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Adventure Sourcebook

Mercenary Adventures™



By Siembieda, Nowak and Bellaire

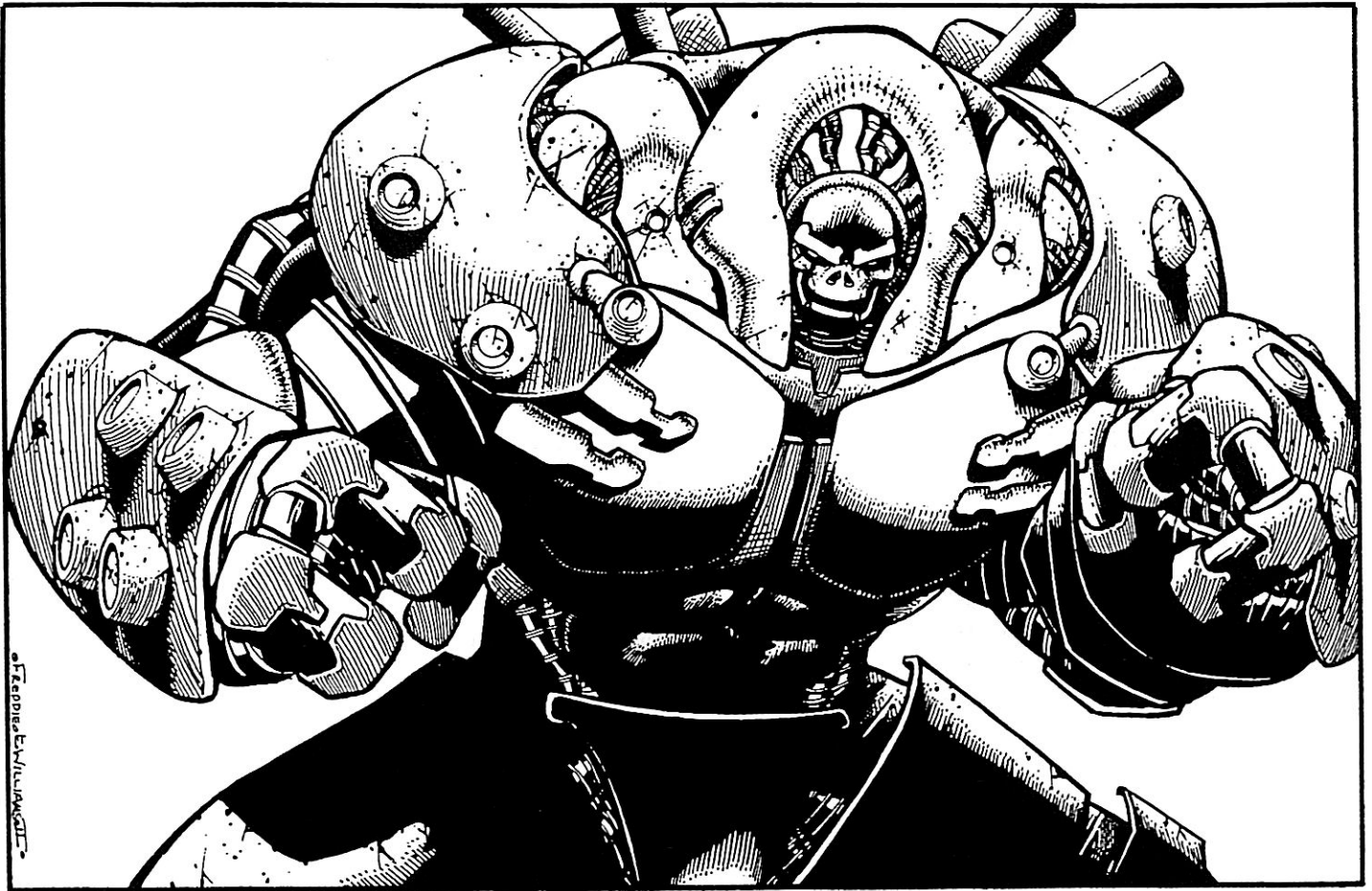
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Dedicated to the soldiers of 31B - and all our troops and allies fighting the good fight overseas and at home. We salute you.

– Nowak, Siembieda, & Bellaire – 2005

The cover, by *Freddie Williams II*, depicts a band of wild and woolly mercenaries locked in combat.

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Adventure Sourcebook

Mercenary Adventures™

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– Kevin Siembieda, 2005

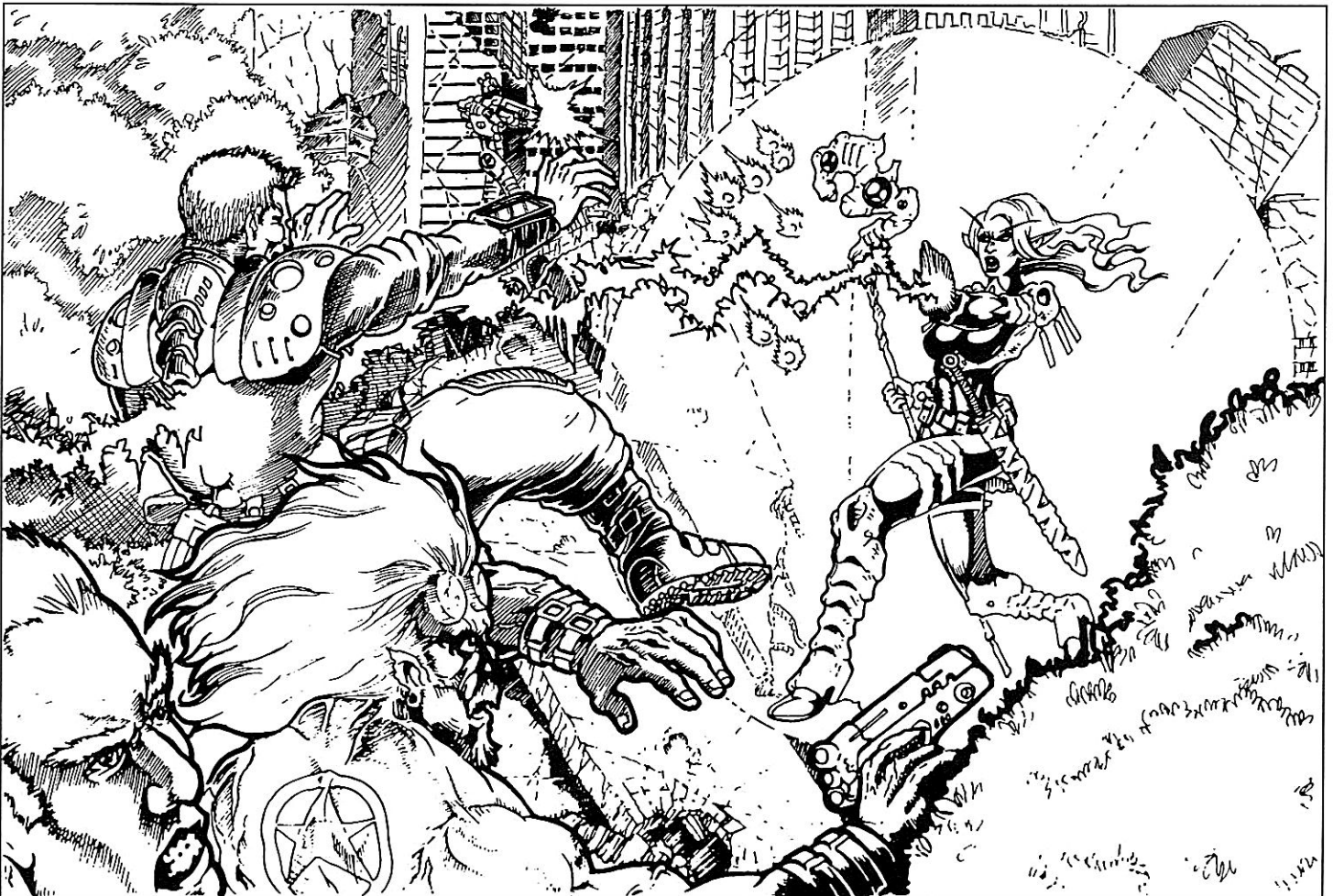
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New Mercenary Occupations

The following O.C.C.s are character classes that may be used as villains, Non-Player Characters (NPCs), or as optional mercenary O.C.C.s for players. Each adds something new to military campaigns and mercenary operations.

Combat Mage O.C.C.	Magebane O.C.C.
Cold-Blooded O.C.C.	Manhunter O.C.C.
Gladiator O.C.C.	Paratrooper O.C.C.
	Tin-Soldier O.C.C.



Combat Mage O.C.C.

By Patrick Nowak & Kevin Siembieda

Mercenaries come from all walks of life and professions, and magic practitioners are no exception. The Combat Mage is a mercenary wizard or *mage-for-hire* whose ability to use magic is designed for modern combat and military operations. These individuals are nothing like the stereotypical bookish man of magic, adventuring intellectual sorcerer, or the enigmatic Ley Line Walker. Instead, the Combat Mage is a warrior-born. A fighting man and a hard charger more at home on the battlefield than in a library.

Although legends from the Dark Age speak about warrior mages, and some believe they may be an offshoot of the Vanguard, the Combat Mage has only come on the scene in the last 20 years. These fighting spell casters are a recent development born in a time of escalating war and conflict. A natural extension of spell magic for war. Some say that Combat Mages are second-rate. That they are practitioners of magic who couldn't make the grade as a *Battle Magus* (See **Rifts® World Book 16: Federation of Magic** for information about the Battle Magus and other Magi). Indeed, the Combat Mage is *not* the master of the martial combat, self-awareness or weapons that are hall-

marks of the Battle Magus. Furthermore, the Combat Mage tends to resent the Battle Magi and most practitioners of magic, seeing them as arrogant elitists who hate to get their hands dirty – at least when compared to an infantry grunt. And Combat Mages are infantry grunts who like to be in the thick of front-line skirmishes or participating in special operations, especially those that involve raids, sabotage, jailbreaks, surgical strikes and assassination.

The Combat Mage originates from the Magic Zone, where a few groups (some say cults) and mercenary companies teach this type of quick and dirty combat. Combat training that combines basic soldiering with rapid-fire spell casting. (Note: This specialty O.C.C. is also taught in the Magic Quarter at *MercTown*, requiring two full years of internship and training to get the basics and go forth as a first level Combat Mage.)

Very much a *soldier*, the Combat Mage is a fighter whose chosen weapon is *magic*. To that end, they use rapid-fire spell sequences to disarm, impair, disorient, capture and destroy their enemies. This means most of their spell knowledge is limited to spell invocations from levels 1-5 because they can be cast quickly (one melee action each; see **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**). Furthermore, 80-90% of their spells are offensive/combat oriented. The mage also receives the same basic training and military orientation as a military grunt.

To these hardy warrior-mages, combat is not the means to an end but is the *end* in itself. These wizards are first and foremost, mercenary soldiers, hired guns who sell their services to the highest bidders. In a very real sense, the Combat Mage is simply the magic-using counterpart of the traditional mercenary soldier. As a result, they are a welcome addition to most mercenary units and look like ordinary infantry troops dressed in light combat gear, at least until they start throwing around magic. Fewer than six thousand are believed to exist on the North American continent. Most are attached to mercenary companies and paramilitary outfits operating in the wilderness and on the fringe of human civilization in the Americas. Over the last two decades, Combat Mages have operated primarily in the Magic Zone, the Southwest and Southern United States (including Dinosaur Swamp), and Northern Mexico. All are locations where they and their teammates often wage war against the undead, monsters and other inhuman villains that need destroying. Many humans and humanoids in the south have come to consider Combat Mages to be vampire and monster exterminating specialists. In the north, however, Combat Mages are hardly known at all. Most stayed out of the Coalition and Tolkeen War, and those who participated were often mistaken for Battle Magi and other types of recognized practitioners of magic.

The Combat Mages' lack of complete mastery over magic and their aggressive, soldier mentality make them something of second-class citizens among most practitioners of magic. The Magi and Ley Line Walkers, in particular, look down upon the Combat Mage as a roughneck without the discipline to master magic or the will to become a Battle Magus. However, they are common associates of Mercenaries and Headhunters of all kinds, Wilderness Scouts, vampire slayers, Cyber-Knights, Native American warriors and gunfighters.

Powers & Abilities of the Combat Mage

1. Initial Spell Knowledge: In addition to his military training, the Combat Mage learns to use spell magic as a lethal weapon. This means 70-80% of his spells are limited to level 1-5 spells, and 70-80% are completely *offensive* in nature, meaning they are intended to be used against an opponent. An offensive spell is either an attack or a weapon, plain and simple. Blinding Flash, Carpet of Adhesion, Electric Arc, Energy Bolt, Turn Dead, and similar are examples of attack/offensive magic. Magic Net, Magic Shield, and Lightblade are examples of magic weapons that are also considered offensive magic.

Even *defensive* (Breathe Without Air, Concealment, Walls, Impervious, etc.) and *self-empowering* spells (See Aura, Sense Magic, Chameleon, Fly, Escape, etc.) are minimal, falling into the 20-30% category. This means the character doesn't even come close to the level of proficiency possessed by a Ley Line Walker or Shifter.

Similar to the Techno-Wizard who must sacrifice full spell casting abilities in order to master machinery, the Combat Mage is a *combat specialist* in the area of magic. As a result, the mage is not as proficient as most magic practitioners when it comes to *non-combat spells*.

Spell Casting Penalty: The range and duration of all *non-combat* spells are *half* when cast by the Combat Mage, the only exception are the spells specifically classified as *Combat Magic Spells* (described at the end of this O.C.C.).

70-80% are attack/offensive spells.

20-30% are non-combat spells.

The common range of spells is levels 1-5, the next most common are levels 6 and 7.

Spell knowledge *STOPS* at (but may include) level 8 spells. The Combat Mage cannot learn any spells past level eight. Spells greater than level 8 are beyond the Combat Mage's ability to summon and control; they are too complex and demanding.

2. Initial Spell Knowledge at Level One: Armor of Ithan, Befuddle, Bulletproof, Cloud of Smoke, Energy Bolt, Fear, Flareburst, Laser Blast, and Turn Dead, *plus* one spell of choice from levels 1, 2, and 3; may include the special Combat Magic Spells described immediately after this O.C.C.

3. Learning New Spells: All new spells must be learned, purchased, or acquired as usual. HOWEVER, all spell selections are limited to spell invocations levels 1-5. This changes only after the character himself reaches level six in experience. A 6th level Combat Mage can learn and cast spells from levels 6, 7 and 8. **Note:** The Combat Mage's focus tends to always be on the Combat Magic Spells described elsewhere in this section and other combat/attack spell magic. Defensive spells are his next consideration, and all others last. The character seldom acquires magic that does not have some use in combat or military operations.

4. P.P.E.: Like all men of magic, the Combat Mage is a living battery of mystic energy that he can draw on to create magic. **Permanent Base P.P.E.:** 2D4x10+20 added to the character's P.E. attribute number to start. Plus, 1D8+1 P.P.E. per each additional level of experience.

Supplemental P.P.E.: The Combat Mage can draw an extra 10 P.P.E. per melee round when on a ley line, and 20 P.P.E.



when at a ley line nexus point. P.P.E. can NOT be stolen or drawn from other people or living beings. Combat Mages are not skilled or disciplined enough in the mystic arts to do so.

P.P.E. Recovery: Spent P.P.E. recovers at a rate of *five points* per hour of sleep or rest, 10 points per hour of meditation, and each hour of meditation is equal to one full hour of sleep.

5. Combat Mage O.C.C. Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +1 to strike with magical attacks, +2 to roll with impact, +2 to pull punch, +1 to disarm, +2D6+3 to S.D.C., +2 to P.S. or P.P. attribute, +1 to save vs possession, +1 to save vs curses, +1 to save vs Horror Factor at levels 2, 4, 8, 10, 12 and 14; +1 to save vs magic at levels 4, 8 and 12; and +1 to Spell Strength (the number others must save against when he casts a spell) at levels 5, 10 and 15.

Combat Mage O.C.C. Stats

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 9 and P.E. 9 or higher. A high M.E. and physical attributes are helpful, but are not required.

O.C.C. Skills:

Language: Native Tongue at 96%.

Language: Other: Two of choice (+15%).

Literacy: Native Language (+15%) or Other (+10%)

Climbing (+10%)

General Athletics

Lore: Demons and Monsters (+15%)

Mathematics: Basic (+5%)

Military Etiquette (+10%)

Pilot: One of choice (+5%; ground vehicle only).

Radio: Basic (+10%)

Swimming or Wilderness Survival (+5%)

W.P. Energy Rifle

W.P.: Two of choice (Ancient or Modern).

Hand to Hand: Basic to start, but can be changed to Hand to

Hand: Expert at the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, or to

Hand to Hand: Martial Arts for the cost of two.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select four other skills. Plus select one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: None.

Espionage: Any.

Mechanical: None.

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: Any (+5%).

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics.

Pilot: Any.

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Any, except Computer Hacking.

Science: Astronomy and Mathematics only (+5%).

Technical: Any.

Weapon Proficiencies: Any.

Wilderness: Any.

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select three Secondary Skills from the Secondary Skill list (see page 300 of **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**), plus one at levels 2, 5, 7, 9, 12 and 15. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get bonuses, other than the possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: A suit of personalized, light (2D6+32 M.D.C.) or medium (3D6+50 M.D.C.) body armor, typically made from organic, M.D.C. material, one weapon for each W.P. and 1D4+2 ammo/energy clips for each, and one common TW weapon of choice (often a Flaming Sword or TW revolver). Plus, dress uniform, utility coveralls, utility belt, and a set of camouflage clothing for covert operations, a gas mask and air filter, pair of quality sunglasses or tinted goggles, binoculars, hatchet for cutting wood (1D6 S.D.C.), six wooden stakes and a mallet (for vampires), small wooden or silver cross (may be worn around neck or wrist), a golf ball-sized quartz crystal shard, one refillable cigarette lighter, on disposable lighter, knapsack, backpack, 1D4 small sacks, pocket mirror, first aid kit, tent, two canteens, flashlight, 50 feet (15.2 m) of climbing rope, 1D4+2 pens or pencils, a note pad or sketchbook, and some personal items.

The vehicle is typically a conventional jeep, motorcycle or hovercycle, and should reflect the character's piloting skill.

Money: Starts with 1D4x1000 Universal Credits, 1D4x1000 in Black Market saleable items. Generally, the character will spend money as quickly as he gets it, usually on TW and other types of magic weapons, new spell invocations, vehicle and combat gear, then on living well and enjoying life during the quiet moments.

Cybernetics: Starts with none and will avoid getting any cybernetic or other forms of physical augmentation. Will only consider Bio-Systems when severely injured.

Experience Table for the Combat Mage: Same as the Headhunter, see the **Rifts® RPG**.

Combat Magic Spells

By Patrick Nowak & Kevin Siembieda

Combat Magic is not as well known or commonly practiced as other areas of magic. Once a popular form of mystic defense in a more savage time, many of these spells go back to the Two Hundred Years Dark Age. Today, however, these spell are all but forgotten by most practitioners magic or deliberately ignored as barbaric. They are predominantly known and used only by the Combat Mage, Battle Magus, and some Mystic Knights. Most other Magic O.C.C.s consider Combat Magic to be inferior, brutal magic for the unskilled, roughnecks and killers. Thus, most Combat Magic is intentionally shunned by other Magic O.C.C.s. **Note:** A Ley Line Walker, for example, is not likely to know more than a half-dozen Combat Magic spells regardless of his level of experience.

Combat Note: Remember that the casting of a level 1-5 spell uses up one melee attack/action, so spells that enhance rather than fire off an immediate blast or other attack, use up one of the mage's melee attacks for that round.

Level One

Bulletproof (3)
Farseeing (3)
Flareburst (2)
Nightvision (4)
Stumble (3)

Level Two

Infrared Vision (5)
Jolt Wand (1 or 5)
Mystic Direction Sense (6)
Mystic Marksmanship (5)
Slam (5)
TK Bullet Attack (3 or 6)
Wakefulness (5)

Level Three

Flamethrower (2 or 6)
Haymaker Strike (S.D.C.; 4)
Laser Blast (5)
Mystic Pitching Throw (6)

Level Four

Eavesdrop (10)
Force Bolt (8)
Quickaction (8)
Quickstrike (10)
Stun Baton (7)
Starburst (12)
Stealthwalk (10)

Level Five

Choking Blast & Dust Cloud (15)
Erase Trail (16)
Mega-Damage Haymaker (10)
Mystic Water Blast (10)
Sense Traps & Mines (12)
Superhuman Agility (15)

Level Six

Full Throttle (20)
Freefall (18)
Invisibility to Sensors (20)
Magelock (15)
Stunblast (16)
Syphon P.P.E. from Object (16)
Thundermaul (16)

Level Seven

Blast Shield (17)
Fighting Spirit (20)
Mystic Invisibility (25)
Spy Eye (25)

Level Eight

Electromagnetic Attack (30)
Engine Flame-Out (35)
Shockblade (30)
Vampire Dance (22)

Note: Remember, the Combat Mage can also learn traditional spell invocations levels 1-8 (but mainly 1-5), with a focus on those that have combat applications.

Level One Combat Spells

Bulletproof

A defensive spell.

Range: Self or others by touch.

Duration: Two minutes per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Three

A lesser magical armor that surrounds the spell caster with an energy field that provides protection against *S.D.C. weapons*. The Bulletproof armor has an A.R. of 19 and 100 S.D.C. plus 10 S.D.C. per level of experience. It is true that in a Mega-Damage battle zone this spell affords minimal protection (one or two M.D.C.), but within the walls of a city or environment where M.D. weapons are not allowed, the Bulletproof spell proves extremely useful.

Farseeing

A self-empowering spell.

Range: Self.

Duration: One minute (4 melee rounds) per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Three

Provides the spell caster with binocular-like vision allowing him to see objects clearly at distances of up to two miles (3.2 km). The magic provides the ability to read objects as small as a license plate or recognize a face up to the maximum distance of 2 miles (3.2 km). It can be used to extend the range of other magic viewing spells such as Nightvision, See the Invisible, See Aura, etc., tripling their normal range. The magic does not adversely affect vision at close distances, and the spell caster's eyes will automatically adjust and focus on items and people at any distance up to two miles (3.2 km).

Flareburst

An offense/combat related spell.

Range: 500 feet (152 m).

Duration: One minute per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Two

A magical illumination spell that works like a signal flare. The Flareburst shoots straight up, into the air, like a rocket flare, and bursts into a shower of light. Like a parachute flare, it hangs in the air for one minute (per level of the spell caster's experience), illuminating a 300 foot (91.5 m) radius like stadium lights, and marking the heavens above for allies to target or zone in on. On the ground, the flickering white light is bright enough to read by, but is not sunlight. The Flareburst remains suspended in midair suspended, until the spell ends (or is cancelled), and then disappears. Unlike a flare, there is no scrap materials or castoffs. When it burns out, the light simply vanishes.

Nightvision

A self-empowering spell.

Range: Self, visual range of about 600 feet (183 m).

Duration: Six minutes per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Four

For the duration of this spell the mage is magically able to see even in total darkness (with the exception of magic darkness, which temporarily renders the character blind). This ability is like the natural ability of many supernatural creatures and certain D-Bees. Everything the character views appears in black and white unless there is a light source such as a candle or starlight, which allows him to see in color. **Note:** If suddenly exposed to bright light such as indoor lighting, flares or a flashlight, the character is temporarily blinded for 1D4+1 melee rounds (-10 to strike, parry and dodge).

Stumble

An offensive spell.

Range: 25 feet (7.6 m) per level of experience.

Damage: 1D4 S.D.C.

Duration: Instant.

Saving Throw: Standard.

P.P.E.: Three

A simple spell that causes the intended target to lose his balance, stumble and fall to the ground. The victim of a Stumble attack automatically loses initiative and must spend two melee attacks/actions to regain his composure and get back on his feet (half that time for a Crazy, Juicer, Mystic Knight, or Combat Cyborg). Damage from the fall is only to one's pride.

Level Two

Infrared Vision

A self-empowering spell.

Range: Self; visual range of about 500 feet (152 m).

Duration: 5 minutes per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Five

Provides the character with the ability to see heat patterns in the infrared spectrum in a manner identical to mechanical thermal imaging optics. The vision enables the mage to see thermal patterns through thin material like thin walls (wood, S.D.C. brick, drywall, etc.), light body armor and clothing, foliage, most S.D.C. materials under four inches (10 cm) thick and light M.D.C. material (half an inch or less), but is unable to see through more than an inch (2.5 cm) of dirt or a foot (0.3 m) of water, or heavy or reinforced M.D.C. structures (walls, armor, concrete, etc.).

Jolt Wand

An offensive spell.

Range: Touch or six feet (1.8 m) per level of experience.

Duration: Instant.

Damage: Varies; 1D4 S.D.C. per jolt or 1D4 M.D. per blast.

Saving Throw: Dodge.

P.P.E.: One per S.D.C. jolt or five P.P.E. per M.D. blast.

A rare spell that requires a component, in this case, a two foot (0.6 m) long rod made of copper. Hold and point the copper rod and it will let loose an electrical jolt or a short-range blast every time the spell is cast and sufficient P.P.E. is channeled through it. The item is used as a cattle prod to jolt victims, causing them to jump and move, or as a light, close-range weapon that fires an electrical arc. Each spell induced jolt or blast counts as one melee attack.

Mystic Direction Sense

A self-empowering spell.

Range: Self or other by touch.

Duration: 10 minutes per level of the spell caster's experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Six

An enchantment that bestows upon the recipient an uncanny sense of direction, making it impossible for him to lose his way. The enchanted character always knows the direction of true North, knows the direction from where he started, can estimate the exact distance traveled to within 10 feet (3 m), and is capable of navigating as per the Land Navigation skill at a proficiency of 92%. However, that all instantly vanishes the moment the spell ends.

Mystic Marksmanship

An offensive spell.

Range: Self or others by touch.

Duration: One melee attack.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Five

The effect of this spell is to provide the recipient with the momentary natural shooting ability of an expert marksman or sharpshooter. It slows the heart rate, relaxes muscles, provides calm focus, and makes breathing even and regular. While under the influence of the spell the affected individual gains a bonus of +3 to strike on Aimed and Called Shots with any modern weapon, bow and arrow, or magic offensive spell attack. This bonus is in addition to the character's other applicable bonuses to strike. **Note:** If cast on another person the magic (and bonus) will not come into play until the character next fires his weapon.

Slam

An offensive spell.

Range: 15 feet (4.6 m) per level of experience.

Damage: 1D6x10 S.D.C. and probable knockdown.

Duration: Instant.

Saving Throw: None except dodge, but the victim must know the attack is coming and must roll a 17 or higher to dodge a Slam.

P.P.E.: Five

A magical blast of force that appears as a blur used to crash or "slam" into the target with the force of a battering ram. Any object struck by the Slam attack suffers 1D6x10 S.D.C. damage and the victim must *roll with impact* or be knocked down. Victims who are knocked down lose initiative and two melee attacks/actions spent regaining their footing and orientation. Characters clad in Mega-Damage armor suffer 1D4 S.D.C. damage even through their armor. This is an *instant* slamming attack and does not hold the target down. **Note:** Heavy Mega-Damage power armor (220 or more M.D.C.), larger than man-sized robots, and robots and creatures with a supernatural P.S. 24 or higher are NOT affected by the Slam spell. Man-sized robots, light and medium power armor and beings with a Supernatural P.S. of 23 or less don't take damage, but must successfully *roll with impact* or be knocked down and lose initiative and two melee attacks. Not effective against M.D.C. vehicles or fortifications.

TK Bullet Attack

An offensive spell.

Range: 100 feet (30.5 m) per level of experience; line of sight.

Damage: A single TK bolt (1D8 S.D.C.) or a burst of three TK bullets (inflicts 3D8 or 4D6 S.D.C.) can be fired. By doubling the P.P.E. expended, the mage can inflict 1D4 M.D. from a single shot or 3D4 M.D. from a TK burst. Only one target can be fired upon at a time and the mage determines the amount of damage inflicted by firing a single bolt or a burst of three.

Duration: A couple of seconds.

Saving Throw: Dodge with a penalty of -2.

P.P.E.: Three or Six

The magic can fire bullet-like telekinetic bolts that inflict S.D.C. damage or M.D. The mage needs to point with a single finger and fire.

Wakefulness

A self-empowering spell.

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

Duration: One hour per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Standard.

P.P.E.: Five

A spell that fights off sleep and provides heightened alertness which allows the recipient of the enchantment to stay fully awake and alert for the complete duration of the magic. This enables the individual to continue to function at peak efficiency without becoming dulled by a need or desire for sleep. If kept awake for 24 hours or more, the character will be very tired when the enchantment ends and will suffer -2 to Perception Rolls, -10% on all skill rolls, and -1 to initiative, strike, parry, and dodge, until he can get at least seven hours of sleep.

Level Three

Flamethrower

An offensive spell.

Range: 10 feet (3 m) per level of experience.

Duration: Instant.

Damage: 1D6x10 S.D.C. or 2D4 M.D.

Saving Throw: Dodge.

P.P.E.: Two for an S.D.C. blast or six for an M.D. blast.

A rare spell that requires a component, in this case, an ordinary cigarette lighter (refillable or disposable) or any device that can create a flame. Hold, point the lighter at the intended target, send the mystic energy through it and flick it on to create a flamethrower-like blast. Each spell-induced blast counts as one melee attack. The lighter must be used to create the initial flame for the spell each time to fire a blast.

Haymaker Strike

An offensive spell.

Range: Self.

Damage (Bonus): +2D6 S.D.C./Hit Point damage in addition to the damage the character usually inflicts; applicable to punches and kicks.

Bonus to Strike: +1.

Duration: Instant.

Saving Throw: Parry or dodge only.

P.P.E.: Four

The spell caster usually cocks or cranks the punching arm back while muttering the spell and upon completion, swings to hit. If the punch or kick connects/strikes, the damage bonus is

inflicted along with the usual damage inflicted by that type of attack for that character; remember P.S. damage bonuses. A magic energy field protects the hand from injury and pain even when the punch is leveled at hard S.D.C. or even Mega-Damage materials, e.g., a plaster or brick wall, wood or metal door, weapon, armored opponent, etc. **Note:** A successful parry of a magic Haymaker will deflect most of the powerful punch, but the defender still takes 1D4 points of damage! This is strictly a *punch or kick attack*, handheld weapons such as swords or clubs cannot be used to deliver this strike.

Laser Blast

An offensive spell.

Range: 200 feet (61 m) per level of experience.

Duration: Instant.

Damage: 1D6 M.D. +2 M.D. per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Dodge.

P.P.E.: Five per blast.

A rare spell that requires a component, a quartz crystal the size of golf ball or the length and size of a fountain pen. Hold and point the crystal at the intended target, send the mystic energy through it and a laser beam is fired. Each spell-induced blast counts as one melee attack.

Mystic Pitching Throw

An offensive spell.

Range: Affects only the spell caster. Twice the usual throwing range for that object +30 feet (9.1 m) per additional level of experience (e.g., +60 feet/18.3 m at level two, +90 feet/27.4 m at level three, etc.).



Damage: As usual, +2 points of additional damage (S.D.C. or M.D. depending on the nature of the object/weapon).

Duration: Instant.

Saving Throw: Dodge or parry, but at a penalty of -3.

P.P.E.: Six

This spell enables the mage to hurl a weapon or object designed for, or suitable for, throwing, including hand grenades, a much farther distance than normal without losing accuracy, and at a speed of 90 mph (144 km). Damage inflicted by thrown weapons and blunt objects (balls, bricks, etc.) is normal +2 extra points of damage (S.D.C. or M.D. depending on what the weapon normally inflicts). For grenades and other explosives, the damage inflicted is normal for the explosive, but the throwing range is greatly increased. If being used in a game of baseball, it counts as a *fast ball* and the batter (or anyone trying to hit the pitch with a bat/club) is -2D4 to hit it (the exact penalty varies with each pitch).

Level Four

Eavesdrop

A self-empowering spell.

Range: 100 feet (30.5 m) +10 feet (3 m) per level of experience; line of sight. The enchantment may be placed on the mage, himself, or another by touch.

Duration: Two minutes per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Ten

This invocation magic enables the spell caster to focus in on the conversation of one specific group, tuning out all others to a dull chatter and hearing what the members of the specific group are saying even if they are a good distance away and whispering. The enchanted person must have visual contact and remain focused on listening, which means he cannot be engaged in conversation or other activities himself.

Force Bolt

An offensive spell.

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

Damage: 1D6+1 M.D. per Bolt.

Duration: Instant.

Saving Throw: Dodge, requiring a roll of 17 or higher, and can only be performed if the victim knows the attack is coming.

P.P.E.: Eight

A bolt of force (rather than energy) that appears as a blur of light that strikes with the impact of a rail gun round. The Force Bolt does 1D6+1 M.D. and is +3 to strike. Requires line of sight, the spell caster must be able to see his target. The hands must weave during the spell incantation and the mage must point at his intended target. This spell has excellent range for experienced mages.

Quickaction

An offensive spell (even though it is also self-empowering).

Range: Self.

Duration: One melee action.

Bonus: +10

Penalty: Each Quickaction uses up two melee attacks.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Eight

Casting the spell enables the character's next action to be done with blinding speed and accuracy. This enchantment can be used to parry, dodge, roll with impact, leap or dive for cover or to knock someone out of harm's way; grab, catch or reach something before an opponent, flip a switch first, and similar "actions." In every instance the mage gets a bonus of +10 to his roll on a D20 (i.e., +10 on initiative, +10 to parry, +10 to dodge, etc.) in addition to his usual bonuses (if any) for that type of action. Such a high bonus almost always guarantees success. However, a poor die roll (1-7) could defeat this spell (consider it fate) and if his opponent rolls a Natural 20, the mage must better that roll by at least five points (rolls a 25 or higher with bonuses) to beat a Natural 20. **Note:** Does NOT apply to a roll to strike, disarm, stun, knockout, or kill.

Quickstrike

An offensive spell.

Range: Self.

Duration: One melee action/attack.

Bonus: +7 in physical combat using punches, kicks, knife, sword or other melee weapon. +3 to strike using a gun, bow and arrow or a thrown weapon.

Penalty: Each Quickstrike uses up two melee attacks.

Saving Throw: Dodge or parry may be applicable.

P.P.E.: Ten

Casting the spell enables the character's physical attack to be done with blinding speed and accuracy. This enchantment can only be used on rolls to strike, disarm, stun, knockout or kill (death blow); the strike must always be an attack. In every instance the Quickstrike bonus is in addition to the character's usual bonuses to strike with that particular weapon or fists. Such a high bonus helps to guarantee success. However, a poor die roll could defeat this spell (consider it fate) and if his opponent rolls a Natural 20, the mage must better that roll by at least five points (rolls a 25 or higher with bonuses) to beat a Natural 20. **Note:** Does NOT apply to pull punch or entanglement.

Stun Baton

An offensive spell.

Range: Touch.

Damage: Special; debilitating.

Duration: One melee round (15 seconds).

Saving Throw: 17 or higher, or parry.

P.P.E.: Seven

This magic may be used to enchant any *blunt* weapon and is ideal for close combat and attempts to capture or subdue an en-

emy rather than kill. It is an offensive spell that surrounds the blunt weapon with a blue energy field. Striking opponents *without* M.D. body armor or other means of M.D. protection delivers a stunning jolt. Victims see their normal combat bonuses cut in half from the first strike, reduced by half again with the second, and reduced to zero with the third. They also feel sluggish and disoriented (hence, their inability to fight at their normal level with bonuses). Subsequent strikes from the Stun Baton that melee round inflict the weapon's usual damage and the accumulating stun effect reduces Spd by 5% per additional strike. Continued use into the next melee round (requiring the spell to be cast again) will have accumulative penalties.

