Knight nodded perfunctorily. "Grab the guns, and make sure these gentlemen don't start any more trouble," he ordered. As the man scurried to obey, the Knight crossed the room and picked up the bomb where it had been dropped. A flashing red indicator told him that the Ogre was able to arm the weapon before he had fallen.

The doors to the room suddenly exploded inward as the authorities surged into the room. Atlantean warriors in light armor, armed with blasters and stun guns, they followed a dark skinned man with a neatly trimmed beard. He stared frostily at the Knight, and sparing a glance at the only two conscious Ogres, ran across the room in the Knight's direction.

"I'd really love to stay and listen to you yell at me, Diomedes," the Knight told the officer. "But this bomb is about to go off." With that, the Knight lifted into the air and blasted out the window once more, rising into the late afternoon sky.

Diomedes watched, framed by the broken window, as the Knight flew away. He did not get far before the explosive detonated in his hands with a resounding boom that echoed across the sky and shook the building. Diomedes swore and turned, glass crunching under his boots. The Atlantean troops were taking the Ogres into custody, slipping oversized manacles onto their wrists to restrict their incredible strength. A medic and a psion circulated among the hostages, checking for wounds or shock.

"Get me Kassiopaea Acherean," Diomedes barked at the nearest trooper. "Her Cosmo-Knight just interfered with another police matter. I'll have Caleb Vulcan's head for this one."

With the explosion still ringing in his ears, Caleb blasted across the sky at top speed. The bomb had banged him up a little



bit, but not nearly as much as a lecture from Sir Diomedes of the Alexandria Militia might have. Besides, the headphones Caleb wore beneath his helmet were informing him that another problem had arisen halfway across the continent. A blizzard had downed an airship carrying vacationers into the Deimos Mountains. Luckily, Caleb could cross the intervening three thousand miles in about a minute, and would be on hand quickly to aid the survivors. If he stayed to explain his methods to Sir Diomedes, someone might die.

For Caleb, that was simply unacceptable.

He had been on Alexandria for close to six weeks now, and his life had settled into a fairly regular pattern. With the headphones and computer link-up that he wore monitoring newsbands and broadcasts around the world, Caleb was notified of trouble quickly and efficiently. With his Forge-enhanced strength, speed, and other abilities, he was more than capable of canvassing the planet and pitching in wherever he was needed most. Whether that meant putting an end to delicate hostage negotiations with terrorists from Ogretopia, or helping a band of Noro set up a colony on the sub-tropical Jeiros Islands, or searching for survivors after an earthquake tore through the city of Kylostathenes, or doing battle with a Rift-spawned horror, or any of a dozen other scenarios, it did not matter to Caleb. What did matter was that he did what he could to help, to alleviate suffering, to save lives.

It was certainly a full time job. Life-threatening emergencies occurred with alarming regularity, even on a benign and sparsely populated world like Alexandria. However, Caleb was uniquely equipped to handle the challenge. As a Cosmo-Knight, he didn't require food, drink, or even an atmosphere to breathe. Nor was sleep terribly important. All Caleb needed for rest was one hour of meditation out of every twenty-four hours of activity. This enabled him to keep busy, to stay active, to barrel onward.

Caleb needed to keep moving. If he slowed down for even a second, he began to think about Lothar, and he desperately wanted to avoid doing so.

The clouds beneath him turned angry and dark. Caleb dropped down, through the cloud cover, and into the raging blizzard beyond. Visibility dropped to zero, but that wasn't a problem. Another of the endless gifts of the Cosmic Forge; Caleb could navigate through the trackless void of space or across the surface of an alien planet with near perfection. He possessed a kind of cosmic awareness that expanded like a net from his body, encompassing the world beneath him. He did not need his eyes to see the bulk of the mountains looming before him, or the dip of valleys and ridges beneath him. He could sense all these things with the same ease with which one crosses a familiar room in the dark.

