

Palladium Books® Presents:

Rifts® Index

& Adventures — Volume One



Warning!

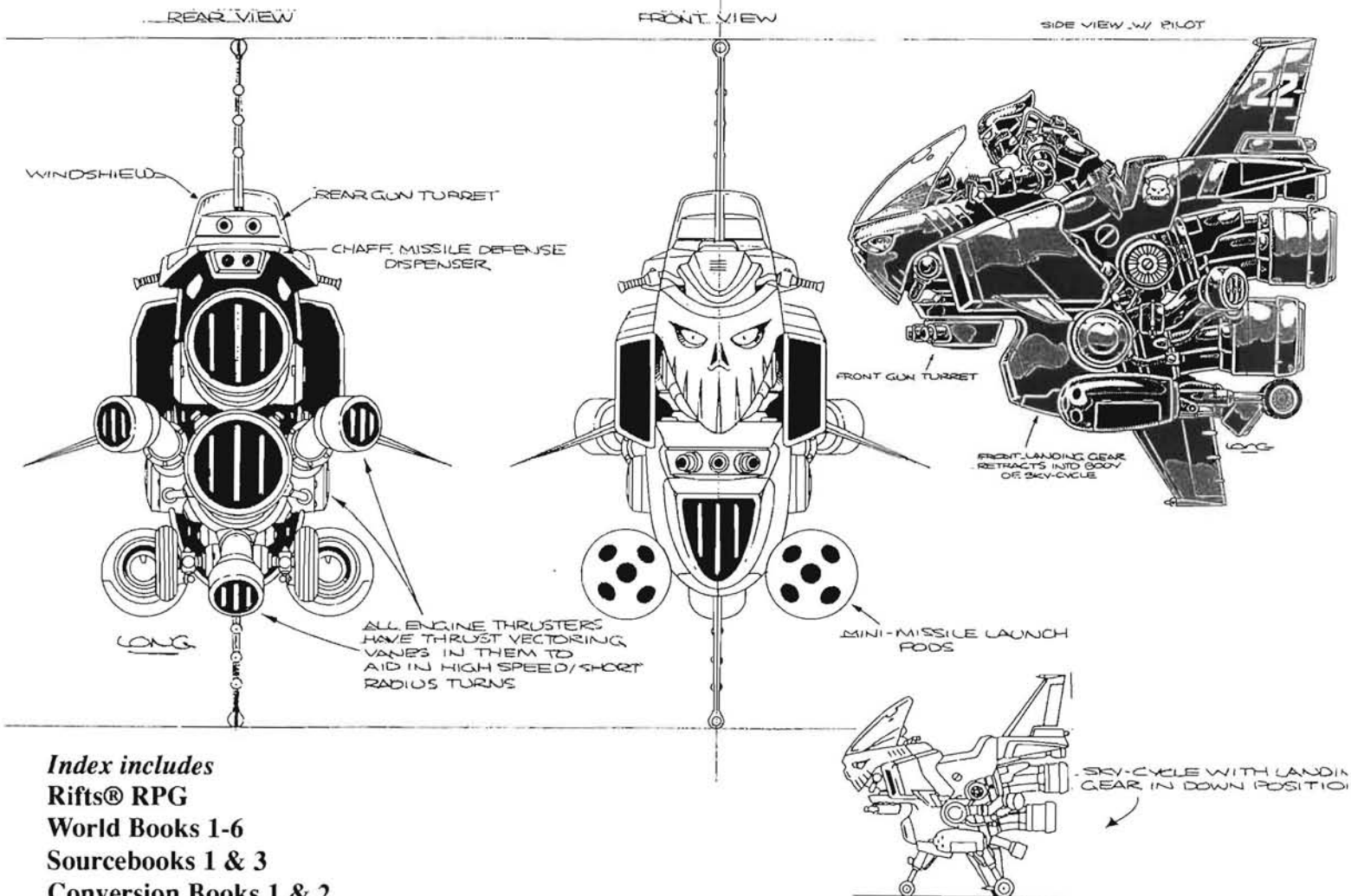
Violence and the Supernatural

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 demigods, as well as magic, insanity, and war are all elements in this book.

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

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

COALITION SKY CYCLE / ARC-023



Index includes

Rifts® RPG

World Books 1-6

Sourcebooks 1 & 3

Conversion Books 1 & 2

Dimension Books 1 & 2

Over 40 pages of adventures, adventure ideas and source material!

The Rifts® Index, your reference to the Megaverse®.