Against opponents in Mega-Damage armor or Mega-Damage beings themselves, the character inside the armor takes no damage, but after three hits in the same melee round is -1 to strike, parry and dodge and Spd is reduced by 2%. Continued use into the next melee round will have accumulative penalties per successful strike.

Note: A Stun Baton may also be used to parry other stun and electrical based S.D.C. and M.D. weapons such as a Neural Mace. The spell was originally designed for riot control and pacification. Victims recover from the stunning attacks within one melee round (15 seconds) *after* the jolting attacks cease (that means penalties last for one melee round after the attacks stop). Continuous attacks can drop a victim to his knees, but can NOT kill. The stun/penalties stop having any noticeable effect upon knocking a victim into unconsciousness or after reducing Hit Points to 15. Likewise, the Stun Baton can be parried by other physical weapons (sword, club, etc.); a successful parry means the Baton does not hit or affect the intended victim.



The spell caster fires a burst of blazing light from his hand; point and shoot. The intended target can try to dodge, but does so with a -2 penalty. Furthermore, unless the eyes are shielded against bright light (quality sunglasses or tinted goggles will do the trick), the victim is momentarily blinded (-10 to strike, parry, dodge, and other combat moves) for one melee round (15 seconds). Increase the duration of being blinded by 7 seconds (a half a melee round) for each Starburst fired at the same person within the same melee round. **Note:** Vampires suffer an additional 1D6 points of damage and are blinded for twice as long.

Stealthwalk

A defensive spell.

Range: Self or other by touch.

Duration: 5 minutes per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Ten

The Stealthwalk spell does not conceal the physical presence of the caster, or footprints, but it does magically suppress any sound made by the enchanted individual while moving. The spell masks the sounds of breathing, footfalls and climbing as well as muting the sound of equipment attached to or worn by the individual that might rustle, clunk or clatter, including body armor, weapons, etc. For the duration of the spell the character enchanted with Stealthwalk moves silently and gets a bonus of +20% to his Prowl (a base Prowl ability of 40% applies if the character does not have the Prowl skill). **Note:** The magic is negated if the character moves faster than half his Spd attribute.

Starburst

An offensive spell.

Range: 30 feet (9.1 m) per level of experience; line of sight.

Damage: 3D6 M.D. and possible temporary blindness.

Duration: Instant with lingering effect.

Saving Throw: Dodge at -2.

P.P.E.: Twelve

Level Five

Choking Blast & Dust Cloud

A offensive spell.

Range: 100 feet (30.5 m).

Duration: 2 melees per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Standard.

P.P.E.: Fifteen

Conjures an explosion that creates a 30x30x30 foot (9x9x9 m) cloud of choking dust and grit (the explosion is all noise, no damage). Everyone caught in the dust cloud without a gas mask or air filter chokes and coughs with every breath they take, with similar effects when they try to speak or cast a spell. Those without protection for the eyes and mouth (e.g., wearing a gas mask, helmet, air filter and goggles, etc.) are blinded (-10 to strike, parry, and dodge, etc.) and unable to speak. Furthermore, they choke and cough, are distracted, causing them to lose one

melee attack/action and initiative (their enemy gets first strike, they can only respond).

Even those in environmental body armor, power armor, vehicles or otherwise protected, find visibility within the dust cloud to be only 1D8 feet (0.3 to 2.4 m) and even then they only see shadowy shapes, no details. They are -2 on initiative and -2 to strike, parry and dodge until they exit the cloud or the magic ends and it disappears; double the penalties for Dog Boys and other beings with keen senses (all the tiny particles and dust interferes with their senses). **Note:** All the grit and floating debris also knocks out radar, thermal optics, and beings who rely on antennae, rendering them effectively blind.

After the magic ends or the victims exit the cloud, they are covered in a fine dust, making them look dirty. The dust can be wiped away, but takes 1D4 minutes to do so effectively and clothing and armor will still look dingy and dusty.

Erase Trail

A defensive spell.

Range: Self or other by touch.

Duration: 10 minutes per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Sixteen

A concealment magic that utterly erases any *physical signs* left by the spell caster's passage. For the duration of the spell the individual leaves no footprints, no broken vegetation, no scuff or wet marks, or even a scent trail, making it impossible to track him or tell if he has gone that way. However, the individual still leaves behind a psychic "scent" that psionic characters like Psi-Stalkers and Dog Boys can easily follow. **Note:** Only the enchanted individual leaves no physical trail, others in his company may leave behind all sorts of trails and trace evidence. Also note that the Detect Concealment spell will indicate that concealment magic has been used on the area, but it will not reveal a trail.

Mega-Damage Haymaker

An offensive spell.

Range: Self.

Damage (Bonus): 2D6 M.D. (When applicable, this M.D. is in addition to the M.D. the character usually inflicts.) Applicable to punches and kicks.

Bonus to Strike: +1

Duration: Instant.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Ten

The spell caster usually cocks or cranks the punching arm back while muttering the spell and upon completion, swings to hit. If the punch or kick connects/strikes, the damage bonus is inflicted along with the usual damage inflicted by that type of attack for that character, if applicable (S.D.C. damage against an M.D.C. opponent doesn't count). A magic energy field protects the hand from injury and pain, even when the punch is leveled at hard Mega-Damage materials, like an M.D.C. metal door, weapon, armored opponent, etc. **Note:** A successful parry of a

Mega-Damage Haymaker will deflect most of the powerful punch, but the defender still takes 1D4 M.D. This is strictly a *punch or kick attack*, handheld weapons such as swords or clubs cannot be used to deliver this strike.

Mystic Water Blast

An offensive spell.

Range: 100 feet (30.5 m) +10 feet (3 m) per level of experience.

Damage: None to ordinary people, 2D6+6 damage to vampires, 2D6+6 M.D. to Fire Elementals and other beings vulnerable to water.

Duration: Instant, each blast counts as a new spell.

Saving Throw: None, except dodge at -1 to do so.

P.P.E.: Ten

This spell was designed to combat vampires, Fire Elementals and other beings vulnerable to water, creating a directed blast which fires from the mage's hand. Against vampires, the water is like acid, burning the flesh and inflicting grievous damage. It is equally effective against Fire Elementals.

Sense Traps & Mines

A defensive spell.

Range: Self.

Duration: One minute per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Twelve

This magic ability enables the caster to sense the presence and location of mines and booby traps. The individual is able to sense normal traps and mines equal to the skill at a proficiency of 94%. Furthermore, the invocation will automatically detect the mystical signature of magical traps, including wards, runes and spells.

Superhuman Agility

A self-empowering spell.

Range: Self or other by touch or within 20 feet (6.1 m); line of sight.

Duration: Two melee rounds per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Fifteen

This enchantment empowers the recipient with the balance, reflexes and agility of a jungle cat. Without the need of any training the character can walk a tightrope or narrow ledge at a base skill of 88%, as well as fight, leap and dodge on narrow beams, tightropes and ledges without fear of losing his balance and falling. The character is also totally unafraid of heights when this spell is in effect.

Bonuses:

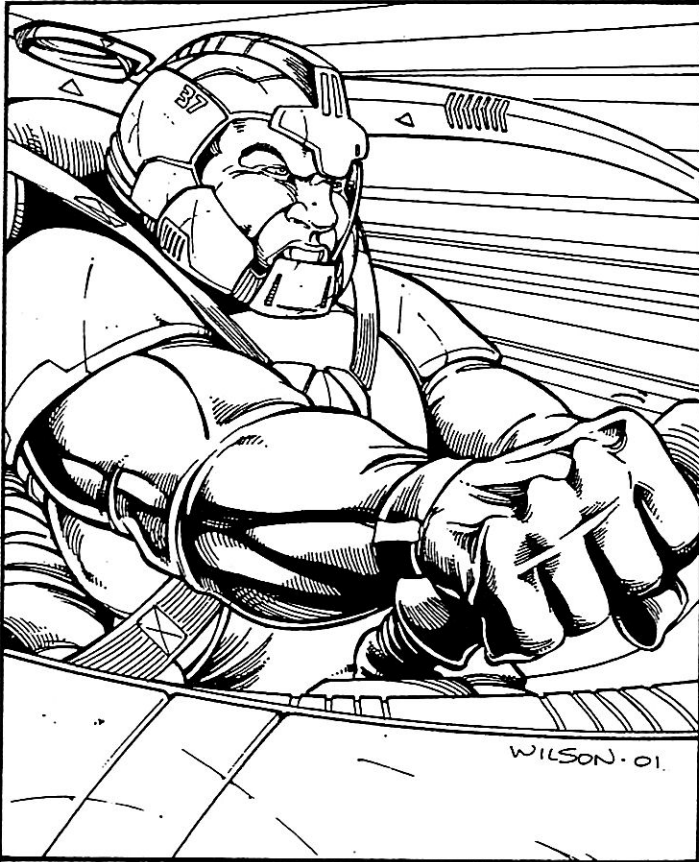
+1 on initiative, +1 to parry, +5 to dodge and +5 to roll with impact.

Automatic Dodge (+5; the act of dodging – moving out of the way of an attack – without spending one of his own melee attacks).

Automatically rolls with impact from falls, when struck by a moving vehicle or when struck by explosions/concussive blasts (including sonic blasts).

+20% to Climb/Rappel skill.

Level Six



Full Throttle

A defensive spell.

Range: By touch or 10 feet (3 m) per level of experience.

Duration: One melee per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Twenty

This spell enchantment enables a vehicle to travel at full throttle – up to 40% *faster* than it is normally capable of achieving on its own, without shaking apart, burning out the engine or suffering any permanent damage. **Note:** -5% penalty to the Piloting skill roll for basic maneuvers (namely going straight and making wide turns), -20% to Piloting skill rolls for evasive, trick or offensive maneuvers.

Freefall

A defensive spell.

Range: Self or others up to 100 feet (30.5 m) away; line of sight.

Duration: Until one reaches the ground.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Eighteen

The Freefall spell magically negates the effects of gravity on the spell caster, allowing him to fall from great heights without suffering any damage. It enables those enchanted to fall up to 2000 feet (610 m) per level of experience and land with a thud, but safely, without taking any damage. If the length of the fall is greater than the Freefall height, the mage suffers normal damage for falling the difference in height.

Invisibility to Sensors

A defensive spell.

Range: Self or others by touch.

Duration: Two minutes per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Special.

P.P.E.: Twenty

This spell magically renders the caster invisible to high-tech sensory devices. Any such device, including radar, sonar, thermal imaging, nightvision optics, motion sensors, surveillance cameras, infrared beams, etc., will not detect the character and thus will not register an alarm if part of a security system. However, the caster himself is perfectly visible to the human eye as well as to other magical or psionic viewing means.

There is no saving throw against this spell unless an organic, intelligent life form is viewing the caster directly through a high-tech optical device. For example, a soldier wearing a pair of nightvision goggles is allowed a save vs magic, which, if successful, means the soldier can still see the mage with his own natural vision even though the mage doesn't register on the goggles themselves.

Magelock

A defensive spell.

Range: Touch.

Duration: 24 hours per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Fifteen

The Magelock spell can be cast on any door, window, drawer, chest or container to lock it shut with a magical bond that cannot be broken. It is impossible to open the Magelocked door or container and there is no physical lock to pick. To open it, one must smash open the container/door, itself, or cast a Negate Magic Barriers or Negate Magic spell (however, the item gets to save vs spell magic with bonuses from the caster's Spell Strength). Otherwise, only a character with a *Supernatural P.S.* attribute of 45 or higher can force the locked item open!

Stunblast

An offensive spell.

Range: 20 feet (6.1 m) per level of experience.

Damage: 2D4 S.D.C.

Duration: Instant effect, 1D4+1 melee rounds.

Saving Throw: -1 to save.

P.P.E.: Sixteen

Level Seven

When the Stunblast spell is cast, a blast of magical energy hurtles at the target which momentarily disorients the victim. Unless the victim saves vs magic he feels disoriented and is -6 to strike, parry, dodge, disarm, and entangle, -2 on initiative, and loses one melee attack/action for 1D4+1 melee rounds. **Note:** The Stunblast affects *all* living creatures, even Mega-Damage beings and people wearing high-tech M.D.C. body armor, but the stun effect lasts half as long. Robots and heavy vehicles (anything with 220 M.D.C. or more, or which has a reinforced pilot's/crew compartment) shield the pilot and crew enough to block the Stunblast.

Syphon P.P.E. from Object

An offensive spell.

Range: Touch or one foot (0.3 m) per level of experience; line of sight.

Damage: 1D6 P.P.E. points per level of the spell caster.

Duration: Instant.

Saving Throw: Special. Applies only if the item's owner realizes what's going on and he is holding the magic item. A successful save (12 or higher) means no P.P.E. is lost and the item works fine. **Note:** This spell has no effect on rune weapons, Splugorthian Bio-Wizard creations or any magic item powered by a living organism.

P.P.E.: Sixteen

This is an offensive enchantment designed to drain and empty the P.P.E. power source of Techno-Wizard weapons and devices as well as other magic weapons with a finite energy reserve. The spell drains the P.P.E. and harmlessly dispels it into the air. When cast, the spell creates a small crackling energy sphere that draws out 1D6 P.P.E. points per level of the spell caster from the one, specific, targeted item.

Thundermaul

An offensive spell.

Range: Self or other.

Damage: 2D6+2 M.D.

Duration: One melee round per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Save vs Horror Factor.

P.P.E.: Sixteen

A Thundermaul is a magical hammer, or maul, that appears out of thin air and is composed entirely of crackling blue energy. Every time it strikes something, the weapon not only inflicts Mega-Damage, but it also produces a loud boom like a small thunderclap. The spell caster can use the Thundermaul himself, or give it to someone else if so desired. This weapon is used like any normal hammer in hand to hand combat and can also be used to parry Vibro-Blades, energy weapons, flaming swords and even energy blasts (though no bonuses to parry apply when trying to parry an energy blast, straight roll only, and the blast may only be parried if it was anticipated before it was fired).



Blast Shield

A defensive spell.

Range: 10 foot (3 m) radius.

Duration: One melee round (15 seconds) per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Seventeen

A spell designed to protect the spell caster and a handful of other individuals from the effects of an explosion. The invocation creates a curved telekinetic force field that redirects the blast of an explosion up and around a 10 foot (3 m) sphere centered on the mage. Anyone within the blast shield is totally protected from the effects of any explosive type blast, including conventional grenades, demolition charges, fusion blocks, missiles, artillery shells and mortars and similar attacks. Once summoned, the blast shield cannot move and anyone straying outside of its protective field is subject to normal damage from explosive attacks.

Fighting Spirit

An offensive spell.

Range: Self or other by touch.

Duration: 2 melees per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Twenty

For the duration of the spell's effect the caster is imbued with the hand to hand fighting ability of a high level warrior. The spell provides the following bonuses: +2 attacks/actions per melee round, +1 on initiative, +1 to strike with guns, +3 to strike in melee combat, +2 to disarm, parry and dodge, +4 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact, +4 to save vs Horror Factor/fear, +2 to save vs possession, Critical Strike on a Natural 18-20, karate kick (1D8 S.D.C.), jump kick, Paired Weapons, leap attack and judo flip/throw. While the spell is in effect, the caster moves with an agility, confidence and skill (normally) beyond his own natural abilities.

Mystic Invisibility

A defensive spell.

Range: Self.

Duration: 5 minutes per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Twenty-Five

An invocation that shields the caster from all forms of mystic detection. For the duration of the spell the caster remains totally undetectable by all magical and psionic means. Those creatures that rely on psionic or mystic sight or hearing are unable to detect the caster's presence, and for all intents and purposes, he is both silent and invisible. Furthermore, the caster will not be detected by the special abilities of beings such as Psi-Stalkers who are naturally able to detect the presence of magic, psionics and supernatural beings. Similarly, the individual does not radiate any perceptible aura for the duration of the spell.

Spy Eye

An offensive spell.

Range: 300 feet (91.5 m).

Duration: Two minutes per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Twenty-Five

The Mystic Spy Eye is a large, black eyeball with a dark red pupil that is similar to the ley line observation ball. Once conjured, this mystical eye is linked to the caster like a third eye that can be sent forward like a remote control spying device. Everything that the spy eye sees is instantly transmitted to the caster as long as he or she concentrates on it - no other melee actions or attacks are possible. The spy eye stays in place or floats along beside its maker when the caster isn't concentrating on controlling the mystic creation. It remains in existence for the duration of the spell or until dispelled by the caster, or until destroyed.

Mystic Spy Eye Stats:

M.D.C.: One per level of the spell caster's experience, but can be hurt by S.D.C./Hit Point damage, with every one M.D.C. counting as 100 S.D.C.

Size: About the size of a grapefruit (4-5 inches/10-13 cm in diameter).

Attributes: Spd 33 (22 mph/35 km), moves silently (equal to a Prowl of 60%).

Combat: No attacks, but the Spy Eye can dodge attacks directed against the eye while controlled by its caster. The number of actions per melee is the same as the caster's hand to hand combat.

Bonuses: +3 to dodge.

Level Eight

Electromagnetic Attack

An offensive spell.

Range: Rail Gun: 1000 feet (305 m) +300 feet (91.5 m) per level of experience. EMP: Touch or a 15 foot (4.6 m) radius of effect and can be cast up to 120 feet (36.5 m) away from the spell caster.

Damage: 5D6 M.D. as rail gun or via electromagnetic pulse.

Duration: Instant.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Thirty

This spell enables the caster to summon and wield the powerful electromagnetic forces of the Earth. The caster can use this magnetic energy in one of two ways, first to hurl metallic objects similar to a rail gun, and secondly to create an electromagnetic pulse. When the first effect is used the caster is able to hurl small metal objects at incredible speeds in volleys much like a rail gun. The volley of objects inflicts 5D6 M.D. +1D6 per level beyond eighth, and has a range of 1000 feet (305 m) plus 300 feet (91.5 m) per level of experience.

If the spell is used to create an *electromagnetic pulse*, the effect will fry unshielded electrical circuits and devices (including radios, radar, cameras/surveillance systems, computers, sensor systems, guidance systems, targeting systems, HUDs, and similar). All electrical devices that are not equipped with magical or hardened circuits are rendered inoperable by the pulse, with no saving throw. Magical (TW, Bio-Wizard, etc.) and hardened circuits (like those used in most combat vehicles, giant robots, and medium and heavy power armor) get a saving throw vs EMP; needs a 14 or higher to save. A failed save results in the electronic device being rendered inert for a period of 1D6x10 minutes, but the device is not permanently damaged. A successful Electrical Engineering skill can repair and get the item up and running in 4D6 minutes.

Engine Flame-Out

An offensive spell.

Range: 300 feet (91.5 m) per level of experience; line of sight or by touch.

Duration: Instant result; engine remains out for 5 seconds per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Thirty-Five

This spell causes one jet engine or hover jet to "flame out" or stall. Engine Flame-Out can be used to impair and slow down aircraft, hover vehicles and power armor that use jet thrusters and hover jets, by knocking out one or more of its jet engines. If the vehicle has only two main thrusters, knocking out one will

reduce its speed by 50% and eliminate all bonuses the aircraft may have when flying. Knocking out both engines will cause the aircraft to glide to earth and make a crash-landing unless the engines kick back in before that happens. Used against a flyer with four jet thrusters, each engine taken out of commission will reduce flight speed by 25%. Knocking out all four will cause it to crash, as above. Similarly, this magic can be used to prevent an aircraft from taking off, or to knock out main thrusters to force a vehicle to travel at a snail's pace using its secondary systems or directional thrusters.



Shockblade

An offensive spell.

Range: Enchants a physical blade weapon.

Duration: One melee round.

Damage: 1D6 M.D. per level of the spell caster.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Thirty

A magical enchantment that can turn an ordinary M.D.C. or S.D.C. blade (knife, sword, axe, etc.; but not spears or arrowheads) into a weapon that unleashes a powerful electrical discharge equal to a Call Lightning spell. The blade must strike its target to unleash the electrical blast, parrying the weapon will not cause it to discharge. Every attack that hits its mark that melee round does massive electrical damage. Does not affect those impervious to energy or electricity.

Vampire Dance

An offensive spell.

Range: Self or other by touch (although others enjoy only half the bonuses).

Damage: As per weapon or wooden stake, Natural 19-20 stake attack or critical damage.

Bonuses (against vampires & undead only): +4 to strike, +3 to parry, +2 to dodge, +4 to save vs vampire induced mind control, charm and Horror Factor, +6 to save vs vampire's bite, and is able to engage in combat without looking into the monster's eyes.

Duration: One minute (four melee rounds) per level of the spell caster's experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Twenty-Two

This enchantment places the character into a combat trance that enables him/her to focus and fight at an enhanced level. While enchanted, the combatant can use a pair of wooden stakes or any type of handheld melee weapons that harm vampires as *Paired Weapons* (one in each hand). This means the fighter can strike and parry simultaneously, perform a simultaneous strike with both weapons and also has the strength and accuracy to stake the vampire's heart with a single stabbing thrust (no hammer or mallet necessary). A Natural 19 or 20 is an automatic staking of the heart or a triple damage strike, whichever the player prefers. **Note:** This enchantment is only effective against vampires, Vampire Intelligences and other types of undead.

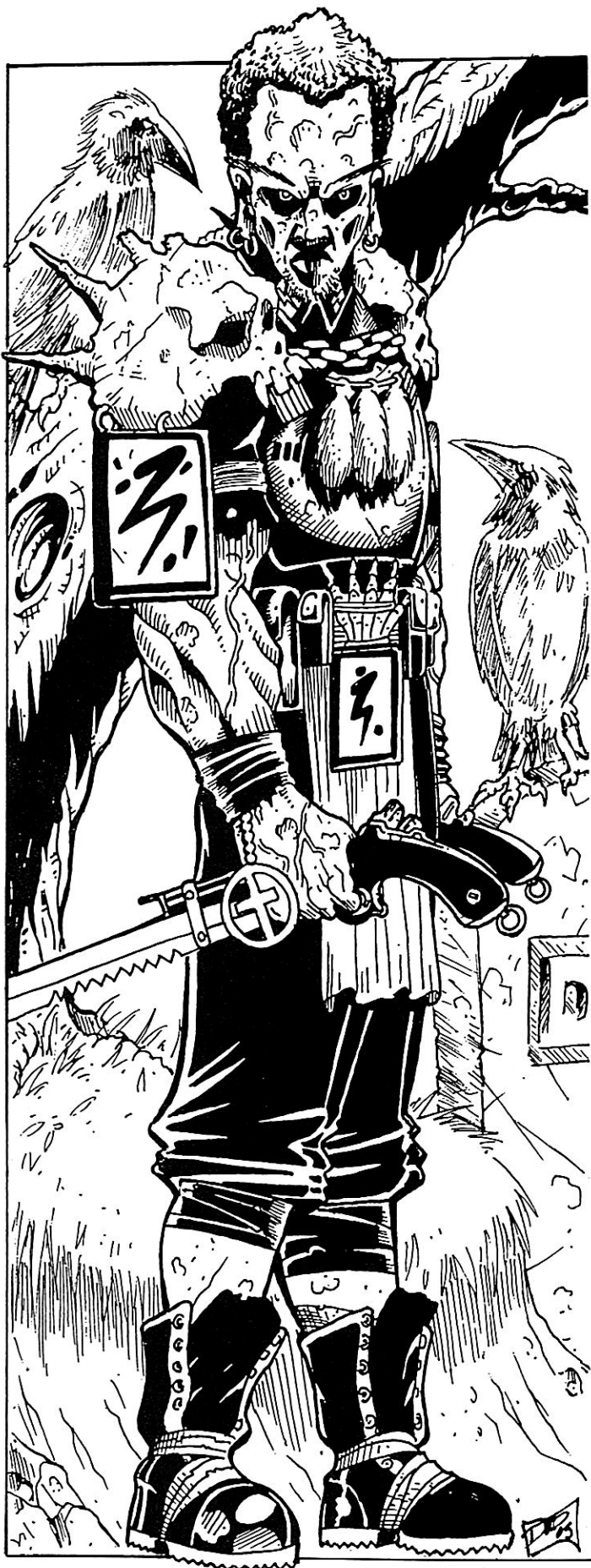
Cold-Blooded R.C.C.

By Kevin Siembieda & Carmen Bellaire

The origin of the Cold-Blooded enhancement procedure is unknown. Most believe it came out of Tolkeen in the early days of its war with the Coalition States. However, many believe the Tolkeenites did not create the process, but rediscovered it from ancient rituals best left forgotten. Others point to the *Vampire Kingdoms* and still others to Africa or Russia where Necromancy is a respected and feared mystic art. Wherever it originates, there is no doubt that the process was *resurrected*, if you will, at Tolkeen.

In North America today, the procedure is currently available at a handful of places in the *Magic Zone*, including Lord Dunscon's *City of Brass*, *Stormspire*, and *Dweomer* (but only at the Potion Palace). It is also available at the Mystic Quarter in *MercTown*, *Fort Reid* and according to rumor, various cities in the Vampire Kingdoms of Mexico. All are secret, underground operations available only to those in the know, or by those who, by fate or folly, stumble upon it.

The cost of the enhancement procedure varies greatly from one location to another. Two to 3.5 million credits is average, but four and five million credits is not uncommon (the latter is what the Potion Palace charges in *Dweomer*, where its sale is forbidden).



The procedure requires a person to drink a special concoction known as the “cold-blood,” a bluish colored, magical potion that eventually replaces the character’s blood. The patient’s body temperature drops to near freezing. This allows his radial arteries (located in the wrists) to be slashed and all of the character’s blood slowly drained without his body deteriorating or decaying. The blood draining also stops the character’s heart, in effect, “killing” him. After the blood has been completely removed, the drainage wounds are closed and the patient is hooked up to an artificial blood pump. The pump fills the patient with the blue *Cold-Blood* formula through IVs hooked to his jugular veins (located in the neck). Once the subject’s veins are filled with the new fluid, several magic rituals are performed over him. The final step involves burying the subject in the ground at a ley line nexus for two days. While buried, the patient’s body is transformed and brought back to life – at least a sort of quasi-undead form of life. The process is both physically and emotionally grueling, invariably causing one or more insanities to develop. At the end of the process, the character will rise at dawn from his burial place, to welcome the new day as a Cold-Blooded warrior. The awakening at dawn is deliberate to prove the character is NOT a true undead, but something in between life and death.

Like a vampire, the Cold-Blooded have limited invulnerability, are stronger and faster than mortal humans and have heightened senses. The skin of the Cold-Blooded, regardless of the person’s original race (may be human or D-Bee provided the character was an S.D.C./Hit Point being), is pale white with a slight blue tint and blue veins after their transformation, the eyes, icy blue. Although something akin to a vampire, the Cold-Blooded is NOT an undead. At least, not a true undead. They do not feed on blood, nor are they bound to the night. The character will also retain most of his memories prior to becoming a Cold-Blooded, and one can only be transformed if the individual seeks to be transformed. Furthermore, the reborn Cold-Blooded is a natural enemy of vampires, other types of undead, Necromancers and demons. In fact, most who undergo the rebirth into a Cold-Blooded do so to fight the undead or to extract a terrible revenge upon them and/or other monsters.

Cold-Blooded R.C.C. Special Abilities & Bonuses:

1. Superhuman Attributes:

No I.Q. bonus, but roll for skills as described below.

+1 to M.E. and +2 to Perception Rolls.

+1 to M.A., and a +10% bonus to evoke trust or intimidation as circumstance dictates.

+2D4+2 to P.S. attribute and strength is equal to that of Robotic P.S., which means the character can inflict Mega-Damage with his punches and kicks. A restrained punch does 3D6 S.D.C./Hit Point damage. Furthermore, the punch, kick and bite of a Cold-Blooded inflicts damage to the undead, animated dead, ghosts/Entities and other supernatural beings. A Cold-Blooded’s *power punch* (counts as two attacks) does triple damage.

+1D4+1 to P.P. attribute, and +1 attack/action per melee round (in addition to Hand to Hand combat), +1 on initiative, +1 to parry and dodge, +2 to pull punch, and +1 to roll with impact.

+2 to P.E. attribute. Fatigues at 10% the usual rate for humans. Remains alert and operates at full efficiency with as little

as 3 hours of sleep per day (5 hours is ideal). Also see Supernatural Invulnerability.

-1 to P.B. attribute.

+2D6+6 to Spd and can leap up to 20 feet (6.1 m) long and 10 feet (3 m) high/straight up from a standing position; increase distance and height 50% with a running start.

2. Hit Points & S.D.C. become M.D.C.: Add the character's original Hit Points and S.D.C. together, and make them M.D.C., then add a bonus of 5D6+10 M.D.C. to the total, and another +2D6 M.D.C. for each additional level of experience as a Cold-Blooded. **Note:** If the character starts off as a Cold-Blooded from a first level human (and most D-Bees) starting S.D.C. will be 4D6+28 and Hit Points are 2D6+12, plus 5D6+10 M.D.C. bonus and 2D6 M.D.C. per each additional level of experience. If a preexisting character "turned" Cold-Blooded, follow the instructions above and modify the character to his new life. Rebirth as a Cold-Blooded is the start of a new existence at Level One experience. Keep only four O.C.C. skills from the *previous life/O.C.C.* and replace all others as noted under stats.

3. Supernatural Senses: Perfect 20/20 daylight vision, Nightvision with a range of 2000 feet (610 m). Keen sense of hearing. Track blood scent or death/rotting flesh like a bloodhound 66% +2% per level of experience. Recognize as well as track the scent of the undead/vampires at 50% +2% per level of experience (+10% for Master Vampires, +26% to track a Vampire Intelligence). A reduced sense of taste enables the Cold-Blooded to eat raw, rotten and putrefied meat (animal or humanoid) without a bad taste.

4. Supernatural Invulnerability: Impervious to a *vampire's* bite, charm and mind control, and can NOT be turned into an undead by any means, nor can the body of a slain Cold-Blooded be animated or used as magical components.

Impervious to rotten meat, spoiled food and radiation.

Impervious to gas attacks.

Impervious to S.D.C. weapons, except silver and those made from animal bones. Such weapons inflict their S.D.C. damage as M.D.

Impervious to natural cold (half damage from M.D. or magic cold), but uncomfortable in extreme heat (see vulnerabilities). **Note:** As the name suggests, the Cold-Blooded is cool to the touch, like a corpse, and does not radiate any body heat; remains at room temperature or 2D6 degrees below. So the character is invisible to all infrared and thermal-imaging devices.

+10 to save vs disease.

+8 to save vs possession.

+5 to save vs Necromancy and Bone Magic.

+4 to save vs curses and (future) insanity.

+3 to save vs poisons, drugs and mind control.

+2 to save vs Horror Factor at levels 1, 3, 6, 9, 12 and 15.

Does not breathe air and can survive being buried, underwater or in a vacuum for an indefinite duration of time (years even).

5. Supernatural Regeneration: The Cold-Blooded regenerate damage at a rate of 1D6 M.D.C. per melee round. Completely regenerates lost limbs, fingers, toes, eyes, ears, skin, etc., overnight when buried alive in a shallow grave. Only if decapitated and the head vaporized or burned is total regeneration im-

possible. However, if the head is the only surviving part, it takes 1D6+2 days of being buried for the character to regrow his entire body.

6. Nourishment: Cold-Blooded need to eat raw meat and bones, or drink blood (animal or humanoid) to survive, including carrion, road kill, rotten meat, garbage scraps and bone, but only need to eat once every two days and can go for two days per P.E. point without eating before getting weak and ill.

7. Vulnerabilities: Mega-Damage weapons, rune weapons, and magic and M.D. attacks usually do full damage, except cold (even magical cold) and electrical attacks do *half* damage.

S.D.C. weapons made of silver or animal bones do the equivalent of their S.D.C. damage as M.D. (e.g. a bone knife that does 1D6 S.D.C. will inflict 1D6 M.D. to the Cold-Blooded). Magical M.D. weapons of silver or animal bones, such as Indian Fetish weapons, do double damage.

Extreme heat – temperatures of 92 degrees Fahrenheit or greater (which is common in the American southwest and Mexico during the Summer months). Penalties for extreme heat: -1 on initiative, -1 to dodge, -2 to pull punch, -2 to roll with impact, reduce Spd by 20% and skill performance by -10%.

8. Insanities: The transformation ritual, and effectively dying and being brought back to life as something less than human, is an emotionally traumatic experience. It is only the character's willingness to undergo the rebirth that mitigates the level of mental damage. Roll 1D4 times on the Random Table below:

01-10% None!

11-20% Phobia of graveyards.

21-30% Phobia of worms.

31-40% Phobia of Necromancy Magic.

41-50% Phobia of decapitation.

51-60% Obsession about vampires and undead; love to destroy them.

61-70% Obsession about protecting others from the undead and supernatural.

71-80% Affective Disorder: Mania (see *Rifts® Ultimate Ed.*, page 333).

81-85% Affective Disorder: Death Wish (see *Rifts® Ultimate Ed.*, page 333).

86-90% Roll on the Neurosis Table (see *Rifts® Ultimate Ed.*, page 333).

91-95% Roll on the Psychosis Table (see *Rifts® Ultimate Ed.*, page 334).

96-00% Random Insanity (see the *Rifts® Ultimate Ed.*, page 332).

Cold-Blooded R.C.C. Stats

Attribute Requirements: None, just a willingness to submit himself to the Cold-Blooded creation process and becoming something inhuman.

Alignment: Any, but most are Scrupulous (15%), Unprincipled (30%), Anarchist (40%) or Aberrant (15%).

Racial Restrictions: Humans and other mortal S.D.C. beings only.

O.C.C. Skills:

Basic Math (+10%)
Land Navigation (+5%)
Language: Native Tongue (+4%)
Language: Other (two of choice; +10%)
Lore: Demons & Monsters (+5%, but +20% when it comes to undead)
Lore: Magic & Ley Lines (+5%)
Pilot: One of choice (+10%).
Physical: Two of choice.
Radio: Basic (+5%)
Wilderness Survival (+5%)
W.P. Knife
W.P. Energy Pistol or Energy Rifle
W.P.: Three of choice (Ancient or Modern).

Hand to Hand: Expert, but can be changed to Martial Arts (or Assassin, if evil) at the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select five other skills, plus one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9, 12, and 15. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any.

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: None.

Electrical: None.

Espionage: Detect Ambush, Detect Camouflage, Escape Artist, Interrogation, Sniper and Tracking only (+5%).

Mechanical: None.

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: Any (+5%), except Parachuting and Trap/Mine Detection.

Physical: Any.

Pilot: Any (+5%), except robots and military vehicles.

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: None.

Science: Astronomy & Navigation and Math skills only (+5%).

Technical: Any.

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: Select three skills from the Secondary Skills list found on page 300 of **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** at level one, +1 at levels 4, 8, 12, & 15. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than any possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: One suit of personalized, medium, M.D.C. body armor (usually a combination of manmade materials and M.D.C. animal hides and bones; often black or red), set of traveling clothes, set of black fatigues, and a set of dress clothing. Binoculars, utility belt, backpack, sunglasses or tinted goggles, canteen, bedroll, flashlight, compass, hand radio, a pair of handcuffs, 10 feet (3 m) of M.D. chain, 50 feet (15.2 m) of rope, a dozen wooden stakes, a mallet, silver or wooden cross (under six inches in size/15 cm), one silver knife (1D6 S.D.C.), one weapon for each W.P. plus 5 ammo or E-Clips for each. The character starts

without a vehicle (but might need to “acquire” one). Also likes to use magic weapons and TW devices, but starts with none.