Caleb aimed himself at the mountain, flying low. He stretched out his senses, trying to find some evidence of the crash. The snow clogged ground hurtled by beneath him as he flew.

It was hard to believe that barely three months ago Caleb had been a senior in high school, dreading his graduation because it meant leaving the arid sands of Arizona for the steamy jungles of Vietnam. Somehow he had avoided that fate, summoned to the Three Galaxies by the enigmatic entity known only as the Cosmic Forge, transformed into a demigod and entrusted with

the duty of protecting all life. Another servant of the Forge, a Wolfen named Lothar, had taken Caleb under his wing, and introduced the young man to the Three Galaxies and his responsibilities. With Lothar, Caleb had survived a supernova, battled an ancient killing machine, rescued a beautiful damsel from space pirates, and visited the largest city in the Three Galaxies. But when they tangled with a psychotic Elf and a powerful Draconid wizard, Lothar had fallen. Caleb survived, had even defeated and arrested the Elf, but the wizard, Quajinn Huo, escaped. Huo had killed Lothar, but Caleb let him go.

The fact that a nuclear device was ticking away, threatening to kill millions, did not register on Caleb. Neither did the fact that Lothar had centuries of experience, and had still fallen against Huo, while Caleb was a green Knight. At the time, those reasons had seemed important; staring Quajinn Huo in the face and knowing a battle against him was futile, Caleb had been forced to let him escape. He concentrated instead on ensuring the bomb did not go off, and thanks to Kassy and Abbot, millions of lives were indeed saved.

Those who lived did not nag at Caleb; it was the one who died that bothered him. He felt guilty for not being there to back Lothar up when he was needed, and for not apprehending Lothar's killer. Lothar's funeral had nearly broken him. Staring into the faces of Lothar's huge family, knowing that he had failed them miserably, stabbed a sharp dagger into Caleb's heart. He had left Motherhome feeling cold and empty. As soon as he set foot on Alexandria, he asked Kassy to buy him the ear-phones with the computer link, and he took to the sky. He had not stopped moving for more than an hour at a time since.

Supposedly, Kassy and Abbot were looking for a ship. They needed one if they were going to hunt down Quajinn Huo, but Caleb wasn't sure what Abbot and Kassy were actually doing. He hadn't seen or spoken to them in weeks. Once he stopped briefly at Kassy's home, a rambling mansion in the countryside outside Alexandria's largest port, but that was late at night when most of the house was dim and quiet. Caleb had simply landed on the roof, meditated for about an hour, and then raced off once again to help Kylostathenes, in the throes of an earthquake.

Caleb paused, sensing an anomaly in the landscape passing beneath him. He flowed into a circling pattern, eyeing the mountain slope. An avalanche had occurred here, and recently if Caleb's enhanced senses read the situation correctly. There was no way to be certain whether the downed craft lay under the avalanche, however. Not for the first time, Caleb lamented the fact that the Forge had not seen fit to give him x-ray vision. What could he do? The slope was buried under tons of snow, too much for Caleb to sift through. Randomly zapping the slope with his eye beams was more than futile; it was stupid.

Caleb growled in frustration. There was nothing to do, it seemed, but fly on and hope he hadn't already failed the survivors. As he flew up and rounded the mountain, he saw a humped metallic shape buzzing across the snow. Caleb increased his pace and dove low, coming up alongside the vehicle. He saw Atlantean lettering and some kind of strange symbol decorating the fuselage, but he didn't know enough Atlantean to decipher it. Caleb shrugged mentally and then buzzed past the vehicle's cockpit. Between the blizzard and the opacity of the window panels, he didn't see much, but hopefully the crew would notice him. A moment later, the vehicle slowed and air-

lock in the side of the craft cycled open. Grinning, Caleb leapt inside.

