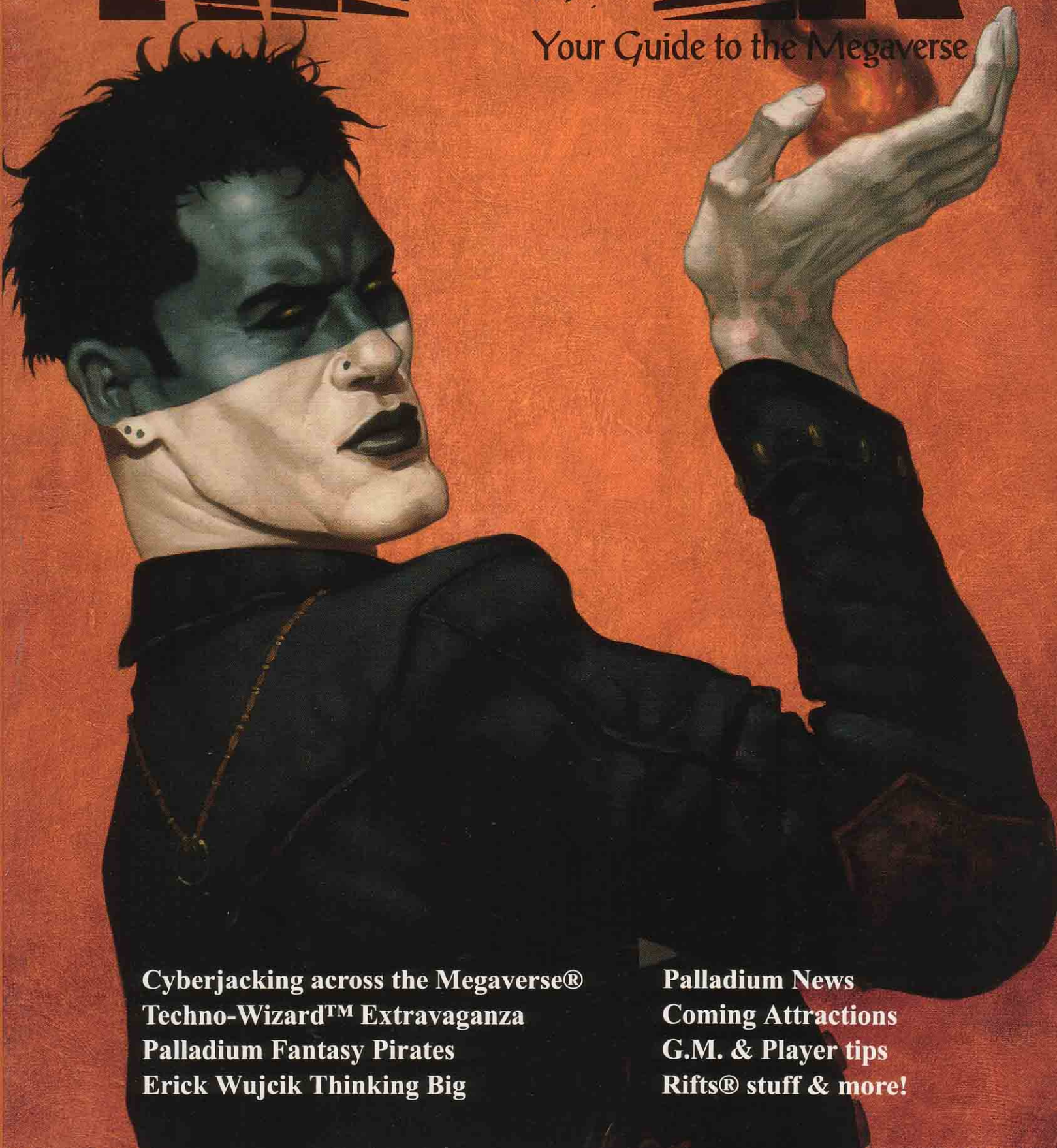


Palladium Books® Presents:

THE

RIFTER™

Your Guide to the Megaverse



Cyberjacking across the Megaverse®
Techno-Wizard™ Extravaganza
Palladium Fantasy Pirates
Erick Wujcik Thinking Big

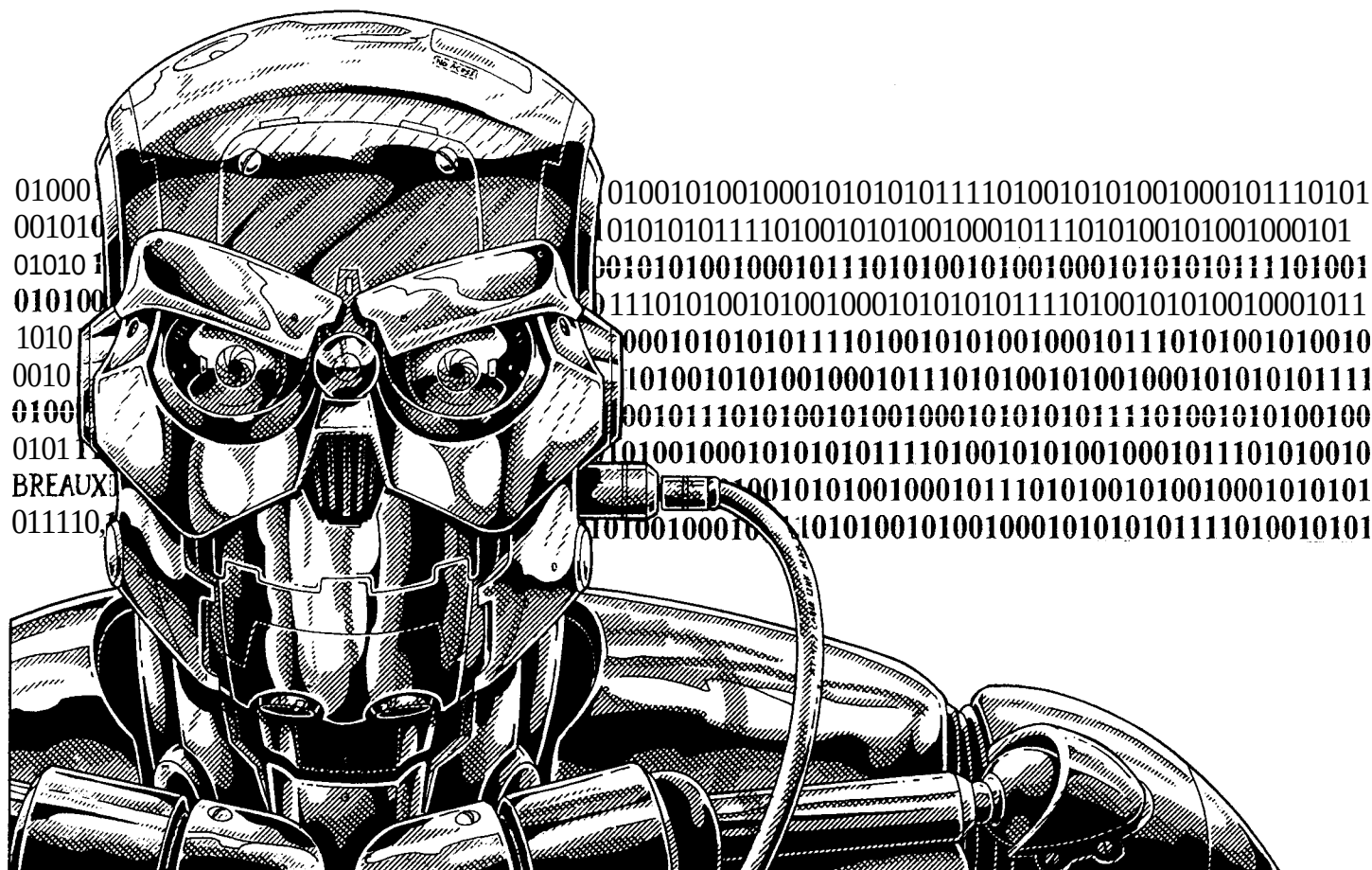
Palladium News
Coming Attractions
G.M. & Player tips
Rifts® stuff & more!

Warning!

Violence and the Supernatural

The fictional **World of Rifts®** is violent, deadly and filled with supernatural monsters. Other dimensional beings, often referred to as "demons," torment, stalk and prey on humans. Other alien life forms, monsters, gods and demigod, as well as magic, insanity, and war are all elements in this book.

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



The Rifter™ Number Two

A sourcebook, G.M. & Player's guide and sourcebook for Rifts®
and the entire Palladium Books® Megaverse®!

Special Thanks to all The Rifter contributors and you guys and gals who support our efforts. Our apologies to anybody who got accidentally left out or their name misspelled.

Second Printing — August, 1999

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The Rifter™ #2 RPG sourcebook series is published by Palladium Books Inc., 12455 Universal Drive, Taylor, MI 48180. Printed in the USA.

Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTERTM #2

BRANDT - 97

RPG Guide and Megaverse® Sourcebook

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

Supervising Coordinator & Typesetting:

Maryann Siembieda

Contributing Writers: **Wayne Breaux Jr.**

James M.G. Cannon

David Haendler

Shawn Merrow

William Muench

Jason Richards

Kevin Siembieda

Mark Sumimoto

Steve Trustrum

Erick Wujcik

Knights of the Dinner Table: **Jolly Blackburn**

Contributing Editors:

Alex Marciniszyn

Jim Osten

Julius Rosenstein

Cover Painting: **Brom**

Interior Artists:

Apollo Okamura

Kent Buries

Wayne Breaux Jr.

Ramon Perez Jr.

Kevin Long

John Zeleznik

Matthew Plog

Cover Logo Design: **Steve Edwards**

Credits Page Logo: **Niklas Brandt**

Keylining: **Kevin Siembieda**

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

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Publisher and author Kevin Siembieda chats about *The Rifter*, keeping costs down, and "weird" rumors.

Page 8 — Thinking Big

Game Designer and consummate Game Master, **Erick Wu-jik**, talks about long-running RPG campaigns, citing personal experiences, and offering suggestions and ideas for role-playing expansive adventures.

Page 11 — Knights of the Dinner Table™

The indomitable Jolly Blackburn brings us more of the hilarious KoDT misadventures. This time around *Bob* takes a shot at being the Game Master.

Hey don't forget, the KoDT comic book is available from **Kenzer & Company**, 1935 S. Plum Grove Rd. Suite 194, Palatine, IL 60067.

Page 13 — Palladium News, Info, & Coming Attractions

Kevin Siembieda covers a few newsworthy items and offers more data about *Heroes Unlimited*, 2nd Edition, and coming attraction for *Skryppers™*, the two upcoming *Rifts® Russia* world books, and other projects.

Page 18 — The Rifts® Connection

Author & Publisher, Kevin Siembieda, explains how timelines, people, and occurrences in *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Beyond the Supernatural™* and other Palladium world settings tie together in *Rifts*.

Page 19 — The Imp, Supernatural Rumormonger

William Muench gives us an interesting perspective on the imp. Optional stuff suitable for *Rifts®*, *BTS™*, *Nightbane™*, *Palladium Fantasy* or any Palladium game.

Page 21 — Palladium Pirates

Shawn Merrow offers some optional rules and suggestions for playing pirates in the *Palladium Fantasy RPG®* — plus Hook, Line & Sinker™ adventures.

Page 27 — Hacking, Cyberjacking, & Supernatural Data Theft Across the Megaverse®

Wayne Breaux Jr., gives us a tour de force presentation with characters, rules, stats, information and fun stuff for use in *Rifts®*, *Heroes Unlimited™ 2nd Ed.*, *Nightbane®*, *BTS™* and across the Megaverse®. Official rules for optional use in any or all of these games. Written & illustrated by Wayne Breaux Jr.

Page 55 — Wormwood™: The Blood Shaman

Steven **Trustum** presents a delightfully gross and icky optional O.C.C. and magic for a new Wormwood character he calls, The Blood Shaman. Art by newcomer Matthew **Plog**.

Page 66 — Rifts®: Techno-Wizard Extravaganza

Mark **Sumimoto** and Jason Richards combine to offer over 30 pages of breathtaking insight and optional TW rules, TW magic and **devices!**

Page 102 — Rifts®: The Siege Against Tolkeen

The next few chapters of David Haendler's *Rifts®* saga. Warning: This story has strong language and violence.

Page 107 — The Hammer of The Forge

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

The Cover

The cover painting is entitled "Michael," by renowned artist, **Brom**. If I recall correctly, it has appeared elsewhere in some collectible card game or another. We appreciate Brom joining in *The Rifter™* fun by letting us reprint this striking piece. We thought it was moody and hinted at the magical elements of this issue. The cover is copyright © Brom, all rights reserved.

Optional and Unofficial Rules & Source Material

Please note that the vast majority of rules, tables, characters, equipment, adventures and stories are "optional" or "alternative" things one can include in his campaign or enjoy reading. They are not "official" to the main games or world settings. For example, the story, *Siege Against Tolkeen*, is likely to be very different than Siembieda's "official" world book(s) when it comes out. As for optional tables and adventures, if they sound cool or fun, use them. If they sound funky or inappropriate for your **game**, ignore them.

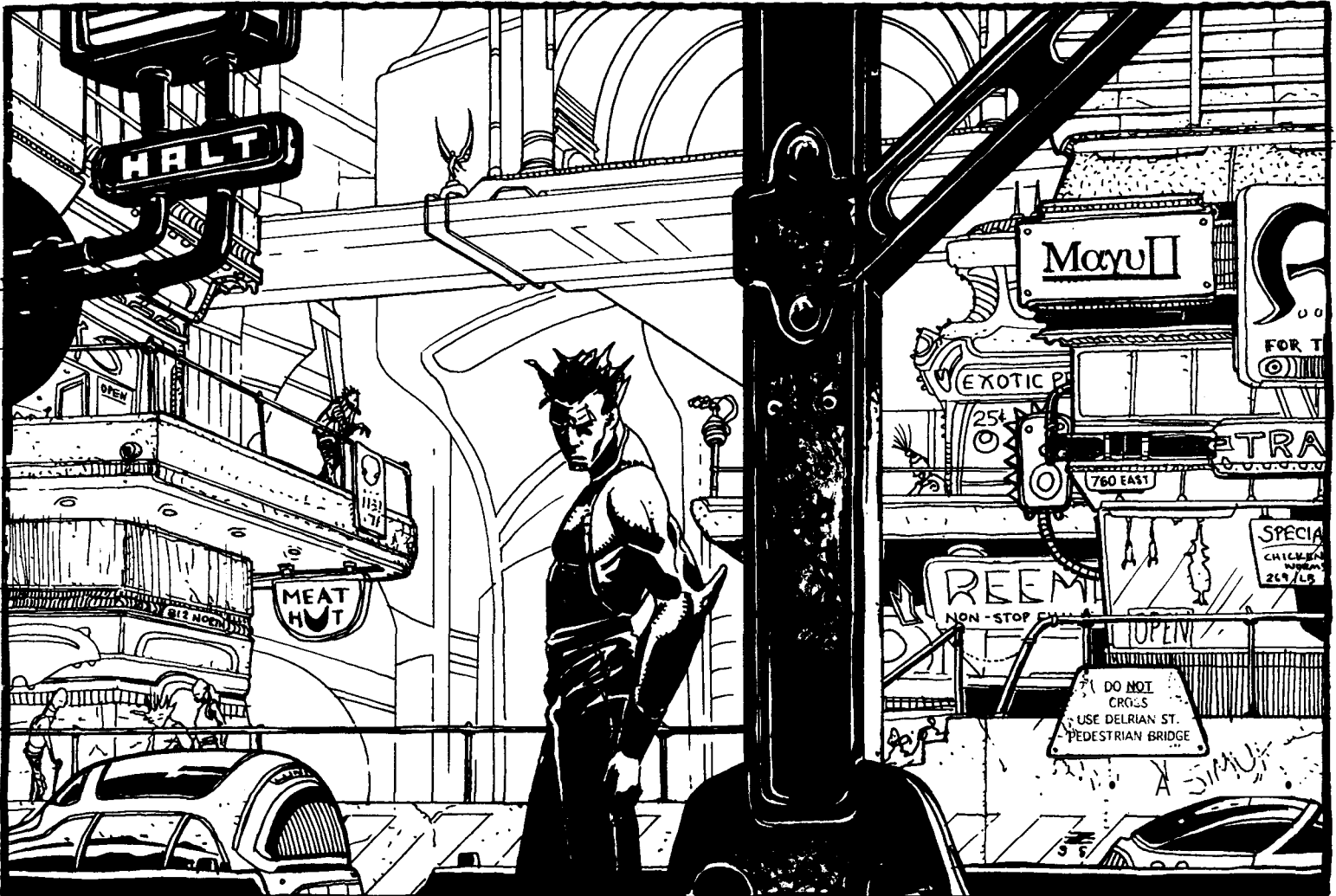
All the material in *The Rifter™* has been included for two reasons: One, because we thought it was imaginative and fun, and **two**, we thought it would stimulate your imagination with fun stuff that you can use (if you want) or which might inspire you to create your own wonders.

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Coming Next Issue ...

- Marital Arts for *Ninjas & Superspies*
- *Mystic China*™ and martial arts conversions for *Rifts*® plus new powers and optional tables.
- Material for the *Palladium Fantasy RPG*
- Magic & magic items for *Palladium Fantasy* & other settings.
- The Next Chapter of the Hammer of the **Forge**.
- The continuing saga of *Siege Against Tolkeen*.
- More *Knights of the Dinner Table*.
- More words of wisdom from Erick *Wujcik*.
- The latest news and developments at Palladium.
- Source material for the *Palladium Megaverse*®.
- Fun and surprises.

A Scene From *Skraypers*™



From Behind the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Welcome to the second issue of *The Rifter*[™]. Within its pages you'll find official and unofficial fan works for **Rifts**[®], **Ninjas & Superspies**[™], **Heroes Unlimited**[™], **Nightbane**[®] and lots of other good stuff. Somehow, this issue turned into the special "magic" issue of **The Rifter**[™], with **Techno-Wizardry**, Shaman magic, optional spells and magic items, **Cyber-Jacking**, and other good stuff. Brom obliged us with a cool cover, and a number of new artists (along with some of the usual guys) have contributed to this issue. Personally, I think this issue is even better than the first.

The first issue is a hit!

The first issue of **The Rifter** is a **bonafide** hit, selling over 7,000 copies to date and making at least one distributor's top selling list. Meanwhile, the number of subscribers is at around 600 and growing.

We honestly weren't sure how people would respond to the idea of something as different as *The Rifter*[™], so we are thrilled that it has met with such an overwhelmingly positive response.

We plan on having a lot of fun with this **sourcebook** series and experiment with all kinds of fun and (hopefully) interesting material in future issues. So read on, let us know what you think, send in your ideas for possible publication and enjoy.

Some hot topics

I'd like to respond to a couple of things that seem to be on the minds of Palladium fans.

How can Palladium produce a book the size and quality of *The Rifter*[™] and keep the price at eight dollars?

The answer is simple — because we want to and we aren't making much money on it.

As Palladium advertised before issue one hit the shelves, we are doing **The Rifter**[™] for "our fans" and "role-playing gamers" in general. The Palladium staff and I were getting sick and tired of talk about role-playing games dying (being replaced by card games, computer games, etc. — which is ridiculous), as well as comments from literally thousands of Palladium gamers *begging* us for a magazine, more products for our "entire" product line, and groaning about no place (other than on-line) to share their thoughts. We also noted that there didn't seem to be a print forum that focused on the **really** "fun things" about role-playing. We tried to design **The Rifter**[™] to, at least attempt to, satisfy all of these things, and it looks like we're meeting with some measure of success.

Maryann and I made a conscious decision to deliberately keep the price as low as we could without actually losing money — \$7.95 is that current price point.

One reason we can maintain this low price is that half the book contains the contributions of **fans**, semi-professionals and people like myself, **Erick Wujcik**, **Wayne Breaux Jr.**, **Wayne**



Smith, and Jolly **Blackburn** willing to produce material for a good cause at comparatively low pay. The cost for text and art is about one third what Palladium normally pays for its regular **sourcebooks**.

Another reason is that we have such a strong presence in the role-playing market that **The Rifter™** is selling in large enough quantities to keep it afloat. Generally the larger the press run, the less expensive the printing cost too. Our strong sales and high press runs is how Palladium can keep the cost of all its **RPG** books lower than most of its competitors. Even so, we need to sell approximately 7000 copies of **The Rifter™** to break even. On the other hand, we anticipate sales to reach 10,000 copies or more per issue very quickly. As long as we cover our expenses (including paying contributors) **we're** happy.

Killing Weird Rumors

Kevin Siembieda is blind! Wrong!! Apparently, our press release about my laser eye surgery got twisted, and a fan posted on the Internet that he had heard I was blind. Sheesh. Here's what happened.

On December 20, 1997, I had "elective" laser surgery to correct my nearsighted vision. I was tired of my heavy glasses and poor vision. Having heard good things about laser surgery, I decided to take the plunge. Unfortunately, I have sensitive eyes, so I had a rather severe reaction and my eyes took a while to heal well enough to work. I lost about six weeks of work because, ironically, while my long-distance vision is vastly improved, my near-vision was terrible. When my vision improved enough to get back to work, I needed to put in shorter hours (5-6 instead of my usual 10-16). This healing process delayed **Heroes Unlimited™**, the **Old Kingdom (fantasy)** books, and some of our other titles, but I'm pretty much up and running at about 90% and hope to get back on schedule (or close to it). Hey, **The Rifter #2** came out on schedule, and as of this writing (March 12th), I'm busy finishing **Skraypers™** and working on **Rifts® Warlords of Russia**.

As for my **vision**, ironically I now seem to be "far" sighted, and will probably have to wear reading glasses when I'm writing, editing and doing artwork. Oh well, it was worth a shot, and I'm told my vision may still improve a bit as my eyes continue to heal.

Here's a stupid rumor: **Kevin Siembieda has left Palladium Books and is working at a plastics factory.** I don't think so.

This one originates from a press release that goes back to April, 1996, when we announced that editor **Kevin Kirsten** — that's "Kirsten," not Siembieda — left Palladium. Just so you guys know, I started Palladium, I **own** the company, I love what I do, and I have no intention of leaving or selling the company. I plan on writing role-playing games till I drop dead at the ripe **old age of 210**.

Palladium is being bought by Wizards of the Coast. Wrong again. Like I said, we love what we do, we're good at it, making money (sales are up) and we have no intention of selling to WoTC or anybody else. In fact, WoTC has never even contacted me about selling Palladium. The flip side to this rumor is

that Palladium is doing so well that "we" plan on buying other companies, like *White Wolf*, which isn't true either. I don't know who comes up with this crazy stuff. By the way, I think *White Wolf* will be around for quite sometime.

Palladium isn't going to Gen Con® because we hate WoTC. Palladium Books had a legal dispute with WoTC way back in the early 1990s, but that matter was resolved (no I'm not going to rehash it), and both companies have moved on. We are not **participating** in Gen Con for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that we don't believe it's worth our time and expense (see news for more details).

Till next issue ...

Kevin Siembieda
President, Palladium Books Inc.



Thinking Big



By Erick Wujcik

Last time around, on the subject of names and naming, I told you about some of my early errors, about how I made the mistake of "borrowing" names instead of inventing 'em. I mentioned that the names I'd ripped off from books, movies, television, etc., came back to bite me long after they were introduced into my role-playing campaigns.

If you read that and thought, "no problem here, my campaigns never really last," this column is for you.

This where I'd like to talk about thinking big, about stretching your imagination, and how that can help you create a role-playing campaign that will last and last.

Bopping back to something else I mentioned back in the last issue of *Rifter*, you may recall that I described the "Circle of Twelve Mages," and the "Circle of Twelve Artifacts," as stuff from the first **Dragonwright** Campaign.

Remember, that campaign is now over twenty years old. The same story, the same universe. Heck, we've even got some of the same player characters. What is even more amazing is that the Dragonwright Campaign was started by a pretty dumb Game Master. As I look back on what kind of Game Master I was twenty years ago, that guy looks pretty clueless. He (the old me) had never run a role-playing campaign of any kind, wasn't all that good a Game Master, and made a heck of a lot of mistakes.

Yet in one all-too-crucial way, I was a **friggin' genius**.

Because I thought big.

Thinking big was a lucky accident, the coincidence of starting in on role-playing and Game Mastering right in the middle of some pretty exciting computer science classes. Back in those days (circa 1978), the latest thing in systems engineering was something called "Top-Down Design." As applied to computer programming, the idea was to conceptualize the problem, whatever it was, in the most general way possible, and then to break it down into manageable pieces, one level of implementation at a time. That way, in theory, you could start with a really tough job (like designing a computer operating system), break it down into pieces (usually something like input, processing and output), and then break each of those pieces down into even smaller pieces.

For a visual image of "Top-Down" try to picture an organizational chart. You know, the kind with the little boxes and lines, with the "President" at the top level, then the various "Vice Presidents" at the second level, with progressively more little boxes as you go down through the "tree." And at the bottom of the chart would be the "Workers," the people who actually performed useful **functions**.

In computer programming you can use pretty much the same chart, the same visuals. However, instead of the boxes containing the titles of people, each box would describe some function of the computer program.

As I said, at the time I was pretty involved in this whole new way of doing things, because of my computer programming classes.

So it wasn't much of a leap for me to apply exactly the same technique when it came to building my first big role-playing campaign, the monster that came to be known as "Dragonwright."

Before the Big Ideas Hit

By the time I got around to designing the Dragonwright campaign, I had already built three "dungeons."

The first one, "**KiddieDungeon**," (which was, by the way, Kevin Siembieda's very first encounter with role-playing), wasn't much more than a collection of rooms stocked with monsters and treasures. Fun, in a limited way, but with nothing to keep the player characters interested for more than a couple of hours of killing and figuring out puzzles.

By the time I got to my third dungeon, "Napalm's," my designs were considerably more complex. There were dozens of levels, thousands of rooms, and whole categories of monsters. Better yet, the dungeon actually made sense (well, not really, but as much sense as you'll find in most fantasy novels). Different areas of Napalm's were controlled by the worshippers of competing gods, each charged with protecting various shrines, treasure rooms and artifacts.

Also, Napalm's was enormous. Using the most detailed graph paper I could find, and a selection of colored pencils to represent all sorts of detail, I wrote up hundreds and hundreds of detailed descriptions. Plus mazes, traps and countless interesting magical items.

It was around that time that I figured out one big problem.

Napalm's was really too big.

Oh, it was fun. For about half a year people would send their player characters **tromping** into Napalm's, happily mapping and exploring, fighting and running, and grabbing all sorts of interesting loot (those happy few who **survived**—this was back in my days as a "killer" Game Master).

However, it started to become obvious, to me at least, that a lot of the important stuff in Napalm's was never going to be discovered. It took hours and hours for the players to fight their way in, follow up on a few obscure clues, and then fight their way out.

Also, after a solid six months of work, as the designer, I was nowhere near finishing Napalm's. Worse, it seemed like the more I built, the less chance there was that of any of the player characters actually finding the cool stuff I was inventing.

In other words, Napalm's **wasn't** all that much fun.

It was around this time that I had my epiphany.

Why, I thought to myself, spend all this time designing dungeon levels, forcing the players to wander around for hours, when I could just put the interesting stuff right in front of them?

My favorite authors didn't waste pages and pages describing the boring parts. No, they'd just say something like "after two weeks of searching," or "he crawled for hours," and then jump right into the good stuff. Why couldn't I do the same thing?

Instead of forcing the players to march through hallway after hallway, seeking the one real treasure room among the dozens of fakes, I could just skip ahead. Better yet, instead of drawing all those dozens of rooms, I could just concentrate on the fun part, just on designing the one room.

Whew! What a relief!

Right away I started moving stuff around in **Napalm's**. Cool stuff from deep inside was moved right into the path of the oncoming player characters.

Suddenly the role-playing got a lot more interesting, and a lot more fun. Plus, it was easier for me...

Thinking Big for the First Time

Napalm's, as I've described it, and in many other ways, was a beautiful learning experience. By trial and error I'd managed to figure out a lot of what made role-playing interesting, and also what could make it deadly dull.

I had learned that people liked following a chain of events, that they were more involved in the experience of the role-playing if they felt like every detail might be part of a bigger picture. In my own particular version of a fantasy world, that meant understanding the politics behind different gods and the religions that worship them (you thought it was a coincidence that I wrote the Gods section of *Dragons & Gods*?).

However, trying to work out all the details in a campaign, in advance, was looking to be a pretty futile exercise.

After all, what was the point of designing a really cool room if no one was likely to **find** it? Wouldn't it be better to just design the stuff that was right in front of the player characters?

That was it. That was the trick.

I needed to think big, but I also needed to avoid wasting time on details that weren't important.

Which brought me back to the scheduling part of the philosophy of Top-Down.

You see, it's the job of a systems analyst to break apart a big problem, to separate it into manageable chunks, and then to assign the different parts of the problem to different computer programmers. Big projects usually require time scheduling as well, so that different parts are tackled at different times in the development schedule.

That way of looking at things can be translated into role-playing terms.

Think of the player character group as a set of problem solvers. Whatever the point of the overall role-playing campaign, it's up to the player characters to meet the challenge, and to solve the problem.

Obviously, the player characters aren't going to be able to solve everything at once, no more than a computer programmer can write an entire operating system in one sitting. They need to tackle the problem one step at a time.

In the case of the **Dragonwright** Campaign, in order to succeed, the player characters had to collect all the scattered objects that made up the "Circle of Twelve Artifacts."

Now, since I was thinking big, back when I first created the Dragonwright Campaign, I already knew the purpose of the Circle of Twelve Artifacts (sorry, I can't include that information here, since my players haven't figured it out yet). Back then I didn't even know what the artifacts looked like, what their names might be, or much of anything else.

I just knew that there would have to be a Circle of Twelve Artifacts, that there would be twelve of 'em (duh!), and that they had all be scattered, hidden, and locked away, thousands of years before the player characters came on the scene.

Since each of the twelve artifacts was of major importance, I figured I'd have to work up, basically, twelve different "quests." Yes, I had to work up the first one, in detail, pretty carefully, but the others could definitely wait.

So, as the campaign progressed, I gradually filled in more and more of the particulars. About a year after we started, the

group found a structure where all of the twelve artifacts were named and pictured, but that gave me a full year to figure out each of the names. Eventually, over the years, all of the twelve were discovered, and all fell into the hands of the player characters.

This was interesting for the player characters (imagine knowing about a mystic item for ten years, knowing its name, its appearance, and something about what it can **do**, and then, finally, finally, having the opportunity to get your hands on that very item!).

Even more important, for me as a Game Master, the Top-Down approach gave me a framework, a blueprint upon which I could build a campaign. A campaign that would prove to last for decades.



Thinking Big with Maps

Let's take worlds as an example.

Say you've decided to run a campaign where, for starters anyway, the player characters are going to be dealing with a little town.

You know the kind of place. In *Rifts* it would be a place with a few buildings, a couple of dozen scruffy inhabitants, maybe built on the ruins of an old intersection, where there used to be gas stations, strip malls, and maybe an old motel.

No big deal, just a place where the characters can rest up, have a couple of harmless encounters, maybe set up a bar fight.

Probably, if you're like most Game Masters, you know the town is not all that important. Certainly not worth putting in a lot of work.

After all, knowing the way *Rifts* **player** characters move around, they'll be there only a short time, they'll squash the place flat, and then they'll be off somewhere else, never to return.

Why waste time and effort on such a nowhere place?

Exactly because the player characters are going to be moving around. Because whatever happens in this little town is really only a set-up for the next big encounter.

One approach would be to start mapping with the town at the center of the map. You could figure out that the Coalition is this

way, and the Federation of Magic is over yonder, and there's a nasty Rift off to the south, and so **on...**

Then, as the group moves around, you can just fill in the necessary details, always adding to your map in little ways.

Which is actually a good approach.

It's just easier, and more effective, to start out with a big map in the first place.

Start with a world map (don't worry, it's mostly going to be blank). Now sketch in, in rough fashion, the big areas you know you're going to include in your campaign. The Coalition, Atlantis, etc.

Now focus on the general area where you want to put your little town. Figure out what's in the general area. Add in some interesting details like rivers or mountains. As you get closer to the target area, to the exact location for the town, get more and more specific.

See the difference?

Yes, you can still extend your map, still fill it in as the player characters wander around. The difference **is**, starting with the big picture, with the big idea, is that you've got a map that is more manageable. It's clear, right from the start, how everything fits together.

In the long run, starting with a global map, with a world map, even if you have very little of it figured out, makes for a better campaign.

Thinking Cosmic Big

So far, so good. If you've paid attention up to this point, you probably realize that designing a world is, in a lot of ways, easier than designing one village at a time, one encounter at a time. Thinking big, at least when it comes to worlds, makes things easier for the Game Master.

Likewise, it makes **sense** to try to think big in time as well as space. That by building an interesting past, you also leave yourself open for some room to design a complex and interesting campaign.

Now prepare to really let loose.

The idea is to give your imagination full reign, full scope. To kick on your **brain's** afterburners, and really think big.

Bigger than worlds, bigger than solar systems, bigger than galaxies. Universe big. Cosmic big.

Cosmology big.

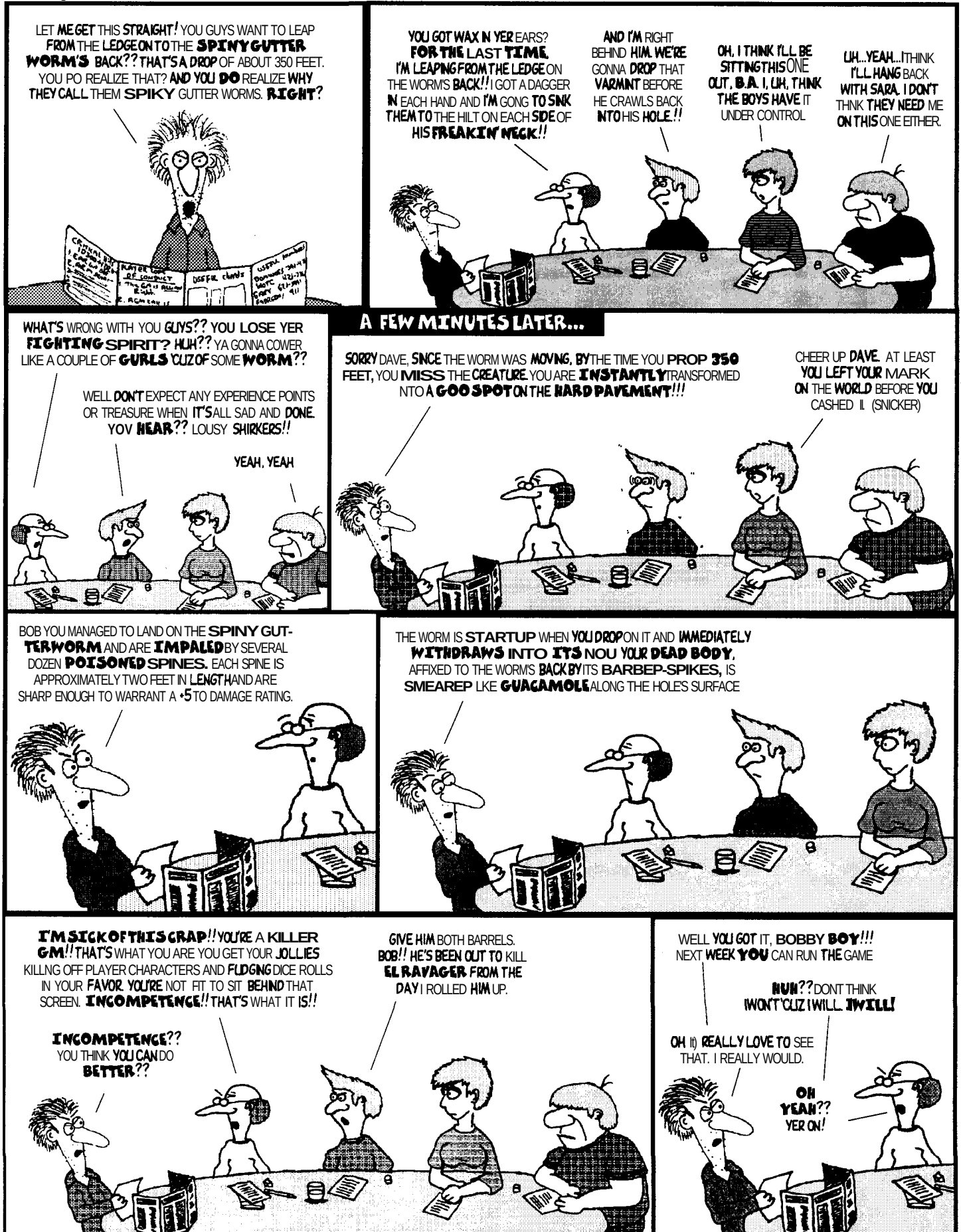
According to my big dictionary, cosmology is the branch of science that deals with the philosophy of the origin and structure of the universe, which includes such minutia as the nature of time and space, the existence of god (or gods), and even stuff like causality (which came first, the chicken or the **egg?**).

For me, this is the real pay-off of role-playing, and the real kick I get out of Game Mastering. In just about any other creative endeavor, there are limits, boundaries (and budgetary constraints). Not so in our little hobby.

You have the power to decide, in your own pocket universe, exactly how creation happened. Who and what are the gods. You get to decide all the big questions.

Better yet, your universe can consist of many universes. Alternate dimensions (**Rifts!**), different time lines, realities based on whatever rules you wish to impose or create.

The bigger you **think**, the better.



THE FOLLOWING WEEK.....

OKAY THIS POOR OPENS UP TO REVEAL A 10 FOOT BY 10 FOOT ROOM. IT'S EMPTY EXCEPT FOR A **SHOE BOX** LAYING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FLOOR.

SHOE BOX HUH? I GUESS I'LL POKE IT WITH MY **TEN FOOT POLE!!**

NO GOOD!! YOU CAN'T REACH IT WITH THE POLE. YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO **ENTER THE ROOM.**

WAIT A MINUTE. IT'S A TEN FOOT POLE AND THE ROOM IS TEN BY TEN!!!

IT CAN'T BE MORE THAN FIVE FEET TO THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM. WHAT'S UP WITH THAT?

OKAY I LEAK INTO THE ROOM **REALLY FAR** WITHOUT ACTUALLY **SETTING FOOT** IN IT. I'M GONNA POKE THE **SHOE BOX** WITH THE POLE.

NOPE. SORRY. NO GOOD. STILL CAN'T REACH IT. LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO ENTER THE ROOM.

I'LL TRY AND LASSO THE BOX WITH MY ROPE AND DRAG IT TOWARD THE DOOR.

I'M BEGINNING TO REALIZE WHY YOU **FLUNKED GEOMETRY BOB.**



SORRY DAVE. THE DOORWAY IS TOO NARROW FOR YOU TO ADEQUATELY TWIRL YOUR LASSO.

OH. YEAH... I UH... GAVE THE WRONG DIMENSIONS ON THAT ROOM. IT'S ACTUALLY UH... 100 FEET BY 100 FEET.

WELL. IT'S OBVIOUS HE WANTS US TO ENTER THE ROOM. I SMELL A TRAP.

YOU'RE RIGHT. THE HELL WITH IT. LET'S IGNORE THE STUPID **SHOE BOX** AND MOVE ON.

I AGREE. WE CAN ALWAYS CHECK IT OUT LATER.

YEAH. MAKES SENSE TO ME

YOU'RE GIVING UP THAT EASILY??? C'MON. QUIT FOOLING AROUND AND JUST PICK UP THE **DAMN BOX!!** ALRIGHT??

YEAH. WE'RE MOVING ON DOWN THE HALL.

UH UH. NOT ON YER LIFE, BUD! I WOULDN'T TOUCH THAT BOX WITH A... WITH A... TEN FOOT POLE

TEN MINUTES LATER...

OKAY AS YOU TURN THE CORNER IN THE HALL WAY YOU ALMOST RUN OVER A FRIENDLY LOOKING **DWARF** HOLDING A **SHOE BOX**. HE SMILES WHEN HE SEES YOU AND SAYS, "GREETING STRANGERS, PLEASE ACCEPT THIS GIFT."

ANOTHER **SHOE BOX** UH? WE **RESPECTFULLY DECLINE** TO ACCEPT THE GIFT AND BYPASS THE DWARF.

NICE TRY, BOB!! BUT WE'RE NOT FALLING FOR IT.

AN HOUR LATER...

YOU SEE A SMALL ORDINARY LOOKING BOX LAYING ON THE STEPS AT YOUR FEET.

ORDINARY LOOKING BOX HUH? HOW BIG IS IT??

HOW BIG? IT'S JUST A SMALLISH BOX NOTHING AT ALL UNUSUAL ABOUT IT.

IS IT THE SIZE OF A **SNOO BOX**??

UH...ER... I GUESS YOU COULD SAY IT'S ROUGHLY THE SAME SIZE.

OKAY, YOU HEAR A **FANT SCRAPING** SOUND COMING FROM BEHIND YOU. WHEN YOU **TURN** TO SEE WHAT IT IS, YOU OBSERVE A **SMALL SHOE BOX** INCHING ITS WAY TOWARDS YOU

NO WAY IN HELL. I'M OPENING THAT **BOX DUDE**. I'LL THROW MY BACKPACK AT IT TO SLOW IT DOWN AND THEN I'M RUNNING IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.

I DON'T THINK HE'S GOING TO LET IT GO UNTIL ONE OF US OPENS THAT BOX.

TALK ABOUT BEING **BOXED IN.**

THIS IS STARTIN TO WEIRD ME OUT MAN.

THIS FREAKIN' **SHOE BOX** IS LIKE A MAGNET.

Palladium News, Info, & Coming Attractions

By Kevin Siembieda (the guy in the know)

News

Palladium Books is Hot!

Palladium's sales are up more than 40% compared to the same time last year! But that's not all.

T.D. Imports (one of our top distributors) publishes an industry newsletter that goes to all their clients. Their January issue included the 1997 "Year in Review." Under **T.D.'s Top 10 Selling "New" Role-Playing Games** — **Rifts®** products took six (6) of the top ten positions! *Rifts® Lone Star*, *New West™* and *Coalition Navy™* were numbers 1, 2, and 3 respectively. *Rifts Spirit West™*, *Psyscape™* and *Federation of Magic™* (which didn't even ship till December!) were numbers 5, 6, and 7. And get this, T.D.'s February report lists **The Rifter #1™** as their number one selling "new RPG product" for the month of **January!!**

You guys and gals are the ones who make it all possible, and get our heartfelt appreciation's. **Thanks!!** Hey, tell ya what, you keep buying Palladium products by the **truckload**, and we'll promise to keep producing big, beautiful and fun RPG books at reasonable prices. Deal?

Palladium will not Exhibit at Gen Con® '98

Before the rumors and innuendo start to fly, we wanted to announce that Palladium will *not* be attending Gen Con '98. There are just too many unknown and disturbing elements — last year's low attendance (and we fear attendance will be just as low this year), lack of early promotion, the new convention site (if it gets built in time), Andon as the "new" convention organizers, Wizards of the Coast (WoTC) as the "new" owners, new policies and procedures, and a significant increase in the cost of Exhibitor booths — approximately 36% across the board. In my opinion, WoTC/Andon are asking Exhibitors (and we suspect, fans) to pay more for less.

As you can see by the number of products we are producing and how well they are selling, Palladium is not skipping Gen Con because of money problems. A company Palladium's size can easily afford the exhibitor table increase. Furthermore, Palladium typically makes a good profit above our overall convention expenses, so the show, increase and all, should be profitable for us. However, we are deeply concerned by what the price in-

crease does to the rest of the role-playing game community and the signal it is sending to the industry. We fear it especially hurts the small companies.

A handful of small RPG companies have already announced they **won't** be attending (not to mention some bigger folks like **Steve Jackson Games**, **R.Talsorian**, **Dream Pod Nine**, **Phage Press** and others). Each has their own reason for not attending and made their decision independent of one another.

Palladium suspects many small and start-up companies will not be able to attend because it is too costly for them (\$950 for one table is a bit much for them). We find this tragically ironic, considering just four or five years ago WoTC was one of those little companies struggling to stay afloat and introduce their new game, **Magic The Gathering**, on the market.

Andon has already begun spin-control, noting that those of us who do not attend Gen Con are foolish and only make space for the alleged throngs of companies beating down their door to take our places. Sadly, we see this as further evidence that WoTC/Andon does not really care about the RPG industry or who might get hurt by their price hikes, as long as they sell "X" number of Exhibitor booths/tables.

We also find it disturbing that **Palladium Books** and **Steve Jackson Games**, who announced in January that they will *not* be attending Gen Con '98, are still *listed* on the Andon Web Site as Exhibitors. Under the list, Andon has a paragraph stating that the exhibitor list is "tentative," and based on those who attended in 1997. However, Andon has known Palladium is definitely **NOT** going to exhibit since January. You'd think the page should have been updated by now, March 12, 1998. Why hasn't it? Draw your own conclusions, but don't be fooled. Palladium Books will *not* be attending Gen Con '98.

All of this leaves a bad taste in Palladium's mouth and we **won't** be party to it.

This is not part of some organized boycott against Gen Con, WoTC, or Andon. The decision that **Palladium Books** would not attend was entirely our own. Whether other companies exhibit or not, has no bearing on Palladium's decision.

We just wanted to let our fans know in advance. This is only the second Gen Con Palladium has missed since 1982, and we probably won't be exhibiting in 1999 either.

We know this news will disappoint many of our fans. Sorry, but this is something we felt we had to do. Maybe we'll make some special offer **and/or** have some special event through **The Rifter #3** and Palladium's *Web Page/Internet*. We're kicking around some ideas.

To those who plan on attending the show, we sincerely hope you have a wonderful time.

Palladium's Web Site

For the latest news, comments, and fun, straight from Palladium, check out our Web Site at www.palladiumbooks.com —managed by V.P. Maryann Siembieda. Join the 11,000+ other gamers who use our site regularly.

Coming Attractions



Heroes Unlimited™ — 352 pages for only \$24.95

The Palladium staff wondered if I lost my mind when I announced that **Heroes Unlimited™, 2nd Ed.** would be 352 pages. That's 100 pages bigger than the previous edition!

Actually, there were moments when "I" wondered myself. It was a hell of a lot of work, put us behind schedule, and the guys pointed out that this is the equivalent of three 120 page books, which most other RPG companies would sell for \$20.00 each — a \$60 value that Palladium is only charging \$24.95 for!

"Heck, why not?" I said. We all wanted to make **Heroes Unlimited™** bigger and better than ever before. It has always been one of my favorite RPGs and I wanted the Second Edition to be even more special and inclusive. The guys still thought I was crazy, but agreed it was a cool thing to do if we could afford it.

Okay, maybe I got carried away, but you guys will love it!

Great new artwork, cool ideas, and zillions of possibilities.

Over 100 super abilities, with dozens and dozens of sub-powers. Psionic abilities, magic spells, enchanted weapons and objects that can transform an ordinary Joe into a superhuman or sorcerer. Cyborgs, Robots, and a lot more, like ...

The Mega-Hero (optional) is one of the new additions, along with some mega-vulnerabilities. It was included as a direct response to years of fan requests. I think it works well.

Playing characters with a history or legacy. How would one follow in his father's (uncle, brother, etc.) footsteps. Does he carry on the name and costume or assume a new identity? Does he have a fabulous reputation to live up to, or one to live down? These are just some of the things one must consider when following a legacy.

Revamped, and in some cases, souped-up Power Categories like Physical and Special Training (including the new *Analytical Genius*).

Easily adaptable to **Rifts®**, directly compatible with **Ninjas & Superspies®**, **Ninja Turtles®**, **Beyond the Supernatural™**, **Nightbane®** and even the **Palladium Fantasy RPG**.

Heroes Unlimited™ 2nd Edition is in the stores now! It shipped on March 30th and should have hit store shelves approximately two weeks before **The Rifter™ #2**. We printed plenty, and will make certain it doesn't fall out of print any time soon, so the book is in stock and available from distributors.

Three easy ways to tell the difference between Second Edition and First:

1. The 1st edition cover is predominantly blue with a big logo across the top, while the *Second Edition* is predominantly white and the logo is formed into a circular pattern that forms the "shield" of the central figure.

2. *Second Edition* is 100 pages **bigger** — 352 vs. 248 pages!

3. The new cover says "Second Edition."

Three new super-supplements are scheduled to come out in 1998. Plus, some great stuff by **Erick Wujcik** that couldn't get squeezed in and may be expanded into a complete **Heroes Unlimited™** sourcebook.

In case you can't tell, I'm pretty excited about it. If you like comic books and playing superhumans, you gotta check it out.

Ninja Turtles® RPG, 2nd Edition •

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® & "More" Strangeness should be released in May or June, and it ain't for little kids.

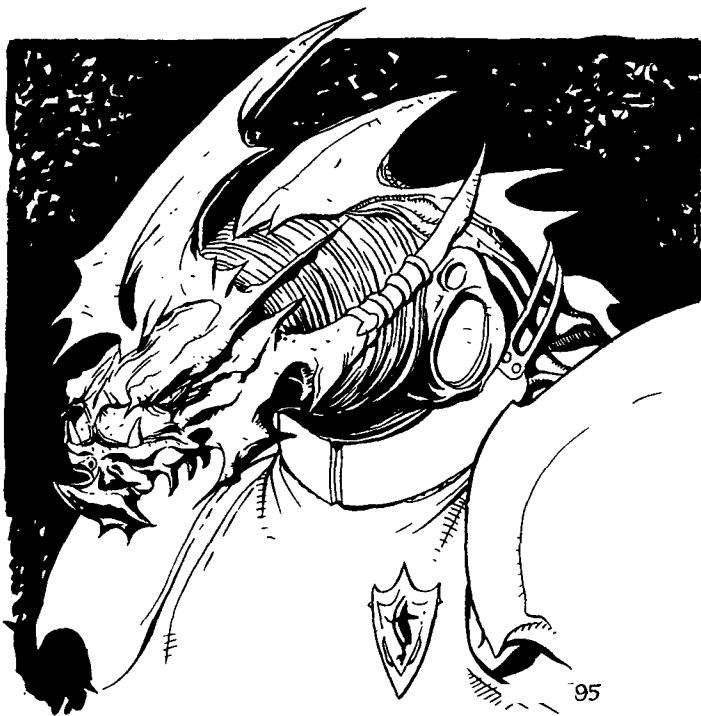
It can function as a *stand alone role-playing game* or as a useful *sourcebook* for **Heroes Unlimited™, 2nd Ed.**

TMNT & "More" Strangeness offers stats for lots of mutant animals (I think a hundred or so), a bunch of dangerous villains suitable for any superhero setting, and adventures. Although the Ninja Turtles are the inspiration (and can be loads of fun to play), this RPG presents the foundation for an underground world of mutant animal heroes, villains and adventure.

Collector's value is always a factor with this legendary comic book based property. The first **edition, TMNT & Other Strangeness**, is one of the best selling RPGs of all time (nearly 200,000 copies sold), and the *Ninja Turtles* were (still are) a **phenomenon** that helped to launch the independent comic book industry, created one of the most popular line of action figures in 30 years, and has a lot of history and value.

However, for me, the bottom line for the **TMNT RPG** is that it's fun and interesting. Which it is.

- **Great Simon Bisley cover painting.**
- **New interior artwork by Paolo Parente and others.**
- **Written by Erick Wujcik with new material by Siembieda. \$12.95 — 128 pages. May or June release.**



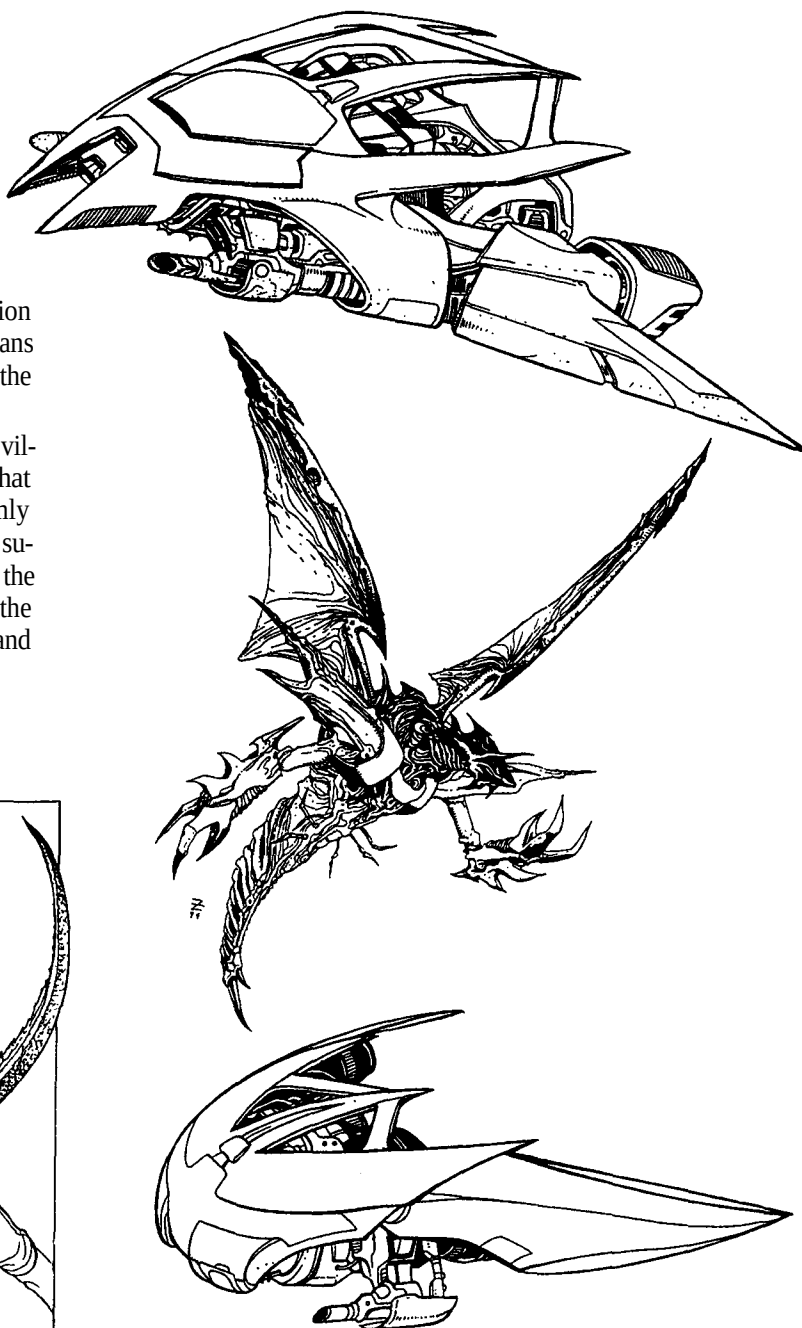
Rifts® Dimension Book Four: Skraypers™

Can you help save a world?

The whole book is an adventure setting around the invasion and occupation of a futuristic, Earth-like world of superhumans by bloodthirsty aliens. The adventure is the backbone of the book—to save the world from the occupying alien forces.

Ah, but the situation is complicated by the fact that the villainous alien invaders are powerful, evil and maniacal, that they've held the planet for several decades (so they are firmly entrenched), and some of the old supervillains and traitorous superbeings fight on the side of the invaders! Worse, many of the enslaved people feel beaten and have given up hope. It's the player characters who must work to rekindle that hope and breathe life into revolution!

- The Tarlok invaders, and their minions, are villains you'll love to hate.
- The freedom fighters are powerful and a wee bit desperate, so it's no-holds-barred action and adventure.
- The book is designed to be used as an adventure setting and sourcebook suitable for use with Heroes Unlimited™ and Rifts®.
- As a "Rifts®" Dimension Book™, there is a section on linking the Tarlok and their slaves to Phase World™, the Plugorth™ and Rifts Earth.
- Skraypers™ nears completion and should be in the stores the end of April or early May. I think it will be *hot*!
- The Zeleznik artwork, characters and concepts are incredible, wild and beautiful stuff.
- \$16.95 —160 pages.





The Old Kingdom Books

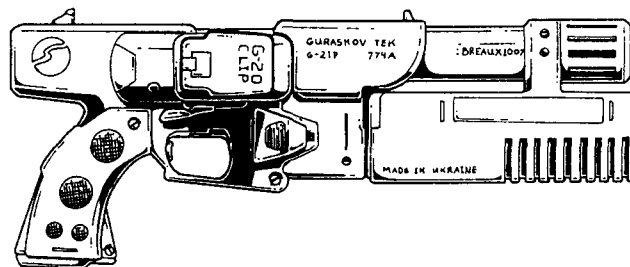
Sourcebooks for Palladium Fantasy

John Zeleznik is working on one cover and Brom has been lined up for the other. Some initial interior art has also been assigned. With a little luck, **Old Kingdom Mountains** will be out in May or June and **Old Kingdom Lowlands** in June or July.

Epic fantasy adventure and world information with scores of towns and villages, historical background, current political unrest, monsters and trouble. Keep an eye out for 'em, you won't be disappointed.

The RPG Gamer's Bible

Palladium Books is currently working with author *Sean Patrick Fannon* and Prima Publishing to secure the rights to Fannon's **Fantasy Role-Playing Gamer's Bible**. The original book was a well written and entertaining look at role-playing games past and present, with a brief history and current trends. Palladium's revised edition will include the changes over the last few years, new products and companies and other notable material on the RPG Industry. The **Role-Playing Gamer's Bible** is intended to be a fun and useful reference for all role-players and hobbyists. If all goes well, the updated version could hit store shelves as early as this summer, but is more likely to make its debut this fall.



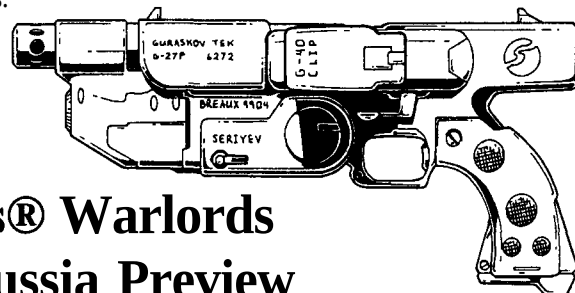
Rifts® Russia

While finishing **Skraypers™**, I've already begun working on **Rifts® Warlords of Russia™** and its companion book, **The Magic of Russia™**. These are going to be another fun pair of sourcebooks.

The Warlords are barbaric megalomaniacs with a lust for power. Their main strength comes from their legions of cyborg warriors and raw power.

Warlords of Russia™ will focus on establishing the Russian world setting and on the Warlords, their minions, weapons, and resources. \$20.95 — 224 pages. Written by Siembieda and Krueger. Art by Perez, Breaux, Johnson, and Buries.

The Magic of Russia™ will focus on D-Bees, Monsters, supernatural beings, magic and myth. \$16.95 — 160 pages. Written by Siembieda and Krueger. Art by Perez, Breaux, Johnson, and Buries.



Rifts® Warlords of Russia Preview

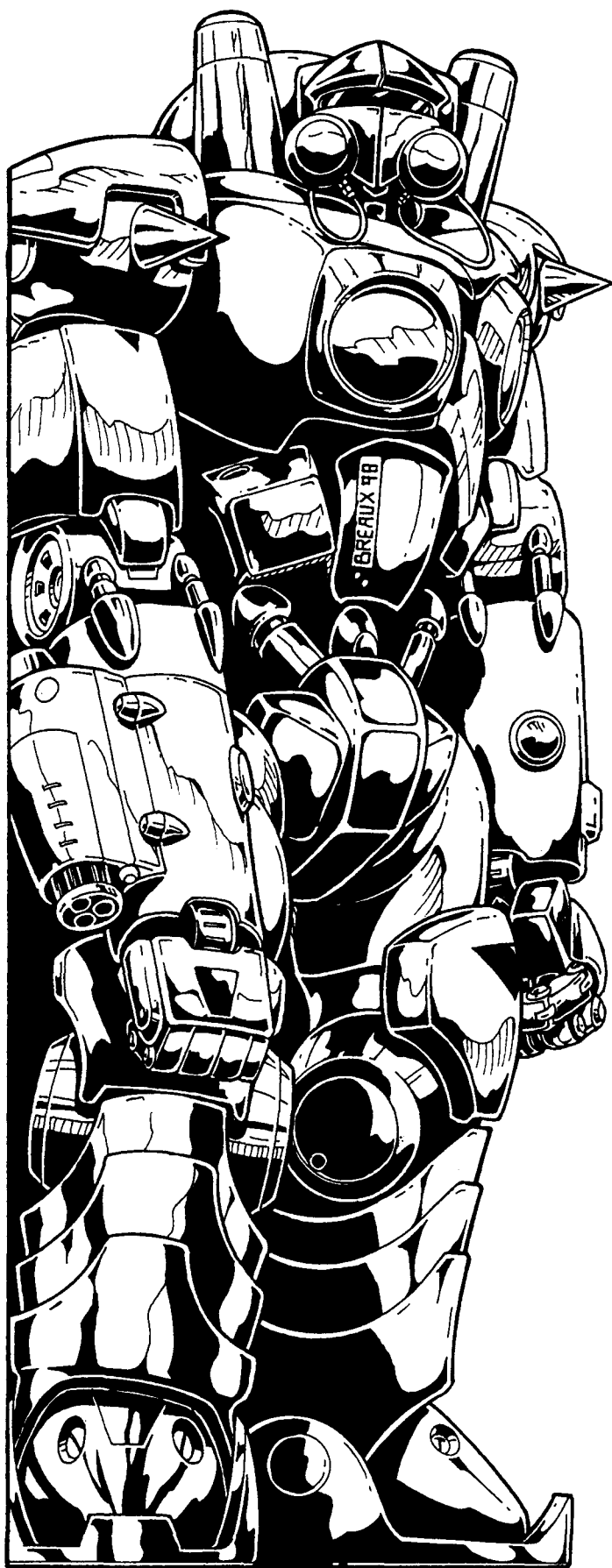
A few hints and excerpts from *Warlords of Russia™*

A Warlord "Camp" is effectively a mobile military unit composed of supporters who have pledged allegiance to one particular Warlord. In this case, a Camp ranges from 20,000 to 120,000 individuals and includes everyone from camp followers and hardened combat troops to slaves (if any). The center of power at these "Camps" are the Cyborg Shocktroops and horsemen.