Money: Starts with 2D6x1000 in credits and 1D4x1000 in Black Market saleable goods (typically items taken from slain vampires).

Cybernetics: None, any cybernetics/bionics will be expelled from his body by his strange new metabolism.

Experience Table for the Cold-Blooded: Same as the Crazy, see the **Rifts® RPG**.

Gladiator O.C.C.

By Kevin Siembieda & Carmen Bellaire

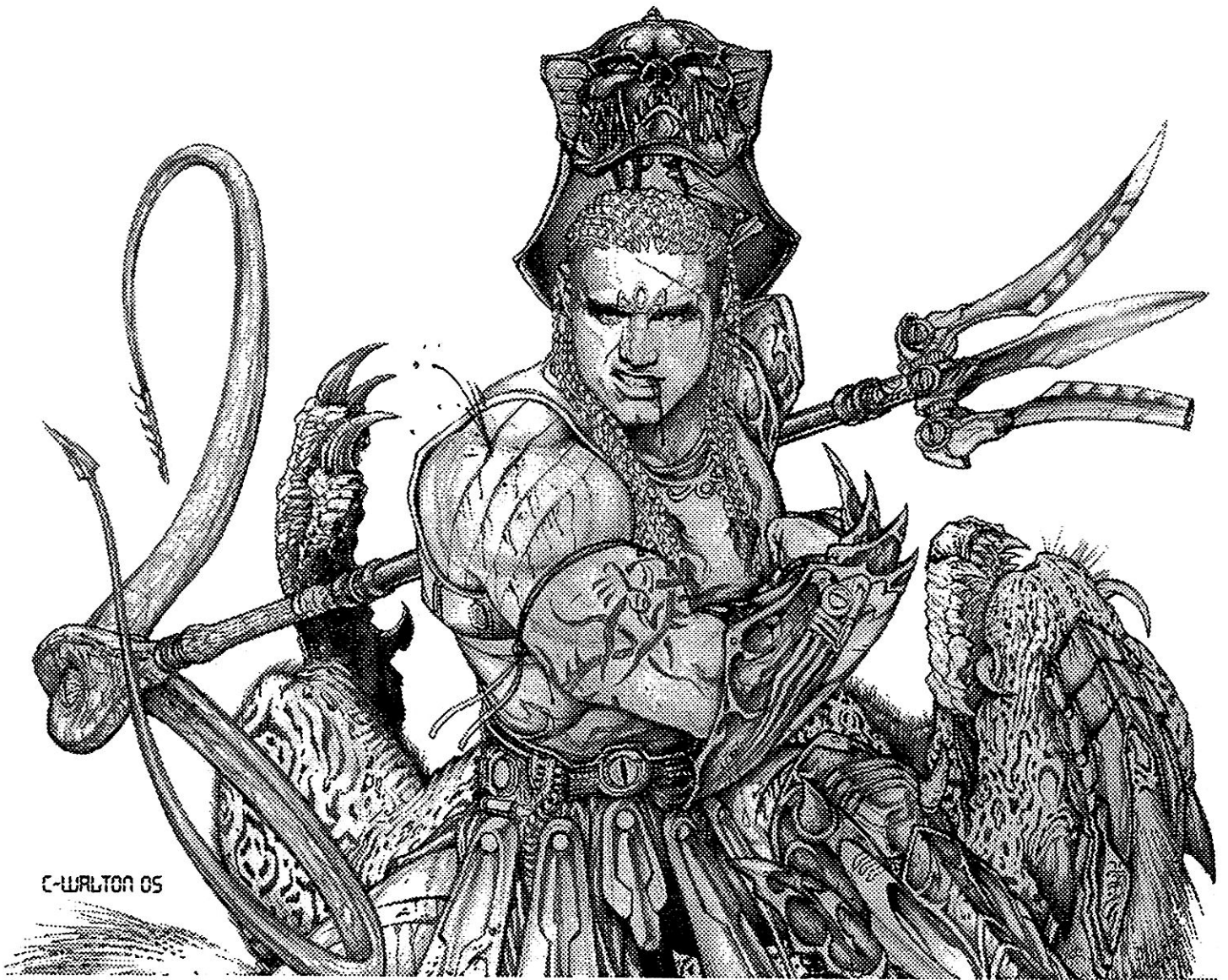
Gladiators are professional warriors who market their fighting expertise in the arena. These men and women are the actors in the tragic drama of *blood sports* – contestants who fight and die for the delight of the crowd. Professional Gladiators are the elite competitors of the arena. The Professional Gladiator is unique, because he is a willing participant in games of combat and battles to the death for profit and fame. Most of the Gladiator’s opponents, however, are criminals, slaves, monsters or other unwilling participants forced to fight or die.

A Gladiator is a special kind of fighter – part showman, part actor, and part warrior. They are bold, intrepid and sometimes ruthless individuals who are willing to risk not only their reputation but their very lives in the gladiatorial arena. Fortunately, such arenas are uncommon in North America, but such is not the case in Europe, Asia, Africa and Atlantis. In fact, the biggest, best, and most spectacular gladiatorial competitions are held in Atlantis, where blood sports are bet upon and viewed by individuals from across the Megaverse.

The life of a Gladiator is one where victory is fleeting, friendships are short and the audience is fickle. These entertainers who kill to please their audience, are called upon to fight supernatural predators, D-Bee supermen, high-tech robots, and a variety of creatures, as well as other Gladiators and “imported” (i.e. shanghaied) warriors from across the Megaverse. A Gladiator’s whole future may ride on the outcome of every match. Losing a fight means a huge loss of reputation, standing, and money. In the worst case scenario, losing means *death*. Winning is the only thing that matters. Winning *and* the adoration of the crowd. Standing alone in the center of the arena, over the body of a fresh kill or defeated rival, is the Gladiator’s moment of glory. The hardships involved in their chosen career make the rewards of victory that much sweeter and roar of the crowd a song of triumph trumpeted to the heavens.

Gladiators and blood sport are surprisingly popular on Rifts Earth, and can be a lucrative profession for the most skilled and lucky in that profession. A successful Professional Gladiator can become ridiculously wealthy and famous throughout the land. In Atlantis, where the Splugorth video and transmit the best matches across the Megaverse to dozens of worlds and billions of viewers, a Gladiator can be famous in numerous galaxies.

For the Gladiator, athletics and showmanship are as important as the art of combat. Prolonging a battle, chest thumping



and flamboyant challenges, threats and diatribes (not unlike the pro-wrestlers of 20th and 21st Century Earth) only feed the excitement of the crowd (and viewers) and a dramatic (albeit staged) final kill, like that of a bullfight, sends the audience on their feet, screaming their approval. These theatrics make the audience believe these are the bravest and deadliest warriors in the world. And in the environment of the arena, they may be. However, when it comes to adventuring and fighting outside of the arena, a Gladiator is a fish out of water. Although masters of hand to hand combat, few have any “real world” combat training and most know nothing about military procedure, strategy and tactics, or the basic rules of wilderness survival. Many don’t even know how to handle energy rifles or heavy weapons. This lack of even rudimentary military skills is a handicap that a Gladiator cannot easily overcome, their inexperience very likely to be fatal. Another problem for Gladiators is teamwork – they don’t understand it. Most gladiatorial competitions are one on one or one on three (the Gladiator being the “one”), and sometimes small teams, but again, always in a staged battle, in a (relatively) controlled environment. And even when a “team” of Gladiators take on larger numbers of opponents, they usually divide their opponents and take them on one by one, not as a team working in tandem or guarding each other’s back. This means in

the real world, Gladiators tend to be lone wolves who have trouble following orders or working as a true team. Their years of one on one combat and the back-stabbing nature of their trade also make it difficult for most Gladiators to *trust* or depend on others. As if all of this were not enough, the Gladiator’s reputation can also become a liability outside the arena. The Gladiator’s rep is likely to frighten ordinary people and attract warriors who have something to prove, to challenge the arena warrior. (“You don’t look so tough to me.”) Fame also makes it difficult to hide or remain anonymous, as superstar Gladiators, their images are featured in the videos, television broadcasts, and plastered on billboards and posters, making them known to a wide audience, worldwide.

Gladiator O.C.C. Special Abilities & Bonuses:

1. Bonuses: The character’s combat training and background provide the following bonuses.

- +4D6+18 to physical S.D.C.
- +1D6 to M.A. attribute.
- +1D6 to P.S. attribute.
- +1D4 to P.E. attribute.
- +1D4 to Spd attribute.

- +1D4 to initiative.
- +2 to disarm and entangle.
- +3 to pull punch.
- +5 to save vs Horror Factor.
- +10% to save vs coma/death.
- +1 to save on all other saving throws.

2. Feign Injury or Death: As a showman and a cunning warrior, the Gladiator learns to *pretend*. This is a tactical ploy to garner the audience's fear and concern over his welfare and to fake out his opponent. This typically involves pretending to be fatigued, staggered/stunned, having lost the full use of one arm or leg, and even unconsciousness or death. When the opponent gets cocky or opens himself up to make his next strike or a Death Blow, the Gladiator can parry or dodge with startling speed (a bonus of +3) and use his next attack to counter strike with a bonus of +2.

3. Tumbling: This skill builds and strengthens the body for feats of strength, endurance and agility. Abilities include a variety of gymnastic rolls, leaps, tumbles, falls, cartwheels, somersaults, and handstand type exercises. These differ from the acrobat in that they are performed on the ground, and involve rigorous exhibitions of speed and strength involving elaborate tumbles, back-flips, body throws, and so on. Special abilities gained from this training include:

Back-Flip: +3 to dodge by quickly flipping out of harm's way or over one's opponent. Always ends in a tumble and a crouched stance. Like all dodges, it takes the place of one attack that melee. However, because the tumbler has flipped a fairly great distance, the attacker may also lose one attack, as he must turn around or lunge forward to renew his attack. Success ratio is 40% +5% per level.

Body Flip/Throw: While usually used on a cooperative partner, this judo-type flip can be used on an opponent, doing 1D6 S.D.C. damage, plus the victim loses initiative and one attack that melee.

Leaps: 5 feet long (1.5 m), plus one foot (0.3 m) for every three levels of experience, and 4 feet high (1.2 m), plus one foot (0.3 m) for every three levels of experience.

Pole Vault: 8 feet (2.4 m) high, plus two feet (0.6 m) per each additional level of experience. Success ratio is 50% +5% per level. Failure means only half the intended height is achieved.

Stilt Walk: To construct and walk on stilts. Success ratio is 50% +5% per level of experience. A failed roll means a fall off the stilts. Roll for every 15 feet (4.6 m) walked.

Bonuses: +2 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +2 to P.S., +1 to P.E., and +2D4 to S.D.C.

Note: This skill can be taken by any character that can take both the Acrobatics and Gymnastics skills, but it counts as three "O.C.C. Related Skill" selections, unless they already have Acrobatics and Gymnastics, then it costs only one skill choice.

4. Physical Augmentation (OPTIONAL): Roughly half of all Professional Gladiators are augmented in one way or another, so if the player would like, and if the *Game Master* allows it, the Professional Gladiator *may* start his career as an *augmented individual*. If augmentation is allowed, the player gets to randomly roll or select one of the following:

01-10% Chemical Enhancement: The character has undergone Juicer conversion and starts with the basic Bio-Comp system. He or she has all of the Juicer's powers and limitations listed in the *Rifts® RPG* under *Special Juicer O.C.C. Bonuses & Abilities*.

11-20% M.O.M. Conversion: A Gladiator Crazy with mind-over-matter implants! Has all the standard powers and limitations of a normal Crazy, as listed in the *Rifts® RPG* under *Special O.C.C. Bonuses & Powers*.

21-30% Partial Conversion 'Borg': All four natural limbs are replaced with powerful M.D. bionic attachments. Bionic P.S. of 22, P.P. 20, and Spd 110 (75 mph/120 km). In addition to basic replacement of pelvis, shoulders, collar bone, shoulders, arms, hands, legs and feet, the character gets to select 2D4 bionic implants and weapons (see the *Rifts® RPG* and/or the *Rifts® Bionic Sourcebook*). Base M.D.C. is 90 plus M.D.C. provided by body armor.

31-45% Physical Psychic: The Gladiator is a Major Physical Psychic with 8 powers of choice from the Physical category. Starts with 3D6+10 I.S.P. and another 2D4 I.S.P. per level of experience.

46-50% Master Psychic (but untrained and underdeveloped in the use of psionic abilities): Has *all* Physical Psionic powers plus Bio-Regeneration and Psi-Shield at first level. Gets Psi-Sword at third level. The character starts with only 2D4x10 +M.E. attribute in I.S.P. at first level, plus another 10 I.S.P. per level of experience. Select one additional psi-power from the Healing or Sensitive Categories and one Super-Psionic ability at levels 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 & 15.

51-55% High Technology: This Gladiator is not an augmented character as such, but instead uses high-tech devices, weapons, and gimmicks to enhance his fighting abilities. Starts with any heavy M.D.C. body armor and 1D4+2 appropriate modern melee weapons, including those of Kittani, Naruni, and Triax manufacture (note that all selections are still subject to G.M. approval).

56-60% Light Power Armor: While the Gladiator is not augmented per se, he does use a light suit of power armor to enhance his own fighting abilities. Starts with any light suit of power armor (including those like the Kittani Manling, Flying Titan, Terrain Hopper, NG Samson and similar light suits, but the selection is still subject to G.M. approval). The Gladiator has the additional skills of Pilot: Power Armor (+10%), Power Armor Combat: Elite (in his specific type of power armor) and Weapon Systems (+10%).

61-70% Techno-Wizardry: This Gladiator is not augmented at all, but uses an arsenal of TW equipment to enhance his fighting abilities and the amount (and type) of damage he inflicts. Starts with any Mega-Damage body armor (with 1D4 TW enhancements of choice) and three TW melee weapons of choice (or lesser magical weapons, like the Living Samurai Swords, flaming swords, etc., but all selections are still subject to G.M. approval). While the character is not a practitioner of magic, he is skilled in the use of Techno-Wizardry and can power TW items with his own P.P.E. or that of a talisman that holds up to 60 P.P.E. The character starts with 3D6 +P.E. attribute in P.P.E. at first level, plus another 1D6 P.P.E. per level of experience. In the alternative, the Gladiator may be a Minor Psychic with a couple of minor psi-abilities and I.S.P. that can be used to power TW items.

71-80% Bio-Wizardry: Augmented by a Splugorth sponsor, or was once an enslaved Gladiator who has earned his freedom and independence. The character has 1D6 Bio-Wizardry symbiotes, parasites and/or microbes of choice (see **Rifts® Atlantis** and/or **Rifts® Splynn Dimensional Market**, or **Rifts® Book of Magic**).

81-90% D-Bee Strongman: The Gladiator is not human, but an alien, D-Bee, or super being seeking fame in the arenas of Rifts Earth. Starts with 2D4x10+38 in M.D.C., plus 2D6 M.D.C. per experience level and P.S. is *Supernatural*. Add bonuses of +1D8+6 to P.S., +1D6 to P.E., and +3D6 to Spd, as well as +25% to save versus coma/death. (In the alternative, the player may substitute Rifts converted super abilities from the *Heroes Unlimited RPG* and sourcebooks.)

91-00% Tattoo Magic: Although not an actual T-Man, this character has received a handful of magical tattoos. Select 1D4+2 tattoos from the Simple Weapons, Magic Weapons and Powers categories. The character starts with 1D6x10 +P.E. attribute number in P.P.E. at first level (plus that gained from the magic tattoos), plus another 1D6+1 P.P.E. per level of experience. See **Rifts® World Book 2: Atlantis** or **Rifts® Book of Magic** for details on Tattoo Magic and T-Men.

Note: A Non-Player Character (NPC) Gladiator may also be a demon, a dragon, a shape-changer (may look human, but . . .), Kydian Power Lord, and similar inhuman characters.

Hand to Hand: Gladiator

The Gladiator is trained in a unique style of hand to hand combat that is tailored to blood sport fighting. Expertise with melee weapons is the focus of this combat style. Few warriors can match skill with a Gladiator in a duel or blade combat, which is the character's specialty. The best opponent will find his attacks easily blocked and his weapon entangled or taken away.

Level 1: Starts with FIVE attacks per melee, +1 to roll with impact, and automatically disarms an opponent on a roll of a Natural 19 or 20.

Level 2: +2 to pull punch, +1 to strike and parry.

Level 3: +2 to damage and W.P. Paired Weapons.

Level 4: +1 additional attack per melee and +2 to disarm.

Level 5: +1 on initiative, +1 to strike and parry, and Karate-style Kick (2D4 S.D.C. damage).

Level 6: +2 to dodge, +1 to entangle and Jump Kick (Critical Strike).

Level 7: +3 to damage, and a Critical Strike on a Natural 19 or 20.

Level 8: +1 additional attack per melee round and *Gladiator's Staggering Stun Attack (Special)* on a Natural roll of 18, 19 or 20 (or with any roll that is 20 or higher with applicable bonuses). The Staggering Stun Attack is designed for dramatic effect. It keeps the stunned opponent on his feet, but staggered so the Gladiator can pick him apart and toy with him without making it seem too easy. From all appearances, the victim of the Staggering Stun seems to have a fighting chance but the number of attacks, Spd and all combat bonuses are reduced by *half*.

Level 9: +1 on initiative, +1 one to strike in hand to hand combat, +2 to pull punch, and +2 to disarm.

Level 10: +1 additional attack per melee.

Level 11: Resist fatigue, tires at half the usual rate.

Level 12: *Killing Blow Power Strike* on a roll of Natural 17, 18, 19 or 20, BUT the character must call this attack before he rolls his die to strike. If successful, the Gladiator inflicts *triple damage*. This attack is +3 to strike against an incapacitated or unconscious opponent. **Note:** Counts as two melee attacks.

Level 13: +1 to strike and disarm in hand to hand combat, +2 to strike with a thrown weapon.

Level 14: Staggering Stun Attack on a Natural 17-20 (described under Level 8).

Level 15: +1 additional attack per melee. *Knockout Blow* (victim is unconscious for 1D6+1 melee rounds) or Critical Strike (triple damage) or from behind.

Professional Gladiator O.C.C. Stats

Attribute Requirements: P.S. 14 and P.P. 12; a high P.E. and Spd are helpful but not required.

Alignment: Any, but most will be of selfish or evil alignment, due to their occupation.

Racial Restrictions: Mortal S.D.C. beings only (humans, Elves, D-Bees, etc.), unless *81-90* is rolled above.

O.C.C. Skills:

Athletics (General)

Body Building & Weightlifting

Boxing or Wrestling

Climbing (+10%)

Language: Native Tongue (98%)

Performance (+15%)

Public Speaking (+10%)

Recognize Weapon Quality (+15%)

Running

W.P. Ancient: Four of choice.

W.P. Modern: One of choice.

Hand to Hand: Gladiator; see above, *cannot* be changed.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select five other skills. Plus select one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 8, 11, and 13. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any (+5%).

Electrical: None.

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Basic and Automotive Mechanics only.

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: None.

Physical: Any (+5%, when applicable).

Pilot: Any (+5%), except power armor, robots, aircraft and military vehicles.

Pilot Related: None.

Rogue: Any (+2%).

Science: Math skills only.

Technical: Any (+5%).

W.P.: Any Ancient Weapon Proficiencies.

Wilderness: None.

Magebane O.C.C.

By Kevin Siembieda & Carmen Bellaire

Inevitably, with the proliferation of magic and its users, there would come an occupation (some would say, force) to oppose it. Not just oppose, but to serve as its antithesis. The Magebane are a small cult of zealots who operate out of a hidden corner of the Magic Zone. The cult was founded by an arch-mage of good alignment, named Maloquinn Delmarco, to destroy the Federation of Magic. He was fed-up with the evil and depravity that he saw among many of the practitioners of magic in the Magic Zone and elsewhere in North America. He dedicated his life to the creation of a group of warriors who could stand up to mages who would use their gifts for evil and lay them low. The Magebane are those warriors.

The training process for a new Magebane shapes and focuses the young initiate's own natural energies (P.P.E.) *inward*, creating within them a natural defense against the magic. This internalized use of Potential Psychic Energy is an unusual manifestation of mystic energy and requires a Magebane to begin training as a child. Ironically, to become this destroyer of magic means the character had the potential to have been a practitioner of magic (or a psychic) *himself*. Many times, losing a loved one through the wrongful use of magic is the inspiration to become one of these anti-mages. However, just as many are recruited as children and taught to hate magic. Whatever the motivation, the young recruits are trained to use their mystic potential to become a Magebane – to become a hunter and destroyer of magic practitioners and creatures of magic. This tends to make most Magebane zealots. Fanatics dedicated to wiping out evil among the practitioners of magic; especially evil dragons, demons, witches, Necromancers, Shifters, the Corrupt, Mystic Knights, and others who use magic for wickedness and destruction. This also means the character views all practitioners of magic with a certain amount of suspicion. This distrust extends to Cold-Blooded, Dragon Juicers and others who derive their power from magic even though they don't wield magic themselves. The only exception is other Magebane.

Most Magebane operate alone, in pairs, or as a member of a larger group of heroes, adventurers or mercenaries. The only traits a Magebane will insist upon from his companions is that they be of strong moral fiber (predominantly good or Unprincipled alignments) and that they be willing to battle evil magic and dark forces. Even practitioners of magic and supernatural beings of good alignment will be accepted by a Magebane provided they are good at heart, though never completely trusted.

In combat against practitioners of magic, the Magebane will try to close with the rival mage, to limit his exposure to the sorcerer's long-range magic. In melee combat the Magebane can focus his inner energies, turning any hand-held weapon into a magical Mega-Damage weapon, capable of slaying even supernatural opponents. It is in close combat that the Magebane is most powerful and able to slay his opponent quickly.

Maloquinn's warriors are currently most numerous in the Magic Zone, but are also found in other places where magic is misused and ordinary people are made to suffer for it. The ruins of Tolkeen, the monster kingdom of Calgary, Lazlo, New Lazlo, the ruins of Detroit-Windsor, Madhaven, the northern border of

Secondary Skills: Select four skills from the Secondary Skills list found on page 300 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition* at level one, +1 at levels 4, 8, 12, & 15. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than any possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: An "arena combat" suit of light Mega-Damage body armor (30-45 M.D.C. plus a helmet with 50 M.D.C.; light for optimum mobility). It is customized to make the Gladiator stand out in matches and look impressive and imposing. Gladiators prefer modern and magical Mega-Damage versions of ancient-style melee weapons like maces, staves, small shields, and M.D. blade weapons (Vibro-Blades or magical axes, knives, swords, spears, tridents, forearm and knuckle claws, etc. **Note:** Usually avoid most modern and high-tech energy weapons. Starts with a small round shield with 20 M.D.C., or Vibro-Blade weapon of choice for each W.P., and one simple TW weapon (or Bio-Wizard weapon if in Atlantis) that inflicts Mega-Damage but has no other properties (no P.P.E. cost to use, cannot fire a spell, etc.).

Other equipment is limited. The character starts with a sleeping bag or bedroll, backpack, canteen or water skin, utility belt, sunglasses, set of dress clothes for formal affairs, and a few personal items. Many have lavish and expensive wardrobes.

Money: Starts with 2D6x1000 in credits. A Gladiator almost never works on a salary basis, instead income is based on the "purses" from their matches. The exact amount of a purse will vary substantially. This depends not only on the Gladiator's reputation, but also on the type of match, the quality of his opponent, the size of the stadium market, the sponsor, and the prestige of the event. The purse for an average match is in the range of 2D4x100 to 1D6x1000 credits. Major events like a battle royal or team match pay out from 2D6x1000 credits to 5D6x1000. Outlandish matches between mid-level stars pay as much as 1D6x10,000 credits, and main events between the big shots have purses as large as 1D4x100,000 credits. Championship events like the Grand Melee have purses up to one million credits.

As the reputation of the gladiator character grows, so does the amount he or she is paid. Crowd favorites (roughly 3rd to 5th level) are paid as much as 30% more per match. True stars (6th level and above) are paid bonuses or points based on ticket sales to the event, which can amount to anywhere from 10,000 to 100,000 credits or 50% more per match. Another source of prize money for major stars is dues from gambling receipts. At 8th level and above, performers can demand a cut of the Black Market betting that takes place at gladiator games. This percentage is usually only 1-6% of the total revenue, but it can amount to a colossal sum of credits. Sums of 4D6x10,000 to 1D6x100,000 credits are not uncommon, with main event matches paying out as much as 1D4 million credits!

Cybernetics: Typically starts with none. The use of cybernetics/bionics will vary from gladiator to gladiator, but many will not use them unless there is no other choice (needed to save his life or as a prosthetic limb), and then many will only use Bio-Systems.

Experience Chart: Same as the Headhunter, see the *Rifts® RPG*.

Mexico and even the streets of the Chi-Town 'Burbs (where they hunt both the Vanguard and evil Federation agents) are all stalked by Magebane. Since supernatural evil is counted among their enemies, battling vampires in the southwest United States is a common crusade for Magebane and their fellow heroes. As a result, Magebane are known to ride with Reid's Rangers and other vampire slayers in their battle against the Vampire Kingdoms. Maloquinn hopes that one day his Magebane will rival the Cyber-Knights of Lord Coake or the Order of Mystic Knights (although for Good) in terms of renown and influence. He believes the Magebane Cult to be his legacy for establishing order and goodness in North America. For now, there are fewer than 1500 Magebane and only a half-dozen cult leaders who completely understand the creation process. A process that takes, on average, 7-9 years of training to complete. **Note:** Most Magebane are recruited at the tender age of 9-11 and complete their training by age 16-20.

Magebane O.C.C. Special Abilities & Bonuses

1. Bonuses: The character's combat training and background provide the following bonuses.

- +2D6x10 to physical S.D.C.
- +1D6 to P.S. and Spd attributes.
- +1 to P.P. and P.E. attributes.
- +1D4+1 to initiative.
- +1 to strike in hand to hand combat.
- +2 to save vs insanity and torture.
- +3 to save vs poison, toxins and disease.
- +5 to save vs mind control (all).
- +7 to save vs illusions.
- +25% to save vs coma/death.

2. Impervious to Horror Factor (always saves): Having seen the depths of evil, wickedness and depravity, the Magebane is totally immune to fear, terror and Horror Factor. The character may fear things, but never to the point of being momentarily stunned and unable to act.

3. Impervious to Possession: The Magebane's training provides the character with an iron will, great determination and an unbreakable spirit. The Magebane is totally dedicated to good and nothing will stop him in his quest, short of death. This determination makes it impossible to possess the character and the warrior is *resistant* to illusions and all forms of mind control (psionic, magical, drugs, etc.); see bonuses above.

4. Impervious to Magic: This is the most amazing of the Magebane's powers, and the one most vital to his ability to hunt and slay practitioners of magic. The character is totally impervious to all forms of magic that require a saving throw (*automatically saves*), he cannot be held by magical restraints or stopped by magical barriers that are *not* physical in nature (e.g., a Wall of Stone will stop him, but he can walk right through an Impenetrable Wall of Force, etc.), and physical magic such as Fireball, Call Lightning, and even rune and Techno-Wizard weapons inflict half damage. For Example: He can be hurt by an Electric Arc or an Ice Shard, but the damage is half, and spells like Agony, Blind, Life Drain, Death Bolt, etc., are totally useless against the Magebane.

5. Empower Body Armor: The Magebane are taught to channel their P.P.E. to one of two purposes, for defense or of-



fense. When channeling P.P.E. for defense, the character is able to “empower” his body armor, turning ordinary S.D.C. leather, ceramic, plastic, rubber, metal, etc., into Mega-Damage material. The enchantment doubles the material’s S.D.C. and turns it into Mega-Damage material! Duration: The enchantment lasts for one hour per level of the Magebane, or until it is destroyed (M.D.C. or S.D.C. reduced to zero), and works only while the warrior is wearing the armor. Cannot be used on the armor worn by others or on a spare suit in the trunk. Nor does it work on normal clothing, it must be some type of armor equal to no less than soft leather and padding. P.P.E. Cost: 12, but only the Magebane’s own, internal P.P.E. can be used, the character can NOT draw upon ley line energy or other source of P.P.E.

6. Empower Weapons: By focusing his inner energies (P.P.E.) on one or two handheld, S.D.C. melee weapons, the Magebane can “empower” that weapon and turn it into a Mega-Damage weapon. The S.D.C. damage normally done by the weapon becomes M.D. (e.g., a sword that does 2D6 S.D.C. now does 2D6 M.D.). Furthermore, the enchanted weapon inflicts double damage to supernatural evil, the undead, practitioners of magic and creatures of magic (that’d be 4D6 M.D. in the case of our example with the sword). Weapons that are already magic, such as rune weapons and Techno-Wizard devices, cannot be empowered to do even more damage. However, an ordinary tree branch, club, length of pipe, stone, etc., *may* be empowered to become an M.D. weapon. Duration: The enchantment lasts for one hour per level of the Magebane’s experience and can only be used by the Magebane and Techno-Wizards (the latter must invest 10 P.P.E. of his own to do so); to all others the weapon remains an S.D.C. item. P.P.E. Cost: 20 points per weapon. **Note**: Modern firearms, energy weapons, bows, and crossbows *cannot* be empowered to become Mega-Damage weapons. An enchanted weapon that is thrown loses its M.D. capability in one melee round (15 seconds) unless it is recovered by the Magebane before then. Most Magebane do not rely on their innate abilities and also use modern firearms as well as magic weapons and devices.

7. P.P.E.: M.E. attribute number x5 plus 1D6+3 per level of experience. Unlike true spell casters, they *cannot* draw additional P.P.E. points from ley lines, nexus points or any other P.P.E. source. It is important to note, however, that the character can use TW items, powering them with his own P.P.E.

P.P.E. Recovery: The Magebane recovers spent P.P.E. at a rate of seven points per hour of sleep or rest. Meditation restores P.P.E. at a rate of 14 points per hour and is equal to twice as many hours of sleep when it comes to recovery from fatigue.

Magebane O.C.C. Stats

Alignment: Limited to Principled (30%), Scrupulous (40%), Unprincipled (30%) and no evil alignments.

Attribute Requirements: M.E. 12, P.S. 12, P.E. 12 or higher; a high P.P. and I.Q. is helpful but not required.

Racial Restrictions: None, although 70% of all Magebane are human, with a 50/50 division between the sexes.

O.C.C. Skills:

Basic Math (+25%)

Horsemanship: General

Intelligence (+15%)

Land Navigation (+10%)

Language: Native Tongue (+4%)

Language: Other (two of choice; +15%)

Literacy (Native Tongue or one of choice; +10%)

Lore: Demons & Monsters (+20%)

Lore: Magic & Ley Lines (+15%)

Radio: Basic (+10%)

Espionage: Two of choice (+10%).

Military: Two of choice (+5%).

Physical: Two of choice (+5%, when applicable).

Wilderness Survival (+5%)

W.P. Knife

W.P. Sword

W.P. Ancient: Three of choice.

W.P. Energy Pistol or Energy Rifle

Hand to Hand: Expert; can be changed to Martial Arts at the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill (these good characters *cannot* select Assassin).

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select four other skills at level one. Plus select one additional skill at levels 2, 5, 8, 11, and 14. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any.

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any (+5%).

Electrical: None.

Espionage: Any.

Mechanical: None.

Medical: First Aid, Holistic Medicine and Paramedic only (+10%).

Military: Any (+5%).

Physical: Any.

Pilot: Any (+5%), except power armor, robots or military.

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: None.

Science: Math only.

Technical: Any (+10% to Law, Lore skills and Research only).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any.

Secondary Skills: Select four skills from the Secondary Skills list found on page 300 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition* at level one, +1 at levels 4, 8, 12, & 15. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than any possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: Begins with a set of clothing, set of fatigues, ceremonial robes, suit of personalized medium or heavy S.D.C. body armor (55-90 S.D.C.), and a suit of light S.D.C. armor (25-35 S.D.C.) as a spare, utility belt, backpack, knapsack, canteen, compass, tent, bedroll, flashlight, gas mask, air filter, hand radio, pair of handcuffs, pair of soft leather gloves, 1D6 flares, a pocket knife (1D4 S.D.C.), some personal items and a good quality riding horse.

S.D.C. weapons include one silver dagger (1D6 S.D.C.), one bone dagger or hatchet (1D6+1 S.D.C.), 1D4+4 wooden stakes and mallet, a ten inch (25.4 cm) wooden cross, and one additional weapon for each W.P.

M.D.C. weapons include one Vibro-Knife (1D6 M.D.), and one modern weapon that matches the character's W.P., plus 1D6 ammo/E-Clips.

The Magebane is also likely to acquire a selection of TW weapons and other magic weapons and items, but starts with none.

Money: Starts with 4D6x100 in credits and another 1D4x1000 in Black Market saleable items.

Cybernetics: Starts with none and avoids cybernetics/bionics unless there is no other choice (needed to save his life or as a prosthetic limb), and then only Bio-Systems will be used. Bionics interferes with the character's abilities in the same manner as it does for spell magic (i.e., more than two implants or one bionic limb, and the Magebane loses all his special abilities!).

Experience Chart: Same as the Ley Line Walker, see the *Rifts*® RPG.

Man-Hunter O.C.C.

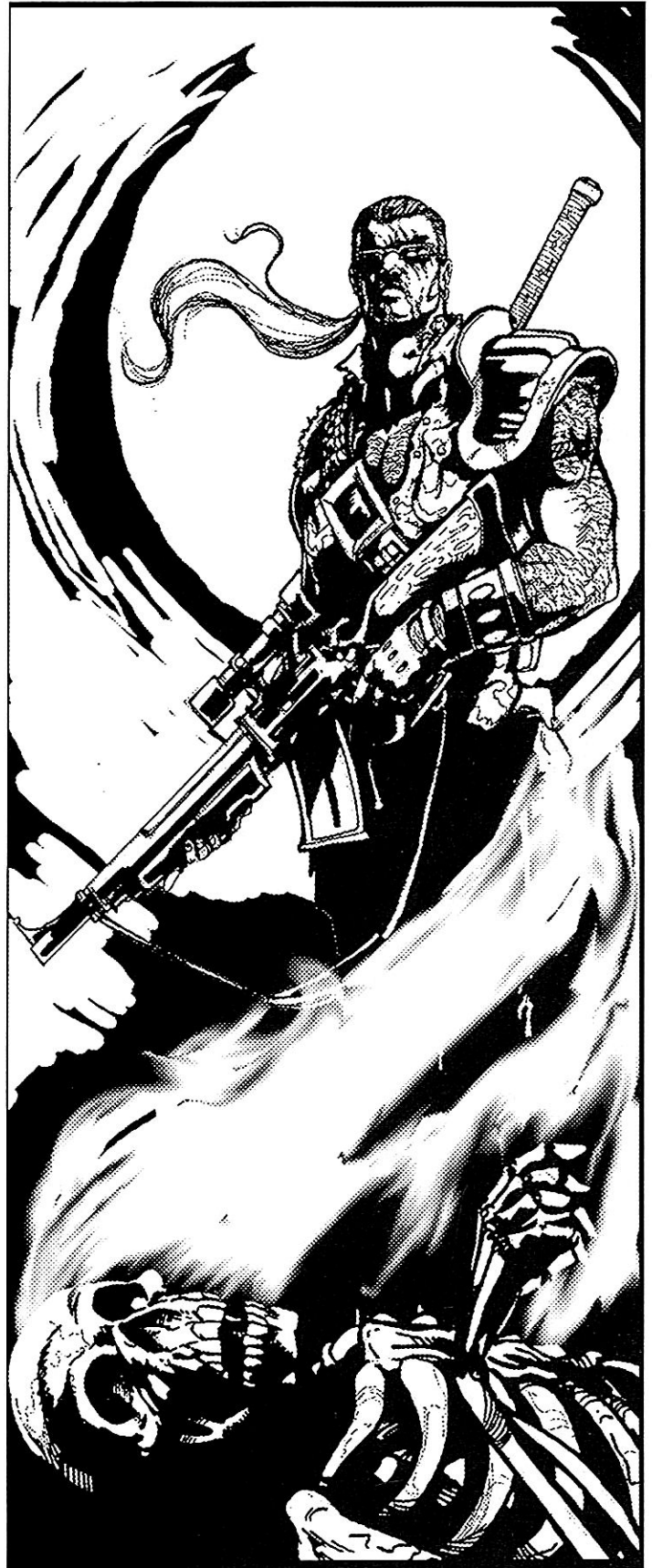
By Kevin Siembieda & Carmen Bellaire

Some bounty hunters are more skilled than others, and the Man-Hunter is among the most skilled, specializing in tracking and surveillance. These elite men and women belong to the *Society of the Man-Hunters* operating out of Kingsdale. Only the most skilled and deadly bounty hunters are allowed into the society, and upon joining (by invitation only), the bounty hunter is given special training that makes him or her a true Man-Hunter. Each of the Man-Hunters is tattooed at the base of his neck with a Black Widow Spider when the training period ends. The tattoo is a mark of honor and proof that he/she is a member of the society.