With a metallic whine the airlock closed, shutting out the roar of the blizzard outside. An almost imperceptible hiss filled the room as it pressurized, and a moment later the inner door slid open. Beyond stood an Atlantean man, conspicuous with his artful tattoos, clad in a white flightsuit. "You must be Caleb Vulcan," he said in Trade Four.

"Didn't realize I was so popular," Caleb offered.

The man smiled. "We don't get many Cosmo-Knights here in the United Worlds of Warlock, and even fewer on Alexandria." He stuck out his hand, adding, "Cassius Astyanax."

"Pleasure," Caleb said, taking the hand. "You're here for the downed tourist craft, aren't you?"

Cassius nodded. "Unfortunately, there's only one other rescue ship capable of dealing with the weather, and we've got a lot of ground to cover. We appreciate you lending a hand."

"It's what I do," Caleb said simply. "How can I help?"

"Let's head up to the comm center," Cassius said, leading the way along the corridor to the front of the ship. A half-dozen crewmen manned stations in the cramped quarters of the cockpit. The most important person was the communications officer, a woman with the same dark hair and creamy complexion as Kassy. "Artemis is monitoring the downed ship's homing beacon," Cassius explained. "But it's a weak signal, and this weather is fouling up our reception. We know they're in the general vicinity, but we can't seem to get a lock on their exact location. Visual is nil, and our instruments aren't much more help."

Caleb nodded. "What kind of craft are we looking for? And what were they doing up here anyway?"

"Zeus knows," Cassius said. "We think they were vacationers, caught unawares by the blizzard. It's true the storm did sort of appear out of nowhere, but that sort of thing is fairly common this time of year. And they were flying in a Zemil H-17. Light craft; anti-gravity plates and not much else. Zero maneuverability and terrible speed. They tried to outrun the storm, but you can't outrun much in an H-17."

"Huh," Caleb grunted. "They went down on this peak, you said?"

Cassius nodded. "At the very least, their homing beacon did. If the ship broke up before landing... a standard twenty-four hour search won't find those people. We'll dig them up in the spring."

Caleb cocked his head. His cosmic awareness told him that the rescue craft was circling the peak, and during the course of his conversation with Cassius, they had looped around the mountain to the avalanche site. "Is something wrong?" Cassius prompted.

"No, but I have an idea. There's another rescue ship out there, right?" Cassius nodded. "Then would you mind setting down nearby? There's a part of the mountain covered by an avalanche, and I have a feeling we should take a look at it."

Cassius frowned, nodding. "You may have something." He turned to his pilots and rattled off something in Atlantean. The pilot shot a short message back. Caleb couldn't understand a word, but he got the gist.



"I'll get back out there; follow me down. But be careful, I don't want to trigger another landslide." In another minute, Caleb was outside once more, deafened by the roar of the wind and snow, but untouched by the bitter cold. The rescue craft dogged him as he flew back to the avalanche site and dropped to the ground. He sank into the snow up to his hips, and grimaced beneath his centurion's helm. The rescue craft wouldn't be able to land here after all.

Caleb craned his neck, and was about to wave them off, assuming they could see him, but the crew was better prepared than he was. The ship settled into a hovering posture over the snow, kicking up a cloud of white spray that added a minuscule amount of chaos to the storm. In moments, the airlock cycled open and a trio of crewmembers in cold weather gear dropped out, hovering over the snowfield on personal anti-grav platforms. Each of them held a large device in one hand, and they split up to canvas the snowfield, pointing their machines at the ground.

Caleb watched, noting that a fire had erupted in a factory in the southern town of Korusk, while a mine in Gigantes had collapsed, trapping a dozen men and women underground. Caleb wondered for a moment if he was wasting his time, whether it was already too late for the downed Zemil H-17, whether he was better off chasing down another crisis. Before he reached a conclusion, one of the crew began gesticulating wildly, a movement almost lost in the swirl of snow. Caleb lifted off and flew over, landing beside the Atlantean and once more sinking into the snow.