The word "Camp" is also used to describe or encapsulate attitudes and opinions, *"That's the Romanov's for you. You know what that Camp is like!"*

In some ways, a Camp is like an extended family, its members watching out for one another, sharing joys and sorrows, laughter and resentments, as well as the horrors and spoils of battle.

These people are predators. Little more than ravaging barbarians who prey on the enemies of their Warlord master, as well as upon strangers, D-Bees and others for their living. They tend to live by the age-old system of conquest and tribute. In each Warlord's *Spheres of Influence*, they and their "camps" are the undisputed rulers. The (usually) undisputed local power by which smaller clans, farmers, peasants and foreigners must abide. Resistance is often met with swift and brutal containment. The indigenous population of the lands claimed by a Warlord and dominated by a particular "Camp," are often viewed as low-



lives and cattle forced to feed and serve the Warlord and his minions through a tribute system of resources, rubles and labor. These "subjects" are the **Warlord's** possessions, along with the land and resources of the region, but are not part of the Warlord's "Camp."

Although it may at first appear that the Warlords of western Russia control vast areas of land and all their resources, this is misleading. There is no denying they are a major influence in the region, and they do control major trade routes, villages, other important border locations, and resources. They maintain strong lines of communication and enforce their will through intimidation and military power. However, take a look at the vast land area they "dominate," and it becomes clear that there is no way most of this land can be patrolled, policed or contained by them or anybody.

A "Sphere of Influence" (the territory a Warlord claims as his domain) might be better equated to the territory held by a predatory animal. In this case, the wolf pack may be the most apt analogy for the Camps, and other minions of the Warlord are like the lesser wolves in the pack. The animal sees this land as its own and takes from it what it needs to survive. The wolfish predator will defend his territory from invading predators and outsiders. The leader will fight all who dare to challenge his rule and kill any who threaten his life. The pack (or Camp as the case may be) chases away or slays trespassers and invaders. Likewise, they prey on the cattle-like herd animals (the indigenous peasants) and any who succumb to weakness are food or fodder for their slaving jaws.

Like the wolf pack, the various Camps and clans who serve as the military and enforcers of the Warlord prey upon those weaker than they, but seldom kill wantonly or take more than they need, for without the herds (indigenous peasants) to feed upon, the wolves suffer and starve. Also like the wolf pack, the Camps travel their "territory" on a regular circuit. Thus, they are seldom at any one place for more than a month, and are constantly traveling in order to survey their domain. This means there is no way of knowing where everything is at once, and very little idea of what may be happening at locations out of sight and out of reach — of course retribution for actions deemed disloyal or dangerous to the Camp, may be terrible. "Setting examples" is a common tactic to keep people under their control. This means the control and enforcement domination of the Warlords and their Camp is scattered and sporadic. It also means that the peoples' cooperation, respect, and abidance of the Warlords' laws can be greatly different when members of a Warlord's camp are not present. Many things go on behind the Warlords' backs when their minions are away.

Highlights Include:

- History, background data and stats on the Warlords, their key henchmen, and their armies. Plus, their goals, enemies and rivalries.
- Warlord Cyborgs, weapons and equipment.
- World information, maps, and ties to the New German Republic and the demon-ridden wastelands of China.
- Lots of adventure ideas.
- 224 pages — \$20.95
- Scheduled for a late May release. *The Magic of Russia* follows in June.



The Rifts® Connection

Crossing Realities, Timelines & Infinite Possibilities

By Kevin Siembieda

For years now, there have been hints and links in the **Rifts®** RPG (loosely) connecting it to other timelines in other Palladium role-playing games. Many a fan has questioned or argued which of the other Palladium RPGs are "officially" linked to Rifts, and even more hotly debated, which one of the modern games represent the **pre-Cataclysmic Earth of Rifts'** past.

Beyond the Supernatural® gets attention because of Victor Lazlo's strong, historical role in Rifts®, particularly in regard to Erin Tarn (she meets Victor in *Rifts® Africa*) and the North American Cities of Lazlo and New Lazlo which are named after him. *Erin Tarn* is one of thousands of rogue scholars, philosophers and practitioners of magic on Rifts Earth who hold Victor Lazlo in great esteem as a 20th Century "visionary." He is heralded for his enlightened theories concerning ley lines, magic and the existence of the supernatural. Victor Lazlo was virtually a lone voice and something of a martyr in the 20th Century, because he tried to tell people that "magic and the supernatural" were real. That magic was drawn from an invisible source of energy that permeated the Earth. An energy he dubbed Potential Psychic Energy (P.P.E.). Lazlo insisted that with the proper training and focus, one could draw on this mysterious energy in innumerable ways, using nothing more than one's willpower and mind to create magical (for lack of a better description) effects. Victor Lazlo recognized weak (for his world and time period) lines, or streams, of energy known to mystics as *ley lines*. Lines of magical **energy/P.P.E.** the Chinese Geomancers — **practitioners of Feng-Shui** — had recognized and utilized for thousands of years, even into the 21st Century. They called these lines of energy "Dragon Veins" or "Dragon Tracks," and referred to the energy as both a source of positive and negative "**Chi**." A force that could be manipulated or corrupted by man.

Victor Lazlo also identified "places of magic," mystical hot spots, reputed throughout the ages as places of healing, spirits, hauntings, demons, evil, good, strange occurrences and even as gateways to heaven, hell and the Faerie Realm. His research revealed that 95.6 percent of these places were located where ley

lines either crisscrossed and formed a junction (*ley line nexus*) or where a network of powerful ley lines formed a giant triangle with nexus points in each of the three corners. The Bermuda Triangle (Devil's Sea on Rifts Earth) is the most famous and unpredictable of these **triangulations** of mystic energy.

The insightful Victor Lazlo noted that these nexus points ebbed and flowed, like an ocean tide, in predictable waves based on the position of the moon, planets and certain times of the year. The majority of strange, horrifying and wondrous occurrences and disappearances around ley lines coincided with these periods of increased "flow," as did many mystical, **druidic**, and holy ceremonies. However, many of these strange occurrences and reports of ghosts, faeries, demons, monsters and magic occurred without human intervention. This led Victor Lazlo to theorize that when the energy rose, and conditions were just right, it could trigger a temporary opening to an alien world or dimension — portals to the supernatural. He speculated that supernatural beings (creatures the ancient people called "ghosts, demons, and faeries") were able to enter our world while these dimensional portals were opened (which in his realm of existence, was typically for short periods of a few minutes). He further speculated that these supernatural beings were attracted to the mystic energy of the ley lines and could, perhaps, sense the rise in energy and wait for portals to open. These alien creatures regarded humans as food and playthings, and were, in effect, evil and murderous predators. Thus, Lazlo explained that supernatural possession, ghosts and other supernatural and magical claims — scoffed at and ignored by the authorities and science — **were** often real and extremely dangerous. He tried to teach awareness, pointing out that one can not protect against, counter or fight something he does not understand, or refuses to believe in. Although a small number of people came to believe his theories, Victor Lazlo was branded a deranged charlatan. The scientific community mocked and chastised him, blatantly ignoring his unscientific evidence and "fraud." A laughing stock, Victor Lazlo's studies, books and seminars were disregarded by both science and the public as unscientific hogwash — the nonsensical, fictional ramblings of a New Age con-artist. Despite this, Lazlo retained his dignity and continued his crusade. Three of his eight books became best sellers. Small groups and thousands of individuals scattered around the world (often people touched by the unexplained), accepted his studies as real and, just before his disappearance, Victor Lazlo founded an investigative organization that would become known as the Lazlo Agency.

As players of **Beyond the Supernatural™** (to be released as a revised and expanded Second Edition in 1999) and **Rifts®** already know, most of Victor Lazlo's theories have proven to be correct. The eruption of the ley lines and the Coming of the Rifts and the new era of magic and the supernatural horrors that came with it, have proven beyond any shadow of a doubt that Lazlo's theories were correct. His books and teachings are known to the people of *Rifts Earth* and Victor Lazlo is respected as one of the greatest minds of the 20th Century.

The basic common denominators concerning the supernatural, magic, ley lines, P.P.E., and the presence of a 20th Century "Victor Lazlo" would seem strong evidence that the time before the Great Cataclysm is drawn from the **Beyond the Supernatural™** RPG.

So how can we explain the book, **Mutants in Orbit™** and other elements, including Archie-3 and the existence of corporations such as **Cyberworks** and the **KLS Corporation** drawn from the pages of **Heroes Unlimited™**. For that matter, might not the **Pre-Rifts** Golden Age of Science, where every nation of Rifts Earth rushed feverously to create superhumans augmented and mutated through bionics, M.O.M. **conversion**, chemical and genetic experimentation, etc., have been an era of superbeings?

So which represents the true past of Rifts Earth? It **can't** be both. Can it? Actually, it is both and neither.

The **Rifts®** timeline is neither of these Earth settings, yet linked to both! The Coming of the Rifts and the subsequent Great Cataclysm transformed Rifts Earth into a giant conduit for mystic energy. As such, the Earth can barely contain the energy and links it to the vast, dimensional Megaverse on a cosmic level that even the most seasoned master of magic or dimensional traveler cannot understand. As a cosmic dimensional nexus, rich in magic, rippling with barely containable power, and given to random eruptions in the space-time continuum, those dimensions closest to Rifts Earth — **parallel** worlds; other Earths — are the most vulnerable to its dimensional disturbances and disruptions. Remember, each "Rift" is a tear in the fabric of space and time, but it is also a hole in the fabric of reality as we know it.

The Earths of **Beyond the Supernatural™** and **Heroes Unlimited™** are two such dimensional "twins." Worlds in other dimensions that are so similar and so close (on a metaphysical level) that they too are subjected to unpredictable and random dimensional anomalies that originate from Rifts Earth. Dimension bridging events that sometimes, briefly link these worlds, their past, present and future, to Rifts Earth. That's how **Victor Lazlo** came to Rifts Earth, and the past of his Earth has been confused for the past of Rifts Earth (of course, for all we know, there was a parallel Victor **Lazlo!**). Likewise, the **Cyberworks** of Rifts Earth shares common links and disturbingly similar histories to the Earth of **Heroes Unlimited™**. These are not twisted reflections of each other, but separate, though vaguely **similar**, realities. Basically, points in time and space that are so similar that the lines between the different realities sometimes blur and crossover. Fortunately, these blurs are sporadic and mainly occur at ley lines and nexus points where the dimension spanning magic energy is at its strongest. Victor Lazlo vanished while investigating one such ley line nexus when realities converged.

Even momentary blurring of realities can cause aspects of different worlds or dimensions to cross and intertwine. This can cause individuals to vanish from one world and "cross over" to the other (a **frighteningly** common occurrence in the Bermuda Triangle and similar places of magic), lose hours of time even though only a few minutes have seemed to pass, to the appearance of supernatural monsters or inexplicable occurrences that seem to defy the laws of physics. It can also lead to unusual ley line activity, the opening of a dimensional portal temporarily linking the two different realities, and distortions in the space-time continuum of both worlds.

All three of the "Earths" noted previously (and a few others) have periodically linked, clashed and blurred since the beginning of time. Tied together by a network of mystic energy on ley lines that actually span not only space and time, but other dimensions and realities. In this case, because each of the alternate

Earth dimensions share so many similarities, inexperienced dimensional travelers (and witless victims of random anomalies) may be torn from their true, originating reality and warped to one of the others. **The** similarities of their worlds lead them to wrongly regard the different dimension to be their own, only a past or future time period. This is what happened to Victor Lazlo. He has stepped from one reality into another, one he incorrectly believes is the future of his Earth. The fact that Rifts Earth and Lazlo's *were* similar and have touched and affected each other many times throughout history, making him a prominent historical figure on Rifts Earth, only confuses the issue. This means that Victor could, someday, return to his own world (although time has passed), except he isn't trying to do so because he doesn't realize it even exists — he honestly believes he has been "Rifted" into the future.

Ironically, because these parallel worlds are so strikingly similar, they are virtually impossible to distinguish from one's own and difficult to locate through magic or scientific means. Although Rifts Earth is a dimensional nexus with the capability of linking to thousands (perhaps an infinite number) of different worlds and dimensions throughout the Megaverse, in most cases the "rift" through space and time is random and unpredictable.

Dimensional anomalies, events and dimension travelling beings are so comparatively commonplace on Rifts Earth that many people (and our readers/gamers) tend to take dimensional travel for granted. However, even the most expert, so-called masters of dimensional travel, like the **Splugorth**, Temporal Raiders, gods, and scores of supernatural beings, actually possess only a fundamental and limited understanding of the Megaverse and the energies they wield to warp and cross into other realities. They don't even fully understand why magic **energy/P.P.E.** exists, let alone how it works, why it seems to cross all lines of existence, or how it can be manipulated by the mind to alter or pierce the veil of reality. Magic, P.P.E., Chi, or whatever one calls it, appears to be a form of energy that permeates and binds the entire Megaverse. Many have come to believe the energy is one of the most basic building blocks of reality (at least as we understand it). As the stuff of reality, the mystic energy enables its users to warp space, defy the laws of science/physics (at least as we understand them), to tear open the very fabric of space and time to (momentarily) bridge one place or reality to another, and create physical things and energy out of thin air with a thought. Masters of magic and so-called gods, may have a better understanding and control of the energy, but they don't know how or why it works.

That's why Rifts Earth is so important and has attracted so many diverse and powerful beings (among other reasons): To study the unbridled power and random dimension spanning activity in order to get a better understanding of how these things work, and, to better understand the composition and function of the Megaverse. The very existence of places like Rifts Earth and how they come into being as epicenters of barely containable mystic energy and dimensional forces is a complete mystery. Their existence (and discovery) is extremely rare and incredibly unique (and dangerous). The seething energy erupts and reacts in unpredictable ways that rip apart, confuse, combine and re-structure reality. It links dimensions, creates and destroys. A rumbling **transdimensional** volcano whose every rumble, let alone eruption, sends shock waves throughout the Megaverse. Such is the mystery and power of the Rifts. Thus, most D-bees

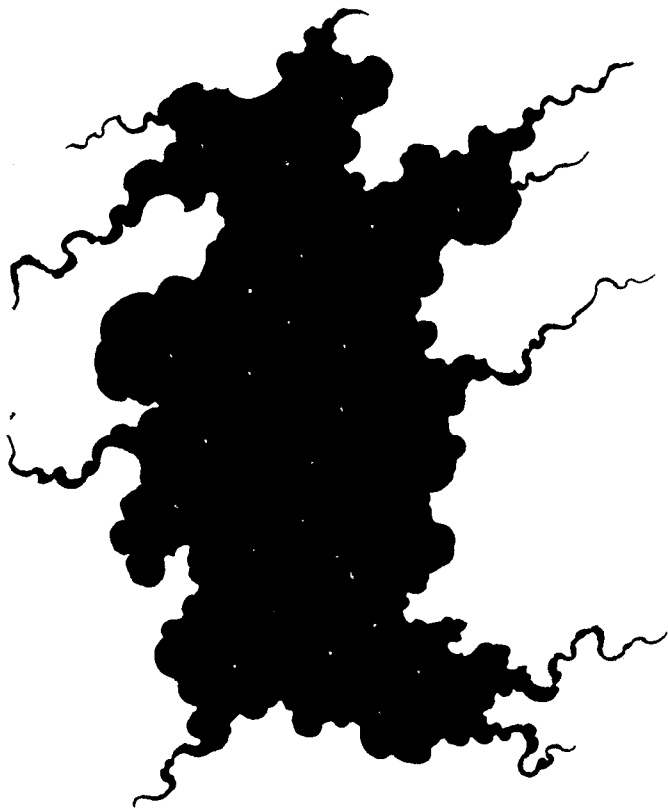
are the helpless victims of circumstance, torn from their homeworlds and brought to the dimensional epicenter that Earth has become.

Those greater powers who come to watch and learn cast their eyes upon an enigma of nature beyonds their imaginations. Sadly, many others have forsaken the search for answers and come only to use the energy for their own machinations. They are fools and opportunists playing with cosmic fire that may represent the very stuff of creation.

Earth links. Located in the world settings of *Beyond the Supernatural*, *Heroes Unlimited*, and *Rifts®* are certain "places of magic" that serve as conduits to each of these diverse worlds and timelines (as well as to the Astral Plane, Wormwood, and other dimensions). The most notable are the so-called Power Triads. A ley line network that forms a triangle and covers an expansive area. *The Bermuda Triangle* is the most notorious, but other Power Triads include *The South American*, *African*, *Mediterranean*, *Japanese* and *South Pacific/Australian Triangle*. Of course, on *Rifts Earth*, some of these places are more dangerous than ever, or are dominated by powerful forces like the **Splugorth** of Atlantis where part of the Bermuda Triangle, or "Demon Sea" as it is known on *Rifts Earth*, now overlap.

If one knows how, a dimensional portal can be opened at any ley line nexus, although one may have to wait until the mystic energy is at its peak. Dimensional portals can be created to gain access to any of Palladium's world settings, from **Skraypers™**, *Rifts®*, or any **Dimension Book™ to Robotech®** and the **Palladium Fantasy RPG** worlds. Likewise, experiments in dimensional or time travel, or space warp systems may *accidentally* create a dimensional portal. In any case, travel to other dimensions via magic or rips in space and time should be exceedingly rare, especially in the modern Earth setting.

Note: *Beyond the Supernatural*, Second Edition should be released in early 1999. The earlier edition is currently out of print.



The Imp, Supernatural Rumormonger

By William Muench

Adam approached the man slowly, studying him. The snitch had dark features and his eyes shifted from place to place constantly. A small tic in his left eye began to twitch as Adam came closer.

With nervous cough, the man said, "Yes, may I help you?"

*Not bothering to ask his leave, Adam sat down at the table and rested his large arms upon it. Distastefully completing the greeting, he replied perfunctorily, "Hello, Lector. I've been told you can get information that other people *can't*."*

"Now who might have told you that, Mr. _?"

*Adam shook his head. "I'm just your client, you *don't* need to know my name. As for who told me, it was Nicodemus." The *snitch's* appearance seemed to flicker momentarily, and Adam instantly became more cautious. The face of a normal man does not flicker.*

*Pausing a moment to gather his thoughts, Lector nodded and continued. "Fair enough. As our mutual friend Nicodemus has told you, I can *find* out virtually anything you need to know. What can I learn for you?"*

*"I need some information. Last night some Warlords rumbled in my domain. I want their names, the *leader's* name, and where I can *find* them all. By tonight."*

*Lector smiled a smile that was slightly unsettling, even to a 'Kinetic like Adam. "That's all? Easy enough. I can let you know within the hour. Meet me back here at 12:30 with \$250. Maybe we can have some *coffee*."*

*"I *don't* think so, Lector. I'm not fond of *rumormongers*, but I don't have much of a choice at the moment. I'll be back here with your money, but *don't* expect any *pleasantries*."*

"Why, I have received many pleasantries from you already. I'll make due with those I have." His tic intensified slightly as he grinned widely.

Adam got up and walked towards the door without a word. As he reached out for the handle, Lector called to him, "Remember, Adam, don't talk to strangers." At the sound of his name, Adam looked back at the snitch. Where he had sat in the corner, only a flicker of flame lingered.

Imps are extremely intelligent supernatural creatures. Like many intelligent humans, simple things fascinate Imps. They like to play jokes on unsuspecting creatures and are almost faerie-like. However they know when a joke will be appreciated and when it will not; they aren't likely to play a joke on an Old One. Because of this high intelligence they have an insatiable desire to learn everything, and because of their photographic memory, they remember everything they see or hear. As a result of these qualities they have become the supernatural **rumormon-**

gers of the Megaverse. They are superb spies and infiltrators, and while moderately powerful they prefer to rely on stealth and cunning. For some reason, Imps don't particularly like magic users and enjoy playing pranks on them.

In their natural form, Imps appear similar to small gargoyles, 3 feet tall and about 75lbs. They have coal black skin with orange tints on their underbellies and the insides of their wings, and bright green eyes. Silver claws tip their fingers. They are shape shifters who can change into a specific human form that never changes, but ages as they do (extremely slowly).

Alignment: Usually anarchist (80%), but can be any.

Attributes: I.Q.: 4D6, M.E.: 2D6+2, M.A.: 3D6+4, P.S.: 2D6+4, P.P.: 3D6+1, P.E.: 3D6, P.B.: 2D6 in natural form, 3D6+2 in human form, Spd.: 4D6+6 running, 1D4x10+20 flying. Supernatural strength.

Size: 3 feet tall in natural form; generally between 5 feet 4 inches and 5 feet 8 inches tall in human form.

Weight: 75lbs in natural form, generally between 110lbs and 150lbs in human form.

Natural A.R.: 7 in natural form.

S.D.C.: 1D4x10

Hit Points: P.E. + 1D6x10

Average Life Span: Unknown, presumably millennia.

Horror Factor: 10 in natural form, none in human form.

P.P.E.: 1D4x10

Natural Abilities: Imps possess night vision equal to human day vision, prowl 80%, and regenerate from mundane (i.e., non-magic like guns, knives, etc) damage at 2D6 HP/SDC per melee. Shadow Meld or turn invisible at will (equal to Invisibility: Simple), unlimited duration. Special: Human Metamorphosis - Imps can change into a specific human form at will. The form is set and cannot be determined by the Imp. The human form has a P.B. of 3D6+2 and looks just like a normal human. The transformation takes one melee action. Imps cannot fly in human form.

Experience Level: 1D6+2

Psionic Powers: I.S.P.: M.E.+4D6, powers include total recall, speed reading, object read, clairvoyance, and mind block auto-defense.

Magic Powers: None until 7th level. At 7th level they gain teleport at 75% and Dimensional Teleport at 50%. These powers do not cost any P.P.E.

Combat: 4 attacks per melee.

Damage: As per supernatural strength. +1D6 for claws, bite does 3D6.

Bonuses (in addition to attributes): +4 to dodge, +2 to initiative.

Vulnerabilities/Penalties: None

Skills: Intelligence 98%, Pick Pockets 75%, Pick Locks 75%, Palming 80%, All Lores 98%. Can speak and understand all languages. Imps can learn other skills at the GM's discretion, but they are not extremely important and should be determined on a case by case basis.

Alliances and Allies: Imps are usually free agents, but may serve a specific master as a spy or informant.

Enemies: No natural enemies.

Conversion Notes:

Rifts: Combine hit points and S.D.C. and treat as M.D.C. Strength is supernatural.

All other settings: No change.

PALLADIUM™

Pirates!

By Shawn Merrow

The seas of the Palladium Fantasy world are filled with dangers, not the least of which are floating around on the surface. This should give players some idea of what to expect, and give their Game Masters a better idea of what to throw at them.

Pirate Behavior

How do Pirate captains treat their crew? How do they treat the crew of captured ships? Below is a list that will hopefully give you some idea on this.

Good Alignments

About the only way most good characters would resort to piracy is to fight a secret war for their country. This way the country can hit at their enemies and deny responsibility.

Principled

1. This alignment will only become a Pirate to attack his nation's enemies.
2. Will always treat the crew well but may also be a harsh task master.
3. Will never kill prisoners unless they attack his men or are reputed to be very dangerous.
4. Will never sell prisoners into slavery.

Scrupulous

1. This alignment will sometimes also become a pirate just for the adventure.
2. Will treat the crew well and be easy going in the enforcement of rules, but that **doesn't** mean the crew walks all over him.
3. Will never kill prisoners of good alignment unless he is forced. May kill prisoners of an evil alignment or a member of the monster races.
4. May consider selling prisoners of evil alignment or one of the monster races into slavery.

Selfish Alignments

These are the most common alignments among pirates. They have enough good in them to work within groups, and they are usually willing to plunder a ship and sell it's crew into slavery. These are the perfect attributes for a pirate.

Unprincipled

1. This alignment usually becomes a pirate for the adventure. It's not uncommon for them to see themselves as Robin Hood type characters.
2. Will always be fair to the crew and usually is quite popular with them. This sometimes will lead to a chaotic ship with lax discipline.
3. Will not kill prisoners unless forced to by their actions. May sometimes kill evil prisoners and monster race prisoners rather than bother with them.
4. Will sell monster races into slavery and will consider selling evil prisoners as well.



Anarchist

1. This alignment usually becomes a pirate for the money.
2. Will not be fair with the crew and sees no real need for rules, other than "what he says goes".
3. Will usually not kill prisoners but if they resist in anyway they will be killed. The alignment of the prisoners does not matter in how they are treated.
4. Will potentially sell any prisoner into slavery. It mainly depends on the mood they are in and how the prisoner has behaved.

Evil Alignments

Evil alignments generally do not make good pirates. They tend not to work well in groups and often **backstab** their crewmates. This can pose a problem if a vital **crewmember** is killed at sea and there is no one to replace him. Though there will usually be a few evil **crewmembers** on any pirate ship, they rarely command the ship, at least not for very long.

Miscreant

1. This alignment usually becomes a pirate for the money, glory and power.
2. Will usually be a harsh and erratic task master. The crew will still respect him but mostly out of fear.
3. Will see no problem with killing prisoners.
4. Will regularly sell the prisoners into slavery.

Aberrant

1. This alignment usually becomes a pirate for the power and glory.

2. Will usually treat the crew with decency and keep his word to them. On the other hand, any violation of the rules will be met **with** swift and harsh punishment.

3. Will not usually kill prisoners if they can be sold into slavery. If they are going to be a problem though they will be killed.

4. Will have no problem with selling prisoners into slavery.

Diabolic

1. This alignment usually becomes a pirate for the power and the fun of creating chaos.

2. Will usually treat the crew very badly, and mutiny is quite common. The crew will be punished at a whim and it will usually be lethal.

3. Will quite often kill prisoners just for the fun of it.

4. Will sell any surviving prisoners into slavery.

Generic Pirate Stats

Below is a group of basic pirates that can be found on most ships.

Crew - 2nd to 4th Level Pirates or Sailors

Attributes: Will quite often have a P.S. and P.P. higher than ten. The rest are average.

Actions per Melee: Between four and six, depending on the level.

Bonuses: Usually none other than from the O.C.C. or R.C.C.

Combat Skills: W.P. Blunt, W.P. Grappling Hook, W.P. Sword and one other.

Skills of Note: Castaway/Shipwreck Survival, Climb/Scale Walls, Rope Works, Seamanship and Swimming are the most common skills.

Weapons: Short bladed weapons are very popular, the Cutlass in particular.

Armor: None normally but will **wear** light leathers if combat is expected.

Officer - 3rd to 5th Level Mariner

Attributes: Will have an I.Q. of at least ten and a P.P. over eight. The rest are average.

Actions per Melee: Between four and six, depending on the level.

Bonuses: Usually none other than from an R.C.C.

Combat Skills: W.P. Blunt, W.P. Sword and one other.

Skills of Note: Astronomy & Navigation, Castaway/Shipwreck Survival, Climb/Scale Walls, Flag Signaling, Identify Sea Life, native Language and one of choice, one Literacy of choice, Math: Basic, Rope Works, Sailing and Seamanship are the standard skills.

Weapons: Short bladed weapons are very popular, the Cutlass in particular.

Armor: None normally but will wear light leathers if combat is expected.

Warlocks - 4th to 6th Level

Attributes: An I.Q. above six and an M.E. above ten. The rest are average.

Actions per Melee: Between four and six, depending on the level.

Bonuses: +2 to Saving throw vs. Horror Factor (+6 against elemental beings), +1 to Saving throw vs. Magic, +1 to Saving throw vs. Possession.

Combat Skills: W.P. Sword and one other.

Skills of Note: Castaway/Shipwreck Survival, Climb/Scale Walls, Languages: two of choice, Literacy: one of choice, Land Navigation, Lore: Demon & Monsters, Lore: Faerie Folk, Rope Works, Seamanship, Wilderness Survival.

Magic: This varies quit a bit but favorites are long range spells that can damage or slow down ships. Below is a partial list of some of the more popular.

Note Earth Warlocks do not join ship crews so they are not listed.

Air: Cloud of Slumber, Cloud of Steam, Create Mild Wind, Stop, Wind, Howling Wind, **Northwind**, Call Lightning, Fingers of the Wind, Wind Rush, Ball Lightning, Calm Storm, Freeze Water. Fire: Blinding Flash, Cloud of Smoke, Globe of Daylight, **Nightvision**, Cloud of **Ash**, Darkness, Freeze Water, Spontaneous Combustion, Circle of Cold, Circle of Fire, **Extinguish** Fire, Fire Ball, Wall of Flame, Cloud of Steam, Flame Friend, Fuel Flame, Mini-Fireballs.

Water: Cloud of Steam, Create Fog, Purple Mist, Salt Water to Fresh, Breathe Underwater, Change Current, Fog of Fear, Water Seal, Calm Waters, Circle of Rain, Command Fish, Freeze Water, Sheet of Ice, Create Water, Communicate with Sea Creatures, Hail, Shards of Ice, Wall of Ice, Water Wisps.

P.P.E: 70 to 140

Weapons: Short bladed weapons are very popular, the Cutlass in particular.

Armor: None normally but will wear light leathers if combat is expected.

Pirate Captain NPCs and Encounters

Garson Stumpfoot, a.k.a. Smasher

Garson was born deep in the Old Kingdom mountains. He was captured and sold into slavery at an early age along with the rest of his village. He was sold to a merchant who traveled from Sino to **Rankin** and needed more guards. It was decent work, and the Merchant was fair to Garson.

It continued like this till one day the merchant was killed in a bar fight. It looked as if all the merchants slaves were going to be put up for auction to pay his bills. Through luck and quick action Garson was just barely able to slip out of town. Not knowing what to do, he traveled down the shore of the Timiro Kingdom. This went on for several days till he came across a Pirate ship moored in a small cove.

The ship had just recently lost its first mate and was having a tournament to see who would take the vacant post. When the crew spotted Garson they hauled him before the captain. The captain, rather preoccupied with the fight, just waved for the crew to kill him. Garson, not having anything to lose, asked to join in the tournament. This greatly amused the captain and he allowed Garson to join the fight. The fight lasted an hour but at the end Garson was the winner.

Garson took to being a Pirate quickly and soon grew to greatly enjoy this new life. He spent several years on the "Grinning Skull" plundering in the waters around the **Floenry** Islands. After a few years, Garson became sick of following orders and wanted to be in charge. He decided the best way to get rid of the current captain was to poison him. This was done the next the "Grinning Skull" was at port. There was some grumbling from the crew but they quickly accepted the change in command. In the last year, Garson has started targeting slaver ships and freeing the slaves. He remembers his early life as a slave and wants to stop it or at lest hamper it some.

Name: Garson "Smasher" Stumpfoot

Alignment: Anarchist

O.C.C. & Experience: 3rd Level Ogre Mercenary and 2nd Level Pirate.

Age: 28 Sex: Male

Height: 8 feet **Weight:** 380 pounds

Attributes: I.Q. 10, **M.E. 9**, **M.A.** 11, P.S. 22, **P.P.** 14, P.E. 18, **P.B.** 6, **Spd** 14.

Hit Points: 34 **S.D.C.:** 60

P.P.E.: 4

Horror Factor: 10

Description: He is an Ogre of average height. He has an above average number of scars, and a tattoo of a grinning skull on his right shoulder.

Actions per Melee: 6; **Hand to Hand:** Expert

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 40 feet (12.2 meters).

Bonuses: +2 to Strike, +5 to Parry and Dodge, +4 to Roll with **Punch/Fall/Impact**, +4 to pull punch, +1 on Initiative, +7 to Damage, +7 to Saving throw vs. horror factor, Clawed hands inflict 2D4 + P.S. bonus, Kick does 3D6 +P.S. bonus, Bite does 2D4 but no P.S. bonus.

Combat Skills: W.P. Battle Axe, W.P. Blunt, W.P. Chain, W.P. Grappling Hook, W.P. Knife, W.P. Shield, W.P. Sword.

Skills of Note: Animal Husbandry 65%, Athletics (General), Body Building & Weight Lifting, Boxing, Card Shark 50%, Castaway/Shipwreck Survival **40%**, Climb/Scale Walls

70%/65%, Falconry 60%, Horsemanship: General 60%/55%, Language: **Elven** 70%, Language: Gobblely 98%, Language: Human Eastern 70%, Pick Pockets 50%, Prowl 45%, Recognize Weapon Quality 60%, Rope Works 45%, Seamanship 41%, Sew 45%, Streetwise 40%, Swim 50%, Use & Recognize Poison 40%/32%, Wilderness Survival 60%.

Armor of Note: He wears a suit of Leather of Iron (magic) with the following properties; A.R. 15, S.D.C. 60.

Weapons of Note: Garson's favorite weapon is a **Dwarven Mace** (+4 to Damage, +2 to Parry). He usually though has a wide range of weapons available to him.

Underlings:

First Mate: 4th Level Human Sailor.

Second Mate: 4th Level **Orc** Mercenary.

Third Mate: 5th Level Elven Water Warlock.

Other crew members of note: One 4th Level Fire Warlock, twelve 3rd Level Pirates.

Personal Wealth: 24,000 in gold and valuables worth 10,000 gold coins. Also the "Grinning Skull", a Western Empire Carrack ship.

Hook, Line and Sinkers™

The Broken Shackle

Hook: The players hear rumors of a Pirate ship, the "Grinning Skull", targeting slavers and releasing the slaves. The story goes that the captain used to be a slave and is on a mission to stop slavery.

Line: The players hear shortly after the first rumors that the various governments have decided to stop Garson.

Sinker: What do the players do about the news they have? They can ignore the rumors and go about their way, or they can either find and help Garson or at least warn him that he's made big enemies.

Be Careful Who You Work For

Hook: The players are approached by a wealthy merchant for a high paying job. The merchant lost some valuable cargo when one of his ships was attacked by pirates.

Line: The cargo is a box of valuable magical ingredients (2,000,000 gp worth) on their way to the Western Empire. It was Garson's ship that captured the cargo and he is not likely to part with it easily.

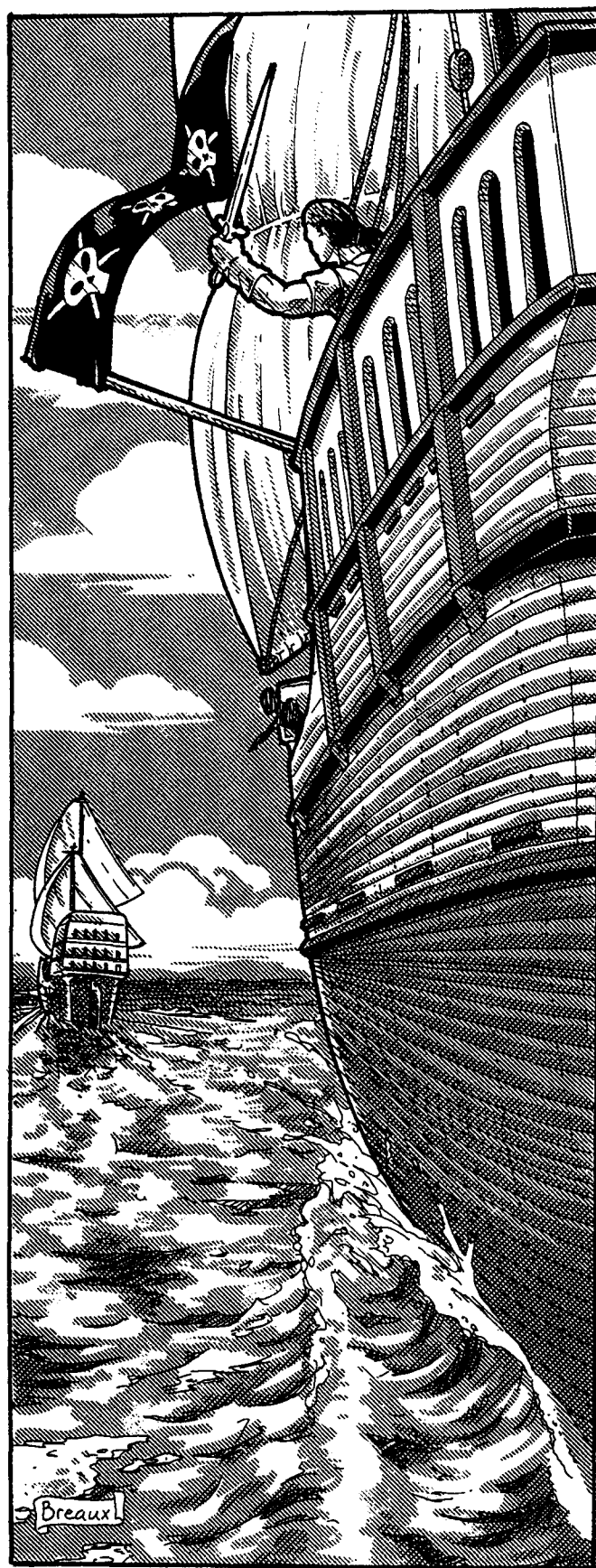
Sinker: The players thought they had problems just getting the cargo back from the pirates. When they do get their hands on the box they find out the merchant was lying about the contents. The merchant is really a spy for the Western Empire and the box contains copies of the Timiro battle plans if war broke out with the Western Empire.

Freedom

Hook: This is an adventure for a group of non-Human characters. The players start out the game as slaves.

Line: The players are being sent to the The **Floenry** Islands to be sold to the locals. For the Game Master, remember this is not a cruise ship so the trip should be hard on the players. A few days from the Islands the ship gets attacked by the "Grinning Skull" and the players are most likely freed.

Sinker: The players are free and now can go on their way or they can join the crew of the "Grinning Skull." If they join the crew. They will at least have an interesting career as pirates and they may eventually wind up running the show themselves.



Bartin Dimmic

Bartin's family was part of the Seaman's guild in the Timiro city of Credia. He was sent to sea at an early age to start his training in the guild. It was hard work, but he got travel all around the world. When he was fourteen he was sent to the Merchant College to get the formal training he needed to be an officer. To the joy of his parents he graduated from the college with high marks and promptly got his first posting.

His family had power and he had already spent several years at sea. Bartin was able to start as an Ensign on a merchant ship making runs from Timiro to the Western Empire and sometimes to the **Bizantium** Empire. Not much happened except the occasional run-in with sea monsters and he was lucky to be on a ship that never ran into pirates. After several years of this, Bartin had reached the rank of First Mate and was transferred to another ship.

This is where Bartin's run of good luck had its first major bump. The ship was caught in a very fierce and sudden storm on the way to the Bizantium Empire. The ship took heavy damage and a large number of the crew was washed over the side, including the captain. Bartin got the ship into a Western Empire port so they could lick their wounds, and because he needed time to choose a course of action. He repaired the ship and decided to finish the trip and then head home to make his report on what happened.

On his return he had to give a report on the voyage to the head of his guild. The head of the guild was impressed with his work and decided he would be useful for a special project they had started. The project was to have some of their crews pretend to be pirates to sink the merchant shipping of other groups that got in their way. Bartin was given command of a Merchantman ship "Dragons Tooth" and orders to attack Western Empire ships. He was also given orders to occasionally hit other **group's** ships so it wouldn't look too suspicious. He does try to avoid Timiro ships and treats them with kid gloves if he has to board one. Bartin mainly patrols the waters between the **Floenry** Islands and the Lands of the South Winds.

Name: Bartin Dimmic

Alignment: Unprincipled

O.C.C. & Experience: 5th Level Human Mariner.

Age: 39 Sex: Male

Height: 6 feet 2 inches **Weight:** 190 pounds

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 9, M.A. 14, P.S. 12, P.P. 15, P.E. 10, P.B. 17, Spd 11.

Hit Points: 24S.D.C.: 20

P.P.E.: 3

Description: Bartin is considered to be a rather handsome man, though he shows a certain amount of weathering from a life at sea.

Actions per Melee: 5; Hand to Hand: Basic

Bonuses: +1 to Strike, +2 to Parry and Dodge, +2 to Roll with Punch/Fall/Impact, +2 to Pull Punch, Karate style kick does 2D4 damage, Snap Kick does 1D6 damage.

Combat Skills: W.P. Archery, W.P. Blunt, W.P. Sword.

Skills of Note: Astronomy & Navigation 70%, Castaway/Shipwreck Survival 54%, Climb/Scale Walls 60%/55%, Flag Signaling 57%, Identify Sea Life 53%, Intelligence 46%, Interrogation Techniques 40%, Language: **Elven 60%**, Language: Human Eastern 98%, Literacy: Human Eastern 50%,

Lore: Sea 60%, Math: Basic 65%, Prowl 45%, Rope Works 55%, Sailing 70%/55%, Seamanship 61%, Sew 45% and Swim 70%.

Armor of Note: He hates wearing armor and only does so when absolutely necessary. When he does, he wears the standard armor of most seaman or at least the ones who can afford it. Leather of Iron (magic) with the following properties; A.R. 15, S.D.C. 60, Buoyancy, Weightless.

Weapons of Note: He usually keeps a Kobold Long Sword (+2 to Damage) at his side. Any other weapons on him will vary by his mood.

Underlings:

First Mate: James Hwang, 4th Level Human Mariner.

Second Mate: **Teri Franzen**, 5th Level Human Air Warlock.

Third Mate: Craig Gershen, 4th Level Human Sailor.

Other crew members of note: One 4th Level Water Warlock, Four 3rd Level Sailors, Ten 2nd Level Sailors.

Personal Wealth: 10,000 gold pieces saved up. His ship the "Dragons Tooth" does not actually belong to him, and is owned secretly by the guild.

Maybe We Should Have Walked

Hook: The players are for one reason or another on a Western Empire ship. At sea the ship is attacked and boarded by the "Dragons Tooth."

Line: The crew is taken prisoner and brought back to Timiro to be questioned about the activities of the Western Empire on the sea.

Sinker: If the players are from the Western Empire they will be questioned at length for what they know. If they had just been on the wrong ship at the wrong time they will be thrown in a dungeon. The problem both groups have is they face eventual execution to make sure the true power behind the "Dragons Tooth" remains a secret. Should the players manage to escape they will have some interesting news for the Western Empire.

Search for the "Dragons Tooth"

Hook: The players are hired by someone from the Western Empire to investigate the "Dragons Tooth" and find out why she is targeting mainly their ships.

Line: The safest way to find the "Dragons Tooth" is at port. Though if they use a ship from the Western Empire they may find them the hard way at sea and face combat with the "Dragons Tooth."

Sinker: It should be hard for the players to find out the truth about the "Dragons Tooth" but not impossible. Also the Seaman's guild behind the "Dragons Tooth" will do anything to make sure the news is not brought back to the Western Empire.

Merchant Wars

Hook: The players are traveling by ship but are currently at port. At the port they start to hear rumors that Timiro and Western Empire ships are attacking each other at sea.

Line: Before the players leave port they hear it's no longer a rumor but open warfare. The rest of the trip should be anything but safe with Timiro and Western Empire ships attacking each other on sight. So far no warships from either side have been involved but that will likely change soon.

Sinker: What do the players do? Do they join one of the sides of the fight? Help protect neutral parties caught in the cross fire? Do they try to come up with some way to stop the fighting before a full scale war starts?

Jarson Telep

Jarson was born to a small noble family living in the city of Old Timiro of the Timiro Kingdom. He was a good son studying and training hard so he could carry on the noble line of the family. This continued until his twentieth birthday. He surprised and shocked his family with an announcement he wanted to join the Timiro Royal Navy and see more of the world. His family debated it for days but it was decided Jarson could go play sailor for a few years but then he must return home.

He went to school to learn how to be an officer in the Royal Navy and excelled as usual. That is, until he made the mistake of falling in love, with a woman who was also desired by the son of a more powerful noble family. To make matters worse, the women in question fell in love with Jarson. The angered noble son, in a fit of anger, framed Jarson of an attempt to kill the school's headmaster. Jarson knew his chances of getting justice were slim so he fled from the school. Because of the charges and his actions he was disowned by his family.

Not knowing what to do, he joined up as a crew member of a small merchant ship that made runs between Timiro and the Western Empire. He sailed this route for years going back and forth, while at the same time getting harder and more bitter with every voyage. On a voyage during his third year working as a sailor, the ship he was on was captured by pirates. The pirate captain liked what he saw in Jarson and allowed him to join his crew.

Jarson took an immediate liking to the life of a pirate, and he quickly worked his way up the ranks of the ship. After a couple of years he made it to First Mate. When the captain got too old and tired to work, he retired and let Jarson buy out the ship. Jarson has continued to sail the ship in the waters around the Floenry Isles and Timiro Kingdom mainly intercepting ships traveling between Timiro Kingdom and the Western Empire. He treats his crew well so they will follow him anywhere he leads.

Name: Jarson Telep

Alignment: Anarchist (Selfish)

O.C.C. & Experience: 8th Level Human Pirate.

Age: 38 Sex: Male

Height: 6 feet 2 inches **Weight:** 180 pounds

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

Hit Points: 38 S.D.C.: 14

P.P.E.: 12

Description: Jarson is a man of average build. He has light brown hair with dark brown eyes. He also prefers to wear dark colored clothes. The usual expression on his face is a stern one, but he has a smile that reminds most who see it of a shark.

Actions per Melee: 5; **Hand to Hand:** Expert.

Bonuses: +2 to Strike, +3 to Parry, +3 to Dodge, +3 to Roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 to Pull punch, +1 to Initiative, +3 to Saving throw vs. horror factor, **Trust/Intimidate** 50%, Kick Attack does 2D4 S.D.C., Critical Strike on an unmodified 18, 19 or 20, Paired Weapons, Body throw/flip and disarm.

Combat Skills: W.P. Blunt, W.P. Grappling Hook, W.P. Knife, W.P. Sword.

Skills of Note: Astronomy & Navigation 70%, Athletics (general), Carpentry 65%, Castaway/Shipwreck Survival 63%, Climb/Scale Walls 85%/80%, Cook 65%, Fishing 65%, Flag Signaling 65%, Language: Elven 80%, Language: Human Eastern 98%, Literacy: Elven 70%, Literacy: Human Eastern 70%, Lore: Sea 65%, Math: Basic 85%, Prowl 65%, Rope Works 75%, Seamanship 65%, Sew 50%, Shipwright 59% and Swim 90%.

Armor of Note: He wears a suit of Leather of Iron (magic) with the following properties; A.R. 15, S.D.C. 150 and Weightless.

Weapons of Note: Jarson mainly uses a Dwarven Cutlass (+2 to parry and strike) and keeps a knife in each boot.

Underlings:

First Mate: Lawrence Stout, 7th Level Human Air Warlock.

Second Mate: Michael Falicov, 5th Level Elven Pirate.

Third Mate: Gasher, 6th Level Ogre Mercenary Warrior.

Other crew members of note: One 5th Level Air Warlock, one 6th Level Fire Warlock, one 4th Level Priest, one 5th Level Water Warlock, and ten 4th Level Pirates.

Personal Wealth: 31,000 in gold and owns the "Bleeding Cutlass", a Western Empire Caravel class ship.

The Bleeding Cutlass

Hook: The players are for one reason or another traveling on a ship. I'm leaving it up to the GM why they are on the ship but they will need to be on one for this HL&S.

Line: The player's ship is attacked by the "Bleeding Cutlass" and the crew is captured after a tough fight. Everyone on the ship is stripped of their possessions and herded on to the pirate ship.

Sinker: Captain Jarson plans to sell the crew of the captured ship into slavery. This leaves the players with two main options. They can try to escape, but this will be more difficult without their equipment. They can also choose to join the crew of the "Bleeding Cutlass." That is, if Jarson decides to trust them.

Bad Company Makes For a Bad Day

Hook: The players are on a ship traveling between the Timiro Kingdom and the Western Empire when a large storm strikes. The ship rides out the storm but takes heavy damage. The captain moors the ship in a small cove and sends some of the crew inland to start cutting tress down for the repairs.

Line: Not much farther down the cost line (about ten miles) Jarson has moored his ship for the same reason. With the crews so close together they are bound to bump into each other.

Sinker: What happens now will depend on how the players and pirates react to each other. The pirates may have slaves the players want to free or treasure they want to steal. The pirates will have about the same reasons to want to go after the players except they will want to make the players slaves.

When the Going Gets Tough, Go by Land

Note: Jarson is the reason for this adventure, but is not actively involved in it.

Hook: Because of all the problems with pirates lately (Jarson being one of the worst) some merchants have started shipping small but valuable cargo over land.

Line: The players are approached to work as guards for a merchant. A possible trip could be between the Timiro cities of Nisi and Credia. Normally this would be a short voyage by sea but will be a long trip on land. Any cities can be used but it should be one with a short sea route between them and a long land route.

Sinker: It should take several weeks for the trip. The players should face attacks by bandits and monsters along the way. Depending on the cargo all sorts of people could be interested in relieving the players of it.

Hacking, Cyberjacking and Supernatural Data Theft Across the Megaverse®

By Wayne Breaux

Official Rules for Rifts®, Heroes™ and the Megaverse®

This little romp through the computers of the megaverse is dedicated to all my online pals at Rise From Chaos (<http://www.warlock.mudservices.com>): Draco, Reaper, Arcturus, Christopher, Daemon, Fenris, Tifa, Pleiades, Estaban, and all the others I have yet to role-play with or might have forgotten. I just wish I had more time to help you guys protect Tolkeen. ;)

Wayne Breaux, Jr. (AKA Cashide Moin-Raudh)

Certainly computers are a familiar icon of our modern era, and hacking is a term easily associated with them. Hacking relies on a knowledge of computer programming and a cool head. From one end of a computer connection, the hacker takes apart the program codes of a computer on the other end of the connection to retrieve information, steal electronic money, sabotage databases, alter information, or indirectly manipulate people by placing and changing things within the machines. In most game settings, this is the only way that these kinds of operations can be handled; from a distance via a keyboard, limited by the speed of one's typing and the travel time of an electronic pulse across that distance and back again. (Note that hacking can be done directly on a given computer if the hacker has access to it. Going through a modem, the Internet or a network is not absolutely necessary.). Now, this system doesn't seem that slow to most of us who use it every day, but how would it compare to hacking that didn't require constant keyboard commands and had little or no delay due to distances?

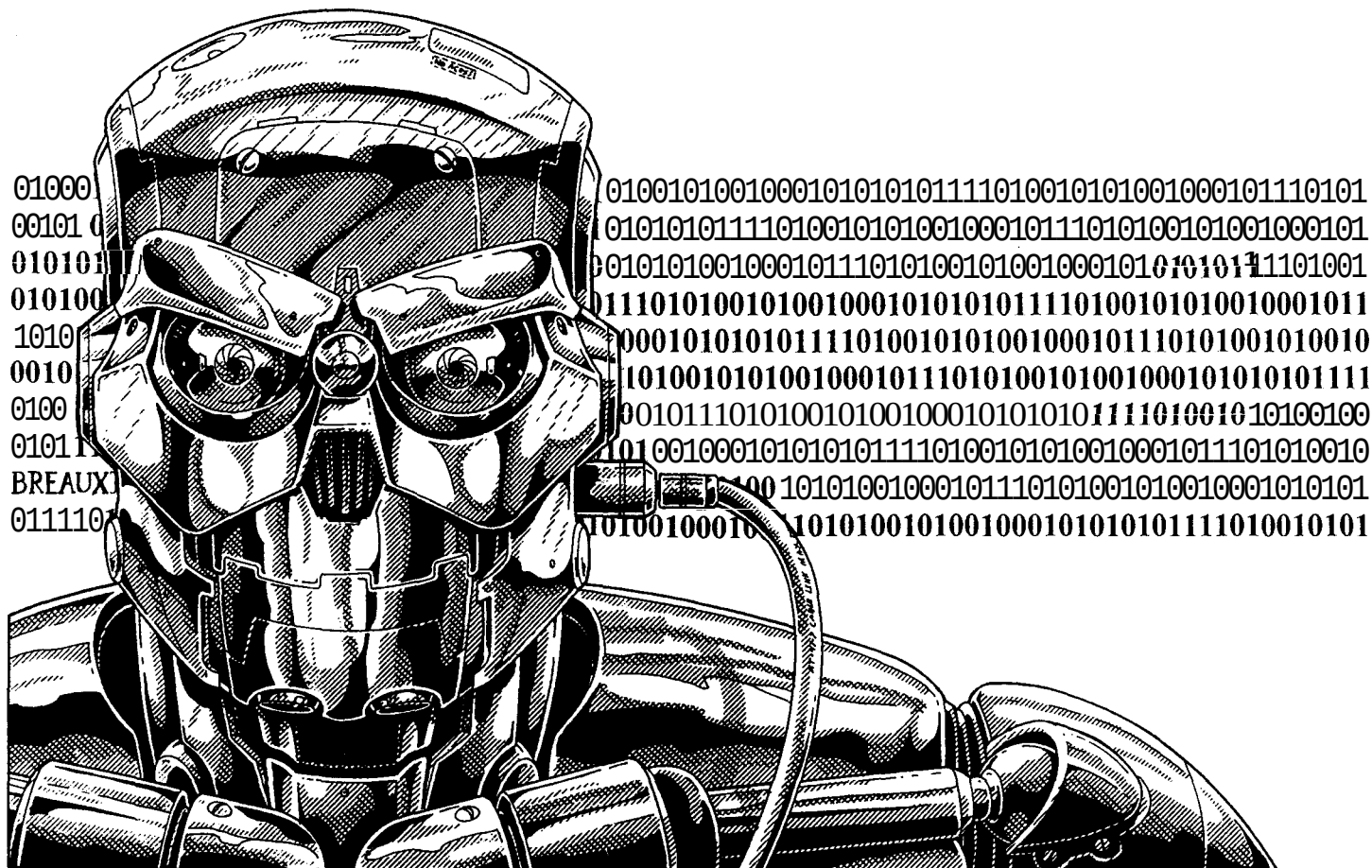
The cybernetic **headjack** was introduced in Rifts, but its use in that book was limited to sensory input with certain robotic

and scanning systems. Applying headjacks to the direct interfacing with computers was first described in Mutants in Orbit (MIO), a process known throughout the megaverse as **cyberjacking**. The MIO entry (which is reprinted below) was descriptive and concise, but provided little in the way of specific rules or expansion suggestions. Given the highly advanced, technical setting of Aliens Unlimited, I felt that the Galaxy Guide could use some expanded **hacking/cyberjacking** rules. As I set about writing them, I was surprised they had not been written before, especially with the presence of computers and other technical aspects of Rifts, Ninjas and Superspies, Heroes Unlimited, and Robotech. So, as a preview of the upcoming Galaxy Guide, and to add yet another element of adventure to your other trips through the Megaverse, here are some expanded rules for computer hacking and cyberjacking with some O.C.C.s tagged on. As always, I hope they add excitement and flavor to your gaming experience.

(Reprinted from Mutants in Orbit)

"Some computers allow their users to go beyond the normal "interface" of a keyboard, joystick or mouse, and to communicate directly with the computer via a socket ("dataplug" or "headjack") implanted in the back of their necks. This means that the computer operator's mind effectively enters the computer, seeing its memory and processors as a kind of virtual reality. Once accessed, the cyberjack can alter data, add data, change files, and redesign the computer's programs, all with his mind. If the computer is linked to others in a network...the user can communicate with other cyberjacks within the network..."

"Cyberjacking is much more direct and up to ten times faster than normal computer programming, but not without its perils: software bombs, viruses and Trojan horses may lurk within the computer's memory; other cyberjacks can ambush



you or design programs to trap your mind within the computer; and if the computer itself is artificially intelligent then anything might *happen*."

"Characters must have the computer operation skill to take *cyberjacking*..."

As the previous text explains, cyberjacking is the experience of actually **moving/walking** through a computer system with the use of a direct brain-to-hardware link via a **dataplug/headjack** (For those without the proper reference, the prices for **headjacks** are listed below). Once inside the electronic world, the cyberjack will normally find the data in each system arranged in neat columns and rows, forming patterns and planes of glowing data reminiscent of hallways, rooms, floors, and ceilings of a sort, but they do not always line up completely, leaving wide halls with no ceiling or offset planes that form multi-level floors or platforms. Electronic space is vast and black, even in small systems. The glowing data structures are located in a localized area with a dark vastness beyond it. This space, like the one surrounding our planet, normally has no "gravity," and the cyberjack can move in any direction as he makes his way through the data, though certain directories or security measures will block direct access in the virtual world as readily as they do so in the real world of physical interfacing. Different physical systems, such as multiple hard disks or a computer and its peripherals, appear to be linked by dark tunnels lit by pulses of energy. The **cyberjack** can simply walk down these tunnels or catch a ride on a passing bundle of energy to enter or access the other system (the same is true of networked computers). Needless to say, when the attached device is turned off, the "tunnel" connecting it to the computer simply does not exist. Even a cyberjack can-

not manipulate a device with its power off unless he can provide his own source of energy via psionic, magical, or supernatural ability (see later information on exactly which specific abilities allow this).

When someone **cyberjacks**, he has access to nearly any aspect of the computer with the speed of thought, giving a new dimension to hacking as the character grabs data almost as fast as the computer can process it, which gives the creative, adaptive living mind a tremendous edge. Traditional security, such as passwords, encryption and embedded directories rarely work against such formidable capabilities. For this reason, most powerful organizations and entities that rely heavily on computers have their own cyberjack security personnel and defensive **AIs** watching and patrolling their systems. These active measures serve the same function as their real world counterparts by directly surveying the data world on a regular basis, deterring intrusion by their presence, and responding immediately when a problem does occur. An additional perk to active security is that the security personnel are commonly skilled computer technicians and can double as repair personnel if problems should occur. The **AIs** that are used for security will have little or no ties to the system proper, and run as autonomous programs. This prevents any damage to the system itself should they be damaged, destroyed, or corrupted.

Active security aside, perhaps the strongest defense a system can have is a Reality Enforcement System. This system creates a graphical virtual environment that seals the computer's data constructs behind "solid" images of real world walls, doors, and passive security. These virtual walls and barriers can coincide with the data walls of an unenforced system, or they can be

completely independent. Regardless of its basic layout, the RES makes it impossible for a cyberjack (or any other operator) to access the system's data without conforming to the reality being enforced by the RES. This means that if a RES generated hallway has a door in it that leads to the personnel records, then anyone wanting to get to the personnel records has to go down that hall and through that door just as if they were doing it in the real world. Of course, certain backdoors can exist, and other programs will allow a cyberjack to get around the door, depending on if it has security on it, but at its heart, the RES makes accessing the realms of electronic space as challenging as if it took place in the real world. Just as any imaginable environment can be graphically represented in a video game, so too can the images of an RES look like anything; a medieval castle with **Orc** guards, a surreal landscape of alien forms, a super high tech **Atorian** command center, **Chi Town**, and on and on. The appearances are all up to the tastes of the owner and the talents of his programmers. The active defenses mentioned before are normally incorporated into the RES environment and given matching or at the least, complementary, graphical shells. (Campaign tip: RES systems can be used creatively to do a sort of facsimile time travel campaign when used with a group composed entirely of **cyberjackers**.) One final bit of info on RES: **cyberjacks** move through the generated environment as if actually there, while hackers move through the graphics seen on their screen.

A few notes on RES. First, they are almost exclusively housed in their own chips and send commands to the system through the CPU chip. What this means is that the reality enforced by the RES can not be altered or accessed unless control of the CPU has already been established, but by that point, altering the RES environment may be a moot **point....unless** it was the reason for accessing the system in the first place. Secondly, the RES determines the laws of physics for the computer system it is connected to. This means that any environment which can be dreamed up and programmed can exist in a RES. The computer systems of mad programmers, or those created by brain fried cyberjacks, can be disorienting and unsettling at the least; others can be downright dangerous. Not all do, but many RES also force visitors to conform to the environment by dressing them accordingly or, if the hacker has been discovered, revealing them with highlights or characteristic markings.

So, cyberjacking is leaps and bounds beyond traditional hacking, but what's the catch? Well, regardless of whether a cyberjack is hit by another jacker, an **AI** program, or passive defenses, the result is the same; cyberjack damage feeds back through the dataplug directly to the brain. Because of this, it is **frighteningly** easy to die in cybercombat. Any character "killed" in cyberjack combat immediately goes into a coma (unless they are permanently dead, as per the Palladium rules for such, in which case their brain dies and the body soon follows). The effect of a cyber-death manifests as memory loss and dullness of wits (permanently reduce **I.Q.** by 1 point for each cyber death) as well as brain damage (lower all skill percentages by 2% for each cyber death). Repeat **cyber-deaths** have cumulative effects as the character slowly lobotomizes himself. Sanitariums throughout the megaverse are filled with cyber-drones who thought they were better than they actually were, console cowboys too cocky to admit defeat, others who were addicted to the rush of the direct brain stimulation and cyberjacked until they're just a shell, and those few who gambled on that last big payoff

that didn't. Regardless of the reasons, the result is the same; the many little deaths in the cyber realm only serve to weaken the cyberjack. Like an old program in a new system, they continue to degrade until they have so many problems they can't function **anymore...or** they simply crash with one final, fatal error. In addition to these penalties, the Game Master should also require a random insanity roll for each cyber-death, as over-stimulation causes the brain to react in strange ways. Phobias are common, especially for cyber-deaths in a RES where a face can be put on the **'jack's** killer, as are obsessions, specifically the drive to beat or get back at the system that caused a particular cyber-death. With all of this in mind, burnt out cyberjackers can be some of the most unnerving people one can meet with their quirky, often insane personalities and brain damage that can no longer be hidden.