One of the things that make Man-Hunters so dangerous is that they are often as conniving and ruthless as those they hunt. In fact, some Man-Hunters live by the motto, "Bring them back dead," and hunt only the most deadly quarries "wanted dead." Most show no remorse in using trickery, lies, deceit, intimidation and torture to get what they want and may even use such tactics on the innocent. For the Man-Hunter, the end usually justifies the means, and they do not weep over breaking the law or hurting a few people along the way. This has led some communities to refuse to hire Man-Hunters for any reason. Of course, many clients enjoy the brutal and lethal effectiveness of the Man-Hunters and turn to them whenever extremely dangerous criminals are wanted. Even many other bounty hunters regard Man-Hunters with fear and concern over their extreme tactics.

The society has a number of perks for its members, including safe houses located across the Dominion of Man in North America (including the Chi-Town 'Burbs, Iron Heart 'Burbs, the Coalition State of Arkansas/El Dorado, Kingsdale, MercTown, Arzno, the Colorado Baronies, El Paso, Ciudad Juarez, Dweomer, Lazlo, and Old Bones). Other perks include an information brokerage service that provides leads on the most lucrative boun-

ties, collection of bounties (basically the same as Merc Ops only at half the service fee), 10% discount on all Black Market items in Kingsdale and MercTown, lawyers on retainer (in case of incidents with the law), a banking service, medical care and treatment at a private clinic with high security, the Man-Hunter



Society Club (in Kingsdale), and a secret language taught only to its members. It is these perks, the sense of belonging to a community, and the respect (and fear) that comes with membership that draws many bounty hunters to accept the invitation to join the Man-Hunter Society should the offer be made to them.

Man-Hunter O.C.C. Abilities and Bonuses:

1. Bonuses: The character's combat training and background provide the following bonuses and are also reflected in the skills known to the Man-Hunter.

+4D6 to physical S.D.C.

+1D4 to M.E. and P.S.

+1 to P.P. and P.E.

+1 attack/action per melee round.

+1 to initiative.

+2 to roll with punch, fall or impact.

+2 to *disarm* on a "Called Shot" with any gun or handheld weapon.

+2 to save vs Horror Factor.

2. Contacts: The Man-Hunters Society has an intricate network of "contacts" that have been cultivated for decades, and includes members of the Black Market, owners of Body-Chop-Shops (also Black Market), arms dealers (Black Market and others), fences (Black Market and others), City Rats, snitches, stool pigeons, Body Fixers, Operators/mechanics, government bounty officials, and similar individuals all across North America. These contacts are willing to provide Man-Hunters special services at average on the low-end prices as well as pass along tips, leads and information that is helpful. In return, the Man-Hunters will perform their services at a 20-30% discount to "friends of the Society" and not ask questions about where certain info and services come from. Additionally, the Society will fence Man-Hunter booty and stolen goods at a good price (typically 30% or 40% of fair market, 50% for rare valuables).

Note: Membership in the Man-Hunter Society also means that its members will never cheat, sabotage or steal another member's bounty or belongings. In fact, whenever possible, a fellow Man-Hunter will lie, cover and assist (typically in a casual and small way) other members. This might include providing an alibi ("Sorry, that gent was playing cards with us all night), misdirection ("Um, I saw a guy fitting that description running like a bat outta Hell, jump onto a hovercycle and head south. Can't be sure it's the fella you're looking for, but ..."), point him toward a Society "friend" who can help in a more substantive way, buy a Man-Hunter a few drinks or meal, warn him about trouble from the law or rivals, and similar.

Man-Hunter O.C.C. Stats

Alignment: Any, but tend to be Unprincipled (10%), Anarchist (50%), Aberrant (15%), and many are downright evil.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 10, P.S. 12 or higher, and the right attitude.

Racial Restrictions: Humans only! The Man-Hunters will not accept any other race into their secret society, but may associate and work with anybody regardless of race. Note that non-members are not admitted into the social club nor can they access member-only services.

O.C.C. Skills:

Barter (+12%)

Basic Math (+20%)

Boxing

Climbing (+15%)

Detect Ambush (+10%)

Detect Concealment (+10%)

Electronic Countermeasures (+15%)

Land Navigation (+10%)

Language: Native Tongue

Language Other: The Society's secret tongue (+20%).

Pilot: Two of choice (+10%).

Radio: Basic (+10%)

Running or Swimming (+5%)

Sniper or Undercover Ops (+10%)

Sensory Equipment or TV/Video (+15%)

Surveillance (+20%)

Tracking: Animals (+5%, used to track a fugitive's horses, etc.)

Tracking: Humanoids (+15%)

W.P. Energy Pistol

W.P. Energy Rifle

W.P. Ancient or Modern: Three of choice.

Hand to Hand: Expert; can be changed to Martial Arts (or Assassin, if evil) at the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select four other skills at level one. Plus select one additional skill at levels 2, 4, 6, 9, 12 and 15. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Cowboy: Horsemanship: General only.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Basic only (+5%).

Espionage: Any (+5%).

Mechanical: Basic and Automotive Mechanics only (+5%).

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: Camouflage and Recognize Weapon Quality only (+10%).

Physical: Any.

Pilot: Any (+5%), except power armor, robots and military.

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Any (+5%).

Science: Math only.

Technical: Any.

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any.

Secondary Skills: Select two skills from the Secondary Skills list found on page 300 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition* at levels 1, 3, 6, 9, and 12. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than any possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: A suit of heavy body armor (with 4D6+70 M.D.C.) and a suit of medium armor (50 M.D.C.) as

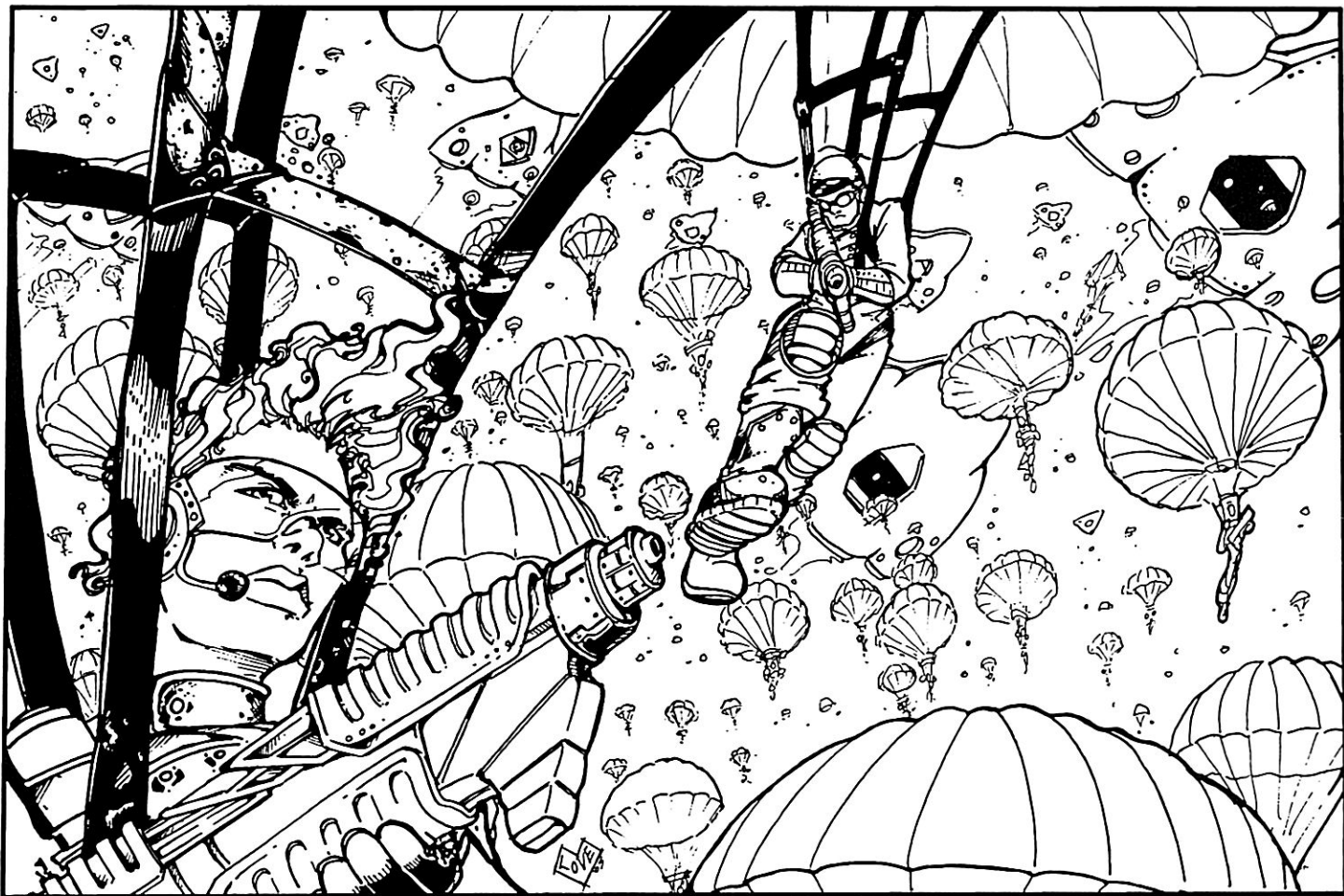
backup, a few sets of traveling clothes, binoculars, language translator, pair of walkie talkies/communicators, field radio, gear for electronic countermeasures, set of basic surveillance equipment and bugs, IRMSS medical kit, utility belt, backpack, sunglasses, canteen, air filter, handcuffs, compass, cigarette lighter, tent, bedroll, flashlight, survival kit, some personal items and one basic vehicle such as a hovercycle or hover car, motorcycle, etc.

One weapon for each W.P. plus 1D4+4 ammo/E-Clips for each, a Vibro-Knife or Neural Mace, and a silver dagger (1D6 S.D.C. damage).

Money: The Man-Hunters tend to make more money than regular bounty hunters, but they also tend to spend their money fast and furiously. He will have 5D6x100 in credits and another 1D4x1000 in Black Market items.

Cybernetics: None. Man-Hunters see the use of cybernetics and bionics to be a sign of weakness and rather unmanly. If the Man-Hunter loses a limb, he will seek out a Bio-System replacement if it is at all possible. Bionics are for weaklings.

Experience Chart: Same as the Military Specialist, see the *Rifts®* RPG.



Paratrooper O.C.C.

By Kevin Siembieda, Carmen Bellaire & Patrick Nowak

While some soldiers specialize in “covert” actions to become commandos or special forces operatives, others train in alternate methods of insertion into enemy terrain. Methods such as HALO or LALO parachuting, beach assaults, strikes behind enemy lines and other highly dangerous activities. These jobs fall to troopers who are often the first boots on enemy territory, the Paratroopers.

The Paratroopers of Rifts Earth are the equivalent to the 20th century Airborne, Navy SEALs, Army Rangers and Marines all rolled into one lethal package. Referred to as “Paratroopers” for simplicity’s sake, these men and women are equally at home under the water (or riding on it), moving in on fast attack vehicles,

or parachuting in from the sky above. This first strike potential commands a high price within the mercenary market, and all Paratroopers are very well paid, second only to special forces operatives. They live and die by the motto of “Death from Above,” and many die early indeed.

Paratroopers are often hired by mercenary companies to act as a first assault wave, saboteurs, assassins, or to launch surgical strikes such as to locate and disable radars and other sensors, knock-out defensive guns, bunkers and other static positions, locate and rescue prisoners, and penetrate enemy fortifications and open the front door (i.e., breach the fortifications by any means possible). After accomplishing their initial mission goals, the Paratroopers fall back, to meet up with the more conventional infantry units, press the attack against the enemy, and exploit the weaknesses that the paratroopers were responsible for creating in the enemy lines. Once the infantry has things in hand, the Paratroopers are usually pulled out until their special services

are needed again, but may be utilized as backup troops or rescue teams. Such is the job of the Paratrooper, to be the *point* of the army's spear, thrust over and over into the enemy's lines, making new openings for the army.

Paratrooper O.C.C. Abilities and Bonuses:

1. Bonuses: The character's combat training and background provide the following bonuses.

+1D4x10 to physical S.D.C. (or +10 M.D.C. for Mega-Damage beings)

+1D4 to P.S., P.E. and Spd.

+2 on initiative.

+1 to strike in hand to hand combat.

+2 to parry and dodge.

+3 to roll with impact.

+3 to save vs psionics, insanity and torture.

+2 to save vs poison, toxins and disease.

+10% to save vs coma/death.

2. Nerves of Steel: Paratroopers are famous for being as cool as a cucumber even under the worst of conditions. They have to be when jumping out of moving aircraft is part of the character's job description. For most, this is a blend of training, experience and a rock-steady disposition, to which freaking out is not acceptable behavior. As a result, the Paratroopers are immune to the effects of Horror Factor and they cannot be tortured through the use of pain alone; it would require the use of magic, psionics, psychology and/or drugs to be effective. Of course, these men are also completely unafraid of heights, no matter how high up they may be.

3. Marksmanship: The character must be incredibly skilled with his weapons in order to hit a target when falling on a chute or when trying to assault a beach front. They gain a special bonus to strike with any ranged weapon, thanks to their keen eyesight, training, target shooting practice and constant battle action. This means that the Paratrooper gains +1 attack/action per melee round, +2 to strike on an Aimed or Called Shot, +1 to strike with a burst or spray, and +1 to disarm on a Called Shot when using any long-range weapon or firearm. The character can also make an Aimed or Called Shot from a moving vehicle, when running, swimming or parachuting without penalty.

4. Hold Breath: A Paratrooper is trained in how to hold his breath longer than the average person, so that he can maximize his air supply when jumping from high altitude or when skin diving (or S.C.U.B.A. diving). Most humans can only hold their breath for one or two minutes before dizziness will occur, unconsciousness then occurs within two minutes and suffocation after another minute or two without air. The Paratrooper can hold his breath for 6 minutes before dizziness occurs, extending his overall time limit.

Paratrooper O.C.C. Stats

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 10, P.S. 12, P.E. 14 or higher; a high P.P. and M.E. are helpful but not required.

Alignment: Any.

Racial Restrictions: None.

O.C.C. Skills:

Basic Math (+10%)

Climbing (+10%, +30% to rappelling)

Land Navigation (+15%)

Language: Native Tongue (+2%)

Language: Other (two of choice; +10%)

Parachuting (+30%)

Pilot: One ground and one water vehicle of choice (+10%).

Radio: Basic (+10%)

S.C.U.B.A. (+20%)

Swimming (+20%)

Wilderness Survival (+20%)

W.P. Energy Heavy

W.P. Energy Pistol

W.P. Energy Rifle

W.P. Ancient: Two of choice.

Hand to Hand: Commando (or Assassin if preferred).

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select ten other skills at level one. Plus select three additional skills at level three, and two at levels six and nine, and one at level twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+10%).

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Basic only.

Espionage: Detect Ambush, Detect Concealment, Escape Artist, Intelligence, and Sniper only.

Mechanical: Basic and Automotive only.

Medical: First Aid (+10%) or Paramedic (+5%) only.

Military: Any (+10%).

Physical: Any.

Pilot: Any (+5%).

Pilot Related: Any (+5%).

Rogue: Find Contraband, Safe-Cracking, Streetwise and Tailing only.

Science: None.

Technical: Any.

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Boat Building, Spelunking and Underwater Navigation only (+10%).

Secondary Skills: Select three skills from the Secondary Skills list found on page 300 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition* at levels 1, 4, 8 and 12. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than any possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level.

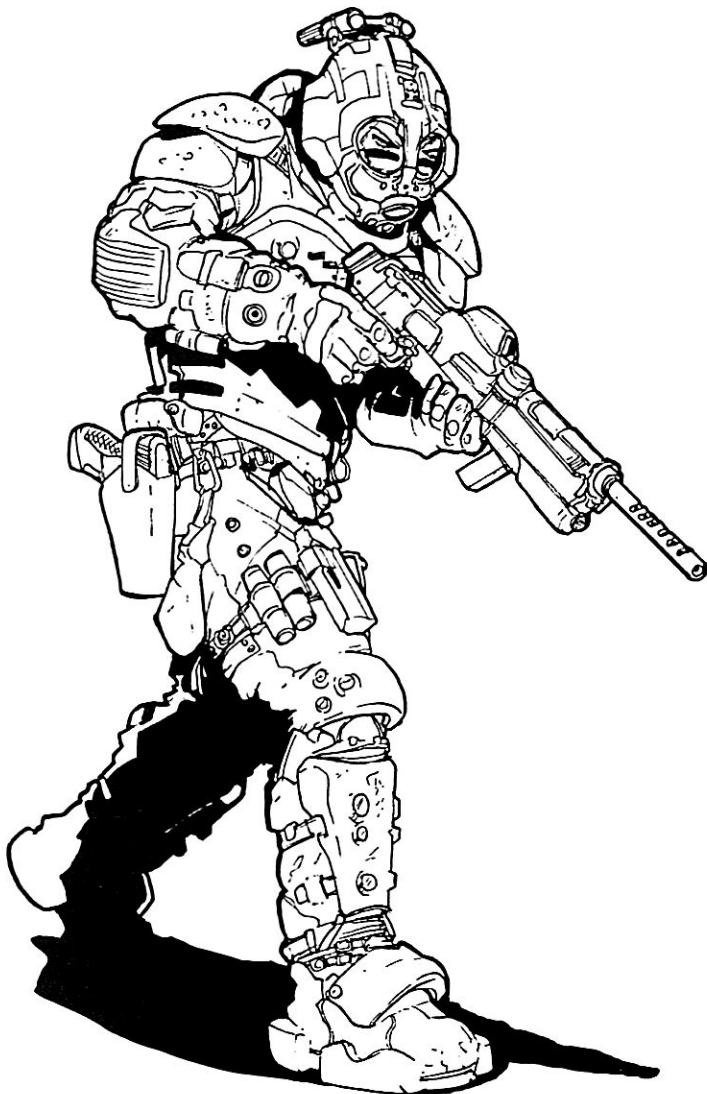
Standard Equipment: Suit of medium environmental armor (3D6+44 M.D.C.), set of fatigues, limited personal wardrobe, binoculars, IRMS medical kit, language translator, utility belt, parachute, backpack or satchel, tinted goggles, gas mask, canteen, handcuffs, compass, disposable cigarette lighter, bedroll, flashlight, survival kit, hand radio, S.C.U.B.A. gear, wet suit and some personal items.

One weapon for each W.P. plus 1D6+3 ammo/E-Clips for each, a Vibro-Saber (2D4 M.D.), Vibro-Knife (1D6 M.D.), two smoke grenades, two fragmentation hand grenades, and six flares.

Money: Monthly salary is typically 4000 credits, plus hazard pay (50% of monthly salary per dangerous mission or raid). Starts with 2D6x1000 in credits and another 1D4x1000 in Black Market saleable goods. The Paratroopers tend to make more money than regular soldiers or mercenaries, but they also tend to spend their money fast and freely.

Cybernetics: None to start, but can acquire them later, including Black Market items.

Experience Chart: Same as the CS Military Specialist, see the Rifts® RPG.



Tin-Soldier O.C.C.

HAZMAT Specialist

By Kevin Siembieda

This character is part soldier, part scientist and part bio-hazard investigator and clean-up crew. As a soldier, the character has the same basic training as the Grunt, but specializes in dealing with hazardous chemicals, waste, poison, drugs and toxins, from gas to pollution, to oil spills and radiation leaks.

Although concealed under a suit of environmental armor and a cloak of science, Tin-Soldiers are among the bravest and most daring mercs and soldiers in the service. They are the unsung heroes who pave the way by scouting out weird alien environments, enemy bunkers, secret laboratories, and ruins *before* the troops arrive, as well as clean up other people's accidents and the aftermath of biological terrorism. Likewise, on a rescue mission, they are usually the first ones in and the last ones out. Tin-Soldiers welcome the mysteries of new hostile environments and unseen killing agents. They are experts at finding traps and mines, deactivating them, and containing bio-hazards such as chemical spills, disease and other contaminants.

Tin-Soldier Special Abilities & Bonuses:

In addition to biological hazard training and chemistry, the character gets the following bonuses and special items.

1. Bonuses: +3 to save vs disease, +2 to save vs poison and drugs, +2 to save vs possession and mind control, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 14.

2. Bio-Hazard Special Training. The Tin-Soldier can evaluate the situation, identify the specific dangers to human life, ascertain their level of deadliness, and how to contain and clean-up/eliminate the contamination. **Base Skill:** 60% +3% per level of experience.

The proper handling, use, storage and disposal of poisons and toxins, and the administering of drugs is part of the special training. **Base Skill:** 68% +3% per level of experience.

Knowledge of medical procedures and laboratory techniques enables the character to work as a lab assistant and even as a nurse, but requires direction and supervision from a doctor or supervisor.

3. Special Hazard Armor: Special HAZMAT double-suit, environmental armor, plus a spare helmet and a spare oxygen tank is standard issue. The Hazard Armor has an inner suit made of light M.D.C. fabric (16 M.D.C.) and is completely airtight and sealed. This is a double-safety feature to protect the wearer in case his exterior armor is breached.

The exterior armor is heavy environmental armor with 100 M.D.C. and all the standard features for EBA. However, the suit can handle twice the amount of radiation, heat and cold as standard EBAs, has a larger independent oxygen supply good for eight hours (days when tied to the air circulation purge system), has numerous belts, pouches and connectors to hold weapons, signal flares, sensors and other gear, as well as the following extra features.

A) Helmet mini-spotlight and camera turret with two small, but high-powered lights (1000 foot/305 m range). The turret can slide forward and back on top of the helmet, turn side to side 180 degrees, and has an up and down arc of 45 degrees; responds to voice command. The camera can record up to eight hours per mini-disc or transmit live feed to a mobile command base.

B) Built-in Geiger counter.

C) Bio-Comp Monitor (of the wearer).

D) Built-in sensory system that identifies and measures air temperature, humidity, toxins in the air and can detect active biological agents that are a hazard to humans.

E) Electromagnetic gripping boots used for walking on and climbing metal structures, the hull of a ship, etc. Electromag-

netic hand pads are either kept in a backpack or hooked in a special carrying case on the hip.

Note: Also see equipment under O.C.C. stats.

Tin-Soldier O.C.C. Stats

Alignment: Any, but most tend to be good.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 11 and M.E. 10 or higher; a high P.P. and P.E. are helpful but not required.

Racial Restrictions: None, but few M.D.C. beings would bother to learn such skills.

O.C.C. Skills:

Basic Math (+20%)

Chemistry (+20%)

Chemistry: Analytical (+15%)

Climbing (+10%)

Computer Operation (+20%)

Excavation (+10%)

Find Contraband (+14%)

Firefighting (+20%)

Land Navigation (+15%)

Language: Native Tongue (+2%)

NBC Warfare (+20%)

Parachuting (+10%)

Pilot: One air, one ground, and one water vehicle of choice (+10%).

Radio: Basic (+15%)

Salvage (+15%)

Swimming (+10%)

Wilderness Survival (+20%)

W.P. Energy Pistol

W.P. Energy Rifle

W.P. Ancient: One of choice.

Hand to Hand: Basic; Expert may be selected at a cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, or Martial Arts (or Assassin if evil) for two skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select two Medical skills and five other skills at level one. Plus select two additional skills at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+10%).

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Any.

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Basic and Automotive only (+5%).

Medical: Any (+5%)

Military: Any (+10%).

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics and Gymnastics.

Pilot: Any.

Pilot Related: Any (+5%).

Rogue: None.

Science: Any (+10%).

Technical: Any (+5%).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Identify Plants & Fruits, Preserve Food, Skin & Prepare Animals and Spelunking only (+10%).

Secondary Skills: Select one skill from the Secondary Skills list found on page 300 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition* at levels 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, and 13. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than any possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: Special HAZMAT double-suit environmental armor, plus a spare helmet and oxygen tank, set of fatigues, limited personal wardrobe, binoculars, IRMSS medical kit, IRVT Seekers, RAU Robot Antiseptic Units ("Cleaners"), pocket digital Micro Scale, Portable Laboratory, Portable Bio-Scan & Bio-Lab, portable computer, field radio, digital audio-recorder, digital camera, mini-tool kit, pocket-sized note pad and 1D4 markers, first aid kit, hypodermic gun, utility belt, holster with sidearm, backpack, satchel, tinted goggles, gas mask, canteen, surgical gloves, compass, disposable cigarette lighter, bedroll, flashlight, survival kit, and some personal items.

One weapon for each W.P. plus 1D4+3 ammo/E-Clips for each, a Vibro-Knife (1D6 M.D.), two smoke grenades, two fragmentation hand grenades, and eight signal flares.

Money: Monthly salary is typically 3200 credits, plus hazard pay (50% of monthly salary per dangerous mission or raid). Starts with 2D4x1,000 in credits and another 2D6x100 in Black Market saleable goods. The Tin-Soldier tends to enjoy life and spending money on life's pleasures and friends.

Cybernetics: None to start, but can acquire them later, including Black Market items.

Experience Chart: Same as the CS Technical Officer, see the *Rifts® RPG*.



Devil Riders

Psi-Stalker Tribe

The Devil Riders is not an O.C.C., per se, but a particular, notable tribe of Wild Psi-Stalkers. They operate in the Kentucky foothills that surround MercTown and they often trade with and hire themselves out as wilderness guides and warriors to mercenaries and adventurers. The tribe is known throughout the region as skilled horsemen, tenacious fighters and excellent scouts. Like all Wild Psi-Stalkers, the Devil Riders are a semi-nomadic people who rarely settle in one place for more than a few months at a time. Aggressive and warlike, these Psi-Stalkers raid their neighbors in search of booty, captives and sustenance. However, Devil Riders don't target defenseless villages and farms, but primarily attack supernatural denizens of the Magic Zone. This includes bands of demons, dragons, Minions of Splugorth, and other supernatural and magical beings. They also raid and rob bandits, raiders, and intruding barbarian and Indian parties that invade what the Devil Riders consider their hunting grounds (i.e. all of Kentucky).

This was not always the way of the Devil Riders. A few decades ago they were part of a much larger Psi-Stalker tribe in Virginia. One raiding season they ventured deep into the Magic Zone into territory controlled by the Federation of Magic. Things went drastically wrong, and the Psi-Stalkers found them-

selves cut off and under attack by the supernatural minions of the Federation. Rather than attempt to fight their way back through the hosts of demons, foul creatures of magic and wizards, the tribe pushed forward under the leadership of *Chorum Darkwolf*. After weeks of harrowing pursuit they eventually made their way to the inviting hills and grasslands of Kentucky.

Upon their arrival, the splintered band of Psi-Stalkers discovered the grasslands were inhabited by herds of wild horses. Chorum was fascinated by the majestic creatures and, immediately grasping the advantages these animals would bestow, he and several others took it upon themselves to tame the horses. This proved quite easy as a result of the Psi-Stalker's natural psychic affinity with animals. Within a matter of months the entire tribe had transformed itself into a genuine horse culture. Before long, the mutants came to adopt Kentucky as their new homeland.

Since the Great Pilgrimage that brought the Devil Riders to Kentucky, they have adapted well to their new environment. The tribe has grown rapidly, so too have the herds of their steeds. In the year 109 P.A., the Devil Riders number more than seven hundred with herds of horses that number almost 1200 animals. Of the total population, approximately five hundred are able-bodied warriors (males and females), with the remainder being children, the elderly or the infirm. Every member of the tribe, including women and children, is an accomplished horse-

man. Their skill is unparalleled, better even than the cowboys of the New West, thanks to their empathic ability to communicate with their horses (as well as other animals). The Devil Riders are superb light cavalry troops, easily a match for the infamous Simvan in the west.

Culture & Ruling Body

Life within the tribe is completely egalitarian, all responsibilities are divided equally between genders. Both male and female Devil Riders share the chores of tending the herds, raising children, caring for elders, hunting for prey and fighting the enemies of the tribe. Likewise, political authority in the tribe is shared evenly between the men and women. The responsibility for governing and making decisions rests with a council of elders, made up of the wisest and most experienced Psi-Stalkers of the tribe, both male and female. In addition to this council, there are two appointed positions in the Devil Riders, the *Tribal Chief* and the *War Chief*.

The senior position is that of Tribal Chief, a post granted to the most capable and visionary leader of the tribe, conferred by a vote of the elders' council. Currently, this post is held by *Chorum Darkwolf* (11th level Wild Psi-Stalker) in recognition for his efforts in leading the Devil Riders to Kentucky, as well as his role in their transformation to a horse culture. As Tribal Chief, Darkwolf is responsible for making all decisions for the tribe. When it is necessary for an important decision that affects everyone, the Tribal Chief has the right to call a meeting of the elders. After discussing matters with the council and listening to their advice, the Tribal Chief has the sole authority to make all final decisions.

Subordinate to the Tribal Chief is the *War Chief*, a post currently held by *Torna Dragonfell*. Like the Tribal Chief, the position of War Chief is an appointed one that is conferred by the council of elders. This position is always granted to a warrior of renown and with the ability to lead in combat, as well as a sound grasp of tactics. The duties of War Chief are very limited. Authority is confined to leading military campaigns during times of war and raiding parties, exploratory expeditions and hunting parties during times of peace. It is important to note that while the War Chief will lead the warriors into battle, it is the Tribal Chief and council of elders who must first make the decision to go to war. The War Chief cannot take it upon herself to marshal the troops and go to war. After that decision has been made however, the War Chief assumes direct command and directs all the actions of the tribe in combat.

Apart from this simple arrangement, the Devil Riders have little in the way of social organization. The tribe has no bureaucracy, no legal code nor any other type of structure. Family-based relationships and tribal loyalties take the place of any true form of government, very much in the tradition of Native American tribal people. This loose social structure of the Devil Riders is a necessity given their nomadic lifestyle. Rarely does the entire tribe assemble in one place for any length of time, which makes permanent governmental agencies far too unwieldy to be effective. During most of the year, the tribe dissolves into dozens of small hunting and raiding bands (10-60 strong) who range along the fringes of the Magic Zone. Only when the snows of winter begin to fall do these bands converge on a single, massive encampment located in the hills some 20

miles (32 km) northeast of MercTown. Come springtime, the tribe remains assembled for a few weeks to launch several large scale raids into the Magic Zone, sometimes on the behalf of one mercenary group or another. Afterward, the tribe again splinters into its constituent bands of from 4-8 family groups (typically about 40 people of all ages).

Exceptions to this general rule do exist. The Tribal Chief can, at any time, call for a general assembly of the Devil Riders. Reasons for this can be anything from the need to elect a new War Chief, if the tribe is faced with some immediate threat (such as a general assault by the Federation of Magic, Simvan, demons, or similar enemy), or when approached by a mercenary outfit to join in a promising expedition, or similar important circumstances. Another justification for summoning the tribe is the death of a prominent figure. In the case of the Tribal Chief, the council of elders issues the summons in order to select a replacement.

One aspect of the Psi-Stalker tribe's lifestyle that has not changed since the Great Pilgrimage is their raids into the Magic Zone. As psychic vampires, the Devil Riders need to feed on the magical energy of living creatures, especially those with vast natural reserves such as men of magic and supernatural beings. The most obvious and nearest source of such prey is the Magic Zone found just beyond the Kentucky border. Thus, every year in the springtime, when the snow melts, the raiding season begins. For several weeks to a few months thereafter, the assembled warriors of the tribe ride, carving a swath of destruction. The Devil Riders take up their weapons, mount their horses and ride into the heart of the Magic Zone in search of demons, wizards and creatures of magic. A natural offshoot of this habitual activity is that the Devil Riders have earned a reputation as fierce warriors throughout Kentucky and the Magic Zone.

Smart leadership has the raiding parties acquire booty they can trade with the mercenaries and adventurers in MercTown. Making a habit of attacking practitioners of magic and demonkind has provided virtually all Devil Riders with one or two magic weapons (mainly Techno-Wizard and Splugorth Bio-Wizard items). Starting several years ago, mercenaries have been approaching the Devil Riders to act as scouts for expeditions into the Magic Zone. The tribe is also regarded as a traveling trading post where one can acquire magic weapons and gear (depending on availability), magical components, books, paper, ink, capes, cloaks, robes, basic adventuring gear, and used M.D.C. armor peeled from those who fall to the Psi-Stalkers (some made from M.D.C. animal hides). The availability of magic items and components will vary greatly from tribal unit to unit, and depends on how successful recent raids have been. Thus, a tribe may have one (or none) to a dozen magic items and/or components available at any given time; mostly common items. The rarest, strangest and most powerful magic weapons are kept by the Psi-Stalker warriors for themselves. For the Devil Riders, this provides them with the opportunity to acquire modern weapons, armor and equipment through trade.

Prior to embarking on any military campaign, the Devil Riders celebrate the upcoming battle with a ritual that lasts for several days. Allies, or employers as the case may be, are invited to join in the festivities. On the first day, the ritual begins with feats of strength and tests of martial prowess. This takes the form of wrestling, boxing matches, swordsmanship, archery,

horsemanship, and marksmanship with bows and rifles. Later, the Psi-Stalkers build a giant bonfire around which the elders tell stories of past battles, songs are sung, and the warriors dance into the early hours of the morning. When guests are present, the Devil Riders put on a feast with courses of wild game (deer, rabbits, wild boar, fruits, etc.). The next day, when the warriors awake, preparations are made for battle. Finally, the warriors ready their steeds by marking them in a harmless red paint to make them appear more dangerous and fearless. Some go so far as to carve small notches into their animal's hooves.