The other two began to buzz over as well, while the first Atlantean, his or her sex indeterminable underneath the heavy winter clothes, tried to shout loud enough for Caleb to hear. The wind was too much, however, and the Atlantean finally decided on simply pointing down. Caleb bent over and formed his arms into scoops, shoveling snow out of the way and forming massive drifts as he did so. He dug fifteen feet at least before his fingers scraped against metal. The light was dim and the snow covered almost everything, but Caleb could still make out an Atlantean ideogram painted on the metal. He had found the hull of the H-17.

They found everyone alive. Broken bones and other wounds were evident, as well as frostbite and deep shock, but all seven tourists were alive. The crew loaded them onto the transport and blasted off for warmer, safer territory, thanking Caleb profusely and urging him to come back to the hospital for more thanks. Caleb declined; he had miners to save.

En route to the mining town of Gigantes, however, the ear-phones buzzed with an incoming message. Caleb tongued the control stick and heard Kassy's voice crackle from the other side. "Caleb, please come in; I need to talk to you."

Another tongue movement opened the channel from his end. "Go ahead, Kassy. I'm listening."

A loud sigh echoed in Caleb's ear. "I hear you've been busy," she said, obviously irritated. "At first I let it go, figuring that perhaps that's how Earthlings deal with grief. But now you've got the federal authorities knocking at my door and asking me to rein you in. That is unacceptable. Lothar was my friend too! I don't appreciate being abandoned by you and Abbot and having to deal with this on my own!"

Caleb stared at the ocean roaring beneath him as his red and black body hurtled across the waves. "What is Abbot up to?" he asked finally.

"He's meditating on the hill outside the mansion. He has been since we got here; you at least are being productive, though you're ignoring your grief. He's drawn into himself and become useless. I can't get his attention, no matter how hard I try. Zeus' beard, but he could be dead too for all I know. And are you here to help me? No, you're off saving every other life on Alexandria."

The sky was darkening as Caleb passed into the planet's night side. Another storm was rising as well, though on this side of the world winter was a relative term. There was the rainy season, and the dry season, and not much else. The ocean was dark and mysterious beneath Caleb's hurtling form, absorbing light and reflecting none. "Caleb? Are you still there?"

"I... I'm two-thirds of the way to Gigantes," Caleb explained. "After I help the miners out there, I'll see what I can do to help you with Abbot." Before Kassy could say anymore, Caleb tongued the connection closed.

* * *

Caleb was still trying to figure out Alexandria's time-zones, and was mildly surprised to see that the sun was just setting over the pyramids of the planet's largest spaceport, Hymaeria. Outside the city limits, where the estates of Clan Acherean's elder statesmen could be found, Caleb reached Kassy's palatial home. Her parent's home, at least; she claimed that she didn't spend much time there, that the place was too big for her to call home. It certainly was a large estate, particularly to the boy from Earth who had grown up in a small house on the grounds of Fort Bliss.

The estate of Hiram and Kornelia Acherean covered ten square kilometers, most of it wooded hills in a state of "cultivated wilderness." The center was a sprawling palace in the Greco-Egyptian style Caleb had come to identify as typical for Atlantean architects. It had four hundred rooms, an Olympic sized pool, stables, a docking bay that looked large enough to service a dreadnought, and what seemed an endless supply of servants, courtiers, and visitors clogging its halls. Kassy's home was beautiful, cultured, and relaxing. Caleb would have gone insane had he been confined here the past few weeks. He suddenly felt a pang of guilt for leaving her here; on the other hand, she had grown up in this building. She was probably enjoying herself.

Caleb avoided the estate proper, instead scanning the ground for the shadowy form of Doctor Abbot. He sat exactly where Kassy had said he would be, on the crest of a tall hill just beyond the walls of the mansion. Caleb saw Kassy standing on the hill as well, probably waiting for him. He hoped momentarily that she had not been waiting long, as the visit to Gigantes had taken him longer than he had expected. Shrugging mentally, Caleb plummeted out of the air like a stone.