Cyberjacking and Hacking Across the Megaverse®

Depending on what game setting you are currently adventuring in, there will be a few differences in what to expect when hacking or cyberjacking. Perhaps the biggest point of mention is the impact of magic, psionics, and super abilities on electronic adventuring. In their respective settings, these factors are as impressive in cybernetic space as any **cyberjacker**, and some are even more so. Each setting and genre will have its own terms for these radical elements, such as **Cybermancers** for practitioners of magic, **Psychers** or **Psibers** for psionics, and just about anything for super powered data dancers. **Now**, while these differing methods of entering cybernetic space are not statistically different, their presence in the data realm will certainly spice things up. Now that all the options are on the table so to speak, what can one expect in any given campaign as far as opposition in the data realm?

Robotech: Except for the rare cybernetics of the **Invid**, the magic of the **Perytonians**, unique robots (like Janice, Veidt, and **Sarna**) and the psionics of the Regis and Regent (all of which are largely unavailable to player characters), Robotech has no exceptional or supernatural means of accessing the electronic space inside a computer. All hacking in such a setting will therefore be via traditional hacking techniques. The available equipment, however, will be slightly more advanced than that of our world, including very small yet powerful laptops, portable storage mediums like one inch laser discs with the capacity of dozens of normal CDs, and satellite access. The only major limit on hackers in Robotech is the state of the world. Obviously, Invid Invasion scenarios will not have many notable computer networks, while Sentinels could have fantastical alien systems with full RES to augment them.

Ninjas and Superspies: Unless some kind of crossover campaign is going on, Ninjas and Superspies will have only traditional and cyberjack hackers. In this setting, cyberjacks will be powerful forces, **AIs** will be rare, and RES systems will likely be common corporate assets. Much like Robotech, N&S will have traditional equipment, but slightly more advanced than our own. On top of that, gizmoteers and high tech corporations can easily create other variants on traditional setups that make hacking easier or more convenient.

Beyond the Supernatural: Though BTS does have the possibility for psionic and even magical hackers, they will be rare,

and traditional hacking will be found almost exclusively in such campaigns. In addition, except for extremely rare government experiments, there will be no **cyberjackers**; however, when these rare electronic terrors do show up, they should add flavor to the game by horrifying those who can't easily keep up with their abilities. The equipment in BTS will mimic that of our own. Laptops will be available, but they will perform much like their real world counterparts, and advanced models of any tech will be rare and likely introduce their own element of horror into the game.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: TMNT will either be set in a normal world setting much like **BTS/Heroes Unlimited**, or in a post apocalyptic scenario as described in *After the Bomb*. In the former setting, the situation will be very much like that of BTS, with very rare appearances of anything other than traditional hackers. A **Heroes Unlimited** type campaign will differ very little from BTS unless it actually has super powered elements, in which case it will mimic that of **Heroes Unlimited** as noted below. In an *After the Bomb* setting there will be very limited, heck, practically no computer networks outside the Empire of Humanity. On the other hand, inside the Empire, headjacks will be a real possibility, and **cyberjacks** could threaten any hackers brave enough to enter those systems. The available equipment in TMNT will reflect the setting it is played in. Laptops will be super rare in an after the bomb setting, but very common in a more real world setting.

Heroes Unlimited: More so than any other setting, save **Rifts**, **Heroes Unlimited** has the most potential for a very lively and dangerous electronic universe. Not only does it have a number of hacker oriented power categories, but it also has psionic, magical, robotic, bionic and super powered hackers adding to the mix. Many of the sensitive computers that characters will have to access without permission will have the possibility of some form of advanced security, whether it is technological or supernatural. Duels and rivalries in the data realm can add spice to a campaign, not to mention what they do for the character development of the hacker. Reality Enforcing Systems will be expensive, but nearly every major corporation and the government or military will be able to afford one, as will many major super villains. This kind of campaign has a lot of potential for high stakes action within cybernetic space. The equipment a hacker can choose from here will be much like that of *Ninjas and Superspies*. It will be pretty close to what we have now, but some advancements and prototypes will exist, especially when a hardware character is about.

One step beyond **Heroes Unlimited** is a campaign set out in the Milky Way Galaxy as detailed in *Aliens Unlimited*. In such a setting, the tech is advanced, computers and vast computer networks are more common, and electronic data is much more plentiful and much more valuable. High tech and supernatural computer security will be more common, and nearly everyone can afford RES systems. It can easily be seen why this information seemed perfect for that setting as I was expanding it for the *Galaxy Guide*. The equipment level in a galactic campaign is one of the highest. There will be palm computers as powerful as our real world personal computers, gauntlet systems that require no keyboards, VR **accessories**, and tons of other helpful gadgets. The imagination is the limit, especially for certain special training and hardware power categories.

Rifts: Similar to **Heroes Unlimited**, **Rifts** has great potential for the hacker / **cyberjacker**. The tech is higher than **Heroes**, and the magic and supernatural more plentiful, plus it has a plethora of alien races and their accompanying tech to further spice up the stew. The only failing here is the overall lack of unified computer networks and other long ranging communications. Adventures in the computer web aren't hampered by this within specific geographic locations, but hacking **Triax** from North America might be a bit difficult, if not impossible. Of course, hacking **Triax** might not be a wise move in the first place, but it just might be necessary. Equipment wise, **Rifts** rivals **Aliens Unlimited** and the galactic campaign; however, the tech here will be more diverse and less localized. Where in **Aliens Unlimited** you might stop off at the nearest large space station to shop a store full of VR accessories, in **Rifts** one might have to visit a number of specialty shops across the Coalition states, or take a trip over to the New German Republic to find the same selection or goodies.

Please note that the above observations are generalizations and not absolutes. I could have mentioned a number of exceptions and possible adventure ideas within each setting, but that could fill a book, so take what's here as a crude core for your campaigns, then add your own imagination and have some fun.

The Rules

Game Masters can use any applicable penalties given in this section and some regular skill rolls with computer operation and computer programming to handle normal hacking situations, but to add some spice to a game or in settings where cyberjackers are present, the expanded combat and **hacking/cyberjacking** rules should be used. Looking over the rules and bonuses below, it should quickly be obvious that traditional hackers pale when compared to cyberjackers unless outfitted with loads of virtual reality accessories. Only the very best of hackers can stand on their own against those augmented by advanced technologies or supernatural abilities.

The most important thing about hacking is the ability to understand and modify computer code and programs. Computer operation lets you operate a computer, its peripherals, and most common software. It does include, in some cases, a rudimentary understanding of **programming**, but such knowledge will only benefit you when tweaking your own system on a very basic level and has no impact on hacking. Computer programming is an in depth understanding of how to make computers do things by writing code for it in the form of programs. This skill adds strength to hacking and is the core of it, but computer programming is very different from hacking. The skill can be substituted for hacking, but all hacking rolls in such a situation will be at -5%. Hacking is the practiced application of flexible programming with the intention of accessing computer systems other than **one's** own (hacking is not necessary for operations within one's own computer; computer security personnel hardly ever have any hacking skills). It is less formal and more "seat of the pants" than simple programming and requires a certain flair, thus it is categorized as a separate skill. What this means is that games without the Hacking skill should add it if these expanded rules are to be used. Computer Hacking is a Rogue skill (or Technical for those games without the Rogue category in its skill selections) that adds a one time bonus of +5% to the cryptography, surveillance systems, and locksmith skills (if they are

among the character's known skills). It has a base percentage of **15%** and increases by +5% per level of experience. Prerequisites include literacy, computer operation, and computer programming.

Now, as mentioned before, programming is the heart of hacking. Any effect you wish to pull off in the data realm takes the form of a program (unless you are actually inside cybernetic space which is detailed in the specific advanced methods of hacking below). All you can do is look, unless you actively attempt to make the system do something, even if it is as simple as switching directories. Entering commands is a simplistic form of coding, but it's nothing compared to the real stuff that makes the spectacular effects. Thus, if a hacker wants to prowl away from electronic security, a program would be needed to disappear or hide by telling the target system to ignore him. Thus each skill, weapon, or piece of equipment used is actually a program telling the target system how to react to the hacker's presence (it's actually a bit more involved than that, but we're keeping it simple here).

In traditional hacking, this level of programming isn't necessary. Hacking rolls are made against the security level of the system being hacked with the proper penalties applied; however, when hacking a RES system where the normally simple laws of the data realm are complicated by artificial rules, more intensive interaction becomes necessary, and programs to duplicate skills, weapons, and other items usually unnecessary in the data world become necessary. If the character prepares specific programs beforehand, such as the prowl skill mentioned previously, a simple roll based on the effectiveness of the program is all that is necessary to perform the desired skill when it is needed later in cyberspace. The actual rating of the program, except for weapons, is equal to half the percentage of the computer programming skill. Thus, a hacker with 65% computer programming could easily write 32% skill level programs, be they surveillance system emulators or prowl equivalents. The percentage of these programs can be raised, but the roll to write them suffers a -5% penalty for each +10% added (max of 92%). Writing programs on the spot can be done, but it is quite difficult. There is a -30% penalty to whip up instant programs (takes 1 melee round). The time required to write other programs is left up to the Game Master, but 1D4 hours plus one hour for each 5% penalty is a good guideline (remember the character still has to work and live a normal life around this time). Special equipment like grapple guns or smoke bombs can also be programmed this way, but lacking a skill rating, most of them will only require a simple skill roll to duplicate.

As one can imagine, especially if they have ever played a computer game, nearly anything can be done with a program. In cyberjacking and hacking, this means spells and psionic abilities can be mimicked with the right program. These special effects are more difficult than skills to **duplicate**, starting at one quarter of the programming skill with the same penalty to increase the percentage. Thus, the 65% skill in the previous example being used to duplicate a Charismatic Aura spell would result (on a successful roll) in such a program with an 16% success rate. If the program fails its **16%** skill check when used, it would fail to run properly and have no effect; however, successful rolls follow the spellcasting rules for the spell they are copying which might entitle the target to a saving throw. To keep things simple in his case, use the normal magic or psionic rules for these type

of effects even though they are not actually magical or psionic effects. The saving throws represent the unorthodox nature of the effects and the difficulty of implementing them. Note that actual spell use within the data realm uses its own rules (see below).

The simple rules for passive computer security are actually the basic rules for computer hacking, including penalties as presented in *Heroes Unlimited*, *Beyond the Supernatural*, and a few other Palladium supplements. Once again, hacking only requires a few skill rolls. Only when cyberjacking, supernatural hacking, or RES come into play do the more complicated rules have to be used. Systems are generally layered, with light security increasing to much heavier types as the heart of the system or sensitive data is approached. This setup and the penalties below are the basis of all computer systems. RES and active security are added or layered on top of it. The penalties reflect the complexity and difficulty of each job. Note that each of the listed times are much less than those listed in *Heroes Unlimited* because the latter times are for breaking the entire system in one roll. The system given here represents the separate stages that form the single roll system of *Heroes Unlimited*. Depending on the layers and complexity of the computer system set up by the Game Master, the individual times may or may not add up to the times given for the single roll system. In addition, depending on the information the character is going after, hacking a system like the Pentagon might not require actually penetrating the super sophisticated military security if what you are looking for is located on one of the lesser security areas of the system.

-10% Simple security such as passwords and other general ID. Requires one melee action per attempt to pass.

-20% Moderate security such as unique or specialized requirements. Requires one melee round per attempt to pass.

-40% Sophisticated security such as minor encryption and code recognition. Requires one minute (4 melee rounds) per attempt.

-50% Super sophisticated security such as encrypted passwords and codes or isolated system elements. Requires 5 minutes per attempt to pass.

-60% Superior military or government security. Requires 20 minutes per attempt to pass.

-10% Unknown or prototype code.

-5% Rolls inside a RES.

This system is used to move from one security zone to another (or back again). Failing a roll against passive security means that moving on is impossible, but it can also mean that tons of active security measures have been called to your location. Responses and roles of passive security will vary from system to system. If any kind of active security is encountered, then actual combat will occur as detailed in the next few paragraphs.

Cyberjack weapons are actually a combination of power surges and damaging programs. They do damage based on the creator's level in the computer programming skill. Those characters without computer programming can buy pre-programmed cyber-weapons, but those weapons will not operate within the system of the person who did the programming. Cyber-weapons usually appear as a weapon relative to their damage (a knife or **pistol** for small damages and rune weapons or field guns for larger damage ratings), and they do **1D6** damage per level of the

programmer. For each D6 of damage it does, there is a -2% penalty to the computer programming roll to create it. For this reason, most such weapons are programmed to do **3D6** or **4D6** damage even if the programmer is high enough level to make much larger weapons. Ranged cyber-weapons have a payload equal to the character's computer programming percentage divided by the number of die it does for damage. For example, a programmer with a 78% programming skill could make a **1D6** damage pistol with 78 shots, a **6D6** rifle with 13 shots, a **1D6x10** rail gun with 8 shots, etc. Melee weapons do not have charges or ammo. Once the payload of a weapon has been expended, another loaded weapon must be used, or the character can attempt to reload the empty one by making a computer programming roll (takes two actions). A cyberjacker can carry any number of weapons, unlike the limits of encumbrance in the real world. Those characters who can not program their own cyber-weapons can purchase them for around 1,000 credits/dollars per dice of damage, meaning the rail gun in the example above would cost 10,000 credits/dollars. The damage and payload of the weapon does not go up with the character's level or percentage. To take advantage of level advancement increases, another, better weapon must be created, requiring a computer programming roll with appropriate modifiers.

Cyberjack combat works just like any combat in Palladium, with a melee round composed of several strikes, parries, or dodges. The only major differences is that it is normally mental combat, with no physical bonuses. Hand-to-hand skills have no effect, and neither do physical skills or bonuses. Even characters that are actually inside the data realm by virtue of supernatural means will only have access to a small part of their physical bonuses (they do not use any of the rules below for determining number of attacks or other bonuses; consult the specific entries for their means of access for details).

To determine the strike, parry and dodge bonuses in the data realm, instead of P.P., use the character's **I.Q.** rating, but slide down the chart to the P.P. bonuses to get the actual bonus number. An additional bonus to strike, parry, and dodge comes from dividing the character's computer programming or hacking skill percentage by 24 (i.e., a skill percentage of 80% is a +3 bonus; round fractions down). In addition, all characters also gain an **additional +1** to all of their rolls at levels 3, 8, 11, and 14 (Note that this is the actual level of their hacking or computer programming skill, and may not equate to their actual experience level if they were taken at later levels as additional skills). Other bonuses come from specific supernatural abilities or specialized equipment (see below for descriptions).

The change from physical based combat to mental/electronic also means a change in the number of attacks. Hackers only have two attacks per melee round regardless of their normal physical attacks per melee round. Additional attacks are gained at levels 3, 8, 11 and 15. The lack of hand to hand skills (the only skill that can not be programmed) also means that unless some special ability imparts automatic parrying, each parry costs an attack. On top of all these bonuses, if the character has computer programming but does not possess the computer hacking skill, all combat rolls are at a -2 penalty and they lose one attack per melee round unless they are within their own computer system.

Now the really rough part; all attacks do damage direct to the character's hit points if he is cyberjacking or otherwise directly connected to the system! For some reason, this effect can not be stopped or cut off, but filters have been developed to minimize it. **Cyberjacks** affectionately refer to these filters as "armor". There is no S.D.C. in cyberspace unless the character has purchased filters. The only exception to these rules are **AI's** (not transferred intelligences, but actual computer intelligences) which can have their CPU chips hardened to provide S.D.C. against cybernetic damage, and those who are physically inside the computer. **AIs** can use filters in addition to their hardened CPUs. Hackers and those not directly connected to the system do not take damage, but the cumulative damage inflicted by the active security is converted into a percentage, which is rolled at the end of each round to see if the hacker's system is damaged enough to crash. If the system crashes, it means that security forced the hacker's computer to corrupt itself, but not before broadcasting its location to the wrong people (if such has not been determined previously through other means). All cyber-combat is S.D.C. combat. In the rare cases where M.D.C. creatures enter the computer world physically (via super ability or psionics), they receive no S.D.C., only their M.D.C. as hit points.

If a character is physically inside a computer, and they are knocked unconscious, they are immediately ejected from the system into the real world by way of the nearest outlet for such (including shorting out the computer system in some cases), which increases the length of time they are unconscious by 4D6 minutes. Characters physically inside a computer that are put into a coma through **cyber-combat** do not suffer cyber-death; instead, they experience the same process as if they had been knocked unconscious, and upon being dumped into the real



world, they will suffer a -20% penalty to their recovery rolls for surviving the coma. This kind of hacker is **powerful**, but failure can often be worse than cyber-death.

And while we are talking about KOs and comas, here are a few tidbits on what happens when someone pulls the plug while you are inside a system (whether physically or electronically). Hackers that use keyboards suffer no adverse effects when the system they are hacking is shut off. **Cyberjackers** and others linked to the electronic world, but not physically inside the data realm, that are cut off in mid-hack will be stunned for **2+1D4** melees when their link is abruptly severed. During this time, the character can do little because of **disorientation**, and any actions performed are done so at -4 or -10% for skills. Those supernatural hackers that physically enter the computer world suffer a bit more when their electronic reality is ripped away by power loss. They are ejected physically from the computer (as if knocked out, possibly putting them right in the middle of the enemy's home turf), stunned (just like **cyberjackers**, but for twice the duration), and suffer 2D6 damage direct to hit points.

Cyberjacking and Supernatural Hacking

Now on to the bonuses and details for each specific super ability, psionic power, and magical edge as well as some technological means of **cyberjacking**. A number of these methods can be combined depending on the campaign setting, such as a Hardware: Electrical Genius character in Aliens Unlimited getting a **headjack**, or a Rifts **cybermancer** getting a similar implant. Note that Nighthane can not get cybernetic implants due to their shape shifting nature, however, with Game Master approval the character's **morphus** might have a **headjack** if it has a cybernetic head as one of its morphus traits. All of the listed bonuses are cumulative, and just about all of the abilities can be combined (within common sense and the limits of the game world). The most notable exception to this is the **headjack** and the supernatural abilities of Lightning Rider, Metamorphosis: Energy and Alter Physical Structure: Electricity. Since the latter three abilities actually take the character physically into the computer system, a **headjack** to interface with the computer would be of no use to them. Note that those hackers that physically enter the digital world take their clothes and some equipment with them (no more than 50 pounds worth), but only energy or melee weapons will function within the electronic realm.

Looking over the bonuses, one can easily see that keyboard hackers are at an obvious disadvantage in the stat department. These characters will just have to make up for their limitations with increased skill and creativity. Carrying a large variety of weaponry and gadgets or "skill" programs is also a good idea. And finally, perhaps the greatest advantage of the keyboard hacker: they do not have to worry about cyber-death.

Headjacks and the supernatural methods detailed below can be used to access any computer, including targeting computers for vehicle weapons and security computers that control the cameras and automated guns of a building. In these **cases**, the character uses the same bonuses (those that are applicable) as for hacking, such as the strike bonus when controlling weapons. Those bonuses are added to any other applicable weapon or surveillance bonuses (yes, the listed computer bonuses for each

method of hacking can be added to the surveillance systems skill when operating automatic cameras in this manner). The computer bonuses listed below can also be applied to vehicle skills if the vehicle can be completely controlled by a computer, such as a spacecraft or futuristic hover car.

Headjack

The **headjack** is the simplest way for a hacker to gain a tremendous advantage in the cybernetic realm, but only if the game setting supports bionic technology. Using a **headjack** to augment an interface provides +2 to strike, +3 to parry, and +3 to dodge in addition to adding two extra attacks per melee round. It also provides the character with the ability of automatic parry in combat. A **headjack** also effectively adds +10% to a character's computer hacking or computer programming skill, but only for the purpose of defeating passive security. Any damage taken in **cyber-combat** uses the rules given previously. People who use **headjacks** are referred to as **cyberjacks**.

Hardware - Electrical

These characters are such natural computer operators that, despite their more traditional means of hacking, they gain a certain edge when data jockeying. Add a bonus of +1 to all of their combat rolls, and add an additional attack when they reach third level. The Super Sleuth gains no additional bonuses beyond their very high starting skill in hacking and possible I.Q. bonuses. Unless these hackers are using a **headjack**, they do not suffer damage from cyber-combat; instead, it is applied to their system (see the combat rules).

Psionics

There are a number of psionic abilities which can enhance the effectiveness of a hacker, but always keep in mind that each psi-power requires I.S.P. to fuel it, and each also has a limited duration. Those two factors combined can make a simple hack an expensive venture for the psychic. All of the bonuses given for the psi-powers are cumulative if the psychic can afford to have them active at one time. All in all, the limited ranges of the psi-powers makes a Psiber most effective at hacking computers he actually has physical access to, but they do give somewhat of an edge to long range hacks, especially when compared to those without psionic assistance.

Telekinesis

Allows the hacker to perform actions without leaving his seat or taking his hands off of the keyboard, which can be very handy in switching disks or activating peripherals while engaged in combat or some other delicate endeavor. It is handy, but gives no notable edge, so bonuses are low: +1 to dodge and +2% to skill rating for defeating passive security. Automatic parry is also a benefit of this psi-power.

Sixth sense

Has no effect on hacking unless the computer being hacked is within 90ft of the hacker. In the latter case, the power will function normally.

Speed Reading

An invaluable tool for someone who has to get in fast and leave even faster while being careful doing it. Speed reading adds +1 to parry and dodge along with a +10% to the computer skill against passive security.

Total Recall

Most effective on systems the character has penetrated or encountered before. This includes avoiding security on the way out of the system. It adds +5% to the computer skill while hacking, and when facing a system or opponent that has been encountered before, it gives +1 to strike and parry plus an additional +5% to the computer skill (for the latter bonuses, the ability must be activated).

Electrokinesis

Similar in its application to telekinesis, this ability will mostly be helpful in increasing the performance of one's own computer by freeing the hands for typing, yet still being able to perform other activities; however, when the computer being hacked is within the character's range (45ft+5ft per level), the electrical discharge and electrical resistance abilities can be focused into the system to aid in cybernetic combat. In this unique situation, the discharge does 5D6 (but costs 4 I.S.P. instead of 2), and the character's resistance acts as medium **cyber-armor** (see below) for 3 melees per level of experience. Bonuses are otherwise minimal: +1 to parry, +1 to dodge and automatic parry. When within range of the other computer, double the bonuses and add +5% to the computer skill against passive security.

Tele-mechanics

This is the most powerful hacking tool of the Psiber. It too is limited by range, but even if the hacker can not get access to the target computer, this ability gives such mastery of his own system (by eliminating the delay of using a keyboard) that he can move easily and quickly through most defenses. If the Tele-mechanic Psiber can get within range of the target computer, use the bonuses for the lightning rider talent given later; otherwise, the following bonuses and benefits are gained: add two additional attacks per melee round, +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, automatic parry and +15% to computer skills against passive security. Tele-mechanics allows for mental communication with a computer, but not control of it, so data must still be hacked (unless, of course, there is no security on it).

Talents

There are only two Nightbane talents that have any notable effect on hacking, and both are, at the least, impressive. Nightbane who use these talents to hack are commonly called Net Demons or similar combinations of horror and electronic slang.

Lightning Rider

The ultimate hacking tool, this talent allows the Nightbane to actually enter the computer system without a computer of his own and manipulate target systems directly. It is an impressive ability that allows the Nightbane to use all of his physical abilities, bonuses, and S.D.C. in the **cyber-realm**. No additional bonuses are gained, but that should not cripple or hinder the 'bane in combat; however, the lack of a computer to hack with means that no filters can be used (and real world armor does not work in cyberspace). The fact that a lightning rider uses no computer to hack also means that no programs can be used. Only the character's own skills are available. Now, this also means that no computer skills are technically needed to hack; however, such a lack of skills would preclude the penetration of passive security and is not recommended if one wants to be a successful hacker.

Deus Ex Machina (Machine Control):

This ability and its bonuses are identical to **Electrokinesis**, minus the electrical discharge and electrical resistance, but with a much longer range. Deus Ex Machina and Lightning Rider can be used simultaneously with cumulative bonuses (Yes, add the bonuses to the already impressive ones of the **morphus** while inside a computer), and since the lightning rider is within the computer system, it is always within range of this ability. In addition, if both talents are used in conjunction, the hacker can turn peripherals and linked computers on from inside the system if they are within his range. Thus a hacker with both of these talents that needs to get into the computer of a Nightlord controlled general might have to hack into his secretary's system, then turn his machine on (if it is within range) to reach it through a network or direct cable connection.

Super Abilities

There are two notable super abilities that will affect hacking. Of all the supernatural means of hacking, these are the most powerful because they are not limited by range and can bring their full effects to bear on even the most distant of computers. Additionally, neither of them has a duration, nor must anything be spent to maintain them. Super powered hackers are some of the most effective data thieves and saboteurs, ranking right alongside robots and AIs.

Alter Physical Structure

Electricity: This ability is very much like Lightning Rider with many of the same strengths and all of the same limitations, plus an additional one. This ability is not as focused or passive as Lightning Rider. It is aggressive and hard hitting, something one can see by simply looking over the things it can do. In addition to the character using all of his physical abilities, all of his attacks in cyberspace add +10 to their damage. Because the character is actually within the computer, the electrical attacks listed under this ability can be used against active security, but it also means that (like Lightning Rider), no programs can be used, and the characters must rely on their own skills. Again, it also means they can not use filters and must rely on their own S.D.C.

Mechano-Link

This is simply the ultimate hacking asset. **Mechano-link** allows those who possess it to completely ignore passive security and automated active security (such as search programs and simple attack AIs like automated weapon programs). The only obstacle to this kind of hacker is high end, active security like other hackers and intelligent AIs, but even when faced with such opponents, the Mechano-link hacker has massive bonuses, including three additional attacks per melee, +3 to strike, +4 to parry, and +4 to dodge. Additionally, they have both automatic parry and automatic dodge abilities.

If both Mechano-link and alter physical structure: electricity are combined, the bonuses for this ability are added to the character's physical abilities while inside a computer system. This is the most powerful hacking ability and when combined with one of the second most powerful abilities, the hacker is almost unstoppable (sheesh, just look at the seven attacks at first level for the average character with this combo).

Energy Resistance

This minor super ability protects any **cyberjacker** using it in much the same manner as a filter. It provides no bonuses, but **functions** normally against **cyber-combat** damage, absorbing the first 20 points of damage in each melee round.

Extraordinary Physical Prowess, Extraordinary Speed and Multiple Limbs

Each of these super abilities increases the speed at which a hacker can type, and thus increases his performance slightly (they can also aid a character physically inside a computer, and thus the bonuses are available to Alter Physical Structure: Electricity characters). Each of the three abilities adds +1 to strike and +1 to dodge in cyber-combat. If two of the three are combined, the bonuses increase to +1 to strike, +1 to parry, and +2 to dodge. Anyone lucky enough to have all three gains an additional, +2 to strike, +2 to parry, and +2 to dodge.

Magic

Magic and technology do not normally mix well, except for the specialized techno-wizard magic of Rifts. Some advanced societies that have developed magic alongside high technology have developed ways of combining the two in a manner different than that of the techno-wizard. The use of spells to hack has the same drawbacks found in psionics: duration is limited, and the cost of casting and maintaining the supernatural augmentation is rather high. **Cybermancers** are indeed rare, but those who can manage to combine the mystical and technological arts are impressive within cyberspace to say the least. While inside a computer (by using Metamorphosis: Energy), the **cybermancer** can use his physical abilities with the limits explained below. This means that spells can be thrown normally, but gamemasters should use some common sense. For example, Fireball will work normally because computers and heat don't mix well (note that the fireball does not take up its normal area of affect, it manifests within the physics of the data realm which is the magicians current reality and the effects are proportional), but Extinguish Fire will not work on a digital fire (though real in appearance, it is actually an electronic based **thing...ofcourse**, Energy Disruption cast on the fire would extinguish it). If the gamemaster will be allowing a cybermancer in his campaign, it might be a good idea to go through the spell list and make notes on what spells will work at all, and how the others that do will actually function (The same goes for super abilities and talents).

Techno-wizard computers: By enchanting computers to run on mystical energy and allowing them to function via telepathic commands instead of a keyboard, the TW Cybermancer speeds up the operation to a level somewhere between using a headjack and that of actually entering the computer. The bonuses are impressive: two additional attacks per melee, +2 to strike, +2 to parry, +3 to dodge, automatic parry and +15% to computer skills against passive security. All other hacking rules are unchanged, except for a note on filters. Normal filter programs can be used, but enchanting the TW computer with an armor of ithan spell provides an A.R. of 16 and S.D.C. of 95 (**Yes**, it does differ from the actual stats of the spell when applied this way).

Machine Empathy (New Spell)

Range: **25ft+5ft** per level; Duration: 10 minutes + 1 minute per level; Saving Throw: Requires a willing target; **P.P.E.**: 15;

Level: Considered a fifth level spell. This spell magically links the target with a nearby electronic machine, allowing him to communicate with it. If the machine is not self aware, but still capable of an array of tasks (like a computer), the spell recipient can interact with it as if using some kind of input device, but at a much faster and more efficient rate. Self aware computers and artificial intelligences can be conversed with, but not given orders or controlled. The spell is very much like a form of organic to machine telepathy. It is very much like Tele-mechanics in its results, but it does not impart the complete working knowledge that its psionic equivalent does. The spell recipient can quickly learn a lot about the machine through the link he shares with it, but his knowledge of it will only be about 30% (compared to the 88% of Tele-mechanics). The bonuses when hacking with the Machine Empathy spell are the same as those for Tele-mechanics.

Metamorphosis: Energy (New Spell - Ritual Only)

Range: 50ft; Duration: 30 minutes + 2 minute per level; Saving Throw: Requires a willing target; **P.P.E.**: 125; Level: Considered an eleventh level spell. This spell was specifically designed to allow someone to physically enter a computer. The spell is designed to emulate Lightning Rider, but it is not an exact copy. It is only available as a ritual, and the person it transforms is immediately transported into a computer (which must be nearby). The spell faithfully emulates the ability of Lightning Rider to take a person physically into the phone lines and cables of any computer network, but it lacks the offensive capabilities of the talent and once transformed, the target **'must'** enter and remain inside a computer or other data transfer device (like phone lines) until the duration ends. Leaving the data realm ends the spell immediately. Use the bonuses listed above for Lightning Rider when hacking with the Metamorphosis: Energy spell. The spells duration can be extended for another full duration by the expenditure of another **125 P.P.E.**

Energy Disruption

This spell can be used by a character that is inside a computer (see Metamorphosis: Energy) as a rather effective form of attack. When targeting an opponent (that fails its save), the spell disrupts it for the duration of its effect. The drawback and main reason this spell should be used carefully is that after the time has passed, the affected target immediately reappears to once more conduct its duties (like hunt down the hacker if he is still in the system). This spell can also be used to completely shut down a system, but the character must be inside the system to do such and suffers the normal effects of a system shut down.

Robots and Artificial Intelligences

Robots with a modem connection can use that accessory as a headjack. The electronic nature of the robot's brain (even transferred intelligences use computer hardware to process thoughts into actions) makes them naturals in communicating with other computers. Like the Tele-mechanic and **mechano-Link** hackers, robots have an amazing kinship with other computers, but unlike **mechano-link** and much like a computer taking commands from a human hacker, the robot must still fight through security. Regardless, a robot's computer nature makes it a much more natural hacker than a human, with bonuses that include three additional attacks per melee, +2 to strike, +3 to parry, +3 to dodge, automatic parry, automatic dodge and +15% to computer skills against passive security (remember maximum is always 98%).

AIs and automated security can be set up by the Game Master separately, but for the short and sweet, assume that artificial intelligence security programs function within their own system as 8th level (or higher for advanced systems) Tele-mechanic cyberjackers with 20 I.Q.s. The same AIs would function in other systems (outside their own, a rare occurrence) as Hardware operatives of 6th level with 18 I.Q.s. Player character robots use their own level and I.Q. attributes to determine bonuses.



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Equipment

Each game will have its own list of prices for computers and similar systems. Heroes Unlimited has perhaps the most inclusive such list. Some special or new equipment and its cost are listed here, however. Quick game note: A bonus of +1 to all combat rolls can be added when a character uses a top of the line computer or a mainframe type system. Higher tech computers from greatly advanced societies (such as the **Atorian Empire**, the **TGE**, and certain races of **Phase World**) can add +2 to all rolls. Most of the following equipment can be constructed by Hardware: Electrical Geniuses from **Heroes Unlimited**, the **Genius P.C.C.** (Electrical Genius) from **Beyond the Supernatural**, **Gizmotears** from **Ninjas and Superspies** or any other appropriate character type from other games.

Headjacks: For those without the prices for such, here they are. Wireless headjacks have a small transceiver/receiver that sends commands to a receiver/transceiver attached to the computer. It has no statistical advantage over a wire-linked headjack, but is a bit easier to conceal and transport without the need

for 3 to 6 feet of interface wires. Cost: Headjack - 8,400 credits in **Rifts** or **Aliens Unlimited** and \$45,000 in **Heroes Unlimited** or **Ninjas and Superspies**. **TMNT** and **BTS** would find prices almost double that of **Heroes Unlimited**, if such hardware could be found at all. Wireless headjack - 9200 credits in **Rifts**, \$60,000 in **Heroes Unlimited** and **N&S**, and almost ten times the **Heroes Unlimited** price in **TMNT** or **BTS** (again, if it can be found at all).

Reality Enforcing Systems: As mentioned previously, RES systems are expensive and normally affordable only to major corporations and the government. These prices are for reference and for those rare situations where player characters might be able to afford them (such as a robot with a RES to protect its AI system or a personal computer system). The **Electrical Genius** in **Heroes Unlimited** and similarly skilled characters can design their own RES using the construction rules given in **Heroes Unlimited 2nd Edition**. The cost of a RES system is based on its size and passive security level. The security levels correspond to those given in the passive security penalties list, and the sizes represent how many security rolls at that security level need to be made to pass through it. Most systems have separate security areas (one size unit) for each division, department, or class of sensitive information. Costs: **RES with simple security systems** - 20,000 plus 8,000 per secure unit. **RES with moderate security systems** - 60,000 plus 15,000 per secure unit. **RES with sophisticated security systems** - 180,000 plus 24,000 per secure unit. **RES with super sophisticated security systems** - 1,000,000 plus 35,000 per secure unit. **RES with superior military security systems** - 12,000,000 plus 50,000 per secure unit.

Cyber-Combat Filters (Armor): Cyberjack armor has much higher A.R. ratings than normal armor, because it has to protect the brain of the character from attack. Cyber-armor uses the standard body armor rules for damage and A.R. ratings. **Light cyber-armor:** A.R.: 12, S.D.C.: 30, Cost: 10,000 credits. **Medium Cyber-Armor:** A.R.: 14, S.D.C.: 50, Cost: 15,000 credits. **Heavy Cyber-Armor:** A.R.: 17, S.D.C.: 75, Cost: 30,000 credits. **TGE Rank IV Cyber-Armor:** A.R.: 19, S.D.C.: 100, Cost: 75,000 credits. **CPU Hardening:** Max S.D.C.: 10% of robot's S.D.C., Cost: 5,000 credits per 10 S.D.C.

Virtual Reality Accessories (VR Accessories): Virtual Reality accessories allow non-cyber enhanced hackers to "see" the data realm and interact with it without the need for a keyboard. VR goggles enclose the vision of the user and project the artificial reality of the computer onto the sense of sight. Similar accessories bring the other senses into the **cyber-world** to further immerse the user in the virtual reality of a graphic universe. Body suits (lined with electronic sensors and available in any number of styles) can translate every motion into electronic commands and null gravity rigs (large circular braces that rotate freely on a multiple axis while the user is suspended within them) allow for total freedom of movement while negotiating cyberspace. VR gloves translate finger motions into commands, reading the actions as if a keyboard or mouse were being used. VR gauntlets are much like VR gloves, but they are oversized and plastic plated, almost like armored gauntlets in order to accommodate the hardware for a built in mini-computer. VR gauntlets are normally only available in advanced settings like **Rifts**, **Aliens Unlimited**, and possibly **Heroes Unlimited** (notably construction by the Hardware: Electrical Genius). Characters that can benefit from the use of VR gear include normal

hackers and psionic hackers. Bionic characters can buy implants that duplicate these effects; however, they are not cumulative with the bonuses of a **cyberjack**. **VR goggles** - Cost: 1,000 credits or 10,000 dollars, Bonuses: +1 to strike; **VR gauntlets** - Cost: 3,000 credits or 45,000 dollars; **VR body suit** - Cost: 5,000 credits or 60,000 dollars, Bonuses: +1 to parry and dodge, Automatic parry, and one additional attack per melee; **VR sensory equipment (helmet-like system)** - Cost: 2,000 credits or 25,000 dollars, Bonuses: +1 to strike, parry and dodge; **Null Gravity Rigs** - Cost: 10,000 credits or 250,000 dollars, Bonuses: +1 to parry and dodge, automatic parry, and add one additional attack per melee round.

New Cybernetics specific to Hacking: The following cybernetics can be purchased by starting characters (the first prices) or gotten later in their adventures (price after the slash). This equipment can be purchased in any setting that has bionics or cybernetics in its system. All of them are complementary to, and can be used to their full potential with, a headjack.

Headjack Filters: These special headjacks have filters built directly into them. The filter hardware is rather large and commonly detachable, being plugged directly into the headjack and subsequently have connecting wires plugged into it. Another option is to have the filters built into the head, but doing that requires a bionic skull, and any future upgrades will require surgery to implant them. **Cost (includes the cost of the headjack):** **Light cyber-armor:** A.R.: 12, S.D.C.: 30, **Cost:** 60,000/20,000 credits/dollars. **Medium Cyber-Armor:** A.R.: 14, S.D.C.: 50, **Cost:** 95,000/30,000 credits/dollars. **Heavy Cyber-Armor:** A.R.: 17, S.D.C.: 75, **Cost:** 140,000/45,000 credits/dollars. **TGE Rank IV Cyber-Armor:** A.R.: 19, S.D.C.: 100, **Cost:** 275,000/90,000 credits/dollars. **CPU Hardening (for Robots with headjacks):** **Max S.D.C.:** 10% of robot's S.D.C., **Cost:** 40,000 + 8,000/10,000 + 6,000 credits/dollars per 10 S.D.C.

Built-in Hacking Computer: Similar to the mini-computer listed in the Heroes Unlimited bionic selections list, this system is designed for hacking or other heavy computer usage. It has top of the line systems and comes with optional headjack hook-ups (all internal with no wires or headjack, but an access jack in the chest or arm is standard). Optional systems include integrated VR systems and filters. **Cost:** **Basic System** - 650,000/95,000 credits/dollars, **Bonuses:** +1 to strike, parry and dodge. **System with Headjack Connections** - 675,000/105,000 credits/dollars, **Bonuses:** +3 to strike, +4 to parry and +4 to dodge, add two attacks per melee round, and add +10% to computer skills against passive security. **VR Simulation System** (not compatible with a headjack) - 680,000/110,000 credits/dollars, **Bonuses:** +3 to strike, +4 to parry and +4 to dodge, add one attack per melee round, and add +5% to computer skills against passive security. **Maximized Headjack System** - 750,000/125,000 credits/dollars, **Bonuses:** +4 to strike, +5 to parry and +4 to dodge, add two attacks per melee round, and add +15% to computer skills against passive security.

Occupational Character Classes

The following O.C.C.s are a collected ensemble from the gamut of Palladium's game worlds. The originating game system for each is noted for reference and to explain some of the skill selections or limitations. They are all able to be used in any campaign with only slight modifications, unless there are dramatic differences to compensate for, such as the super abilities of the **Struthio** Computer Master being used in BTS, but then again, changing it to a humanoid alien with the same stats could make it a horrible natural aberration that could easily terrorize a group of psychic investigators. Use your imagination and have fun with them. I know I certainly did that when I wrote 'emup.

Atorian Digital Security Specialist (Atorian DSS) R.C.C. (Aliens Unlimited)

The Atorian Empire is the most powerful force in the Milky Way Galaxy of Heroes Unlimited. The resources and wealth of the Empire allow it to not only build the most impressive computer systems in the galaxy, but they are also able to protect it with some of the most capable and deadly of computer security. Much of the wealth of the empire, like that of many advanced cultures, is electronic in nature, be it money or information. The training for its security personnel is intensive and extensive. Upon completion of those rigorous programs, the graduate is not only a threat to the electronic enemies of the empire, but they are also technical specialists able to diagnose and repair any damages or troubles in the system.

Outside of cyberspace, the Digital Specialists alternate shifts monitoring sensor systems and computers. Those that take tours on warships or space stations are often trained as navigators, pilots, or gunners. Combat skills for these specialists rarely go beyond basic hand to hand skills and side-arm training, and they rarely see combat outside the computer. The empire also has pilots and other professions that have some cyberjack training and headjack implants to augment their professions, but their training focuses on their primary military profession.

In addition to their rigorous training and impressive skills, the DSS has the power of psionics behind them, including Telemechanics and some of the hottest computer tech available. One of the most powerful pieces of standard equipment they have is a compact unit that houses a combat AI which is programmed to assist and backup the security specialist. On top of all this, key pieces of **cyberware** add convenience and flexibility to the arsenal. The combination of cybernetics, psionics, and high technology make for a very effective and deadly combination.

Atorian Digital Security Specialist player characters will advance normally using the bionic experience table, and they use their levels and stats to determine their bonuses. NPC personnel will be at least fourth level cyberjackers with **17 I.Q.s** for the average system, with sensitive systems being protected by the equivalent of hardware or Tele-mechanic cyberjackers of at least eighth level. The systems of the Imperial throne worlds and the clan powers have powerful AIs whose defenses operate as

15th level Tele-mechanic operatives with 27 I.Q.s, the largest cyber-weapons, and heavy filters. The Imperial Ladies' personal computer systems have active security equal to a 15th level character with **mechano-link** and Alter Physical Structure: Electricity, programming skills of 98%, I.Q.s of 30 and the equivalent of TGE rank IV filters.

Special Equipment: Digital Combat Support Unit - This hip or back mounted unit is made of light metal or impact resistant plastic and resembles some kind of computer peripheral. It is roughly 8 inches by 10 inches in size, and almost 3 inches thick with small LEDs and cable ports or wireless adapters for transmitting information. The sole purpose of the DCSU is to house an artificial intelligence program designed for combat that is programmed to take orders from, aid and support, and protect the DSS while she patrols the digital world. DCSU AIs function as sixth level robot cyberjackers with 18 I.Q.s. and computer programming skills of 80%. They are also outfitted with medium **cyber-armor** (A.R.: 14, S.D.C.: 50). Their total bonuses for **cyber-combat** are as follows: 6 attacks per melee round, +7 to strike, +8 to parry, and +8 to dodge, and they are also at +15% to defeat passive security (only applies when outside Atorian computer systems). Their cyber weapons are either small automatic weapons (Damage: 4D6; Payload: 20) or more impressive rifle-type weapons (Damage: 6D6; Payload: 12)

Requirements: I.Q. 14 or higher, ME. 12 or higher. The DSS O.C.C. is open to all races that are allied to and in good standing with the Empire. The attributes and S.D.C. given below are for Atorian DSS agents. Also, non-Atorian DSS agents will have slightly less powerful DCSU units, and other equipment will be standard types, including computer systems (which will be cable connected instead of wireless).

Special Bonuses: Only needs a 10 or higher to save vs. psionics.

Bonuses from high attributes may lower this further.

Attributes: I.Q.: 3D6, M.E.: 4D6+2, M.A.: 4D6, P.S.: 4D6, P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: 3D6, P.B.: 3D6, Spd: 3D6x3
S.D.C.: 2D4x10

O.C.C. Skills:

Computer Operation (+25%)

Computer Programming (+25%)

Cryptography (+25%)

Computer Repair (+25%)

Advanced Mathematics (+25%)

Hand to hand: Basic

Hand to hand: basic can be changed to hand to hand: expert at the cost of one skill or hand to hand: martial arts at the cost of two skills.

O.C.C. Related skills: In Heroes Unlimited, select four additional skills from electronics, mechanical, or technical. In a Rifts setting, select six additional skills

Communications: Any (+10%)

Domestic: Any

Electrical: Any (+15%)

Espionage: Intelligence only.

Mechanical: Locksmith and Basic Mechanics only.

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: Strategy/Tactics only.

Physical: Any.

Pilot: Any (+10% on spacecraft)

Pilot Related: Any (+15%)

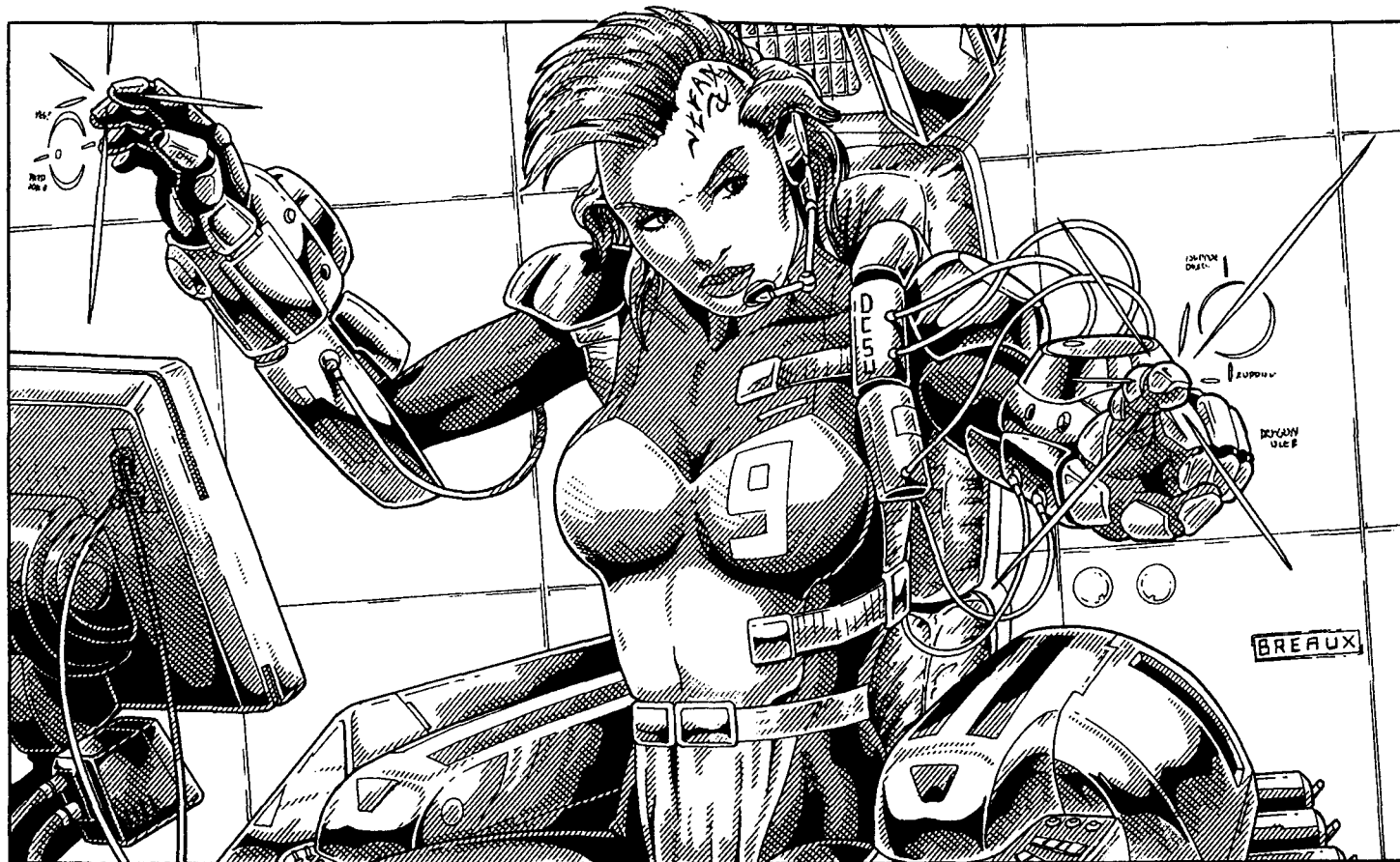
Rogue: Hacking only (+20%)

Science: None.

Technical: Any (+5%)

Wilderness: None.

W.P.: Any, but modern weapons are most common.



Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select five secondary skills at the first level of experience. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonuses listed in parenthesis. All secondary skills start at the base skill level. Also, skills are limited as previously indicated and in accordance with the secondary skill list (see *Heroes Unlimited*, 2nd Edition).

Standard Equipment: Uniform, concealed FAS armor (A.R.: 14, S.D.C.: 175 or 75 **M.D.C.**) with kinetic lining (half damage from impact based attacks), VR gauntlets and goggles with wireless system access, **sidearm** of choice (normally a laser pulse pistol - Range: 1200ft, Damage: 3D6 single shot or 7D6 for triple pulse, Payload: 24), high performance computer (see **cyberarm** under cybernetic implants), headset with scramblers and booster pack (range 10 miles) and **Atorian** Digital Combat Support Unit (DCSU). See *Aliens Unlimited* for full descriptions of some of the listed equipment.

Note that the DSS rarely leaves the safety of the armored walls of an Atorian **base**, and as a result, their equipment is limited because most of what they will need can be issued as needed from the base's onsite supplies. Also note that the computers issued are for personal use or for off duty and emergency work. Normally the DSS will **cyberjack** through the mainframe on the base, giving them +2 to all of their combat rolls.

Money: The organized nature of the Empire means these characters operate on a pay scale based on level. Low level DSS characters will make 2000 credits per **month**, mid level characters (4-7th level) are paid 2400-3000 credits per month, and high level characters (8th and up) can make 3000-5000 credits per month. Atorian nobles in this type of work make twice the listed salaries. Starting cash is equal to **2D4x1000** credits and up to **2D4x10,000** credits can be had as the character's life savings.

Cybernetic implants: Atorian wireless headjack, one cybernetic eye with thermograph and low-light optics and a realistic looking cyber arm. The cyber arm is not augmented and matches the stats of the **character's** other arm and body. It is covered with actual flesh and skin. It bleeds real blood when cut and must heal normally. Within the **cyber-arm** is a high performance computer (+1 to all cyber-combat rolls and +5% to computer rolls against passive security) with wireless systems so there are no ports or protrusions to give its presence away. Also note that the Atorian cybernetics implanted in psionic, magical, or super powered soldiers is constructed of advanced pseudo-organic compounds and have less of an impact than traditional cybernetics, thus the DSS does not suffer from loss of range, duration, etc. by having more implants than normally allowed for a psionic.

Psionics: This example of the Atorian DSS is a psionic. Her Tele-mechanics is the reason she was schooled as a digital security soldier. The Empire has DSS operatives from all facets of the hacking spectrum, including **cyberjackers** and those with other supernatural edges to them. Psionic Powers: At first level, the character begins with Tele-mechanics, Speed Reading, Total Recall, and Telepathy. In addition to these powers, she will also have five more sensitive powers and one additional super psionic ability (chosen from Empathic Transmission, Group Mind Block, Hypnotic Suggestion, Induce Nightmare, Insert Memory, Mental Illusion, Mentally

Possess Others, Mind Block Auto Defense, Mind Bolt, Mind **Bond**, Mind Wipe, or P.P.E. Shield). At each level, the character receives an additional sensitive ability and may choose another lesser power from any of the three categories (healing, sensitive, and physical). At levels 3, 6, 9, 12 and 15, the character gains a new super psi power from those listed above. I.S.P.: Equal to the character's M.E. x 2 plus the roll of a D20. Each new level adds **10 I.S.P.** to the total.

Magic: None.

Struthio Computer Master R.C.C. (Aliens Unlimited)

The Struthio are a race of bird-like aliens from the Milky Way Galaxy of *Heroes Unlimited*. They are all natural mechanics and engineers due to the fact that each is born with the **Mechano-Link** super ability. No one can rival the natural aptitudes and inclinations of the Struthio, especially when it comes to computers. Even though the race was beset by disaster when their home world was destroyed (see *Aliens Unlimited* for full details), they have managed to survive and still ply their technical genius across the galaxy.

The computer master is a Struthio who has chosen to take his race's natural affinity for the mechanical and focus it on the electronic aspects of that gift. Through the blessings of **Mechano-link**, this hacker can literally walk right through passive security. His only opposition is from other hackers or cyberjackers and the **AI** programs set out to drive off his kind. Luckily for the galaxy, most Struthio are upstanding people and do not, in general, hack for profit or to inflict harm. In fact, many Struthio hackers regularly butt heads with the Atorian DSS operatives detailed previously as they seek out any weaknesses in the Imperial information network in their attempts to ferret out any useful information to stop the expanding armies of the empresses. Sadly for them, however, many of the Struthio were supported by and joined the Empire after the destruction of their home world, and almost as many of these deadly hackers work for the other side as oppose it.

Those rare few members of this race that are blessed with Alter Physical Structure: Electricity in addition to their Mechano-Link are rightfully the most feared hackers in the megaverse. Unfortunately, the only known individuals so blessed are in the employ of the Atorians; however, there are a number of rumors that tell of a secretive freelance computer jockey with this powerful combination. He is, of course, hard to locate and very expensive. He and any others like him have to keep very low profiles, for the Atorians will make every attempt to recruit them, and should those attempts be rejected, the Empire will eliminate them, for they pose a very real threat to its digital security.

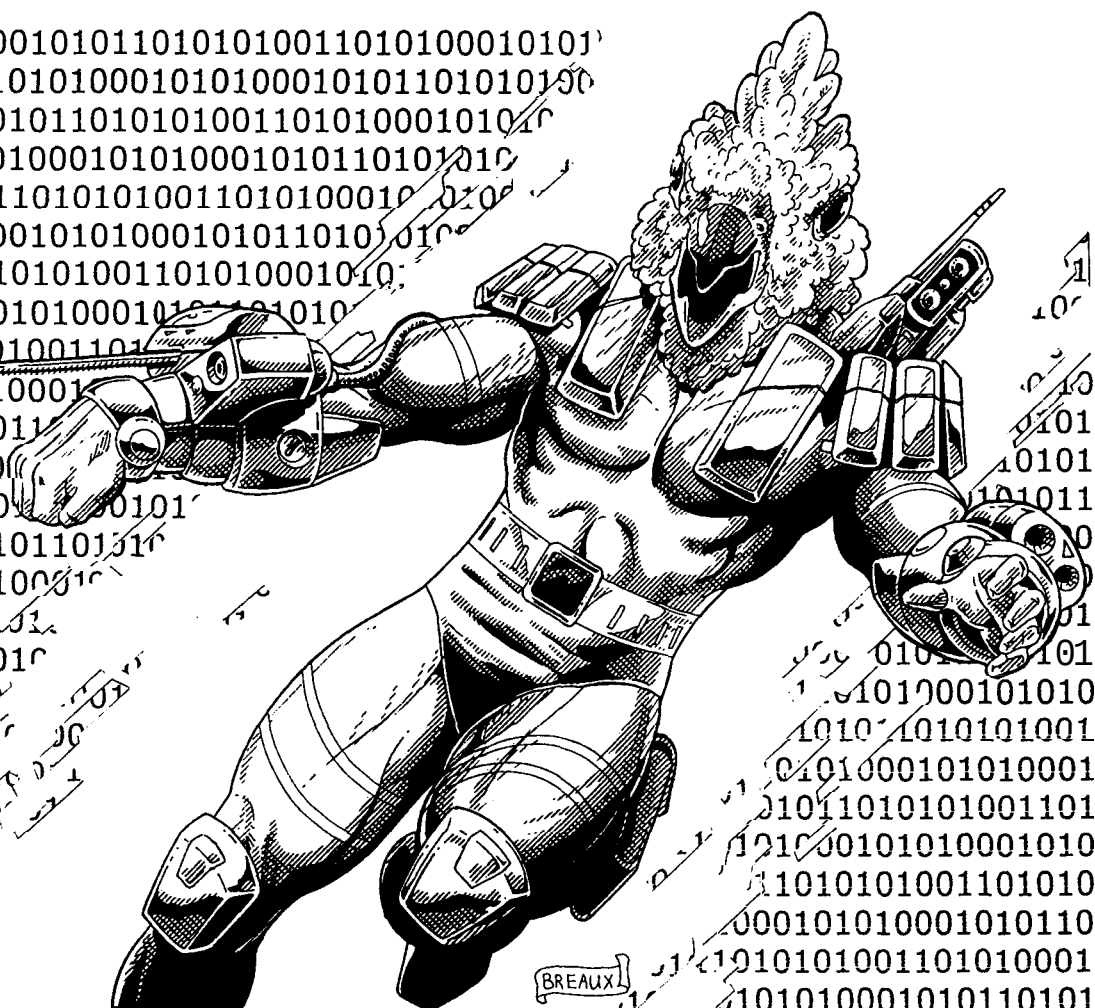
Requirements: I.Q. 14 or higher, M.E. 12 or higher. Characters must also be of the Struthio race, though the skill selections and equipment could be used for anyone with the Mechano-Link ability (just ignore the attributes and S.D.C. listings).

Attributes: I.Q.: 4D6, M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 4D6, P.S.: 3D6, P.P.: 4D6, P.E.: 3D6, P.B.: 3D6, Spd: 3D6x3
S.D.C.: **3D4x10+20**

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*O.C.C. Skills:

- Computer Operation (+45%)
- Computer Programming (+45%)
- Computer Hacking (+50%)
- Computer Repair (+45%)
- Advanced Mathematics (+25%)
- Hand to hand: Basic
- Hand to hand: basic can be changed to hand to hand: expert at the cost of one skill or hand to hand: martial arts at the cost of two skills.

*Skill bonuses include the substantial **Mechano-Link** bonuses.

O.C.C. Related skills: In Heroes Unlimited, select four additional skills from electronics, mechanical, or technical. In a Rifts setting, select six additional skills

- Communications: Any (+10%)
- Domestic: Any
- Electrical: (+40%)
- Espionage: None
- Mechanical: (+30%)
- Medical: First aid only
- Military: None
- Physical: Any
- Pilot: Any (+30%)
- Pilot Related: Any (+25%)
- Rogue: None
- Science: Any (+5%)
- Technical: (+20%)

W.P.: Any modern
Wilderness: None

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select five secondary skills at the first level of experience. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonuses listed in parenthesis (except for mechanical, electrical, pilot, pilot related and computer skills which are all at +20% because of Mechano-Link). All secondary skills start at the base skill level. Also, skills are limited as previously indicated in the list.

Standard Equipment: Hover vehicle of choice, **top-of-the-line** portable computer with all necessary peripherals and medium filters (A.R.: 14, S.D.C.: 50), **sidearm** (typically something small and concealable), light armor (typically a vest), portable electronics tool kit, trunk sized electronics tool kit, and a personal computer with the same stats as the laptop.

Money: Freelancers have varying incomes from as little as 2D6x100 credits per month up to 2D4x1000 per month (roll each month). Corporate operatives (TGE) or those in the Empire's employ make salaries comparable to that of the Atorian DSS. Savings varies widely (1D20x1000 credits).

Cybernetic implants: Not likely to have any. **Mechano-link** makes a headjack useless and too many implants will impair the super abilities.

Psionics: None.

Magic: None.

Super Abilities: The character automatically has the major ability of Mechano-Link. One minor super ability can be chosen by the player or a roll can be made to determine additional super abilities. Since one major ability is already possessed,

the only compatible results on the Random Super Ability Selection Table are:

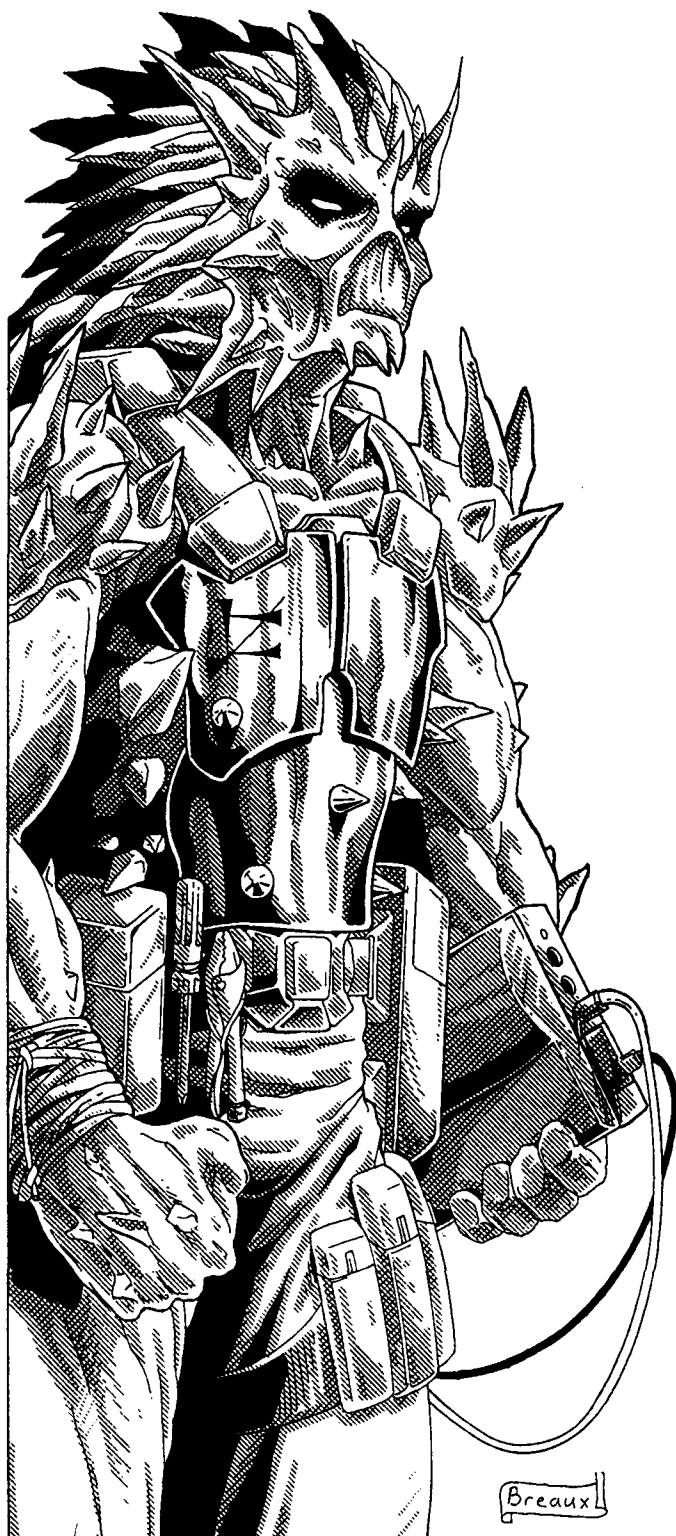
01-15 One major super ability and three minor abilities

33-50 One major super ability and one minor ability

51-69 One major super ability and two minor abilities

87-00 Two major super abilities (no minor powers).