Typical Devil Rider Warrior

The Devil Riders are a fierce, noble and warlike tribe. They are skilled woodsmen, hunters and trackers as well as stalwart guerrilla fighters who excel at raids, ambushes and skirmishing. One difference is that since moving to Kentucky these Psi-Stalkers have adopted a horse culture, learning to raise horses and fight on horseback. It is rare to see a Devil Rider without a mount close at hand, and every warrior in the tribe is provided with a steed. Every able-bodied member of the tribe is a trained warrior, whether male or female. As a general rule, the Devil Riders are ferocious combatants eager to hunt and slay the enemies of the tribe. Devil Rider warriors are loyal to the tribe as a whole and to each other. They will never leave a comrade to fend for himself and rarely leave any behind in battle.

Special Bonuses for the Devil Riders Tribe:

Same as usual for a Wild Psi-Stalker plus the following: +10 to S.D.C., and +2 to save vs possession and Horror Factor.

Devil Rider Horsemanship: Roughly equivalent to *Horsemanship: Cyber-Knight* with a +10% bonus. While on horseback add bonuses of +1 on initiative and +1 to parry and dodge in addition to those provided by the Horsemanship: Cyber-Knight skill. Furthermore, Devil Riders can throw spears and fire guns or bows and arrows from horseback without penalty. The ability to communicate empathically with horses (range is 100 feet/30.5 m per level of experience) adds to their control of the riding animal.

Average Level of Experience: 4th-7th level, with 20% 1st-3rd level, 25% 8th-10th level, and 3% 11th or higher.

Armor Note: The majority (roughly 60%) wear conventional light, non-environmental body armor such as Huntsman, Juicer Assassin plate, etc. Another 25% wear Techno-Wizard armor or similar magical devices enchanted with spells such as Armor of Ithan. The remainder wear armor fashioned from the Mega-Damage skins of creatures like dragons, dinosaurs and demons.

Similarly, the horses are dressed with barding, a mix of high-tech versions (such as Bandito's cavalry armor; see *Rifts® New West* page 180) and armor fashioned from the cured skins of supernatural creatures.

Weapon Note: Approximately 95% use one or more magical weapons, mostly simple Techno-Wizard melee weapons (swords, lances, axes, etc.), or TW weapons from Stormspire, MageFire or Atlantis. They also use modern firearms, Vibro-Blades and other items.

A Typical Devil Rider

Average Level of Experience: 5th level Wild Psi-Stalker.

Alignment: Any, but most are Unprincipled (35%), Anarchist (35%), Aberrant (15%), and 15% are other, good and evil.

Attributes Requirements: None.

Average Hit Points: 28-36, S.D.C.: 48

Age: Varies from 14 to mid-fifties, with the majority falling within the range of between 18-32 years old.

Natural Abilities: Sense psychic and magic energy 85% (1000 ft/305 m), sense supernatural beings 65% (1400 ft/427 m), communicate empathically with horses (range of 100 feet/30.5 m), and psionic empathy with animals. See the *Rifts® RPG* for more details.

P.P.E.: 6; needs to consume a minimum of 50 P.P.E. per week to function without fatigue, weakness or penalty.

Magic Knowledge: Limited to an instinctive understanding of how the forces of magic work and the natural ability to sense its presence.

Psionic Powers: Considered a Master Psychic with the powers of Mind Block, Object Read, See Aura, Sense Evil, Sixth Sense and Telepathy. **I.S.P.:** 85.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Expert.

Attacks per Melee: Five to start, six by 5th level.

Bonuses: +4 to strike, +6 to parry and dodge, +3 to roll with impact, +3 to damage, +2 to pull punch, kick inflicts 1D6 S.D.C., +4 to save vs psionics, +2 to save vs possession, +3 to save vs magic, +5 to save vs mind control, and +8 to save vs Horror Factor.

While on horseback, Devil Riders gain bonuses of +2 on initiative, +3 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with impact (if unhorsed), inflict +6 S.D.C. or M.D., and a charge with a lance, pole arm or spear inflicts +3D6 S.D.C. or M.D.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Archery & Targeting, W.P. Knife, W.P. Pole Arm/Spear OR Sword, W.P. Paired Weapons (natural ability), W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle.

Typical Skills of Note: Speaks American at 90% as well as Dragonese and Gobblely at 70%, Detect Ambush 5%, Escape Artist 55%, Tracking 60%, Wilderness Survival 65%, Athletics, Climbing 60/50%, Prowl 55%, Horsemanship: Devil Rider/Cyber-Knight, Horsemanship: Exotic Animals 50%, Lore: Demon & Monsters 50%, and Land Navigation 66%.

Description: Hairless, pale complexioned mutant humans with lean, athletic builds and dark-rimmed eyes. Approximately a third of the tribe, mainly the younger warriors, have adopted facial tattoos which transform their visage into a demonic mask.

Animal Companions of Note: All Devil Riders are expert horsemen and each has his or her own steed. These horses come from an excellent stock of riding horses. **Horse Statistics:** I.Q. 1D4+1 (animal intelligence), Speed 50 (35 mph/56 km), 4D6+10 Hit Points, 5D6+10 S.D.C., three attacks per melee, a bite inflicts 1D4 S.D.C., front kick does 2D6 S.D.C. or rear kick inflicts 3D6+4 S.D.C. The Devil Riders consider these horses to be friends and equals, thus, like any other member of the tribe, their steeds are provided with Mega-Damage barding or magical protection whenever possible.

Torna Dragonfell

War Chief of the Devil Riders

Torna Dragonfell is the present War Chief of the Devil Riders. The young female is only 24 years old, the youngest Devil Rider to ever hold this position. However, her age belies the vast measure of combat experience that Torna's had in her short years. She is one of the most fearsome and cunning warriors in the tribe, as strong and brave as any male, and a screaming terror on the battlefield. Among the Devil Riders, her reputation as a warrior is unparalleled. Torna seems to know no fear and has squared off against a multitude of enemies, including the hated Simvan, Darkhounds, Minions of the Splugorth, wizards, demons and creatures of magic. When the position of War Chief became open, hers was the sole name forwarded by the tribe's warriors to the council of elders.

Torna is the product of Rifts Earth's tortured environment. The region which surrounds the Magic Zone is not a kind place. Monsters, barbarians, practitioners of magic and unscrupulous adventurers roam the land and survival is never assured. Like so many others of her tribe, Torna became a warrior child. Psi-Stalker children, by necessity, grow up fast, their parents can only afford to supply them with psychic energy for so long before they must pull their own weight. Before reaching her twelfth birthday, Torna learned to wield the blade and shoot a rifle. At thirteen, she began to join the adults on their hunts into the dreaded Magic Zone.

It was during her second year of raiding that the tribe decided to launch an extended hunt into the Magic Zone. Torna was thrilled to be asked to accompany the warriors on this expedition. Eventually, they came upon a Snow Lizard Dragon and a mighty battle ensued. The struggle went badly for the hunters and they began to flee in retreat. Suddenly, there was a terrible bellow followed by a thunderous crash. Fearing to look back, but knowing they must, the warriors were stunned to see little Torna still clutching onto the sword she had plunged into the great beast's skull. She had found the sword laying on the ground near the dragon (part of its own treasure trove), climbed a tree, and leapt upon the serpent. Upon her return, Torna was christened *Dragonfell* in recognition of her great deed.

On the strength of her many victories since, quick thinking, fast actions and respect by all others, she was chosen to succeed as War Chief. For the last three years she has served in that capacity as the military commander of the Devil Riders. Torna has rapidly grasped the principles of leadership and tactics, she is tough, uncompromising and clever. Over the past few years she has had the opportunity to work alongside a number of mercenary commanders. A quick study, Torna has learned a great deal from each of them concerning modern tactics and strategy. While she is no Tennessee Jack or Marcus Larsen (yet) and her education in modern warfare has a long way to go, Torna is already a master of the hit-and-run and skirmish styles of fighting. She is admired and respected by her people and by many of the merc outfits who frequent the area around MercTown.

Full Name: Torna Dragonfell

Alignment: Aberrant, completely loyal to the Devil Riders tribe and lives by her own code of ethics. She is ruthless and merciless, and does whatever she must to win.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 20, M.A. 11, P.S. 17, P.P. 22, P.E. 18, P.B. 9, Spd. 29.

Hit Points: 54, S.D.C.: 56.

Size: 5 feet, 10 inches (1.77 m) tall and weighs 160 lbs (72 kg).

Age: 23

Natural Abilities: Sense psychic and magic energy 98% (1300 ft/396 m), sense supernatural beings 80% (1700 ft/518 m), communicate empathically with horses (range of 100 feet/30.5 m), and psionic empathy with animals.

P.P.E.: 6; needs to consume a minimum of 50 P.P.E. per week to function without fatigue, weakness or penalty.

Disposition: Fiercely independent, vicious, at home in the wilderness, but familiar with civilization. The laconic Torna has spent her life tracking and battling the supernatural, defending her tribe and stalking inhuman prey. As the War Chief she is confident and adept, a true warrior who has earned the respect and admiration of her peers. Torna has never been plagued with self-doubt or the need to prove herself. She is ruthless and the equal of any male warrior. Although completely loyal and dedicated to the tribe and her people, she does not display the characteristic warmth and closeness her people show each other. Instead, Torna is withdrawn and something of a loner. She is a hardened hunter and killer who has little use for sentimentality. The sole exception seems to be her animal companions, her steed Banshee and the wolf Chorum.

Experience Level: 8th level Wild Psi-Stalker.

Magic Knowledge: Limited to an instinctive understanding of how the forces of magic work and the natural ability to sense its presence.

Psionic Powers: Considered a Master Psychic with the Sensitive powers of Intuitive Combat, Mind Block, Object Read, See Aura, See the Invisible and Sixth Sense. I.S.P.: 130.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Assassin.

Attacks per Melee: Seven.

Bonuses: +6 to strike, +10 to parry and dodge, +7 to roll with impact, +6 to damage, +3 to pull punch, +3 to entangle, knockout/stun on a Natural 18-20, +4 to save vs psionics, +3 to save vs insanity, +2 to save vs possession, +4 to save vs magic, +2 to save vs poison, +5 to save vs mind control, +8 to save vs Horror Factor, and +6% to save vs coma/death.

While on horseback Torna enjoys additional bonuses of +3 on initiative, +3 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with impact (if unhorsed), inflicts +6 S.D.C. or M.D. (depending on weapon type), and a charge with a lance, pole arm or spear inflicts +3D6 S.D.C. or M.D.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Blunt, W.P. Paired Weapons (natural ability), W.P. Pole Arm/Spear, W.P. Sword, W.P. Energy Pistol, and W.P. Energy Rifle.

Weapons of Note: Dragon Bone Spear (inflicts 4D6 M.D., affects creatures immune to normal weapons, has 150 M.D.C. and requires a Supernatural P.S. of 50 to break), ion pistol, Battle Fury long sword (inflicts 3D6 M.D.), Vibro-Sword (does 2D6 M.D.) and her favorite, the magical bastard sword she used to kill the Snow Dragon. (A lesser rune weapon that is indestructible, never dulls, feels surprisingly light for its size, inflicts 5D6 M.D. and sings to her in combat to keep

Torna calm, unafraid and clearheaded. The sword has never revealed its name, but welcomes her as its partner and shares Torna's Aberrant alignment.)

Armor: Wears a full suit of leather made from dragon hide that has 180 M.D.C. and looks similar to gladiator armor.

Skills of Note: Speaks American at 90% as well as Dragonese and Gobblely at 70%, Radio: Basic 45%, Detect Ambush 70%, Escape Artist 70%, Tracking 70%, Wilderness Survival 95%, Holistic Medicine 60%, Acrobatics (sense of balance 95%, walk tightrope 81%, climb rope 94%, back flip 95%), Athletics, Boxing, Climbing 95/85%, Prowl 75%, Swimming 90%, Horsemanship: Devil Rider/Cyber-Knight 98%/91%, Horsemanship: Exotic Animals 73%, Basic Math 60%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 65%, Lore: Faerie 50%, Land Navigation 78%, and Track Animals 55%.

Description: Torna is an athletic young woman with a tall and muscular build. Though young and strong, she possesses remarkable grace and the agility of an acrobat. Like all of her people, Torna is pale skinned, has absolutely no body hair, and dark-rimmed eyes. Her face is tattooed, covered by a demonic serpentine mask, a fashion currently in favor amongst the younger warriors of the tribe.

Animal Companions of Note: Torna's closest and dearest friends in life are her animal companions. These she treats with the greatest respect, care and tenderness, far more than she typically demonstrates to sentient beings not of her tribe. Counted first among her friends is **Banshee**, Torna's snow-white mare and veteran warhorse. Horse and rider have been together for close to a decade now and are inseparable. The two seem to share a single consciousness in the throes of combat. Banshee is an incredible specimen, exceptionally smart, brave and strong; I.Q. 4, a Speed of 50 (35 mph/56 km), 29 Hit Points, 35 S.D.C. and 3 attacks per melee. Like her master, Banshee wears barding made of cured dragon hide which has 300 M.D.C.

A recent addition is the timber wolf whom she calls **Little Chor** or simply **Chor**. Torna befriended the animal a year ago and it has followed her ever since. The wolf is a loyal friend, a skilled hunter (track by smell 90%, can smell prey up to a mile/1.6 km away) and a fearless combatant, though as an S.D.C. creature, there is little he can do against supernatural creatures. Naming the creature after the Tribal Chief was done out of respect for the great leader, not as a slight. Chor has an I.Q. 5, a Speed of 50 (35 mph/56 km), 25 Hit Points, 36 S.D.C., three attacks per melee, and his bite inflicts 3D6+4 S.D.C. To protect Chor from injury, Torna has placed a Talisman of Armor around his neck that she took from the corpse of an Altara Warrior Woman (this provides 100 M.D.C.).

Boot Camp!

By Patrick Nowak

"So ya wanna be a Headhunter? Well let me tell ya one thing straight off, it ain't nothin' like the vids. It ain't all glory, fame and fortune. Something that those of ya who make the grade are sure to find out someday, hunkered down in a hole on the wrong end of an arty barrage."

"Bein' a merc is a tough, dirty and thankless business. It's probably the hardest job in the world. The folks ya work fer try an' cheat ya on yer pay, there's never enough creds for the right supplies, and yer employer almost never tells ya the whole story. The folks yer there to protect don't think squat about ya. They despise ya or fear ya, and look at ya the same as if ya're some kinda psycho killer. Even when ya win the war they hold ya in contempt and can't get rid of ya fast enough."

"That's if ya win. Odds are, most of ya won't live long enough to cash out, or if ya do, it won't be in one piece. Yep, that'll make you a Headhunter alright."

"Hear this, an' hear it well, most merc soldiers don't last five years. There's big, bad killers a-plenty – Crazies, Juicers, Combat 'Borgs, 'bot pilots, wizards, D-Bees, monsters, an' demons from the pits of Hell who'll rip yer head off without thinkin' twice about it. If ya want to live to see retirement, pick yerself some other trade. I ain't kiddin' either. Go be a farmer or a merchant; Hell, they're the ones with the real money."

"I don't suppose any of ya'll believe a word I have to say. Figure I'm just tryin' to scare the babies outta the pack. Yer all hardcases blinded by the promise of adventure, fame an' fortune. Alright then, boys and girls. This Headhunter Academy is the real deal. Yer bein' here is a privilege. An' only the best of ya is gonna walk away with a recommendation. It ain't no cakewalk here. It's gonna take everything ya got to pass. You will bleed, sweat an' most likely cry afore yer third night here. Well, there ain't no nursemaids here, so suck it up and quit yer cryin' or get out."

"My DIs are mean S.O.B.s, but they're fair. Listen to 'em an' they'll prepare ya for life as a merc as best as anyone can. Neither they nor I will abide slackers, wise-mouths or troublemakers. You work hard, you learn what we got to teach ya, show respect to yer instructors and veterans – veterans teachin' ya to survive out in the world, an' we will all get along just fine. If ya don't, you'll be takin' the kitbag-drag right back into town. An' fer all you over-achievers, there's six spots open in the Tennessee Headhunters right now. If ya make it to the top six positions in yer class, they might jus' let ya join up for a tour o' duty and see how ya pan out."

"Well, that's all I gotta say right now. Good luck. An' fer those of ya who survive, I'll see ya back on this parade square at graduation. Dismissed!"

- The standard "Orientation Briefing" given at the start of each course by Tennessee Jack Crabtree at the *MercTown Headhunter Academy*.

An Introduction to Military Life

This adventure scenario is designed to serve as the starting point for a mercenary campaign. Although we have set it at the infamous Headhunter Academy on the outskirts of MercTown, operated by the famous merc commander, Tennessee Jack Crabtree, "Boot Camp" can be set just about anywhere. The basic training presented in these pages is, with a little variation here and there, fundamentally the same at most military academies and training facilities.

Tennessee Jack's Headhunter Academy is a school for mercenaries and Headhunters (partial cyborgs). It is a training ground that produces between 500 and 1,000 mercenaries each and every year. This scenario is the saga of **Class 109-05**, a group of sixty-five mercenary recruits that include the *Player Characters*. Making the grade at the Academy has its privileges. Those who graduate earn their certification, a document that is more than just a diploma to put on the wall. It is a passport into the larger mercenary world, because Tennessee Jack and his merc company, the *Tennessee Headhunters*, are both well-known and highly respected in mercenary circles. His word carries a great deal of weight with most merc commanders, so an endorsement from Jack Crabtree will open many doors.

In game terms, the scenario is designed to give player characters the chance to earn enough experience points to reach second level. Moreover, it is designed to give players a broader knowledge of military operations, tactics and soldiering skills. Aside from gaining experience and a bit of information, the graduates of **Class 109-05** are rewarded with Tennessee Jack's stamp of approval. An endorsement that is enough to get any mercenary unit to hire the graduates as new replacement troops; i.e. it provides plausible justification for the G.M. to have the player characters join a company like *Larsen's Brigade*, *Crow's Commandos*, the *Tennessee Headhunters* or a company of your own design.

Getting Started

This scenario is designed for a group of newly generated player characters from the Men at Arms O.C.C. category – all first level characters just starting out. Any warrior O.C.C. is welcomed, although the training is primarily designed with *Headhunters*, *Mercenary Soldiers*, *Robot Pilots*, *Dog Boys* and other military classes in mind. *Juicers*, *Crazies* and *Glitter Boy Pilots* are welcomed, but will be pressed harder and given more grief and hell than any other recruits. Likewise, *Wilderness Scouts*, *Operators*, and even *Scholars*, *psychics* and practitioners of magic who can keep up the pace are welcome to enroll in Boot Camp, but at a cost of 30% higher than usual and they must sign an agreement that the school is not responsible for injury or death resulting from training! *Cyber-Knights* get their very specialized training elsewhere and are NOT accepted as candidates for Boot Camp. Nor are dragons and other superhuman beings allowed.

The cost of enrollment is 35,000 credits, however, 20% of the class is usually in on a partial (12,000 credits) scholarship, and 10% are on a full scholarship (no cost). Scholarships are given to those who appear to have a natural calling as soldiers, officers and special ops, and are usually handed out by Jack Crabtree and other distinguished members of the Tennessee Headhunters and the Academy. Enrollment may also be *sponsored* and paid for by an individual, business, corporation, kingdom or mercenary company. **Note:** Only serious candidates are accepted, and the Headhunter Academy has sole discretion as to who is allowed and who is not. Also note that graduates of the MercTown Headhunter Academy tend to see a 10-25% increase in their salary and bonuses, as they are usually regarded as better trained than the average merc.

The goal of this training is to provide the individuals with enough experience to make them combat ready (i.e., Second level characters). **G.M. Note:** No character higher than second level can take Boot Camp training, and second level characters only earn half the experience points normally awarded to first level characters.

The scenario begins at the Headhunter Academy outside of MercTown on day one of Course 109-05.

Game Master Information

Boot Camp presents something of a Game Mastering challenge. For starters, it is not your traditional adventure scenario, the level of genuine life and death danger is low, there are no real enemies to fight, limited opportunities for NPC interaction, and the rewards are not as tangible as booty or credits. However, the training helps to build the characters' physical conditioning, provides an understanding of combat and military procedure, and should help the characters to improvise, make choices, work as a team and solve problems.

The goal of the scenario is to give the characters (and the players) a greater appreciation for, and knowledge of, what *soldiering* entails. To provide the players with a more tangible goal, their characters are working towards earning Jack Crabtree's endorsement and may be competing for positions in the Tennessee Headhunters. This means, outside the structured and linear format of this training adventure, one or more of the player characters *may* be targeted by a rival Non-Player Character (NPC) who sees them as competition. Interaction between the player characters and other NPCs also undergoing training is left to the G.M., however, this is not an aspect to be ignored. Competition and the desire to win may lead some (Anarchist and evil) NPCs to cheat, trick, sabotage, harass and fight other characters, the player characters included. There are likely to be bullies, braggarts, lunatics, overachievers, underachievers, and characters not cut out for this line of work. How they interact with the player characters (friends, rivals and enemies) and how that interaction might help or hurt the player character's in passing the course can add a lot of drama, fun and challenge to what might otherwise be considered "basic exercises." It is the interaction with NPCs where personal friendships, rivalries, dislikes, trouble and competitions will develop. NPCs who are bullies,

cheaters and arrogant hot shots can help make this adventure all the more memorable and worthwhile. And remember, competition can bring out the *best* and the *worst* in people. For inspiration and ideas, check out any of the following movies: *Heartbreak Ridge*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *The Dirty Dozen*, *We Were Soldiers*, *An Officer and a Gentleman*, *Biloxi Blues*, *Top Gun*, and even *Renaissance Man*, among other films.

As in any other roleplaying scenario, for Boot Camp to be successful, the G.M. must do an effective job setting the scene for the basic training exercises and establishing the rival/competing NPCs.

One of the key roles for the Game Master is that of the “Drill Instructor.” The DI is both mentor and tormentor, friend and enemy, instigator and referee. He is trained to get the best out of recruits and drive home life and death lessons to thick-skulled and inexperienced youths. Ham it up as the heartless, crusty old DI. Be arrogant, be condescending and be long-winded. Make the player characters respond to questions with “Sir, yes Sir,” “Sir, no Sir” and “Sir, aye-aye Sir.” Inflict punishment upon those who refuse to show respect to their superiors (the DI included) or when they fail to follow orders. Bawl them out when the characters make mistakes. Challenge their loyalties (a test of their honesty, loyalty and compassion for their teammates). Be dramatic. Be tough and hard as nails. Push their buttons, frustrate them, pit them against their rivals. (“You gonna let that punk Bennerman git the better of you, boy?” Or, “What are you, soldier!? A D-Bee lover? You siding against your own kind to help these D-Bee recruits?!” and, “You think yer somethin’ special ‘cuz yer a Juicer? Maybe you ain’t afraid to die, ‘cuz you ain’t seen enough of death yet, but you better be afraid of me! Do you hear me, boy!?!”) Get them a little angry. It’s okay if they hate the Drill Instructor, but remember, the DI should be playing “devil’s advocate” to teach them, not only the mechanics of combat, teamwork and survival, but to teach them things about themselves. Unless the DI has become jaded, hardened and cruel, this tough, bellowing S.O.B. should ultimately have the recruits well being at heart. He secretly has his favorites, although he may push them the hardest rather than show favoritism, and cares about all of them (with the possible exception of genuine “bad eggs”). Make the DI a memorable character who, at the right moments, shows his softer, caring side hidden beneath that gruff exterior of his, or who secretly works behind the scenes to help those who deserve it. As anyone who’s ever been through real life *basic training* can tell you (myself, Pat Nowak, included), you never really forget your boot camp instructors. **Note:** Again, to get a feel for this character, watch any of the previously mentioned films.

Another thing to keep in mind is that one of the hallmarks of basic training is *simulated stress*. To prepare soldiers for combat, keep them on their toes, and to evaluate their physical and mental fortitude, instructors use simulated stress. It is a way to see which recruits will excel and which ones will crack under pressure. In real world training schools this is most often accomplished through the application of physical punishment (endless push-ups, stress positions, fast-paced runs, etc.). Obviously, the author is not suggesting that you make the real life players do push-ups, but their characters sure can. In a game context, there should be consequences for a character’s words and actions, and since the military is *team* oriented, the actions of *one* character

can have repercussions for EVERYONE in his squad. This has the consequence of peer pressure (“Do that again, man, and we’ll kick your . . .” or “Don’t sweat it, buddy, you did the right thing.”). Another method to create artificial stress among the players is to give the characters an outline of tasks to be completed, but not allow the players to write them down. Then 5 to 10 minutes later, get them to perform that series of tasks. If they forget some, there are consequences (one of which can be punishment or dropping in training by the *loss* of the experience point amount that they would have gained if done right). Another way is to keep the players off balance by asking questions unrelated to the task at hand, then grill them about the current task in detail in an effort to confuse or fluster them.

Game Masters, do a little homework by watching a few good army movies or reading a few army books. Try to develop the DI as an interesting and engaging character, stay in character - play it over the top, if necessary, reminding the characters (and the players) of the reward at the end of the scenario (gaining one level of experience), and do your best to emulate the military experience in an entertaining way for this adventure.

Calculating Experience

As previously noted, one of the goals of this scenario is to get new, first level characters to reach 2nd level. The course is broken down into a series of *evolutions*, components or parts which are each worth a total of 200 experience points. Depending on how well the characters fare in each evolution, they will earn a specified amount of experience points as follows:

Excellent – 200 experience points

Good – 150 experience points

Poor – 100 experience points

Failure – 50 experience points (an “E” for Effort)

The exact criteria to achieve a result of Excellent, Good, etc., is explained under each evolution. In addition to the experience accumulated through regular training, characters can earn further experience points by playing in character, using good judgement or self-sacrifice, as per the normal experience point reward system (with the exception that characters are NOT given experience point rewards for performing skills or killing or subduing foes, because it is simulation). Note that the extent of additional experience is entirely up to the G.M. All experience points are totaled at the end of the scenario.

Other Rewards: Bonuses

For characters who *graduate* from Boot Camp, each character gets the following bonuses. (None if kicked out or failed, but it may be taken again by those who failed. Graduates cannot take this training to increase their abilities any further.)

+2D6+2 to S.D.C. (or 1D6+1 M.D.C. to applicable characters).

+1D6 to Spd or +1D4 to P.S. attribute (pick one).

+5% to ONE skill that was used repeatedly or at a critical moment during training (i.e., it helped to save the day/win).

To characters who proved to be natural leaders or reliable, trusted and stalwart teammates, assign the following in addition to the above.

+1D4 to M.A. attribute.

+1 to M.E. or I.Q. attribute (pick one).

To characters who proved to be accurate or deadly fighters:

+1 to strike and disarm in hand to hand combat.

+1 to strike with long-range weapons (i.e., guns).

To practitioners of magic: +1D6+2 to P.P.E. and +1 to dodge.

To psychics: +1D8+1 to I.S.P. and +1 to Perception Rolls.

Orientation & In-Clearance

Headhunter Academy Class 109-05 begins at 1200 hours sharp on the first day. This is the most relaxed day of the course, and as the sign posted next to the barracks says, "*The only easy day was yesterday.*"

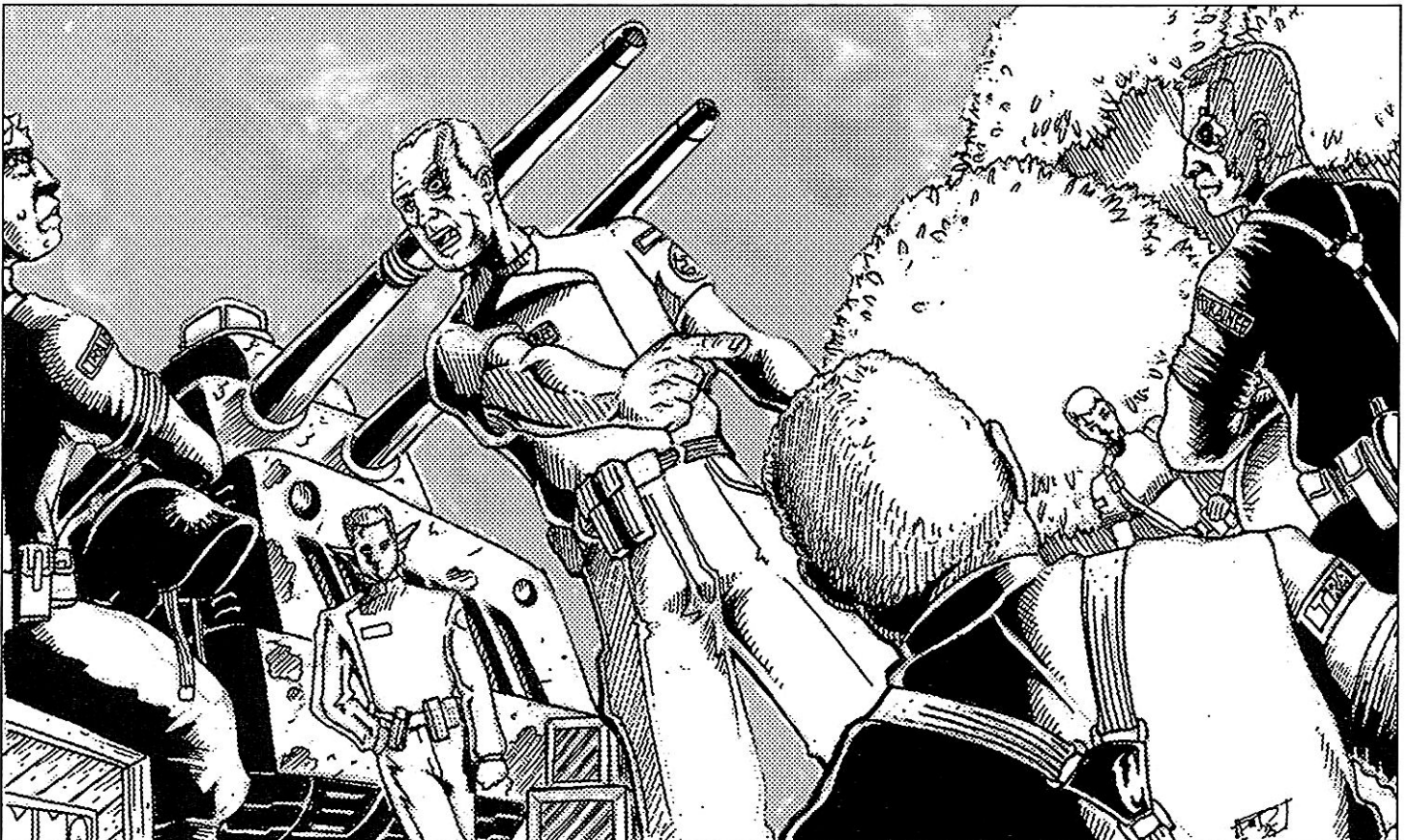
When recruits arrive they are required to pass a fitness test (consists of a timed run, push-ups, sit-ups and pull ups) and a quick medical exam (to ensure recruits are medically fit and to evaluate any special requirements; i.e. breathing apparatus for those unable to breathe oxygen, special medication, the need for containment suits, etc.). After that, they are processed by the company's clerk. This involves payment of the training fee, filling out basic paperwork, and signing a waiver to the effect that the recruit can't sue for any injuries suffered during the training course.

All personal items, clothes and equipment are seized and locked away. The recruits are rushed through haircuts, equip-

ment issue, sizing and uniform issue. Then they are forced to run to their barracks carrying an overstuffed footlocker, kit bag, armor, training rifle and rucksack to dump their kit at their assigned bunks.

Course Issue Equipment Note: For the duration of Boot Camp, the player characters are loaned a complete set of equipment. This includes 3 olive drab uniforms, 2 sets of combat boots, 2 sets of PT clothes, running shoes, a tactical vest, a rucksack, sleeping bag, first aid kit, short-range radio, gas mask, mess kit, compass, and 2 canteens. As well the recruit is issued a WI-R12 caseless rifle, four magazines, MP-10 pistol, two magazines, a conventional S.D.C. bayonet, and a suit of S.D.C. body armor that looks and weighs the same as *Bushman* armor. At the end of the course, or if the character fails, when he leaves, all of this equipment is *turned in* and left at the Academy for the next set of recruits.

When all of the above has been accomplished, the troops are ordered to form up on the parade square to receive their orientation briefing by the camp commandant **Tennessee Jack Crabtree**. Things get a lot less friendly during the initial orientation (the opening to this section). When Crabtree is finished with his speech, the recruits are turned over to their Chief Drill Instructor. This is also when they meet the Academy's legendary Administrator, **Sergeant-Major Robert "Tough" Henderson**, a 10th level Headhunter. Many times during his career, Henderson earned his nickname, Tough, carrying on the fight even with wounds that would incapacitate a lesser man. Once, in the Pecos Empire, Tough caught a dozen bits of shrapnel in the torso but fought on for several hours. When the battle was over the medics wrote him off for dead and were in the process of putting him in a body bag when he cursed them and said "I ain't ready to die yet." Sure, it took months for him to recover but even af-



ter the docs said that Henderson would never soldier again, he made a full recovery and strapped on the old armor for another decade.

Henderson is a long-standing member of the Tennessee Headhunters, is a close friend of the Crabtree brothers, and served as the sergeant-major of the company for more than twenty years. The man is a grizzled, forty-something year old veteran who is short, bow-legged and stocky. Age hasn't slowed Tough down all that much, he remains fit and can run most twenty year olds into the dirt. He has a booming shout, a stern, weathered poker-face, and eyes the color of slate.

Henderson's personality is similar to his friend, Jack Crabtree. He is demanding, stern, coarse and none too big on words. While he is fair, Sergeant-Major Henderson tends to be mean-spirited and has a sadistic streak a mile wide. The merc actually enjoys watching recruits suffer, lose heart and fail.

For the duration of Course 109-05, Chief DI Henderson is its head instructor. Basically this amounts to his being the course commander, though the time he spends with the recruits is limited. Henderson is in charge of the training, but leaves the instruction to the individual DIs. What he does for the most part is handle the administration, arranging for the course's supplies, ammo, rations, transportation and training aids. He will teach the occasional class, but for the most part, all he has to do with the course is lead daily Physical Training (PT) and conduct routine inspections of kit and quarters. Henderson is also responsible for discipline, he deals with all troublemakers, wise asses and failures on the course, and none too kindly.

After Sergeant-Major Henderson is through bawling out the recruits, he warns them to get as much rest as they can, it will be the last time before graduation they are likely to get more than six hours in one night. They are dismissed to get a meal at the chow hall, buy toiletries at the PX, make their bunks and get some sleep.

The Drill Instructors

Everyone at the Academy is in some way affiliated with the Tennessee Headhunters company. Those in background, support or administrative positions are rear echelon active-duty members, camp followers or family members who support the unit in whatever capacity they can (which includes helping to keep the Academy running smoothly). The Drill Instructors are all from the old guard, forerunners of the current generation, who have gone into retirement (or semi-retirement in some cases). In total, the cadre at the Academy numbers some thirty full-time instructors, safety staff and support personnel.

Game Master Note: Use one of the following as the Drill Instructor for the player group (and the NPCs in their platoon/group), or create your *own* DI for the player group and use the NPC Drill Instructors described below as the instructors for rival and competing groups of recruits. From time to time, Commander Henderson, other DIs, and active members of the Tennessee Headhunters will make a brief appearance to assist in running the training course or to review, discipline or question the various squads.