He dropped to the grass lightly at the base of the hill. Kassy shot him a glare from where she stood beside Abbot. Caleb trudged up the slope, noting that the fire in Korusk was under control, but that a monster from the Rifts had appeared in the earthquake ravaged city of Kylostathenes. The city was not doing well without the pyramids that regulated the flow of magical energy through the area, and random Rifts were erupting in the Kylostathenes' downtown. Caleb thought briefly about jetting out to the city once more, but one look at Kassy changed his mind.

She was very angry. Caleb had not known Kassiopaea Acherean for very long, and he had never before seen her angry, but he recognized by the set of her jaw, the tightening of her fists, and the way her arms, decorated with artfully designed blue and white tattoos, were shaking that she was upset. Caleb reached the top of the hill, and spared a glance in Abbot's direction. The wizard looked even more like a living shadow at the moment, sitting cross-legged in the grass, with his trench coat, hat, and cane piled next to him. Lacking the clothing to give his body definition, Abbot appeared as if he were nothing more than a man-shaped smear of darkness. The effect was as unsettling as seeing Kassy seethe with rage.

What has happened to us? Caleb wondered, not for the first time since Lothar's death.

"Take off the armor, Caleb," Kassy ordered.

"I haven't got time," Caleb heard himself say. "There's trouble brewing in Kylostathenes."

"I should never have bought you those cursed headphones," Kassy muttered. And then out of nowhere she decked Caleb. Her Atlantean strength, enhanced by the magic of the tattoos she wore, was more than enough to knock Caleb off his feet and send him rolling down the hill. Surprised more than hurt, Caleb picked himself up and dusted grass and dirt off his armor.

"What was that for?" he asked dully.

"For being a jerk," Kassy snarled. "Now get back up here, take off the armor, and talk to me like a civilized human being!"

"I don't know what you're getting at Kassy," Caleb said. This time he flew up the hill, landing with a thump in front of her. "I'm sorry I haven't been around, but I've had work to do."

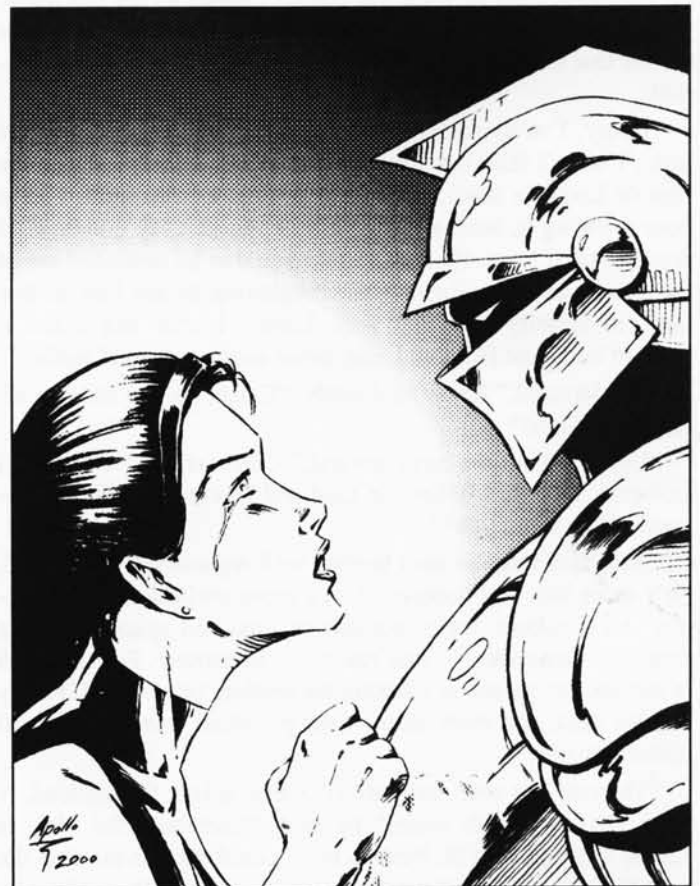
"Work?" Kassy said incredulously. "Since when has running yourself ragged been in the Cosmo-Knight handbook? Avoiding me and avoiding Lothar is not work. It is cowardice. Now, you want to be a coward, fine. Go and do it, and the gods be done with you. But this morning you recklessly charged into a tense situation and twelve people almost paid the price."