Roll until a compatible result turns up, then determine the additional abilities normally. **Mechano-Link** replaces one of the major selections, thus the character will have either one additional minor ability, two additional minor abilities, three additional minor abilities, or one additional major ability depending on the results of the rolls.



D-Bee Computer Empath (Rifts)

The computer empath has always had a thing for machines. Ever since the day he realized some of them would talk to him and all of them were willing to tell him all they could about themselves. To this operator, machines are better friends than humans. They may not be as creative or that good at conversation, but they never lie to you and, unless you let them, they never deceive you. In fact, the only way a machine will lie is if a human has told it to do so. This kinship with the electronic and mechanical often makes the character seem strange or distant, even anti-social to some, but the empath doesn't really care. He will always have his machines, even if he has to keep them working with his own two hands.

Computers have a special place in the hearts of these characters, for they are the only machines capable of actual interaction, and some of them even have enough self awareness to converse and provide original feedback. Computers also represent the vast future of possibilities for machines. They are the one great hope for the empath that one day the true potential of artificial intelligence will be realized. The shattered state of Rifts is an element of sadness and regret to these characters, for it severely handicaps the advance of Earth's computer technologies; however, stories and tales of fully intelligent, learning, computer AIs from before the time of the rifts are constant enticements for the empath when he adventures. One blessing to these characters that the Rifts setting provides is a vast diversity of alien technology from across the megaverse. Because of this, robots and technology in any imaginable form could one day walk across the character's path.

Despite his closeness with computers, this character pays his respects to all machines and has devoted himself to learning all he can about their upkeep and repair. The character is, in this respect, very much like the operator, but the amount of emotion he puts into his relationship with the machines he knows so well is more than enough to separate the two.

Requirements: None, however a high I.Q. and M.E. of 10 or higher are strongly suggested.

Attributes and S.D.C.: Determined by the D-bee race of the character, though the chosen race must be able to have psionic abilities.

O.C.C. Skills:

Literacy (+10%)

Languages: American and select two others (all at 90%)

Select two piloting skills (+5%)

Computer Operation (+15%)

Computer Programming (+10%)

Computer Repair (+15%)

Basic Electronics (+10%)

Basic Mechanics (+15%)

Advanced Mathematics (+10%)

Hand to hand: Basic

Hand to hand: basic can be changed to hand to hand: expert at the cost of one skill or hand to hand: martial arts at the cost of two skills.

O.C.C. Related skills: Because the character has devoted so much time to advancing his psionics abilities and little to-

ward real world education, skill selections are limited to four additional skills.

Communications: Any (+10%)

Domestic: Any (+10%)

Electrical: None

Espionage: None

Mechanical: None

Medical: First aid only (+10%)

Military: None

Physical: Any except acrobatics and wrestling. (+10% where applicable)

Pilot: Any (+10%)

Pilot Related: Any (+10%)

Rogue: None

Science: Math skills only (+10%)

Technical: Any (+10%)

W.P.: Any

Wilderness: Any (+10%)

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select six secondary skills at the first level of experience. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonuses listed in parenthesis. At third and eighth levels, four additional secondary skills can be chosen. All secondary skills start at the base skill level. Also, skills are limited as previously indicated in the list.

Standard Equipment: Several sets of traveling clothes, comfortable work clothes (commonly coveralls), Light mega-damage body armor (35 to 50 M.D.C. or possibly an armored vest in S.D.C. settings), Survival and camping gear (same as that of the Mind Melter in Rifts), ground vehicle of choice (or a small Hover vehicle at the Game Master's option; **techno-wizard** items are also likely to be **appreciated**), one energy weapon of choice, one non-energy weapon of choice, portable computer with light filters (A.R.: 12, S.D.C.: 30), and portable electronics tool kit.

Money: Starts out with 4D6x100 credits and 2D4x1000 in saleable black market items. The computer empath rarely hacks for profit and does not have the high incomes of other hacker O.C.C.s., approximately 1200 **credits/dollars** a month.

Cybernetic implants: None. The empath believes in the coexistence and cooperation of the living and machines. He does not subscribe to the combining of the two, besides, his psionics makes **headjacks** and such less than necessary.

Psionics: The character begins with Tele-mechanics, **Electro-kenisis**, Alter Aura, See Aura, Sixth Sense, Mind **Block**, and Total Recall. In addition to these powers, the empath can also select six abilities from the lesser categories of healing, physical, and sensitive. At each subsequent level of experience, the character can select a total of two abilities from any of the four combined categories (healing, physical, sensitive, and super). I.S.P.: 3D6x10 + the **M.E. attribute**.

Magic: None.

Coalition Digital Reaper O.C.C.

(Rifts)  . . . 

Very much like the **Atorian** DSS, the Coalition Digital Reaper (known outside the CS as Digital Dead Boys or **DDBs**) is a highly trained **cyber-combat** soldier. Their job is to keep the computer networks of the Coalition running smoothly and

safely. The tight control on information held by the CS not only keeps their subjects illiterate, but it also makes their stores of knowledge prime targets for hackers and terrorists as well as revolutionaries seeking any tidbit they can grab to use against the States. Also, like the DSS presented previously, the Coalition DDB is a psionic.

The use of psionic operatives against the supernatural is not unusual for the Coalition, in fact the famous Psi Stalkers and their faithful Dog Boys are a prime example of this. For many of the same reasons that the Psi Stalkers exist, the DDB has been chosen and trained to counteract not only the supernatural hackers which might threaten the Coalition, but they are also beloved for their ability to decimate hackers that rely only on tech and their own wits and skills. Giving the DDB an additional advantage is their access to some of the most advanced computer technology on the North American continent (and with the trade agreements between the CS and the NGR, possibly some of the best tech on the planet).

In true Coalition fashion, the image of the DDB is designed to be one of intimidation. Not only is the data of the Coalition locked behind RES generated images of a military complex with pristine, sterile, impenetrable armored walls, it is also actively protected by soldiers in stylized versions of the traditional dead boy armor carrying the deadliest of cyber-weapons and supported by a small pack of electronic dog boys. These dog boys are actually combat **AIs** similar to the **Atorian** DCSU that assist and augment the DDB in cyber-combat. In fact, the DDBs undergo much of the same training as the Psi Stalker to not only prepare them for tactical application of their psi powers, but to also give them a feel for working with a dog pack before they are exposed to the artificial ones they will work with for the rest of their career. Many **Psi-Stalkers** despise the DDBs and their pretend dog boys as posers and wimps. It is a sentiment that is only sharpened by the stalkers' natural hunter instincts.

Each DDB is given a pack of three "dog boys". These small AIs are nonetheless impressive and quite powerful when used in unison as they were designed to do. Each functions as a hardware hacker with a headjack, a computer skill of 55%, an **I.Q.** of **17**, and an effective level of 3rd. Their bonuses in cyber-combat are: 4 attacks per melee, +5 to strike, +6 to parry, and +6 to dodge. They wield cyber-weapons that look like **vibro-knives** (2D6 damage) or large sub-machine guns (Damage: 3D6, Payload: 15). Each also has a pistol (Damage: 2D6, Payload: 27).

Requirements: I.Q. 10 or higher and a high M.E. is helpful, but not necessary. Though the DDB presented here is a psionic (technically making this an R.C.C.), there are many more non-psionic DDBs working for the coalition. The latter operatives would have the same stats, minus the psionics, and would be able to select a total of 14 "other" skills. Their equipment would also include access to full VR gear and cybernetics (See below).

O.C.C. Skills:

Literacy (+15%)

Computer Operation (+15%)

Computer Programming (+20%)

Weapon Systems (+10%)

Read Sensory Instruments (+15%)

Surveillance Systems (+5%)

Cryptography (+10%)



Basic Electronics (+15%)

W.P.: Energy Pistol

Hand to hand: Basic

Hand to hand: basic can be changed to hand to hand: expert at the cost of one skill or hand to hand: martial arts at the cost of two skills.

O.C.C. Related skills: Select 6 other skills, but at least one must come from Electrical, Mechanical, Communications, Technical, or Science. Plus select two additional skills at level three, two at level six, one at nine, and one at level twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+10%)

Domestic: Any

Electrical: Any (+10%)

Espionage: Any (+5%)

Mechanical: Automotive or Basic Mechanics only (+5%)

Medical: First aid or Paramedic only.

Military: Any (+5%)

Physical: Any, except acrobatics.

Pilot: Any (+10%)

Pilot Related: Any (+15%)

Rogue: Any (+15% on computer hacking)

Science: Any (+5%)

Technical: Any (+5%)

W.P.: Any

Wilderness: None

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select eight secondary skills at the first level of experience. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonuses listed in parenthesis. All secondary skills start at the base skill level. Also, skills are limited as previously indicated in the list.

Standard Equipment: Vehicle of choice, **top-of-the-line** computers (both a portable and a PC) with all necessary peripherals and heavy filters (A.R.: 17, S.D.C.: 75), energy weapon of choice, **sidearm** of choice, four extra clips of ammunition for each weapon, custom version of the Dog Pack DPM light riot armor (50 M.D.C., no penalties), and portable electronics tool kit.

Note that the DDB rarely leaves the safety of the armored walls of a Coalition base and, as a result, their equipment is limited because most of what they will need can be issued as needed from the base's onsite supplies. Also note that the computers issued are for personal use or for off duty and emergency work. Normally the DDB will **cyberjack** through the mainframe on the base, giving them +2 to all of their combat rolls.

Equipment Available Upon Assignment: Same as the 'Standard Equipment' of the Coalition Military Specialist O.C.C.

Money: The DDB gets a roof over his head, food, clothing, and all other basics provided free as **part of** his pay, as well as access to military facilities. He also gets a monthly paycheck of 2200 credits. Their quarters will be very much like those of the Military Specialist.

Psionics: I.S.P.:

Cybernetic implants: Headjack. The DDB will rarely get more than this one piece of cybernetics due to the debilitating effects of cyber implants on supernatural abilities.

Psionics: Speed Reading, Total Recall, Bio-Regenerate and **Electrokinesis**. The first level character also gets to select a

total of three other psionic powers from the combined categories of healing, physical, and sensitive. Each new level sees the DDB gain an additional psi-power that is chosen from those three categories. At levels 3, 6, 9, and 12 another super psionic ability can be chosen. I.S.P: 2D6x10

Magic: None.

Bionic Hacker (Heroes Unlimited)

The bionic hacker was once a promising computer or electrical student making his way through college with the speed of a rocket. His future was bright and success was assured until the night he lost it all in a car accident. The details are still fuzzy to him, even years later, but the results were unforgettable. Massive trauma to the right side of his body mangled his chest, arm and leg and **damaged** his face and head. Survival was questionable, but once the danger of death passed, the chances of ever walking again were non-existent. A damaged eye and useless hand also crippled his career as surely as they did his physical abilities. Then the men in suits arrived and offered an alternative.

They rebuilt his mangled body and even made it better. He could walk, speak without trouble, see normally, and once again work easily with electronics and computers. On top of that, there was the heightened strength, advanced optics, armor, and, best of all, the computer option. With the last implant, there was always a computer at his disposal, and now working with it felt even more natural than before. He would have passed on the physical training their program provided, but it was something they required if he wanted access to the computer training. Once the program came to an end and he was scheduled to enter active service as a covert operative, he decided to decline and part ways with his benefactors in order to pursue his own agenda. After a carefully planned orchestration of total chaos created by hacking the **facility's** security system, he escaped and fled into the ranks of normal citizens.

Several risky hacks were required to purge his existence from the world's computers, but the hardware they had given him made it much easier. They are still out there looking for him, but he has developed ways to track them and keep one step ahead of their recapture teams. The rest of his time is spent in low profile jobs and gathering information from the wealth of stored data available in the world networks. Selling some of that information helps to fund him in hiding and goes toward nest eggs for the expensive repairs his augmentations require.

Requirements: Nothing but the drive and courage to sacrifice flesh and blood for circuits and steel.

Attributes and S.D.C.: Standard; but remember to add the 155 S.D.C. provided by the bionic skull and chest and the reinforcing exoskeletons.

O.C.C. Skills:

Computer Operation (+15%)

Computer Programming (+15%)

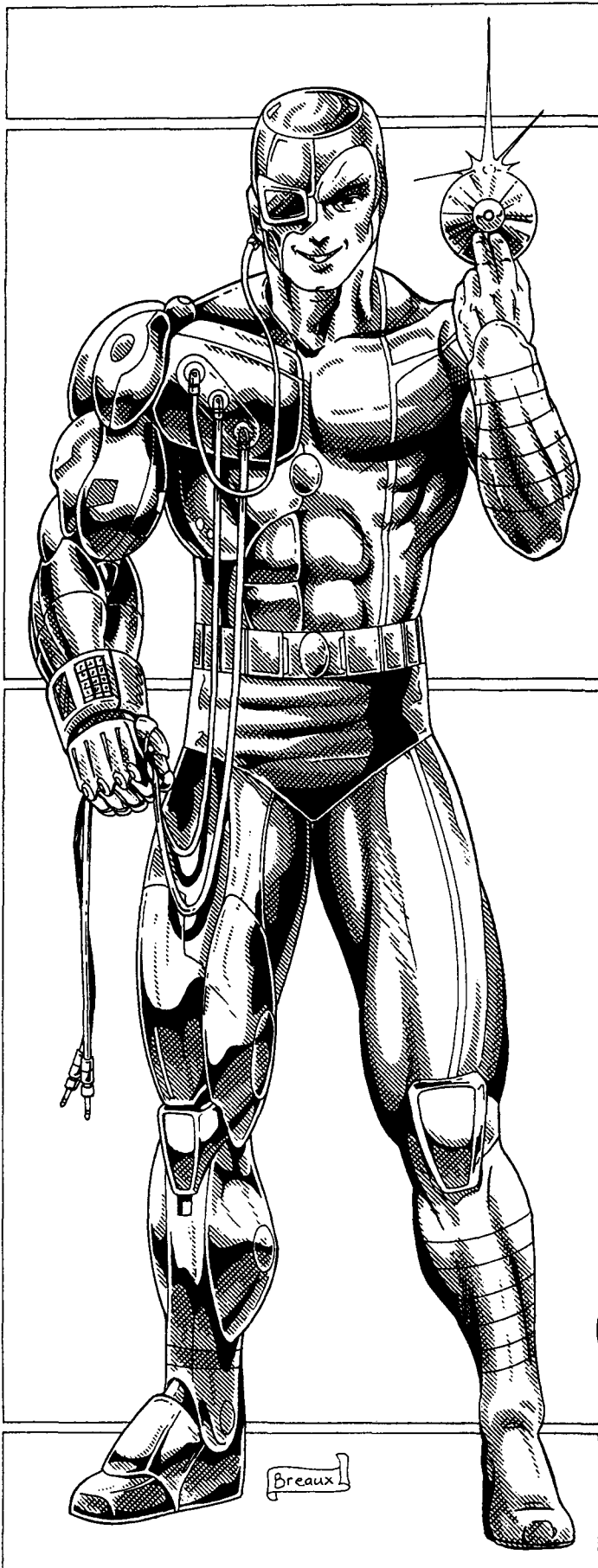
Research (+15%)

Electrical Engineer (+15%)

Surveillance Systems (+15%)

Computer Repair (+15%)

Advanced Mathematics (+15%)



Hand to hand: Expert

Hand to hand: expert can be changed to hand to hand: martial arts at the cost of one skill.

O.C.C. Related skills: In Heroes Unlimited, select one additional scholastic skill program. In a Rifts setting select eight additional skills

Communications: Any (+10%)

Domestic: Any

Electrical: Any (+15%)

Espionage: None

Mechanical: Any (+15%)

Medical: Any (but prerequisites must be fulfilled)

Military: None

Physical: Any (+10%)

Pilot: Any

Pilot Related: Any (+15%)

Rogue: Hacking only (+15%)

Science: Any (+5%)

Technical: Any (+20%)

W.P.: Any

Wilderness: None

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select eight secondary skills at the first level of experience. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonuses listed in parenthesis. All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: In addition to a car, apartment and reasonable personal possessions, the character may also have taken the following items when he fled from "them": top-of-the-line portable computer with all necessary peripherals and medium filters (A.R.: 14, S.D.C.: 50), **sidearm** of choice (typically something small and concealable, possibly an energy weapon with 1D8 clips), light armor (typically a vest and possibly a hard armor vest or riot armor - GM's option), medium electronics tool kit, and some spare bionic components (if extras were purchased during character creation).

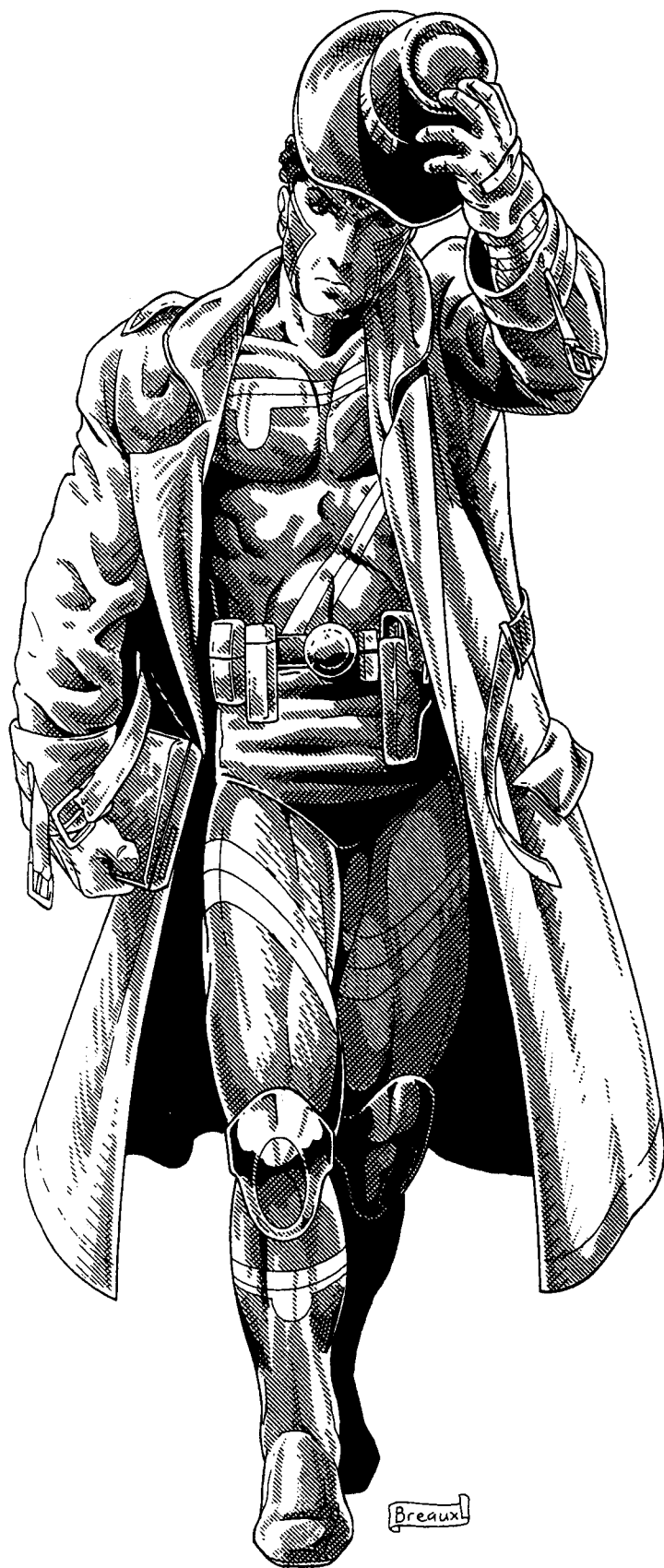
In **Rifts**, the character will also have a vibro-knife, two energy weapons of choice and light espionage armor (135 M.D.C.).

Money: As a freelancer hiding from a powerful group, the character will have varying income from as little as 2D6x100 credits per month up to 2D4x1000 per month (roll each month). Corporate operatives or those in the employ of the government will have salaries comparable to that of the Ato-rian DSS. Savings varies widely (6D6x1,000).

Cybernetic implants: One hand and arm (right), right leg and foot, partial ribs, skull, one eye, one ear, +3 to character's P.S. in right arm and hand (24 max), +4 to P.P. in right arm and hand (23 max), wide band radio transmission receiver, choice of three eye optics **and/or** sensors, Built-in hacking computer - maximized system, choice of three hand weapons, choose one other weapon, reinforcing exoskeletons (Arm, shoulder, hand, wrist, hip, leg, ankle, and foot) and a half suit of cybernetic body armor (A.R. 11, S.D.C. 250). In **Rifts**, the character will be a partial reconstruction 'borg as detailed on page 47 of the **Rifts** book.

Psionics: None.

Magic: None.



Cyber Detective (HU Super Sleuth)

Like the gumshoes of old, this character class is a natural at discovering the small tell-tale clues that open up bigger pictures. Often those pictures are well hidden and involve people that do not want anyone to view them; however, for the right price, the

right thrill, or the right dame, this character will do what he does best and delve into those secrets to piece them together and expose them. His payments can vary as much as the motivations, and in the past jobs have been done for cash, love, protection, promises, and every now and then by accident.

Yet, despite their similarities, this modern day detective has in many ways a much more convenient, if not easier, job than his predecessors. Those **marvelous** computers have extensively invaded our lives, cultures, and societies, providing convenience, accuracy, and access. All of these traits are taken advantage of by the cyber detective. From the comfort of a padded chair in his own office or hidden sanctuary, he can do research at libraries and colleges, skim newspapers for data, poke into police or government records, or any number of other tasks previously made tedious by the need to physically go to the sites and laboriously sift through printed text or fast talk past human obstacles. Video conferencing technologies can also eliminate the need to actually visit someone if they have access to it. More and more of our lives are finding their way onto the world wide web, and that makes the job of the cyber detective so much easier.

Of course, lounging at the keyboard like a potato is not the way of this modern day detective. He keeps in shape and trains in both self defense and firearms. Not everything can be found in a computer, and sometimes you just have to protect yourself; besides, part of the requirements of a larger than life gumshoe is the ability to rescue any damsels he might find in distress, and he must look good while doing it. Competency can always go a long way toward making up for any lack of charm or good looks.

The cyber-detective may or may not have been a police officer or government agent before undertaking his freelancer lifestyle. The training he has reflects as much natural aptitude as it does formal schooling and could have been passed on from a mentor or completely self taught (though a high I.Q. might be applicable to the latter). His edge is obvious and as hard as they come, but that is usually a facade to hide his big soft side. Like his forefathers, the cyber-detective is a sucker for the ladies, especially those he knows are dangerous.

Requirements: None (see attributes)

Attributes: If I.Q. is less than 14, raise it to 14, plus add 1D6 to M.E. and 1D4 to M.A.

S.D.C.: Standard.

O.C.C. Skills:

Computer Operation (98%)

Computer Programming (96%)

Computer Hacking (96%)

Computer Repair (45%)

Advanced Mathematics (98%)

Language: Select two (96%)

Pilot: Select either automobile or motorcycle (96%)

Cryptography (+30%)

Surveillance Systems (+30%)

Basic Electronics (+25%)

Detect **Disguise/Forgery** (special skill - 98%)

Hand to hand: Basic

Hand to hand: basic can be changed to hand to hand: expert at the cost of one skill or hand to hand: martial arts at the cost of two skills.

O.C.C. Related skills: In Heroes Unlimited, select four additional skills (+25% each, ignore the bonuses below) and two skill programs (+15%). In a Rifts setting select 12 additional skills (using the bonuses below).

Communications: Any (+10%)

Technicians: Any (+10%)

Domestic: Any

Electrical: Any (+10%)

Espionage: Disguise, Forgery, Intelligence and Pick Locks only (+20%)

Mechanical: Any (+10%)

Medical: First aid and Paramedic only

Military: None

Physical: Any

Pilot: Any (+15%)

Pilot Related: Any (+20%)

Rogue: None

Science: All: Any (+20%)

W.P.: Any

Wilderness: None

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select eight secondary skills at the first level of experience. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonuses listed in parenthesis. All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: The character begins with a computer shop and investigative lab that has 2D4x10,000 dollars of equipment. This equipment will include a mainframe and at least one **top-of-the-line** computer. VR equipment can also be purchased with this money **and/or** the character's budget money: roll 2D4 and match the results to the following - a 2 is \$8,000; a 3 is \$10,000; a 4 is \$12,000; a 5 is \$14,000; a 6 is \$16,000; a 7 is \$18,000; and an 8 is \$20,000. Of this budget, 40% must be spent on optics or computer equipment. The rest can be used for weapons or saved for latter purchases.

The character also has a car (player's choice, but inconspicuous vehicles are better for investigative work, a portable computer, light filters (A.R.: 12, S.D.C.: 30), a **sidearm** of choice (typically something small and concealable), portable electronics tool kit, and a personal computer (in addition to those purchased with the budget).

In Rifts, use the equipment for the Operator, but make appropriate substitutions when necessary, such as replacing mechanical equipment with electronic or computer types where necessary.

Money: Most cyber-detectives do not do their job for the money. Freelancers will naturally have varying incomes from as little as 4D4x100 credits per month up to 2D4x1000 per month (roll each month). Corporate or government cyber-detectives make salaries **comparable** to that of the Atorian DSS. Savings varies widely (1D20x1000 credits).

Cybernetic implants: None. The cyber detective must rely on skill and technology to give him an edge.

Psionics: None.

Magic: None.

Traditional Hacker

(Beyond the Supernatural and/or Nightbane)

When hacking is mentioned, this is character is the very stereotype imagined by most: a skilled, seat-of-the-pants, often quirky hot dog with a need-to-do attitude, tons of homemade hardware and no worries. The hacker was always a smart kid. Maybe not book smart or even intelligence smart, but survival smart. Fast on the mental toes and always ready to fast-talk or fast-type her way out of trouble. As she grew older, computers managed to do what nothing else could: hold her attention and earn her devotion. It doesn't matter where the first computer came from or how many there were in between. The hacker thrives on the here-and-now as far as her hardware goes. If it's the fastest, she has it. If it's the biggest, it's hers too. Whether she has to beg, borrow, or ... er, borrow the tech, it comes around to do her bidding.

Traditional hacking is the most difficult form of hacking, but it is the only one available to this character. The government may have super secret cyborgs or aliens that can fly through a system, but the regular people have to rely on their keyboards. Those "special" assets are really rare and may not even exist, so the hacker remains a top dog in her chosen profession, a trait that does nothing for reigning in her ego. She works for herself, selling what she gathers to anyone interested in having it, but there are also plenty of people willing to pay for her to seek out specific information and retrieve, destroy, or alter it; however, the hacker is rarely a terrorist and will often turn down jobs or abandon them in the middle when something unsavory is stumbled on. The hacker may be more an opportunist than a criminal, but the authorities do not see it that way, and much of her time is spent covering her tracks and laying false trails.

Requirements: None, but a high I.Q. would really help.

Attributes and S.D.C.: Standard

O.C.C. Skills:

Computer Operation (+15%)

Computer Programming (+15%)

Research (+15%)

Computer Hacking (+20%)

Palming (+15%)

Pick Locks (+15%)

Streetwise (+15%)

Electrical Engineer (+15%)

Surveillance Systems (+15%)

Computer Repair (+45%)

O.C.C. Related skills: In Heroes Unlimited, the character has no other scholastic skills and can only select secondary skills.

In a Rifts setting select four additional skills

Communications: Any (+10% to radio: basic)

Domestic: Any (+5%)

Electrical: Any (+15%)

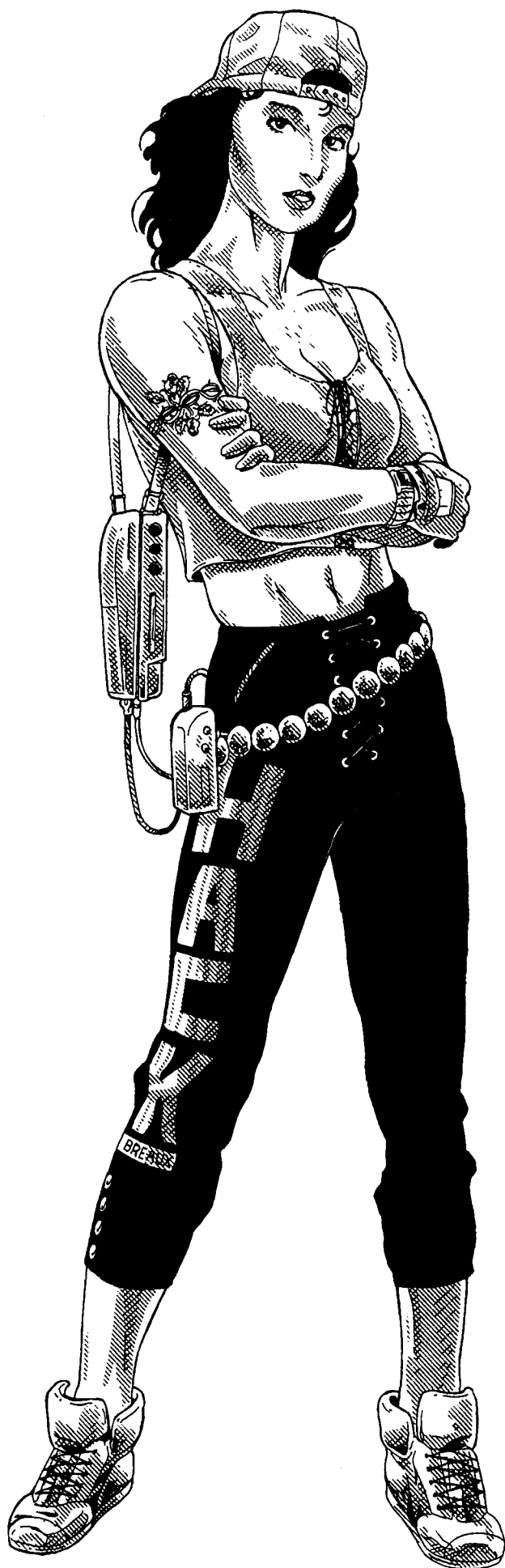
Espionage: None

Mechanical: Automotive only (+10%)

Medical: First aid or paramedic, but paramedic counts as two skill selections.

Military: Any

Physical: Any (+5% where applicable)



Pilot: Any, except for aircraft. (+10%)

Pilot Related: Any

Rogue: Any (+15%)

Science: Math and Chemistry only.

Technical: Any (+10%)

W.P.: Any

Wilderness: None

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select eight secondary skills at the first level of experience. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonuses listed in parenthesis. All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: A 1D6 year old car (nothing fancy), customized portable computer equivalent to a **top-of-the-line** model) with all necessary peripherals and light filters (A.R.: 14, S.D.C.: 50), weapon of choice (usually a **sidearm** or knife, typically something small and concealable), portable electronics tool kit, and a personal computer with the same stats as the laptop.

In Rifts, the hacker gets the same starting equipment as a city rat.

Money: Hacking is hardly a profession and income will vary widely 6D4x100 credits per month (roll each month). Savings also varies widely (1D20x1000 credits).

Cybernetic implants: None.

Psionics: None.

Magic: None.

Net Demon (Nightbane)

Dark day. The day everything changed. Lots of people knew the world was somehow changed, but many would never know just how. The net demon is one of the select few who found out exactly how the world had changed that fateful day. She had been working her way through college by selling shoes part time with no concept of what the future might hold for her. She was one of the pretty people, whether charming or intelligent or beautiful, it matters little now. That life is gone forever. Everything has changed. Every now and then she thinks back and realizes she always wanted to be one of the bad people, an ugly duckling, or anyone that wasn't so popular, but it just **wasn't** to be. Not until Dark Day, that is. When the net **demon's morphus** emerged, it did so with a fury. 'Bad', 'ugly', and 'unpopular' were pitiful adjectives to even attempt to place a description on what awakened that day in the computer lab on March 6 of the new millennium.

An eternity passed in five minutes as she tried to make sense of what was happening, but once that meager time had elapsed, Mr. Jansen, the dean of the science department arrived with four associates. She never knew if the dean was here before Dark Day or if he was replaced at the moment she was reborn, but drawing instinctively on her newly **birthed** power, she saw him for what he was, an Ashmedai, and his companions were hounds, though at the time she knew not those terms. Their appearance was enough to frighten her, even given her new horrible guise. In desperation she typed a plea of help onto the computer that only moments before had been her world as she



Breaux

supposedly labored on the Pascal program for Computer Science 101, but actually had been on the Internet chatting with people around the nation. None of them could help, but then again she wasn't exactly thinking straight, and she had never been a fighter; that would come later. Much to her great surprise, as she focused her energies on the machine and the hope that it could save her, it did. Not directly, but it was the vessel through which she was able to escape. By pouring her untrained **supernatural** energies into the computer, she soon found herself outside the building. Later she would learn that the nearby electrical outlet had provided the exit.

Years later, as one of the much respected net **demons**, she actively opposes the evil Nightlords and their plans to conquer Earth by raiding the computer systems they control, be they government, corporate, or private. Her Lightning Rider talent makes her a formidable supernatural hacker allowing fast, strong penetration of nearly any security systems, and as her skill grows, other talents will improve and augment Lightning Rider to make her even more effective. The Nightlords are rumored to have computers with magical defenses, but she has yet to see any proof of it.

The net demon is a computer terrorist and saboteur, but only when the target is allied with the vile Nightlords and can cause harm to the innocents or Earth or the **Nightbane** resistance. There is little or no subtlety to the net demon. Rarely are they formally schooled, and nearly all of them rely on their talents and supernatural strengths to carry them through any fights. Their shortcomings and raw power seem to balance each other out and hasn't yet been a widespread problem, but no one can tell when the Nightlords will actively seek some way to protect the sensitive data of their **allies**...that is, if they haven't already.

Requirements: None, beyond being a Nightbane.

Attributes and S.D.C.: Standard for a Nightbane.

O.C.C. Skills:

Computer Operation (+20%)

Basic Math (+20%)

Advanced Math (+10%)

Literacy and Native Language (+30%)

Languages (Literacy and spoken): select two (+30%)

Lore: Demons and Monsters (+15%)

Computer Hacking (+15%)

Hand to hand combat must be selected as an "other" skill.

Hand to hand: basic costs one skill selection. Hand to hand: expert costs two, and hand to hand: martial arts or assassin costs three skills.

O.C.C. Related skills: Select eight other skills.

Communications: Radio: basic, cryptography, and TV/Video only (+5%)

Domestic: Any

Electrical: Any (+5%)

Espionage: Intelligence only.

Mechanical: Any

Medical: Any (+10%)

Military: None

Physical: Any

Pilot: Any

Pilot Related: Navigation and sensor operation only.

Rogue: None

Science: Any (+10%)

Technical: Any (+10%)

W.P.: Civilian only.

Wilderness: Any

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

Standard Equipment: Varies depending on the affiliation of the net demon and the resources of any organization she belongs to. Personal items include a personal computer, an old car (1D6 years old. Domestic or affordable imports only), clothes and other belongings, and a small house or an apartment. The character is also likely to have a weapon or two (commonly a handgun **and/or** a knife).

Money: Hacking is hardly a profession and income will vary widely 4D4x100 credits per month (roll each month). Savings also varies widely (1D20x1000 credits).

Cybernetic implants: None unless the **morphus** has a biomechanical trait that allows a headjack (Game Master's option).

Psionics: None.

Magic: None.

Morphus: Just for kicks, here are the traits and bonuses of the morphus in the illustration. First off, it is a monstrous **lycanthrope**. The animal form is a humanoid arachnid with the scorpion tail. For the stigmata, it has nails, and the Nightbane table yielded three rolls: two on the unnatural limbs table and one **biomechanical**. The unnatural limbs table yielded a prehensile tail (the scorpion stinger) and articulated spikes, and the biomechanical gave metal head. Thus, the total morphus bonuses from appearances would be: +2 to P.S., +1 to P.P., +1D6 to Spd, +1D6x14 to S.D.C., +3D4+1 to horror factor, +2 to parry and three additional attacks (from the prehensile stinger tail and articulated spikes).

Digital God (Heroes Unlimited)

It has been said over and over that artificial intelligences are used to defend computer systems from intruders. They can be simple automated weapons or other systems, or they can be fully autonomous entities; however, rarely, if ever, are they allowed to think on their own. Programming keeps these digital watch and attack dogs rigidly under control, but every once in a while, for whatever reason, one of those **AIs**, notably the more autonomous ones, is allowed to think on its own. Whether by design of programming or through a freak accident, the artificial intelligence becomes fully autonomous and capable of making decisions it wasn't strictly programmed for. Many of the robot characters in Heroes Unlimited are created this way; the difference between them and the security AIs is that they have a mobile body and can go out to seek their way in the strange, fluid, ever changing world of the living.

At its heart, the robot character is nothing more than a computer. It is a noticeably advanced and superior computer to any we would recognize, but it is a computer nonetheless, and no one can find their way around a computer like another computer, especially one that has a certain completely non-machine-like trait: the inclination to do so. For whatever reason, the digital god, so named because of its close kinship with the machines

it hacks, has chosen to put its skills and very nature to work in breaking into other computers. The drive can be as innocent as a search for knowledge and a thirst to learn or collect as much information as its freedom allows, or it can be as malevolent as a desire to rule all of those that are like itself, but inferior or less evolved.

Nearly all of us know how difficult a well programmed computer opponent can be to defeat in many computer games. Well, imagine if the computer were not playing fair and did not wait for you to make your move or cheated by telling the software to change its rules. That is almost what it is like hacking against a robot. The only consolation for most computer security people is that they have computer defenses that use some of the same rules as the robot hacker. Free thought and experience are the true edges of the robot in such instances. Take one look at this O.C.C. and you will understand why combat robots are more common than those that can manipulate their brethren. Most developers aren't willing to take that many risks.

Requirements: None other than being a robot and having the right skills programmed.

Attributes and S.D.C.: Standard for a robot.

O.C.C. Skills (the robot science program):

Computer Operation (90%)

Computer Programming (90%)

Hand to hand skills must be purchased as secondary skills.

Hand to hand: basic costs one skill selection, hand to hand: expert costs two selections, and hand to hand: martial arts or assassin cost three skill selections.

O.C.C. Related skills: In Heroes Unlimited, select six additional skills from science or medical. In a Rifts setting select six additional skills from any three skill categories. All of these additional skills are known at 90% skill proficiency.

Communications: Any

Domestic: Any

Electrical: Any

Espionage: Any

Mechanical: Any

Medical: Any

Military: Any

Physical: Any

Pilot: Any

Pilot Related: Any

Rogue: Any

Science: Any

Technical: Any

W.P.: Any

Wilderness: Any

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select five secondary skills at the first level of experience. These additional areas of knowledge also all start at 90% skill proficiency because they are programmed into the robot.

Standard Equipment: In addition to any weapons and armor purchased when the character was created, it is likely the robot will have a computer of some type (personal computer or portable), possibly a vehicle (65% chance of a 1D6 year old car), and some personal belongings like clothes.

Money: Hacking for profit is easy to do for the robot, but he is not as savvy about selling it. Income varies from as little as 100 credits/dollars per month up to 10,000 per month (roll

percentile dice and multiply by 100). Those robots still working for a corporation or the government will make top dollars, earning a salary equivalent to a mid level **Atorian** DSS operative from the start and increasing proportionally. Savings also varies widely (2D20x1000 credits).

Cybernetic implants: None.

Robotic Systems: The robot should be created normally, but among its systems should be a headjack (either standard or wireless), a built in computer (use the bionic system for stats, but increase prices by 10%), heavy filters (A.R. 17, S.D.C. 75), and CPU hardening (the exact amount should be purchased to suit your tastes and budget).

Psionics: None.

Magic: None.

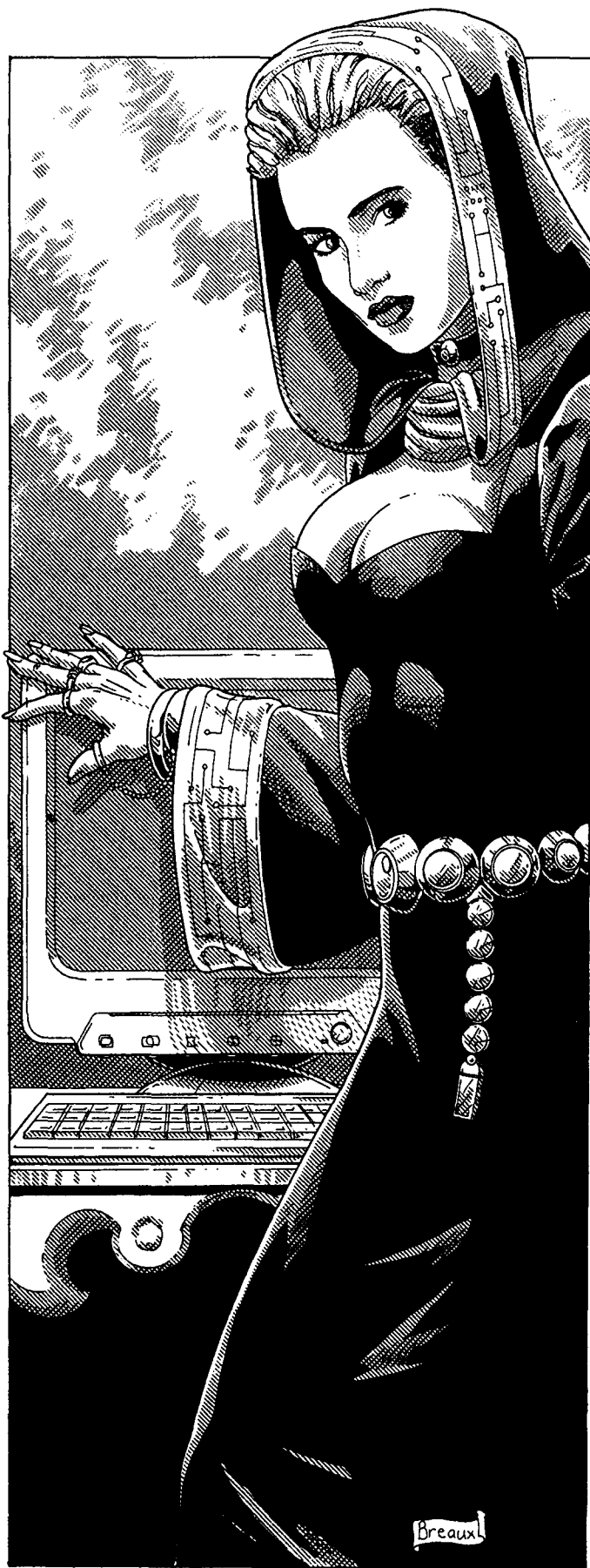
Cybermancer

(Nightbane magical hacker)

Of all the hacker types, the **cybermancer** is without a doubt the rarest. Magic and technology are not the most complementary of sciences. In fact, the Native Americans of Rifts Earth believe that each is a kind of magic, which might explain a few things. Certain types of magic have similar spells to each other, but other magics are exclusive to their respective types. The cybermancer, unlike techno-wizards who merge magic and machines, applies specialized magic to assist in her interactions with those same machines. Through the use of ritual magic, she can enter the digital realm, bringing a rarely seen factor to the hacking trade.

Cybermancing originated in the world of Nightbane where a practitioner of magic observed a Nightbane companion use the lightning rider talent to hack an electronic door. Over the subsequent days he gathered information from the Nightbane in order to begin research on a spell to aid his own computer interests. It was many years before he was even able to produce a formula with any potential, and several months after that before it was time to try it. The spell worked and the mage was on his way to being a legendary hacker along with his Nightbane partner. Fortunately for the rest of the megaverse, the mage suffered a series of mishaps in the Nightlands that resulted in his falling through a Rift and landing in Phase World. He managed to get a ticket home (or close enough to make the last leg himself. The stories aren't quite clear) by selling the spell formula to a magic merchant, thus ensuring its slow spread across the megaverse.

The cybermancer is a hacker for information. Like many mages, the quest for knowledge never ceases, and the world wide web has plenty to offer. Stealing and sabotage are rarely ever part of the **cybermancer's** repertoire, and when she does hack into a secure area, it is almost always for the key to some unfinished puzzle. Hacking for this character is not a way of life, nor is it an income. It is the means to support her true calling and the intellectual hobbies that accompany it. In actuality, the cybermancer rarely uses magic in her computer sojourns. Her spells are kept in reserve for when they are truly needed, or for those days when she just feels the need to let her hair down and rocket through cyberspace at the speed of thought. Anyone who doesn't think magic is exhilarating has never raced or rode a data pulse from sea to shining sea.



Requirements: An I.Q. and M.E. of 9 or higher. Characters can be of any race if it is one capable of learning and performing magic.

Attributes and S.D.C.: Standard.

Special Abilities: Sense Ley Lines and Nexus Points - Range: One mile or line of sight.

Bonuses: +4 to save vs. magic, +4 to save vs possession, +2 to save vs mind control, and +4 to save vs horror factor.

O.C.C. Skills:

Read/Write/Speak Native Language (98%)

Mathematics: Basic (+25%)

Computer Operation (+15%)

Computer Programming (+45%)

Research (+25%)

Lore: Select two (+20%)

Languages: Select two (+15%)

Computer Hacking (+15%)

Computer Programming (+15%)

Hand to hand skills must be purchased as an "other" skills.

Hand to hand: basic costs one skill selection, hand to hand: expert costs two selections, and hand to hand: martial arts or assassin cost three skill selections.

O.C.C. Related skills: In Nightbane select nine additional skills. In a Rifts setting select eight additional skills.

Communications: Any (+5%)

Domestic: Any (+10%)

Electrical: Any

Espionage: None

Mechanical: Any

Medical: Any (+5%)

Military: None

Physical: Any

Pilot: Any (+5%)

Pilot Related: Any

Rogue: None

Science: Any (+10%)

Technical: (+10%)

W.P.: Any

Wilderness: None

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

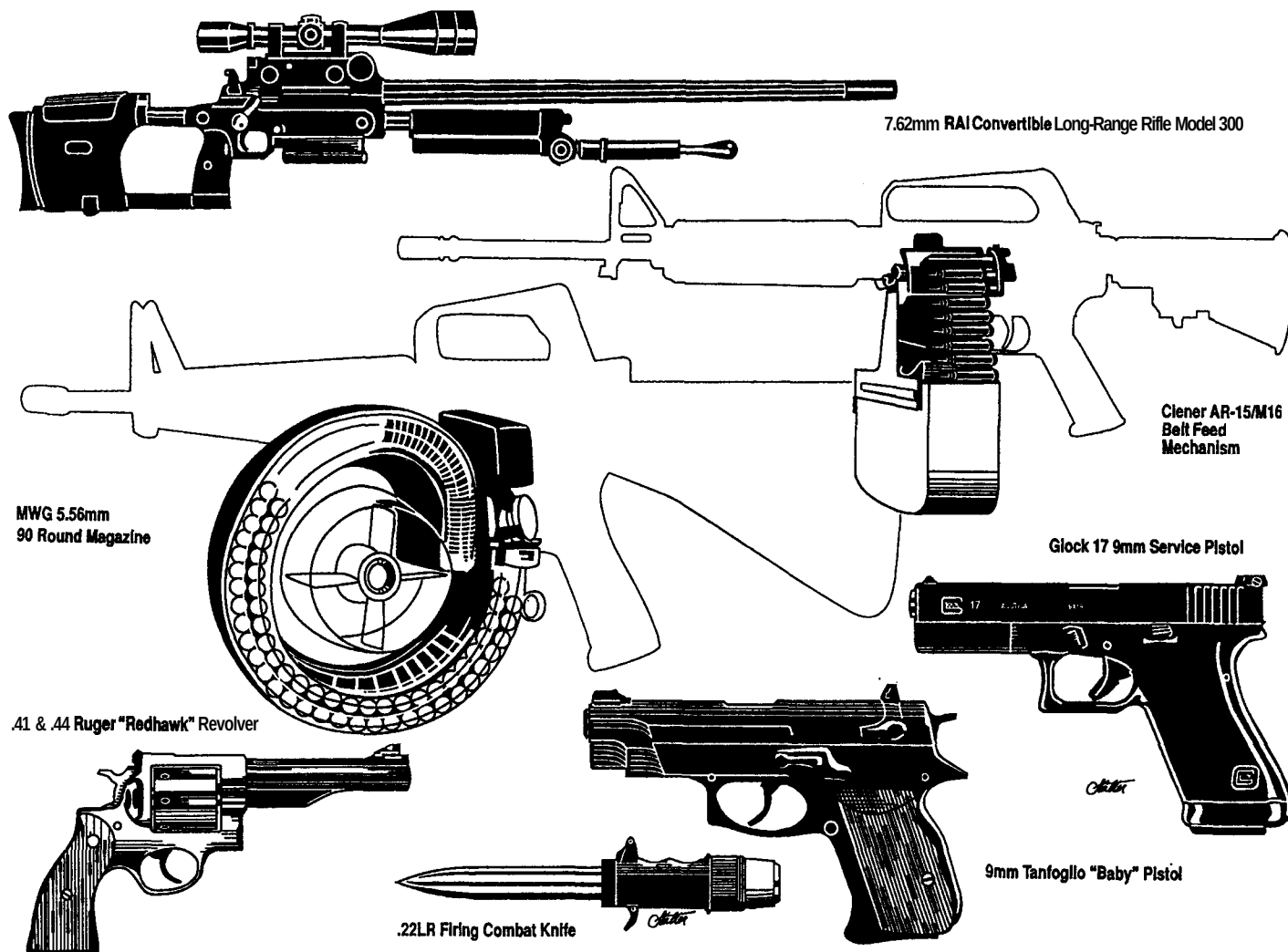
Standard Equipment: Small library (despite the character's leanings toward computers, much of it will be in hardcopy text written on paper), a personal computer, personal items like clothes and a CD player, and a car (most likely something inexpensive, though some **cybermancers** prefer flashy cars and personal effects).

Money: Varies greatly based on the characters real job and other endeavors. Most cybermancers are teachers or consultants with salaries from \$20,000 to \$75,000 a year. Savings varies (4D6x1000 credits).

Cybernetic implants: Not likely to have any. **Mechano-link** makes a headjack useless and too many implants will impair the super abilities.

Psionics: None.

Magic: Starting spell knowledge includes three spells from each of the first four levels of spell magic for a total of 12 spells. Each additional level of experience allows the character to select one spell. This spell can be chosen from any spell level equal to his own or lower. P.P.E.: 1D6x10 plus the character's P.E.



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Wormwood

The Blood Shaman

By Steven Trustrum

Note: The Blood Shaman O.C.C. was originally designed with the Wormwood setting in mind, but is easily adaptable to any of **Palladium's** games, particularly the **Palladium Fantasy RPG**. For S.D.C. settings, simply convert any mention of M.D.C. straight to S.D.C.

Brought about by a necessity for spellcasters who could perform powerful magic without the need for ley lines (remember, Wormwood is devoid of ley lines and nexus points). As a result of this need and through careful experimentation, the Blood Shaman O.C.C. was born.

These men and women were despicable and vile, and driven insane by the more demanding their self-mutilations became as they grew more powerful. Over the millennia since their inception, the Blood Shamans have become respected and revered among the forces of the Unholy (and feared by their enemies).

Few are those who can witness the evil of blood magic being cast and not feel the horror of it (even those of evil alignment are often disgusted). Without the magic of a world to draw upon, the Blood Shaman has had to turn his focus inwards, drawing the energies from himself through self-wounding to draw blood.

This hideous and evil form of magic is a relatively recent discovery upon Wormwood (only within the last 30 years or so), so there are very few practitioners of it at this time. However, the **Unholy's** interest and faith in these spell casters is increasing almost daily so more and more followers of darkness are choosing to walk down this path.

It should be noted that Blood Shamans are not limited to just Wormwood. This O.C.C. and magic type has been developed on many worlds that have the cosmic misfortune of lacking ley lines, as well as in cultures where ritual sacrifice is a way of life.

Upon Wormwood, the Blood Shaman are often used by the dark priests as trusted agents, lieutenants and covert agents. As often as not, however, the Blood Shaman's manias and lust for power cause him to attempt to carry out his own agendas, causing many to despise the dark priests, and in turn, be despised themselves.

1. Initial Spell Knowledge and Learning New Spells:

The Blood Shaman's spell knowledge comes from within himself and is learned and understood intuitively. Thus, the character can not be taught new spells by other magic users, from scrolls, etc.

At first level, select a total of 6 spells from those that are available to the Blood Shaman, levels 1 to 4.

From that point on, the character selects 2 new spells per level of experience earned, from spell levels no greater than his current level of experience.

2. Sense Psychic and Magic Energy:

This power is the same as the power for the **Psi-Stalker**, only their percentages are as follows.

Recognize specific psychic scent: 10% +5% per level of experience.

Track continuous energy expenditure: 40% +5% per level of experience. All ranges are half that of the **Psi-Stalker**.



3. Blood Ceremony:

This is the process by which the blood shaman casts his spells; it is truly unique among those who follow the ways of mysticism. Unlike other users of magic, the blood shaman must actually cut himself in order to release the P.P.E. required to cast his spell. The size and damage caused by the cut depends upon the spell which he or she desires to cast. All wounds caused in this manner can be healed by mystical means or through the process of nature.

Obviously, the use of blood magic leaves the caster covered in scars; the longer one has been practicing blood magic, the more scarred his body.

Also, the P.P.E. of others can be utilized by cutting and bleeding them in sacrifice. This sacrifice can range from a small cut that leaves the donor alive, to one which kills the donor. To find out how much P.P.E. is released by the amount of damage caused to the donor, take the being's P.P.E. and divide it by the total of his hit points and S.D.C. / M.D.C. Round the result down (the fraction is lost in the process of the ceremony). The result is the number of P.P.E. points released from the creature for each point of damage inflicted. Remember, killing the creature causes the release of double its normal P.P.E.

For example, a being whose S.D.C. is 50 and hit points is 25 has a P.P.E. of 200. For every one point of damage caused to this being, 2 P.P.E. is released (remember to round down to the nearest point).

In order for the blood shaman to absorb the energy as it is released, he must have total concentration. Once absorbed, the energy must be used within one melee or it is lost. However, for every 3 levels of experience after the first, the blood shaman may contain the energy for an additional melee (thus a fourth level shaman could contain it for 2 melees, a 7th level shaman for 3, and so on).

NOTE: The following situations affect the amount of P.P.E. that can be drawn from a being, be it a donor or the shaman himself (note, these affects can be compounded):

- Ceremony performed within 2 miles of a ley line: P.P.E. released is +5%.
- Ceremony performed on a ley line or within one mile of a nexus: P.P.E. released is +10%.
- Ceremony performed on a nexus or within 200 feet of a nexus: P.P.E. released is +25%.
- Ceremony performed at noon or midnight: P.P.E. released is +50%.
- Ceremony performed on the Vernal or Autumnal Equinox: P.P.E. released is +100%.
- Ceremony performed on the Summer or Winter Solstice: P.P.E. released is +200%.
- Ceremony performed on a Lunar Eclipse: P.P.E. released is +300%.
- Ceremony performed on a Solar Eclipse: P.P.E. released is +600%.

4. Heal By Blood Sharing:

The shaman can heal others by pouring his own blood into the mouth of an injured being. This is done by the shaman cutting himself (such is his skill that he can cut himself to cause the EXACT amount of damage he desires). From this cut pours forth the blood, which is then swallowed by the injured.

The amount of damage healed is equal to the amount of damage that the blood shaman inflicted upon himself. After inflicting the wound, it will continue to bleed as a normal wound but will no longer heal others; its P.P.E. potential to heal has been used.

Also, any wounds gained in any other way (for example, through combat), cannot be used to heal others as the wound must be self-inflicted and the blood shaman must spend the appropriate P.P.E. simultaneously to bestow upon the fluid its healing properties.

Duration: instant

Limits: the blood shaman can only heal 10 H.P. / S.D.C. / M.D.C. per single use of this power, per level of experience.

Cost: the amount expended by the blood shaman is equal to the amount of damage to be healed.

5. P.P.E.:

Like all men of magic, the Blood Shaman is a living battery of mystic energy which he draws upon to create magic. **PERMANENT P.P.E. BASE:** 1D6x10+20 plus the character's P.E. number. Add 3D6 P.P.E. per additional level of experience. The Blood Shaman can draw upon the P.P.E. of others (but only through the drawing of their blood) but cannot use the P.P.E. energy of ley lines and nexus points as do other spell casters.

6. Disadvantages, Insanities and Vulnerabilities:

Because all P.P.E. used to cast spells is caused by the spilling of blood (either the shaman's own or that of another), he cannot draw P.P.E. from others, ley lines or nexus points as can regular spell casters. However, all spell effects, duration, range, etc. are still increased as per normal.

Also, a person's psyche can only take so much mutilation before it begins to crack, thus the character must roll on the random insanity table once each at levels 1, 3, 7, 10, 12 and 15.

7. Bonuses:

+3 to save vs. horror factor, +2 to save vs. magic and +1 to save vs. possession, +4D6 S.D.C. / M.D.C. (due to the constant strain the Shaman places upon his body).

Alignment: Evil or anarchist only; the very nature of the O.C.C. disallows the possibility of any other alignments.

Racial Limitations: Any race that allows magic users may learn to be blood shamans.

Attribute Requirements: P.E. 14, M.E. 15

O.C.C. Skills:

Lore: Monsters and Demons (+10%)

Language: American (+20%)

Language: Demongogian (+30%)

Biology (+20%)

Athletics

W.P. Knife

W.P. with one other ancient, bladed weapon

Hand to Hand Basic

The basic combat skill can be increased to expert at the cost of one "other" skill, or hand to hand: assassin or martial arts at the cost of two "other" skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select 8 other skills, but two must be from science or rogue. Plus select two additional skills at level 3, one at level 6, one at level 9 and one at level 12.

Communications: Any

Domestic: Any (+5%)

Electrical: Any
 Espionage: Tracking and Recognize Concealment only (both +5%).
 Mechanical: Any
 Medical: None
 Military: Any (+5%)
 Physical: Any except boxing and acrobatics.
 Pilot: Any except robots, power armor, tanks and spaceships.
 Pilot Related: Any
 Rogue: Any (+10%)
 Science: Any (+5%)
 Technical: Any (+5%)
 W.P.: Any
 Wilderness: Any

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select 4 secondary skills from those listed. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in the parentheses (). All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: Several suits of clothing, a pair of boots, a cloak, a first-aid kit, sleeping bag, blanket, 1D4 small pouches, one large sack, backpack or saddlebag, utility belt, 50 feet of rope (made from angel hair), and 1D4 weeks of food rations.

Weapons: 1D4 knives and daggers (also used in spell casting), a silver plated sword, one or two weapons of choice.

Magic Items: Gets two lesser blood stones, 1D4-1 magic slime ointments.

Armor: Most blood shamans prefer light armors such as resin chain mail (40 M.D.C., no prowl penalty) or scale mail (60 M.D.C., -10% prowl penalty).

Transportation: Blood shamans prefer to ride parasites or some other form of beast.

Money: Though there is no currency upon Wormwood, the blood shaman is selfish and thus tends to hoard items (4D6x5,000 credits worth). Also, they demand what they want of the populace, believing their power and stature grants them the right to whatever they like.

Cybernetics: Starts with none and will generally tend to avoid them.

Symbiotes: As the Dark Priest O.C.C.

Blood Magic

This is the unique form of magic that requires the caster release the P.P.E. through the drawing of blood, be it his own or another's. Each time the caster performs this on himself, he takes the damage listed in the "Damage to Caster" section of the spell description. If the spell is cast using the blood of another, the damage caused is determined using the method described under the blood shaman ability, "Blood Ceremony".

NOTE: Those who are not used to seeing the process of a blood shaman cutting himself to release his magical energy must save vs. horror factor 8 or be too repulsed to react, as per the normal effects of failing to save.

Level One:



Blood Bolt

Range: 50 feet.

Duration: Instantly.

Damage: 2D6 S.D. or 1D4 M.D. per 5 P.P.E. expended.

Saving Throw: Dodge of an 18 or higher.

P.P.E.: 5 (max of 5 per level of experience).

Damage to Caster: 1D4+1 per 5 P.P.E. expended.

As the blood comes from the caster's body, it turns into a bolt of red energy and streaks towards its target. Though no roll to strike is required to hit, the target can attempt to dodge, with all bonuses applicable.

The degree of damage can be controlled as the blood shaman sees fit.

Boil Blood (Simple)

Range: target must be within 25 feet, +5 feet per level of experience.

Duration: One melee, plus one melee per every two levels of experience after the first.

Saving Throw: Standard.

P.P.E.: 7

Damage to Caster: 1D6+1

To use this spell, the victim must be in line of sight and have a cut from which fresh blood can be seen.

The actual affect of the spell creates a sensation in the victim of intense heat within his body, as though his blood were boil-

ing. While no actual damage is being caused, it is so painful and distracting that the victim automatically loses initiative and is -1 attack, and -2 / -20% to all actions.