**Dedicated to the hundreds of thousands of fans
who have made the Rifts® RPG a part of their Megaverse®. Thank you.**

Kevin Siembieda

First Printing — February 1996

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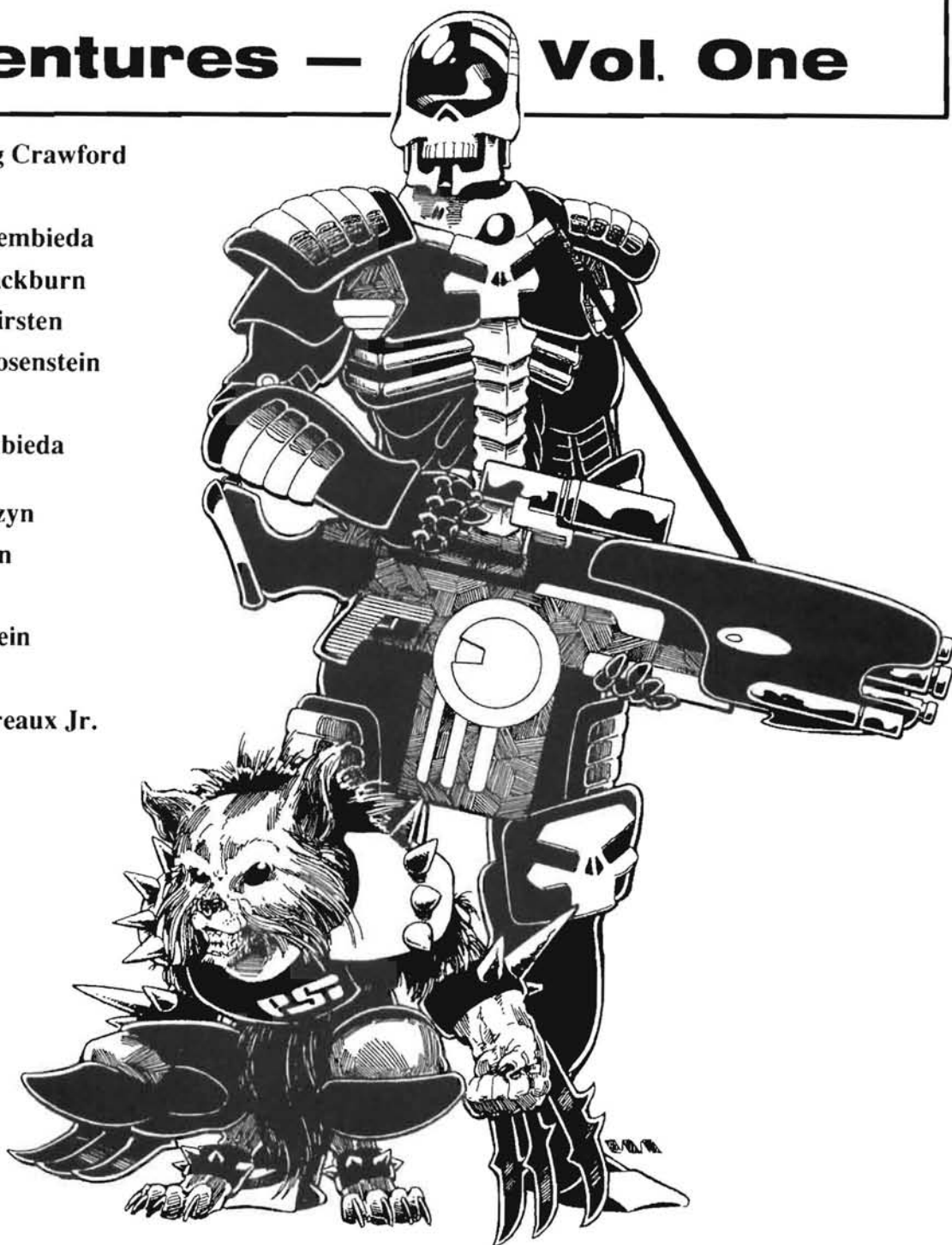
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RIFT[®] MULTI-BOOK INDEX

This work represents an index of information for the game of **Rifts**[®]. It includes data spanning fourteen books in a concise, alphabetical listing. In addition, this resource contains ten appendices of additional information. It was designed as a reference guide so that game masters and players alike can find information on every aspect of the **Rifts**[®] role playing game, and find it quickly.

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BOOK ABBREVIATIONS

The page numbers in the Rift's Index will always be accompanied by an abbreviation corresponding to the book the information is found in. Below is a list of all books included in this index and their abbreviations.

Rifts[®] Book:

Conversion Book I	CB1
Conversion Book II: Pantheons	CB2
Dimension Book I: Wormwood	WW
Dimension Book II: Phase World	PHA
Rifts	.R
Rifts' Mercenaries	MER
Sourcebook I	SB1
Sourcebook III: Mindwerks	SB3
World Book I: Vampire Kingdoms	VAM
World Book II: Atlantis	ATL
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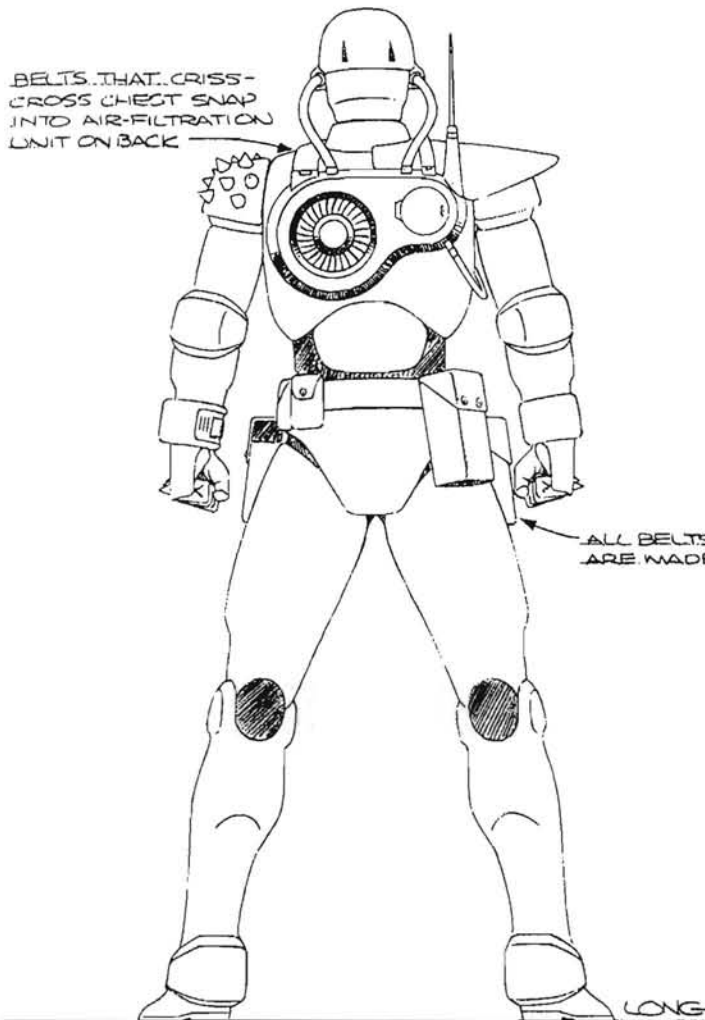
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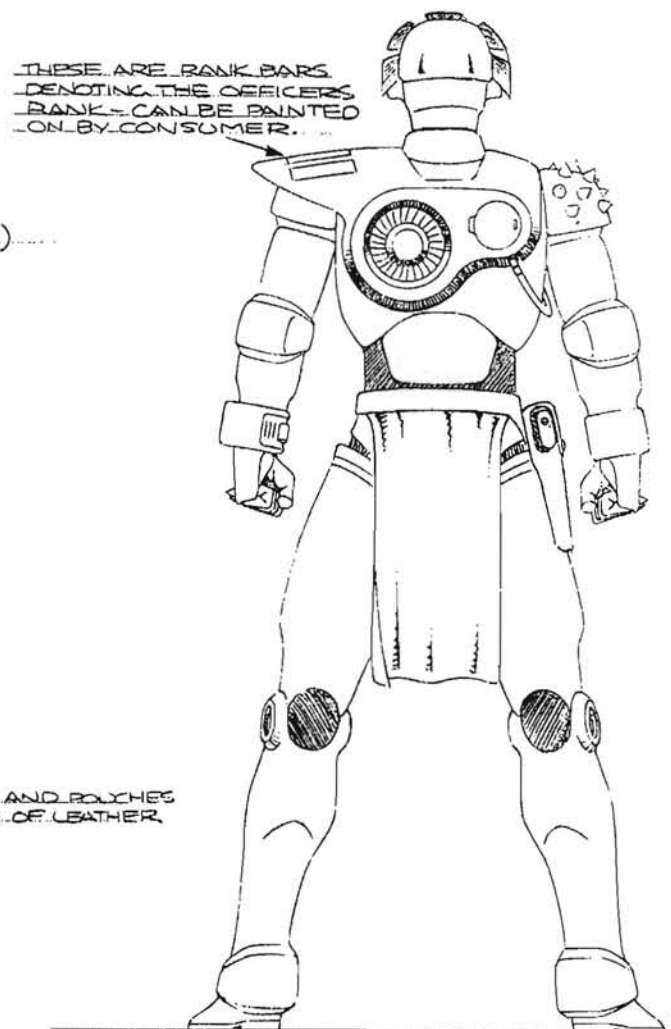
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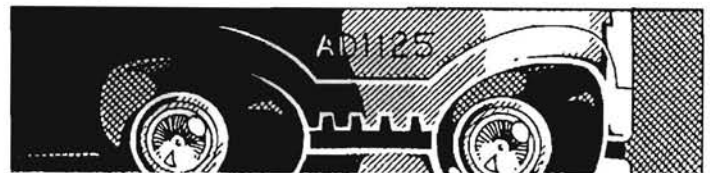


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T-11 Enhanced	NGR/35
T-12 Field Medic	NGR/35-36
T-13 Field Mechanic	NGR/36-37
T-40 Urban	NGR/37
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SDC Rounds	R/223
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Wellington Industries

WI-10 Ramjet Rounds	MER/103
WI-20 Heavy Ramjet Rounds	MER/103

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<i>SEE ALSO Energy-Clips This Section</i>	
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Pocket Digital Disc Audio Player/Recorder	R/247
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<i>SEE ALSO Phase World, Center: Level 3-B</i>	
<i>SEE ALSO Black Market, Pre-Rifts Artifacts</i>	

Illegal Documentation

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Jet Packs

T-100 Eagle Jet Pack (Accessory)	NGR/34-35
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Medical Equipment

Three Galaxies

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Triax Medical Items	NGR/151-152

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Northern Gun

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Three Galaxies

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Psionics Crystal Devices

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<i>SEE ALSO Psionic Crystal Technology</i>	
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TW Magic Optic System	R/96
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TW Night Goggles	VAM/32
TW SCUBA Gear	VAM/32
TW Thieves Gloves	VAM/32

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For More Creature Ideas

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Kittani

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Kittani (Phoenix Empire)

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Brownie	CB1/103	Espionage Agent	ATL/53-54
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Algor: Frost Giant	CB1/93-94	Pleasurer	PHA/88-89
Cyclops	CB1/94-95	Postal "Dragon Slayers"	
Cyclops, Greater	CB2/92	(O.P.C.)	VAM/150-153, SOU/135-136

Promethean, First Stage (O.P.C.)

Phase Adept	PHA/27-28
Phase Mystic	PHA/29
Time Master	PHA/28-29
<i>SEE Appendix-3: Promethean, Second Stage (NPC)</i>	

Psychic

Burster	R/102-104
Dog Pack	R/107-111
Mind Bleeder	AFR/93-95
Mind Melter	R/112-113
PSI Bloodhound	SB3/42-43
PSI Stalker	R/104-107

Pygmy

Hunter	AFR/114-115
Shaman	AFR/115-116
Rahu-Men (O.P.C.)	CB1/152-154
Ram-Rat	WW/131-132
Ramen	AFR/61-63
Rathos the Rumbler	WW/132-133
Ratling (O.P.C.)	CB1/154-155
Robot	SB1/94-105
Scorpion People	CB2/57-58
Seeker	SB3/49-50
Sekhmet (O.P.C.)	SOU/116-117
Shade	WW/133-134
Shapers (O.P.C.)	VAM/133-135
Shaydor Spherians (O.P.C.)	ATL/77-79, SOU/103
Shaydorian Intel (O.P.C.)	ATL/79-80
Seljuk	PHA/69-70
Silhouette	PHA/80-81
Simvan	SB1/110-112, SB3/54-56, NGR/221
Sky Rider	WW/135-136
Sowki (O.P.C.)	CB1/189-190
Sphinx (O.P.C.)	CB1/158-159
Srrynn Cannibal	SB3/52-54
Tautons	AFR/61, 63-64
Temporal Raider (O.P.C.)	WW/136-137, ENG/71-72
<i>Titan SEE Giants</i>	
Tree People	AFR/118-119
Troll	CB1/92-93
Ugakwa Explorer	SB3/50-52
Uteni (O.P.C.)	MER/75
Valkyrie	CB2/167-168

Vampire

Secondary (R.C.C.)	VAM/14-15
Wild (R.C.C.)	VAM/15-16

Warrior

Of Valhalla (O.P.C.)	CB2/170
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Werebeasts (O.P.C.)