Despite himself, Kassy's words hurt Caleb. "No one was hurt except the Ogres," he replied, trying to keep his voice even. "I saved the lives of those hostages."

"You were lucky," Kassy snapped. "If you had been a fraction of a second slower, or misjudged a jerky movement, someone would have died."

"No," Caleb said firmly. "I would never allow that to happen."

Kassy's hands tightened into fists again, and Caleb eyed her warily, expecting another attack. Instead, Kassy turned around, crossing her arms against her chest. Her shoulders shook. It took Caleb a moment to realize she was crying. Caleb stood still for a



long moment, stunned. He glanced at Abbot, but the wizard didn't appear to be conscious. Caleb looked down the hill at the mansion, but didn't see any help from that quarter either. At last, Caleb took a cautious step towards Kassy, reaching out tentatively with a gauntleted hand.

"Don't touch me," Kassy snarled, stepping away from him. Caleb retreated, stung once more, and unsure how to respond.

They stood there for a long moment, as the sun fell and darkness expanded across the estate. Lights began to flicker on in the mansion, brightest around the empty docking bay.

At last, Caleb took a deep breath and, for the first time since Delian-4, dispelled his armor in a crimson flash. He approached Kassy again, reaching out an arm to put around her shoulders. This time she didn't retreat, but instead turned into him and reached out to embrace him. She cried against his chest, and Caleb was surprised to feel moisture on his own cheeks.

Kassy looked up, her eyes raw and red. Caleb had never seen her look more beautiful or more vulnerable, yet at the same time the anger was still there, simmering, and Caleb knew she would deck him again in a heartbeat. "You can't save everyone," she said, her voice rough. "And you can't be Lothar, either. I miss him terribly, but you can't be him. I need Caleb to be here. Do you understand me? I need Caleb Vulcan, not Lothar of Motherhome."

Caleb nodded, his throat constricting and his vision clouding. He felt the cool Alexandria night air against his skin, and he could smell the clean grassy scent of the field and Kassy's perfume without having it filtered through his helmet. He could feel her body, warm and alive, against his own, reminding him that he was alive. He was whole, and while Lothar was gone, Caleb would not bring him back by retreating into the inhumanity of his Cosmo-Knight persona. He couldn't spend all his life inside that armor as Lothar had done; he couldn't ignore the parts of his life that made it worth living. He couldn't ignore his life, period.

"Kassy, I'm so sorry," Caleb said. He hugged her tight. "I just... I wasn't thinking. I couldn't think. I couldn't get past the idea of Lothar's death, of what it meant. You're right. I have been avoiding it, been avoiding him. I couldn't say goodbye... I don't know if I can. He was... I told you that he reminded me of my father, back on Earth. I was beginning to see him in that light, to identify him that way. Losing Lothar like that... it brought home the fact that I may never see my real dad again."

"I understand," Kassy said softly. "Caleb, do you have an afterlife on Earth?"

"Um... I think we have several," Caleb said. "I was raised Lutheran, though. I believe in God and Heaven, an ultimate reward. What about you?"

"Atlantean religion isn't terribly well organized," Kassy said. "It's more like a philosophy than a more traditional belief system. As a culture, we're nomads of time and space, traveling from one dimension — one reality — to another. For us, death is just another means of crossing the borders between this reality and the next, one more stop on the perpetual journey we're all undertaking."