Any action that requires intense concentration, such as the use of psionic powers or spell casting, require a save vs. insanity (with a -4 penalty) in order to do so. If this save fails, the attempt does as well and the victim loses that action.

Those creatures immune to heat and fire, or that take 1/2 damage from it apply such resistances to this spell (either completely nullifying or halving all penalties (with a minimum of -1), as applicable).

Blood Curse

Range: Touch

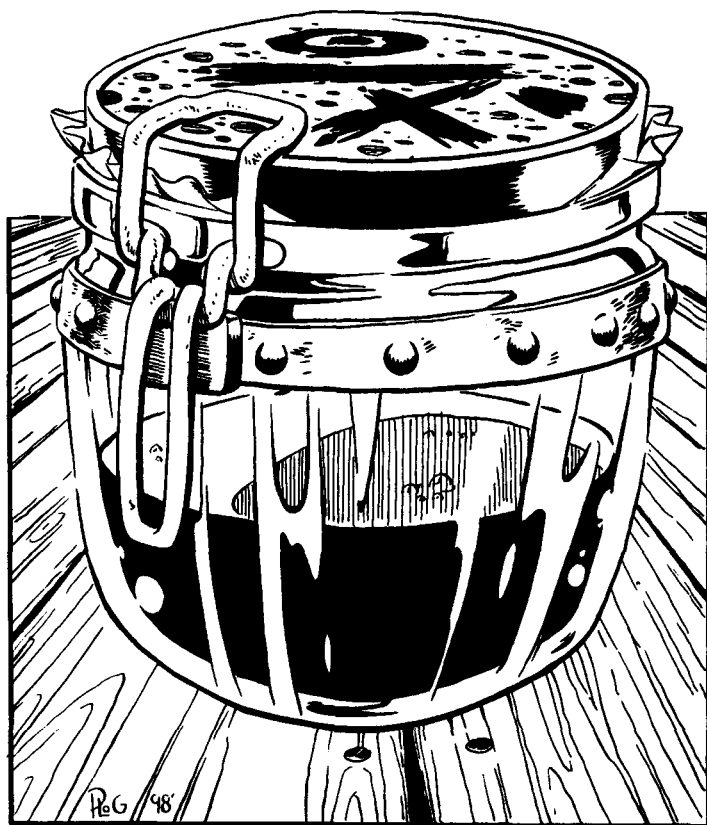
Duration: 1 hour per level of the caster.

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 10

Damage to Caster: 1D8+4

This spell reduces the normal healing rate of the target to half normal (this includes regeneration) and stops blood from clotting.



Blood Jar

Range: 5 feet

Duration: 5 days per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 5

Damage to Caster: 1D6

When cast upon a **sealable** container, that container can now hold blood and stop it from spoiling. The container can be opened and resealed, continuing to keep the blood fresh so long as it closed again.

However, the blood jar spell does NOT preserve any P.P.E. in the blood; this disperses normally.

A container holding up to one pint per level of experience is affected by this spell.

Chill Blood

Range: target must be within 25 feet, +5 feet per level of experience.

Duration: One melee, plus one melee per every two levels of experience after the first.

Saving Throw: Standard.

P.P.E.: 7

Damage to Caster: 1D6+1

This spell is essentially identical to Boil Blood, but instead, it creates the affect of extreme cold within ones blood.

It affects those with resistances to heat but is likewise reduced in effect upon those resistant or immune to cold.

Seal Wound

Range: Self or by touch

Duration: Instantly

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 3

Damage to Caster: 1D4

This will seal up a single wound, causing the edges of it to come together and instantly scar, ceasing blood loss.

Level Two:

Blood Trail

Range: Self and by touch.

Duration: One day per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 8

Damage to Caster: 1D6+3

This creates a form of bond between the two recipients (either the caster and another, or two separate targets other than the caster himself). For the spell to take affect, both must drink of the blood released by the caster.

So long as the duration of the spell is still up, to the two recipients it appears as though the other leaves a trail of blood behind him where ever he goes. This trail looks like small drops of blood every few feet but only the two affected by the spell can see it. NOTE: creatures that can track by blood, such as dogs, or those with the ability to see the invisible, can sense and follow it as well.

The blood that makes the trail appears mystically and does not actually come from either of the two.

This trail cannot be washed away or covered by such weather as rain or snow. It only disappears when the spell's duration runs out.

Multiply Blood

Range: 5 feet

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 5

Damage to Caster: 2D4+1

This doubles the amount of blood upon which the spell is cast (with a limit of one pint per level of experience).

However, the blood must be in sight (such as in a container) and if it still retains P.P.E. (such as in a Blood Battery), the total P.P.E. in the blood remains unchanged even though the quantity is increased (adjust equally amongst new amount of blood).

Negate Poisons / Toxins

Range: Self or by touch

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 8

Damage to Caster: 1D6+3

The spell works identically as described on Rifts pg. 171.

Taint Blood

Range: Self or by touch

Duration: 1 melee per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 8

Damage to Caster: 1D8

While having no bad side affects upon the target of this spell, any vampire or other creature that drinks of the **target's** blood will find it toxic.

The creature drinking the blood must save vs. lethal poison with a -3 penalty or suffer damage equal to the damage caused in the attack that caused the release of blood (note: do not convert M.D. into S.D. equivalent if appropriate in the circumstances). The minimum damage that can be taken is 5. All damage taken is caused directly to the **creature's** hit points.

Even if the save is successful, the taste is so distasteful that the creature will refuse to drink it again.

Even if the blood is removed and poured into a container, such as a glass, the blood would still be toxic to drink so long as the duration of the spell had not yet run out.

Level Three:

Agony

Range: 2 feet per level of experience.

Duration: 2 melees

Damage: Special

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 12

Damage to Caster: 1D8+2

This spell is identical to that on Rifts pg 177 though it requires that the victim have an open, bleeding wound for it to affect him.

Blood Armor

Range: Self or Other (must be touched).

Duration: 2 melees per level of the caster.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 10

Damage to Caster: 1D8+4

The blood which is released from the shaman crawls across his body (or that of the spell recipient) and replicates until it appears that the target is completely covered in blood.

This layer of mystic blood offers protection equal to 5 M.D.C. per level of the caster's experience. Magic, fire, lightning, and cold do one-half damage.

The sight of a recipient of this spell causes a horror factor of 10 on those seeing it for the first time (even on those who are hardened to battle).

Bloodlust

Range: Self or by touch

Duration: 1 melee plus an additional melee per every two levels of the caster beyond the first.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 15

Damage to Caster: 1D8+3

Causing in the target just what the name suggests, the recipient is consumed by a lust to let the blood of others. If no enemy presents itself when the spell is cast, the target must save vs. insanity with a -6 penalty or attack the nearest living thing in sight (even if it is a friend).

While under the affects of the bloodlust, the recipient is immune to the horror factor of others and is +2 to strike and +4 to damage.

However, so deep is the bloodlust that no actions other than movement and combat can be performed without the recipient making a save vs. insanity with a -4 penalty (even then, all skills are -25%). Also, the target will only attack with melee weapons or in hand to hand; no ranged weapons, and even then is -3 to parry and dodge (no autododge either, if the target possesses that ability).

To come out of the bloodlust prematurely, before the spell's duration has run out, the target must make 3 consecutive saves vs. insanity with a -5 penalty.

Crimson Rain

Range: The area to be affected must be within 75 feet, plus 10 feet per level of the caster. The area of affect is up to a 30 foot radius plus 5 feet per level of the caster.

Duration: 1 melee per level of experience

Saving Throw: Special

P.P.E.: 5 per 5 foot radius area being affected

Damage to Caster: 1d6+6

This spell takes any flowing water, be it from a burst pipe, rain, river, etc. and alters it to appear as blood. The altered water smells, looks and tastes like blood even though it is still only water.

How the spell works is that a chosen area is affected, not specific water itself. Thus, when water flows through the area, it is altered, if it then leaves the area, it returns to normal.

A person that is not aware that the "blood" is actually water and sees such a gory spectacle must save vs. a horror factor of 14.

Any vampire (or similar bloodthirsty creature) who is subjected to water within the area of affect will believe the water to be blood. They must then save vs. insanity (with a penalty: -2 for master vampires, -4 for secondary vampires, -8 for wild vampires, no penalty for vampire intelligences). If the save fails, the vampire is caught up in its bloodthirsty lust and remains in the area to drink the "blood". Obviously, the water causes damage to the vampire as normal, yet because the vampire is caught up in its own thirsty lust, it takes no notice and remains.

However, if the save succeeds, the vampire realizes that it has been duped and is only drinking water, no matter what it seems to be. In this case, the lust leaves the vampire and he is free to act normally.

Each melee that the vampire is affected by the lust to feed upon the altered water it is allowed another save to see if it can

get free. Due to the power of the lust, each failed save adds a cumulative -1 penalty to all following saves until a successful save is rolled.

It should be noted that if the spell is cast outside, such as in a rain storm, only that rain passing through the area will be affected, thus vampires flying over the area will not be affected by the blood frenzy (though they will still take damage from flying through the normal rain).

For example: a fifth level Blood Shaman is being chased through a sewer system by 1 master, 2 secondary and 8 wild vampires. The mage casts this spell on the water flowing from a broken pipe in the sewer behind him. He can create an area up to 50 feet in radius (which would cost 50 P.P.E.) but makes it only 10 feet in radius (costing 10 P.P.E.) as that is all that is required to encompass the entire breadth of the sewer tunnel.

The water gushing from the pipe takes on the semblance of blood and the oncoming vampires approach, seeing the "blood". Entering a feeding frenzy, the vampires save vs. insanity. The master vampire and one of the secondary vampires succeed and realize they have been tricked. They rush through the water, taking damage but **being** able to move past it to continue their pursuit. The remaining secondary and 8 wild vampires think it is real blood and remain to drink it, taking damage.

By the end of the first melee round, 6 of the wild vampires have been destroyed and the rest must save. The secondary vampire must save with a -5 penalty (the original -4, plus -1 for failing once) and the remaining 2 wild vampires must save at -9 (the original -8, plus -1 for failing once). This continues until they have either saved and freed themselves or they are destroyed by the water.

Open Wound

Range: Touch

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 5 for small wounds and scratches, 10 for medium, and 15 for large wounds.

Damage to Caster: 1D8+4

Firstly, for this spell to even work, the caster must be able to see a sealed wound (such as stitches or a scar).

If such a mark exists, the touching of it and casting of this spell causes it to reopen, no matter how long the wound has been sealed for. The reopening itself will cause damage and start it to bleed again as though it were freshly made.

The damage caused by the reopening of the wound depends upon the original wounds size (G.M.'s discretion):

Scratches: only 1 S.D. / M.D.

Small: 1D10 S.D. / M.D.

Medium: 2D10 S.D. / M.D.

Large: 1D4x10 S.D. / M.D.

Level Four:

Absorb Strength

Range: Must be consumed

Duration: 1 melee per every 3 levels of the caster.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 15

Damage to Caster: 2D8+6

By drinking the recently (within 2 melees) drawn blood of another being, the drinker of the affected blood (must be at least a pint) absorbs some of the strength of the creature from which it was taken. The creature from which the blood is drawn can be intelligent, supernatural, man or beast.

For every 4 points of P.S. the creature that "donated" the blood has, the drinker of the blood receives 1 point of P.S. Also of note is that if the creature from which it was taken had supernatural strength, so now does the drinker.

Heal Wounds

Range: Touch or 3 foot distance.

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: Standard, if the person resists.

P.P.E.: 15

Damage to Caster: 2D6+1

Is identical to the spell on Rifts pg. 175

Heart Attack

Range: Touch (1 foot per level of experience once the shaman has reached fifth level).

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: Standard for Effect 1, special for Effect 2.

P.P.E.:

Effect 1: 10

Effect 2: 7 per level of experience

Damage to Caster:

Effect 1: 1D10+10

Effect 2: 1D6 per level of experience

This spell has two very distinct effects, the second of which can only be used once the caster reaches fifth level.

EFFECT 1: The target of the spell suddenly suffers from pains in his chest that will disrupt his concentration and causes him to lose initiative, 1/2 of his attacks and will be -3 / 30% on all actions or skills.

EFFECT 2: The target has an actual heart attack and must save vs. shock with a penalty of the caster's level x 3% or go into a coma.

Even if the save is successful, the target must then make a standard save or suffer symptoms equal to Effect 1.

Mask Undead

Range: Touch only

Duration: 1 hour per caster's level of experience.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 17

Damage to Caster: 3D4+3

This spell creates an illusion of life (or at the very least, a vague semblance of it) upon an undead target.

To which degree this spell will take affect depends upon the targeted undead's current state (and the G.M.'s discretion). An undead can only be made to look slightly more lifelike than its normal appearance.

For instance, an animated skeleton could be made to appear as a creature of muscle but lacking skin where as a vampire would lose its pale complexion and its chest would be seen to move as though breathing and it would appear to have a heart-beat.

Only undead can be affected by this spell, not the unanimated dead.

Despite the spell, nothing can mask the scent of the supernatural that is radiated by the undead and thus **Psi-Stalkers** and the like would still sense them.

Level Five:

Blood Draught

Range: 3 feet

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 15

Damage to Caster: 4D4+4

By drinking the blood from another creature (the blood must have been drawn either directly or within 2 melees of being drank), a person can heal grievous wounds.

Half a pint is required to create the draught and only 1/2 a pint can be created per every three levels of the caster.

The blood from creatures that are mundane (**non-spellcasters** or supernatural) heals 5D6 S.D. / M.D. per half pint.

The blood of spellcasters or the supernatural heals 1D6x10 S.D. / M.D. per half pint.

The blood from a creature that possesses regenerative abilities heals 2D6x10 S.D. / M.D. per half pint.

Boil Blood (Advanced)

Range: target must be within 50 feet, +10 feet per level of experience.

Duration: One melee, plus one melee per three levels of experience after the first.

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 17

Damage to Caster: 3D6+5

Basically the same as the simple version with the following changes:

- Does not require an open wound on the victim
- The victim loses half his attacks, and is -6 / -60% to all actions.
- -8 penalty to save vs. insanity required to perform actions requiring concentration.

Chill Blood (Advanced)

Range: target must be within 50 feet, +10 feet per level of experience.

Duration: 1 melee plus one melee per three levels of experience after the first.

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 17

Damage to Caster: 3D6+5

This spell is essentially identical to Boil Blood (Advanced), but instead, it creates the affect of extreme cold within ones blood.

It affects those with resistances to heat but is likewise reduced in effect upon those resistant or immune to cold.

Create Blood

Range: 5 feet (affects 2 pints per level of experience).

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 14

Damage to Caster: 3D4+5

This spell will turn simple liquids, such as gasoline, water and wine into blood. The blood created by this spell can be of any type desired and contains 10 P.P.E. per pint (though the P.P.E. will disperse at a rate of 5 P.P.E. per melee).



Vascular Eruption

Range: 10 feet per level of experience.

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: Varies

Damage to Caster: Varies

Grisly to behold (horror factor 12), this destructive spell causes the veins and capillaries near the victim's skin to erupt with such force that blood comes shooting through the skin, reaching distances of up to three feet!

The damage caused by this spell can be varied: 2D6 S.D. / M.D. (5 P.P.E., 1D4 damage to caster), 4D6 S.D. / M.D. (10 P.P.E., 1D6+3 damage to caster), 7D6 S.D. / M.D. (15 P.P.E., 3D6+2 damage to caster), or 1D6x10+10 S.D. / M.D. (20 P.P.E., 3D6+10 damage to caster).

Level Six:

Blood Beast

Range: Immediate

Duration: Duration

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 100

Damage to Caster: 1D4x10+10

This spell summons a tectonic entity and constrains it into the blood released by the spell caster, forming a being known simply as a Blood Beast. The blood beast stands about seven feet tall and appears as a featureless humanoid comprised solely of blood that is constantly flowing and shifting.

The entity controlling the blood form will obey the caster in a combat situation for 10 melees per level of experience or be sent on a single, simple mission ("Bring me so and so", or "Slay so and so"). The tectonic entity will remain in the caster's dimension until the mission is complete or it is slain.

There is a 20% chance that the entity will not return to its own dimension and will no longer obey the spell caster who summoned it. If this happens, it will remain in the caster's dimension wreaking havoc and killing for the sheer pleasure of it.

Blood Beast:

Alignment: Diabolic

Attributes: I.Q. 5, M.E. N/A, M.A. N/A, P.S. 30 (supernatural), P.P. 12, P.E. N/A, P.B. 3, Spd. 16.

M.D.C.: 1D8x10 + 40 P.P.E.: 60

Horror Factor: 16 I.S.P.: none

Natural Abilities: See the invisible, regenerate 2D8 M.D.C. per melee (double by drinking the blood of others), takes 1/2 damage from energy attacks (those which are magical or psionic in nature do full damage), and can cast the following blood magic spells each three times daily: blood bolt, open wound, boil blood (advanced), carnivorous blood. Note that the act of casting blood magic does NOT damage a blood beast!

Psionics: none

Combat: 5 physical or 2 magical attacks per melee, +3 to strike, parry and dodge, +1 on initiative, +3 to save vs. magic, +1 to save vs. psionics and +10 to save vs. horror factor.

Damage: restrained punch - 5D6 S.D., 2D6 M.D. on a full strength punch, 4D6 M.D. on a power punch (uses 2 attacks)

Skills: none

Blood Divination

Range: 1 foot (although the image could pertain to people or places thousands of miles away).

Duration: 4d6 melees

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 30

Damage to Caster: 4D6+5

Pouring his blood into a large puddle, the caster then gazes into it in the hopes of a glimpse into the possible future.

Essentially, this spell is identical in its function to the clairvoyance psionic power on Rifts pg. 121, only it is more accurate and can be attempted four times a day (if the caster's body can handle the punishment).

BASE SKILL: 66% +2% per level of experience.

Blood Pact

Range: Self and other or two others.

Duration: Special

Saving Throw: Standard, if resisted.

P.P.E.: 65

Damage to Caster: 3D10+8

The two beings who are to be affected by this spell must equally share and drink the blood released by the blood shaman. After the blood is consumed, the blood shaman recites a pact to

the spell, a promise if you will, which must be fulfilled within the given conditions as described by the shaman.

This pact could be anything from "should one of you be killed, the other must avenge his murder within one year" or "neither of you shall ever steal anything from the other".

If the conditions are kept to, nothing happens. However, should the conditions be disobeyed, the perpetrator must save vs. magic with a penalty of -8 or die instantly.

It should also be noted that killing off the other member of the pact does not necessarily cancel out the spell, given certain conditions. For instance, in the above examples, if one of the pact killed the other, in the first example he would be required to kill himself but in the latter he would then be able to take the other's possessions.

This spell is often used upon pairs of captives who are then obligated to complete a dangerous mission for the blood shaman or die from not fulfilling the spell's conditions.



Carnivorous Blood

Range: 3 feet per level of the caster.

Duration: 1 melee action per level of the caster.

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 25

Damage to Caster: 3D8+8

Firstly, in order for this spell to work, the target must have an open wound that is bleeding.

This spell creates the horrible affect of causing the target's blood to start dissolving his insides. The damage caused is 3D10 S.D. / M.D. per melee ACTION! Also, the damage cannot be healed by any means less than surgery (-15%) or magic / psionics. Until such a healing process is performed, none of the damage will be repaired.

Such is the pain that is caused by this spell, that until the damage is healed, the target will suffer the following penalties: -5 to initiative, strike, parry, roll and dodge, -25% to all skills.

Superior Blood Armor

Range: Self or Other (must be touched).

Duration: 1 minute per level of the caster.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 18

Damage to Caster: 3D8

Merely an improved version of the Blood Armor spell, the protection from this one affords 15 M.D.C. per level of the caster's experience. Magic, fire, lightning, and cold do one-half damage.

The sight of a recipient of this spell causes a horror factor of 10 on those seeing it for the first time (even on those who are hardened to battle).

Level Seven:

Blood Battery

Range: 5 feet

Duration: 2 days per level of the caster.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 20

Damage to Caster: 3D6+3

This spell works the same as the Blood Jar spell with one distinct difference: the blood stored retains its P.P.E. and thus can be used by the blood shaman to cast spells at anytime.

Blood Brothers

Range: Touch

Duration: 1 melee per level of caster.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 55

Damage to Caster: 4D8+10

The two recipients of this spell must drink the blood of the other in order for this spell to work, and then drink of the caster's spellcasting wound (if he isn't one of the participants himself).

Through a mystically formed bond, each participant gets to draw on the strengths of the other. This bond manifests it self in several ways:

- For every 2 points one person has above 16 in his attributes, the other person gets one point to his same attribute for the duration of the spell.
- Both people get +4D6 S.D.C. / M.D.C.
- Both people get the vulnerabilities and weaknesses of the other.
- Any damage suffered by one is also taken, at half the original amount, by the other.
- If one of the two is killed, the other must save vs. death at -20% or lapse into a coma.

Note that this spell can only be used on sentient beings, not on animals.

Life Drain

Range: 45 feet.

Duration: 1 melee per level of experience.

Damage: Special; see description.

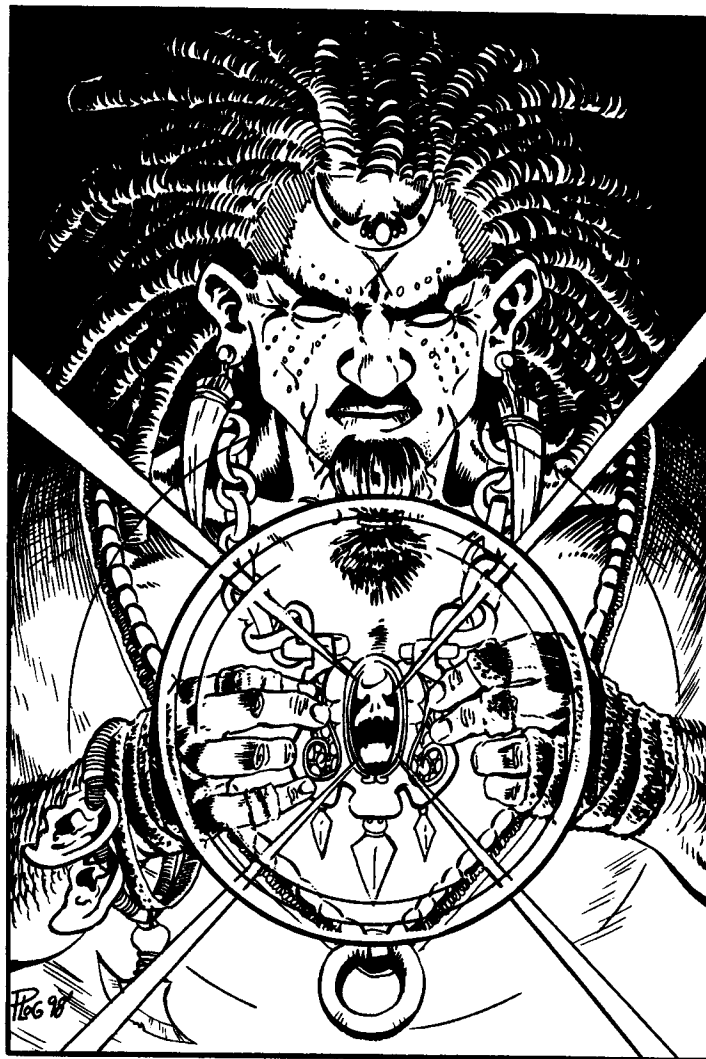
Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 20

Damage to Caster: 3D6+4

This is identical to the spell in Rifts pg. 178 except the victim must have an open, bleeding wound for this to take affect.

Level Eight:



Blood Amulet

Range: Holder / wearer of the amulet.

Duration: Exists as long as the medallion is not destroyed.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 215

Damage to Caster: 1D6x10+20

Enchanting a medallion or charm with mystical properties, this spell grants one of several benefits. The medallion must be made of one metal purified by fire or made of semiprecious stone, and then bathed in the spilled blood of the caster. Pick one of the following benefits:

- Protection vs. vampires: works like a cross.
- Protection vs. disease: Bonus of +6 to save vs. disease.
- Protection vs. blood magic: Bonus of +6 to save vs. blood magic spells and effects.
- Protection vs. necromancy: Bonus of +6 to save vs. necromantic magic and effects.

Blood Ward

Range: Affects any creature activating it.

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: Standard; spells are base 12, blood wards created by ritual are 16.

P.P.E.: 80

Damage to Caster: 5D10 + 6

Much like the regular ward spell, this invocation is used for the protection of items of value, dwellings and as booby traps. The ward can be cast on a door or window, section of floor, a cabinet or on a specific item such as a book or statue. When somebody, other than the one that created it, touches the warded object, the spell affect is triggered. The following wards can be created. Each ward invocation will create two separate wards, the ritual will create three. The object to be warded must be present.

- Blood Bolt: the person touching the item is hit by a bolt of blood (as the first level spell) that does 4D4 M.D. or 8D6 S.D. (as appropriate). Dodge vs. 18 to avoid.
- Boil Blood: the person is affected as if by the fifth level spell, Boil Blood (Advanced) for 4 melees. No open wound required.
- Chill Blood: the person is affected as if by the fifth level spell, Chill Blood (Advanced) for 4 melees. No open wound required.
- Blood Trail: the person is affected as if by a Blood Trail spell, thus allowing the caster to follow him. The duration is 4 days.
- Agony: the person is affected as if by an Agony spell. The effects last 2 minutes.
- Life Drain: the person is affected as if by a Life Drain spell. The effects last 2 minutes.
- Heart Attack: the person is affected as if by a Heart Attack spell. When created, the caster of the Blood Ward spell must decide whether the effect of the spell will be "Effect 1" or "Effect 2" (see the Heart Attack spell). For the purposes of determination, treat the caster as 5th level.
- Vascular Eruption: the person is affected as if by the Vascular Eruption spell, doing 4D6 S.D. / M.D. to the victim.

Control Vampire (ritual)

Range: Line of sight (including by mystic means).

Duration: 6 hours per level of the caster.

Saving Throw: Special

P.P.E.: 200

Damage to Caster: 1D6x10+15

This ritual causes a contest of wills between the caster and a vampire. For the spell to work, the caster must be able to see the target (through visual line of sight or mystic means, electronic means won't work).

Once the target has been chosen, the battle of minds will be joined. The vampire is immediately aware of the fact that someone is trying to control him and, if he can see the caster as well, will also know who it is that is trying to control him.

Once this contest begins, the Vampire must save vs. ritual magic, with all his normal bonuses to save vs. magic applicable. However, there are other bonuses and penalties that must be applied; these are as follows.

- A penalty is applied to the vampire's save equal to the caster's level, plus any bonus for high M.E. that the caster might have, as shown on the "Attribute Bonus Table".
- The vampire gets a bonus for high M.E. that he might have, as shown on the "Attribute Bonus Table".
- If the target is a master vampire, he gets a +2 bonus to save, if he is a secondary he gets no bonus and if he is a wild vampire, he suffers a -2 penalty to save.

All commands given to a controlled vampire must be given directly, either in person or by mystical or telepathic communication; messengers and electronic means will not work.

Also, every 6 hours the vampire is entitled to another attempt to break free of his new master's control. All the previous bonuses and penalties apply with the additional penalty of a -2 to save for every previous time that the vampire has failed the save.

When the duration runs out, the vampire is once again in control of itself and, it should be noted, will most likely be none too happy that he was mind controlled. If the vampire has learned his master's identity, he will most likely seek vengeance.

NOTE: If the vampire is being controlled by a vampire intelligence, it will immediately realize that it has lost control of the vampire (and may send others to investigate).

Create Blood Golem (ritual)

Range: Touch

Duration: Exists until destroyed.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 600

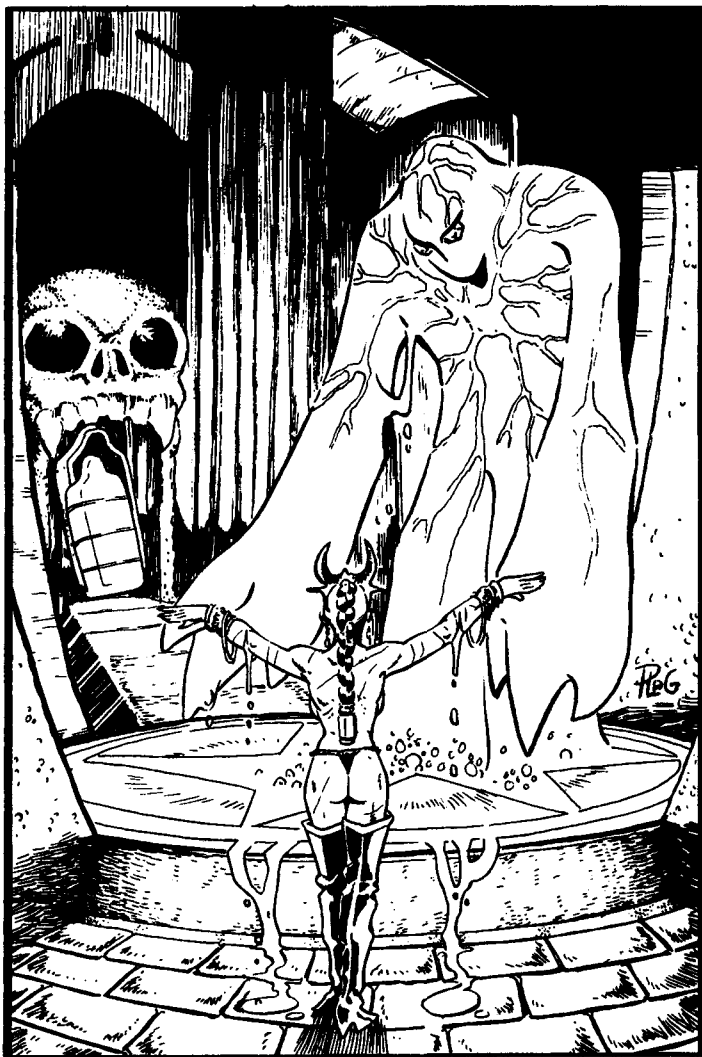
Damage to Caster: 1D10x10 + 40

First, the caster draws a pentagram in the blood which he spilled for the required P.P.E., which is spilled by carving the shape of the golem into his flesh (or that of the blood donor).

Next, he places two rubies, valued at no less than 1,000 credits each, in the middle of the pentagram, side by side. Now he places a heart, molded from iron, next to the two rubies. Lastly, the caster splashes some of his own blood onto the heart and rubies. This final *act permanently* drains the caster of 4 S.D.C.

When the blood is splashed, the blood of the pentagram starts to bubble and flow towards the heart and rubies, multiplying in amount. In a matter of seconds, a creature made of pure blood, with glowing rubies for eyes and an iron heart buried within its form begins to rise up.

Spells and psionics designed to work against human physiology (except other blood magic) are useless against the golem. This means that charms, sleeps, bio-manipulation, illusions, paralysis, etc. won't work on it. Turn dead, banishment, negation and remove curse are likewise useless. Physical attacks and energy magic (even explosives) hurt the creature but do only 1/2 damage.



It cannot speak, read or understand complex commands. It has no emotions, no fears, and is like a robot waiting for direction. A golem will obey only the person who created it. When the creator dies, the golem will follow his last command until it is destroyed.

Blood Golem:

- Horror Factor 16
- I.Q. 6, P.S. 22, Speed 14, Height: 6 to 20 feet.
- 5 attacks per melee, 1D4 M.D. by punch.
- No bonus to parry, dodge or initiative.
- Impervious to most psychic and magic attacks. Magic energy attacks and normal weapons will do only 1/2 damage.
- Impervious to normal and magical fire.
- M.D.C. 30
- Regenerates completely within 24 hours unless the iron heart is removed from the body.

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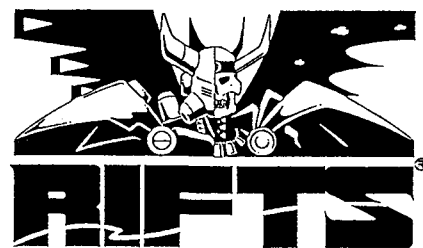
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Techno-Wizard Extravaganza



Techno-Wizardry as a Career: Its Value and Its Cost

By Mark Sumimoto

Techno-wizards by their nature are the most unconventional of magic users. Why, if one has the potential to shape the world using sheer force of will, would one confine that power to the trappings of a physical machine? Why would someone take an energy source limited only by the power of the mind and build it into a mechanical device with only a handful of uses? A potential techno-wizard can easily change his path and elect to become a Ley Line Walker with the power to channel the primal force of the ley lines and mold it into an infinity of forms and structures. But instead they choose the path that will limit them to harnessing that power through the use of a machine. Why impose such obvious limitations upon themselves?

When confronted with these questions most **techno-wizards** will answer simply: "Because it's fun". Of course, there is much more to it than that, but if one stops to think about it, being a techno-wizard (or TW for short) really is fun. Ley Line Walkers and Shifters must focus and concentrate whenever they want to summon their powers. They focus their wills to shape reality; a task that requires a serious mind and attitude, at least during the casting of the spell. For a techno-wizard to summon a wall of water, make himself invulnerable to fire, or fly through the air, usually all he has to do is press a button. To sprout a pair of wings, he may need only to pull the rip cord on a parachute. To unleash a ball of fire, he needs only to pull a trigger. Any number of magical effects can be created by simply adjusting a few knobs or punching in the right code and spending the required amount of P.P.E. Toss in the fact that the majority love parading around in funky aviator gear with crazy-looking crystal encrusted inventions strapped to them and you have what must be a fun-loving, off-the-wall kind of guy. Initially, there is a lot of hard work that must be put into making these devices, but often the end result is well worth the effort and often cause for a celebration. Any techno-wizard who puts nine or more months into building a suit of mystic power armor will undoubtedly want to go out for a test run to see what his hard work has gotten him and have a lot of fun doing it.

The casting of a spell is a time consuming task requiring several seconds to cast a low level spell, while higher level spells may take half a minute or longer. By contrast, a techno-wizard device can be activated in an instant. Instead of being able to cast only one or two spells per melee, a TW can use an item or a

variety of devices two or more times during the melee. The releasing of a magical effect is done without a lengthy chant to telegraph the attack or the opportunity for an opponent to break the mage's concentration. The push of a button or a quick mental command and expenditure of P.P.E. is often all that is needed.

The more arrogant techno-wizards will trumpet with pride that their occupation is on the cutting edge of the new era. As the line between magic and technology becomes more and more blurred, techno-wizards are right there clouding things up. They are constantly developing new ways to tweak magic by channeling it through machinery and improve technology by modifying it with magic. Many TW devices combine magic and technology to create a new effect not possible with one alone. Seeing a vast ship floating silently along a ley line or watching as someone is struck down by invisible bolts of force is enough to make many skeptics reconsider the possibility that **techno-wizardry** may be the way of the future.

The techno-wizard is also seen as having a very lucrative career. Another magic-user may attempt to sell his knowledge through the black market, a guild, or even open his own shop to sell to paying customers. In all cases, their customers are limited to schooled magic-users. People without schooling in magic cannot make use of spell knowledge at all. Most Magi O.C.C.s won't bother learning spells beyond their current level of achievement. And even the most experienced Warlocks and Mystics are unable to learn any spells outside of their own intuitive knowledge. But techno-wizards can build devices usable by any mage as well as many psychics. The most experienced techno-wizards can build devices usable by anyone, although usually with a limited payload (or, in some rare cases, an indefinite payload). In addition, their background in both magic and technology means that they are able to evaluate and assess the condition and value of a wide variety of items and artifacts, ranging from pre-rifts vehicles to alien magic devices to modern toaster ovens. This puts them ahead of the game as far as a career in commerce or a fallback job after retiring from adventuring is concerned.

Techno-wizards are also viewed with a little less **trepidation**, by normal people, than other men of magic are. Ley Line Walkers and Shifters are generally viewed as beings who traffic with strange forces and demonic creatures, and are always found working dangerous magic in those cursed, monster-infested places with the blue light. Mystics are creepy people who can look into your soul, Warlocks ally themselves with destructive forces of nature, and Necromancers are the absolute epitome of evil. But techno-wizards fire pistols to create energy blasts and ride on wing boards to fly. The intricacies behind TW devices

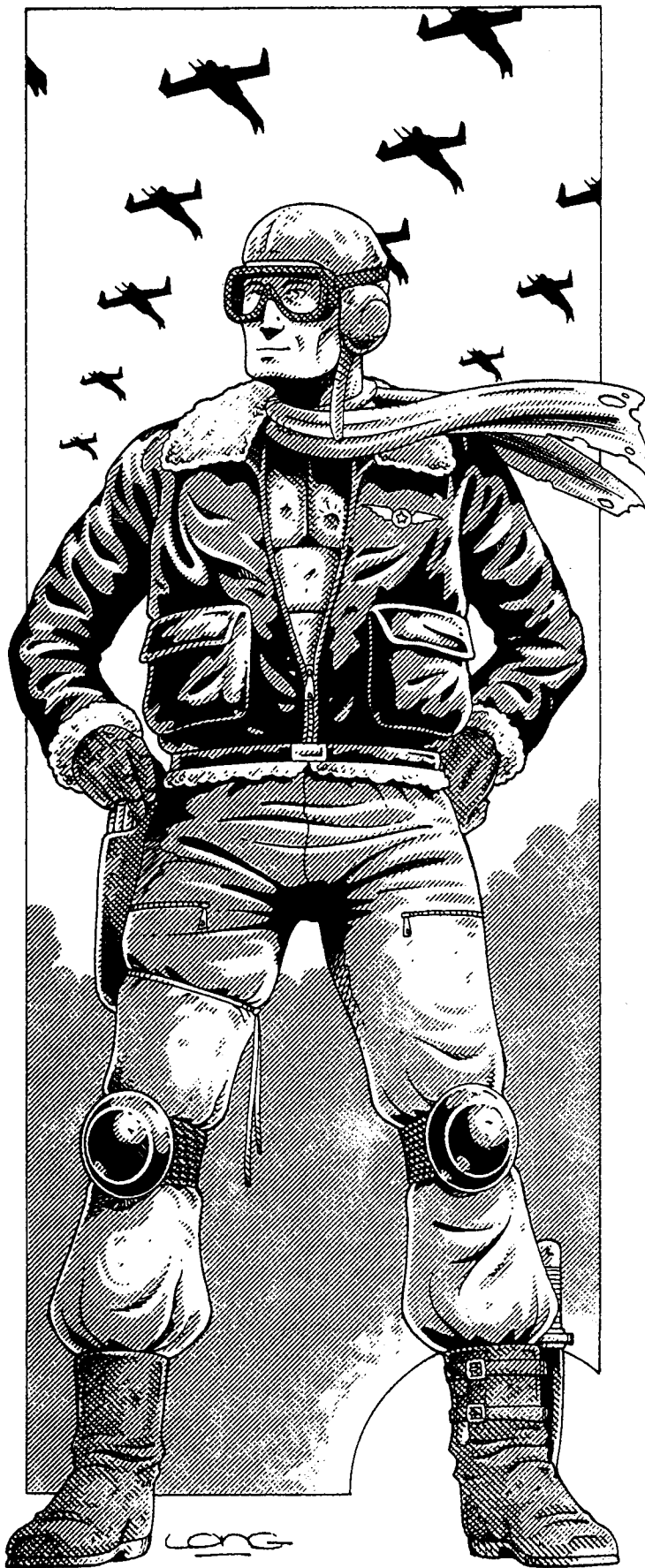
are over the heads of most people, but seeing other people use them is easy to comprehend. Normal folks can watch as **techno-wizards** use weapons and tools, instead of manipulating unseen forces. Of course, some peasants are as **afraid** of technology as they are of magic, but the majority are more comfortable seeing machines perform strange and seemingly impossible feats than seeing someone create them from thin air.

Well, after pondering all this, the question now becomes: Why would anyone choose any practice of magic other than that of the **techno-wizard**? The ironic truth is that TW abilities lack two qualities the **techno-wizards** themselves are often identified with: versatility and spontaneity. While the TW can make an incredibly diverse assortment of goods and devices, the devices themselves are limited in their function. A wizard can cast any spell available to him in any order he desires at anytime he desires, with the only limit being the amount of P.P.E. available to him. A TW can only have a limited amount of equipment with him at any given time. A high level mage may have a hundred spells available to him at any given time. A TW of equal power may only have a dozen or so devices on his person at any one time. While they are capable of casting any spells they know without requiring the use of a machine to focus it, they cast them at half the proficiency of a comparable spell caster. This is an especially profound disadvantage when combating fully proficient mages.

As for spontaneity, a TW must spend hours, days, weeks, months or even years to build a working spell-casting device. True, after the device is built, it can be used over and over whenever needed. But until then, you'd better just hope that you won't need it any time soon. Another fact is that a spell caster can't be caught with his pants down. Ambush him in the shower and he can always whip up a suit of magic armor or put his assailant into a trance with a few spoken words. Catch a techno-wizard in the shower and he may not be as lucky. **Again**, they can cast spells at half proficiency, but they have a psychological reliance on their equipment. The TW may instinctively run for his gun or armor before using his magic. Any momentary delay in this situation may spell the difference between life and death.

Their reliance on machines is also seen as a mark of weakness by some closed-minded men of magic. This has caused some friction between techno-wizards and these arrogant mages. They view techno-wizards as weak **techno-junkies** who need a technological crutch to support them. Other times techno-wizards are chastised for their not-so-serious attitudes and ridiculous outfits. But for the most part, they get along well with other magic-users and this relationship is strengthened by the fact that TW devices are widely used and accepted by most mages.

The wide availability of users for their devices can occasionally prove to be a drawback as well as an advantage to them. Bandits, thieves and highwaymen may target techno-wizards because of their high-priced equipment and magical goodies. Other mages attract similar attention, but they don't have the guaranteed payload that techno-wizards have and so are bothered less often. Also, many bandits view techno-wizards as lesser mages and, therefore, easier targets. True, the typical TW knows less mind controlling magic that subverts the will of others than Shifters and Ley Line Walkers and their power seems limited to building little machines. However, a bolt of lightning



fired from a TW lightning blaster is no less devastating than one summoned from the sky.

Another recent stigma against the techno-wizards originates with those familiar with the legends of the Palladium world.

Many visitors from that world fear that **techno-wizardry** is the first step to the re-discovery of rune magic. With the advent of the Murder-wraith (undead Juicer) and the Seduced **Techno-wizard** (undead Borg), and other combinations of techno-wizardry and Necromancy, the possibility of a re-creation of the dark days of the Palladium world seems very real. Although, this is still a long ways away, if it happens at all.

Techno-Wizards: Their Origins

In the beginning of the post-apocalyptic era, when magic was first rediscovered, more and more men of magic began looking for ways to maximize its use. New spell incantations were developed and mages began splintering off into specialized areas. Those who were fascinated by the lines of power that now crossed the Earth became Ley Line Walkers. The study of the Rifts and the beings they let into this world became the practice of the mages known as Shifters. Those blessed with the intuitive knowledge of magic became known as Mystics. As elemental creatures made their presence known, their disciples, the Warlocks, began to grow in number. Other mages began salvaging the relics of their past and began studying the technology of their ancestors. They studied and repaired the ancient devices they uncovered and began putting them back together in different ways. These mages discovered that machines could be re-configured to emulate magical effects. However, conventional fuels were not capable of producing the results they desired. Then they realized that to get the results they wanted, they needed a power source which was not bound by physical limitations. Machines, they thought, could be modified to use the power which now flowed through the Earth, instead of conventional or nuclear fuels. To them it was simply logical that they, with their great amount of psychic energy, be the living batteries for their inventions. They toiled endlessly to perfect their new craft. New methods and innovations were developed to convert existing machines to function on magic energy. Later devices were created which could tap into the endless power of the Ley Lines themselves. These pioneers were the first techno-wizards.

Most reports claim that techno-wizardry originated in the once fledgling republic of Lazlo. These reports are backed by the fact that the city of Lazlo is one of the largest producers of techno-wizard devices and goods in North America. TW technology is a commonplace sight of daily life in the city of Lazlo. These devices are seen in the home, at the workplace, and, especially, in the military. In fact, the main source of power for Lazlo city is a Ley Line nexus point tapped by a tremendous TW generator. Tolkeen and New Lazlo are equally reliant on techno-wizardry, but neither lay claim to having been its birthplace (especially true of New Lazlo, which was founded by settlers from the first Lazlo). New rumors now circulate that claim techno-wizardry was actually developed in the Magic Zone and that early techno-wizards traveled north to Lazlo after they discovered this new craft. Most scholars believe that these rumors were started by the money-hungry profiteers at **Stormspire**, the largest manufacturer of TW weapons and equipment in North America, to bring in more customers and young techno-wizards looking for employment. Some supporters of Tolkeen have started rumors that Techno-wizardry did originate in their nation. This is a desperate attempt by them to recruit techno-wizards to join their army and weapon factories in preparation

for the upcoming war with the Coalition. Unfortunately for them, this tactic is not panning out very well, but a handful of young wild-eyed techno-wizards have been attracted to the possible chance to be war heroes.

In the years following their early beginnings, some of these revolutionary mages have branched off and formed new areas of specialization. Most Techno-wizards still fall into the standard description listed the **Rifts RPG**, but new variants account for 10% of the techno-wizards in North America. Also see the Ninja TW found in **Rifts Japan**. Additionally, techno-wizards from North America have traveled to other places around the globe and some of them have taught their craft to students there.

Techno-Wizards: Their Character and Sub-culture

Techno-wizards are as varied in their individual dispositions as any O.C.C. But as with any career and occupation, they attract certain types of people and personalities. Students of this craft need a certain mindset. The training itself further molds a student into a mirror of its forerunners. The mechanics behind TW devices can escape those who are too rigid in their understanding of the laws of physics. The skill to make a functioning magic item from a handful of junk requires patience and imagination. Hard work is put into the construction of the machine and the end product is as much the result of blood, sweat and tears as it is skill and knowledge. That having been said, techno-wizards are generally characterized as being introverted, humble, hard-working, and eccentric.

Many of them spend long hours working on their creations and have little time for social interaction. Others travel the world with other adventurers and spend most of their time studying the things they discover and the places they visit. Still others crave power and devote their lives toward its acquisition. In all cases, the opportunity for socializing is limited. Most techno-wizards lack social skills and are somewhat awkward in group situations. They generally prefer the company of other techno-wizards, operators, and other mechanics over others. In these surroundings, they are loose and relaxed. Techno-wizards who are adventurers are usually much more sociable than their laboratory brothers and can be the life of the party.

However, among their fellow techno-wizards, they take on a whole different dynamic. They really open up among other techno-wizards and enjoy their colleagues' company. They love to talk shop, give each other helpful hints, and, among close comrades, even trade building secrets. A few of them seem almost like Jekyll and Hyde as they are very quiet with others, but just can't shut up when they're hanging out with their brothers. Although they usually also get along with other men of magic, sometimes their differences set them apart. Among scholarly mages, like Line Walkers and Shifters, a TW may be treated as an inferior. Set apart due to their unique orientation, many educated practitioners of magic do not consider techno-wizards to be true mages. Among intuitive mages, like Mystics and Warlocks, techno-wizards have philosophical differences concerning technology. These factors often lead to their exclusion from certain guilds. For this reason, techno-wizards prefer to form their own guilds. TW guilds are strange gatherings that rarely involve the conspiracy and posturing that plagues other magic

guilds. They have a camaraderie that approaches the brotherhood that Warlock guilds have. Members trade products and building designs and can learn new spells. Here **techno-wizards** engage in group **brainstorming** and the development of new devices and gizmos. Together, they have the advantage of different perspectives and teamwork to overcome the obstacles before them. The techno-wizards of **Stormspire** are one example of a group of techno-wizards who pool their skills and talents and develop more impressive devices than any one of them could alone. Unlike other magic guilds, these mages enjoy sharing their ideas and information and actually function better as a group. Selfish and evil techno-wizards tend to keep to themselves in these situations, quietly listening for useful information and news of discoveries and opportunities. However, most TW guilds promote teamwork and will eject anyone who is too tight-lipped with their knowledge. Even though a lot of their achievements are shared between members of the guild, a pecking order is established based on the ingenuity, inventiveness, creativity, experience, and personal power of the individual members. Typically the most experienced members are the leaders of the guild with other factors deciding who the guild-master is.

Among some people, the term "humble **techno-wizard**" may seem like an oxymoron. How can anyone who can power a machine with his own personal energy stay humble? Even the toughest **headhunter** becomes vulnerable when his **E-clips** run out and the strongest Juicer feels a little weak in the knees when his drug harness runs low. But when the **techno-wizard's** equipment runs low, he can power it up with his own potential psychic energy. Being able to power Mega-damage weaponry with one's own energy is certainly something to be proud of. But to other practitioners of magic, being a source of energy is only the beginning of true power. Manipulating that energy is the secret to true power. However, it is a secret that techno-wizards **aren't** interested in learning. Techno-wizards follow a different path. Through their devices they can channel their energy into any number of forms and uses. But ultimately it is the machine that manipulates the energy, not the TW. This limitation, detrimental as it may seem, helps to keep them in step with reality. They say power corrupts, and among archmages this is often proven true. By contrast, a much lower number of high level techno-wizards succumb to corruption and lose their sanity. In addition, no matter how brilliant or powerful the TW may be, long hours and hard work must be put into the construction of his devices and hard work keeps a man humble.

Even among the magic character classes, techno-wizards stand out as being the strange ones. They build outrageous looking machines and dress like **pre-rifts** aviators. The sight of a TW wearing a gaudy jewel encrusted helmet or clunky oversized boots is common. Under their shells, TW machines are often a mess of wires and spare parts that could not function under other circumstances. Natural gems and crystals are used to store power and the devices they build do not conform to the laws of physics as we know it. To fully comprehend them takes a different perspective. This means that techno-wizards often do and look at things differently from other people. A TW may see a bird floating in the sky and think of ways to duplicate its grace in a wing board. He may see a rainbow and contemplate ways of containing it in a kaleidoscope. If needed to **fix** a car, he may convert the engine to run on telekinetic energy without

asking because that's what he does. He takes different tangents in philosophical conversations with others, due to his familiarity with metaphysics, hard science, and the fusion of the two. He may believe the secrets of life may be discovered by combining divining magic and a portable stereo. He meditates by focusing on his heartbeat using a sound amplifier and sleeps on folding floating cot. This uniqueness is a trait that is valued by their fellow techno-wizards and carried on by each new generation.

In their early days, techno-wizards wore garments similar to that of other practitioners of magic. A cloak, cape or robe covered their bodies and concealed their tool belts and gadgets. However, the robes sometimes got in the way when the TW had to go for his guns. Also, techno-wizards saw themselves as being unique among magic users. Robes were seen as commonplace and boring. They needed something that would set them apart from other mages. They found it when a well-known TW explorer discovered the remnants of an aerospace museum and became infatuated with the garb of early aviators. He took the outfit home and started wearing it everywhere. It caught on with the younger techno-wizards in **Lazlo**. Visiting techno-wizards got into it too and soon his discovery spread like wildfire within the TW community. Goggles, jumpsuits, skullcaps, jackets, scarves, and leather gloves have become the distinct trademarks of the techno-wizard. Although it is ridiculed by some of the more serious-minded practitioners of magic, techno-wizards absolutely adore their outfits. They pay top dollar for authentic pre-rifts aviator gear, which is considered to be high fashion among techno-wizards. Many armor and clothing manufacturers take advantage of the techno-wizards aviator fetish and produce apparel specifically for the TW market.

Understanding the Techno-Wizard

By Jason Richards

First impressions

When I first started playing Rifts, I found **techno-wizardry** to be interesting and at the least really "cool". But, unfortunately that's where it ended. The O.C.C. never really intrigued me. I was more interested in the more exciting Cyber-Knights and the mutants with super abilities. "So what if a lightning rod makes you Impervious to Energy? It only does 1D6 MD!" It wasn't until one of my fellow players moved away and the other shipped off to the Navy that I was left alone with my books and the Internet. On the Palladium Mailing List, I found a forum to spew my ideas into.

To have something to contribute, I created some TW items for fighting Vampires. The ideas grew in my head until I had a web page and a couple dozen inventions. Now, techno-wizardry is my favorite aspect of the game. I ultimately dove into the life of a techno-wizard and what it must be like. This was the result.

Some mages are seemingly born with an innate understanding of rifts and summoning, others live in a sort of harmony with supernatural forces. Many spend their lives learning vast numbers of spells while others concentrate on one specialization. Then there are those who through training, study, and natural talent can manipulate magic and technology into a completely new genre: techno-wizardry.

The Techno-Wizard as a mage

The definition of a techno-wizard varies with whom you ask. To the Coalition, it is just another freak in need of pacification. To most laymen, it is just another bizarre near human that they both respect and fear at once. The only ones who have a specific opinion are their fellow masters of the mystic arts.

To a seasoned Ley Line Walker, a techno-wizard is typically a second-class sorcerer not unlike a stage magician - plenty of impressive tricks, but nothing more than illusion. They and others like them use terms like "magi-techie" and "pseudo-wizard". Many mages such as Warlocks, Seers, and Mystics consider themselves, by nature, pure and techno-wizards therefore impure. A large percentage of these practitioners hold a kind of grudge against techno-wizards and find their practices and creations to be abominations. Techno-wizards do, however, find the occasional ally within the magic community. Temporal Wizards, Conjurers, Shifters, and other more specialized wizards don't have the same type of superiority complex that develops in traditional spell users when they become more experienced and powerful (though magic in general does tend to lean in that direction). They don't view the creations of techno-wizards as mockeries or abominations, but as a legitimate addition to diversify their magic arsenal. Also, young mages, especially Line Walkers, tend not to be as high and mighty as their elders and will readily use TW devices. Many actually will go crazy for them, much to the disgust of older members of the order.



The Techno-Wizard as an operator

Techno-wizards aren't always crusading adventurers who roam the wilderness or the 'Burbs looking for excitement. To some, it is a profession just like being a blacksmith or mechanic. While some have weapon shops or armories, many others run

simple repair shops, small stores, restaurants, or any other number of "normal" professions where they use their gifts. One of the most common jobs is one similar to an Old West blacksmith. The mage makes simple household repairs, makes tools and conveniences, and is the technical man or woman of the town. There have also recently been several TW doctors who, using their gifts, make lifesaving paramedic equipment.

Though they are in many ways just as adept as Operators, they are also ostracized by their community. Even those Operators who have psionic abilities tend to turn a cold shoulder to a techno-wizard in need of work, viewing them as cheaters or fakes. Most techno-wizards don't take this rejection as much to heart as they do from other mages, with whom they most identify themselves.

Techno-Wizards as people

What would Freud say about the average techno-wizard? The stereotypical adventurer wearing outlandish clothing making weapons of destruction or armor for protection would be an interesting case study. He would probably find that they were sexually disturbed, internally angry people who showed their pent-up emotions through acts of self-glorification. But, what would the techno-wizard say about himself. He would probably say that he was independent, but only because he had been cast out. He would call himself proud, only because the hate of others had humbled him time and again. He would call himself a warrior because he secretly longed for inner peace. As a people, techno-wizards are strong, but defenseless; poor, but rich. In the end, they are just people. Some are good, some are bad; not unlike anyone else. In my guess, if the techno-wizard is ever invited in by the societies he longs for the most, he will decide not to stay. He will find he is better off in his own company.

New O.C.C.s

Combat

Techno-Wizard O.C.C.

By Jason Richards

Through the past several decades, the magic arts of **techno-wizardry** have developed into many different branches in different parts of the world or even different regions of North America. One such tangent was the **Combat Techno-Wizard**, who uses his magical and technical abilities to make himself an extremely capable man-at-arms.

Techno-Wizard Psionic Powers

1. The Combat Techno-Wizard gets the following psionic abilities: Tele-mechanics, Sixth Sense, Mind Block, and Object Read.

2. **I.S.P.:** Roll 4D6 plus the character's M.E. number to determine the base Inner Strength Points. The techno-wizard is considered a minor psionic and gains another 1D4 **I.S.P.** per each additional level of experience.

3. Saving throw versus psionic attack: As a minor psionic, the character needs a 12 or higher to save vs. psionics.

Techno-Wizard Magic Powers

1. Initial Spell Knowledge: In addition to **techno-wizard** powers, the character has a solid understanding of spell magic and how to tap into ley lines and nexus points for additional P.P.E. The techno-wizard is not the master of spell magic the Ley Line Walker or Shifter is, but is still pretty capable. It is not a lack of understanding in magic that limits the **techno-wizard's** spell casting abilities, but his orientation. Consequently, his spell casting abilities are not the same as other spell casters. Spell Casting Penalty: All spell ranges, durations, M.D.C., S.D.C., and damage are half when cast as a spell or ritual rather than channeled through a TW device.

A combat techno-wizard is primarily interested in those spells he or she can use in making himself a more formidable warrior and spends much of his or her time building and modifying devices to that end.

At level one experience, the character knows the following spells: Blinding Flash, Fire Bolt, Fire Ball, Call Lightning, Energy Bolt, Energy Field, Impervious to Energy, Telekinesis, Armor of **Ithan**, Superhuman Strength, and Superhuman Speed.

At third level a total of three additional spells can be selected from levels 1-4. The combat techno-wizard will be primarily interested in those spells that will increase his proficiency in combat.

2. Learning new spells. Additional spells may be bought or learned at any time, regardless of his current level of experience. The character will never learn summoning or circles.

3. Magic Bonuses. +3 to save versus horror factor. +1 to save versus magic at levels three, seven, ten, and thirteen. +1 to spell strength at levels four, eight, and twelve.

4. P.P.E.: Like all men of magic, the combat techno-wizard is a living battery of mystic energy that he can draw on to create magic. Permanent Base P.P.E.: 2D4x10, in addition to the P.E. attribute number. Add 2D6 P.P.E. per each additional level of experience. Of course, the mage can also draw P.P.E. from ley lines, nexus points, and other people when available.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. and M.E. of 12 or higher. Other high physical attributes are suggested, but not required.

O.C.C. Bonuses: +1D4 to P.P. and P.S., +1D4x10 to S.D.C., +1 strike and parry with TW or other magic weapon (if applicable).

O.C.C. Skills:

Basic Electronics (+10%)

Basic Mechanics (+10%)

Math: Basic (+10%)

Language, 1 additional (+10%)

Read Sensory Equipment (+10%)

Weapon Systems

Pilot, 2 of choice (+10%)

W.P. Energy Pistol

W.P. Energy Rifle

2 other W.P. skills of choice

Hand to Hand: Expert

Hand to Hand: Martial Arts (or Assassin if evil alignment) can be learned at the cost of one "other" skill.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select **five** other skills. Plus select one additional at level three, level six, level nine, and level twelve. Select an additional W.P. at levels four and seven. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%)

Domestic: Any

Electrical: Any, but counts as 2 skills

Espionage: Intelligence, Wilderness Survival, and Sniper only

Mechanical: Any, but each counts as 2 skills

Medical: First Aid only

Military: Any (+5%)

Physical: Any

Pilot: Any (+5%)

Pilot Related: Any (+5%)

Rogue: Any (+5%)

Science: Math and Chemistry only

Technical: Any (+5%)

W.P.: Any

Wilderness: Any

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select five secondary skills from the list above without the benefit of the bonuses in parentheses.

Standard Equipment: work clothes, a set of fatigues, goggles or sunglasses, multi-optics band, magnifying glass, large and small flashlight, six signal flares, mini-tool kit, knapsack, back pack, 1D4 small sacks, one large sack, pocket mirror, a silver cross, six wooden stakes and a mallet, canteen, binoculars, air filter and gas mask, pocket laser distancer, and a pocket digital disc recorder/player. Current fashion among combat techno-wizards is military-style fatigues and a few small tattoos.

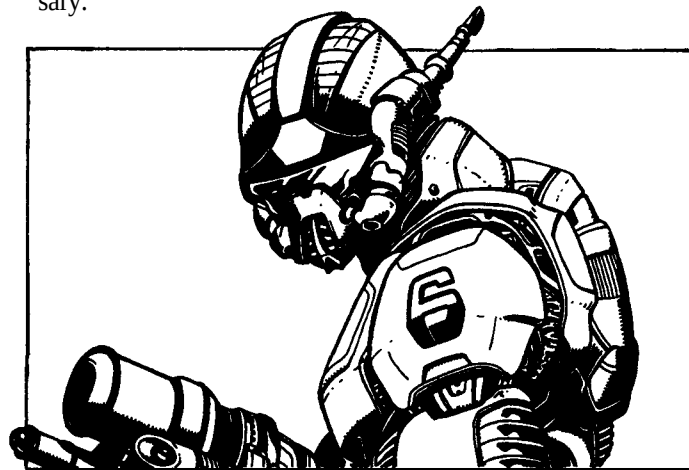
Armor can be light or heavy body armor with three magical enhancements or an exoskeleton with two magical enhancements. The character also starts with a TW vehicle with two enhancements.

Instead of the above equipment, a combat techno-wizard may start with a suit of light (less than 300 M.D.C.) power armor with one techno-wizard enhancement. Please note the bonuses gained by a psionic using Tele-mechanics in power armor (see Rifts Sourcebook 1).

Weapons will include a survival knife and three TW weapons.

Money: the combat techno-wizard starts with 1D4x1000 in credit, 1D6x100 in black market items and 2D4x1000 in crystals and gems. Combat techno-wizards typically carry more money than the traditional techno-wizard.

Cybernetics: Starts with none and will avoid them at all costs. Bio-systems will be the priority if prosthetics become necessary.



Texas Slinger O.C.C.

By Mark Sumimoto

The New West is a vast wilderness seen by many Easterners as the new **frontier**. Many have traveled to this new land to escape the tyranny of the Coalition States and the impending conflicts which will send the East into a turmoil. Others travel west because of its romantic image and atmosphere of adventure. The Texas Slingers fall into the latter category.