Werebear	CB1/192-193
Werejaguar	CB1/193-195, VAM/172-173, SOU/117-118
Werepanther	CB1/195-196
Weretiger	CB1/193
Werewolf	CB1/191-192
Wild Cat	VAM/61-62
Witch, Splugorth	ATL/68

Wolfen

Average	CB1/86
Quatoria	PHA/66-68
Space	PHA/65-66
Zembahk	ATL/82-83

APPENDIX 7: Robots

Coalition

Skelbots	SB1/30, 31-35
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Cyberworks

A-001 & A-002 Monst-Rex	SB1/87-90
A-49 Combat Drone	SB1/80-81
A-51 Reconnaissance Drone	SB1/81-83
A-63 Heavy Bot	SB1/83-84
A-64 Master Bot	SB1/84-86
A-SHE-2 Shemarrian Warriors	SB1/90-92
AA-10 Bottweiler	SB1/86-87
AA-50 Insecton	SB1/92-94
Robot Rhino Buffalo	SB1/63-64

Kittani Drones

ABS-3 Security (Basic)	ATL/144-145
ABSS-2 Security (Simple)	ATL/144
ABW-4 Work	ATL/145

Mindwerks

Universal Features	SB3/26-27
M-1000 Panther	SB3/27-28
M-1200 Lion	SB3/28-30
M-1400 Tiger	SB3/30-31
M-1600 Bear	SB3/31-33

Naruni Enterprises

NE-010 Smart Bomb "Destructo-Drone" ..	MER/126-127
NE-020 Combat Platform "Combat Drone" ...	MER/127
NE-030 Reconnaissance Drone "Spy Drone" .	MER/128

Northern Gun

NG-W9 Light Labor Bot	SB1/50-51
NG-W10 Heavy Labor Bot	SB1/51-53

Phoenix Empire

Robot Spy Wing	AFR/139-140
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Triax Drones

DV-12 Dyna-Bot	SB1/45-47, NGR/82-84
DV-15 Sentry-Bot	NGR/84-86
DV-40 Hunter/Killer Drone	NGR/87-90

Triax Enemy Infiltration Robots

EIR-10 Gargoyle Drone	NGR/91-93
EIR-15 Manned Gargoyle Bot	NGR/93-94
EIR-20 Gurgoyles	NGR/93-94
EIR-30 Gargoyles	NGR/95-96
EIR-50 Gurgoyles Android	NGR/96-97

SEE ALSO Appendix-4: Borgs

APPENDIX 8: Robot Vehicles

Universal Features	R/214
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Angrar Robotics

AM-XX Angrar Assault Robot	MER/142-143
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Coalition

CR-003 Spider Skull Walker	R/197-198
IAR Abolisher	SB1/35-37
UAR-1 Enforcer	R/194-196

Columbian

G-9A Jaguar (Light Robot Vehicle)	SOU/29
G-18B Aguirre (Heavy Robot Vehicle)	SOU/31

Consortium Armed Forces

BR-CCW2000 Battleram Attack Robot	PHA/133-135
CAF-AR-20 "Bombard"	PHA/143-145

Independent

EX-5 Behemoth Explorer	R/217-218
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Kittani

Creax Armored Rover	ATL/147-149
Dragon Dreadnought	ATL/149-152
Insecton Land Rover	ATL/145-147
K-ATV Hover Jet	ATL/155-156
K-GTRV Hover Land Skimmer	ATL/156-157
K-TRF-M Transformable Robot Fighter	PHA/140-142
TRV Tyrannosaurus	SOU/83-85

Manoan

L-100 Lictor Assault Robot	SOU/95-97
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Naruni Enterprises

DK-AR500 Death-Knight	MER/136
N-SR20 Nomad Scout Robot	MER/139
NE-OMAV Combat Pod	MER/128-130

Northern Gun

NG-M56 Multi Bot	SB1/48-50
NG-V7 Hunter Mobile Gun	SB1/47-48
NG-V10 Super	SB1/53-54

Titan

TR-001 Combat Robot	R/214-215
TR-002 Exploration	R/215-216
TR-003 Reconnaissance	R/216-217

Triax

X-500 Forager	SB1/44-45, NGR/54-55
X-535 Hunter/Jager	NGR/55-60
X-545 Super Hunter	NGR/60-63
X-622 Bug	NGR/63-66
X-821 Land Crab	NGR/66-68
X-2000 Dyna-Max	NGR/70-73
X-2500 Black Knight	NGR/73-75
X-2700 Dragonwing	NGR/75-78
X-5000 Devastator	NGR/79-81