"Then no one ever really dies?" Caleb asked. She nodded. "I think I'll stick with mine," he said. "Somehow the idea of Lothar chatting with St. Peter is more comforting to me than the possibility that he's just bopping around in some other galaxy."

She smiled then, though her eyes were still moist. "You are back, aren't you?"

Caleb returned her smile. "I'm sorry I left. I won't do that again."

"Good," Kassy said, pulling out of his embrace and lightly punching him on the arm. "I don't want to have to get rough with you again. Now, what about Abbot?"

"What about Abbot?" came the cultured tones of the wizard, sitting cross-legged in the grass. Caleb and Kassy started, and stared wordlessly as Abbot's head turned and his orange eyes, his only recognizable features, opened up. Abbot unfolded his legs smoothly and rose to his full height. He gestured with a shadowy hand, and his coat, hat, and cane rose into the air. His hat and coat settled upon him, and he reached out and plucked the cane out of the air.

"I've been sitting up here for weeks, going through my own mourning ritual, as prescribed by the Order of Celestial Monks that raised me," Abbot explained with his typical British inflection, while the other two continued to stare. "I have sent Lothar off in grand style, if I do say so myself. In the process, I managed to attune myself to Alexandria's rhythms and magical cycle. I'm afraid I became quite lost in the beauty of this world's invisible nature." Abbot twirled the cane in his hands. "I was in there fairly deeply, my consciousness riding along the ley lines and delving deep into Alexandria's Astral Plane. The attunement was so powerful, so precise, that I began to pick up echoes from other worlds, joined in the great cosmic dance that keeps the Three Galaxies moving. And there, I felt a faintly familiar pinprick ripple across what was left of my mind." He paused. "Kassy, Caleb, there is another Shadowbeing somewhere loose in the Three Galaxies."

Kassy recovered first. Her open jaw clicked shut audibly. "Abbot," she said, speaking slowly. "You're not making any sense."

Abbott chuckled, his orange eyes flashing in his dark face. "There is another being like me out there somewhere. For the first time in my life, I sensed someone like me. Unfortunately the shock of that revelation broke the connection and violently returned me to my body. I've been sitting here for three days wondering when Caleb would return to his senses. Now that he has, it's time to go looking for my counterpart."

Caleb found his voice, though Abbott was still confusing him. "I thought we were going to look for Quajinn Huo," he said.

"All in good time, lad," Abbott said. "If the Shadowbeing is a wizard like me, we may be able to enlist his help against Huo. That would be good, considering how badly he beat us last time."

"Okay," Kassy said. "Where do we begin looking?"

"I haven't the foggiest notion," Abbott said, eyes glinting. "Let's go down to the house and have a bit of tea and talk it over."

"Capital idea," Kassy said, mimicking Abbot's accent. She grabbed Caleb's hand and tugged him down the hill. "C'mon," she said. "You haven't met my parents yet."

I wonder if Kylostathenes still needs help? Caleb wondered, but followed her down the hill.