Notable Drill Instructors

Easy going, friendly and relaxed, **Lieutenant Plastro Greschell** is quite probably the most likeable DI on the course. The Quick-Flex D-Bee spent fifteen years with the Tennessee Headhunters most of which he spent in the recon platoon. From his amiable demeanor one would never suspect that Plastro is in fact a 7th level Headhunter Assassin, that is unless you saw him in a fight. The Quick-Flex is an expert in the martial arts, unarmed combat, bayonet fighting and sentry removal. While he is a friendly, outgoing person, Plastro has never once hesitated to "remove" the enemy and has pulled the trigger hundreds of times when it counted (Unprincipled alignment). He is a loyal friend, a patient instructor and a swift-moving terror to the enemy.

The only thing that will set Plastro off is recruits who refuse to put their best foot forward at PT. The Quick-Flex is a fast, tireless runner and often accompanies Tough Henderson on PT sessions; unlike Tough he will not yell and scream at recruits who can't keep up if they are putting forth a good effort (in which case he tries to encourage them), on the other hand if a recruit is "dogging it," the Quick-Flex will lose his mind and be every bit as vicious as Henderson.

To describe **Captain Clive "Longshot" McGraw** in a single word, he's "intense." Longshot is very much a goal-oriented person, a man focused solely on the mission or the task at hand, which for the duration of Course 109-05 is producing top caliber graduates. Whenever he is dealing with recruits or instructing, McGraw seems almost like an emotionless automaton, but when with his equals he can be a friendly and affable fellow. He is totally professional, showing no favoritism or animosity towards recruits, but is very demanding, making troops repeat drills endlessly to ensure they grasp the knowledge. All in all, McGraw is an excellent instructor and bears no ill will towards those who are truly trying to learn, he is a firm believer in the maxim that "there are no stupid questions," and is exceedingly patient.

Outside of the job, McGraw is just another guy. He likes to jaw with fellow troops, knock back a few beers and spend time with his family. When he loosens up he has a great sense of humor and is one of the nicest guys at the Academy. He's mentored dozens of younger Tennessee Headhunters over the years, enjoying the opportunity to pass on his craft to the next generation. Clive is also a deeply spiritual man. Every day he feels lucky to be alive, to have been given the second chance to enjoy retirement, and raise a family. There was a time when Capt. McGraw was convinced he wouldn't live to see the age of thirty. That was back when he was still a Juicer; in the folly of his youth, Longshot McGraw wanted to be a super-man. After watching several old Juicers (men in their mid-twenties) succumb to Last Call, he quickly changed his mind and opted for detoxification (5th level Juicer Assassin, 9th level merc weapons expert/sniper). He is the course expert on marksmanship, observation, judging distance and firearms.

Boisterous, sarcastic and loud, **Captain Dwayne "Crator" Crenshaw** is the most talkative of the DIs. Crenshaw loves the sound of his own voice and is always talking, even if it is just muttering under his breath. Whenever he is not instructing, the man hangs around with the other DIs cracking jokes, mocking individual recruits and running at the mouth. He possesses a finely honed acid wit which is always at the ready, to be turned

on any recruit who makes a mistake or challenges an order. It becomes apparent within a few minutes of meeting Capt. Crenshaw that he is supremely arrogant, egotistical and narcissistic. The man is convinced of his own superiority, he is condescending to anyone below his rank or experience (i.e. the recruits and new soldiers). That being said, Crenshaw is fairly intelligent and highly knowledgeable about his craft, that of combat engineering. He is a 9th level Tin Soldier and the course expert on mine warfare, demolitions, booby traps and NBC warfare. Crenshaw is a bear of a man, he stands well over six feet and has a broad frame, with a growing paunch that bespeaks of his retirement.

Until a few years ago, Captain "Doc" Savanna Bristol served as a front-line medic with the Tennessee Headhunters. On her last mission, Doc's husband, Hal Bristol, a Headhunter, stepped on a blast mine and was horribly disfigured. Savanna was among the medics who treated him and saved Bristol's life, however she was deeply scarred by that trauma and retired in order to better take care of her emotionally crippled husband. Still, the 8th level Combat Medic finds the time to help train recruits. She is both an experienced combat soldier and the course expert on first aid. Doc Bristol is very stern, professional and maintains an emotional distance from both the recruits and her peers. She is humorless, doesn't tolerate any tomfoolery and takes an instant dislike to any recruit who doesn't take the training seriously.

Colonel Titus "Gus" Augustus Turner is a 10th level Operator and was formerly in charge of the Tennessee Headhunters' motor pool. Five years ago, he decided it was time to take a step back, enter semi-retirement, and settle down at the Academy. He turned over the job of front-line mechanics commander to his oldest son, Leland Turner. Of all the instructors on Course 109-05, Gus Turner has the least combat experience. While the other instructors were on the front lines fighting, his job was to repair, maintain and service the unit's vehicles. Even so, there were several times over his career that Gus had to put down his wrench and take up a laser rifle to help defend camp or fight in a skirmish. His role on the course is to teach recruits the more technical aspects of the job, such as the operation of sensory equipment, communications and AFV recognition. Owing to the fact that he wasn't a line soldier, Gus isn't as harsh or demanding as some of the other instructors he is fairly relaxed, approachable and friendly. Still, he's no easy mark. Gus doesn't tolerate recruits who have a lax attitude towards training, show disrespect or goof off, and will resort to the same methods of instilling discipline as the other DIs.

Colonel Woodrow Greentree plain doesn't like most folks, especially greenhorn recruits - it's that simple. When he loses his temper, is harsh to the recruits and punishes them, it's no act. Woodrow really is as mean as an enraged rattler, and his bite is every bit as venomous (Miscreant alignment). In general, the man keeps to himself, says little (only what is absolutely necessary), doesn't smile, doesn't joke around and has a hair trigger. Only those who've earned his respect are considered friends and it's a very short list (includes Jack Crabtree, Tough Henderson, Plastro Greschell, Longshot McGraw, Cletus Ray Taylor, surprisingly, the Farkus brothers, Cottonmouth, Wild Bill Simms and a handful of others, all of whom are local to MercTown or visit regularly). The worst thing that can happen during the course is for Col. Greentree to work with *Sergeant-Major*

Henderson, because within a few minutes it turns into a contest of sheer mean; a round of "bad cop-worse cop" with the recruits as the helpless victims caught in the middle.

Col. Greentree is a 12th level Wilderness Scout who joined the Tennessee Headhunters about five years after the company started. Already a veteran merc and sometimes associate of Crabtree, he was selected to lead the recon platoon until choosing to step down in favor of Cletus Ray Taylor, and entering semi-retirement. On the course he serves as the expert on wilderness survival, patrolling, navigation and rappelling. Woodrow enjoys the wild beauty of nature and seclusion, and except for when he's instructing he spends most of his time at a rundown cabin deep in the Kentucky wilderness.

A second-generation Elf born in Tennessee, Col. Greentree has adopted human customs and habits, forsaking his Elven heritage. He constantly spits tobacco, speaks with a backwoods accent and shuns contact with the more civilized, cultivated members of his species. In fact, he often refers to his people as moon-eyed, fancy-shmancy, pointy-eared sissies.

The Competition

One way to keep the *player characters* on track is to give them competitors or rivals amongst the recruits. More than half of the troops who sign up for the Academy do so in hopes of getting a job with the Tennessee Headhunters. To even be considered for a position with that merc company, a recruit has to finish at or near the top of the class. Thus the competition for the four top spots on each course is fierce. Over the first couple of days many of the recruits are busy sizing up their peers. Likewise, the instructors are searching for the strongest recruits and potential leaders. It's not altogether uncommon for recruits to trick, sabotage, back-stab or set-up their competitors to help insure that they, themselves, finish first.

The Eight. On Course 109-05, the strongest recruits will include the player characters, an ex-CS Dog Boy loner and the *Ishpeming Eight*. "The Eight" are a crew of young mercs (average 2nd and 3rd level of experience) who spent the last year trying to make a name for themselves. What they quickly discovered is that it's tough to earn a living as a small independent outfit; the big credits usually go to the larger, well-known units like Larsen's Brigade, Crow's Commandos and the Tennessee Headhunters. As a result, they decided to pack it in, sign up for the Headhunter Academy and, hopefully, get a job with one of the "big boys." In the pursuit of this goal, the *Ishpeming Eight* are cutthroat. For them it comes down to a matter of making a living, and they will be very back-stabbing, antagonistic and hostile towards the player characters.

As the course progresses, the Eight are likely to try and sabotage the characters to make them look bad. This sabotage will be simple things like messing up their equipment for inspections, putting a sandbag or two in their rucksack so they fall out of a march, throwing off the sights of their weapons so they shoot poorly, etc., and jokes and insults to embarrass and fluster the characters further. This may possibly result in outright physical confrontation when the victims of this sabotage figure out who is responsible, or our heroes still beat the members of the Eight

in competition (and the Eight get angry and frustrated themselves).

Phase One: Soldier Skills & Endurance

Course 109-05 is divided into two broad phases, the first being Soldier Skills & Endurance. Essentially, this phase encompasses the basics, the fundamental skills that a mercenary soldier must have to succeed and survive in the business. It is only after these skills are mastered (or at least picked up) that the recruit can move on to put them into use in practical applications.

Phase One follows a relatively conventional schedule. The events for each day of classes are posted as a detailed timetable, so the troops know, more or less, what is planned right from the get go. Phase One is staged out of a garrison, which means the recruits get to sleep in the barracks rather than out in the open field.

The pace of the training is very brisk, and the Headhunter Academy accomplishes the same result as a Coalition Boot Camp, but in about two-third of the time. Each day the recruits are forced to absorb a barrage of information, learn drills and practice select combat skills in several different subject areas. In many ways, this is like cramming 10 lbs (4.5 kg) of dirt into a 5 lb (2.3 kg) bag, making it somewhat difficult for the recruits to keep up.

The standard layout for a training day is as follows:

0500-0530 (5 A.M. to 5:30 A.M.) – Reveille, personal hygiene, preparation for PT (physical training).

0530-0700 (5:30 A.M. to 7:00 A.M.) – Physical training exercises.

0700-0800 (7: A.M. to 8:00 A.M.) – Showers, breakfast, preparations for inspection.

0800-0830 (8:00 A.M. to 8:30 A.M.) – Inspection.

0830-1200 (8:30 A.M. to Noon) – Morning classes and lectures.

1200-1230 (12 Noon to 12:30 P.M.)– Lunch.

1230-1800 (12:30 P.M. to 6:00 P.M.) – Afternoon classes and lectures.

1800-1830 (6:00 P.M. to 6:30 P.M.) – Supper.

1830-2000 (6:30 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.) – Evening classes and lectures.

2000-2300 (8:00 P.M. to 11:00 P.M.) – Upkeep of kit & quarters.

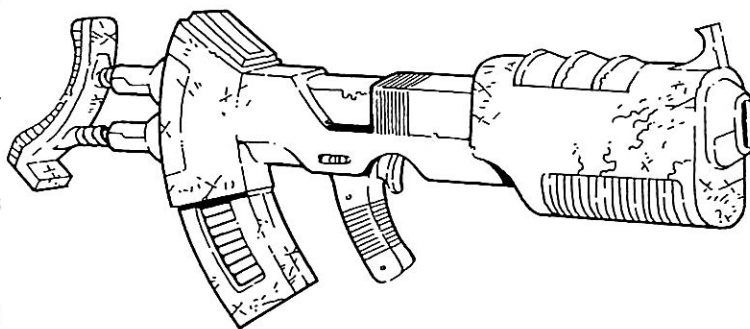
2300 (11:00 P.M.) – Lights out.

Physical Training: Every morning at the crack of dawn, “Tough” Henderson takes the course on Physical Training (PT). It starts on Day One with a 3 mile (4.8 km) run at a blistering pace. On Day Two, the course goes for a 4 mile (6.4 km) rucksack march with their armor (worn), web gear, weapons and a 50 pound (22.5 kg) rucksack. The PT alternates between runs and rucksack marches for the remainder of the phase, both of which get steadily harder and longer. By the end of the phase, both runs and marches will be 8 miles (12.8 km) long, and the weight of rucks will increase to 100 lbs (45 kg).

Any character with a P.E. of 12 or higher will be able to keep up with the Physical Training schedule. On the other hand, those with less than 12 (or all characters; G.M.’s choice) are required to make P.E. checks. If the player rolls equal to or less than his character’s P.E. attribute on a D20 in a best four out of seven, he or she will successfully finish the PT schedule for the week. Failure results in the player character being removed from the course and told not to come back until he is in better shape. **Bonuses:** Any character who completes the course receives bonuses of +1 to P.S., +1 to P.E., +1D6 to Spd., and +2D6 to S.D.C. to reflect this additional physical conditioning.

Kit & Quarters: Polishing boots, pressing uniforms, cleaning weapons and waxing floors are a normal part of military training. This is done for two main reasons. First, because it has to be done, since equipment that is not properly maintained it will fall apart, jam or malfunction. The second reason is to teach recruits to pay attention to small details. This is why the Drill Instructors (DI) conduct daily inspections tearing into troops for even minuscule infractions like a speck of rust on a bayonet. To keep from being torn apart by the DI again, the recruit learns to pay very close attention to the maintenance of equipment and small details. **Bonuses:** +5% to the Military Etiquette skill and +2% on the following skills that require an attention to detail: Demolitions, Detect Ambush, Detect Concealment, Detect Traps/Mines, Recognize Weapon Quality and Tracking. **Note:** As always, bonuses apply only to skills already known to the player characters.

Classes/Lectures: The heart of the course, *classes* are where the recruits are taught the basic skills. Classes are broken down and described in the following section. In each case, only a minimum of detail is provided, however there’s nothing stopping the G.M. from doing a little research and elaborating to give a sense of greater realism.



Evolution 1.0 – Weapons & Ranges

The primary skill of any soldier is to handle and employ weapons effectively. For that reason, the first two weeks of the course are set aside for weapons classes and ranges. “Longshot” McGraw serves as the primary instructor for this evolution, but he is assisted by the other DIs.

Over the first three days, the recruits are taught the theory portion of the evolution. McGraw teaches them the principles of marksmanship, weapons safety, stoppage drills, and how to strip and assemble weapons for routine maintenance. The instructions cover all of the following weapons: WI-R12 caseless rifle, MP-10 caseless pistol, Wilk’s 447 laser rifle, fragmentation grenades, WI rifle-launched grenades, NG-303 mini-rail gun, NG-E12 plasma ejector and WI-GL8 grenade launcher, NG-202

rail gun, WI-23 missile launcher and GAW Commando 60mm mortar. Since the actions of most weapons follow standard designs, the recruits can use the same drills to handle just about any weapon in the same categories (i.e., most energy pistols, rifles, heavy weapons and rail guns).

Following the theory portion of training, the recruits go to the range to fire each of the weapons over the next ten days. On the final day on the range, each recruit is required to pass a test that measures his marksmanship. The test involves firing 20 rounds from the MP-10 pistol, 40 rounds from the WI-R12 rifle, 20 blasts from the Wilk's 447 rifle, ten bursts from the NG-303 rail gun, 5 blasts from the NG-E12 plasma ejector and 5 grenades from the WI-GL8 grenade launcher, all at the weapons' farthest effective ranges.

Test Results: The test involves a total of 100 shots. Having characters make 100 rolls to strike is ridiculous, not to mention boring. Instead, the shots should be grouped in tens so that the character only needs to make ten D20 rolls. Strikes are resolved as normal, but instead of 5, a natural or modified roll of 8 is necessary to score a hit because of the distance. Anything less than 50% of successful hits is a *failure*. An excellent score result falls within the 80% to 100% hits, and good is 65-79% of hits, leaving 50-64% hits as fair or poor. **Bonus:** +5% to the Recognize Weapon Quality skill.

Evolution 2.0 - Bayonet Fighting

Weapons can malfunction, break or run out of ammunition. If that happens, the soldier has to be able to continue fighting, he cannot simply run away. The next best weapon in a soldier's arsenal is often the bayonet (or a large knife). A bayonet is basically just a long-bladed knife that attaches to the barrel of a rifle. It is fairly effective, allowing the soldier to maintain a greater distance from an enemy than if using a regular knife. Plastro Greschell teaches the recruits a series of basic moves (the point, ground point, slash, smash, butt-stroke and parry), all of which they are forced to rehearse endlessly for an entire week. At the end of Bayonet Fighting training, the moves should have become almost instinctive. Both conventional S.D.C. bayonets and Vibro-Blades are part of the training exercises.

Aside from practicing on dummies with real (S.D.C.) bayonets, the recruits are forced to fight in bouts. Recruits are paired off to fight with padded staves called "pugil sticks," given helmets, groin protectors, gloves and a chest pad, and then fight in a series of three matches lasting no more than five minutes each. Bouts are resolved just like regular melee combat; pugil sticks inflict 1D4 S.D.C. per strike.

Bout Results: If the character wins all three bouts, the result is excellent. Good for two out of three, and poor for a single win. Complete failure results from *no* wins. Any character who scores a good or excellent result gains a "W.P. Bayonet Fighting" proficiency (i.e., a long knife/Vibro-Blade attached to a rifle). **Bonuses:** +1 to strike and parry at levels 1, 4, 8 and 12 with bayonet.

Evolution 2.1 - Unarmed Combat

Plastro Greschell also teaches the recruits some basic unarmed combat techniques, mainly defensive moves and tech-

niques. For nearly a week he teaches the recruits basic fighting stances, hand strikes, kicks, blocks and throws. Much like Bayonet Fighting, these techniques are practiced for hours then recruits are paired up, given light gloves and protective headgear, and are tossed into the ring to duke it out. Recruits must each fight in three bouts of no more than three minutes; these are determined as per normal hand to hand combat and anything goes (punches, kicks, choke holds, throws, etc.).

Bout Results: Excellent is the score if all three bouts are won. Good for two out of three. Poor for a single win, and failure if no bouts are won. **Bonuses:** Any character who scores a good or excellent result gains bonuses of +1 to parry, +1 to disarm and entangle, +1 to pull punch, +1 to roll with impact, and can make kick attacks at first level.

Evolution 3.0 - Combat First Aid

Appropriately enough, the day after the recruits are finished bashing the tar out of one another, they are given a one day first aid seminar. Doc Savanna Bristol teaches them CPR, Artificial Respiration, basic treatment of fractures, treatment of lacerations, chest trauma, tourniquets, and heat and cold injuries. (Note that if the G.M. wants to provide any details, it is up to them to do a little research; a *St. John's Ambulance* manual or similar reference is a good source of information.) At the end of the day, recruits are given a multiple choice test. If the G.M. provided additional information simply give the players a five question quiz, otherwise have them make five *First Aid* skill rolls at a base percentage of 25% (35% if the character has the *First Aid* or *Paramedic* skill as part of his O.C.C.).

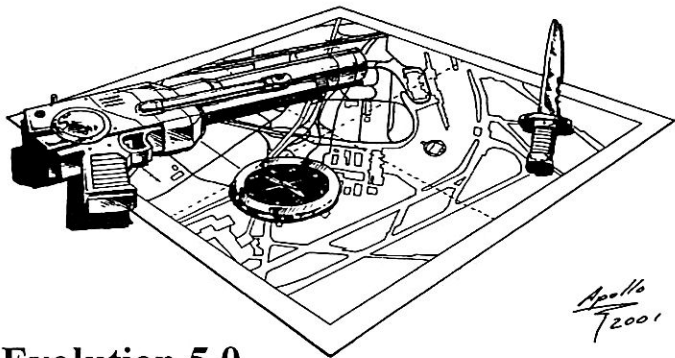
Test Scores/Results: Perfect score is excellent, 4 out of 5 is good, 3 out of 5 is poor, and anything less is a failure. Those who score excellent or good may add a bonus of +5% to their *First Aid* or *Paramedic* skill. **Note:** Applicable only to characters who have selected one of those skills for their O.C.C. All other characters have only a very, very basic idea of first aid which they quickly forget, and which provides no special skill or bonus.

Evolution 4.0 - NBC Warfare

The most horrifying weapons ever created by mankind (or aliens too, for that matter) for war are *Nuclear, Biological and Chemical* weapons of mass destruction. Dwayne "Crator" Crenshaw teaches the recruits the basics of NBC Warfare, how the various agents work, how to properly don gas masks and use protective suits, the use of detection devices, the use of counter-agent auto-injectors and decontamination procedures. The training lasts all day, most of which is spent practicing how to properly put on the gas mask and protective gear. According to generally accepted doctrine, a soldier can survive in an NBC environment if he dons his gas mask within 9 seconds of an agent's being detected, so this practice can save one's life if environmental armor is not available.

At the end of the day, recruits are taken into the *gas hut*. Once they are inside, Crenshaw tosses in a canister of *tear gas*, and the recruits have 9 seconds (approximately 3 melee actions) to don their protective masks or suffer the effects of the *tear gas*. **Practical Test Results:** To determine whether the character is

fast enough at donning his mask, roll a D20 and subtract the character's P.P. attribute; if the result is 9 or less they are *successful*. Anything over 9 is a failure. 8-9 is a poor but acceptable result, 6-7 is good and 5 or less is excellent.



Evolution 5.0

- Navigation/Map & Compass

In order to accomplish any mission, soldiers must first be able to find their way to their objective. Finding an objective is not always easy, most targets are not as prominent as a city, crossroads or oil field, and often troops have to march through wilderness and navigate rough terrain like forests, mountains, rocky hills and swamps. Navigation, or "map and compass" as it is sometimes called, is the skill of getting from one place to another. *Col. Woodrow Greentree* teaches the basics of this skill to the recruits over three days. He shows them how to properly read a map, find points on a map, plot bearings, plot routes and then how to march on a bearing. While fancy laser-gyro navigation tools exist, *Col. Greentree* teaches the recruits the old-fashioned method of using a topographical map and compass.

On the last day of this evolution, recruits are split into two-man teams and given a series of five points to find. At the point will be a sheet of paper which has to be signed, a symbol that characters must report at the end (to ensure they actually went to the designated point) and the coordinates of their next point. The recruits have to find three of the points by day and two at night (once the sun has gone down).

Navigation Test: Simply have the characters roll five Land Navigation skill checks. If all five are successful the result is excellent, four results are good, and three are poor but acceptable, two or less is a failure. Give characters who score an excellent or good result a +5% bonus to the Land Navigation skill and +2% to the Navigation skill. Characters who do not have the Land Navigation or Navigation skill can, in the future, perform Land Navigation or Navigation at a base skill of 33% (this number does not improve with experience).

(Optional: If the G.M. wants to provide extra detail there are books, such as army field manuals, which can teach the basics. Furthermore, if the G.M. has access to a map and compass and understands navigation, he can actually teach the players the basic principles of navigation, get them to find points on a map and plot bearings, then award experience based on their real performance.)

Evolution 6.0 - Communications

Communications are essential in modern warfare for the passage of information and coordination of forces. A day is set

aside for *Gus Turner* to teach the recruits how to use radio sets, proper radio procedure/speech, and troubleshooting techniques. At the end of the day, troops are split up in groups scattered around the training area to conduct a radio procedure exercise (they must set up radio sets, properly transmit information and use troubleshooting to deal with problems).

Practical Test: There isn't enough space in this book to provide an overview of military radio procedures, however if the G.M. wishes to expand on the information a good source is the *Deluxe Revised RECON RPG*, pages 109-110. If that book is used, simply make the players give four "transmission" phrases. Otherwise, make them roll four Radio Basic skill checks. If *all* are successful, the result is excellent, two to three is good, one is poor and none is a total failure. There is a bonus of +5% to the Radio: Basic skill for characters who score a good or excellent result.

Evolution 7.0 - Mine Warfare

Mines are being used with increasing frequency by enemy forces. They are comparatively cheap, simple to employ and produce large numbers of casualties, as well as psychological trauma. They are an effective tool in modern warfare and are thus employed by a growing number of militaries, merc units and bandits in North America. *Dwayne "Crator" Crenshaw* gives the recruits a three day seminar on the employment, detection, avoidance, and disarming of mines.

The first day is devoted to basic theory. *Crenshaw* teaches recruits how explosives work, shows them a few basic types of explosive (dynamite, plastique, claymores, fusion blocks, etc.), gives descriptions of common mines, teaches how to recognize and mark minefields, how to use mine detection equipment and field-expedient searching methods (i.e. prodding with a bayonet) and how to locate a mine *without* detonating it. On the following day, the recruits are split in two groups, each sets up a minefield with dummy mines (which release colored smoke when tripped) then, in the afternoon, switch around to search and clear the other's minefield. This test is repeated the next day and the best single day results used to grade the recruits.

Practical Test: When detecting/searching for mines the player rolls under the *Trap/Mine Detection* skill or, if that skill is not known, rolls under the *Detect Concealment* skill. Otherwise, the character has only a base, 20% chance to detect a mine without detonating it. Each recruit is given a lane to clear that has four dummy mines buried along its length. If all four are found the result is excellent, three is good, two is poor and one or none is utter failure.

Bonuses: Those who score excellent or good get a +10% bonus to the *Trap/Mine Detection* skill or +5% to the *Detect Concealment* skill, but the bonus applies to the latter skill only when specifically looking for mines and traps. Also adds a bonus of +2% to the *Demolitions Disposal* skill. All other recruits have only a 20% chance of locating a simple mine or trap without detonating it.

Evolution 8.0 - Rappelling

Terrain often poses as much of a challenge to soldiers, especially light infantry, as the enemy. While Course 109-05 is not

long enough to cover training in all types of terrain, there are three days set aside to briefly cover operations in rocky terrain and scaling sheer walls. Woodrow Greentree, the expert in patrolling, teaches a few classes on knots, rope, basic climbing techniques and rappelling. Recruits are taught to use pre-fabricated harnesses, how to tie improvised harnesses from a piece of rope, and are made to rappel from a 32 foot (9.8 m) tower.

Practical Test: At the end of the training session, each recruit must tie an improvised harness, and rappel down the tower once in just body armor and twice fully loaded down with all their gear. For each of these three checks, the character must make a Climbing or Spelunking skill roll; if the character does not have either skill, roll against a base percentage of 25%. If all three are successful the result is excellent, two out of three is good, one is poor, and none is a failure. **Bonuses:** Any character who scores an excellent or good rating gets a +5% bonus to the rappelling portion of his Climbing skill and/or Spelunking skill when making rappelling rolls. Characters without either skill have a base skill of 25% to climb *using rope* (rappelling).

Evolution 9.0 - The Obstacle Course

The most physically demanding evolution on the course is the Obstacle Course. All militaries require troops to run through such courses as a way of building strength and practicing traversing common obstacles that troops will encounter on real operations. The Headhunter Academy has a whopper of an obstacle course that troops must run through twice on the same days as rappelling, once in the afternoon and once at night with minimal illumination (provided by flares).

Running the Obstacle Course: This requires the G.M. to keep track of time, the players to roll plenty of dice, and most importantly, to give a running, fast-paced description to maintain the players' level of interest. The obstacle course is an *endurance trial*, a test of speed, agility and strength, and at the end, recruits should be exhausted. It is designed to force recruits to push themselves to the limits of physical exertion, there are no easy obstacles and each takes its toll.

Attribute Checks: Certain obstacles require the recruit to make a roll against specific attribute scores. Simply roll a D20; if the number is *equal to or lower than* the attribute, the check is successful, if greater than the attribute it is a failure. There is no requirement to roll if the attribute is a 20 or higher until P.E. Penalties reduce the attribute to 19 or less.

P.E. Checks: At the beginning of each obstacle, have the character roll a P.E. check (as described above); each obstacle requires only one P.E. roll for the entire obstacle.

A failed roll means the roll on a D20 was higher than the character's P.E. attribute number, indicating he is winded and fails to navigate the obstacle. This means he must turn around and start at that specific obstacle and try again (roll D20, requiring a score below the current P.E. number). A failed obstacle roll also means the recruit suffers the following temporary penalties: -2 points from the character's Spd., P.S., and P.P. attributes. Successfully making/navigating the obstacle means going to the next obstacle. If successful again, the previous penalties are erased and the character moves to the next at full strength. Only accumulative P.E. penalties remain in place.

After successfully defeating/navigating one obstacle, the character always moves on to the next in rapid succession. Roll under the character's current P.E. attribute number again for each new obstacle. Repeat this process for each obstacle.

P.E. Accumulative Penalties: Some obstacles, especially the later ones, inflict a temporary but accumulative *P.E. penalty*. All P.E. penalties last until the obstacle course is completed.

The farther along the course, the more tired the character becomes and the more likely he will slow down, make mistakes, and fail to navigate that particular obstacle. The recruit may even collapse from exhaustion when the P.E. attribute drops below 6, preventing him from completing the course and getting a passing grade. **Note:** The P.E. penalty makes it increasingly more difficult for the character to roll a successful navigation of the next obstacle.

Failure (rolling higher than the penalty-reduced P.E. attribute) means going back to the start of that particular obstacle, and trying again (without additional penalty) as often as it takes (roll under the penalty reduced P.E. number until the character succeeds). However, each *repetition* takes time and counts against the character's score and ability to complete the course. **Example:** An obstacle with a P.E. penalty of -2 reduces a character with a superior P.E. of 20 to 18, requiring him to now roll an 18 or lower to successfully navigate the obstacle. A character with a P.E. of 15 now requires a roll of 13 or lower to succeed. Each recruit moves on to the next obstacle and must roll under the P.E. modified by the penalty. When an obstacle with another P.E. penalty is encountered, say a penalty of -1, the one character sees his P.E. (temporarily) drop to 17 and the other to 12. Again, both must roll a number equal to (17 or 12 respectively) or lower than his current P.E. number to succeed in overcoming the new obstacle and reaching the next. The P.E. penalties continue to accumulate, making success potentially more difficult with each successive obstacle. When the P.E. attribute number is reduced to five or less, the recruit collapses, exhausted and dehydrated.

The entire course consists of 17 obstacles each separated by 160 feet (49 m) or more, with a total distance of sixth tenths of a mile (1 km). Drill Instructors are spread along its length to ensure that recruits don't cheat by skipping an obstacle or getting a helping hand from a friend, as well as to scream at them and provide motivation when necessary. **Note:** It is important to take into account the character's Speed attribute (can cover five times Spd. attribute in yards/meters per melee round).

The Obstacles Course:

A. Log Bleacher: A series of log frames spaced 4 feet (1.2 m) apart with a 3 foot (0.9 m) rise between "rungs" similar to steps. There are four "steps" and it takes a successful P.P. attribute check to get from one rung to another without mis-stepping, especially while running. A 1D20 roll higher than the P.P. attribute means the character stumbles and the recruit must try again; roll again under P.P. and P.E. attribute number.

B. 10 foot (3 m) Wall: A flat wooden wall with no footholds and a short length of knotted rope near the top as the sole handhold, blocks the recruit's path. Requires successful rolls under the recruit's P.E. and P.S. attributes to leap, grab the rope and hoist oneself up and over the wall. Each attempt counts as one melee action. **Note:** The recruit must make a successful *roll with*

impact (10 or higher) to drop from the top of the wall safely. A failed roll inflicts 1D4 S.D.C. damage.

C. Low Wire Entanglement: Strands of barbed wire elevated 2 feet (0.6 m) above a sand floor stretch for 300 feet (90.5 m). Recruits must crawl under the wire, which is fairly difficult, so maximum speed is one third their normal Spd attribute. Roll under P.E. attribute to succeed without pausing.

D. Over/Unders: Similar to the log bleachers, eight wooden frames with half 2 feet (0.6 m) tall and half 4 feet (1.2 m) tall, staggered (i.e. high/low/high/low). Recruits must jump over the tall ones and roll under the low ones, a tiring process. P.E. Penalty: -1.

Furthermore, to negotiate each of the frames requires a successful dodge roll (12 or higher), and takes one melee action. Failing a dodge roll means that the character hits the frame and takes one S.D.C. point of damage, but he may continue along the course. Only a failed P.E. attribute roll requires the recruit to start over again.

E. Ramp & 10 foot (3 m) Drop: Fairly simple, recruits run up a 45 degree angled ramp then jump the 10 foot (3 m) drop to the ground below, which requires a successful *roll with impact* (10 or higher) or they suffer 1D4 S.D.C. damage.

F. Monkey Bars: A set of monkey bars with 20 rungs. At the halfway point a P.E. check is required. If the character fails he falls from the bars and has to start again. P.E. Penalty: -1.

G. Tunnel: A 300 foot (91.5 m) long stretch of concrete pipe that is 3 feet (0.9 m) in diameter. When crawling through, characters move at one third their normal speed attribute.

H. 6 foot (1.8 m) Wall & Trench: Recruits must jump into a 6 foot (1.8 m) trench, climb out the far side and then climb a six foot (1.8 m) wall. Each climb requires the recruit to make a P.S. attribute check (roll under P.S. number) or a Climbing skill check (roll under skill percentage). It takes one melee action to jump into the trench, two to climb out. Failed rolls mean that the character has to try again.

I. Balance Beam: The beam is a 3 inch (8 cm) wide steel rail suspended 3 feet (0.9 m) above the ground. It is 160 feet (48.7 m) long and requires one successful P.E. check when moving at only one third the character's normal Spd. Requires two P.E. checks and one successful P.P. attribute check when moving faster, however, going across at a fast speed wins the character the bonus of being able to fail one obstacle without having to repeat it. P.E. Penalty: -1.

J. Pipe Fence: A two rung fence made of steel pipe, takes one melee action to climb or vault over.

K. Knotted Rope Climb: Recruits must climb a 40 foot (12.2 m) knotted rope to reach a wooden platform. Takes two Climbing/Rappelling skill rolls (with a +10% bonus) or P.S. checks to climb. If one is failed the character gets a second chance, and if that also fails, he falls and takes 1D4 S.D.C. damage per 10 foot (3 m) drop. P.E. Penalty: -2.

L. Death Slide: A thick rope stretches from the platform to a pole that is 20 feet (6.1 m) lower in the center of the pond. A DI hands the recruit a T-bar and all he must simply do is slide down the rope and let go just before the pole.

M. The Pond: After dropping from the Death Slide the recruit must swim 300 feet (91.5 m) to shore. Requires a successful Swimming skill roll (or a P.E. check if the character lacks

the Swimming skill; manages to dog paddle and wade across). For a skilled swimmer, speed is equal to three times the P.S. attribute in meters/yards per melee, for non-swimmers the speed is equal to half the character's Spd. attribute. P.E. Penalty: -1.

N. 820 foot (250 m) Sprint: Flat out run at top Speed. Simply calculate the time in melees it takes. **Note:** Juicers, Crazies and other augmented or superhuman beings are required to run to the end, then turn around and run back to the starting point of N, and then run back before proceeding further, effectively running three times the distance. P.E. Penalty: -1.

O. Cargo Net: Recruits must climb a 40 foot (12.2 m) net made of sturdy rope. Make a Climbing skill roll at +25% and the usual P.E. check. If the skill roll is successful it takes four melee rounds to climb up and down, if the roll fails the character needs twice that time. If the P.E. check fails, it takes him five times that time and the recruit almost falls 1D4 times. P.E. Penalty: -1.

P. One Rope Bridge: Suspended 40 feet (12 m) above the ground is a single rope that recruits must cross either hand over hand, commando style (lying on top of the rope) or with a knee cocked over the rope and pulling themselves along by hand. A P.S. check is necessary at the halfway point to hold on, a failure indicates that the recruit falls to the padding below and must start over at O, the cargo net. A failed P.E. check is required at the three quarters mark with identical results for failure. P.E. Penalty: -2.

Q. 30 foot (9.1 m) Rappel: At the platform on the far side of the bridge, characters must perform an improvised rappel to the ground where, thankfully, the course finishes. The rappel takes one melee round if a Climbing skill roll is successful, add 1D4 melee rounds if the roll fails (the character falters and must cling desperately to the rope before regaining his bearings and starting down again).