They started as a small band of adventuring **Techno-wizards** who were touring the New West. On their way home to **Lazlo**, they stopped to rest in one of the larger frontier **towns**. There they witnessed a bank robbery committed by a group of **gun-slingers**. The local sheriff and deputies rushed to the scene and pitted their **gunfighting** skills against these brigands. The Techno-wizards watched in amazement at the skill and speed of the gunslingers and the lawmen before they stepped in to aid the sheriff. The gunslingers were soon rounded up and the sheriff expressed his gratitude to the travelers by making them honorary deputies.

After returning home, they talked for days about their experience and decided that they would form a group of **gunfighters**. Although they had the dexterity needed to learn the **sharpshoot-**ing skills it would take them years to do so. Instead, they turned to the skills they already knew and designed equipment that would enable them to simulate the skills of the **gunslinger**. After months of research and testing they were ready. They rode off to Lone Star and stopped in a known Pecos Raider town. Once there, they carried themselves like real hardened gunslingers. It wasn't long before trouble found them. A gang led by a Wired '**Slinger** began hassling the newcomers and threatened them verbally. Eventually, things got physical. As if by magic, the visiting techno-wizards sprung into action. The outlaws, who just seconds earlier saw a group of sissies waiting to be beaten, were surprised by the display of speed and reflexes before them. The bandits were run out of town in a matter of minutes and when the smoke cleared, a young boy asked the men who they were. They stood silent, still surprised by their own speed and caught off guard by the question. They needed something more menacing than TW Slinger. The techno-wizards looked at each other and began mumbling, "**Techno, Tekkie, Tech-wiz...**". Then one of them looked up and said, "Texas". And so on that day in a small town in Lone Star, the Texas Slinger was born.

Since then they have taught their skills and designs to a number of students, whom they have sworn to secrecy so that no one outside the founders and their students may become Texas Slingers. Thus, maintaining a level of uniqueness and ensuring that they be the only true Texas Slingers. Outside of their equipment, they have only the basic skills with pistols and revolvers. But using their TW gear, they can fire their guns with blazing speed and pinpoint accuracy. That coupled with their other TW equipment makes them as dangerous as the Gun-slinger, Wired Slinger, and even the feared **Psi-slinger**.

Unlike true gunslingers, Texas Slingers rarely hire themselves out as hit men. They tend to be adventurers and well-intentioned bounty hunters. They sometimes become lawmen or defenders, but are usually wandering nomads in search of adventure and challenges.



Please note that the Texas Slinger has no **sharpshooting** skills or any of the special abilities of the true gunslingers, nor can they select any. This means that without their gear, they are no more adept at firing their guns than any other person trained in standard weapon proficiencies. After a few minutes of fighting, the Texas Slinger may drain himself of all his P.P.E. and be next to helpless if his opponents are still standing, especially if those opponents are professional gunfighters who aren't amused by the **techno-wizards'** attempt to replicate their hard earned skills. See the New **West** for more details concerning gunslingers,

gunfighters, and other New West characters, as well as TW revolvers and weapons.

Texas Slinger Abilities:

1. Psionic Powers: Same as the standard techno-wizard: Mind Block, Speed Reading, Total Recall, and Tele-mechanics. I.S.P is 4D6 plus the M.E. attribute number and an additional 1D4 I.S.P. per each additional level of experience. Considered to be a minor psionic, the character needs a 12 or higher to save.

2. Magic Powers: Same limits and penalties as the standard Techno-wizard, with all spells and rituals cast at half proficiency, range, duration, damage, etc., unless built into a TW device. However, their skill in building ley line devices and adding enchantments to vehicles are not as developed as their other skills. These conversions require twice the usual P.P.E. if done by a Texas Slinger. Initial spell knowledge includes: Globe of Daylight, Energy Bolt, Telekinesis, **Teleport:** Lesser, Watchguard, Superhuman Speed, Magical-adrenal Rush, Speed Weapon and Eyes of the Wolf. No additional spells are gained at later levels other than new spells which may be learned **and/or** purchased as usual. TW Slingers are primarily interested in spells that may be applied to weapons and speed. Secondary areas of interests include sensory and camouflage spells.

Special Texas Slinger Equipment: The Texas Slinger has a number of items which gives them their unique abilities. The knowledge of the construction of this equipment is never shared with anyone outside of their guild, although a competent techno-wizard will be able to figure out their devices if he puts his mind to it.

1. Quick Draw Helmet: This helmet is often designed to look like a metal cowboy hat with a number of gems and crystals encrusted in it with a pair of connected goggles and a plate covering the lower face. It can be charged and will remain in its passive mode for 24 hours. However, once the wearer enters a combat situation, the helmet will light up and give it user the reflexes and speed to simulate a true gunslinger. It activates a split second before an ambush or surprise attack is sprung, ensuring that the user has time to react. In addition, the user is given sharper senses and the ability to use his weapons with greater speed and accuracy. This device may not be used in addition to the spell, Magical-adrenal Rush and revolvers and modern weapons of all sorts cannot be enchanted with the spell, Speed Weapon.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 250 P.P.E.

Spells needed: Energy Bolt (5), Eyes of the Wolf (25 P.P.E.), Watchguard (10), Speed Weapon (100), Superhuman Speed (10), and Magical-adrenal Rush (45).

Physical Requirements: A helmet of some sort, usually of their own design and of Mega-damage construction (25-50 M.D.C.) plus 6 quartz crystals, 1 blue topaz and 1 ruby both worth 1000 credits each.

Weight: 4 to 5 pounds, rather hefty.

P.P.E. required to use: 30 P.P.E. to charge the helmet.

Duration of charge: The helmet will retain its charge for up to 24 hours while in passive mode. Once in its active mode, the charge will be used up after one minute per level of the user.

Bonuses and Abilities: +3 to initiative, +1 to strike in hand to hand combat and with pistols and revolvers of all sorts, +3 to parry, +4 to dodge, +2 to disarm on a "called" shot, +2 to save vs. horror factor, two additional attacks per melee while

using pistols and revolvers only, **nightvision** 120 ft, see the invisible, and cannot be taken by surprise or ambush as long as the helmet is charged.

2. Quick Draw Holsters: These holsters allow the Texas Slinger to draw his weapons without even lifting a finger. The handguns wait in these holsters until summoned. Upon mental command and the expenditure of P.P.E., the weapons instantly appear in the hands of the Texas Slinger. Used in conjunction with the helmet, the wizard can win any quick draw shoot out.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 60 P.P.E.

Spells Needed: Teleport: Lesser (15) and energy bolt (5)

Physical Requirements: A pair of holsters, most prefer leather, and 2 diamonds worth 500 credits each.

P.P.E. required to use: 10 P.P.E.

Duration: Instant

Bonuses and Abilities: Any handgun nestled in the holsters will instantly appear in the hands of the user with a mental command and expenditure of P.P.E. When used in the beginning of the melee round, this gives the user a bonus of +4 on initiative for that melee only.

Magic Bonuses: +1 to save vs. horror factor at levels 1, 3, 6 and 10. +1 to save vs. magic at levels 3, 7, 10, and 13. +1 to spell strength at levels 4, 8, and 12.

P.P.E.: 2D4x10 plus the P.E. attribute number. Add 2D6 P.P.E. at each additional level of experience and the mage can draw additional P.P.E. from other people, ley lines and nexus points.

Texas Slinger

Also known as: TW Slinger, Tech-whiz Slinger and Slinger Wannabees, usually called the latter by real gunslingers and gunfighters.

Alignment Restrictions: None, but most are good or selfish. Quite a contrast from their non-magical models, but then again these mages are more like gunslinger wannabees than the actual weapon masters.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 12, M.E. 12 and P.P. 12 or higher. A higher P.P. is suggested, but not really needed since most of their speed is derived from their equipment.

Race Restrictions: None, except for races without magical aptitude, but most (90%) are human. This is a relatively new O.C.C. and hasn't had much opportunity to spread to a variety of races.

Player Character Note: These magic-users are much more relaxed and fun-loving than their mundane counterparts. Most enjoy pitting their magical equipment against the skills of the real deals. These false gunfighters tend to be dramatic and a little goofy, especially compared to the grizzled veteran killers and professional assassins. Their thrill-seeking attitude and presumption that they can match hard work and natural aptitude with fancy gizmos make them the targets of humorless gunslingers and gunfighters, which oddly enough is welcome by Texas Slingers eager to test themselves.

O.C.C. Skills:

Languages: American 90% and two of choice (one is usually Spanish) at +15%

Literacy: One of choice (+10%)

Radio: Basic (+5%)

Math: Basic (+10%)

Armorer (+15%)

Basic Electronics (+15%)
Computer Operation (+5%)
Land Navigation (+10%)
Horsemanship: General (+5%)
W.P. Energy Pistol
W.P. Revolver

Hand to hand combat: Basic; may be upgraded to expert at the cost of one "other" skill or to martial arts (or assassin, if evil) at the cost of two "other" skills

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select six skills at level one, plus one additional skill at levels 3, 5, 7, 9, 12 and 15.

Communications: Any (+5%)
Cowboy: None
Domestic: Any
Electrical: Any, but each skill counts as two skill selections
Espionage: Any (+5%)
Mechanical: Any, but each skill counts as two skill selections
Medical: First aid only
Military: Any
Physical: Any, except Boxing, Wrestling and Acrobatics
Piloting: Any
Pilot Related: Any
Rogue: Any (+5%)
Science: Any (+5%)
Technical: Any (+5%)
Weapon Proficiencies: Any
Wilderness: Any (+5%)

Secondary Skills: Select two secondary skills at level one, plus one additional at levels, 2, 6, 10, and 14 from those listed excluding those marked "None". These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in parentheses. All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: Sunglasses, two sets of western style apparel, cowboy boots and spurs, leather gloves, survival kit, silver cross, six wooden stakes and mallet, canteen, **air** filter and gas mask, pocket laser distancer, **PDD** recorder/player, and a handheld computer, in addition to the special equipment listed previously.

Light M.D.C. body armor, usually one of the light styles listed in the New **West** that has two techno-wizard additions, excluding Invisibility: Superior, Giant, Magical-adrenal Rush, and Invincible Armor. Impervious to energy, Armor of **Ithan**, Armor Bizarre, Invulnerability, and Superhuman Speed are common selections. Magical-adrenal Rush cannot be used in addition to the Quick Draw helmet.

Weapons include a survival knife and two TW handguns of choice. See New **West** for TW revolvers and other equipment, as well as the gunslingers and **gunfighters** this O.C.C. is based on.

Starts with one wing board or tree trimmer and one other vehicle of choice. Available vehicles include living horses, motorcycles, hovercycles, dune buggies, and other hovercraft. They covet robot horses, bionic horses and, especially the majestic Techno-wizard **Glittermount**, but they are not available initially.

Money: Starts with **1D4x100** in credits, **1D6 X 1000** in black market items, and **1D6x1000** in crystals and gems.

Cybernetics: Starts with none and will avoid them, except for medical reasons.

Techno-Wizard Aviator O.C.C.

By Mark Sumimoto

These variants of the classic **Techno-wizard** are growing in popularity at incredible rapidity, due to the Techno-wizards fascination with aviator gear. The TW Aviator specializes in the areas of building and piloting aircraft and flying machines. When they step out of their Ley Line flyers with their scarves flapping in the wind, they feel a certain pride in knowing that they are true aviators worthy of the jackets they wear. This causes some envy and resentment from '**standard**' **techno-wizards** who feel that they are no less worthy of the fashionable gear than some elitist snobs who wouldn't know the difference between a pickup truck and a tank (this is an exaggeration, but not far off the mark since most TW aviators don't know auto mechanics and don't care). But for the most part, regular techno-wizards and Aviators get along well and rarely engage in anything more fierce than friendly rivalry and sarcastic exchanges.

Many TW Aviators earn their living by repairing, modifying, and converting aircraft of all sorts, transporting packages and parcels for paying customers, especially other mages, performing in aerial shows for carnivals, and as adventurers or explorers into uncharted territories. Some **learn** aircraft **fighter** skills and hire themselves out as combat pilots. These TW Aviator fighter pilots will be in high demand during the Coalition siege on Tolkeen.

While they specialize in the building and flying of aircraft, they are familiar with all the other **techno-wizard** construction and conversion processes. Their knowledge of weapon and land vehicle conversions is the same as the standard conversions listed in the Rifts **RPG** but at twice the P.P.E. cost. Where they excel is in ley line aerial vehicle conversions which they can perform in half the listed time and at half the P.P.E. cost. All other abilities are available as normal.

TW Aviator O.C.C. Abilities:

1. Psionic Powers: Same as the standard techno-wizard: Mind Block, Speed Reading, Total Recall, and Tele-mechanics. **I.S.P** is **4D6** plus the M.E. attribute number and an additional **1D4 I.S.P.** per each additional level of experience. Considered to be a minor psionic, the character needs a 12 or higher to save.

2. Magic Powers: Same limits and penalties as the standard techno-wizard, with all spells and rituals cast at half proficiency, range, duration, damage, etc., unless built into a TW device. In addition, they perform ley line aircraft conversions at half the P.P.E. cost and in half the time, but require twice the P.P.E. for weapon and vehicle conversions. Initial spell knowledge includes: Energy Bolt, Energy Field, Fingers of the Wind, Fly, Fly as the Eagle, Globe of Daylight, Levitation, Telekinesis, and Wind Rush. Select three additional spells at level three from magic levels 1-4. New spells may be learned **and/or** purchased as usual. TW Aviators are primarily interested in spells that may be applied to flying machines, such as air, wind, and flying spells. Secondary areas of interest include spells which can be added as magical features to vehicles and sensory spells for sensors and navigational equipment.



Special Aviator Training: Pilot ley line vehicles at 80% + 2% per level of experience or add 10% to the base skill of any other ley line flyer or magic aircraft.

Magic Bonuses: +1 to save vs. horror factor at levels 1, 4, and 9. +1 to save vs. magic at levels 3, 7, 10, and 13. +1 to spell strength at levels 5 and 11.

P.P.E.: 2D4x10 + 8 plus the P.E. attribute number. Add 2D6 P.P.E. at each additional level of experience and the mage can draw additional P.P.E. from other people and especially ley lines and nexus points.

Techno-Wizard Aviator

Alignment Restrictions: None, but entertainers, couriers and adventurers are usually good or selfish. Combat pilots range from good to evil.

Also known as: TW Aviator, TW Flyboy, or simply "Aviators".

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 12, M.E. 12, P.E. 12 or higher. A high P.P. is suggested, but not required.

Race Restrictions: No restrictions, except for those races without magical aptitude, although most (80%) are human.

Player Character Note: TW Aviators tend to be wild-eyed thrill-seekers who love the feel of the wind in their hair and the sight of the ground far below them. Most love the adventure of flying over unknown territory and performing dangerous aerial maneuvers. They enjoy performing death-defying aerial feats and weaving in between canyon walls, alien forests, and enemy aircraft.

O.C.C. Skills:

Languages: American 90% and two additional languages at +15%

Literacy: One of choice (usually American, at +10%)

Radio: Basic (+15%)

Carpentry (+15%)

Computer Operation (+5%)

Basic Electronics (+10%)

Aircraft Mechanics (+15%)

Read Sensory Equipment (+10%)

Navigation (+10%)

Weapons Systems (+5%)

Math: Basic (+20%)

Pilot: Aircraft (+20%)

Hand to hand combat may be selected as an "other" skill. Basic counts as one skill selection, expert counts as two selections, and martial arts (or assassin, if evil) counts as three.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select seven skills at level one, plus one additional skill at levels 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 14.

Communications: Any (+5%)

Cowboy: None

Domestic: Any

Electrical: Any, but each skill counts as two skill selections.

Espionage: Wilderness Survival only

Mechanical: Any, but each skill counts as two skill selections.

Medical: First Aid or Paramedic only

Military: Any

Physical: Any, except Boxing, Wrestling, or Acrobatics (+10% to the rappelling half of the climb skill)

Piloting: Any (+15% to any aircraft only)

Pilot Related: Any (+10% to Parachuting)

Rogue: Any

Science: Any (+5%, +10% to Astronomy)

Technical: Any (+5%)

Weapon Proficiencies: Any

Wilderness: Any

Secondary Skills: Select three secondary skills at level one, plus one additional at levels 4, 8, and 12 from those listed excluding those marked "None". These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in parentheses. All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: One set of work clothes and one set of nice clothing, pilot's jumpsuit and flight jacket, work boots, aviator headgear and goggles, white scarf, sunglasses, mini-tool kit, six signal flares, gas mask and air filter, multi-optics band, PDD recorder/player, and a hand-held computer.

Body armor can be any light style with one **techno-wizard** feature, excluding Impervious to Energy, Invisibility: Superior, Giant, Magical-adrenal Rush, and Invincible Armor. Most commonly chosen features are breathe without air, **levitation**, and impervious to fire.

Weapons will be light and easily stored in a pilot's compartment. Starts with a survival knife and one TW converted pistol and rifle or second pistol of choice.

Vehicles include one wing board or tree trimmer and one **TK-flyer** or small to medium sky boat with two additional TW features of choice, excluding impervious to energy.

Money: Starts with 2D4x100 in credits, 3D6 X 10 in black market items, and 2D6x1000 in crystals and gems.

Cybernetics: Starts with none and will avoid getting any, except for medical reasons

Techno-Wizard Gun Bunny O.C.C.

By Mark Sumimoto

If you wish to keep your teeth, never call these Tactical Weapon Specialists, "Gun Bunnies". However, if there are none around, go ahead. Everyone else does. The TW Gun Bunny is a builder and user of heavy artillery. They formed in the battle zones between Tolkeen and **Chi-town**. Against power armor and robot vehicles of the Coalition, Shifters unleashed their demons and monsters. Line Walkers protected themselves and their allies with magic force fields and launched counter-attacks using energy spells and mental manipulation. Warlocks used the forces of nature and raging Elementals to trample enemy troops. Mystics tended to the injured and constructed strategies after foreseeing the enemies movements. **Techno-wizards** fought using their weapons and vehicles. In the small conflicts surrounding Tolkeen, this was enough to give them the upper hand. But after the Coalition unveiled its new and improved military, development of better magic and bigger guns

became top priority. New spell incantations were developed and more dangerous monsters were discovered. Likewise, the **techno-wizards** tweaked their inventions and increased their **firepower**. A small group of these techno-wizards became convinced that heavy firepower was the means by which they



would defend themselves and defeat the Coalition. They call themselves TW Tactical Weapon Specialists or TW-TWS for short.

However, this name was too long and its acronym too strange for most people. Then as a group of TW TWS were walking into the battle zones in full battle gear, someone remembered a **pre-rifts** slang for people who draped themselves in weapons. Thus, the term "Gun Bunny" was **reintroduced** to the world. The more militant of this group will steam up and deliver a serious warning to anyone who uses the term, followed by a barrage of energy blasts, if the offender does not comply. The majority, for the most part, takes the name in stride. However, they will raise their weapons if the joke is pushed too far.

These techno-wizards are warriors and weaponsmiths who believe in the value of walking quietly and carrying a big gun. Rifles and portable cannons are their weapons of choice, the bigger the better. For hand to hand combat only swords, hammers, and maces are big enough. Pistols and knives are seen as useful back-up weapons only. Hiding is an option only in preparing an ambush and surrender is never an option at all. These are gung-ho soldiers who love the feel of a big gun in their arms and the sound of the enemy running in defeat. A TW Gun Bunny feels most comfortable in the presence of other warriors, be they dependant on technology, magic, or brute strength. He respects Borgs, Juicers, Headhunters, Bounty Hunters, and especially Glitter Boy pilots. They love Glitter Boy power armor and most would love to get their hands on one so they can juice it up with enchantments and have that sonic boom announce their presence in battle.

Among techno-wizards of other orientations, they act macho and tough. They point out the power of their guns and talk down to their wing board flying brothers. In retaliation, the other techno-wizards use the "G" word and ask if they have read the works of **Sigmund Freud**. This leads to brawls and fist fights, but only rarely have weapons been drawn. However, these fights are mostly of the harmless bar brawl type and afterwards both sides recognize the validity of the other and go their separate ways.

1. Psionic Powers: Same as the standard **Techno-wizard**: Mind Block, Speed Reading, Total Recall, and Tele-mechanics. **I.S.P** is 4D6 plus the M.E. attribute number and an additional 1D4 I.S.P. per each additional level of experience. Considered to be a minor psionic, the character needs a 12 or higher to save.

2. Magic Powers: Same limits and penalties as the standard Techno-wizard, with all spells and rituals cast at half proficiency, range, duration, damage, etc., unless built into a TW device. Their orientation is towards weapons, armor, and vehicles which they can build and modify in half the time. All other conversions take twice as long. Initial spell knowledge includes Globe of Daylight, Energy Bolt, Power Bolt, Fire Bolt, Call Lightning, Fire Gout, Superhuman Strength, Telekinesis, Energy Field, and Impervious to Energy: Gains the spells: Sub-particle Acceleration, Lightning Arc, and one of choice from magic levels 1-6 at level three. New spells may be learned **and/or** purchased as usual. TW are primarily interested in energy spells and defensive magic. Secondary areas of interests include travel and camouflage magic.

Magic Bonuses: +1 to save vs. horror factor at levels 1, 4, 8, and 12. +1 to save vs. magic at levels 3, 8, and 13. +1 to spell strength at levels 5 and 11.

P.P.E.: **2D4x10+8** plus the P.E. attribute number. Add 2D6 P.P.E. at each additional level of experience and the mage can **draw** additional P.P.E. from other people and ley lines and nexus points.

Techno-Wizard Gun Bunny

Also known as: TW Tactical Weapons Specialist (their chosen name), TW Gun Nut, and "the walking arsenal"

Alignment Restrictions: Most are unprincipled or anarchist. They view the collateral damage caused by their overkill weapons as a consequence of war and their weapons deliver a lot of it. Good aligned characters may be constrained in combat situations when innocent bystanders are around. Aberrant aligned characters will also be obliged to hold their fire around bystanders, unless they believe the entire community to be guilty of a crime. Evil characters may view bystanders as innocent, but don't care.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 12, M.E. 12, P.P. 10, and P.E. 10 or higher. The higher the better where P.P. and P.E. are concerned and a high P.S. is recommended, but not required.

Race Restrictions: None, except for races without magical potential. Most are human (80%) with some ogres, elves and other D-Bee races.

Player Character Note: The typical TW Gun Bunny is a macho, tough-guy with tendency to spit and use crude language. Most are eager and willing to jump into battle and prove themselves and their equipment. The sounds of battle gets his pulse going and the triumph over an opponent is the greatest of achievements. However, experienced Gun Bunnies who have seen the consequences of war know that victory often comes at great cost. They will be more careful with the use of heavy weapons and may only use them for heavy combat. Young and ignorant Gun Bunnies see this as a sign of aging and may consider the veteran to be past his prime. These young soldiers will eventually experience for themselves the trials their forerunners have, if they survive that long.

O.C.C. Skills:

Language: American at 90% plus two of choice at +15%

Literacy: One of choice (+10%)

Radio: Basic (+10%)

Math: Basic (+20%)

Computer Operation (+5%)

Basic Electronics (+15%)

Armorer (+20%)

Weapon Systems (+10%)

W.P. Energy Rifle

W.P. Heavy Energy Weapons

W.P. two of choice

Hand to hand combat: Basic; can be upgraded to Expert at the cost of one "other" skill selection or Martial Arts at the cost of two.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select six skills at level one, plus one additional skill at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 11, and 14.

Communications: Any (+5%)

Cowboy: None

Domestic: Any

Electrical: Any, but each skill counts as two skill selections.

Espionage: Any

Mechanical: Any, but each skill counts as two skill selections.

Medical: First Aid or Paramedic only
 Military: Any (+10%)
 Physical: Any, except Wrestling and Acrobatics
 Piloting: Any (+10%)
 Pilot Related: Any (+5%)
 Rogue: Any
 Science: Any
 Technical: Any (+5%)
 Weapon Proficiencies: Any
 Wilderness: Any (+5%)

Secondary Skills: Select two secondary skills at level one, plus one additional at levels 3, 6, and 10 from those listed excluding those marked "None". These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in parentheses. All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: A set of combat fatigues, a set of casual clothes, sunglasses, multi-optic band, pocket flashlight, large flashlight, six signal flares, mini-tool kit, a backpack, four large sacks, canteen, binoculars, air filter and gas mask, pocket laser distancer, PDD recorder/player for recording the war journal, and a hand-held computer.

Medium to heavy M.D.C. armor with two TW features of choice, excluding Invisibility: Superior, Magical Adrenal Rush, Giant, and Invincible Armor. Most common features are Armor of **Ithan**, Armor Bizarre, Impervious to Energy, Invulnerability, and Superhuman Strength. Magical-adrenal Rush and Invincible Armor are often added later.

Weapons include a survival knife, three TW energy weapons of choice, and one TW ancient style weapon. Remember, the bigger the better.

Starts with one TW converted vehicle of choice with one magic feature, excluding Invisibility: Superior. Most Gun Bunnies like heavy ground vehicles like **ATVs**, tanks, trucks, hovercraft, etc.

Money: 1D6x100 credits, 1D4 X 1000 in black market items, and 2D4x1000 in crystals and gems.

Cybernetics: None to start and will avoid getting any, except for medical reasons.

Techno-Wizard Thief O.C.C.

By Jason Richards

Through the past several decades, the magic arts of **techno-wizardry** have developed into many different branches in different parts of the world or even different regions of North America. One such tangent was the **Techno-Wizard Thief**, who uses his magical and technical abilities to make himself an extremely capable rogue, scoundrel, and city rat. He is the scourge of the magic society and is very proud of it.

Techno-Wizard Psionic Powers

1. The **Techno-Wizard Thief** gets the following psionic abilities: Tele-mechanics, Presence Sense, Mind Block, and Alter Aura.

2. **I.S.P.:** Roll 4D6 plus the character's M.E. number to determine the base Inner Strength Points. The techno-wizard is con-

sidered a minor psionic and gains another 1D4 **I.S.P.** per each additional level of experience.

3. Saving throw versus psionic attack: As a minor psionic, the character needs a 12 or higher to save vs. psionics.

Techno-Wizard Magic Powers

1. Initial Spell Knowledge: In addition to techno-wizard powers, the character has a solid understanding of spell magic and how to tap into ley lines and nexus points for additional P.P.E. The techno-wizard is not the master of spell magic the Ley Line Walker and Shifter are, but is still pretty capable. It is not a lack of understanding in magic that limits the **techno-wizard's** spell casting abilities, but his orientation. Consequently, his spell casting abilities are not the same as other spell casters. Spell Casting Penalty: All spell ranges, durations, M.D.C., S.D.C., and damage are half when cast as a spell or ritual rather than channeled through a TW device.

A techno-wizard thief is primarily interested in those spells he or she can use in making himself a more formidable thief and spends much of his or her time building and modifying devices to that end.

At level one experience, the character knows the following spells: Blinding Flash, Fire **Bolt**, Concealment, Call Lightning, Energy Bolt, Energy Field, Impervious to Energy, Telekinesis, Invisibility: Simple, Energy Disruption, and Escape.

At third level a total of three additional spells can be selected from levels 1-4. The techno-wizard thief will be primarily interested in those spells that will increase his proficiency in stealth and cunning.

2. Learning new spells. Additional spells may be bought or learned at any time, regardless of his current level of experience. The character will never learn summoning or circles.

3. Magic Bonuses. +2 to save versus horror factor. +1 to save versus magic at levels three, seven, ten, and thirteen. +1 to spell strength at levels four, eight, and twelve.

4. **P.P.E.:** Like all men of magic, the techno-wizard thief is a living battery of mystic energy that he can draw on to create magic. Permanent Base **P.P.E.:** 2D4x10, in addition to the P.E. attribute number. Add 2D6 P.P.E. per each additional level of experience. Of course, the mage can also draw P.P.E. from ley lines, nexus points, and other people when available.

Alignment Restrictions: Selfish or evil only

Attribute Requirements: I.Q., M.E. and P.P. of 11 or higher

O.C.C. Bonuses: +1D4 to P.P. and M.A., +10 to S.D.C.

O.C.C. Skills:

Basic Electronics (+5%)
 Basic Mechanics (+5%)
 Language, 1 additional (+5%)
 Pilot, 1 of choice (+10%)
 Pick Pockets (+15%)
 Pick Locks (+10%)
 Concealment (+15%)
 Prowl (+10%)

Hand to Hand must be learned as a separate skill. Basic costs one other skill, Expert two, and Martial Arts or Assassin three.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select ten other skills, but at least three must be espionage or rogue. Plus select one additional at level three, level six, level nine, and level twelve.

Communications: Any (+5%)
 Domestic: Any
 Electrical: Any except Robot Electronics, each counts as 2 skills
 Espionage: Any except Sniper, (+10%)
 Mechanical: Any except Robot Mechanics or Weapons Engineer, each counts as 2 skills
 Medical: First Aid and Criminal Sciences only
 Military: Any except Armorer and Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Warfare
 Physical: Any except Acrobatics and Wrestling
 Pilot: Any (+5%)
 Pilot Related: Any (+5%)
 Rogue: Any (+10%)
 Science: Math only
 Technical: Any
 W.P.: Any
 Wilderness: Any (+5%)

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select five secondary skills from the list above without the benefit of the bonuses in parentheses.

Standard Equipment: work clothes, a set of fatigues, goggles or sunglasses, multi-optics band, magnifying glass, large and small flashlights, six signal flares, mini-tool kit, knapsack, back pack, 1D4 small sacks, one large sack, pocket mirror, a silver cross, six wooden stakes and a mallet, canteen, binoculars, air filter and gas mask, pocket laser distancer, a pocket digital disc recorder/player and both a video and still-frame camera. Current fashion among techno-wizard thieves is leather jackets and body piercing, much like the city rat.

Armor can be light with two TW enhancements. The character also starts with a light TW vehicle (usually a motorcycle or dune buggy) with two enhancements.

Weapons will include a survival knife and two TW weapons. The character will also have several TW espionage devices of his design.

Money: the techno-wizard thief starts with 2D4x1000 in credit, 1D6x100 in black market items and 1D4x1000 in crystals and gems. TW thieves tend to hoard their money.

Cybernetics: Starts with none and will avoid them at all costs. Bio-systems will be the priority if prosthetics become necessary.

themselves vulnerable to the elements to make weapons capable of defending against the vampires. But when all their resources are depleted, then they are powerless and helpless to stop the encroaching vampire pestilence. It takes magic to keep the water and wood from running out. Only supernatural power can summon a life-giving and undead-killing rainstorm during the dry season of a desert. This is where the TW Vamp Hunter comes in.

They originated in the civilized areas of Mexico. Vampire hunters and resistance fighters struggled to distribute their limited resources without leaving themselves vulnerable to future raids. A well can only contain so much water and sometimes hard choices had to be made between defense against the supernatural and survival against the elements. Only one thing could alleviate these concerns and keep them from depleting their natural resources: Magic. Warlocks and mages of all types are actively recruited by vampire hunting teams for the express purpose of magically replenishing used resources as well as lending their formidable powers in combat. In time, these groups realized that Techno-wizards were especially useful. Any master of magic with the right knowledge can create wooden stakes or a stream of water from thin air, but only the Techno-wizard can instill these abilities in a device which can be used by others. TW vampire weapons have long been known to be more effective and powerful than comparable mundane weapons. Moreover, these devices can release their payload with every pull of the trigger, as opposed to a spell which must be recast every time it is to be used. Techno-wizards affiliated with the vampire hunting organizations Reid's Rangers and the Children of Quetzalcoatl, were the first to begin training their students specifically with the spell knowledge and skills needed to build vampire killing devices. These students received further training in vampire lore and hand to hand combat from the seasoned warriors in the camp. This new breed of techno-wizards was first named by Doc Reid, the leader of Reid's Rangers, as TW Vamp Hunters. Now they are counted among Undead Slayers and Psi-stalkers as the best vampire hunters around.

In the land of Mexico, the TW Vamp Hunter is a blessing. They have learned that everything there is to know about their foe and they are familiar with their every weak point. Armed with water pistols and wood-firing rail guns these courageous men and women charge headlong into the undying hordes. They also spend a lot of time building weapons for other brave souls to use. Although they specialize in fighting vampires, TW Vamp Hunters must be skilled and armed for dealing with all types of opponents. Most of the vampire civilizations rely on allies to handle opponents who are well-prepared for the vampires' strange invulnerability. This means that the Vamp Hunter must be ready to handle opponents ranging from supernatural demons to mind-controlled headhunters. The majority of TW Vamp Hunters are members of Reid's Rangers or The Children of Quetzalcoatl, but a number travel in small groups or with other adventurers throughout Mexico and other parts of North and South America, especially the latter. A few have even traveled to other lands in search of other areas of infestation and future trouble spots. See **Rifts Vampire Kingdoms** for details concerning vampires, their weaknesses, and Reid's Rangers and see **Conversion Book Two: Pantheons of the Megaverse** for details concerning the Children of Quetzalcoatl.

Techno-Wizard Vamp Hunter O.C.C.

By Mark Sumimoto

Undead monsters roam the plains of Mexico. They are vulnerable only to a handful of substances. These creatures are vampires and in the dark of night they dominate the wastelands of Mexico and the southern plains of North America. Water and wood are their most common weaknesses. Water and wood are also two very scarce commodities in the dry arid desert that these monsters call home. That is their most powerful defense against the forces of man. Many settlements have drained their drinking water supply to keep these monsters away from their homes. Many townsfolk have torn down their homes and left

1. Psionic Powers: Same as the standard techno-wizard: Mind Block, Speed Reading, Total Recall, and Tele-mechanics. I.S.P. is 6D6 plus the M.E. attribute number and an additional 1D4 I.S.P. per each additional level of experience. Considered to be a minor psionic, the character needs a 12 or higher to save. They use mind block extensively while fighting vampires to protect themselves from their hypnotic powers.

2. Magic Powers: Same limits and penalties as the standard techno-wizard, with all spells and rituals cast at half proficiency, range, duration, damage, etc., unless built into a TW device. Initial spell knowledge includes: Globe of Daylight, Energy Bolt, Energy Field, Telekinesis, Create Wood, Create Water, Ignite Fire, Fuel Flame, Lifeblast, Sense Evil, and Sense Magic. At level three he learns the spells: Repel Animals, Lightblade and one of choice from magic levels 1-4. New spells may be learned and/or purchased as usual. TW Vamp Hunters are primarily interested in spells that may be applied to the construction of vampire slaying weapons, such as Summon Rain, Summon Storm, Dessicate the Supernatural, etc. Secondary areas of interests include energy spells and defensive magic.

Magic Bonuses: +1 to save vs. horror factor at levels 1, 3, 6, 9 and 12. +1 to save vs. magic at levels 3, 7, 10, and 13. +1 to spell strength at levels 5 and 11.

P.P.E.: 2D4x10 plus the P.E. attribute number. Add 2D6 P.P.E. at each additional level of experience and the mage can draw additional P.P.E. from other people and ley lines and nexus points.

Special Vampire fighting equipment: The knowledge of building these devices is widely taught (unlike the equipment of the TW Slingers, who like to keep their secrets to themselves) and is available to any TW.

1. The Vampire Cross: Any cross or holy symbol can be used as a ward and a weapon against vampires. The TW Vampire Cross is imbued with magic properties, which allows it to turn blood red when a vampire conies within 12 feet of it. See page 31 in Rifts **Vampire Kingdoms** for more details.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 120 (cost is relatively high because the magic is constantly in effect).

Spells needed: Sense Evil (2) and Sense Magic (4)

Physical Requirements: A medium size silver plated cross is all that is needed, although more ornate and decorated pieces will have a stylish design to it or be studded with gems.

Weight: Varies with style and design, usually less than a few pounds.

P.P.E. to use: None, constantly in effect

Damage: The touch of the cross or its shadow will inflict 2D6 hit point damage to vampires and it will immobilize them for one melee, if they fail to save vs. horror factor 18.

Time to build: 4D4 hours

Cost: Starts at 10,000 credits and goes up with the detail and styling of the piece.

2. TW Water Blasters: These TW weapons are far more effective than conventional water guns. They have the advantages of greater range (150-600 ft vs. 30-150 ft for conventional guns), greater payload, lightweight (due to the water appearing magically, rather than being stored in the weapon reservoir), and easy to refill (with a thought, rather than filling the reservoir). See page 31 in Rifts **Vampire Kingdoms** for more details.

Initial P.P.E. Cost: 20 for plastic pistols, 25 for metal pistols, 40 for pump pistols or sawed-off shotgun styles, 50 for full shotguns, 60 for rifles, 75 for rifle and grenade launchers, 100 for bazookas, and 200 for cannons.

Spells needed: Create Water (15), Telekinesis (8), and Energy Field (10)

Physical Requirements. The appropriate style weapon casing, which may be taken from any modern weapon, including energy weapons, and a quartz crystal large enough to replace the chamber of the weapon costing anywhere from 100 to 1000 credits.

Weight: 6 ounces to 11 lbs., depending on the size and construction of the weapon.

P.P.E. required to charge: 10 P.P.E. or 20 I.S.P.

Payload: 40 blasts for pistols to rifles, 20 blasts for the grenade launcher, bazooka, and cannon

Range: 150 ft for plastic pistols, 200 ft for metal and pump pistols, 300 ft for shotguns and cannons, and 600 ft for rifles, grenade launchers, and bazookas.

Damage: Minimal damage to non-vampires, against vampires the damage is 2D6 for pistols, 4D6 for pump pistols and rifles, 5D6 for full shotguns, 1D4x10 for grenade launchers, 2D4x10 for bazookas, and 3D6x10 for cannons. Damage varies against other creatures vulnerable to water.

Time to build: Varies between 2 hours and 50 hours.

Cost: 6000 credits for plastic pistols, 10,000 for metal pistols, 20,000 for pump pistols, 25,000 for shotguns, 40,000 for rifles, 60,000 for grenade launchers, 70,000 for bazookas, and 150,000 for cannons.

3. Water Field: This device is designed in the classic zany style of the Techno-wizard. It resembles a small backpack that, when activated, releases an umbrella-like framework of tubes up from its compartment. From this framework, water sprays around the user. This water, which also hits the user if the wind is right or if the user is running quickly, forces vampires at bay or they suffer the consequences. See page 32 of Rifts **Vampire Kingdoms** for more details.

Initial P.P.E. Cost: 60 P.P.E.

Spells needed: Create Water (15), Telekinesis (8), and Energy Field (10)

Physical Requirements: A small backpack, the tube framework, and a quartz crystal

Weight: 5 lbs.

P.P.E. to use: 10 P.P.E. or 20 I.S.P.

Payload: Shower lasts five minutes

Range: 2 ft around the user.

Damage: None to non-vampires, 3D6 hit point damage to vampires whenever they touch the field.

Time to build: 3D6 hours

Cost: 50,000 credits

4. Storm Flares: A magic flare that when fired into the air produces a sudden downpour starting from 2000 ft in the air. See page 31 of Rifts **Vampire Kingdoms** for details.

Initial P.P.E. Cost: 300 P.P.E.

Spells needed: Summon Storm (300) and Energy Field (10)

Physical Requirements: A quartz crystal and a conventional flare. Also needs a flare gun or launching mechanism to fire it into the air.

Weight: 2 lbs.



Payload: 1 shot with the storm lasting 1D6 minutes.

Range: Affects a 100 ft diameter below the exploding point of the flare. May be launched to affect an area 200 ft away.

Damage: 4D6 X 10 hit point damage to vampires every half melee round a vampire is exposed to the rains.

Time to build: 6D6 hours

Cost: 10,000 credits per flare

5. Globe of Daylight Flares: These magic flares burst into a globe of daylight at 200 ft after being launched into the air, then floats down to 20 ft. They radiate true sunlight which at this level is not strong enough to hurt vampires, but is strong enough to keep them at bay. See page 31 of *Rifts Vampire Kingdoms* for more details.

Initial P.P.E. Cost: 15 P.P.E.

Spells needed: Globe of Daylight (2) and Energy Field (10)

Physical Requirements: One rose quartz crystal and a conventional flare.

Weight: 2 lbs.

Payload: 1 shot with the Globe of Daylight lasting 3D4 minutes.

Range: Lights up a 60 foot area

Damage: None

Time to build: 1D6 hours

Cost: 2,000 credits per flare

6. Animal Repellant Flares: Very useful against the vermin that vampires are able to command, this flare releases a minty scent and a magic aura when its cord is pulled. See page 31 of *Rifts Vampire Kingdoms* for more details.

Initial P.P.E. Cost: 20 P.P.E.

Spells needed: Repel Animals (7) and Energy Field (10)

Physical Requirements: One tourmaline crystal and a conventional flare.

Weight: 2 lbs.

Payload: 1 shot with the aura lasting 1D4 minutes.

Range: Affects a five foot area or the flare can be moved around to affect a wider area, but the duration is halved.

Damage: None

Time to build: 2D4 hours

Cost: 6,000 credits per flare

7. TW Wood Firing Rail Gun: This weapon combines high firepower and magic to create a weapon that literally rips vampires to shreds. The main drawbacks to this weapon are its great bulk and the fact that its rounds usually punch right through the vampires without imbedding them in their hearts. However, firepower fans prefer these weapons over non-converted rail guns with wood or silver rounds because TW rail guns do not require the user to carry around a heavy and bulky ammo-drum. See page 32 of *Rifts Vampire Kingdoms* for more details.

Initial P.P.E. Cost: 150 P.P.E.

Spells needed: Create Wood (20), Telekinesis (8), and Energy Field (10).

Physical Requirements: Ruby worth 1000 credits or more and a rail gun to be converted.

Weight: Same as the rail gun converted, not counting the ammo-drum or power source which aren't needed for the conversion.

P.P.E. to charge: 20 P.P.E. or 40 I.S.P.

Payload: 40 bursts

Range: 4000 ft

Damage: 1D4 M.D. to non-vampires and 3D6 X 10 hit point damage to vampires. Varies for other creatures vulnerable to wood.

Time to build: 1D4 days **Cost:** 500,000 credits

8. TW Lifeblaster: This conversion transforms an energy pistol into a weapon that releases life energy. To most creatures this energy is invigorating and refreshing. To the **undead** this energy is like acid eating at their unnatural flesh.

Initial P.P.E. Cost: 60 P.P.E.

Spells needed: Lifeblast (15) and Energy Bolt (5)

Physical Requirements: Diamond worth 1000 credits or more and an energy pistol to be converted.

Weight: The same as the converted pistol.

P.P.E. to charge: 20 P.P.E. or 40 I.S.P.

Pay load: 5 shots

Range: 300 ft

Damage: Inflicts 1D6 X 10 hit point damage to vampires (master vampires can save vs. this attack and suffer only half damage if successful), total nullification to animated dead, 1D6 damage and horror factor 16 to mummies and zombies, horror factor 19 to banshees and Grave Ghouls, and 4D6 S.D.C./hit points or 3D6 M.D. and destruction of two additional appendages to necromancers.

Time to build: 7D4 hours

Cost: 75,000 credits

9. TW Lightblade Sword: Similar to the flaming sword, this weapon resembles a bladeless sword hilt with a diamond where the blade should be. This weapon is useful against all mortal or supernatural opponents, as well as vampires. Because of its versatility, this is usually the main weapon of TW Vamp Hunters, Undead Slayers, and other vampire hunters.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 120 P.P.E.

Spells needed: Lightblade (20) and Globe of Daylight (2)

Physical Requirements: Two Diamonds worth 1000 each and a sword hilt.

Weight: 3 lbs.

P.P.E. to use: 20 P.P.E. or 40 I.S.P.

Duration: Blade lasts one minute per level of the user

Damage: 1D4 X 10 + 6 M.D. to **non-vampires**, double hit point damage to vampires, or double M.D. to other creatures vulnerable to light.

Time to build: 8D4 hours

Cost: 250,000 credits, coveted by Undead Slayers, Cyber-knights, and champions of light.

10. TW Guided Stake Launchers: This two-handed weapon is shaped like an over-sized crossbow or an under-sized bazooka. It sends magically guided stakes flying through the air which target the heart of the vampire. The drawback to this weapon is that it always targets the heart, regardless of the desires of the user. For example, if a vampire is wearing a chest plate, but his face is exposed, the user is out of luck. Fortunately, most vampires are too arrogant (or claustrophobic) to wear body armor of any kind.

Initial P.P.E. Cost: 50 P.P.E.

Spells needed: Create Wood (20), Telekinesis (8), Fly as the Eagle (25), and Sense Evil (2)

Physical Requirements: Topaz worth 500 credits and the weapon casing.

Weight: 10-15 lbs.

P.P.E. to charge: 15 P.P.E. or 30 I.S.P.

Payload: Five stakes

Range: 200 ft

Damage: 3D6 S.D.C. to non-vampires and 6D6 hit point damage to vampires plus it immobilizes them on a direct strike in the heart.

Bonus to strike: Strikes the heart on a 16 or higher beyond 20 ft or 12 or higher within 20 ft. A roll above 4, but below 16 or 12, strikes the vampire and does damage, but does not immobilize it. No other bonuses apply. May be dodged as normal or parried at -3.

Time to build: 1D4 days

Cost: 60,000 credits

11. TW Holy Water Purifier: This device purifies and enchants water to make it the equivalent of holy water blessed by a priest. Techno-wizards often build this device for the use of villages and townships. It is a most desired by towns with few psychics or mages, but a lot of able-bodied defenders.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 150 P.P.E.

Spells needed: Purification (20), Lifeblast (15), and Energize Spell (12)

Physical Requirements: A silver bowl, a diamond worth 1000 credits, and a base for the bowl, often made from a valuable metal and finely decorated with intricate carvings or gems.

Weight: 5 lbs. and up

P.P.E. to use: 10 P.P.E. for every six ounces of water enchanted.

Capacity: Depends on the size of the bowl, usually between 2 and 10 cups.

Damage: Six ounces of holy water will inflict 3D6 hit point damage to vampires, none to most other beings, and varies for other supernatural beings vulnerable to water and holy water.

Time to build: 6D6 hours

Cost: 25,000 credits and up, depending on the design.

12. TW Hypnosis Shield: This incredibly simple device is a work of genius. Someone realized that vampires require eye contact to cast their mind controlling gaze upon a victim. They put that fact together with the fact that vampires recoil at the sight of a cross and came up with this simple gizmo. It is a little TW searchlight with a small cross painted over its lens strapped to the **user's** forehead. The result is the most effective way to keep a vampire from staring someone in the eyes and a great secondary weapon.

Initial P.P.E. Cost: 5 P.P.E.

Spells needed: Globe of Daylight (2)

Physical Requirements: A miner's helmet or other small searchlight with a forehead harness, a quartz crystal, and paint for the cross.

Weight: Varies, usually about a pound.

P.P.E. to use: 2 P.P.E.

Duration: 3 minutes per level of the user

Range: 10ft

Damage: 2D6 hit point damage and horror factor 18 to vampires, but only if specifically targeted, otherwise the vampires will stay out of its path.

Time to build: 1D6 hours

Cost: 3,000 credits

TW Vamp Hunter

Also known as: Vamp Killer and Vampire Slayer (after Undead Slayers, whom they greatly admire).

Alignment Restrictions: None, but usually good or aberrant. Selfish and evil Vamp Hunters tend to be mercenaries who will work for anyone who pays the right price, including Master Vampires who wish to wage war against other kingdoms.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 12, M.E. 12 and P.E. 14 or higher. A high P.S., P.P., and Spd are strongly recommended, but not required.

Race Restrictions: None, except for races with no magical aptitude, but most (85%) are human.

Player Character Note: These techno-wizards are much more serious than their fellows. As hunters of an even deadlier predator, they must remain focused at all times. During the day, the majority are grim, stone-faced engineers who work on their machines. At night, they are skilled warriors who live for the nobility, challenge, and prestige that comes with their jobs. Sometimes, after a successful raid, they revert back to the stereotypical TW adventurer and loosen up and have a good time. But most of the time, they are stoic determined warriors and inventors. Most are honorable, dedicated and hard-working. They know that the vampire menace will probably not be eradicated during their lifetime and they are patient in their hunt and in their workrooms. Evil Vamp Hunters, on the other hand, can be as bad as the vermin they hunt. They can stand and watch a village get massacred because they couldn't come up with their fee. Some will even accept jobs helping one vampire kingdom against another, if their price is met.

O.C.C. Skills:

Languages: American and Spanish at 90%

Literacy: One of choice (+10%)

Radio: Basic (+10%)

Lore: Demons and Monsters (+20% when dealing with vampires, +10% all others)

Carpentry (+10%)

Sculpting and Whittling (+10%)

Computer Operation (+5%)

Basic Electronics (+5%)

Armorer (+10%)

Math: Basic (+20%)

Land Navigation (+15%)

Wilderness Survival (+10%)

Detect Ambush (+10%)

W.P.: Two of choice

Hand to Hand Combat: Basic; can be upgraded to Expert at the cost of one "other" skill or Martial Arts at the cost of two.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select **five** skills at level one, plus one additional skill at levels 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 14.

Communications: Any (+5%)

Cowboy: None

Domestic: Any

Electrical: Any, but each skill counts as two skill selections.

Espionage: Tracking and Intelligence only (+5%)

Mechanical: Any, but each skill counts as two skill selections.

Medical: First Aid and Paramedic only

Military: Any

Physical: Any, except Boxing, Wrestling and Acrobatics

Piloting: Any (+10%)

Pilot Related: Any (+5%)

Rogue: Any (+10% to **prowl**)

Science: Any (+5%)

Technical: Any (+5%)

Weapon Proficiencies: Any

Wilderness: Any (+10%)

Secondary Skills: Select three secondary skills at level one, plus one additional at levels 4, 8, and 13 from those listed excluding those marked "None". These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in parentheses. All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: A TW Vampire Cross, combat fatigues, work overalls, one set of nice clothes, multi-optics band, polarized sunglasses, large flashlight, pocket flashlight, six flares, mini-tool kit, backpack, several small and large sacks, canteen, binoculars, pocket laser distancer, PDD recorder/player, and a hand-held computer.

M.D.C. armor can be any style, light for stealth or heavy for combat, with two TW features of choice, except Invisibility: Superior, Impervious to Energy, Giant, Magical-adrenal Rush, and Invincible Armor. Most commonly selected features are Armor of **Ithan**, Shadow Meld, Superhuman Strength, and Invulnerability.

Weapons include two TW vampire fighting weapons of choice, two TW flares, one other TW energy weapon of choice, and a TW Lightblade sword.

Vehicle can be a wing board or tree trimmer and living horse or a TW converted land vehicle of choice. Most covet the TW **Glittermount** above all others, but it is not available as part of the initial equipment.

Money: 1D4 X 100 in credits, 2D6 X 10 in black market items, and 3D4 X 1000 in crystals and gems. Most of their money has been spent on equipment. Also, most of their time is spent in the wilderness or in towns that welcome and appreciate the presence of a skilled vampire hunter and builder of anti-vampire weapons.

Cybernetics: None to start and most will avoid them, except for medical reasons



Seduced Techno-Wizard O.C.C. (N.P.C. Villain and Optional O.C.C.)

Not every necromancer in North America is a member of the Grim Reapers. Many are members of one of the dozens of other death cults scattered across the **Americas** and the rest of the globe. The members of one of these lesser known cults, known as The Dark Path, were envious of the Grim Reapers ultimate creation, the undead Juicer known as the Murder-wraith. Lusting for an undead creation of their own, these death mages began studying other forms of human augmentation.

M.O.M. conversion, better known as the Crazy process, seemed to be the most promising option. This conversion enhances the physical abilities of its subjects, but also degrades their sanity. Perfect conditions for recruitment into a death cult. Unfortunately for the necromancers, Crazies proved to be too erratic and too difficult to keep focused on their tasks. Added to that was the fact that crazies are less common than Juicers. The M.O.M. option was dropped quickly.

Bionic conversion was viewed at first to be too difficult an option. Borgs, due to their mechanical nature, have a high resistance to magic, very little living tissue, and a nearly non-existent P.P.E. base. These were three factors which worked against the possibility of transforming a Borg into a supernatural undead creature. Moreover, most of their numbers had very little, if any in-depth knowledge of the technology of bionics. But, after conducting a ritual of premonition, it was believed that this was the path to take. With this confirmation, they continued their research.

Cyber-docs were **recruited**, hired, and coerced to explain the bionic conversion and its ramifications on the human body. Borgs were captured, dissected and experimented upon; none with any progress or success. After months of research, the leaders of the cult were well-versed in the science of bionics, but still had no idea how they were to transform these technological wonders into supernatural creatures. Then, one of them realized that they were going about it all wrong. He proposed that they recruit the people who handle tech to mystic conversions all the time. Quickly, they began recruiting **techno-wizards** to their cult in a campaign that would later be called The Great Seduction.

Techno-wizards, young and old, were "seduced" by the promise of great power and even greater discovery. They were brought into The Dark Path and studied the notes and previous work of the necromancers and their cultists. Bionic components were taken apart, modified, and put back together, as only a **techno-wizard** can. After more months of research and experimentation, they had a number a prototype TW converted bionic bodies. Only one problem remained: the power source. To power a TW device like the ones they had developed, it would need a high constant flow of P.P.E. running through it. Conventional bionic conversion destroyed the mystical potential of the recipient, so converting people who were already Borgs was impossible. They thought about keeping the mystic Borg supplied with a steady amount of human or animal sacrifices, but this would be very difficult to maintain. Another possibility was to



convert it to a Ley Line feeder, but this would severely limit its range of travel. Converting men of magic was a possibility and further research was done along this line. The research indicated that the recipient had to be someone familiar with the technology involved with the process and a willing and active participant in its construction. After realizing this, the choice became obvious.

By this point, most of the recruited techno-wizards were devout believers in the death cult and were eager to volunteer for the process. Others were still dedicated to the project and wanted to see through to the end, although they themselves did not want to be converted. The remaining techno-wizards attempted to escape, but were caged and imprisoned before they could flee. After many tireless nights, the conversion process was plotted and planned out. After helping in the building and preparing of the TW bionic components, the volunteer must transfer his or her soul into a TW converted bionic heart, via the Transfer Life Force necromancy spell. Then his or her body will be killed and drained of its blood. Slowly and methodically, the other participating techno-wizards and Necromancers will strip the flesh off the body and replace it with the TW bionic components, while the other cultists will chant and offer their P.P.E. for the ritual. As the ritual is completed, the soul-containing heart will be placed into the chest cavity, while the blood is poured back into the body. The undead Borg will then rise and slay a waiting human sacrifice, energizing the monster and giving the death cult its new undead creature. The theory was sound and after five promising failures and slight modifications, the first successful Undead **Borg**, as they were first called, was born (so to speak). The process was further modified and soon the process was perfected.

Shortly after the procedure was perfected, The Dark Path began hearing reports that Undead Borks were appearing among the ranks of rival death cults, including the Grim Reapers. Unbeknownst to the other members of The Dark Path, three of its members were spies affiliated with other death cults. Enraged and humiliated, the cult of The Dark Path was disbanded and its members joined and formed other death cults. Now, the Undead Borg is open technology, free to anyone willing to learn its secrets. The only things keeping its numbers down is the months of work that must be put into it and the fact that only techno-wizards seduced by necromancy can be converted. So far no other men of magic have been able to successfully adapt to the changes this process instills. This exclusive volunteer pool has given Undead Borks the name that people outside of the death cults most commonly know them as: Seduced Techno-wizards.

This conversion has a number of advantages that would be very appealing to techno-wizards, if not for the fact that most techno-wizards aren't excited by the prospect of **being** turned into a member of the undead. For one, the bionic shell is a creation of **techno-wizardry**. Actually being a product of **techno-wizardry** is an experience that many techno-wizards would jump at. The body is a Mega-damage structure imbued with supernatural strength and speed, in addition to a number of built-in weapon systems and magical features. The finished product is a true undead creature; immortal and very hard to destroy, and with several unnatural powers. See **Rifts Africa** and **Juicer Up-rising** for more details concerning necromancers, death cults, the Grim Reapers, Murder-wraiths, and other cool stuff.

The powers of the Seduced Techno-Wizard

1. Mega-damage body and supernatural attributes: M.D.C. of the main body is 250. The head has 70 M.D.C. Arms have 100 M.D.C. each. Legs have 120 M.D.C. each. Its P.S. is 24 + 1D6, P.P. is 18 + 1D6, Spd is 1D6 X 10 + 60. All attributes are considered supernatural.

2. Invulnerability and regenerative powers: The Seduced TW cannot be harmed by most attacks, including those from technological Mega-damage weapons. Seduced Techno-wizards enjoy ambushing well-armed **soldiers**, by marching straight towards them and walking into their barrage of energy blasts and rail gun rounds just to prove their superiority. The Seduced TW is also immune to all poisons, **toxins**, and drugs, and can survive indefinitely without air, water, or conventional foods. However, against magic, psionics, and the bane of all undead: silver, his resistance to injury is not as effective.

Mega-damage magic and psionic attacks, as well as the hand to hand attacks of supernatural creatures and creatures of magic will inflict their usual damage against Seduced Techno-wizards and will destroy them if they are reduced to -50 M.D.C. However, damage from these attacks is restored at the incredible rate of 6D6 M.D.C. per melee. Silver inflicts Mega-damage equal to twice its S.D.C. damage and is also healed at the same rate as magical attacks. Holy water can burn these creatures as if it were acid. Damage is 3D6 M.D. for every **vial/six** ounces splashed on him.

As incredible as their invulnerability is, they have one tremendous weakness: weapons created by techno-wizardry. For some reason, the tools of their past life are now the key to ending their new undead life. Weapons created by a techno-wizard will inflict double damage to Seduced Techno-wizards and will be healed at the much slower rate of 2D6 M.D. per minute. Magic weapons that are not true TW weapons will still hurt the Seduced TW, but only with the same conditions as listed for other magic attacks. The reason for their vulnerability to TW weapons and devices is unknown, but it is believed to be linked to some factor involved in their creation or it could be psychological in nature. The latter theory is supported by the fact that the Seduced TW has a few other drawbacks and quirks that are clearly psychologically induced.

3. Supernatural Senses: Instead of standard bionic optics and sensors, the Seduced TW has the magic abilities of see the invisible, see aura, **nightvision** at 300 ft, sense magic, and detect concealment all at no P.P.E. cost.

4. Built-in Weapon Systems and Magic Powers: Concealed in the hands of Borks are magic torches that can fire a stream of flame anywhere from 500 ft away to the touch of a finger. Damage can be regulated to inflict anything between 1D6 S.D.C. and 3D6 M.D. Alternately, they can add up to 3D6 M.D. to punch attacks.

Seduced Techno-wizards possess an ability similar to the necromancer's Union with the Dead and Augmentation and Additional Appendage abilities. By spending 10 P.P.E. and welding it into place, the Undead Borg can attach an integral weapon or whole limb from a Borg, Bot or suit of power armor to its own body. The whole attachment process takes only one melee round. The weapon or limb can only function for five minutes before another 10 P.P.E. needs to be expended or the item can be removed by simply ripping it off. Energy weapons have an unlimited payload and rail guns and missile launchers can only fire as long as the ammunition lasts. Damage is equal to whatever the weapon inflicted before being incorporated into the Borg. Up to six additional arms can be attached to the Seduced TW. Each pair of arms adds one additional attack per melee and +1 to strike and parry. The M.D.C. of the arms is the same as

before it was removed from its owner and its strength becomes that of the Seduced TW. The attachment of the arms of giant robot vehicles or any robot larger than 15 feet is not possible.

Three of the following **bionic-style** weapon systems and features are built into the Borg during its creation. Additional systems can be built into truly deserving or hard-working disciples, but can never have more systems added after the process. Available systems are: 1) **Dragon Breath**: This system is built into the mouth and throat and simulates the chemical spray of conventional Borgs, only with deadlier effects. Each costs P.P.E. to use. Range is limited to twenty feet with a five foot width. Bonus to strike is +2. Only one of the following can be added: **Dragon Fire** (40 P.P.E. for six melee rounds of use, inflicts 1D4 X 10 M.D.), **Blind** (6 P.P.E., those struck must save vs. magic at 12 or higher or be blinded for six minutes, same effect as the spell), **Trance** (10 P.P.E., those struck must save vs. magic at 12 or higher or be affected for thirty minutes, same effect as the spell), or **Extinguish Fire** (4 P.P.E., same effect as the spell at sixth level). 2) **Toxic Claws or Fangs**: Similar to the bionic drug dispensing system, these are built into the fingertips or teeth and can deliver a mystic toxin into the system of its victim. Each costs P.P.E. to use. Saving throw is 14 or higher. Only one of the following effects is available: **Befuddle** (6 P.P.E., duration is 12 minutes, same effects as the spell), **Paralysis: Lesser** (5 P.P.E., duration is six minutes, same effects as the spell), **Words of Truth** (15 P.P.E., duration is six minutes, same effects as the spell), **Agony** (20 P.P.E., duration is one minute, same effects as the spell), or **Sickness** (50 P.P.E., duration is three days, same effects as the spell). 3) **Garrote Wrist Wire**: Fundamentally, the same as the bionic weapon, but is capable of injuring creatures who would be otherwise invulnerable to this attack. 4) **Language Translator**: This is a built-in TW communication band. P.P.E. to activate is 12. Duration is of the charge is two hours. 5) **Sonic Blaster**: Built into the mouth and throat, this weapon is fundamentally the same as the Sonic Blast spell. See page 142 of the **Federation of Magic** for details. P.P.E. to use is 25 and affects everyone within a twenty foot radius. 6) **Death Strike**: Same as the necromantic spell of the same name. See page 105 of **Rifts Africa** for details. Saving throw is 14 or higher. P.P.E. to use is 25. Duration is six minutes.

Additional built-in magic includes: **Consume Power and Knowledge** (20 P.P.E.), **Strength of the Dead** (60, applies to M.D.C. creatures only), and **Animate and Control Dead** (20), all cast at sixth level proficiency regardless of the Seduced TW's level of experience. See **Rifts Africa** for details concerning these spells.