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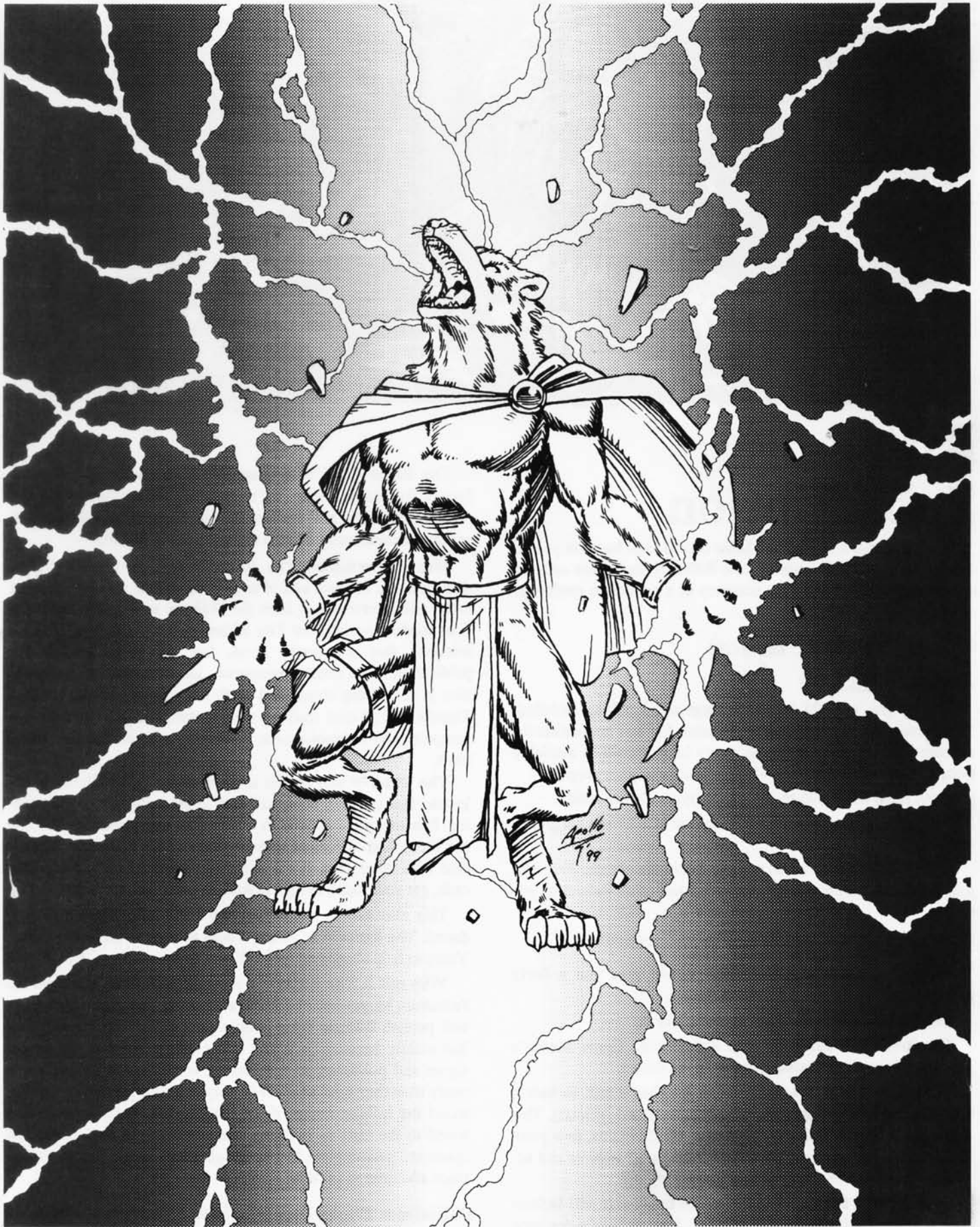
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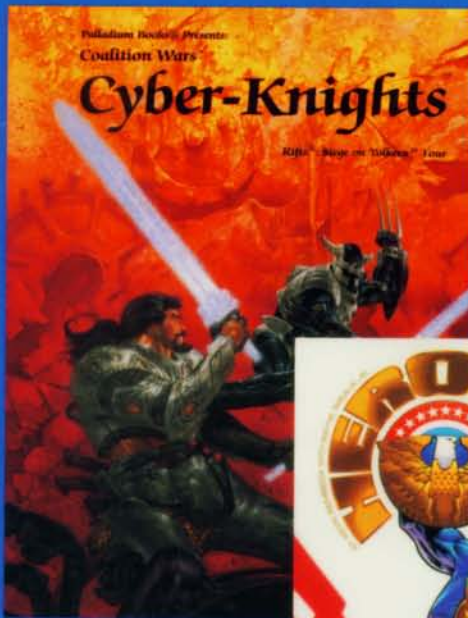
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