Calculating the Success of the Obstacle Course. First, ALL recruits must successfully complete the obstacle to graduate. A recruit may take the course as many as six times. Six failures means he washes out of the Headhunter Academy and does not graduate.

Second, the rating for completing the obstacle course is based on the amount of times a character had to *repeat* an obstacle in his final course run. Perfect: Running through the course without faltering on any of the obstacles. Excellent: Three or fewer repetitions/falters. Good: 4-6 repetitions. Poor: 7-9 repetitions. Failure: 10 or more repetitions or the inability to complete the course. **Note:** As many as half the recruits fail their first time on the course. **G.M. Note:** After the characters' first run on the obstacle course, do not count the P.E. penalties at stages D & F. Drill Instructors make all recruits run the course twice, but remember, a recruit can take the obstacle course as many as six times before washing out of the program. Even a *poor* score allows the character to graduate, but many recruits will take the obstacle course until they earn a good or excellent score; only the best score out of the total number of tries (up to six) counts for graduation.

Bonuses: Perfect and excellent scores gain bonuses of +1D6 to Spd and +1D4 to P.S. or P.E. attribute (pick one), as well as +1 on initiative, +1 to parry and dodge, and +2 to roll with impact.

A good score earns the character a bonus of +1 to P.S., +1D4 to Spd, and +1 to roll with impact.

A fair score earns the recruit a bonus of +1 to roll with impact.

Note: These bonuses are actually the culmination of *all* the previous training and physical conditioning.

Evolution 10.0 - AFV Recognition

Friendly fire is a common problem in modern combat. Nervous and tired troops make mistakes, sometimes accidentally targeting the vehicles of their own troops, allies and innocent civilians as enemy targets marked for destruction.

To keep friendly fire to a minimum, most armies teach their troops to recognize common AFVs (Army Field Vehicles) used by both friendly and enemy forces. Gus Turner serves as the instructor for this evolution, showing the recruits pictures and slides of common AFVs as well as providing basic details about their armaments, number of crew, troop capacity, etc. Turner shows the recruits a total of 50 vehicles, including the following: the SAMAS, Mark V APC, Spider Skull Walker, IAR series robots, CS tanks, Icarus Flight System, Glitter Boys, Titan series robots, NG-Samson, NG-V7 Mobile Gun, Triax X-10 Predator, Triax Ulti-Max, GAW Bradley, Iron Hammer, and the Naruni Juggernaut MBTs.

AFV Test: At the end of the tutorial part of the class, the recruits are given a test on a combat simulator in which they encounter 16 enemy vehicles mixed in with “friendly” vehicles in a variety of combat situations and environments. Each must be correctly identified and targeted by them. **Game Master Note:** G.M.s may run an actual adventure for the player group (i.e., enacting the group simulation; this can be quite fun), or roll 2D4 to determine how many vehicles were misidentified. Excellent is one or two, good is 3-4, poor is 5 or more. Regardless of the results, all recruits pass this course, although those with a poor score are likely to suffer a considerable amount of teasing and ridicule by their teammates.

Evolution 11.0

- Observation & Judging Distance

Half a day is devoted to covering the techniques used by reconnaissance troops to search the ground/terrain, identify enemy targets (including camouflaged ones), locate targets, and estimate their exact location and distance. Training includes determining the enemy’s troop strength, size, direction of travel, likely goal/destination/purpose and key targets/dangers (i.e., armored vehicles, artillery, bunkers, dug-in positions, communication towers, practitioners of magic, monsters, etc.) for the purpose of basic intelligence and calling in artillery and air strikes, or surgical commando strikes/raids and sabotage.

Legendary sniper, Clive “Longshot” McGraw, teaches these classes in which he trains them to split the ground into zones by distance, to scan from right to left (the opposite of reading) and what to look for (distinctive shapes, colors, movement, etc.) to pinpoint and identify enemy activity, snipers and entrenched positions. He also teaches them a few methods for estimating distance to objects that are seen, by using known distances like the

length of a football field, using features as reference points then consulting a map, etc.

Practical Test: At the end of the classes recruits are given simple binoculars, sent into the field, and made to search for concealed objects in a lightly forested environment. There is a total of 8-10 targets/objectives, and a successful Detect Concealment or Camouflage or Intelligence skill roll is required to find the two *concealed* targets (one of which is a sniper). If all 8-10 enemy targets are found and accurately “called in” (identified and their location marked) without the characters getting caught or attacked, the result is excellent. Good is the score if only the two concealed targets are missed, fair if for three or four targets are missed or their location inaccurate, and poor for missing more than that. **Bonuses:** +5% to the skills Detect Concealment, Camouflage and Intelligence (depending on what skills the individual characters may possess).

Evolution 11.1

- Use of Sensory Equipment

Following the Observation & Judging Distance classes the recruits are turned over to Gus Turner to learn how to use common sensory equipment. Gus teaches them to use and maintain nightvision goggles, infrared goggles, thermal imagers, radar detectors and similar devices. In the evening the recruits repeat the search exercise from Evolution 11.0, looking for 6-8 targets concealed in the field but this time using the Sensory Equipment skill.

Practical Test: If all the targets are found, the result is excellent. Good for finding most. Poor for finding half, and any less is a failure. Those who score excellent or good receive a +5% to the Sensory Equipment skill.

Phase Two:

The Field Training Exercise (FTX)

It is during the second phase, the FTX, that recruits put all of the soldiering skills they’ve learned into practice. The course goes out into the training area, eating and sleeping in the wilderness, for an exercise that lasts 11 days. In essence, the FTX is a war game between the recruits, who are led by their DI cadre, against an Opposition Force (Opfor) platoon of 40 semi-retired or convalescing Tennessee Headhunters (average 4th-6th level Headhunters and Mercs).

Prior to leaving for the field, recruits turn in their “live” weapons for ones that fire harmless light beams (that trigger sensors on their rivals) and *paint guns*. All weapons look and feel like the genuine article, but are modified for training exercises. Sensors are attached to each participant’s body armor which register when the armor has been “shot” or hit by the beam or paint. After a total of *five hits* the character is considered “dead” and his own weapon no longer functions. At the end of that specific scenario or day of training, one of the DIs will reset the sensors, giving “dead recruits” another “life.” **Note:** It is possible to tamper with the system by making a successful *Electrical Engineer* or *Weapons Engineer* skill roll, or if the



G.M. sees fit, a *General Repair* or *Field Armorer* skill roll, but the latter two suffer a penalty of -15%. If caught cheating, however, those involved will be reevaluated and most likely (01-80% chance) kicked out of the academy.

Running the FTX - Notes for the G.M.

Unlike the evolutions of Phase One, the events of the FTX are purposely left fairly loose. The whole point of this phase is to *simulate "real" combat*, but in the safe, controlled environment of the Headhunter Academy. The combat exercise (or exercises) should include at least half, if not all, the training and skills honed in the various "evolutions." Exactly what that simulation/exercise(s) should be, we leave to the individual G.M. to create and orchestrate as he would any military oriented adventure. There may be civilians who need to be rescued, or at least not gunned down as victims of friendly fire, concealed enemy positions, obstacles, firefights and hand to hand combat, among other elements and aspects of combat. Have fun with this and weave a story as you would any adventure. Tailor the tests, encounters, skirmishes and battles to the player characters. Use the *Oil Town FTX adventure outline* that follows, or whip up something entirely on your own.

This portion of the course provides a greater opportunity for role-playing and NPC interaction (with course mates, rivals and DIs), and more importantly, the player characters have more freedom to improvise, plan and problem solve to overcome the hurdles of the FTX. Phase Two is the grand finale of the Boot Camp adventure, and is the time for the recruits to prove themselves. While the evolutions of Phase One were important, what the DIs are looking for in Phase Two is how the recruits handle themselves *in the field*. Anyone can fire a marksman rating on the range or run like a gazelle when they get to sleep in a comfy bed, what really matters is if the soldier can perform under stress with little or no sleep, not much food, pushed close to the edge of physical exhaustion and with people shooting at them. G.M.s should keep this keenly in mind while running Phase Two and awarding experience.

Experience for the FTX is handled differently than during the Phase One evolutions. During this phase, the G.M. should award experience normally, as per the system presented in the **Rifts® RPG**. The sole difference is that rewards for self-sacrifice or endangering one's own life are reduced to only *100 points*, due to the fact that characters all know this is an elaborate simulation and they can NOT be killed. In addition to this, the players

should be awarded a bonus of from 100 to 600 experience for completing the FTX. This is based on their performance as a team and for individual achievement, so the bonus may vary for individual characters.

Note: The FTX is designed to challenge the recruits and teach them the basics of field operations and things like tactics, fire and movement, and different patrolling techniques. For industrious G.M.s looking to create a genuine military feel, they can do a little background research. There are numerous books in print on the subject of infantry tactics such as U.S. Army Field Manuals and various independently published combat guides. An excellent role-playing game resource for Phase Two is the *Deluxe Revised RECON RPG*, pages 164-170.

FTX Adventure Outline

Part One:

Introduction to the Field

Days One & Two of the FTX are an introduction to field operations. The point of this is to familiarize the recruits with the basics of combat operations, to teach them what is required of them before launching into the actual FTX scenario. It is a warm up for things to come.

On the first day, the recruits march out to a bivouac site with all of their field equipment. There, the DIs show them how to erect field shelters (hooches), dig basic firing positions (shell scrapes), and how to use camouflage to prevent detection by the enemy. They are also shown how to maintain equipment in the field, the ins and outs of sentry duty and security patrols, and the use of hand signals, passwords, light recognition and communications signals. During the afternoon, the DIs shake out their squads and show the recruits the basics of movement (how to walk in the woods, crawl, leopard crawl, etc.), formations (single file, wedge, staggered column, etc.) and fire and movement (basically, what this means is that all soldiers work in pairs: while one member is moving, the other gives covering fire, they switch back and forth so that while moving toward or away from the enemy someone is always looking to cover this teammates movement or firing to keep the enemy's head down).

The second day is a little more intense. Recruits are awakened at 0500 hours (or 5 o'clock in the A.M.), pack up their kits and march to an open area. There, they practice the techniques of fire and movement in mock attacks against entrenched members of the enemy force. The DIs run the recruits through basic frontal attacks, flanking (where one squad stays firm to give cover fire while the rest maneuver to the right or left and make a flank attack) and mechanized operations (first the recruits follow behind tanks, using them for cover, then fan out and attack close to the objective, later they ride in the back of APCs before dismounting just short of the objective and doing an attack). At the end of the day, *Tough Henderson* gives a briefing on the remainder of the FTX. This consists mainly of a situation briefing that gives details on the FTX scenario.

The FTX Scenario: Class 109-05 is a mercenary outfit that has been hired to defend a small community named **Oil Town**, an isolated, tiny village of a thousand people located near a pocket of oil. Five derricks pump day and night, dredging up

black gold for sale to neighboring kingdoms, adventurers and merchants. Seeking to take the oil for themselves, a platoon-sized band of high-tech bandits have moved into the region. Oil Town's mayor, Samantha Gibbons, has hired Class 109-05 to protect the town, its population and the oil derricks.

Note that during the FTX, the recruits are evaluated solely on their ability to perform basic soldiering tasks. They are not required, nor expected, to lead, formulate plans, give orders or make tactical decisions. All that is expected is that they follow the orders and directions of the DIs who remain as the squad leaders and platoon commander. Which is not to say that the player's cannot think outside the box, improvise or offer the DIs an alternative method of completing a task. Such initiative is usually welcome and will elevate the character in the eyes of the particular DI, especially if it works well. Thinking on the fly and smart tactics are likely to earn that character (and/or his team) a spot at the top of the class. Obviously, the player also earns the reward of additional experience for good judgement, a good idea, plan or action, or for playing in character as per the usual Palladium Experience System.

Part Two: Offensive Operations

At dawn of day three, the FTX begins in earnest. Orders given the night before reveal that the bandits are just a couple of miles (3.2 km) from *Oil Town* (which is represented by the main Academy camp and barracks). In the last 48 hours the bandits

swept into the area, drove off the roughnecks working the derricks and took up hasty defensive positions. Their size is estimated to be a platoon-minus, fifteen to twenty heavily armed infantry combatants (the Opfor).

The player characters move out on foot in a classic "advance to contact." During the day, they will come across three positions of 4-6 Opfor troops, all of which must be overwhelmed, cleared and secured. The advance continues into the late evening with a night attack, in darkness, on a fourth position around midnight.

After the final attack of day three, the course will draw near to the *main* Opfor position, a series of dug-in trenches where 10-12 troops await. The DIs halt the troops roughly a kilometer from that position and hunker down to give the recruits a chance to eat and get a few hours of sleep. On the following morning, preparations are made for a deliberate attack on the final bandit position.

When the bandits have been defeated or driven away, and their main position has been secured, the troops take on a defensive role and engage in the next phase of operations.

Part Three: Patrolling

With the main Opfor position subdued and secured, the mission priority shifts from pure offense to aggressive defense. The player characters and their comrades (NPC troops) search for pockets of enemy resistance and reinforcements. The only way



to be sure that there aren't more enemies lurking about in the area is to go looking for them, in other words, to conduct *reconnaissance patrols*. For the duration of days five through seven the recruits are split into 4-6 man teams, each of which is accompanied by a DI, to patrol the broader vicinity of Oil Town in search of enemy activity. Patrols are staggered so that half of the troops will be out while the other half remains at the main position where they maintain a defensive posture, eat, rest and perform maintenance on their equipment.

While reconnaissance patrols can be conducted by vehicle for the FTX, all such operations for this exercise are done on foot. The patrol starts with the issue of a warning order by "Tough" Henderson, the course commander. The order tells the patrol their assigned area of operations (the exact area they are to search), their timetable and any specific tasks to be completed. Then, the 4-6 man patrol leave their defensive position, travel on foot to their assigned area, and search for signs of enemy activity. While on patrol, proper *fieldcraft* is essential. Recruits must put into practice soldiering skills they've learned, including navigation (to get to where they're going), observation techniques (to spot the enemy), and communications (for sending reports). The goal is to *find out* as much about the enemy as possible (their size, readiness, equipment and intentions) without being detected or direct enemy engagement unless they are discovered and attacked first.

Over the course of three days, each 4-6 man patrol group of recruits will be tasked to carry out 4-5 patrol missions. In addition to basic patrols, they will be ordered to carry out related tasks such as setting up ambushes, grab and snatch operations, and Observation Posts (OPs).

Ambushes are small-scale combat operations in which the patrol's objective is to make contact with, and destroy, small enemy elements (groups of roughly 2-8 troops) in order to inflict casualties and disrupt enemy activity. Basically, on an ambush the patrol will conceal themselves at a position the enemy is likely to pass by or through, attack quickly using the element of surprise, search the enemy "dead" for intelligence (maps, written orders, equipment, etc.), then quickly get out of the area and return to friendly lines.

A grab and snatch operation is similar to an ambush, except that the objective is to capture a *live enemy prisoner* for interrogation by the squad's officer (in this case, one of the DIs). Their mission is simple: snatch an enemy soldier, search his body, secure and silence him, and bring him back to camp for interrogation, without giving away their own position or leading the enemy to them. The officer in command conducts the actual interrogation, although the player characters *may* be allowed to watch or participate under direct orders of their commander. In most cases, the squad that does the capturing is NOT involved in the interrogation.

Observation Posts (Ops) are a type of static patrol in which the recruits conceal themselves at a key position overlooking likely avenues of enemy movement. Unlike an ambush or prisoner snatch mission, contact with the enemy is avoided at all costs, the goal is to remain hidden and to simply gather information through observation which is then reported via radio transmission to the unit commander (who then acts based on the information, dispatching a squad or platoon to intercept the enemy, setting an ambush for them, sending out aircraft or armored units to engage the enemy, etc.).

It is up to the G.M. to decide how many and what types of patrols the player characters must do, as well as the amount of contact and conflict between them and the enemy. Suggestions: *Day Five*, enemy activity is probably very light. At most the characters will see one to three Opfor troops, survivors of their previous attacks trying to withdraw and regroup. Starting on *Day Six*, activity will increase, groups of 3-5 Opfor will be moving into the area conducting their own patrols. On *Day Seven*, it becomes obvious that the original Opfor has been reinforced and is preparing for a counter-attack. The information gathered by the recruits suggests that the Opfor strength has increased to roughly two platoons (80-100 troops).

Part Four: Defensive Operations

Based on the intelligence gathered from patrolling, it is evident that the Opfor is preparing for a counter-attack. The fact that Course 109-05 is now outnumbered by at least two to one means that offensive action is no longer feasible. Instead, the recruits are ordered to dig in a fortified defensive position in the area of the oil derricks to protect Oil Town from the imminent Opfor counter-attack.

In its basic character, the defense is similar to a medieval siege. The defender prepares obstacles, fighting trenches and defensive positions to enhance their strength, provide them with M.D.C. cover, and confer them a significant advantage. Generally, it is accepted that the attacker needs to have an advantage of three to one or greater in manpower to win against an *entrenched defender*. Thus, on days eight and nine, the recruits are assigned the tasks of digging trenches, building wire obstacles, laying minefields and clearing fields of fire for heavy weapons like rail guns and/or missile launchers. The goal is to use obstacles and minefields to force the enemy into the kill zones of the defender's heavy weapons so the enemy can be more easily destroyed.

The entirety of Day Eight is devoted to building defensive positions. On Day Nine, the recruits continue to improve and expand these positions (if you have access to the *Deluxe Revised RECON RPG* the narrative on pages 167-169 is a superb example of defensive preparations). However, once darkness falls on day nine, the enemy begins to launch *probes* – limited scale attacks by 2-8 troops – to locate and test the defensive positions. Then, on the morning of Day Ten, the Opfor makes its move, attacking in force with the support of an Iron Fist MBT, two M48A3 MBTs, three M113 APCs, a Glitter Boy, and five suits of other power armor (G.M.'s choice). The Opfor attacks in waves, fighting for about an hour or two before withdrawing and preparing for successive attacks. Sometime after midnight, they make a final push, an all-or-nothing assault which ends 3-4 hours later with the seeming defeat of the Opfor.

Part Five: The Final Exam

By the end of the Defensive Operations phase, the recruits will be close to the brink of exhaustion. For ten days they've been forced to eat field rations, gotten limited sleep and been pushed both physically and mentally. On Day Ten, because of the constant Opfor attacks, the recruits will have had no sleep, few chances to eat or drink, and they have been battered and

bruised in constant fighting. Which sets the conditions for the so-called “final exam” of the Headhunter Academy.

Raid and Hostage Rescue. Shortly after the Opfor is destroyed at the defensive position, the recruits receive a distress call from Oil Town. While they were busy fighting off the main body of the Opfor, a squad-sized element of the enemy snuck passed their position and infiltrated the town. The Opfor bandits took Mayor Samantha Gibbons and 4-5 other townspeople *hostage* and have holed up in a remote cluster of buildings on the outskirts of town. Unless the recruits can rescue Mayor Gibbons, they will have lost the war despite all their efforts and, even worse, won't get paid for the contract (at least according to the scenario). As a result “Tough” Henderson quickly puts together a rescue effort that includes all player characters (and NPCs?).

The team is assembled, pack all of their gear, and set off, on foot, to the target area. Instead of taking the direct route they march all night through the roughest terrain in the area to avoid enemy detection. On the way to the target, they have to conduct a river crossing (handled the same as the one rope bridge of the obstacle course), climb a 20 foot (6.1 m) rock face and rappel down a 30 foot (9.1 m) bluff, before reaching the cluster of buildings where the mayor and the others are being held captive.

At the cluster of buildings, the recruits must clear a lane through a small minefield (or work around it), then clear and secure a total of four buildings that are defended by a total of 8-10 Opfor troops. **Note:** The “hostages” are equipped with a sensor system similar to those of the mercs and recruits to indicate damage, only in their case, a single “hit” by a laser blast or M.D. weapon (i.e., one of the non-lethal, modified, weapons used in this training course), means they are “killed.” Losing the mayor or half the hostages means failing the final exam. Good luck. **G.M. Note:** I suggest always including a few (2-4) NPC recruits on these missions. Use them to express the fear, anger and/or confusion of the situation and use them as cannon fodder to get

across the drama – “Oh no! Todd just got taken down! Where's Carl? Get down!”

Graduation Day

The Headhunter Academy course is essentially over after the FTX's Final Exam. Following the completion of the raid and hostage rescue operation, win or lose, the recruits are trucked back to the main camp. There they are given a hot meal, the chance to shower and a full night's rest.

On the following morning, the recruits clean the kit they were issued, turn it back in and take part in a short evaluation of their performance presented as a debriefing.

If all (or most) of the hostages were successfully rescued, the recruits pass. If the hostages were lost/killed, the recruits *may* still pass, but without distinction. Furthermore, each recruit will be graded on their individual performance and half the team will be given a failing grade.

Graduating recruits participate in a parade, at the end of which, each recruit who passed the course is given a certificate of merit to show they took the Headhunter's Academy training course. The names of those selected to join the Tennessee Headhunters are also announced (maybe it's the player characters, maybe not). Equipment that was taken from the characters at the outset of the course is returned and they are free to go. Most respectable mercenary companies will take an extra hard look at graduates of the Headhunter Academy's Boot Camp and consider them first, above other “green” recruits. Only experienced mercs may be looked at more favorably.

Experience is calculated (first level characters should reach 2nd level, second level characters should reach about halfway to third level or come close to it) and the training program and this scenario is over. **Note:** Characters who wash out of Boot Camp without completing it will only receive a quarter of the experience and half the usual bonuses.

Merc Adventures

The MercTown Setting

The city-state of **MercTown** is one of a handful of new mercenary havens that have sprung up in North America over the last 50 years. It is a prosperous, high-tech and independent kingdom with lax rules and loose morals. A cosmopolitan center where hundreds of D-Bee species, magic practitioners, mercenaries, psychics and outlaws are equally represented and a wide range of goods, services and entertainment venues normally found only in the larger nations of the continent are available. The city-state tries to remain a neutral meeting place and cross-roads where mercenary companies, small squads, adventurers and individual soldiers of fortune can come to conduct business. "Business" may include anything from collecting on a bounty, getting information about bounties, trading booty (and stolen goods) for ammo, supplies or credits, equipping an entire squad or army, getting medical attention or augmentation surgery to a little downtime R & R, starting a business, buying a retirement home, hiding out and all kinds of skullduggery.

All of this makes MercTown a great backdrop for adventure. Characters may use MercTown as a base of operations where they can pick up news, rumors and opportunities through the grapevine, or purchase data from any number of snitches and information brokers operating in the city-state. Or MercTown could simply be one of their watering holes, a resource where they go to buy, sell and trade goods and information for money and supplies. The MercTown sourcebook contains a highly detailed city with descriptions of more than 200 notable shops, places and people, including Black Market organizations, a thieves guild, arms dealers, college of magic, merc groups, criminal syndicates, gangs, significant individuals, and businesses. A perfect backdrop for merc campaigns, adventure & encounter ideas.

MercTown is a hotbed of intrigue where mercenary units, governments, criminal groups, mega-corporations, the Coalition States, Federation of Magic, Naruni, Tolkeen freedom fighters, D-Bees, City Rats, bandits, adventurers, spies, smugglers, and practitioners of magic are all active. Many carrying out clandestine or espionage missions against their enemies. An entire mercenary campaign could be played out from start to finish within the boundaries of MercTown. Furthermore, its location puts it in close proximity to the Magic Zone and the Federation of Magic, the Coalition States of El Dorado/Arkansas, Lone Star, Missouri and Chi-Town, as well as the monster filled southlands, Dinosaur Swamp and even Arzno (Arizona) and vampire infested Mexico.

Use MercTown as the staging ground for all kinds of adventures!



Catalysts for Adventure

Buying & Selling Equipment: Much of the time this is an aspect of any campaign that gets quickly glossed over (heck, I'm usually guilty of it – Pat). However, the buying & selling of equipment is a vital part of any mercenary scenario and is moreover, a fantastic opportunity for role-playing and NPC interaction, discovery of clues and information, bumping into rivals or the accidental meeting of an enemy or rival to come.

The bottom line is that mercenary work is a business. No one risks life and limb just for the fun of it, the whole point of getting into the merc trade is to earn credits! Running a mercenary unit is expensive - weapons, ammunition, body armor, equipment, robots, vehicles, fuel, repairs, food and even water all cost money. The real trick to turning a profit is to reduce the overhead, to secure all the necessities without going over budget. Mercs have to get more bang for their buck, or go broke. Every successful merc commander needs to be part accountant to survive; even Marcus Larsen himself is a notorious skinflint. In game terms, the challenge for the player characters is to come up with a budget for equipment that still leaves them with enough profit to justify the venture. The greater challenge is to get everything they need without exceeding their budget. Getting discount goods or bargain prices may also mean taking risks and lead to adventure and role-playing. Negotiating the deal, getting jumped by bandits (or avoiding or battling the thieves), buying “hot” stolen goods or Coalition contraband, getting robbed and seeking out the robbers for revenge, and any number of incidents built around supplies and equipment can lead to or involve adventure and subplots.

MercTown and similar places are filled with arms dealers, weapons merchants and outfitters, but even here, all kinds of skullduggery, treachery and underhanded deals can lead to conflict and adventure. This is an opportunity for the characters to interact with new and interesting NPCs, all of whom have their own personal agendas. It represents the chance to earn additional experience points from good role-playing, to expand on their network of contacts, gather intelligence and for the G.M. to introduce various subplots and characters to the central storyline.

Criminals and Predators: Places like MercTown have their share of bottom feeders, including thieves, grifters, con artists, pickpockets, Cyber-Snatchers, organized crime, evil masterminds, corrupt government officials, police on the take, Coalition spies, assassins, evil practitioners of magic, disguised monsters, demons, gangs, bullies and brawlers. Any of these villains are likely to provide subplots and all out adventures. Game Masters, just think about the possibilities. Crooks and scoundrels may hire, trick or deceive even the best of heroes, hiring or conning them to work on their behalf. Criminals and other brigands can serve as rivals and reoccurring villains or bloodthirsty enemies. Then there's the classic: find, stop and bring to justice bad guy(s). MercTown, in particular, is home to thousands of crooks, hustlers and misanthropes. The Warrens section of town is particularly rundown and beset by cutthroats and crooks. Chance meetings and run-ins with criminals are unavoidable, and the worst of the lot see mercenaries as potential victims just like anybody else. And there are the gangs, gang wars and turf wars, not to mention power plays by the thieves' guild and

Black Market. Anyone who gets too involved in the events of the Warrens will eventually run afoul of either the Black Market or the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild, or both. Each of these is a powerful force in its own right, capable of withstanding even pressure from the local government.

Spies and Secret Agents: Covert operatives are an elite class of mercenaries who specialize in espionage, assassination, sabotage, surveillance or a related field. By their very nature, covert operatives excel at missions of stealth, spying and intelligence. They often meld, invisibly, into the population and use the element of *surprise* and *misdirection* as one of their favorite weapons and crucial tools. Virtually every major power in North America, including the CS, Federation of Magic, Free Quebec, Lazlo, Northern Gun, the Black Market, and scores of merc companies, raiders and bandits, have spies, snitches and undercover agents in place at MercTown or other centers of mercenary activity.

Most of the time even the sharpest player characters won't realize that they've come across a spy, since the operative will have no reason to tip his hand or blow his cover. On the other hand, when such an encounter goes sour and the spy's cover is blown, things can get perilous very quickly. Covert operatives rarely leave witnesses to their actions, they'd rather leave an unsolved murder for the police to handle than an eyewitness. Moreover, if the encounter jeopardizes or spoils a covert mission, it is open season on the people who threaten it, including hardened warriors, mercs, adventurers and even dragons. Espionage agents have a tendency to be meticulous, intractable opponents who will let nothing stand in the way of their completing a mission. Those who become obstacles are gotten around or *removed* – one way or the other.

Espionage and the Sale of Information. Information is worth hard credits in MercTown, Kingsdale, Arzno, and other centers of mercenary activity. Thus, City Rats, spies, information brokers, rivals, opportunists and enemies (of the player group and/or their client) always have an ear open for juicy bits of info they can sell, trade or use to their own benefit (or their client's benefit), as well as data they can use to trick, undermine or outdo their rivals (i.e. our heroes). This means the player characters might have to establish (or deal with) added levels of security and an adventure could develop around loose lips and the loss and recovery of vital information. Losing an important contract or source of info could also be an adventure subplot, and in the most extreme of cases, the characters' enemies, rivals or intended target might target them for elimination or sabotage. As a result, the characters will have to take extra steps to protect themselves and secure their vital information, including the name of their client, their mission/goal, and other data that must be kept out of the wrong hands.

Employment Opportunities: Breaking into the mercenary business is much more difficult than one might think. Large, reputable and established merc companies like *Larsen's Brigade*, *Crow's Commandos* and the *Tennessee Headhunters* often attract the big money contracts. To stay afloat, independent contractors and small units might try signing on with one of the bigger organizations or specializing in a particular area of work. Merc centers of activity like MercTown, Kingsdale, and Arzno make finding work easier, because there are always rumors circulating on the streets and people in the know – for the right

price or twist of the arm. There are also professional snitches, informants and information brokers who can set up meetings with potential clients and point the heroes in the right direction, for a modest fee or commission, of course. Places like MercTown also attract those looking to hire “specialists” to help them with whatever problem they may be dealing with. On the other hand, competition, rivalry and backstabbing is high, and one must be very careful with reliable information and who provides it.

Getting one’s foot in the door is not always easy, and it is often feast or famine in the merc trade. However, the challenges and the money can be a dream come true for those who enjoy such down and dirty work.

Finding Contracts & Clients: MercTown is well known across the continent as a haven for soldiers of fortune. Monarchs, wealthy merchants, corporate executives, usurped tyrants, army commanders, government officials, rebel leaders, arms dealers, smugglers, organized crime, and others come to MercTown (and places like it) to network and hire mercenary soldiers, spies, thieves, assassins and agents to do their dirty work, protect their assets or help them out of trouble (threats, extortion, kidnaping of a loved one, tracking down a thief or the vital data, schematics, magic item, money, etc., he stole, and so on). *MercTown*, *Arzno*, *Kingsdale* and other merc centers are a buyer’s market where one can find a selection of mercenary companies, squads and specialists to fit most any budget.

Information brokers at locations like MercTown make it easy for prospective clients and mercenaries to connect, interview and hire (or be hired). The megalithic *Mercenary Plaza* building and the much smaller but trusted *Job Market Caf * are two of MercTown’s most popular places to make connections, but several other information brokers also operate in town, and other establishments, organizations (like the Black Market, Ravenshome Thieves’ Guild, and the Tennessee Headhunters) and notable individuals may serve as an emissary between interested parties. All this (using established NPCs and a setting that lets a G.M. insert any of his own NPCs) eliminates the need for the characters to scour the city in search of leads for work, and provides a quick vehicle for connecting employers and mercs, as well as plenty of opportunity for additional info, clues or potential for trouble via the rumor mill and word on the street.

Information: Prior to stepping off on any given operation it is a good idea to gather information regarding the situation, the area of operations, the enemy and, often, one’s own employer and his motives. Much of this can be done in MercTown by keeping one’s ear to the ground and establishing a reliable network of City Rats, stoolies and information brokers. The more dangerous (or true and reliable) the information, the more likely it is to cost a pretty penny, but it can be worth every cent. Some reliable information can cost as little as a few drinks and conversation with other mercs who have been to the area, fought the same opponent in the past, or have worked for (or against) their target (or their employer). Other times, one may have to pay out hundreds or thousands of credits to information brokers, professional spies, members of the underworld or cagey City Rats. Meanwhile, the player group needs to avoid asking the wrong people the wrong question or risk tipping off their target/enemy. Likewise, they have to be careful not to leak the information that could be used against themselves.

Medical Attention & Augmentation: Casualties, injury and damage can also be catalysts for adventure. Needing to find a doctor to save the life of a friend, ally or innocent bystander could be a journey and an adventure all by itself. So might finding the right medicine or getting the money to pay for it. Hiding from the enemy or the law while a teammate recovers could be another adventure or subplot. Another might be staying behind to defend a hospital or to protect innocent sick or injured people/children, or getting medical supplies from point A to point B where they are desperately needed (by an ally, friend, client, village, smugglers for profit, etc.). Not to mention possible storylines built around biological warfare, a magical plague, finding the cause or a cure for a sickness, etc.

Many individuals in the mercenary trade are looking for a boost, an edge of some kind, to better compete and survive in combat. Augmentation is one answer, whether it is getting Juiced, M.O.M. brain implants, magic symbiotes, cybernetics or bionics. Many “clients” and mercenary companies will promise augmentation or upgrades to augmentation as *payment* for a particular job or mission, or in trade for so many months or years of loyal service. All ideal for initiating mercenary adventures. Likewise, an augmentation clinic may hire mercs to defend its facility, track down a thief or bandits, escort a shipment of medical/augmentation supplies, track down or bring to justice Cyber-Snatchers, stop or defend a community or client against an augmented enemy (Juicers, Crazies, Combat ‘Borgs) and so on.

Mercenaries: On an average day, a city like MercTown plays host to thousands of mercenaries. These range from lone wolves and small bands and squads to entire companies and brigades. Mercs tend to be roughnecks and heartbreakers who live large and party hard. They don’t brook insults and tend to solve problems with their fists or gunplay. Thus, a town that caters to mercs always has something of a wild west atmosphere to it. Duels, physical contests, horseplay, brawls, gambling, drunkenness and violence all come hand in hand with mercenaries. This can lead to friendly contests and rivalries or vendettas and bloodshed. That being said, most soldiers of fortune are polite to one another, either out of respect, a sense of camaraderie born out of common experience, or simply to avoid making trouble or killing anybody without getting paid for it.

Among friends and even respected rivals, mercenaries tend to be a sociable if rowdy lot, enjoying the chance to renew contacts, share information, gamble, drink and swap war stories. At the opposite end of the spectrum are encounters with rivals, competitors and/or old enemies. Such meetings are rarely cordial. Best case scenario, the mercs exchange dark looks, make snide comments to their buddies and then do their best to ignore one another. Instead, they often turn into heated confrontations, exchanges of insults, fisticuffs, duels, knife thrusts or gunplay. Normally, rivals won’t go so far as to kill one another, rather they are just looking for a little *payback* from the last meeting on the battlefield or past treachery. Then again, the more ruthless mercs will take any opportunity for revenge and seek to kill their enemies regardless of the consequences.

Rivalry. Competition from one or more rival groups always creates a sense of urgency and a touch of intrigue or conspiracy that can only add to an adventure. At merc centers like MercTown, there is always the threat of interference by “poach-

ers” – rival mercenary outfits competing for the same contract or who try to get themselves hired to replace the player group. While most rivals will simply try to underbid the player group, desperate or despicable mercenaries might resort to skulduggery such as slander, sabotage of equipment, theft, kidnapping, bushwhacking or assassination.

Securing Transportation: This can be yet another subplot or adventure in and of itself depending on where, when and how the player group needs to get to where they’re going. This might involve buying a map to a secret route, arriving unnoticed, securing special vehicles and identification documents, arranging to have a practitioner of magic teleport or Rift the group to (or near) their destination, and dealing with ambushes, traps and bushwhackers along the way, as well as weather, indigenous people, wild animals and so on.