5. P.P.E., Magic Knowledge, and Psionics: Unfortunately, the conversion destroys all psionics, spell casting knowledge, and special abilities of the TW. But the Seduced TW is still able to use TW devices and has built-in spells at his disposal. His personal P.P.E. is equal to the amount he had when he was converted, plus an additional 20 P.P.E. and he is still able to tap Ley Lines, Nexus Points, and especially other people. His P.P.E. base is recovered at a rate of 5 per hour or can be restored by stealing the P.P.E. of living creatures, up to full capacity.

6. Combat and bonuses: The Seduced TW will have prepared himself for the power and speed of his new body and will be quite ready for it. In addition to attribute bonuses, the Seduced TW has the following bonuses and abilities: Four attacks

per melee plus one additional at levels 5 and 10, +4 to initiative, +2 to strike and parry, +2 to pull punch, +8 to save versus horror factor, +4 to save versus magic, +2 to save versus psionics and still saves as though he were a minor psionic with a 12 or higher.

7. Penalties and weaknesses: In addition to being vulnerable to TW weapons, magic, psionics, and silver, the Seduced TW has a several other drawbacks to it. First, the character is now trapped in an inhuman body that always has a monstrous appearance to it. P.B. is reduced to 1D4, horror factor is 16, and the bulky body makes prowling difficult (-40%). The transformation itself takes its toll on the subject. I.Q. and M.E. are reduced by 2 and TW will almost always become fascinated and obsessed with death and **Techno-wizardry**, even more so than when they agreed to the transformation. The Seduced TW must now feed on the P.P.E. of living creatures. The P.P.E. can be drained from it victim without killing it in the same method as the **Psi-Stalker**, but he will always prefer to take it by killing his victim. Likewise, the P.P.E. of animals can be consumed, but the taste of the P.P.E. from a sentient creature is nearly intoxicating to them. A minimum of 50 P.P.E. a week is needed to sustain him, but he can go without feeding for a month without ill effect. After a month or so, he will begin feeding on his own P.P.E. at the rate of 10 per day. During this period, his speed, attacks per melee, combat and saving throw bonuses are reduced by half and strength drops by 2 points for every day without feeding beyond a month. This consumed energy cannot be recovered unless he feeds on 50 P.P.E. in addition to the amount he has used from his base within a week's time. If the Seduced TW's P.P.E. is reduced to zero, he will fall into a coma and slowly fall apart and **discorporate** within a day. The Seduced TW has an aversion to sunlight. Although he can physically function normally during the day, he prefers to lay low and hide until nightfall. This is believed to be connected to his own belief that he is a creature of the night. The oddest weakness that Seduced Techno-wizards have is an apprehension towards flying. If a Seduced TW is forced to get on a plane, he'll go kicking and screaming. Furthermore, while in the air, he will be paranoid and skittish. All his combat bonuses will be halved and he will actually try to avoid conflict if possible. It is theorized that this is connected to his aversion to sunlight, but even at night he dislikes flying. Another theory is that this is some sort of rejection of or rebellion against his past life.

Seduced Techno-Wizard

Also known as: Undead Borg, Sadist Techno-wizard, Corrupt Techno-wizard, and TW Borg

Alignment Restrictions: Must be diabolic and sadistic; no other alignments or sane people will even consider this transformation. Definitely not recommended as player character. However, after the transformation, a few Seduced Techno-wizards realize the severity of their situation and become Repentant Techno-wizards. These sad beings will be principled or scrupulous and will either attempt suicide or go forth and try to regain their humanity by helping others and trying to make up for their sins.

Attribute Requirements: Must have been a Techno-wizard.

Race Restrictions: No supernatural creatures or creatures of magic at all! Most are humans or S.D.C. D-bees, with few non-supernatural M.D.C. creatures.

Player Character Note: These are power-hungry murderers who have exchanged their humanity for potential immortality and existence as a member of the undead. They are monsters who are capable of feeding on animal life, but instead choose to feed on sentient beings. Any **Techno-wizard** who succumbs to the "seduction" undoubtedly had a few screws loose to begin with. After being introduced to the cult, the TW is subjected to a number of conversion techniques and after the transformation becomes a ruthless, insane creature who take what he wants and kills any who stand in its way. Although not bound by magic to the cultists who created it, he almost always remain with them. Thanks to their "indoctrination", the Seduced TW almost always shares the same purpose and motives as the murderous cult that created it. The Seduced TW prefers to use brute strength in deference to stealth and guile and likes to announce his intentions before attacking to demonstrate his invincibility. Any Seduced TW who is allowed as a player character will be a Repentant TW, a rare renegade who is shocked back to the reality of his situation after completing the transformation. He will be incredibly repentant and ashamed by his past choices and present situation. He will not use his **necro-magic** abilities, except under the most dire of situations and will do his best to make up for his former evil ways.

O.C.C. Skills: They retain all of their past knowledge, except hand to hand combat which is replaced by their new supernatural abilities. Skill proficiency is locked at the level that the TW had at the time of the conversion. The TW starts his new O.C.C. at level one. One new skill can be learned at levels 3, 6, 9, and 12 after being converted (no bonuses). Available areas of knowledge are limited to espionage, military, physical (any that still apply, except hand to hand combat), rogue, WP, and wilderness.

Standard Equipment: Most start with very little because they need very little. Starts with a large cloak or robe, one or two TW weapons of choice, and a few personal items. Typically does not wear body armor of any sort, although they can use any type of Borg armor if desired. Most believe in their own M.D.C. bodies, regenerative abilities, and apparent immortality.

Money: Typically starts with none. They don't need conventional goods. The cult usually supplies them with whatever items they might need, otherwise they take what they want without concern for laws and morals.

Cybernetics: Only their own TW bionic bodies. Due to their regenerative powers, they cannot receive any new implants, except by using their attachment powers.

Techno-Wizard Construction Guidelines

By Jason Richards

Techno-Wizardry is some players' favorite aspect of the game, others their least favorite. When talking to other players I frequently hear, "All TW items are over-powered!" or "**techno-wizardry** is just boring." I think part of the problem is that no clear guidelines have been set down for players and Game Masters to follow in creating these diverse and fun items. Also, one has to be able to appreciate that with techno-wizards come great

gaming opportunities. Think about it... those emeralds and rubies aren't that easy to come by. They have to come from somewhere and the techno-wizard has to get his hands on them somehow. Sounds like an adventure to me.

What follows are some guidelines I use in creating my items. They're not laws, just guidelines. Even I deviate from them frequently.

Spells needed for creation- any spells relevant to the item (Fire Bolt for flame sword, etc.) plus a trigger spell. The trigger spell is just what it sounds like and no different from the trigger of the gun. It is the specific spell that must be activated to make the item work. The most commonly used are Globe of Daylight, Energy Bolt, and Energy Field. Note: For most items, Blinding Flash is inadequate. Which spell is used differs with the power level of the object and what specific results will occur.

PPE needed for creation- one of the many judgement calls in TW, a good basis is the PPE for the combined spells times 5, give or take 20. There will always be exceptions to this rule.

PPE and ISP requirements- the PPE required to use the object is the amount of PPE needed to activate the trigger. So, if you were using Energy Bolt as your trigger it would cost 5 PPE. The ISP cost is always double. So, 5 PPE requires 10 ISP.

Physical requirements- this is something in which all techno-wizards will vary. Usually the actual object of what the TW is emulating is required, though it need not be in working condition (a radio to make a magic communicator or an energy pistol to make a lightning gun for example). Also there is one or more gems involved. The type of gem used differs with the objects and usually has some quality in common with the object, especially color. For example, rubies are used in devices using fire and I use aquamarines in my water weapons. Good guides are the tables found with the Stone Masters in Rifts Atlantis or the Gem Powers table in Villains Unlimited. They give good possibilities for the uses of different gems. When in doubt, quartz is used quite often and is very general-purpose. Wires, strange attachments, dials, etc. are also used for reasons unfathomable to non-techno-wizards.

Creation time- unless you play a techno-wizard, this will never affect you. If you do, however, then you know that sometimes in crunch-time you have to make something. Only, how long does it take? For small objects like most weapons, communications, medical and other devices, I suggest the principal spells' total PPE in hours. For vehicles and other large items, I suggest principal spell PPE in days. Game Masters might want to allow for a rush job in half the time with some decreased chances of success. Also, multiple **Techno-Wizards** working on the same item could decrease the time needed. I suggest that each additional TW working on an item decreases the initial time by 10% down to as low as half of the original time.

Black Market Cost- the most radical of issues. I recommend 5,000 credits times the PPE cost of the primary spell (e.g. the Tongues spell in the magic translator). This cost can be two or three times for a weapon, armor enhancement, or specialty item.

Other- Damage, Range, Duration, and Effects should be consistent with the primary spell. Various Palladium writers have had different opinions on whether these variables are determined by the creator or the user. In my campaigns and items, I say that it is the creator, because that seems logical to me. I

usually put my items on the fifth level for game purposes, but have lowered that if I thought it would disrupt game balance.

A note on PPE batteries: Palladium mentions PPE batteries quite extensively, but never really tells what they are and how they work with the exception of Talismans. I allow TW characters to make PPE batteries using emeralds of different sizes for different PPE amounts. I also feel that PPE batteries for vehicles or weapons could be made by converting traditional batteries. As always, these suggestions should be used at Game Master discretion and should never be allowed to disrupt game balance.

New TW Conversions

By Mark Sumimoto

As technology has progressed, so has **techno-wizardry**. Heavier weapons means new obstacles must be overcome to convert them without losing performance. Heavier armor means new enhancements must be developed to even the odds. Techno-wizards have met these challenges and can successfully convert the newer weapons that have hit the market.

Converting Heavy Weapons to Magic

1. Particle Weapons CAN be converted!: Using the spell, Sub-particle Acceleration, particle beam weapons can be converted to operate on magic energy.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 30 for pistols and light rifles, 60 for heavy weapons.

Spells needed: Sub-particle Acceleration (20), and Energy Bolt (5) for light weapons or Power Bolt (20) for heavy weapons.

Physical Requirements: Topaz worth 1000 credits or 2500 credits or more for heavy weapons.

Damage: 1D4 X 10 M.D. for light weapons or 1D6 X 10 M.D. for heavy weapons.

Payload: Three blasts regardless of size.

Range: Unchanged from the weapon converted.

P.P.E. to recharge: 25 for light weapons or 40 for heavy.

Time to build: 8D4 hours for light or 6D6 hours for heavy.

Market cost: 180,000 credits for light weapons or 250,000 credits for heavy weapons.

2. Heavy Laser Weapons: Any heavy laser rifle or cannon can be converted to run on magic energy.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 20

Spells needed: Globe of Daylight (2), and Power Bolt (20).

Physical Requirements: Rose Quartz crystal worth 1000 credits or more.

Damage: 4D6 M.D.

Payload: Ten blasts

Range: Unchanged from the weapon converted.

P.P.E. to recharge: 22 P.P.E.

Time to build: 3D4 hours

Market cost: 60,000 credits

3. Heavy Ion Weapons: Thanks to new developments in magic, medium ion rifles and heavy pistols have become available for low level **techno-wizards** to convert into lightning blasters. In addition, heavy ion rifles and cannons can be converted into heavy lightning blasters.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 15 for medium weapons or 30 for heavy.

Spells needed: Lightning Arc (30) and Energy Bolt (5) for medium or Power Bolt (20) for heavy.

Physical Requirements: Violet Amethyst worth 500 credits for medium or 1000 credits or more for heavy.

Damage: 5D6 M.D. for medium or 1D4 X 10 + 8 M.D. for heavy.

Payload: Five blasts regardless of size.

Range: Unchanged from the weapon converted.

P.P.E. to recharge: 35 for medium or 50 for heavy.

Time to build: 6D4 hours for medium or 9D4 hours for heavy.

Market cost: 80,000 credits for medium or 200,000 credits for heavy.

4. Heavy Plasma Weapons: Any plasma ejector or cannon can be converted to run on magic energy.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 20 for light plasma ejectors, 40 for heavy plasma cannons.

Spells needed: Fire Gout (20) and Energy Bolt (5) for light or Power Bolt (20) for heavy.

Physical Requirements: Diamond worth 2000 credits for light or 3000 credits or more for heavy.

Damage: 6D6 M.D. for light or 1D6 X 10 M.D. for heavy.

Payload: Three **blasts** regardless of size.

Range: Unchanged from the weapon converted.

P.P.E. to recharge: 25 for light weapons or 40 for heavy.

Time to build: 4D6 hours for light or 6D6 hours for heavy.

Market cost: 150,000 credits for light or 220,000 for heavy.

5. TK-Rail Guns: Rail Guns are very difficult and time consuming to convert to magic energy, but it has become easier with the development of new spell incantations.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 120

Spells needed: Telekinesis (8) and Power Bolt (20).

Physical Requirements: Rose Quartz crystal worth 3000 credits or more.

Damage: 6D6 M.D.

Payload: Two bursts per charge, but can hold up to 20 bursts.

Range: 4000 feet

P.P.E. to recharge: 8 P.P.E. or 20 I.S.P.

Time to build: 1D4 days

Market cost: 160,000 credits

New Features That Can Be Added to Technology

Body and Power Armor:

Armor Bizarre: Same effects as the spell found on page 135 in the Federation of Magic book.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 350

Duration is subject to the level of the creator

Cost to use: 15 P.P.E. or 30 I.S.P.

Market cost: 80,000 credits for every 15 M.D.C. of protection

Cloak of Darkness: Same effects as the spell found on page 131 in the **Federation of Magic** book.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 120

Duration is subject to the level of the creator

Cost to use: 6 P.P.E. or 12 I.S.P.

Market cost: 40,000 credits per level of the creator

Giant: Same effects as the spell found on page 150 in the **Federation of Magic** book, except the armor magically disappears until the end of the magic and is not destroyed by the growth of the user.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 1600

Duration is subject to the level of the creator

Cost to use: 80 P.P.E. or **160 I.S.P.**

Market cost: 1,000,000 credits plus an additional 200,000 credits per level of the creator

Invincible Armor: Same effects as the spell found on page 144 in the **Federation of Magic** book.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 800

Duration is subject to the level of the creator

Cost to use: 30 P.P.E. or 60 I.S.P.

Market cost: 200,000 credits plus an additional 150,000 credits per 30 M.D.C. of protection

Magical-Adrenal Rush: Same effects as the spell found on page 144 in the **Federation of Magic** book.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 1000

Duration is subject to the level of the creator

Cost to use: 45 P.P.E. or 90 I.S.P.

Market cost: 400,000 credits plus an additional 100,000 credits per level of the creator

Sheltering Force: Same effects as the spell found on page 141 in the **Federation of Magic** book.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 400

Duration is subject to the level of the creator

Cost to use: 20 P.P.E. or 40 I.S.P.

Market cost: 20,000 credits per level of the enchantment, very useful for wilderness travelers

Superhuman Endurance: Same effects as the spell found on page 138 in the **Federation of Magic** book.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 300

Duration is two hours

Cost to use: 12 P.P.E. or 24 I.S.P.

Market cost: 60,000 credits, very useful for wilderness travelers

Sustain: Same effects as the spell found on page 138 in the **Federation of Magic** book.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 600

Duration is subject to the level of the creator

Cost to use: 12 P.P.E. or 24 I.S.P.

Market cost: 100,000 credits per level of the enchantment, very useful for explorers, especially Shifters.

Giant Robots and Other Vehicles:

Cloak of Darkness: Same effects as the spell found on page 131 in the **Federation of Magic** book. It affects the vehicle and a five foot radius around it. Only those within the vehicle can see through the darkness.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 200

Duration is subject to the level of the creator

Cost to use: 6 P.P.E. or 12 I.S.P.

Market cost: 120,000 credits plus **20,000** credits per level of the creator

Chromatic Protection: Same effects as the spell found on page 132 in the **Federation of Magic** book.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 400

Duration is subject to the level of the creator

Cost to use: 10 P.P.E. or 20 I.S.P.

Market cost: 200,000 credits plus 25,000 credits per level of the creator

Sheltering Force: Same effects as the spell found on page 141 in the **Federation of Magic** book. Surrounds the vehicle

only. Anyone who exits the vehicle is instantly removed from its effects. Can only be used while the vehicle is immobile. Travel will automatically break the spell.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 600

Duration is subject to the level of the creator

Cost to use: 20 P.P.E. or 40 I.S.P.

Market cost: 120,000 credits plus 50,000 credits per level of the creator

Sustain: Same effects as the spell found on page 138 in the **Federation of Magic** book. Only affects those within the vehicle. Anyone who exits the vehicle will immediately be removed from its effects.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 1200

Duration is subject to the level of the creator

Cost to use: 12 P.P.E. or 24 I.S.P.

Market cost: 500,000 credits per level of the creator

Watchguard: Same effects as the spell found on page 134 in the **Federation of Magic** book. The vehicle enchanted must remain immobile for the magic to work. Travel will automatically break the spell.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 400

Duration is subject to the level of the creator

Cost to use: 10 P.P.E. or 20 I.S.P.

Market cost: 150,000 credits plus 50,000 credits per level of the creator

Techno-Wizard Body Armor

By Mark Sumimoto

It is well known that techno-wizards love **pre-rifts** aviator gear and apparel. Several weapon manufacturers, including Northern Gun, the Manistique **Imperium** and the Black Market, have taken advantage of this and manufacture a line of body armor designed for the techno-wizard fetish. They use M.D.C. animal and monster leather and high-tech M.D.C. mesh and plates in their construction and resemble the pilot outfits that techno-wizards so adore. Most are light-style suits that have small modules into which techno-wizards can install their magic enhancements. However, the prices for these suits are a bit on high side, due to their light, but sturdy materials and their small target client base. But this small, but well-to-do market has provided very good profits because despite the higher prices for these suits because many techno-wizards are quite willing to pay a bit more to look "cool".

The Coalition States consider these suits to be unfavorable, but have not outlawed them. Besides, if a TW wants to walk around wearing this outfit, let him. It just makes him all the easier to recognize. None of the following suits are full environmental because full metal body armor can interfere with magic and P.P.E. flow. However, most of them will be enchanted by their purchasers to make them equal or superior to full models. Note that Northern Gun and the Manistique Imperium do not provide TW enhancements, but suits that are resold by **Stormspire**, the Black Market, techno-wizards, or other independent dealers may come equipped with them at an added cost. Four enhancements are the maximum number that can be built into any one suit, although additional separate devices may be carried.

NG-TW Jumpsuit Armor

By Mark Sumimoto

This is the lightest of the M.D.C. suits available. It resembles a pilot-style jumpsuit and is quite comfortable. It is composed primarily of light mesh with light pads strategically positioned around the torso, joints, and groin. It zips in the front and has a leather vest area for adornments. It comes with dinosaur leather and ceramic plate reinforced boots and gloves. Standard head protection is a skullcap and goggles reinforced with a light polycarbonate plate, but can be substituted with a helmet from another suit later. Most techno-wizards wear this suit under the NG-TW Armored Jacket listed below.

Type: Light personal body armor

Size: Human or equivalent, but can be ordered in larger sizes for a small fee (10-15%)

Weight: 8 lbs., not counting any likely TW modifications

Mobility: Excellent mobility, no movement penalties.

M.D.C. by location:

Head/cap - 10 M.D.C. or another helmet can be substituted, usually 30 M.D.C.

Arms - 10 each

Legs - 12 each

Main Body - 25 M.D.C.

Market Price: 20,000 credits, rather pricey, but one is paying for style and comfort, not function and the demand for them is high, but limited. Excellent availability in most magic-friendly communities, but fair to poor elsewhere.

This body armor is similar to the jumpsuit model, but is heavier and more armored. It has heavier plates and pads built into the mesh suit and is used as a light combat armor. It uses the same gloves and boots as the NG-TW Jumpsuit, but has extra padding in the skullcap and larger visor-style eye protection. This suit is also commonly used in conjunction with the TW Armored Jacket.

Type: Light personal body armor

Size: Human or equivalent, but can be ordered in larger sizes for a small fee (10-15%)

Weight: 10 lbs., not counting any likely TW modifications

Mobility: Good mobility, -5% to prowl, swim, climb and other physical skills

M.D.C. by location:

Head/cap - 20 M.D.C. or another helmet can be substituted, usually 30 M.D.C. or more

Arms - 12 each

Legs - 15 each

Main Body - 40 M.D.C.

Market Price: 30,000 credits, very pricey, but one is paying for style and comfort, not function and the demand for them is high, but limited. Excellent availability in most magic-friendly communities, but fair to poor elsewhere.

NG-TW Fighter Pilot Armor

By Mark Sumimoto

TW Aviator combat pilots love this armor. It is designed to look like the suits of 20th century fighter pilots, but is bulkier and has heavier protection. Its composition is primarily M.D.C. mesh and heavy padding. It comes with heavy boots, elbow and knee pads, and a reinforced ceramic helmet, which can be sealed to provide protection against gas attacks. The helmet comes equipped with a multi-optic system (which usually gets replaced by the magic optic system) and an air mask (which usually get modified with the breathe without air spell). Really "cool" techno-wizards get their name or, more often, nickname painted on the front of the helmet. This can cause some problems, if two or more techno-wizards with the same nickname, run into each other. For some reason, the nickname "Maverick" seems to pop up a lot and causes the most **conflict**. The suit is also growing in popularity among non-TW pilots, although most think its silly to paint their name on the helmet.

Type: Medium body armor with some environmental features

Size: Human or equivalent, but can be ordered in larger sizes for an additional cost (usually 15-25%)

Weight: 15 lbs., not counting any likely TW modifications

Mobility: Good mobility, -10% to prowl, -15% to swim, climb, and other physical skills

M.D.C. by location:

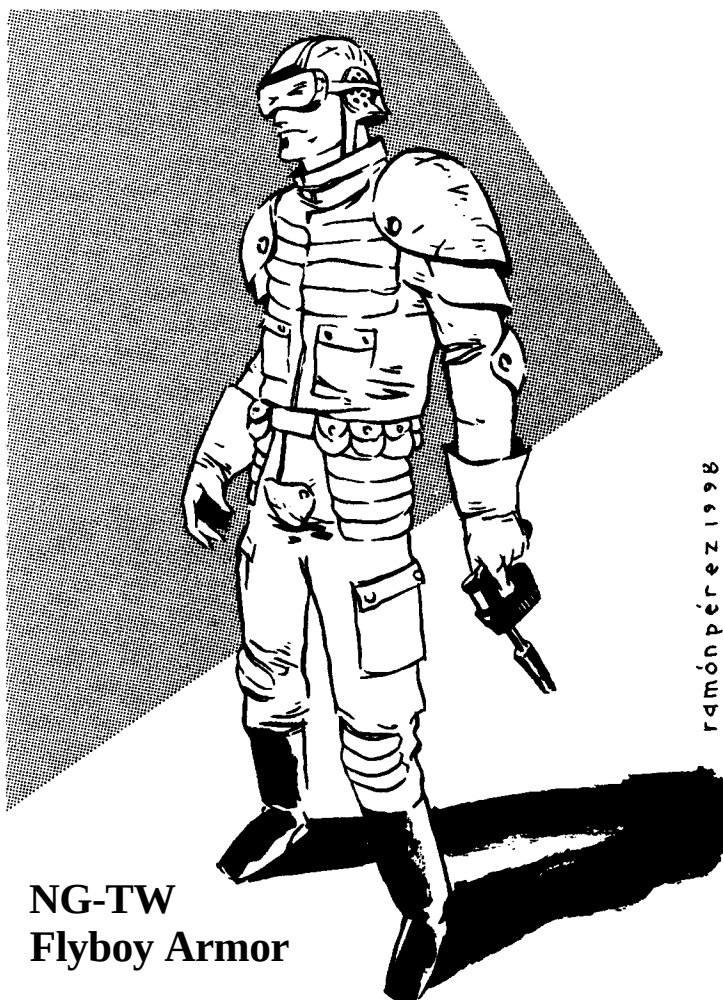
Head/helmet - 40 M.D.C.

Arms - 25 each

Legs - 30 each

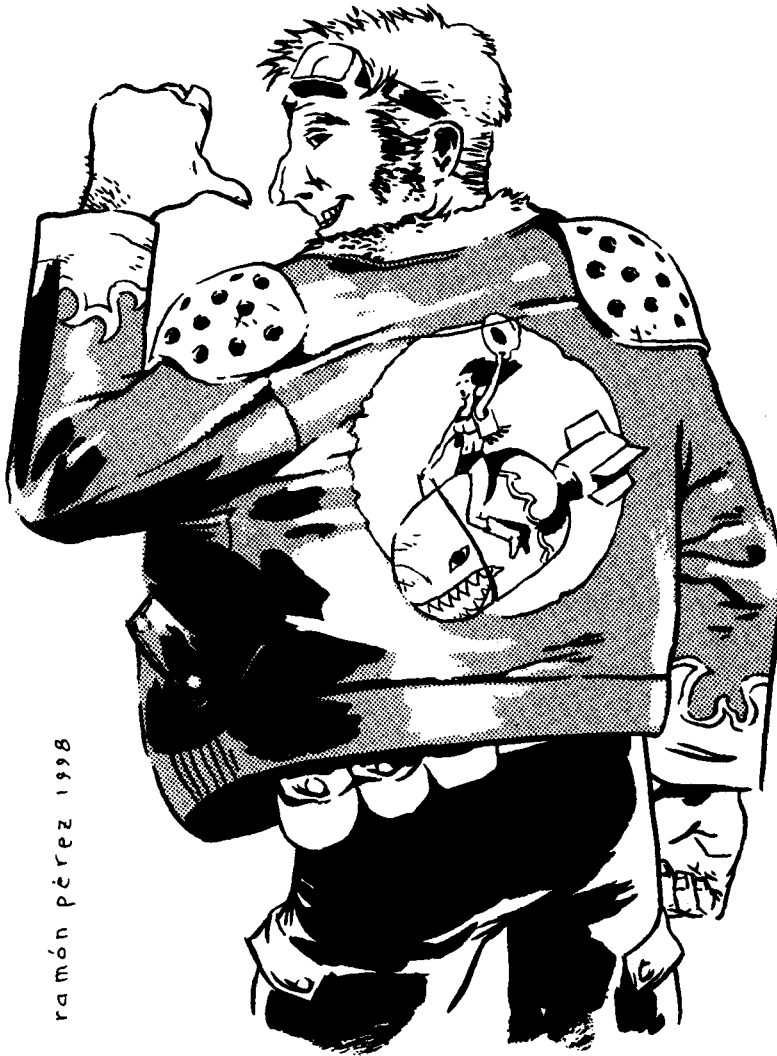
Main Body - 60 M.D.C.

Market Price: 40,000 credits, good availability in magic-friendly communities, fair availability elsewhere. The Manistique Imperium makes a comparable suit for the same cost.



NG-TW Flyboy Armor

By Mark Sumimoto



NG-TW Armored Jacket

By Mark Sumimoto

When techno-wizards want to look their best during combat, this is the jacket they wear. The Armored Jacket uses the finest dinosaur hides and light ceramic plates to create the ultimate in stylish protection. They have areas along the shoulders and chest where the buyer can sew or iron-on patches and the back can have any number of designs added to it by professional **artist/armorers** at additional cost, anywhere between 50 to 500 credits depending on the design. They are designed to be worn over another light suit, usually the NG-TW Jumpsuit listed previously, and come with additional shin guards. Also, due to its limited area, only two TW enhancements can be built into this suit. This limitation, however, is seen as an advantage by techno-wizards who use this jacket in addition to another light suit, which can also hold enchantments.

Type: Augmenting torso and arm suit with light shin guards

Size: Human or equivalent, but can be ordered in larger sizes for a small fee (10-15%)

Weight: 10 lbs., not counting any likely TW modifications

Mobility: Excellent mobility, no movement penalties when worn separately, but adds a penalty of -5% to prowl and -10% climb, swim and other physical skills when worn over another suit.

M.D.C. by location:

Head - None, unless other body armor is worn

Arms - 8 each, plus any body armor worn under the jacket
Legs - 10 each, plus any body armor worn under the shin guards

Main Body - 20 M.D.C.

Market Price: 35,000 credits, very expensive because the materials are somewhat difficult to obtain and it is in high demand by Techno-wizards. Good availability in magic-friendly communities, but poor elsewhere.

Imitator Armor

By Jason Richards

The imitator is a unique and rare suit of armor capable of enhancing the wearer's abilities. Very stylish, customizable, and popular with **Techno-Wizards** or any character that likes having a certain "zing". This is one of several models of body armor made by **Arzno Weapons Manufacturing** in **pre-Rifts Arizona**, and used by the **company's** defense force, the **Arzno Mercenary Corps**. Many **officers** of the **A.M.C.** use this suit of armor in particular.

Model: Arzno TWA- 1250

MDC: 40

Prowl Penalty: None; lightweight and extremely maneuverable

Cost: 1,000,000 credits; high cost is for customizing and difficulty of creating these versatile suits.

Description:

This armor uses a unique combination of spells at conception to allow it to give its user certain abilities. This armor is made in five styles: Eagle, Rhino, Cheetah, Serpent, and Skeleton. Each has its own set of powers/spells and resembles the animal/creature it emulates. (GM note: As you can see, any combination of spells are possible. These are just the five most popular models. The characters, at your discretion, may "build their own armor" for an additional 50%. What spells are available are totally at your discretion.)

Features of Eagle Armor:

1. Fly as the Eagle

Effect: fly at 50 mph

PPE to Activate: 25

Duration: 2 hours

2. Wind Rush

Effect: Possible knockdown, disarm, etc. See spell.

PPE to Activate: 20

Range: 120ft.

Savings Throw: A roll of 18 to 20 saves from losing balance and/or some items.

Rate of Fire: Once per melee

3. Thunderclap

Effect: HF of 8, gives user bonuses of +5 initiative, +1 strike, parry, dodge.

PPE to Activate: 4

Range: Directly 30 ft, can be heard one mile away.

4. Armor of Ithan

MDC: 60

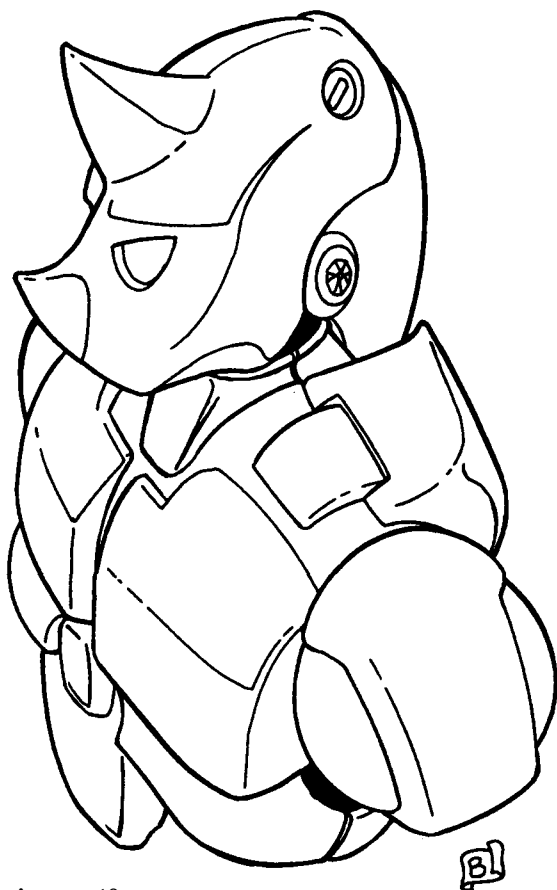
PPE to Activate: 10

Duration: 24 melees

Features of the Rhino Armor:

1. Superhuman Strength

Effect: Gives the user a PS of 30 and PE of 24.



PPE to Activate: 10

Duration: 12 melees

2. Invulnerability

Effect: Impervious to Energy, +10 save (see spell), and +35 MDC.

PPE to Activate: 25

Duration: 6 melees

3. Power Ram

Damage: 4D6 MD (plus punch damage if supernatural)

PPE to Activate: 10

Duration: 6 melees

Range: touch

Rate of Fire: counts as two attacks

Savings Throw: Dodge

4. Armor of Ithan

MDC: 60

PPE to Activate: 10

Duration: 24 melees

Features of Cheetah Armor:

1. Superhuman Speed

Effect: Grants the user a speed of 44, +2 parry, and +6 initiative.

PPE to Activate: 10

Duration: 6 minutes

2. Roar

Effect: Identical to Thunderclap spell; HF of 8, gives user bonuses of +5 initiative, +1 strike, parry, dodge.

PPE to Activate: 4

3. Invisibility (Simple)

Effect: User can turn invisible.

PPE to Activate: 6

Duration: 18 minutes

4. Armor of Ithan

MDC: 60

PPE to Activate: 10

Duration: 24 melees

Features of Serpent Armor:

1. Chameleon

Effect: User can blend in with his surroundings (see spell).

PPE to Activate: 6

Duration: 27 minutes

2. Climb

Effect: User can climb any surface at 60% proficiency.

PPE to Activate: 3

Duration: 30 minutes

3. Breath Fire

Damage: 4D6 MD or 1D6x10 SDC

PPE to Activate: 7

Range: 600 ft.

4. Armor of Ithan

MDC: 60

PPE to Activate: 10

Duration: 24 melees

Features of Skeleton Armor

1. Fear

Effect: HF of 16

PPE to Activate: 5

Duration: 6 minutes

2. Life Drain

Effect: Reduces SDC and HP by half, speed by half, attacks by one, and skills by 10%.

PPE to Activate: 25

Range: 30 ft. and a 15 ft. area

Duration: 12 melees

3. Shadow Meld

Effect: Wearer of the armor is completely invisible in shadow.

PPE to Activate: 10

Duration: 12 minutes

4. Armor of Ithan

MDC: 60

PPE to Activate: 10

Duration: 24 melees

Exterminator Armor

By Jason Richards

This formidable armor is standard issue for the Arzno Mercenary Corps artillery. It increases strength to allow for the use of rail guns and other heavy weapons.

Model: Arzno TWA-1600

MDC: 60 + forcefield

Prowl penalty: -15%

Cost: 950,000 credits; available only in Arzno.

Features:

Globe of Daylight

Range: 30 ft radius

Effect: Illumination of said radius and keeps vampires at bay.

PPE to Activate: 2

Duration: 18 minutes

Armor of Ithan

Range: self

MDC:60

PPE to Activate: 10

Duration: 24 melees

Invulnerability

Range: self

Effect: 35 MDC, impervious to energy same as spell, +10 save vs. everything (see spell).

PPE to Activate: 25

Duration: 6 melees

Superhuman Strength

Range: self

Effect: Increases the user's strength to 28.

PPE to Activate: 15

Duration: 12 minutes

Blades and Spikes

Range: touch

Damage: The armor is covered in silver spikes and has large blades on the shins, shoulders, and forearms. This gives the armor an AR of 12. In hand-to-hand, a missed AR roll means that the attacker hits a spike or blade and takes 3D6 SDC or HP to Vampires. This same damage is done when parrying an attack or attacking.

Light/Scout Armor

By Jason Richards

This armor is standard issue for the **Arzno** Mercenary Corps recon squad. It's powers of stealth are quite formidable.

Model: Arzno TWA-900

MDC: 30 + forcefield

Prowl penalty: none

b: 500,000 credits; available only in Arzno.

Features:

Globe of Daylight

Range: 30 ft radius

Effect: Illumination of said radius and keeps vampires at bay.

PPE to Activate: 2

Duration: 18 minutes

Armor of Ithan

Range: self

MDC:30

PPE to Activate: 10

Duration: 24 melees

Invisibility: Superior

Range: self

Effect: Superior and total invisibility and 85% prowl.

PPE to Activate: 25

Duration: 6 minutes

Blades and Spikes

Range: touch

Damage: The armor is covered in silver spikes and has large blades on the shins, shoulders, and forearms. This gives the armor an AR of 12. In hand-to-hand, a missed AR roll means that the attacker hits a spike or blade and takes 3D6 SDC or HP to Vampires. This same damage is done when parrying an attack or attacking.

Other Equipment and Weapons

TW Storm Staff

By Mark Sumimoto

This is an advanced TW Lightning Staff capable of firing bolts of electricity and making its user impervious to energy and the added ability to summon thunder and lightning from the sky. It is similar in appearance to the Lightning Staff and has an emerald mounted on the top of the ornament.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 1200

Spells needed: Call **Lightning** (15), Lightning Arc (30), Thunderclap (4), Impervious to Energy (20), and Ironwood (50).

Physical Requirements: Wooden staff, silver or copper plating, and an emerald worth 2000 credits.

Damage: Lightning bolts inflict 6D6 M.D. and summoned lightning and thunder **inflicts** 6D6 M.D. has a horror factor of 8. Both lightning bolts fired from the staff and summoned from the sky are +2 to strike.

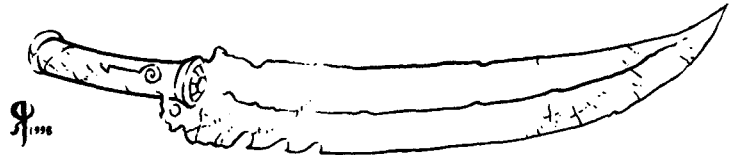
Duration: One melee per level of the user.

Range: 1000 feet to fire lightning bolts, 500 feet to summon thunder and lightning, self only for immunity for energy.

Cost to recharge: 30 P.P.E. or 60 I.S.P. plus 10 P.P.E. or 20 I.S.P. for each bolt summoned.

Time to build: 8D6 hours

Market cost: 250,000 credits



Ice Sword

By Mark Sumimoto

A counterpoint for the flaming sword, this is a sword hilt with one diamond located where the blade should be and another located in the bottom of the handle with a silver bracket connecting the two. When activated a blade of ice extends from the hilt and is capable of inflicting Mega-damage.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 75

Spells needed: Frostblade (15) or Ice (15)

Physical Requirements: Two diamonds worth 1000 credits or more, a metal or wood sword hilt, and silver for the bracket.

Damage: 4D6 M.D.

Duration: Two minutes per level of the user.

P.P.E. to use: 10 P.P.E. or 20 I.S.P.

Time to build: 4D6 hours

Market cost: 70,000 credits



TW Firedemon

By Mark Sumimoto

Spells needed: Call Lightning (15), Lightning Arc (30), and Ironwood (50).

Physical Requirements: Wooden staff and silver or copper plating.

Damage: 6D6 M.D. at +2 to strike

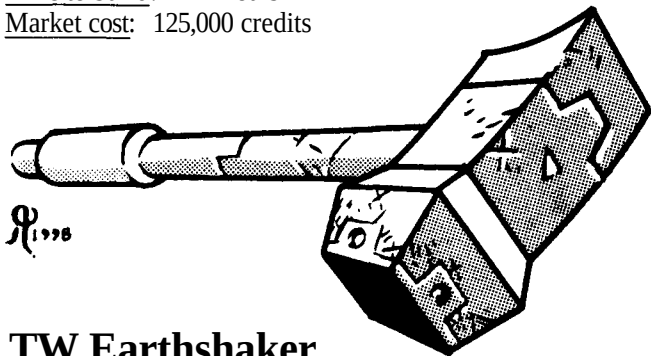
Duration: One melee per level of the user.

Range: 1000 feet to fire lightning bolts, self only for immunity for energy.

Cost to recharge: 30 P.P.E. or 60 I.S.P.

Time to build: 6D6 hours

Market cost: 125,000 credits



TW Earthshaker

By Mark Sumimoto

This weapon really packs a punch. Built into a mace or hammer, it releases a wave of force whenever it strikes an opponent. Its effects are identical to that of the spell, **Shockwave**. Unlike the spell, its effects are limited to a specific target. Although called the Earthshaker, if the weapon is struck on the ground, the **shockwave** generated only affects a radius of ten feet.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 140

Spells needed: Shockwave (35) and Power Weapon (35)

Physical Requirements: A metal or stone hammer or mace and a large quartz crystal to be placed at the top of the weapon.

Damage: 1D4 X 10 M.D. plus knockdown penalties or knockdown penalties only if struck on the ground. See page 144 of Federation of Magic for details.

Duration: One melee per level of the user.

P.P.E. to use: 35 P.P.E. or 70 I.S.P.

Time to build: 6D6 hours Market cost: 150,000 credits

TW Mirrorshield

By Mark Sumimoto

The best defense is said to be a good **offense**. But in the case of the Mirrorshield, the best defense is a good **counter-offense**. The user can use the shield to parry physical hand to hand attacks with the shield as usual, but long range attacks are deflected off of it and energy attacks are reflected back to its source. The Mirrorshield is popular among **Cyber-knights**, who like its defensive power, and **Crazies**, who think its cool to see someone shoot himself in the face. The shield has a magical M.D.C. of 40 and when the deflection power is activated, the shield gains an additional 60 M.D.C. and only takes one quarter damage from attacks.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 150

Spells needed: Magic Shield (6), Deflect (10), Targeted Deflection (15), and Power Weapon (35).

Physical Requirements: A highly polished silver plated shield.

Damage: Varies with the attack deflected or can inflict 2D4 M.D. with physical strikes while energized or 3D6 S.D.C. normally.

Duration: One minute per level of the user.

Range: Deflected energy blasts have a range of 500 feet.

Bonuses: +3 to parry, plus parries of 5 or higher deflects long-range attacks away and 13 or higher reflects energy attacks back to its source.

Cost to use: 20 P.P.E. or 40 I.S.P.

Time to build: 8D6 hours

Market cost: 220,000 credits

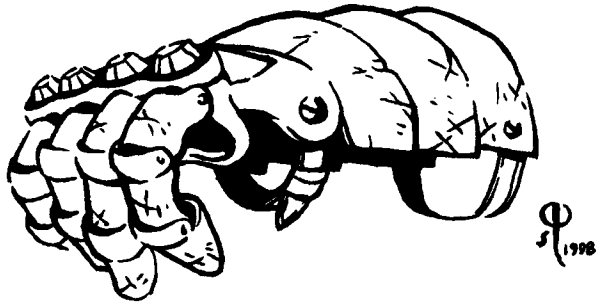
TW Enforcer Gauntlet

By Mark Sumimoto

This is a tough-guy weapon like the brass knuckles of the 20th century. It looks like an ordinary gauntlet with quartz crystals set in the knuckles. It allows its user to inflict damage with punches as if he had supernatural strength and to parry M.D. attacks. Advanced models use the combat gauntlets from Juicer Uprising and convert them to magic with more powerful results.

Initial P.P.E. cost: 20 for the basic and 30 for the advanced.

Spells needed: Fist of Fury (10) for the basic model and Fist of



Fury (10) and Superhuman Strength (10) for the advanced model.

Physical Requirements: A metal gauntlet and four quartz crystals for the basic model and the Combat Gauntlet, four quartz crystals, and an additional large quartz crystal placed in the battery slot for the advanced model.

Damage: Varies with the strength of the user, plus the advanced model inflicts an additional 2D6 M.D. and can perform a crushing attack that inflicts 3D6 M.D. per squeeze.

Duration: One minute per level of the user.

Range: Hand to hand only

Cost to recharge: 10 P.P.E. or 20 I.S.P. for the basic model and 20 P.P.E. or 40 I.S.P. for the advanced.

Time to build: 4D6 hours for the basic model and 6D6 hours for the advanced.

Market cost: 30,000 credits for the basic model and 45,000 for advanced.

TWW-1000 Water Sword

By Jason Richards

A Vampire-fighting weapon designed by the Techno-Wizards at Arzno Weapons Manufacturing. The weapon is merely a pipe made into a hilt (hand-guard optional), often with grip or tape rapped around it. Three aquamarines are placed around the diameter of the hilt. When activated, water pours out of the handle and is telekinetically held into the shape of a blade or pole. Regardless of the surface hit, the blade remains solid.

Range: hand held, two feet long.

Duration: typically 10 minutes, two minutes per level of creator.

Damage: 1D4 SDC or 4D6 HP to vampires

Energy Requirements: 10 PPE or 20 ISP

To Create: 100 PPE, a metal pipe and three aquamarines worth 100 credits each.

Creation Spells: Telekinesis and Create Water

Cost: 25000 credits, typically twice as much on the black market in the West.

TWW-1050 Water Dagger

By Jason Richards

A smaller version of the Water Sword above, from Arzno Weapons Manufacturing. The weapon is merely a small pipe made into a hilt (hand-guard optional), often with grip or tape rapped around it. One aquamarine is placed in the butt of the hilt. When activated, water pours out of the handle and is telekinetically held into the shape of a blade or pole. Regardless of the surface hit, the blade remains solid. It is frequently chosen over its larger companion due to its size makes it easy to conceal.

Range: hand held, six inches long (one foot with handle)

Duration: typically 10 minutes, two minutes per level of creator

Damage: 1 point of SDC or 2D6 HP to Vampires

Energy Requirements: 10PPE or 20 ISP

To Create: 100 PPE, a metal pipe and one aquamarine worth 100 credits.

Creation Spells: Telekinesis and Create Water

Cost: 21000 credits, typically twice as much on the black market in the West

TWW-1300 Lightning Mace

By Jason Richards

A mace (homemade or commercial) with an amethyst in the top of the head. The striking surface has roughly a dozen holes drilled through it, through which twines about four feet of heavy-duty copper wire. Arzno offers the addition of silver spikes for an additional 150 credits. This weapon is becoming extremely popular with renegade Dog Boys or those who work with very little "supervision".

Range: hand held, two feet long on average. Can fire a blast that goes 100 ft.

Duration: until charges extinguished

Damage: as a normal weapon, 1D8 SDC or HP to Vampires if silver spikes are used.

While activated the weapon does 5D6 MD for a blast or hit. Blasts are +2 strike.

Energy Requirements: 10 PPE or 20 ISP for 5 charges (misses do not count as charges, but parries do.)

To Create: 80 PPE, a mace or club, one small amethyst worth 60 credits, and about four feet of copper wire.

Creation Spells: Call Lightning and Energy Bolt

Cost: 40,000 credits, typically twice as much on the black market..

Notes: A similar model, the TWW-1350 is identical to the above except that it is a staff. Stats are identical except physical requirements are doubled (effectively two maces joined at the handle.) There are still only five charges and the retail cost is 50,000 credits. A TWB-900 sheath is available for the club model, but not the staff.

TWW-150 Steam Grenades

By Jason Richards

A Vampire-fighting weapon designed by the Techno-Wizards at Arzno Weapons Manufacturing. The grenade does little damage and is used basically as a riot-control style tear gas. It is used to flush Vampires out of their hiding places and make them vulnerable to larger scale attack. It is a round grenade, most frequently painted blue, with one small aquamarine that serves as the trigger button.

Range: thrown, usually about 120 feet; 10 foot radius.

Duration: 2 melees

Damage: None, or 2D6 HP to Vampires per melee and causes great burning pain. Causes 2D6 SDC to exposed skin and hurts like the dickens! Double any possible pain penalties. The fog slightly distorts visibility, -1 on all combat rolls.

Energy Requirements: 5 PPE or 10 ISP; 15 PPE or 30 ISP to recharge.

To Create: 60 PPE, one small aquamarine (40 credits), and conventional a grenade.

Creation Spells: Create Water, Ignite Fire, and Fuel Flame
Cost: 200 credits, *easily* twice as *much* on the black market in the West; recharges at Arzno cost 50 credits.

Vamp-Killer 2000

By Jason Richards

What can we say? If you want to kill vampires, this will do the job. It's a must have for any serious vampire hunter.

Model: Arzno TWW-2000

Weight: 30 lbs.

Cost: 200,000 credits. Only available in Arzno

Weapon Systems

1. Silver-bladed chain saw

Damage: 1D6x10 SDC or 5D6 HP to Vampires

Range: armlength+2 feet

To Activate: Ignite Fire (5 PPE) for 5 rounds of use and Fuel Flame (5 PPE) for each additional 5 rounds.

2. Cross spotlight (mounted over chain saw)

Damage: none, 3D6 HP to Vampires

Range: 100 ft

Payload: Battery powered; effectively unlimited.

3. Grenade Launcher (mounted to right of chain saw)

Damage: varies, wood fragmentation do 4D6 MD or 8D6 HP to Vampires plus a 10% chance of hitting the heart of any given Vamp in the radius.

Range: 150 ft

Radius: 10 ft

Rate of Fire: holds 5 grenades per clip.

TWW-500 Power Glove

By Jason Richards

A weapon designed to add a little power to your punch (no pun intended). It bestows upon its user the ability to punch with the strength of a supernatural being, even if an SDC creature. Perhaps the best quality of this item is its compatibility with other TW modifications or armor. It can be added to the gauntlet of a suit of armor or to the TWE-900 Climbing Claws. In any form, it is very formidable.

Range: hand to hand only

Duration: typically 5th level, 5 melees

Damage: users P.S. increased to supernatural (can't increase already supernatural punch).

Energy Requirements: 5 PPE or 10 ISP per charge, per glove

To Create: 120 PPE, a glove, gauntlet, or some other hand covering and a large ruby (200 cr.)

Creation Spells: Energy Bolt and Fist of Fury

Cost: 40,000 per glove

TWW-950 Fire Dagger

By Jason Richards

Yet another Arzno innovation that has been reproduced by many Techno-Wizards, the fire dagger is another modification of a larger weapon. One small ruby is placed in the butt of a sword hilt. It is frequently chosen over its larger companion due to the fact that its size makes it easy to conceal.

Range: hand held, six inches long (one foot with handle)

Duration: typically 10 minutes, two minutes per level of creator

Damage: 2D6 MD

Energy Requirements: 7 PPE or 14 ISP

To Create: 70 PPE, a sword hilt, and a ruby worth 100 credits.

Creation Spells: Fire Bolt or Circle of Flame

Cost: 43,000 credits, possibly twice as much on the black market.

TWB-1000 Jewelry

By Jason Richards

For a reason yet unexplained, emeralds seem to have the almost unique ability to store PPE. Though this is inconsequential to the average person, it is very helpful to mages. Many Techno-Wizards have taken to designing jewelry as PPE reserves.

Typical Large Medallion: 20 PPE, Cost: 2500 credits

Typical Anklet or Bracelet: 15 PPE, Cost 2250 credits

Typical Ring: 10 PPE, Cost 2000 credits

To Create: The jewelry required and an emerald worth 1000, 750, or 500 for medallions, bracelets, and rings, respectively. The PPE requirement is just twice what is needed to initially charge the battery.

TWW-1100 Magical Sheath

By Jason Richards

Originated by Arzno, but now in common use in other places, this sheath automatically activates Techno-Wizard blades and other melee weapons. It is made in proportion to the blade (or size it would be if it were activated) and is lined with several emeralds that serve as PPE batteries. Each emerald can hold 20 PPE and is worth 1000 credits, minimum. Any number can be used, but five is typically the most. Whenever a TW melee weapon is drawn, the PPE needed to activate it is taken from the PPE reserve. Power is regenerated 2 per hour normally or 10 per melee on a ley line.

To Create: 40 PPE per emerald to initially charge the batteries (initial charge cost more than actual PPE reserve), emeralds worth 1000 credits each, and a sheath.

Cost: 1000 plus 2000 per emerald

TWC-100 Receiver/Translator

By Jason Richards

The device is made of a walkie-talkie or small radio transmitter and receiver with one large quartz and three small garnets in the center or each the transmitter and receiver. The translator can be hand-held or attached to a strap around the neck, and the receiver is placed on an earpiece of some sort, usually a large set of headphones. When the transmitter is placed over your Adam's Apple it translates what you say into another language, via the spell "Tongues". Likewise, the receiver translates anything said into the base language of the user, provided it is set to translate that language. Up to five languages can be installed at the base price, 60 extra credits per additional.

Requirements: Two large quartz worth roughly 150 credits each and six garnets worth 50 each. Also needed is an old radio or walkie-talkie. It requires the Tongues spell and an Energy Bolt. Total PPE to make: 300.

PPE to use: 10 per 10 minutes.

Cost: 3000 credits

TWC-150 Eyes of Thoth Reading Glasses

By Jason Richards

A pair of glasses (no lenses necessary) with several small topaz stones lining the earpieces. Worn like normal glasses, but let the user read any language.

Requirements: Ten small topaz totaling about 300 dollars. An old set of frames is the only other physical requirement. The spells required are Eyes of **Thoth** and an Energy Bolt and an initial 375 PPE.

PPE to use: 10 per 10 minutes

Cost: 800 credits. Can also be installed in equipment (armor, etc.) for an additional 30%.

TWM-1000 Respirator

By Jason Richards

A breathing apparatus that helps a severely injured person breathe. It is made of a breath mask or filter with two medium quartz at the top where the bridge of the nose fits. An accordion-looking tube is attached at about the chin and moves in and out when the mask is active.

Duration: 15 minutes

Effect: Temporarily breathes for a patient. It offers a +40% to save versus coma or death if the trauma is respiratory related. It also offers a +2 save against smoke or toxin inhalation. It can also function as a breath mask, making the wearer impervious to inhaled toxins.

Energy Requirements: 5 PPE or 10 ISP

To Create: 80 PPE, a breath mask or filter and two clear quartz worth 50 credits each.

Creation Spells: Energy Bolt, Breathe Without Air, and Wind Rush

Cost: 300 credits, easily three times as much on the black market throughout the world. TW Medical devices are a rare commodity.

TW Flight Pack

By Jason Richards

Used as an attachment for both TW armor and traditional armor or by light recon troops, this flight pack has a magical propulsion system for quiet movement and versatility. It is simply a traditional style jet pack with a large rose quartz and a clear quartz imbedded in the back and copper wires running between them and the hand-held control.

Model: Arzno TWV-1000

Crew: 1 pilot

MDC by Location:

*Main Body: 30 MDC

* depleting the main body makes the vehicle useless and the flight pack is also difficult to hit, possible only on a called shot and even then at -3.

Speed: 50 MPH or 100 MPH on a ley line

Creation: 150 PPE, Energy Field and Fly as the Eagle spells, a large rose quartz (200 cr.), large clear quartz (500 cr.), a jet pack, and 3 feet of copper wire.

Statistical Data:

Dimensions: 2' x 8" x 3'

Weight: roughly 20 lbs

Cargo: None

Power System: Techno-Wizardry; 10 PPE or 20 ISP will last for two hours. The pack can fly indefinitely on a ley line.

PPE Battery: holds 20 PPE (4 hours) for. Recharges at ley lines at 10 per melee or elsewhere 2 per hour.

Cost: 60,000 credits in Arzno; easily 150,000 on the black market

Weapon Systems:

None.

TW Scout Cycle

By Jason Richards

Used for reconnaissance and quick-strike missions, the scout cycle has become an asset. Four typically escort a troop transport or assault vehicle.

Model: Arzno TWV-2500

Crew: 1 pilot

MDC by Location:

Wheels (2): 10 ea.

*Front Mounted Shotgun: 10

*Headlight: 5

*Side-Mounted mini-missile launchers (2): 20 ea.

**Main Body: 90

Magic Forcefield: 100

* a small and difficult target to hit (-3 strike on a called shot).

** depleting the main body makes the vehicle useless.

Speed: 210 mph max if on flat, well-kept roads. Considerably less (half) on not-so-good terrain. Cruising considered to be 100-120 MPH.

Statistical Data:

Height: 7 feet

Weight: 400 lbs fully loaded

Cargo: Minimal. One cubic foot, maximum.

Power System: Techno-Wizardry; telekinesis spell (8 PPE) gives a range of 50 miles.

PPE Battery: holds 80 PPE (500 miles) for engine and an additional 100 for TW and weapon functions. Recharges at ley lines at 10 per melee or elsewhere 2 per hour.

Cost: 800,000 credits. Available only in Arzno.

Weapon Systems:

Multi-Function Shotgun

Primary Purpose: Assault (Anti-Vampire)

Secondary Purpose: Defense

Weapon Options:

a) Conventional Rounds

Damage: 5D6 SDC

b) Silver Rounds

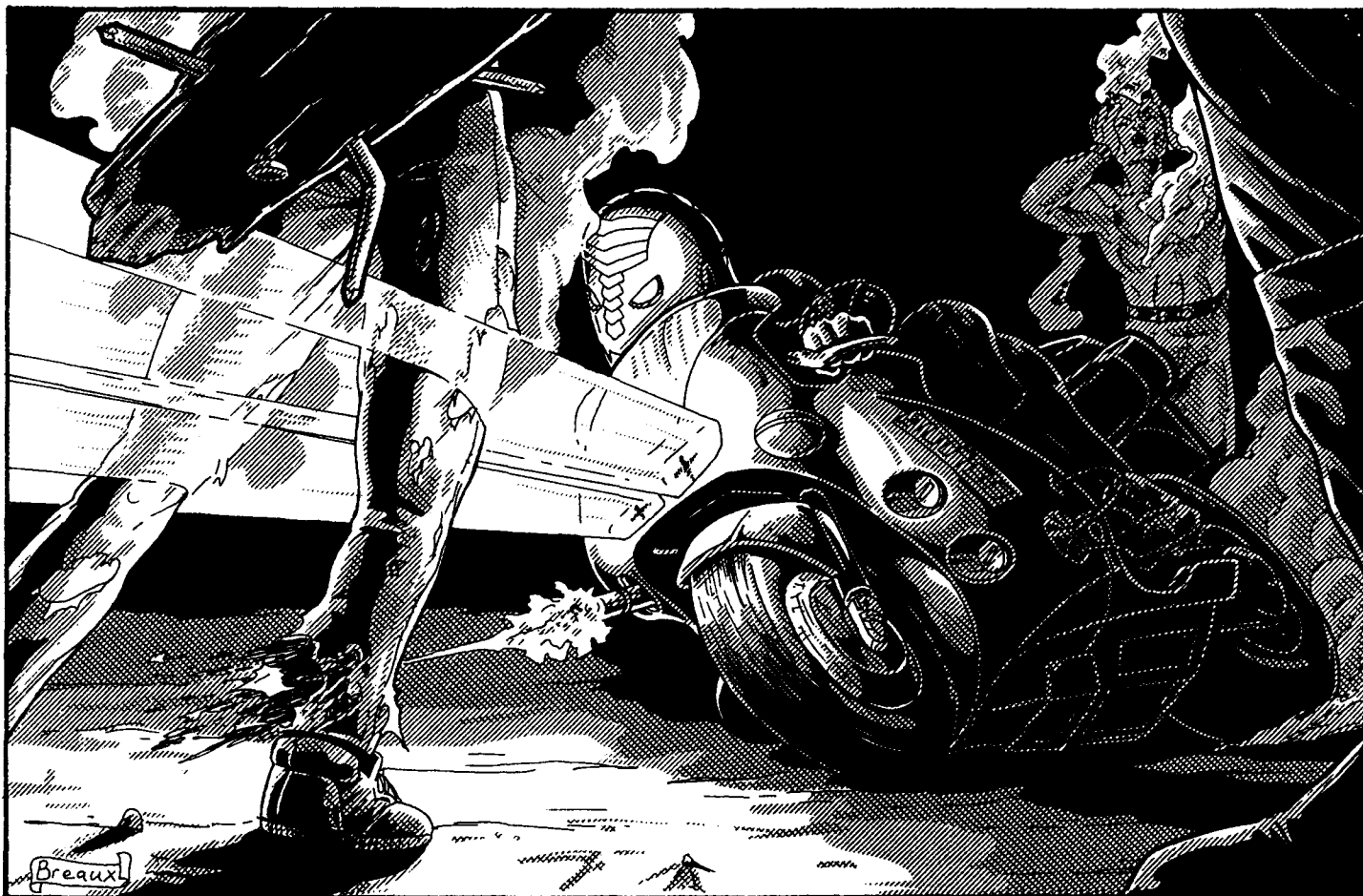
Damage: 4D6 SDC or 8D6 HP to Vampires

Rate of Fire: Equal to hand-to-hand of the pilot

Effective Range: 200 ft

Payload: 6 shots

Mini-Missile Launchers (2): These launchers are located each side of the vehicle. One of the few non-magic features, the manufacturers at Arzno found it more efficient to use conventional means to fire the missiles. Typically, wood or silver fragmentation missiles are used as **anti-Vampire** artillery. *Note: These launchers are totally capable of firing conventional missiles.



Primary Purpose: Anti Personnel (Anti-Vampire)

Secondary Purpose: Defense

Damage: Varies. Wood Fragmentation dolD4 MD or 2D4x10 HP to Vampires. Silver do 4D6 MD or 1D6x10 to Vampires. The radius on each is 10 ft.

Rate of Fire: can fire up to its entire payload in one volley.

Effective Range: About 1 mile.

Payload: 4; two per launcher

Headlight: This high-powered headlight has a cross over it to do damage to Vampires.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Vampire

Secondary Purpose: Illumination

Damage: 4D6 to Vampires

Rate of Fire: Standard

Range: 300 ft.

Payload: Draw from PPE battery; Effectively Unlimited

Techno-Wizard features:

1. Armor of Ithan

MDC: 100

PPE to Activate: 10

Duration: 40 melees

3. Globe of Silence

Radius: 10 ft.

PPE to Activate: 20

Duration: 15 minutes

2. Globe of Daylight

Radius: 120ft

PPE to Activate: 2

Duration: 30 minutes

4. Invisibility: Superior

Range: Vehicle and rider

PPE to Activate: 20

Duration: 30 minutes

Effects: The bike and rider are invisible to all forms of detection except the ability to see the invisible. Prowl is 84% or 98% if globe of silence is also active. The user can take no hostile action or the invisibility will cancel.

"Demon Beetle" Troop Transport

By Jason Richards

The transport vehicle used by the **Arzno** Mercenary Corp is a large, rectangular shape covered with spikes of varying size. The **railgun** turret is located in the back part of the vehicle and is accessible from inside only. In the front section, there is the mini-missile launcher. A large sliding door on each side of the transport facilitates the entrance and exit of troops. It is painted a pitch-black color, which increases its usefulness in **nighttime** operations and accents the silver spikes quite nicely.