APPENDIX 9: Vehicles

Air

AC-29 Air Castle Bomber	MER/114-116
B-AA14 Boomerang Attack Aerodyne	MER/140

CH-1000 Zancudo

Transport/Attack Helicopter	SOU/33-34
CM-DW1000 Crescent Moon Spaceplane	MER/139-140
CS-AFC-050 Death's Head Transport	R/199-201, SB1/31
CS-AFC-023 Sky Cycle	R/201-202
GF-1A Grey Falcon Attack Jet	MER/112-114
IE-15AH Iron Eagle Attack Helicopter	MER/116-117
Modified Aircraft	MER/98
NA-15 Nightwing Attack Aircraft	MER/149-150
NG-A70 Sky King	R/228
TW TK-Flyer	R/94
TW TK-Glider	R/94
TW TK-Sky Boat	R/95-96
TW Tree Trimmer	R/95
XM-180 "Dragonfly" Drop Ship	NGR/124-125
XM-270 "Mosquito" VTOL Airship	NGR/127-128
XM-275 "Lightning" VTOL Combat Jet	NGR/128-130
XM-280 Fighter Jet	NGR/130-131
XM-288 Supersonic Transport	NGR/131-132

APC

APC-10 Iron Maiden	MER/111-112
IFV-100 CAF Maniple IFV APC	PHA/147
LIT-100A,B,V Lancero Light Tank/APC	SOU/31-33
Mark-V APC	R/198-199
Modified Armored Cars and Light APCs	MER/97
WR-5050 Super Hauler APC	NGR/139-140
WR-5054 Mini Cargo Hauler APC	NGR/140

XM-350 Leopard III APC NGR/136-137
ATV
 Big Boss R/227
 Mountaineer R/227-228
 WR-1010 Land Rover NGR/138
Automobiles
 Modified Automobiles and Jeeps MER/98
 Pre-Rifts R/207
Barge
 XM-170 Infantry Repair Barge NGR/122-124
Hover Station
 XM-250 Medical Hover Station NGR/125-126
Hover Vehicles
 Cycle: ATV Speedster R/226
 Cycle: WR-2020 "Shark" NGR/139
 Fan-Jet Hydrofoil Skimmer ATL/157-158
 Fan-Jet Land Skimmer ATL/157
 FP-10 Flying Platform SOU/141-143
 MZ-10 Wilderness Crusader NGR/138
 Phoenix Sand Crawler AFR/138-139
 Phoenix Sand Skimmer AFR/137-138
Motorcycles
 KM-700 Uni-Motorcycle ATL/158
 Highway Man R/227
 Modified MER/98
 Wastelander R/227
Naval
 Universal Features (Iron Heart Watercraft) ... MER/117
 Black Ships SOU/165-167
 CHB-5 Corsair Hydrobike SOU/156-157
 GB-30C Black Galleon Gunboat SOU/158-159
 IH-TB12 Black Eel Torpedo Boat MER/117-118
 IH-PB12 Triton Patrol Baot MER/118-119
 IH-MCIA Sea King Missile Cruiser MER/120-121
 KSM-100 Splugorth Slaver Mothership ... SOU/154-156
 KY-HSS Splugorth Slaver Raider SOU/152-154
 PTB-20AB Piranha Submersible SOU/157-158
 TC-B20 Torpedo Speed Boat SB3/104-105
 TC-B30 Lightning Hydrofoil SB3/105-107
 TC-B40 Mini Sub SB3/103-104
 TC-B100 Walesa Cargo Ship SB3/107
 TW Hover Yacht VAM/32
 TW Sailboat VAM/32
 TW Underwater Ley Line Flyer VAM/32
 TW Underwater Scooter VAM/32
 TW Water Sled VAM/32
Platform
 XM-140 Infantry Support Platform NGR/120-122

Pods

XM-50 Medic Ambulance Pod NGR/117-119
 XM-60 Field Mechanic Pod NGR/119-120
 XM-70 Covert Ops Pod NGR/120

Space Ships

Fighters

CAF LRF-25 Proctor Class Interceptor . PHA/158-159
 CAF SF-69,SF-69B Scorpion Class PHA/157-158
 FF-100 Flying Fang Interceptor PHA/159-160
 NE-SF10 Broadsword Delta-Wing PHA/160-161
 SG-1 Star Ghost Class PHA/162-163
 WF-F15 Shadow Bolt Strikeship PHA/164-165

Frigates

SF-20 Scimitar Class (CAF) PHA/168-170
 TIV-AS Berserker Class (TE) PHA/170-171
 GSS Spaceship (Gene Splicers) SB3/68-69

Merchant Transport Ships

Merchantman, Typical PHA/172-173
 Runner, Typical PHA/171-172

Military Shuttles

SAS-12 Assault Shuttle (CAF) PHA/156-166
 TIV-TT1 "Rain of Death"

Troop Transport PHA/166-168

Strike Base

X-MISB-01 Mobile Infantry Strike Base SB3/81-88

Tanks

Universal Features (Triax) NGR/48-49
 CS Grinning Skull Main Battle Tank MER/147-148
 CS Mark IX Missile Launcher Vehicle MER/148-149
 IAF-95 MBT Dark Slayer (TE) PHA/147-148
 IH-1B Iron Hammer Main Battle Tank MER/107-109
 IH-12B Iron Fist Medium Tank MER/109-110
 Iron Bolt Missile Vehicle MER/110-111
 J-12 Juggernaut Heavy Hover Tank MER/132-134
 KT-1 Kartuhm-Terek
 "Doomsday Machine" (TE) PHA/148-150
 M48A3 Modified Main Battle Tank MER/97
 MBT-35 CAF Phalanx Main Battle Tank .. PHA/145-146
 Modified Bradley Tanks MER/97
 N-120B Carnivore Mark-I

LT Hover Tank MER/130-131

T-322 Stinger Turbo Tank SB3/102
 XM-300 "Terror" Mini Tank NGR/133-134
 XM-330 "Phantom" Hover Tank NGR/134-135