Weapons Dealers. Since the onset of the Coalition War with Tolkeen, North America has fallen into the grip of an escalating arms race. The demand for high-tech weapons, military equipment and magic weapons is at an all time high. The dozen or so dedicated weapons manufacturers scattered across the continent have continued production unabated to meet this growing demand. Newer and more powerful weapons are constantly being developed and released on the open market. As of 109 P.A., profit margins and production levels have risen to record levels. Even many of the smaller corporations like Golden Age Weaponsmiths, Chipwell Armaments, and Wellington Industries are enjoying a boom-time. Business is go good, even Naruni Enterprises has returned. An increasingly unstable political climate has also added fuel to fan the escalating arms race. The CS has expanded its armies to over a million soldiers and seemingly from out of nowhere, created a Navy. Nervous leaders of kingdoms all across North America fear that the CS won’t stop at the destruction of Tolkeen. The threat of CS invasion has left a great many kingdoms and nations scrambling to rebuild their own forces, and fueling mercenary operations across the continent.

As far as the average mercenary is concerned, this arms race is a godsend. Weapons and employment are readily available just about everywhere. Weapon prices have dropped about 5% to 20% with the growing competition, and all of the established companies are pumping out new designs for combat vehicles, armor, weapons, and ammo at a feverish pace. **Note:** The availability of any weapon, armor, robot and vehicle is left completely to the G.M.’s discretion.

MercTown - Hook, Line & Sinkers

By Patrick Nowak & Kevin Siembieda

Rough Night Out

Hook: While enjoying a rare chance for some R&R in MercTown, the player characters spend a night on the town. As the regular bars close up shop they hear about *Nightcrawlers*, an after hours club open all night until the break of dawn. Upon ar-

iving they discover the club is packed with hundreds of young people drinking, dancing and having a good time.

Line: Over the course of the evening and into the wee hours of the morning, before sunrise, one of the bartenders, a beautiful, young Spanish woman named *Rosa* (P.B. of 20), makes a pass at the best looking male character in the group (or vice versa if he’s the type to hit on the waitress). As the night starts to wind down, she invites the character to a private party in the VIP area where things get hot and heavy. Rosa loses her composure in the passion and that’s when her helpless lover (a player character or an NPC in the player group) discovers she is a vampire. (Rosa is a Secondary Vampire, 5th level, she has 80 Hit Points and 120 I.S.P., and is Unprincipled.)

Rosa doesn’t mean to bite and drain his blood, but it happens. She regains her composure before bleeding the man dry, draining only a portion of the character’s blood, after which she tosses him into a cab and sends him back to his hotel (info she learned earlier that night).

Sinker: Oblivious as to what has happened, the poor fool wakes up later that day (probably mid-afternoon) with the worst hangover of his life. He feels exhausted, even more than usual after staying up for half the night, and is awash with a sense of melancholy. He spends the afternoon just staring out blankly at the sky and thinking about Rosa. He is also jittery, easily startled by loud noises and half blinded by bright light. (Note that his skills and attacks are both reduced by half.) This strange behavior should lead the character’s companions to suspect that something is wrong and they’re right. Their pal is suffering the effects of a Killing Bite – the first step in turning him into a vampire! (See *Rifts® Vampire Kingdoms*, pages 19-20, for details.)

When night falls the bitten character seems to perk up, becoming more himself. If it is raised, he scoffs at any *nonsense* about vampires or that Rosa could spell trouble. At the same time, he has the overwhelming urge to go back to *Nightcrawlers* as soon as possible and see dear, sweet, beautiful Rosa again. With a single-minded determination he is bent on returning to the nightclub, no matter what the others say. The love bitten character feels a powerful attraction to Rosa and will try everything in his power to see her again.

However, at the club, Rosa completely snubs the character, ignoring him, avoiding him, and hiding from him. Not the behavior of a typical evil vampire. Biting the guy was a mistake, and she does not wish to create another vampire and thereby risk drawing attention to herself, the club and the rest of the undead that frequent, work and live at the club.

Whatever happens next depends entirely on the player characters, especially Mister Love Struck.

If his buddies drag the character back home he returns to normal in a few days (1D4+1). On the other hand, if the rest of the player characters demand to know what happened to their buddy, nose around the club, accuse Rosa or others of being vampires, or otherwise make nuisances of themselves, the vampires are likely to feel threatened and take action to protect themselves and their secret lair. This could mean luring the entire group into the VIP lounge where they are attacked or where they are set up to believe some convenient cover story, perhaps one involving smuggling or other illegal activity. Or they might just be scared off, or even hired by the vampires (another scam)

for a job suitable for mercs or that might get them all killed! Then again, Rosa might simply bring the enthralled character upstairs and do away with him (kill him) or decide to continue to turn him into a vampire, in which case he is even more motivated to stay at the Nightcrawlers club. Three bites and he's an undead.

The group's course of action is not exactly clear-cut. Remember that these particular vampires are not evil or killers, most are of Anarchist alignment and just want to live unnoticed. They kill only out of necessity or fear. (Like now?) That is, assuming that the player characters have pieced together the story behind the vampires in the first place, or the vampires (or Rosa) have thrown themselves on their mercy. What should the characters do? Do they reveal the vampires' presence to the authorities, stock up on silver ammo and exterminate the nest on their own, or negotiate a solution with the vampire leader, *Havier Ramos*. (9th level, Secondary Vampire, 142 Hit Points, 135 I.S.P., Anarchist, 99 years old, but looks thirty-something.) Whereby their friend is released, the vampires promise to control themselves better, and they pledge to share valuable information with the player group (drunks often talk too much and vampires have excellent memories and don't get drunk). They could make valuable allies or at least intelligence agents. But can they be trusted and what happens if the player group pushes them too far, or they fear someone in the player group can't be trusted?

Game Master Note: This adventure can be just as effective if the *victim* is an NPC friend of the player characters. Furthermore, maybe the vampires already have information that helps the player group and/or sends them off on another adventure. See *MercTown*, page 104, for details on the Nightcrawlers.

Corrupting the Youth

Hook: On a past mission the player characters were involved in some fierce urban combat. Word got out in MercTown concerning their efforts. While relaxing in the city-state between campaigns they are approached by the leader of the Mega-Monkeys gang. The young Juicer, Tank Robertson, offers the characters 150,000 credits to train the members of his gang in urban warfare. The Juicer paints himself and his gang as well intentioned street vigilantes who are trying to restore peace and order to the streets of their home.

Line: Tank Robertson is tired of being at the bottom of the heap and preyed upon by other, more powerful criminal elements in the Warrens, especially the Red Terror gang. When he heard about the characters' exploits he decided they might be the answer to his band's troubles. Taking the stockpile of credits the gang was saving to get another of their number augmented, he hires the group to teach them urban tactics and fighting techniques.

If the characters take the job it starts out as a routine assignment. They spend the first week or two in the wilderness outside of MercTown running the Mega-Monkeys through their paces. The sole difficulty is a Crazy named Tricky Ricky, a sometimes unpredictable and often insufferable pain in the hindquarters. Nevertheless, the training goes well, the Mega-Monkeys are eager pupils and work hard to learn what the characters have to



teach. The gang and the player characters return to the city streets to continue their training.

Sinker: Our heroes find themselves caught in the middle! Rival gangs have targeted them either as new members of the Mega-Monkeys or hired by the gang to provide extra muscle. First are the threats to "get out of town or else." Then a few hit and run potshots at them from a distance. Then, one or two members of the player group are attacked, beaten and left with the message to "get out or die." There is no reasoning with the rival gangs, and they will NOT believe that the player characters are not true gang members or just hired to better train the Mega-Monkeys. Besides, the latter still makes them "their" enemies. The next attack will be to the death. The group has 24 hours to get out of MercTown.

If questioned about any of this, the Mega-Monkey gang members will continue the charade about wanting to bring peace to the streets of the Warrens and point to these incidents as examples of how bad these gangs are and why the Monkeys needed the group's help. They will even invite the player characters to join them in "extracting some justice." **G.M. Note:** Ironically, using magic or psionic means to sense the truth will show the Mega-Monkeys are being honest. Well, sort of. They want to bring peace to the streets by destroying their gangland competitors and ruling the Warrens (or as much as possible) for themselves. Not exactly how our heroes see things, but close enough to foil Words of Truth and similar examinations.

If the player characters insist the Mega-Monkeys straighten out this *misunderstanding* the street bangers laugh and say something like, "The only things those punks understand is violence. So we're fighting fire with fire. You wanna talk sense into the Greenskins or any of the others, you need to start killing them." End of story.

If the player characters threaten or attack the Mega-Monkeys it only adds them to the list of gangs out for their blood. Our heroes were played for chumps and are paying for it in spades.

To make matters worse, emboldened by their new training, the Mega-Monkeys go on a rampage. To raise credits to fund their war effort against the Greenskins they launch a series of ambushes, muggings and stick-ups against mercenary visitors to the Warrens. They also jump lone members of the Greenskins and other gang members whenever the opportunity arises. Indeed, the Mega-Monkeys have proven to be good students and use their new combat training to maximum effect. Meanwhile, word gets around that the player characters are behind the Mega-Monkeys' new crime wave, which puts them on the outs with the local authorities and respectable mercenary bands. Without sufficient evidence to lay charges, the cops are forced to let the characters go, but the group is considered lowlifes to be watched and never trusted. Commanders of the more reputable units, like Marcus Larsen, will refuse to work with the player characters, though criminal gangs may welcome them as brothers (or rivals), provided they don't run around screaming about how they were tricked by the Mega-Monkeys. Locals who recognize them will also resent, snub and chide them, while other citizens will fear them as villains and run away.

Can things get any worse? Oh yeah, time's running out to get out of town . . . or else.

CSAR - Combat Search & Rescue

Hook: Air Superiority, Inc. takes a contract to fly missions against the enemies of some medium-sized kingdom (the enemy could be the Xiticix, Federation of Magic, Simvan raiding parties, vampires, Pecos Bandits, barbarians, Worm Wraiths, etc.; take your pick).

Line: In the initial stages of the campaign the enemy attacks Air Superiority's base camp, inflicting mass casualties on its ground security forces. To reinforce its battered security platoons the commander is forced to hire *sub-contractors*, i.e. the player characters, who are flown in from MercTown. Then a few days later, lightning strikes twice, and Air Superiority suffers a crippling blow to its air force.

Sinker: With its own special forces squad left decimated and its wing of aircraft at least temporarily out of commission (days, perhaps weeks), the player characters (who are still 100%) are asked to run a quiet *Combat Search & Rescue Operation* to find and rescue downed Air Superiority crewmen and take them back to the (currently) safe rendezvous camp. The problem is they are *on their own* with no support of any kind. Make a mistake and it could be all over.

Thankfully, the enemy thinks they chased the mercs out of their territory, so there are only small, random squads patrolling the area. But in addition to whatever threat the enemy may represent, there is other trouble afoot. Smelling the opportunity to scavenge a heap of parts worth thousands of credits, the **Vultures** gang has deployed to the combat zone. An arm of the gang just happens to be nearby when Air Superiority loses three of its aircraft and the rest of the wing goes limping away. The aptly named "Vultures" rush to the scene to strip and salvage the wreckage. Any survivors they find are captured and held to be sold to slavers (Splugorth or others) as they can't allow witnesses to finger their operation.

Violence is not the only option. The mission priority is to rescue the pilots and crew of the aircraft, not to recover its wreckage or stop looters. If the player characters are sneaky, they can rescue the crew before the high-tech bandits even know their prisoners are missing. The Vultures are likely to send out a small squad to try to track the missing airmen, but their top priority is the salvage and they should give up the search after a couple of hours.

G.M. Note: Feel free to toss in other threats and obstacles. Perhaps an enemy squad, or an unexpected monster(s), or someone else in trouble and in need of their rescue, and so on.

Evil Allies

Hook: This scenario takes place sometime after the Coalition-Tolkeen War (if the G.M. is running a campaign that has not yet seen the conclusion of this bloody conflict it may occur *during* the war). The player characters are either on a job or just out adventuring, hoping they come upon something worth their time and trouble.

Reports of mass slaughter by Coalition soldiers and equal savagery by monstrous minions that once fought on the side of Tolkeen continue to filter back from many of the Tolkeen "hot zones" in Minnesota, Missouri and along the Mississippi River. In retaliation for the *Sorcerers' Revenge* and a hatred for all inhuman life forms, the Coalition is apparently sending Search & Destroy patrols to massacre isolated communities, hamlets, and refugee camps, as well as armed militants, freedom fighters and monsters.

Line: What our heroes come across is a squad of Coalition soldiers apparently handling the "clean up" of a recent slaughter. Signs of combat are strewn about in a hundred yard (meter) diameter. More disturbing is the mound of bodies shot dead by a firing squad. A Coalition transport has been filled with items taken off the slain refugees and might include magic items. It is guarded by only one CS Grunt. The rest of the soldiers are busy pushing and shoving the last 16 refugees, mostly D-Bee women and children, into position for a firing squad. A Military Specialist and two Dog Boys are doing the herding of the people, a pair of CS Grunts, a Coalition Cyborg, and a SAMAS grounded by a missing wing and battle damage (main body has half its M.D.C.) wait to do the shooting. The SAMAS's rail gun is enough to do the job, so the other three soldiers are in it for the *fun*. "I guess this will be the last of target practice for today," chuckles one of the Grunts. (All these particular Coalition characters are evil.)

Sinker: Before the player group can talk amongst themselves, they see a Tolkeen Monster Squad moving up on the Coalition troops and their hostages. This group includes a human Combat Mage, a Witchling, and two Brodkil sporting their own rail guns (each also has a bionic arm with a large, retractable Vibro-Sword). Most unnerving is that this band is aware of the player group. The Witchling snarls at them, but one of the Brodkil gives the group a "thumb's up" signal and the Combat Mage waves for them to join them. It is evident that the quartet plans on attacking the Coalition troops and rescuing the hostages. However, they may not have enough firepower to win.

Do the player characters join the Monster Squad and attack the CS soldiers? Do they attack the monsters in an attempt to

help the CS? Or do they turn a blind eye and move on? Perhaps our heroes hang back, joining the battle when they feel it is necessary. Or perhaps they use the cover of battle to investigate the supply truck.

The old adage, “no good deed goes unpunished,” comes into play against those characters who try to do the right thing.

Helping the CS: The Monster Squad (which is at half strength to begin with) is easily chased away or destroyed. The CS is grateful to the humans who have helped them, but these fanatically dedicated human supremacists will immediately turn on any nonhumans and practitioners of magic in the group. Their big concession will be allowing humans without magic abilities to hit the bricks and flee. Any player character who chooses to stand with their teammates is an *enemy of the States*, and is attacked along with their inhuman, and/or magic wielding buddies.

Helping the Monster Squad: The Monster Squad attacks by leveling magic at the most powerful members of the Coalition squad, while the others attack the CS Grunts and Military Specialist. No care is taken to protect or shield the D-Bee prisoners, and 1D6 people are killed while 2D4 are injured. Once the Coalition troops flee or are destroyed (the monsters would prefer the latter; no prisoners are taken), they ignore the refugees and turn their attention to the cargo inside the truck. One of the squad members tells the player group they appreciate their help, and they can take whatever they want off the dead Coalition soldiers and the terrified refugees, but the contents of the truck is “theirs.” Any resistance to this idea, threats or attacks leveled at the monsters will incite an attack. The Monster Squad will fight to the death. They are looking for a rare and powerful magic artifact said to be among this band of refugees (G.M.’s discretion), only it’s not there. Angry and frustrated, the monsters will turn their ire on the refugees. First they threaten, then they start killing people, one by one. The villains assume one of the refugees knows where the item is hidden and they want it! The people scream, plead and insist they don’t know what they are talking about.

Either scenario puts the player group in the middle of hatred, hot emotions, and deadly violence. Have fun.

Heist of the Century

Hook: In a single night, an unknown person or persons rob both the *Gulf East Trading House* and *Edwards Savings & Loans* at MercTown. The thief made off with 10 million credits between the two establishments. The two victims have joined forces to offer a combined bounty of 100,000 credits for the thief’s capture plus a bonus of 5% of any recovered funds (for a total of 500,000 credits if the whole 10 million is recovered).

Line: With half a million credits on the line just about every merc in the city-state gets in on the hunt. The problem is that nobody knows *who* was responsible. All that anyone can discover is that the thief was a consummate professional because he left no evidence behind. Not even magical or psionic divination is successful in unearthing any clues. Four or five weeks go by and interest in the case dies out.

Sinker: The player characters are approached by an unassuming businessman who introduces himself as *Chester Grey* (2nd level Vagabond). It seems that Chester has learned the

identity of the thief and is willing to give the player characters the information for an equal share of the bounty. If they refuse he simply goes looking for other mercs willing to accept his terms.

According to Chester, the man responsible is *Dalton Piven* (9th level Professional Thief), the owner of the *Café on the Corner* (see *MercTown*, pages 51-53, for details). He claims to have seen the whole thing. The Café on the Corner is known for shady deals and gambling, but bank robbery? Is it coincidence that Dalton Piven hasn’t been seen since the night of the robberies? The café is being run by two of his assistants who genuinely don’t seem to know anything. **Note:** Dalton is a cagey old dog, one who’s been in the game for nearly two decades, and he is responsible for the robberies. Prior to springing his caper the burglar had been planning for months, mapping out his every move and anticipating for contingencies. Knowing that pursuit was inevitable, Dalton left an obvious trail to Kingsdale (he booked passage on a river boat), where he bought a ticket on a Magic Carpet Airships flight to Lazlo. However, the thief never boarded the TW aircraft and is missing. That’s because he disguised himself, doubled back to MercTown’s airport and hopped on a Golden Age Airlines flight to CS Newtown. From there he traveled through Fort El Dorado and Los Alamo before finally settling in El Paso.

To effect the capture of Dalton Piven, the characters must follow along his merry goose chase. All told, this is a trek of more than a thousand miles (1600 km) filled with a multitude of perils (these include wanted criminals from Tolkeen, high-tech bandits, CS patrols, Pecos Raiders and Wild Vampires). And the characters themselves are being tailed.

If the characters manage to track Piven down in El Paso, he will attempt to flee. Remember that he’s a slippery individual who plans for every eventuality. Dalton always has an escape route close at hand. Given the chance, he’ll flee and head for Ciudad Juarez and, if necessary, into Mexico. If the player characters do capture Piven, he’ll try to cut a deal. All he has left of the loot on his person is 1 million credits, the rest he claims to have lost or spent in MercTown, Kingsdale, Newtown, Fort El Dorado and Los Alamo. He offers to turn over the entire million in return for his freedom as well as their word that they won’t reveal his location. If that isn’t enough to whet their appetites he tells them about another bank heist he has all mapped out in Ciudad Juarez worth at least 14 million. The catch is he needs a group like them to pull it off. Of course, if anything goes wrong, they’ll be hunted by the law. Otherwise, he swears to take the information to the grave, or at least until he gets the chance to escape from prison. (Dalton can make good on his claim, he has an M.E. attribute of 19 and is a major psychic with the power of Mind Block.)

What should the characters do? If they refuse Dalton’s bribe and return him to MercTown, all they’ll get is 150,000 credits (the bounty plus 5% of the million recovered). On the other hand, if they cut the thief loose, and rob another bank . . .

Cleaning up the Streets

Hook: Everyone is sick of the criminal antics of the *Cyber Street Gang*. (See *MercTown*, pages 89-90.) The Black Market, Ravenshome Guild, various merc outfits and the Defenders all



want these punks gone. Where others merely complain, Boss Dutcher has taken action. He gets the tacit approval of the Ravenshome Guild to hire a group of “outsiders” to put a hit on the gang, exterminating each and every last one of them like the vermin they are. The job: 30,000 credits per gang member, with 250,000 credits on the heads of each of the top four leaders. The entire job should pull down a cool 2.7 million credits. If everything goes smooth, Boss Dutcher will round the money up to an even three million. To make things even easier, the gang has been “set up” to meet at a particular location to parlay a deal with a notorious smuggler to liquidate the gang’s latest hot goods. It should be like shooting fish in a barrel.

Line: Our player characters are the “outside” team hired to do the job. (Or are part of a larger team of mercs or adventurers, the rest being low level NPCs; no more than a dozen.)

Sinker: Somebody has tipped off the Cyber Street Gang, so Savage Razortooth and his boys know it is an ambush and they are ready for trouble. All of them are armed and armored to the teeth, and have brought a few “associates” with them to provide some extra muscle. Those associates include Brock “Widow Maker” Millender, a 5th level Cold Blooded, “Iron Fist” Hayward, a 6th level Combat Cyborg, Ricardo “the Lion” Ortez, a 5th level Ley Line Walker, and Lydia “Sister Death” Kriffel, a 6th level Brodkil with a bionic hand and arm (concealed hand and arm weapons) and brain implants that have given her the psi-powers of Psychic Omni-Sight (15), Telemechanics (10), Telekinesis (3+), Telekinetic Leap (8), Telekinetic Punch (6), Levitation (2+), Mind Block (4) and Object Read (6). The monstrous Sister Death has 137 I.S.P., is reputed to originate from Germany, and is rumored to have been the creation of the mysterious *Angel of Death* operating out of Poland. Sister Death ar-

rived to North America via an accident involving a Rift, and has made a living killing, raiding and robbing throughout the south for the last three years. There is a bounty of 750,000 credits on her head offered by the Coalition State of Arkansas/El Dorado. She had a fling with gang leader, Razortooth, and still has a thing for this bad boy. All four “associates” are evil. All have a past with the Cyber Street Gang. All have a hatred for the Black Market (or Boss Dutcher). And all enjoy killing and striking fear into others. Their involvement, this time, is a favor to their gangland buddies. Should the gang come out on top of this rumble, it will make them even more feared and powerful on the streets of the Warrens than ever before. They want to send a message to Boss Dutcher and everyone else, not to mess with the Cyber Street Gang, and that means the battle will be brutal and to the death.

Player Characters, be advised that since the Cyber Street Gang wants to make a point, a tactical retreat will not be good enough to escape their wrath. The gang will pursue and hunt down anyone identified as having participated in the “set up.” Once found, they will be slain. One’s only hope for survival is to defeat the gang leaders and their outside helpers. In this instance, “defeat” means to destroy them or be destroyed. The only other alternative is to flee MercTown and hope one never comes face to face with the extra help out in the field of combat (they are mercs and bandits, after all).

Strike Breakers

Hook: The time for contract negotiations rolls around at industry giant, *Allen Foods*. Fed up with the MercTown Labor Union and its practices, the owner, Matthew Allen, demands that his employees quit the union. As a result, the workers strike.

Line: During the strike, Allen Foods hires temporary replacements so he doesn’t have to shut down operations. The picket lines try to block the replacements from getting to the factory. To stop them, Allen hires mercenaries (including the player characters) as extra security, offering 300 credits per day for what amounts to standing around, looking tough, and occasionally handling a little trouble.

Sinker: The MercTown Labor Union is owned through and through by the Black Market. Boss Dutcher refuses to let any unionized business slip from his grasp, not Allen Foods, not *anyone!* To break the strike he calls in his own henchmen, including the Mega-Monkeys gang. These gangsters mingle among the workers, getting them riled up to the point of violence – taking swings at the security guards, throwing rocks and debris, and acts of vandalism. As tempers rage on the picket line, violence erupts as picketers start to tip over trucks, set them on fire and throw Molotov cocktails. There are even some who have Mega-Damage firearms and Vibro-Blades. At its worst, a few security guards are dragged into the angry crowd and the player characters are expected to rush in and save them from an uncertain fate. To make matters worse, they are instructed to use *measured force* and not actually kill anybody. It will be all that our heroes can do to simply stay alive on the picket line. This will continue until the union is broken or Allen Foods gives in.

Game Master Note: In the end, Matthew Allen caves in to the bullying tactics, violence and escalating losses orchestrated by



the Black Market behind the scenes. He signs a favorable contract with the union and brings an end to the need for the characters' service. However, over the previous week or two of protests and violence, the player group – or individuals within the group – are likely to have made enemies among the Mega-Monkeys, the Black Market and select workers, especially if they accidentally killed or severely injured anybody. This may lead to future incidents (and adventures).

What about Bob?

Hook: The player characters are relaxing in MercTown after a mission. During the course of the evening, an NPC friend or associate of the player characters bumps into a large, tattoo-covered Ogre and a brief scuffle ensues.

Line: The Ogre is no ordinary merc or street tough, but a member of the Atlantis-sponsored gang **Mephisto's Horsemen**. Unwilling to let even such a minor slight go unpunished, the Horsemen kidnap the clumsy character.

Sinker: A little investigation reveals their friend has already been shipped off to the slave market of Splynn! If they act quickly, they should be able to catch up with the slavers within 6-12 hours. What happens next depends on the group.

They can try to *buy* their friend back (will cost 1D4x100,000 credits), quietly steal him from the slavers (who are not likely to spend much if any time and resources tracking down ONE escaped slave), or attack the outfit and take their friend by force. Should the heroes decide to rescue ALL the slaves, they can

count on a fight to the finish. If any slavers escape, they can expect some sort of retribution in the future. **Note:** Depending on luck and exactly how the G.M. plays out the confrontation, if our heroes aren't careful, they may end up captured and sold as slaves themselves. This could be an opportunity to launch an adventure campaign in Atlantis, or just about anywhere else depending on who they are sold to (as a lot) and where their owner takes them (South America, Europe, Asia, the Three Galaxies, etc.).

Freeing the Press

Hook: A staff reporter from Warhawk Magazine has been taken captive. *Frederick Laramey* (6th level Rogue Scholar) was on assignment in the Magic Zone when he went missing. The reporter was trying to put together a piece on the fabled *City of Brass*, home of the Federation of Magic, for the magazine. It was to be an expose piece on the True Federation, its foreign affairs, the city's layout and military forces, and similar data. Just as he was making ready to sneak out, he was discovered and taken prisoner by a combined patrol of humans and demons.

Line: Warhawk Magazine's owner and editor-in-chief, *Fritz Habicht*, has put up a *one million credit reward* for the rescue of his employee and friend. There's just one catch. As a condition of the rescue contract, Fritz Habicht demands to tag along. Fritz has never been very far into the Magic Zone, certainly never to the City of Brass. He wants to accompany the mission for several reasons that include ensuring its successful completion, to cover the rescue story for his magazine, and because he wants to see the wondrous City of Brass firsthand.

Sinker: Having Fritz along for the ride doesn't present any great hardship, but he is something of a notorious figure (if not outright famous). That means keeping him safe is very important. Besides, if Fritz is captured or killed, the mercs won't get paid. The journalist has had combat experience before turning to journalism, and is also a student of military history, so he is quick to offer advice or a plan of action. However, he leaves the final decision on tactical matters to the mission commander. **Note:** If the player characters do well, their being *featured* in Warhawk Magazine can only enhance the characters' reputation as mercenaries, likely leading to more work and higher pay. This is a HUGE career opportunity.

The rescue will not be an easy mission. Alistair Dunscon's hidden City of Brass is populated by powerful sorcerers, Shadow Beasts, Splugorth minions, demons and the undead. The last thing these brigands want is to be featured in a magazine article that will be circulated across the continent. Which is why Lord Dunscon ordered that Frederick Laramey be taken captive and imprisoned in the deepest holding cells located in the (magically rebuilt) Mammoth Cave. To spring Laramey, the player characters will have to make their way through the Magic Zone to the city's location, a task made easier by the presence of Devil Rider Psi-Stalker guides (old friends of Habicht's). Then they will have to slip by patrols of Lord Dunscon's henchmen, including Shadow Beasts, Gargoyles, Mystic Knights and all manner of practitioners of magic (including Witches and Necromancers) to make their way into the city itself. Stealth, cunning, trickery and deception can go a long way to avoid combat along the way. After that the characters must find Frederick Laramey,

break him out of confinement and escape back to the safety of MercTown. Those last two parts will be the most dangerous and tricky.

Race for the Case

Hook: A nervous, distressed representative of a major corporation (Northern Gun, Wellington Industries, MageFire, GAW, etc.) approaches the player characters to do a job. The corporate rep won't reveal any details until they accept but does offer them a million credits in payment.

Line: On his way home from work one night, the executive had stopped to pick up his dry cleaning in the Spokes at MercTown. In the few moments he was gone, *Delix "Speed Demon" Va'Artii* (4th level City Rat) stole the man's sports hover car. More importantly, he also inadvertently stole the *briefcase* in the back seat, a case that held schematics of a brand new, experimental weapon design. The corporation wants it back before one of its competitors gets their hands on it. (The design could be worth tens of millions to another arms manufacturer.)

Sinker: The executive who lost the design wastes no time and without even waiting for endorsement from his superiors, he finds the first group of mercs he can (the player characters) not fifteen minutes after discovering the theft. He provides them with a description of the car thief (a D'norr Devilman), the make of the car and its license plate number. Even if the heroes respond immediately, grabbing a car and giving chase, cornering the Speed Demon is not a simple matter.

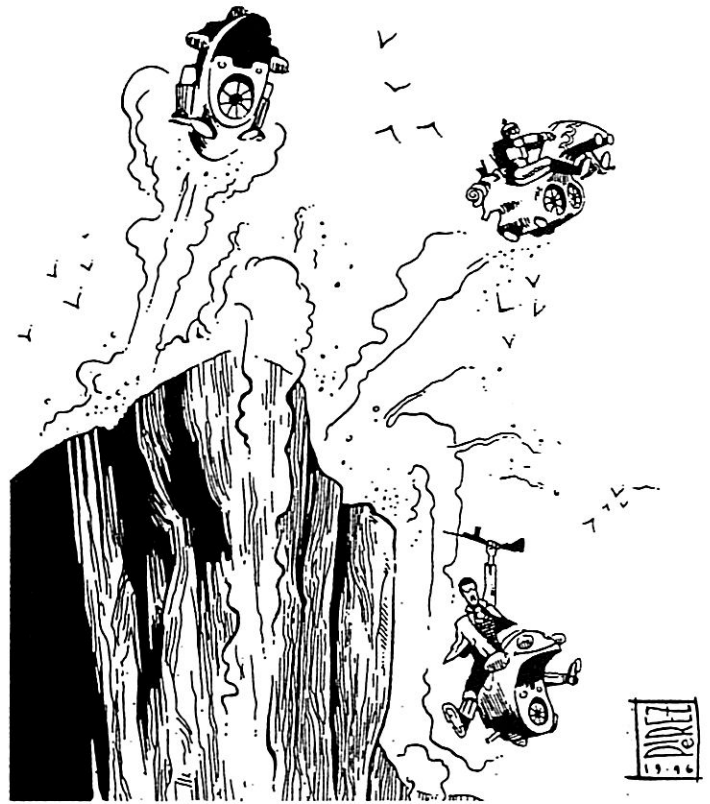
Finding Delix isn't difficult, but catching him is another story. The car thief doesn't expect anyone to come looking for the stolen hover car for at least a couple of hours (which is how long it takes going through official channels). As a result, he's cruising through the streets of the Warrens enjoying the chance to drive a luxury sports vehicle. However, when the characters try to force him to pull over, stop the car or otherwise stop Delix, he "burns rubber" to get away. As good as his nickname, the "Speed Demon," the thief is an accomplished driver with a *Pilot: Hovercraft* skill of 85%. He tears away at the vehicle's top speed, which is an impressive 180 mph (288 km; remember, it is a sports hover car). Delix leads pursuers on an implausible car chase through streets of the Warrens, the Spokes, and Dockside, executing a series of tricky maneuvers like bootleg turns, sudden braking and squeezing down impossibly tight alleys at top speed.

G.M. Note: For a taste of something different, G.M.s should play out the car chase and possibly even play it for laughs. Keep in mind that pacing is the key to making this a memorable and worthwhile experience for the characters. Don't waste time on needlessly detailed explanations or descriptions and try to keep dice rolling to a minimum. The focus should be on the action, and the car chase itself this should be kept fast-paced. Don't give the characters much time to make decisions or explain their

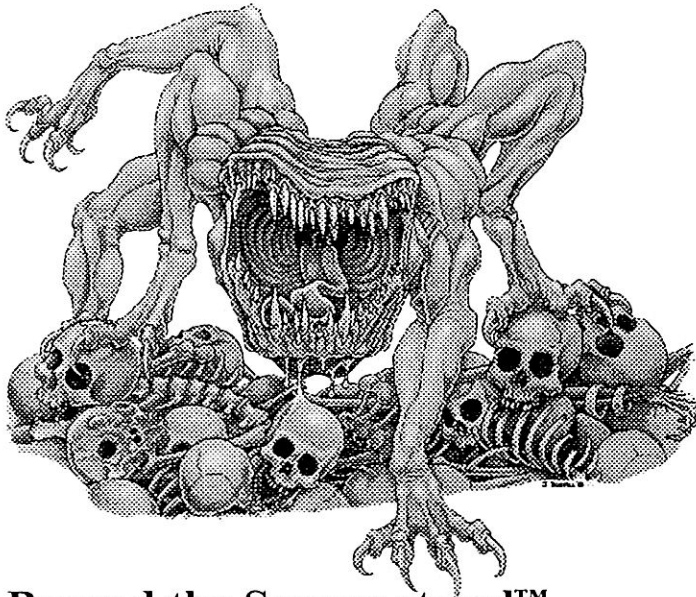
actions, don't let them pause for more than a few seconds before carrying on the running description of the chase. No matter how close the characters get, Delix should pull away and keep one step ahead. With so much heat on his tail, Delix retreats to a deserted area of Dockside, dumps the vehicle and flees, taking the car's radio and all the obvious loose valuables. Whether that includes the briefcase or not is up to the G.M. and may depend on how much time he has before the mercs are on his back.

Delix holes up and waits for things to blow over before returning to the Booster Boys.

In the meantime, the executive reports the theft to his superiors. They panic. The case being recovered by freelance mercs is as bad as its being in the hands of thieves. After all, soldiers of fortune change allegiances at the drop of a credit and they can't be trusted to return the case if they get it! At least that's their irrational fear. Instead, the company hires its own operatives, Blackman Intelligence Resources and a team of accredited bounty hunters, to recover the case. This makes recovering (and hanging onto) the briefcase a *race* against who finds it first and who turns it in for the reward.



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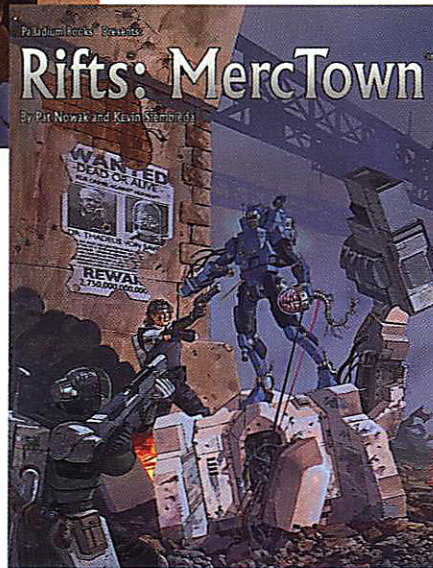
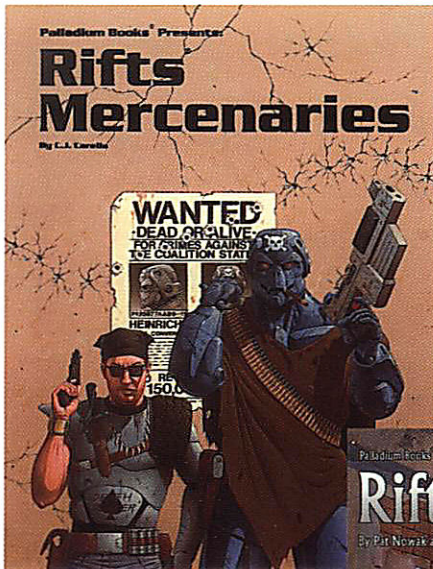
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