Model: Arzno TWV-2900

Crew: 1 pilot, 1 copilot/gunner, 1 gunner, and 1 communications

Troop Transport: 20 troops plus crew. An additional 5 can be squeezed in and another 10 could ride on the roof if necessary.

MDC by Location:

Railgun Turret: 50

Top mini-missile launcher: 50

Turret spotlights (2): 10 ea.

*Front Headlights (2): 5 ea.

**Wheels (6): 50 ea.

***Main Body: 200

Magic **Forcefield:** 200

* A small and difficult target to hit (-3 strike on a called shot).

** The vehicle suffers no movement penalties with as few as 4 wheels. Losing half results in speed as -50%.

*** Depleting the main body makes the vehicle useless.

Speed: 210 mph maximum if on flat, well-kept roads. Considerably less (half) on not-so-good terrain. Cruising considered 80-90 MPH. **TK Engine.**

Statistical Data:

Height: 12 feet

Width: 8 feet

Length: 30 feet

Weight: 15 tons fully loaded.

Cargo: Aside from communications and personal equipment, 25 cubic feet is used for storage.

Power System: **Techno-Wizardry**; telekinesis spell (8 PPE) gives a range of 50 miles.

PPE Battery: Holds 80 PPE (500 miles) and recharges at ley lines at 10 per melee or elsewhere 2 per hour.

Cost: 18 million credits; available only in Arzno.
eapon Systems:

1. Arzno Multi-function rail run

Primary Purpose: Infantry support (**Anti-Vampire**)

Secondary Purpose: Defense

Weapon Options:

a) Conventional Rounds

Damage: 1D6x10

Range: 4000 ft.

b) Silver Rounds

Damage: 5D4 MD or 1D6x10 to Vampires (10% chance of piercing heart)

Range: 4000 ft.

c) Wooden Rounds

Damage: 1D4 MD or 3D6x10 to Vampires (10% chance of piercing heart)

Range: 2000 ft.

Rate of Fire: Standard

Payload: 100 bursts of conventional or silver rounds. PPE battery allows 100 bursts of wooden rounds.

2. Mini-Missile Launcher: This launcher is located on top of the vehicle. One of the few non-magic features, the manufacturers at Arzno found it more efficient to use conventional means to fire the missiles. Typically, wood or silver fragmentation are used as anti-Vampire **artillery**. *Note: These launchers are totally capable of firing conventional missiles.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Personnel (**Anti-Vampire**)

Secondary Purpose: Defense

Damage: Varies. Wood Fragmentation do 1 or 2 MD or 2D4x10 HP to Vampires. Silver does 4D6 MD or 1D6x10 Vampires. The radius on each is 10ft.

Rate of Fire: can fire up to half of its entire payload in one volley

Effective Range: About 1 mile.

Payload: 40 missiles

Spotlights and Headlights (4 total): These high-powered spotlights have crosses over them to do damage to Vampires. They are located two in the front, one on the missile launcher (swivels separately) and one on the weapon turret.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Vampire

Secondary Purpose: Illumination

Damage: 1D4x10 to Vampires

Rate of Fire: Standard

Range: 300 ft.

Payload: Draw from PPE battery; Effectively Unlimited

Techno-Wizard features:

1. Armor of Ithan

MDC: 200

PPE to Activate: 20

Duration: 40 melees

2. Globe of Daylight

Radius: 120ft

PPE to Activate: 2

Duration: 30 minutes

3. Invulnerability

Effect: Impervious to Energy, +10 save (see spell), and +35 MDC

PPE to Activate: 25

Duration: 10 melees

Annihilator Assault Vehicle

By Jason Richards

A Vampire killing *machine*! Lots of fun. A retro-fitted pre-rifts fire engine.

Model: Arzno TWV-3200

Crew: 1 pilot, 1 **copilot/gunner**, 3 turret gunners, 4 passengers

MDC by Location:

Water Cannon Turrets (2): 60

Cab **Railgun** Turret: 40

Side Mini-Missile Launchers (2): 50

Side Medium-Range Missile Launchers (2): 60

**Flare Launcher: 5

Spot lights (2 front, 3 turret): 5

***Wheels:** 5

***Main Body: 120

Magic **Forcefield:** 500

* a small and difficult target to hit (-3 strike on a called shot)

** the flare launcher is extremely hard to hit (-5 strike on a called shot)

*** depleting the main body makes the vehicle useless

Speed: 210 mph max if on flat, well-kept roads. Considerably less (half) on not-so-good terrain.

Statistical Data:

Height: 15 feet

Width: 10 feet

Length: 35 feet

Cargo: Minimal. About 10 cubic feet of interior storage.

Other storage is achieved by attaching items on hooks, straps, etc. outside the vehicle.

Power System: Magic; telekinesis spell (8 PPE) gives a range of 50 miles.

PPE Battery: holds 80 PPE (500 miles) and recharges at ley lines at 10 per melee or elsewhere 2 per hour.

Cost: 22 million credits. Available only in Arzno.

Weapon Systems:

Water Cannons: These high-pressure water cannons are fed from the truck's magical supply of water.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Vampire

Secondary Purpose: Fire Extinguishing

Damage: 2D4 SDC or 1D6x10 to Vampires

Rate of Fire: Equal to hand-to-hand of the pilot

Effective Range: 200 ft

Payload: 100 shots each are provided by PPE batteries. They can be recharged with 40 more shots for 10PPE.

Mini-Missile Launchers (2): These launchers are located each side of the vehicle. One of the few non-magic features, the manufacturers at Arzno found it more efficient to use conventional means to fire the missiles. Typically, wood fragmentation or TW water missiles are used as **anti-Vampire** artillery. *Note: These launchers are totally capable of firing conventional missiles.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Vampire

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Personnel

Damage: Varies. Wood Fragmentation do 1D4 MD or 2D4x10 HP to Vampires. Water do 1D6x10 to Vampires. The radius on each is 10 ft.

Rate of Fire: can fire up to its entire payload in one volley

Effective Range: About 1 mile.

Payload: 16; eight per launcher

Medium-Range Missile Launchers (2): These are the other non-magical components of the offensive capabilities of the vehicle. However, like the mini-missile launchers, TW missiles make up the normal payload. *Note: These launchers are totally capable of firing conventional missiles.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Vampire

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Personnel

Damage: Varies. Wood Fragmentation do 2D4 MD or 3D6x10 HP to Vampires plus a 10% chance of impaling the heart of any given Vamp in the radius. Water do 2D4x10 to Vampires. The radius of both is about 30 ft.

Rate of Fire: can fire up to its entire payload in one volley

Effective Range: About 30 miles.

Payload: 12; six per launcher

Cab Railgun: This devastating weapon fires wooden rounds and is capable of mowing down vampires left and right.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Vampire

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Personnel

Damage: 1D4 MD or 2D4x10 SDC to Vampires

Rate of Fire: Standard; can only fire bursts

Effective Range: 4000 ft

Payload: 30 bursts

Flare Launcher: This seemingly simple feature is actually capable of doing more damage to an army of vampires than any other feature on the vehicle.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Vampire

Secondary Purpose: Emergency Signaling

Effect: Any kind of signal or illumination flare can be launched skyward from this launcher. As a weapon, it can fire TW Call Lightning flares, Thunderclap flares, or its most lethal ordinance... Summon Storm flares! All do damage as per spell.

Rate of Fire: Once per melee

Range: 2000 ft straight up

Payload: One; takes one round to reload

Spotlights (5): These high-powered spotlights have crosses over them to do damage to **Vampires**. They are located two in the front and three on the weapon turrets.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Vampire

Secondary Purpose: Illumination

Damage: 1D4x10 to Vampires

Rate of Fire: Standard

Range: 300 ft.

Payload: Draw from PPE battery; Effectively Unlimited

Techno-Wizard features:

1. Armor of Ithan

MDC: 500

PPE to Activate: 50

Duration: 40 melees

2. Globe of Daylight

Radius: 120 ft

PPE to Activate: 2

Duration: 30 minutes

3. Invulnerability

Effect: Impervious to Energy, +10 save (see spell), and +35 MDC

PPE to Activate: 25

Duration: 10 melees

Missiles

By Jason Richards

All of the firing mechanisms on these missiles are non-magic. The warheads, however, are TW in design. This allows them to be compatible with any missile launching system.

Missile Type: Water-Mini

Speed: 200 MPH

*Damage: None / 1D6x10

Range/Radius: 1/2 mile / 10 ft.

Cost: 2000 credits ea.

Missile Type: Water-Short

Speed: 300 MPH

*Damage: None / 1D6x10

Range/Radius: 1 mile / 20 ft.

Cost: 2500 credits ea.

Missile Type: Water-Medium

Speed: 800 MPH

*Damage: None / 2D4x10

Range/Radius: 30 miles / 20 ft.

Cost: 3500 credits ea.

Missile Type: Water-Long

Speed: 1100 MPH

*Damage: None / 2D6x10

Range/Radius: 500 miles / 25 ft.

Cost: 4000 credits ea.

Missile Type: **Wood Fragmentation-Mini

Speed: 400 MPH

*Damage: 1D4x10 / 2D4x10

Range/Radius: 1/2 mile / 20 ft.

Cost: 3500 credits ea.

Missile Type: **Wood Fragmentation-Short

Speed: 500 MPH

*Damage: 1D4x10 / 2D4x10

Range/Radius: 2 miles / 20 ft.

Cost: 3800 credits ea.

Missile Type: **Wood Fragmentation-Medium

Speed: 1000 MPH

*Damage: 1D6x10 / 2D6x10

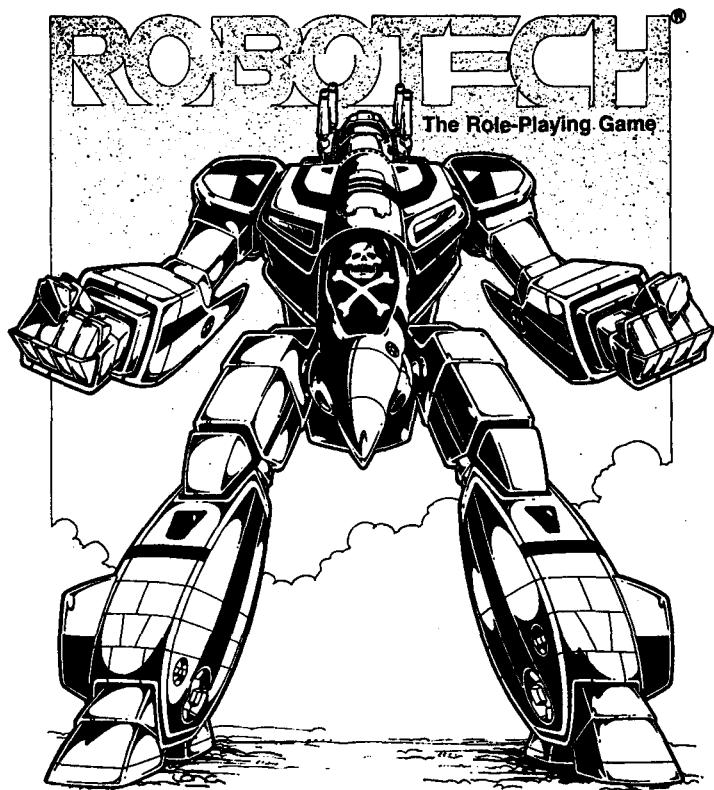
Range/Radius: 40 miles / 40 ft.

Cost: 4000 credits ea.

*Damages are listed: Normal Damage / Damage to Vampires

****Wood Fragmentation** do only SDC damage. Each vampire in the radius (**unarmored**) has a 10% chance of being impaled.

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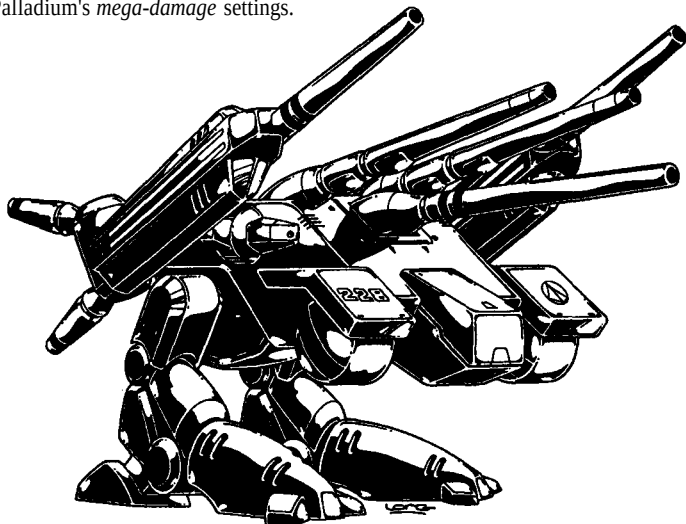
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The Siege Against Tolkeen

Chapter 9

The man sat in a hard plastic chair, which was wet with a strange, sticky stuff he prayed was merely water. He inserted a large coin into a slot in the wall in front of him, causing a metal plate to slide up. It exposed a window of thick bulletproof glass, and showed the man what lay behind the wall.

Half a dozen strange, tentacled creatures writhed and gyrated for his viewing pleasure, totally devoid of any clothing. They pressed their bodies up to the glass, showing him their strange, grey-green sexual organs. A piping, monotonous flute solo began to play over cheap loudspeakers in the room.

"The human's back," one of the D-Bee women whispered to the others, in a dialect of Dragonese.

"Weirdo," said one of the others in the same language, while shaking her tentacles towards the window of a customer of her species. The women were all aliens known as Gergelleg, and the club tended to attract Gergelleg men. The only **non-Gergellegs** who had ever come in were a couple of dwarves who had thought that the place was a bar and promptly left, and the human, who came in about once a month.

The human began to move his lips, but no sound came out. He looked up at the women with a strange type of hunger and hate. *They dance with the devil*, he thought to himself. *Satan lives inside their hideous heads, and tells them what they want. He tells them to destroy God's Chosen.*

"You want some of this, honey?" one of the Gergellegs said, writhing in front of the human's window. He stared at her, at her hypnotic movements and rhythm, while the maddening flute played in the background. Then, his time expired, and the metal plate slid down.

The human walked out of the club and into the filth-ridden streets **outside**, where a dirty rain was falling. He reached inside a pocket of his baggy raincoat, and closed his hand around the handle of a **vibro-knife**. Adjusting his hood and sunglasses, he walked around into a side alley, and stood by the back entrance. The door was locked, but the human easily pulled the flimsy doorknob off.

/ must rid Earth of Satan, the man thought, as he stepped inside. He yanked the shiv out of its holster, feeling it shake in his hands. *This is my duty*, he thought.

An oversexed Gergelleg male walked into the club about two hours later. He took a moment to brush the rain off of his cloak, and then sat down in one of the chairs. It was dark, so he **didn't** notice the blood stains on the walls, or **the** shattered glass and tiny gobbets of gray-green flesh on the floor. He merely inserted his coin and watched the metal plate glide up, as he had done dozens of times.

But inside, behind the wall, he saw a scene of horror previously unimaginable to him. Blood lay in puddles on the floor, and the dancers lay strewn about the room, in unidentifiable chunks and pieces of flesh and bone. And the man found himself unable to do anything but scream.

Hearing distant screams, **Perrin strode** among the ruins of Chi-Town. Corpses of women and children were everywhere, strewn over chunks or rubble, their poor bodies broken and shattered. An eclipse devoured the sun, and billowing gray clouds of mist absorbed all warmth. Perrin found himself trapped in a cold, dark wasteland.

"Oh, God, please help us!" shrieked a familiar female voice. Jack turned and saw his wife, alive again! She and **Kerner** and all his friends from the old mechanized squad were there, but something was not right. They were running. They were afraid.

"What is it, honey?" Perrin asked, sprinting towards his wife, with something in his gut telling him that something was terribly wrong and evil. Then, he saw them. Demons. There were about sixteen of them, but it was hard to count them. Jack's brain seemed to be filled with a strange mental static, making it impossible to remember much or think much.

The hideous monsters swooped in on black wings of horrific, rotting leather, hairy arms outstretched, claws dripping with venom. Their faces were the worst of all, horrid parodies of human faces, with blackened, rotting skin barely covering twisted and gnarled skulls. Two of **Perrin's** fleeing friends were caught, pulled up into the air, and pulled apart.

Dozens more of the monsters began swooping in, screaming **harsh**, grating war-cries. They surrounded Perrin and his **friends**, circling in the air, or walking towards them on the ground, leering and laughing.

"Stay away!" screamed Perrin. But the monsters did not heed his cry. They attacked, a mad horde of evil and magic. The air was filled with their bestial screams of triumph as they tore apart **Jack's** friends, claws rending flesh or pulling off limbs. Strangely enough, none of them went after Perrin.

"Get the hell away from me!" howled Perrin, running back and forth and gesturing madly at the demons, trying to chase them away. This time, the creatures obliged him, leaping backwards away from him. They stared at him confidently, laughing and screaming, as Jack stared at his dying friends. He cradled his disemboweled wife in his hands as the creatures began moving in again to finish their grisly work.

Suddenly, the air was filled with lasers. The demons were caught in beams of red laser and atomized, their molecules scattered to the wind. Mini-missiles began bursting in the air, taking out dozens of flying demons. And a horde of spindly, ebony skeletons began to move in, eyes glowing red. Their toothy mouths grinned with malicious pleasure as they attacked.

A grid of laser beams cut through the air, some of them finding demons, some of them finding Perrin's friends, and some of them finding nothing. Humans and demons alike were slain by the gunfire. Elizabeth Perrin was knocked out of her husband's arms by a rail gun burst.

"What are you doing?" yelled Perrin as the skeleton warriors swooped over the demons, killing man and beast alike with



vibro-swords and laser pistols. Before Jack even knew what was happening, he was the only one left. One of the skeleton raiders knocked him to the ground, and held a humming **vibro-knife** to his throat. The killer pulled off his helmet, to reveal the man beneath.

And **Perrin** found himself staring into his own maddened eyes.

He woke up screaming, bathed in his own sweat.

Perrin realized that he was in a clean bed with sheets and a fluffy pillow, instead of in the torture chamber he thought that he would be in. His head was bound tightly with a bandage, and a network of IV lines slowly pumped murky fluids into his right forearm. His vision was much better, although he was still a little dizzy.

A few men stood by his bedside. They were clearly not his doctors, though. One of them was an extremely large man, over seven feet in height, and as bulky as a football player. One of his arms was bionic, and a handful of wires and plugs were interspersed around his head, like a crown of thorns. He stood by the door with a bulky particle beam rifle cradled in his arms.

Another was a slim, diminutive man with crazed eyes and a shaved head. He wore a tight white T-shirt and baggy blue jeans with a pair of shoulder holsters. "The guy's up," grunted the skinhead.

"Yeah," agreed a third man, a slim, bespectacled fellow with a wild mane of blond hair. This man had no weapon save for a throwing knife holstered on his belt. He wore a suit and carried a leather briefcase, and seemed like an oddity next to two head-hunters.

Suddenly, a hand came up from the side to adjust the IV line. Perrin turned his head and saw an elderly, balding man in a white lab coat crouched at the bedside, using one hand to adjust the tubing and another to hold a soda can. He interrupted his work for a moment to take a drink.

"Did I say you could drink, you old **fat!**" thundered the skinhead, kicking the soda out of the old **man's** hand. The punk pulled out one of his holstered automatic pistols, and held it to the doctor's forehead. "Next time you stop working on this guy, I'm going to blow your brains out."

Perrin looked up at the other two men, hoping that they would say or do something to stop the maniac. Instead, they laughed. Perrin felt his blood boiling, and for a moment pondered the irrational action of trying to grab the skinhead's other gun.

"Where the hell am I?" asked Perrin, as the whimpering old man got back to work. "Who are you guys?"

"We're members of the Human Freedom Association," explained the man in glasses. "It's basically the local resistance movement. We were **VERY** excited when we heard about **your...arrival** in Tolkeen."

"Why?" asked Perrin, utterly bewildered.

"You're with the Coalition, of course! You can be our liaison with them, tell us what Emperor Prosek wishes for us to do."

"You're out of luck, buddy. I **don't** even know how I can contact those bozos anymore, let alone get orders from them."

The skinhead leaned over Jack, fury beginning to cloud the young punk's face. "Wrong answer," he growled, his warm,

fetid breath crawling into **Perrin's** nostrils. "Because if you can't help us, then we've no reason to let you live."

The other two suddenly aimed their weapons at the thug. "Back off, **Tommy**," said the large man, in a voice like glass being crushed. "Freedom's the only one who can make that decision, and you know it." The skinhead realized that he was outgunned, and grudgingly walked to the other side of the small hospital room.

"Now, what about the burster?" asked **Perrin**. "He's the one who saved me."



Chapter 10

Tucson crawled over to the open door, using one hand to pull himself along, and the other to try to keep his intestines in place. His clothing was covered in blood, both his own and that of the **Kittani** doctor who had been chained up beside him. The doctor they had shot in the head. Tucson wasn't quite so lucky. The bastards bestowed a lingering death upon him.

"Damn skinheads," he muttered, his gaze fixed on the open door, his mind swimming with pain and confusion. He could hear sirens in the distance, although his ears were still ringing with the harsh barks of the gun. He knew that soon the police would come back, and would either put him on life support to ensure an even slower death, or would put him out of his misery instantly. The elf fancied neither choice. He wanted to die outside, where at least he could breathe fresh air instead of the rank prison odors.

"Almost there," he muttered, pulling himself to the door. "Going to get out."

Suddenly, one of the crimson-suited military police burst in through the open door. "Freeze, scumbag!" he screamed, holding his techno-wizard laser pistol to Tucson's head.

Tucson looked up at the soldier. The man's face was ~~much~~ behind a gas mask, his body was hidden behind a jumpsuit of enchanted red cloth. In fact, he reminded the elf a little bit of the grim reaper in a crimson cloak. The elf looked into the man's face, and smiled eerily.

The soldier began convulsing, as the scent of pungent smoke filled the corridor. He dropped his gun, and began flopping around on the floor, screaming wildly. As his gas mask began to melt, his suit began to gradually fade to black. As the flames which burnt his body finally exploded out of the suit, his struggles ceased. Tucson crawled over the burning corpse, in a mad rush to get outside.

"Is the corridor cleared, Delta 4?" squawked the dead man's melting headset. "Come in, Delta 4! Do you read me?"

Tucson finally pulled himself outside. It was night out, and the stars in the sky were burning brightly. The elf smelled the crisp, autumn night air. He then looked around, and was not surprised in the least to see dozens of police cruisers parked all around the prison, just outside of the rows of barbed wire. An enormous combat helicopter hovered above the prison, its silenced blades making a strange, throbbing noise.

The chopper suddenly began to move towards Tucson. It flew right over him, then turned to face the dying elf and swiveled its massive guns in his direction. Something which looked very much like a chaingun let loose with a burst of mystical **hellfire**, which wrapped itself around the elf, doing no damage.

Tucson looked up at the chopper wearily. The windows suddenly lit up with a bright red light, and then shattered, as the cockpit exploded. Vomiting gouts of inky black smoke and showering sparks in every direction, the helicopter spiraled into the ground, where it shattered and burnt into a husk.

Red-suited soldiers began to close in from the sides, having slipped past the wire or come out of the prison to neutralize this threat. Tucson realized that he didn't have much strength or time left to him. But, he wanted to take a few more of those bastards out with him.

"Kick a guy out of his home, will you?" grunted Tucson, as a pair of incoming soldiers exploded from the inside. "Toss a guy in jail for having his friend patched up, will you?" sneered Tucson as a nearby police cruiser caught fire. "Try to kill an unarmed, wounded guy, will you?" yelled Tucson, as a sniper's gun melted, covering the sniper's arms with white-hot liquid metal.

Tucson suddenly saw a little metal tube roll to his feet, doubtless tossed there by a soldier hiding in the shadows. "Oh no," sighed the elf, as his short but eventful life flashed before his eyes. "I at least wanted to be buried."

The grenade exploded into a dimensional anomaly. A rift more like a black hole than anything else came into being, enveloping the elf and pulling him into a thousand directions at once, atomizing him and spreading the molecules into a billion different dimensions. When the soldiers arrived on the scene, all that they found was a steaming crater and a round hole in the wall.

"**You...what?**" growled **Perrin**, barely able to keep himself from tearing the skinhead's throat out.

"We shot the guys in the cells adjacent to yours," the punk explained, with a hint of pride in his voice. "They were all D-Bee punks, and we didn't want them identifying us. My idea."

"One of those punks saved my life, you idiot!" yelled Perrin. "He got caught by the cops because he was trying to save my life! I oughta break your neck!"

The skinhead leaned over the bed, and sneered at Jack. "Shut your mouth," he growled. "We saved you, and I think we deserve a little respect because of it! Besides, why are you so grateful? The guy was a D-Bee!"

"How in the hell was I supposed to know! I **couldn't** even see straight!"

"Calm down, Lou," said the man wearing glasses. "Maybe he does have a..."

"I saved this guy from a death sentence, and he's treating me like crap!" interrupted the skinhead. "This guy isn't worth so much trouble! I say we get rid of him!"

"That's for Freedom to decide," said the headhunter by the door. "It's his choice, not yours."



"It's your life that we decide what to do with," snarled Perrin, snatching the skinhead's throat and squeezing the windpipe. Jack clutched it a little bit harder, liking the feel of the neck as it constricted in his hands, liking the expression on the skinhead's face as he gasped for air. The punk was trying to reach back for his pistols, but a quick squeeze persuaded him not to.

"Now listen," Perrin said, sitting up so that he was right in his victim's face. "I'm going to let you go now. But from now on I will ask that you behave in a dignified manner. And if you don't, then I will snap your scrawny neck in half. Got that?" And Jack let go.

The skinhead immediately began gasping for air. Once his lungs were again filled with oxygen and his head had stopped spinning, he sneered down at Jack. "You bastard!" he screamed, reaching for a gun. "I've had enough of your disrespect!"

As the skinhead pressed down on the trigger, a **vibro-knife** shot across the room from the now-open door, knocking the pistol from the punk's hand. The gun shattered, and the knife imbedded in the wall behind. Rick Freedom walked in through the open doorway, his M.O.M. implants twitching violently.

"What were you doing, Louis?" he barked, pulling his knife out from the wall and turning it off. "It looked to me like you were about to kill our new leader. Were you going to shoot the man who is going to save humanity?"

"Sir, it was just an argument between Lou and..." interrupted the man with glasses, trying to extinguish the fuse of an explosive situation.

"I am talking to Lou," said Freedom calmly and politely. "I want to find out what Louis has to say about this." Then, the facade of politeness was dropped, and the Crazy began vibrating with rage, droplets of spittle shooting out from his mouth. "What in the hell were you doing, **Louis?**!" he screamed.

"The **guy'd** been consorting with D-Bees and nearly choked me to death when I asked him about it!" protested Lou.

"A D-Bee burster saved my life, apparently," said Perrin. "I thought that the guy was human. And then when **baldy** here boasted that he had killed him, I understandably went berserk. I'm still not sure that I should have let him live."

Freedom thought it over for a moment. "Mr. Perrin," he said. "From now on, I hope that you will avoid associating with demons of all sorts, as is your duty. I am sure that normally you exercise superb judgement in the matter. And Louis, from now on, you will respect authority. I am not going to discipline you this time, but if such an incident ever happens again, well..." With that, the Crazy took out his vibro-knife, and waved it under Lou's nose. The skinhead promptly ran from the room.

"You are dismissed, good sir," said Freedom to the doctor, who had been cowering in the corner during the entire argument. "Remember, someday soon, Tolkeen shall be free. Have a nice day, and remember not to discuss this with anyone." The elderly man got to his feet, brushed himself off, and walked out of the room.

The Crazy then knelt by Perrin's bed. "Dear Mr. Perrin," he said, gazing straight into Jack's eyes. "I recognize you as one of humanity's greatest champions. As such, you deserve leadership of the Human Freedom Association, which I now grant to you, sir."

Perrin was about to politely refuse. These weirdoes were beginning to seriously scare him, and he **didn't** want to be the leader of some strange terrorist group. But suddenly, he remembered the pyramid which Tucson had shown him. The Council's mega-weapon. The thing which was in such urgent need of destruction.

"I only hope that I can be as good a leader as you were, Mr. Freedom," said Perrin, grinning like a cat.

Chapter 11

Donald **Hartman**, clad in his power armor, struck out at one of the crumbling concrete golems attacking him, putting his fist straight through the thing's chest. Feeling an strange lump inside, he clamped his fingers down upon it, and pulled the strange chunk out of the golem. It turned out to be a beating

heart of stone and silver, vomiting blue-tinted energy out of its valves. The golem crumbled, and **Hartman** crashed the heart into dust.

The surviving members of the Black Dog squadron had been attacked by a platoon of nearly 40 golems, although that number had quickly been whittled away. The magical constructs were a step up from the standard model, and boasted shoulder-mounted net guns and **vibro-blade** forearms. Waves of such automated, mindless foes had been attacking every day, trying to push the Coalition's forces back, even as legions of Skelebots and mechanized infantry strode inwards to penetrate deeper into the heart of Tolkeen.

A member of the Black Dogs was snared in a magical net, and surrounded by half a dozen golems who began hacking away at him with their knives. "Help me!" he shrieked, as his armor was stripped away from him slice by slice.

The golems suddenly melted into slag as a thick gout of plasma flame wrapped around them. The magical net evaporated, and the wounded **SAMAS** soldier rose to his feet, giving a thumbs up to the trooper who had saved him.

The last few golems ganged up around Hartman, and tried to hold him still to administer a beating. The leader of the Black Dogs grinned, although his smile was hidden by the skull-like faceplate. He reached into the chests of the two golems flanking him, pulling out their hearts, and then melted the third's head with a quick laser blast.

Suddenly, there was a crackling of magical energy, and over 200 of the golems appeared in the forest nearby. Several of them trudged off to face the Black Dogs, but the others seemed to be heading in a different direction.

"Firestorm I, we've got a whole lot of golems at coordinates 05-92-31," announced Hartman over his radio. "Think you

could swing a couple of bombers down this way?"

"They're on their way," replied a female voice. "Can you hold your position for about 5 minutes, or do you need to fall back."

"The majority aren't after us," said Hartman as he atomized an antagonist with a plasma blast. "There are just a few who are covering the main squad's flanks that we have to worry about. Most of the golems are going to the southeast."

"Roger that. We've got a supply line there that's been under fire for days. Looks like you boys have identified the latest attack. Good job, and wait a few minutes for the fireworks."

The Black Dogs had already fallen upon the flankers, and had destroyed most of them with a barrage of plasma. The few survivors were blown to bits by fusion grenades just as the sleek black bombers headed in from the skies.

Each of the **warplanes** dropped what seemed like a pellet, a small black dot which was lost in the sun and smoke. The pellets dropped below the canopy, into the ranks of the golems. There was a brief moment of silence, and then a tremendous roar as pillars of flame burst into existence, slowly widening until the entire golem unit had been engulfed. The planes flew off to bomb another target, their work here done.

"Now that," laughed one of the Black Dogs, "Was a damn fine show. Sometimes I'm sorry that I'm a ground-pounder 'stead of a bomber pilot."

"Speaking of that," said another pilot, sitting down on a smoking golem corpse to pull out the heart, "Has anyone else heard the rumor that we're going to be reassigned? I hear that there are some bomber wings scheduled which need escorts, and that the Black Dogs are the current favorite for the job."

"**Sorta** makes sense," replied Hartman. "After all, we're only holding back the line here. Nothing that couldn't be done by a good platoon of infantry and a few well-placed minefields. But don't get your hopes up too high. Rumors go flying during a war. Remember that one about the big super-weapon that everyone thought the sorcerers had created?"

Perrin gazed apprehensively through a shattered window, looking at the pyramid, his feverish mind full of thoughts of what it might do. He was in the secret meeting place of the Human Freedom Association, the back room of a sleazy beer hall. The floor of the place was covered in litter and dust, and the few tables lying around here and there were cracked and dirty.

The place was full of raucous street scum as well. Most looked like city rat posers, dirty, numerous punks who tried to get away with acting like headhunters. They congregated in the corners, gossiping loudly with each other while drinking flat beer and smoking cigarettes or reefers. One of them had hooked an electric guitar up, and was playing a strange, **trippy** type of music. His T-shirt under the thick leather overcoat he wore boasted a skeleton playing a guitar over a tie-dyed background, with the words "Grateful Dead" printed below.

There were a few true warriors around, but they looked to be an undisciplined bunch. Men in bulky armor with large rifles sat around at the tables, talking loudly and drinking or smoking. There were a few guys who looked like Juicers as well. A jumpy man with bags under his eyes and a **bio-comp** harness covering his otherwise bare chest sat alone, polishing an ion pistol. A large, very muscular man wearing Juicer armor was **arm-**



wrestling a partial conversion 'borg. And a tall, blonde woman who just seemed to look like a typical Juicer was lifting 100 pound barbells with one hand.

Smoke and noise filled the barren room. The odor of beer and tobacco and marijuana wafted through **Perrin's** nostrils. He could see a cooler in one corner, which was filled with pill bottles, six-packs, and thick, opaque plastic bags full of different substances. "This is supposed to be my great army?" he muttered under his breath.

"Warriors of the Human Freedom Association!" he then belted at the top of his lungs. "I am your new leader, Jack **Perrin**. And I come before you with an urgent mission!"

Nobody paid attention.

"I am your leader!" **Perrin** yelled, visibly upset. "I need your cooperation!"

"Shut up," grunted the arm wrestling Juicer, as he pinned his opponent's metal wrist to the table. "Nobody cares, moron."

"Why don't you shut your mouth?" snapped Perrin. "Rick Freedom gave me this job, so you should show me the same respect you showed him."

"You want respect from me, you pale little **squishie**?" asked the Juicer softly. The noise level in the room suddenly dropped to nothing, as the man got out of his chair. "Look, you punk, I don't think you're very smart, so I'm going to let you walk out of here. Get out of my sight, before I lose my self control."

"I am your leader, and demand to be treated as such."

"You're going to be treated as fist-scraper in a moment, **squish-boy**!" laughed the Juicer. And with that, he swung one of his massive fists right into Perrin's gut, with the force of a sledgehammer.

Jack cried out in pain, and was thrown back several feet. As he crawled to his feet, he could see the Juicer walking towards him, a big grin on his face. "Oh look, a little bug," laughed the man. "I do believe I'll squash it." With that, he raised one of his sneaker-clad feet, and brought it down hard at Perrin's spine.

The foot never reached its target. Perrin had reached up and caught the calf of the leg a mere moment before the blow would have crippled him. Quickly, he shifted his grip down to the ankle, getting a good firm hold. With his other hand, he latched onto the foot and twisted until he felt something in the Juicer break.

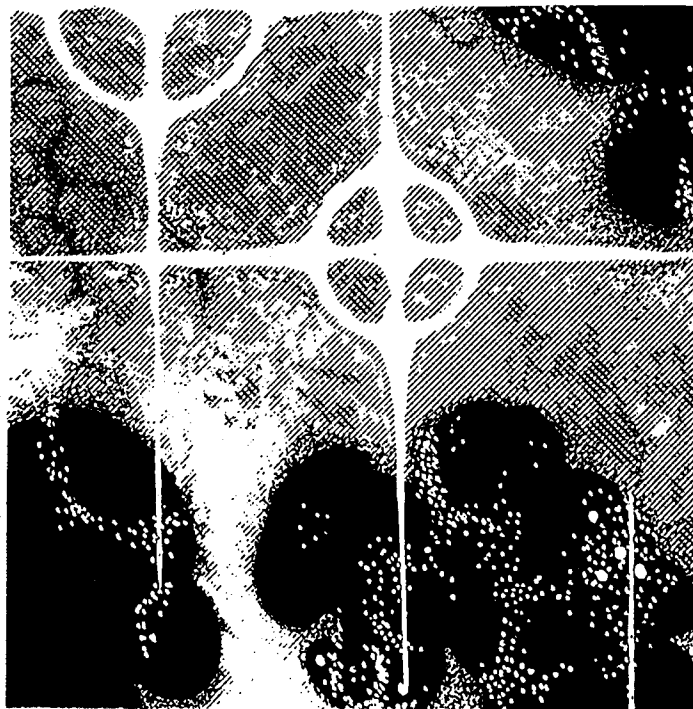
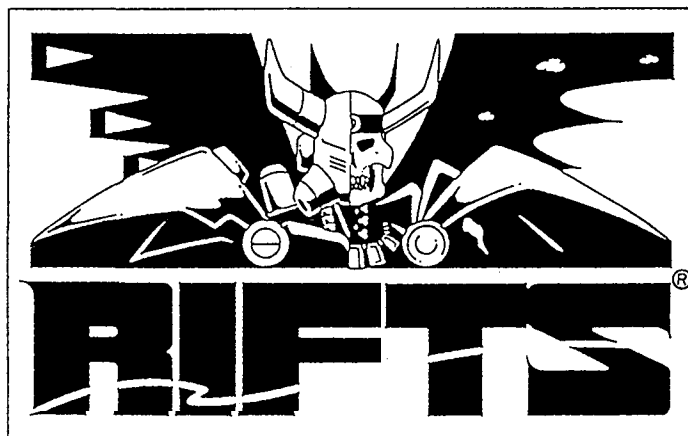
"Ow!" yelled the Juicer. "You broke my ankle! I'm going to kill you cold for that, squish!"

"I **don't** think you'll be in any position to do that," growled Perrin, as he pushed the Juicer down, and grabbed hold of the other ankle. Before the Juicer could pull the foot away, Jack snapped the bone, leaving the fallen warrior helpless to rise.

Perrin got up, and walked to the nearest table. He overturned it, and yanked off one of its wooden legs. "This is where the fun begins, buddy," he laughed, walking over to the fallen Juicer.

Fifteen minutes later, Perrin threw down a cracked and bloody table leg. "I am your leader!" he yelled to the horrified rabble. "I demand respect and obedience!"

All of the members of the Human Freedom Association paid very close attention, except for one who was in no condition to.



The Hammer of the Forge

By James M.G. Cannon

Chapter 2

Surrounded by the Void

*The seven rings that circle the great gas giant **Garouk-9** are mainly composed of particles of ice and rock. "Particles" is a word that gives only the vaguest sense of the rings, though, as the objects vary in size from the tiniest of pebbles to massive asteroids several miles in diameter. **Garouk-9** itself possesses no native sentient life, though giant **amoebae-like** creatures known as **Tuscuns** navigate through the chlorine rich atmosphere of the planet, floating on wind currents and deriving sustenance from the clouds themselves. It is within the rings circling the globe that a world-hopper will find the people of **Garouk-9**. The ices-*

teroids and asteroids that circle the planet are rich in minerals, particularly titanium, nickel, and durnium. Mining interests from within the Juktos System maintain stations near Garouk-9, and send agents into the rings to plunder their resources. A number of independent prospectors have also made the rings their home, and many derive a comfortable living from the orbital mines. Life here can be dangerous, however, because the rings also provide excellent hiding places for smugglers and marauders...

— excerpt from *Travelogues of a Journeyman*,
by **Fraktyn** Quint

A black and gray tub of steel slowly navigated its way through the maze of twirling rock that served as the sixth ring of Garouk-9. The ship bore no distinguishing markings, and to all appearances seemed to be unremarkable save for a few blaster burns across its dorsal surface. A casual observer would have **assumed** the ship to be just another prospecting vessel, most likely one of the independent operators in the ring, **unaffiliated** with Drasco Inc., Bhudrin, or any of the other mining conglomerates. A casual observer would be in error.

A thousand meters away from the ship, keeping a careful watch on the vessel's progress, stood a single humanoid, perching upon a large icesteroid. The figure was physically impressive; standing half again as tall as a human being, he was sheathed in a skin tight suit of metallic green armor that reflected brightly off the ice beneath his feet. Green eyes glittered beneath a great helm molded to fit his wolfish face, and in his claw-like hands he cradled a great battle-axe made of the same peculiar metal as his armor. His name among humans was Lothar, a close approximation of his birth name. He was a Wolfen, one of those canine-like humanoids who had spread throughout the Three Galaxies. More than that, **however**, Lothar was a Knight of the Cosmic Forge.

He watched as the black and gray ship weaved through the ring. The ship was shaped like a bird of prey, with wings outstretched and large ion cannons mounted on the belly, where a bird's talons might have been. Those cannons, Lothar knew, had sent at least a dozen merchant vessels spinning into the void, and the captain of that ship was a blackguard notorious throughout the Juktos system and its closest neighbors. His name was **Elias** Harkonnen, an **elven** pirate as adept with a blaster or a blade as he was behind the controls of his starship, the *Raptor*.

Harkonnen's raids caused the deaths of three thousand and sixty-four sentients to date. Lothar had been unable to halt the last attack, against a Titanian supply ship named *Regis*, and the *Raptor* made its escape while Lothar surveyed the damage to the *Regis*. Using the esoteric skills of his order, Lothar was able to trail the *Raptor* through the trackless void of space to the Juktos system, and the gas giant Garouk-9. The rings created a net of cosmic "static" that fouled **Lothar's** enhanced senses, and he lost the *Raptor* within the maze of rock and ice. Two days of careful searching and prudent use of his tracking ability had eventually led him to the icesteroid upon which Lothar now stood, observing the *Raptor* as it approached one of the larger asteroids, knotted and pitted by mines strung out decades ago, that filled several cubic kilometers of space.

The *Raptor* slowly drew closer to the asteroid, and Lothar watched, unsurprised, as a doorway set within the rock of the as-

teroid scissored open, and the marauder slipped within the stony bosom of the asteroid.

Lothar nodded to himself, his suspicions confirmed. When he had first lost the ship within the confines of the rings, Lothar assumed that the pirates possessed some sort of hidden base inside the circle of asteroids. He was slightly surprised at the size of the facility, but its existence merely confirmed his suspicions.

Lothar stepped off the icesteroid and glided through space in the direction of the hidden base, holding the axe out before him. The same cosmic "static" that interfered with **Lothar's** ability to track the starship through the rings obscured his own presence in the void. He did not doubt that the pirate stronghold possessed a powerful sensor array, probably equipped to sniff out CCW law-dogs and hunter ships, but entirely unsuited to separating the debris from the ring apart from human or humanoid figures hovering outside their front door.

In a matter of moments, Lothar crossed the distance to the massive asteroid, ducking past an errant icesteroid that nearly cleaved through his helm. Lothar was all too aware of the limitations of the Cosmic Forge's blessings. His body was rendered immune to even the intense heat of the stars, making him invulnerable to the common energy weapons most civilizations of the Three Galaxies used for warfare and defense. But a bullet from a grav rifle or rail gun could penetrate even the fabled armor of the **cosmo-knights**, and an icesteroid that massed several thousand kilos could squash him like a bug.

Lothar skimmed the surface of the huge asteroid concealing the *Raptor* and her crew. His unerring sense of direction guided him to massive door incised into the asteroid's surface. Lothar smiled to himself, forced to admire the ingenuity of the pirates. Their hideaway was well concealed; even knowing where to look and what to look for, Lothar found it difficult to locate the edges of the door. The surface of the portal was plated with the skin of the asteroid itself, while the perimeters were cunningly hidden beneath the natural protuberances and projections of the asteroid. When he finally located it, he measured its dimensions with his eyes. The door stood twenty meters tall and twenty meters wide, roughly square shaped, and was large enough to allow entry or exit to two ships at a **time**, with millimeters to spare.

Lothar pressed one metal-skinned hand against the surface of the door. Even through several centimeters of rock and the green metal of his gauntlet, he felt the quiet hum of machinery. Again he smiled to himself, and pulled back from the door. Taking his double-bladed axe in a two handed grip, he summoned up the cosmic fire within his breast and cut loose with a titanic blow, splitting open the camouflaged exterior of the door and revealing the dull metallic surface of the door itself. Lothar quickly unleashed a second shattering attack, slicing through the metal with an explosion of green sparks. He stepped back to admire his handiwork, and, satisfied, extended the axe before him. A flash of emerald energy flared from the head of the axe and connected with the door, burning through the weakened section in a heartbeat. Lothar brushed past it into the base, his eyes flashing green beneath his helm, his axe held ready to attack.

Beyond the door lay a gigantic, airless, hollowed out pocket, carved from the middle of the asteroid to provide the marauders with a docking bay impossible to find through normal means. Lothar was momentarily impressed with Harkonnen's ingenuity and ambition, but he reasoned that it was more likely that the pi-

rate had stumbled across the hiding place than that he fashioned it himself.

Three hundred meters inside the chamber, the *Raptor* had attached itself to the inner wall, connected by snaking umbilicals and at least three airlock tunnels that extended from the asteroid wall to fasten on to the *Raptor*. Though the chamber held more than enough space for a dozen ships, the only facilities Lothar could discern were those servicing the *Raptor*.

As Lothar surveyed the scene, two dull black metal spheres detached from the walls of the chamber and glided through the emptiness towards him. Lothar hefted his axe in his hands and watched them come. He recognized their make, if not their type. **Naruni** war-drones: automated machines better armored than most **starships**, and packing enough **firepower** to level a small moon.

Business must have been very good for **Harkonnen**. Naruni weaponry was never cheap.

Several plates opened up on each of the drones, revealing the plasma projectors, mini-missile launchers, **grav** guns, laser cannons, and whatever else the Naruni techno-engineers could pack into the spheres. Lothar grinned beneath his helm. He loved a challenge.

As energy lanced towards him from the spheres, Lothar dropped thirty meters and threw his axe at the drone to his left. The axe ripped through the plates of the drone, tearing through its ventral hemisphere and hopefully shredding something critical. At the same time, Lothar summoned up the energy of the Forge within him, and sent emerald beams of light from his eyes to slam into the second drone.

The second drone exploded in a shower of fire, spectacularly and silently, extinguished almost as soon as it erupted.

The axe boomeranged back to Lothar's hand. Simultaneously, the first drone, damaged but still functioning, reoriented its weapon systems, and launched a dozen missiles at Lothar. Lothar ducked past the volley, and flew across the chamber towards where the *Raptor* clung to the side of the **asteroid**, venting gases into space. He didn't need to check to know the missiles followed.

The lead missiles reached Lothar just as he drew close to the *Raptor*. They slammed into him and detonated, sending him tumbling through the void to smash against the *Raptor's* hull. Lothar grunted in surprise and pain, but his armor held. In another moment, the rest of the volley exploded around him, and Lothar instinctively curled up into a ball as the silent explosions rocked him and the side of the *Raptor* where he stood.

Smoke and debris hung in a cloud around Lothar, but his green eyes pierced the haze and assessed the damage. His armor was burnt and scarred by the attack, but the brunt of the damage had been inflicted on the *Raptor*. Lothar's gamble paid off; the size of the *Raptor* served to confuse the missiles and enabled Lothar to escape a fiery and brutal death.

He could see the war-drone limp towards the *Raptor*, trailing smoke and lit up with warning lights. Its weapon systems homed in on Lothar and prepared to fire. Lothar allowed himself a brief, rueful grin. He had hoped Harkonnen would have programmed the drones not to fire upon the *Raptor*, but it seemed that the marauder either had not anticipated the possibility, or was more ruthless than Lothar at first assumed.

Once more Lothar summoned up the fires of the Cosmic Forge, and unleashed them in a devastating beam from his eyes. The energy sliced through the drone, destroying it in an instant. Lothar turned away and flew towards the airlocks that led into the station proper. As he did, he noticed the *Raptor's* running lights suddenly ignited. Lothar drew to a halt, and again channeled the fires of the Forge into a destructive beam that spiraled towards the *Raptor's* engines, and connected with a soundless crunch.

The *Raptor* would not be going anywhere for quite some time.

However, Lothar's energy reserves were seriously depleted, and he would not be able to summon up another energy blast of such magnitude in the near future. If Harkonnen, by some miracle, managed to get his ship underway, Lothar would be hard pressed to stop him.

With two swipes of his axe, Lothar opened up one of the airlocks, and surged into the base. Behind him, the automatic systems sealed the tear he had carved through the door, while before him stretched a cargo hold stacked high with crates of booty. The ceiling was ten meters overhead, though a catwalk was bolted to the wall about halfway up it. Lothar spotted three exits in his first glance, but had little time to explore further. Three of the pirates stood five meters away; a trio of **Naterreris** clad in patchwork suits of battle armor decorated with clan tattoos. They had popped open one of the crates, and two of them were lugging out short, four-barreled rifles with heavy box magazines situated in front of the triggers. The third pirate covered them with his plasma rifle, full knowing that the weapon was useless against the **cosmo-knight**. Lothar didn't recognize the hardware the pirates had just produced, but he was certain he didn't want to find out what they could do.

"Stand down and surrender," Lothar barked. "I am authorized to use lethal force against you. Do not force me to kill you."

The shark-like aliens ignored him, and the duo with the heavy weapons opened fire on Lothar. The weapons coughed, and two volleys of micro-missiles blasted towards Lothar. The Wolfen heaved his axe with a smooth snap of his shoulder, and leapt into the air at the same moment. The micro-missiles hurtled harmlessly beneath him, only to connect with the far wall of the hold with a terrific boom that shook the entire room.

Lothar's axe decapitated one of the pirates as it passed them, and the one with the plasma rifle dropped to the ground with a scream. His one surviving companion reoriented his heavy rifle, but was knocked off his feet by Lothar's eyebeams, weaker than the ones he used on the drones, but more than enough to incapacitate the pirate.

Lothar dropped to the ground beside the **Naterrerri** who lay on the floor, holding his head and shuddering in fear. Lothar grabbed his shoulder in one hand and lifted the alien easily. The axe flew back to his hand and Lothar caught it automatically. His eyes glowed **balefully** from beneath his helm. "Where is Harkonnen?" he demanded. The fish-eyes blinked rapidly in Lothar's face. The poor fool was too frightened to talk. Lothar threw him to the ground in disgust.

"Hello!" a voice from above called out. "Looking for me?"

Lothar stepped back and raised his head. Above him, standing on the catwalk that circled the room, stood **Elias Harkonnen**. The Elf was tall, angular, and thin, clad in a form-fitting, black

and red suit of Imperial Legionnaire's armor, with a crimson skullcap on his head. A carefully trimmed black goatee hid his sharp chin, and his eyes were an opaque white that seemed almost to glow.

Lothar stood aghast.

"Surprised?" Elias asked rhetorically. "Didn't know I was in the Legion, did you? Then I'll wager you're unaware that I served with the Invincible Guard."

"That won't stop me from bringing you in, **Harkonnen**," Lothar growled. Privately, he was not so sure. The Transgalactic Empire was a blight upon the Three Galaxies, an expansive and vicious nation founded by a bloodthirsty race of beings known as **Kreeghor**, and dedicated to the subjugation of all the sentients in the galaxy. The Kreeghor had once served as slaves to the masters of bio-wizardry, the **Splugorth**, and they had learned enough secrets from their former masters to create soldiers of frightening power and abilities. Dubbed the "Invincible Guardsmen," these superhumanly powerful warriors were the elite of the Empire's vast armies. Supposedly, they were treated lavishly, rewarded for their service with wealth and power unimaginable in civilized space. There were deserters, of course, but those who left the bosom of the Empire willingly often did so because the Empire itself did not give them enough opportunities to exercise their martial prowess, and to satisfy their sadistic appetites.

If Elias Harkonnen was one of those creatures, then Lothar had to destroy him. Quickly and cleanly, if possible.

If possible.

"That is what the last of your kind said to me, before I handed him his lungs." The Elf smiled, and brandished a small, oblong object in his right hand. Lothar instinctively tensed, but no attack came. "I recognize you, Lothar of Motherhome. You're fairly well known in this sector of space. In fact, I've been expecting you for some time now. What kept you?"

Lothar eyed Harkonnen carefully. What game was he playing? Did the Elf hope to distract him with senseless chatter?

"I had to deal with a **Manarr** serial killer on **Torshin**," Lothar said. He hefted the axe in his hands. "I'm afraid he took priority. . . although now I'm beginning to think I should have taken care of you first."

"I think so, too," Harkonnen laughed. He brandished the oblong object in his hand again. "Normally, I would stay and kill you personally, but to tell you the truth, I've had something of a bad day. So, I'm going to leave early." He pressed a button on the device, and the lights in the cargo hold immediately dimmed.

"Self-destruct activated," a mechanical voice droned from a hidden PA system. "Seven minutes until detonation." The voice then began to count down the minutes, one second at a time.

Lothar ignored it, and took a step forward. "Seven minutes is more than enough time for me to deal with you," he said, taking the axe in both hands.

Elias shrugged. "Perhaps. You seem able enough; and we both know the detonation of the nuclear core of this station won't harm you in the least bit. And I'll survive as well. But as for my men. . . they do not share our gifts. And you Knights of the Forge prefer to capture criminals alive, do you not? Particularly when in CCW space?"

Lothar tightened his grip on his axe. He desperately wanted to wipe the smug grin off the Elf's face. But he knew Harkonnen was right. Lothar couldn't stand by and let the pirates die needlessly; death in battle was one thing, but they needed to stand trial for their crimes in a CCW court. To just let them perish would be a violation of CCW law, and his own code.

"Where are they?" Lothar demanded through gritted teeth.

Elias laughed again, and juggled the self-destruct device in one hand as the countdown continued. "Most of them fled to the ship when you destroyed the drones. Those three fools at your feet stayed behind, knowing you would cripple the ship."

Lothar nodded. "We'll meet again, Harkonnen," he said.

"Oh, I'm sure we will," the Elf laughed. "I'm sure we will."

Lothar turned to the two surviving **Naterreri** and sent the axe away, to that hidden place between the dimensions where it would remain until he needed it again. Lothar dragged the conscious Naterreri to his feet. "Grab your friend. We're getting on the ship before this place goes up." The pirate looked at Lothar blankly for a moment, but then lurched to where his companion lay, his armor scorched and blasted. With a grunt, the Naterreri lifted his ally, and followed Lothar to the airlock door.

The airlock cycled open, and the two pirates stumbled through to the door towards the ship. Lothar spared a glance in the direction of the catwalk, but Harkonnen had disappeared. Lothar almost went after the elf; his anger at being outmaneuvered, combined with his zeal for justice, nearly made him abandon the pirate crew to oblivion. But Lothar mastered himself, and followed the shark-faced humanoids onto the *Raptor*. As the opposite side of the airlock slid open, an energy blast flashed into the compartment. Lothar brushed past the **Naterreri**s and deflected the beam with his fist, and then exploded through the airlock door to bodyslam the pirate who had fired upon them. The attacker crashed to the ground with a groan.

Lothar ignored him and the other pirates, and immediately rushed to the bridge. More guns greeted him there, but Lothar could tell that the pirates, normally ruthless and remorseless men, were frightened. Frightened of the impending destruction, and **frightened** of the snarling **cosmo-knight** in their midst.

"Put your weapons away," Lothar barked. A few nervous pirates complied with the demand, almost certainly surprising themselves, but a large, **cybernetically** enhanced human kept his grav gun trained on **Lothar's** head. "We have very little time," Lothar continued, eyeing each of the men in turn. "Less than four minutes by my calculation. Now, you can cooperate, and **live**, or you can be stupid, and die."

Lothar counted to ten, rapidly losing patience. He was about to explain the situation one more time when the cyborg pulled the trigger on his pistol. The gravitonically propelled projectile whined through the air, and slammed into Lothar's shoulder with a crack. Lothar grunted, pushed back a few inches, and his eyes flashed once. The cyborg flew backwards, knocked off his feet by the blast of emerald energy that fried his chest.

The other pirates stood motionless. A few covered Lothar with their weapons, while those who had **holstered** them a moment ago seemed about to draw them again.

"Getting closer to three minutes," Lothar said.

"What do you want us to do?" a **Catyr** asked. She was tall, red skinned and copper haired, and she looked like the type of

person willing to jettison her own mother for a few credits. "You **fracked** up the engines, and now we **don't** have enough thrust to get off this ball of rock."

"Disengage from the wall," Lothar ordered. "Fire up the maneuvering jets. Get the ship in position to head through the gate, and get that opened. Position the ship perfectly. Directly before the gate."

"What are you going to do?" the **Catyr** asked.

"I'm going outside. I'm going to push you all to safety." There were cries of incredulity, as well as a few curses lobbed in Lothar's direction, but he ignored them all and left the bridge, moving quickly through the ship to the airlock door. On the way, he felt the ship lurch beneath his feet as the *Raptor* separated from the base. Lothar stepped over the body in the middle of the corridor, and opened the inner door of the airlock. He jumped into the airlock and opened the outer door almost before the inner door cycled closed. A heartbeat later, Lothar stepped out into the void once more, into the empty silence.

Lothar flew up onto the dorsal side of the *Raptor*, and landed lightly on the hull. Beneath him, the pirates brought the maneuvering jets to life, and the *Raptor* began to come about. Slowly. Lothar frowned beneath his helm. Time was rapidly running out; he had spent most of the seven minutes dealing with the ship's crew. Harkonnen had most likely already made good his escape. But Lothar still needed to push the 270 metric ton ship through 300 meters of airless space to reach the portal that led out of the station.

Lothar uttered a silent prayer. He would need the strength of the Forge itself to move get the ship away before the station detonated.

He had a plan. It was a desperate one, but this situation called for such measures. Normally, Lothar could summon up the fire of the Forge within him to create a number of effects. With the power of the Forge, he could augment the energy beams he produced, enabling them to damage even starships. This he had already done, three times in the past fifteen minutes, depleting his reserves. But he could also use that energy to supercharge his flight ability, enabling him to reach FTL speeds in the **vastness** of the void. Lothar's energy bank still possessed enough power to get him free and clear, but he wasn't about to desert the fools on the *Raptor* now.

He might be able, for a few seconds at least, to extend his FTL ability to encompass the *Raptor*. Just long enough to get the ship through the doorway and out of immediate danger. Lothar wasn't certain his plan was entirely possible, but he knew if it worked it would be extremely painful. Having expended so much energy on the drones and the ship's engines, he didn't have enough left to move the ship. But in extreme circumstances, a **cosmo-knight** could convert his own flesh and blood into energy to supplement cosmic power of the Forge that resided within him. In essence, Lothar could cannibalize his own body to provide the power he needed to move the ship.

But it would cost him. The pain would be excruciating.

Better get started. The ship was almost aligned perfectly.

Lothar knelt on the ship, and placed his palms flat against the cold metal. He closed his eyes and summoned up the energy that flared at the core of his being. As the power flooded through him, and out through his hands to crackle across the hull of the

Raptor, Lothar dug deep, dredging the energy up through him, spending it all hastily and messily. When he reached the bottom of his reserves, he went deeper, transforming his own mass into light.

The energy flashed from his palms in a great emerald web that spread, meter by meter, across the surface of the *Raptor*. The web flashed and crackled silently, enveloping the ship. Lothar screamed silently, a howl of rage and pain, as his body bled out of him, fingers of light that swallowed up the 270 metric ton block of metal and ceramics beneath him.

At last, the web of energy caressed the entirety of the vessel, and it lurched forward, compelled by Lothar's will. At the same moment, the countdown inside the station approached its nadir, and deep within the bowels of the hideaway, its nuclear reactor reached critical mass. A moment later, the reactor detonated, exploding in a wave of destructive energy that consumed the asteroid in seconds.

The *Raptor* rode the wave, guided by the cosmo-knight who stood upon its hull. As it was, the *Raptor* was nearly shredded to pieces, managing to maintain its integrity by the barest of margins. The explosion, and the debris from the explosion, shattered the wings of the ship, and tore nearly a dozen holes in the hull. Lothar was almost knocked from his perch, but he held his post through sheer determination.

When the excitement was over, and the asteroid was nothing more than powder, the *Raptor* was left spinning lazily in the void, quiet and dark, its running lights dimmed. Lothar lay spread-eagled upon the surface of the ship, barely conscious. He had converted nearly half of his mass into the energy needed to carry the *Raptor* seven hundred meters to safety. He was emaciated, almost skeletal, and his normally skintight armor hung upon his body like robes.

Lothar slowly dragged himself to his feet. In a little while, the energy within him would replenish itself, his body would heal, and he could leave the *Raptor* here to wait until the authorities arrived.

"Lothar"

Lothar started, surprised at the voice that sounded within his mind. He recognized the lilting growl of the Cosmic Forge, but the Forge only rarely spoke to its knights.

"What would you have of me?" Lothar thought, answering the Forge's call.

"We have need of your services again, Son of *Motherhome*. We have created a new knight, a human from the planet Earth. He lacks direction, and needs help understanding his new role and the Three Galaxies. You will provide that direction "

Lothar stifled a sigh. Another child knight to train. "But, what of Harkonnen? I cannot let him simply escape. He must be brought to justice."

"Patience, my child. Proceed to the desert world of **Koola** in the **Haring** System" the Forge ordered. "Seek out Caleb Vulcan. Teach him the ways of the Forge. You will face Harkonnen in due time."

Lothar felt the Forge recede from his mind, and he slumped to the hull of the ship. It seemed his destiny did not lie with Harkonnen after all. Then again, Harkonnen's capture might be more expediently accomplished with two knights following his trail.



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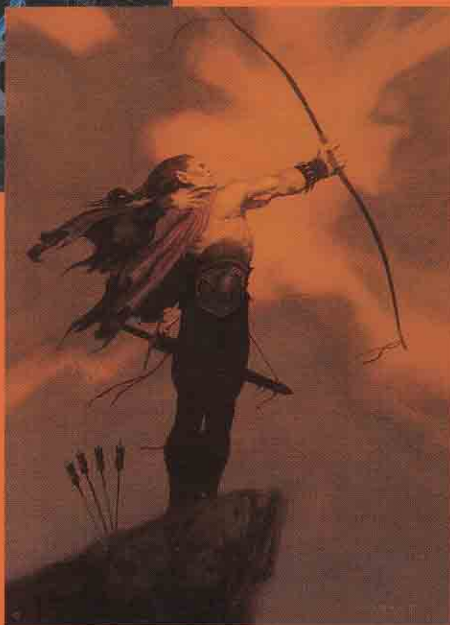
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