Trucks

Modified Large MER/97
 Modified Small/Medium MER/97
 Pre-Rifts R/207

APPENDIX 10: Weapons

Alien	
Nova Gun	PHA/96
Anti-Vampire Weapons	
Cross Spotlight	VAM/30
Rail Guns	VAM/30
Squirt Guns	VAM/30-31
Wood/Silver	VAM/29-30
<i>SEE ALSO Appendix-2: TW Devices</i>	
Biomancy Weapons	
Bio Energy Bow (Greater)	SOU/70
Bone Blade (Greater)	SOU/70
Enchanted Spears, Swords & Clubs (Lesser)	SOU/69
Insect Pincers (Greater)	SOU/70
Bio Wizard	
Eyes of Eylor	ATL/123-124
Eylor Helm of Omnipotence	ATL/125
Forearm Plasma Blaster	ATL/153
Head/Helmet Laser	ATL/154
Jolt Gun	ATL/153
Mental Incapacitator	ATL/153
Plasma Rifle	ATL/153
PSI Interrogator	ATL/120
Psionic Rod	ATL/120-121
Slaver's Net Gun	ATL/154
Staff of All Seeing	ATL/122
Staff of Eylor	ATL/122
Staff of Pacification	ATL/121
Staff of Power	ATL/121
Coalition	
C-10 Light Assault Laser Rifle	R/203
C-12 Heavy Assault Laser Rifle	R/203
C-14 Fire Breather	R/203
C-18 Laser Pistol	R/203
C-27 Heavy Plasma Cannon	R/203
C-40R SAMAS Rail Gun	R/226
CR-1 Rocket Launcher	R/204
CV-212 Frequency Variable Light Laser Rifle	SB1/34,57
Columbian	
Auto Loading Bazooka	SOU/27
Dragon-1 Plasma Ejector	SOU/23
RA-C15 Rocket Auto Cannon	SOU/24
RAR-C15 Rocket Auto Cannon Rifle	SOU/24
RC-10 Laser Pistol	SOU/22
RC-15 Laser Rifle	SOU/23
RP-C20 Rocket Pistol	SOU/23
RR-C40 Rocket Rifle	SOU/24
Consortium Armed Forces	
CAF Multi-Rifle	PHA/132
CAF Repeating Rocket Launcher	PHA/118
HI-10 Heavy Laser Pistol	PHA/115
HI-30 Laser Pistol	PHA/114-115
HI-50 Laser Rifle	PHA/115
HI-80 Combat Laser Rifle	PHA/115
Cyberworks	
Arch-22 Pulse Rifle	SB1/81
Shemarrian Rail Gun	SB1/91
Explosives	
Fusion Blocks	R/204, NGR/149
Hand Grenades	R/204, NGR/149-150
Northern Gun	MER/100
Mines	
Northern Gun	
Anti-Personnel	MER/106
Anti-Vehicle	MER/106
Wellington Industries	
Light SAWS (mini-missiles)	MER/106
Heavy SAWS	MER/106
Medium SAWS	MER/106
Other Types	MER/100-101
Plastique Explosives	MER/100
Northern Gun	MER/101
Torpedoes	
Iron Heart	MER/117
Gargoyle	
Blaster Knuckle Spikes	NGR/210-211
Blaster Neural Whip	NGR/211
Firebrand Spear	NGR/212
Grenade Mace	NGR/212
Laser Mace	NGR/212
Spikes/Blades	NGR/210
Super Eight Pistol Mace	NGR/213
Wing/Tail Blades	NGR/211
WR-12 Giant Ion Pistol	NGR/212
WR-100 Giant Laser Rifle	NGR/213
WR-200 Giant Rail Gun	NGR/213
Gravitonic Weaponry	
CAF Gravity Cannon	PHA/135
GR-10P Pistol	PHA/125
GR-15AR Assault Rifle	PHA/126
GR-45HP "Jackhammer" Heavy Pistol	PHA/126
<i>SEE ALSO Gravitonic Technology</i>	
Hand to Hand	
Ancient Wepaons	R/32,243, VAM/29-30
Axe, Energy	SOU/97
Bows/Crossbows	R/32

Costs VAM/30, NGR/151
 Faerie MER/74
 High Tech Arrowheads SB1/58 TL/153, NGR/150-151
 More High Tech Arrowheads VAM/115
 Collector Bubbles PHA/96
 Cosmic Weapons PHA/101-102
 Halberd, Power PHA/116-117
 Mace, Neural R/205
 Spear, Energy SOU/94
 Starsplitter PHA/96
 Sword, Energy MER/134
 Sword, Short: Faerie MER/74
 Tarnow Weapons SB3/108
SEE ALSO Kittani Weapons
SEE ALSO Phase Weapons
SEE ALSO Vibro Blades

Independent

JA-9 Variable Laser Rifle R/225
 JA-11 Energy Rifle R/225
 L-20 Pulse Rifle R/225

Kittani

Double Bladed Plasma Axe ATL/152, NGR/214
 Energy Lance ATL/152-153, NGR/214
 K-1 Sniper Laser Rifle/Launcher ATL/137
 K-4 Laser Pulse Rifle ATL/137, AFR/140
 K-30 Ion Pulse Rifle ATL/137, AFR/140
 K-500 Rail Gun ATL/137, AFR/140
 K-1000 Spider Defense System ATL/138
 KEP Special Energy Pump Pistol ATL/137, AFR/140
 K-E4 Plasma Ejector ATL/137, AFR/140
 Laser Wrist Blasters ATL/152, NGR/213
 Plasma Axe AFR/140-141
 Plasma Sword ATL/152, AFR/141, NGR/214

Manoan

"Fireball" Rifle SOU/92
 "Flamer" Pistol SOU/91
 SK Stun Gun SOU/91
 Stun Pistol SOU/92

Mindwerks

M-12 Plasma Pistol SB3/34
 M-18 Ion Pulse Pistol SB3/34
 M-25 Firebrand Rifle (Giant) SB3/34
 M-30 Dual Energy Rifle SB3/34
 M-40 Ion Rifle Tube SB3/35
 M-120 Plasma Rifle SB3/35

Naruni Enterprises

NE-4 Plasma Cartridge
 Pistol PHA/117, MER/123, SOU/139

NE-10 Plasma Cartridge
 Rifle PHA/117, MER/122, SOU/139
 NE-50 Particle Beam Rifle PHA/118, MER/123
 NE-200 Plasma Cartridge Machinegun .. PHA/117-118,
 MER/123, SOU/139

NE-1000 "Modified" Plasma Ejector Rifle ... MER/124

Northern Gun

NG-33 Laser Pistol R/225
 NG-56 Light Ion Pistol MER/99
 NG-57 Heavy-Duty Ion Blaster R/224
 NG-101 Rail Gun R/226
 NG-202 Rail Gun R/226
 NG-E4 Plasma Ejector MER/99, SB1/56-57
 NG-E12 Heavy Plasma Ejector MER/100
 NG-L5 Laser Rifle R/225
 NG-LG6 Laser Rifle & Grenade Launcher MER/100
 NG-P7 Particle Beam Rifle R/225
 NG-Super Laser Pistol/Grenade Launcher R/224

Phase Weapons

PH-21 Phase Beamer PHA/123
 PH-100 Heavy Phase Beamer PHA/123
 PH-400 Heavy Phase Beamer PHA/123
 Phase Sword PHA/124

SEE ALSO Phase Technology

Pre-Rifts Weapons

Automatic Pistols R/244
 Heavy Weapons R/244-245
 Machineguns R/244
 Sub-Machineguns R/244
 Revolvers R/243-244
 Rifles R/244
 Shotguns R/244
 Special Guns R/245

Psionic Crystal Weapons

Crystal Assault Rifle PHA/128
 Crystal Bolt Pistol PHA/127
 Crystal Paralyzer PHA/127
SEE ALSO Psionic Crystal Technology

Rune Weapons

Call Staff (Greatest) ATL/129
 Crystal Fire Rod (Greatest) ATL/129
 Dragon Rod (Greatest) ATL/129
 Dragon Thunderer (Greatest) ATL/130
 Enslaver (Greatest) ATL/130
 Impaler (Greatest) ATL/130
 Necronstaff (Greatest) ATL/130
 Soul Drinker (Greatest) ATL/128
 Sword of Atlantis (Greatest) ATL/131
 Sword of Life (Greatest) ATL/131

Splugorth Rune Statues

Combat/Guardian Statues	ATL/133
Dragon Heads	ATL/132
Dragon Statues	ATL/132
Eyes (Eylor)	ATL/133
Fire Breathing Lions	ATL/132-133
Gargoyle Statues	ATL/132

Techno Wizard

Animal Repellent Flares	VAM/31-32
Ankh Mace	SOU/95
Black Powder Guns	WW/35
Fire Gauntlets	SOU/94-95
Flaming Sword	R/96
Globe of Daylight Flares	VAM/31
Lightning Rod	R/96
Magic Net	SOU/94
Rail Gun	VAM/32
Rifle	SOU/97
Storm Flares	VAM/31
Vampire Cross	VAM/31
Water Field	VAM/32
Water Blasters	VAM/31

Transgalactic Empire

EP-5 Energy Pulse Pistol	PHA/116
EPR-8 Energy Pulse Rifle	PHA/116

Triax

TX-5 Pump Pistol	SB1/58, NGR/143
TX-10 Mini Missile Launcher	NGR/149
TX-11 Sniper Laser Rifle	SB1/57, NGR/144
TX-16 Pump Rifle	SB1/58, NGR/144
TX-20 "Short" Laser Pistol	NGR/143
TX-22 Precision Laser Pistol	NGR/143
TX-24 Ion Pulse Pistol	NGR/144
TX-26 Particle Beam Pistol	NGR/144
TX-30 Ion Pulse Rifle	SB1/145, NGR/145

TX-41 Laser Pulse Rifle (Giant)	NGR/145
TX-42 Laser Pulse Rifle	NGR/145
TX-43 Light Assault Laser Rifle	NGR/146
TX-45 Particle Beam Rifle	NGR/146
TX-50 Rail Gun	NGR/146-147
TX-250 Rail Gun	NGR/147
TX-500 Borg Rail Gun	SB1/57, NGR/147-148
TX-M4 Mini Missile Launch Pack	NGR/149
WR-10 Wilderness Ion Pistol	NGR/144
WR-15 Wilderness Laser Rifle	NGR/148
WR-17 Wilderness Double Rifle	NGR/148
WR-19 Plasma Ejector	NGR/148
WR-20 Plasma Ejector (Giant)	NGR/148

Vibro Blades

Axe, Giant	NGR/206
In the Coalition	R/204-205
In the NGR	NGR/150
Sword, Giant	SOU/31

Wellington Industries

MP-10 Caseless Pistol (SDC)	MER/103
MP-23A Caseless SMG	MER/103
WI-15 Laser Rifle	MER/102
WI-20 Laser Pistol	MER/102
WI-23 Missile Launcher	MER/104
WI-40M Fire/Forget S-HVY Missile Launcher	MER/105-106
WI-GL4 Revolving Grenade Launcher	MER/104
WI-GL20 Automatic Grenade Launcher	MER/105

Wilk's

320 Laser Pistol	R/223
447 Laser Rifle	R/223
457 Laser Pulse Rifle	SB1/56
Laser Scalpel	R/224
Laser Wand	R/224
Portable Laser Torch	R/224

Heart of Evil

A Rifts adventure by Julius Rosenstein,
with contributions from Kevin Siembieda

This adventure can be played in one of two ways: One, the player characters can be a mixed group of adventurers (as in most typical campaigns), or two, the player characters can be a Coalition squad on a routine long-range patrol (these are not the mysterious skeleton clad troopers rumored to be operating in Wisconsin). For groups that want to use the Coalition patrol idea, go to Option #2.

Option #1 (standard adventuring party):

A group of adventurers are traveling through a lightly inhabited wilderness area that, in pre-Rifts times, was the midwest of the American Empire, along the old Missouri-Kansas border (**G.M. Note:** If preferable, this scenario can take place anywhere along the outskirts of CS territory).

One (or more) of the adventurers remembers that someone they know (either a friend, relative, former comrade or acquaintance) lives in the nearby **Village of Kernois** (population 125). Unless the group is in a hurry for some reason, it should not be out of their way to stop by for a visit to renew old friendships, get the scoop on local events, and possibly catch a home cooked meal out of this.

In the alternative, the player group could simply stumble upon the village on their way to some place else. As they pass the village, they are drawn into the adventure, especially if the members of the group are of a good alignment or members of the Coalition forces.

Finding Kernois is not a problem; however, the reception that awaits them is.

Option #2 (the Coalition Patrol):

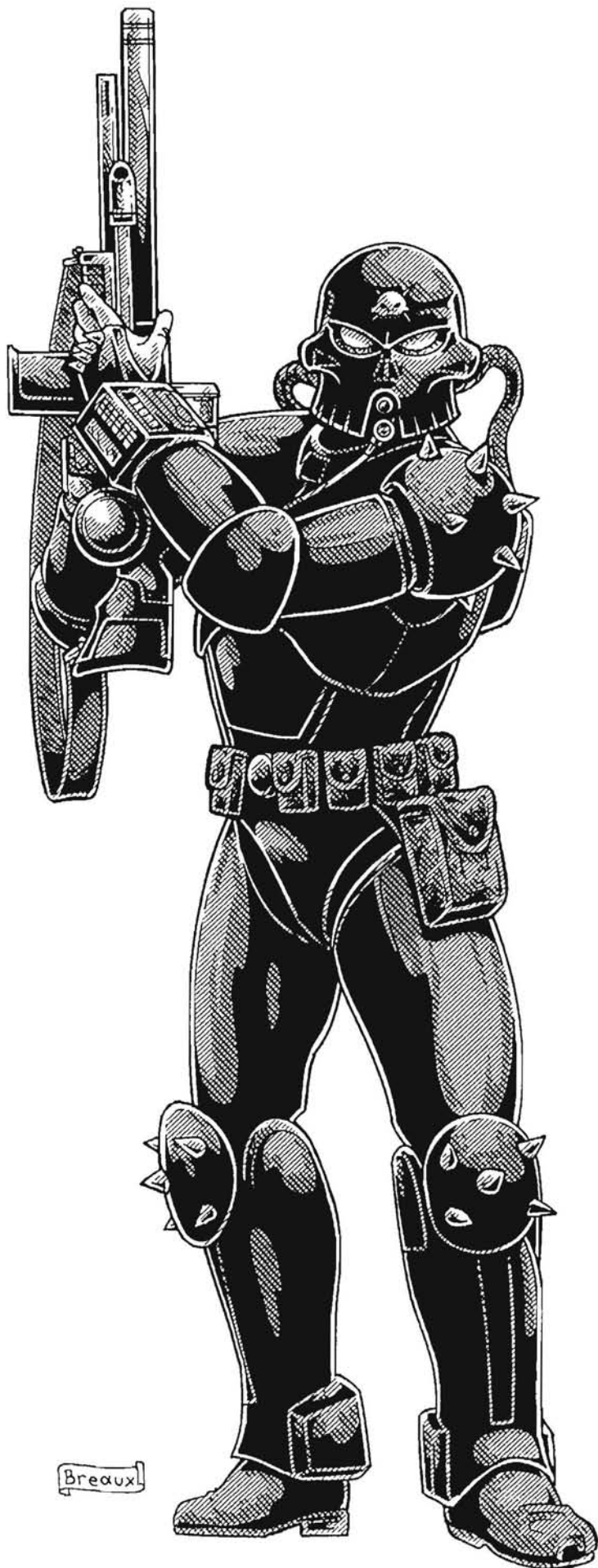
A Coalition squad assigned to **Base Caesar** (or some other outpost if the G.M. elects to move the location for this adventure) is sent out on a long-range patrol. They are given an experimental APC vehicle to field test as part of their duties. The orders given to the squad commander are as follows (**G.M.'s note:** If the squad commander is a player-character, these orders should be given to him alone and it should be up to him to decide what information to share with his fellow soldiers. The mission is quite routine. If the squad commander is a NPC, then he will share the details of the mission and its goals with his men:

To: Lt. (insert the name of the squad commander):

You are hereby ordered to take a patrol and tour the designated area. You are granted discretion over your specific routes provided your squad satisfactorily surveys the entire area. Your general orders, in descending priority, are:

1. To patrol the area in question to insure that there are no D-Bees, mages, rogue psychics, or any other incursions or threats to the security and safety of the Coalition States and its citizens. Your squad is authorized to use any means at your disposal to "neutralize" any such threat.

2. You are to provide a visible presence to the populace of the designated area, so as to bolster their morale and remind



them of the Coalition States' strength and commitment to them, and thereby, insure their continued loyalty.

3. You are further authorized to act as a peacekeeping force among the civilian population, should the need arise.

4. The EPC (Exploratory Personnel Carrier) assigned to you is to be given an extensive field test. The EPC is an experimental vehicle under consideration for military production and deployment, your report should reflect both technical and personal opinions and observations regarding said vehicle. Take thorough notes on both positive and negative observations, your report on the EPC cannot be too detailed.

5. Although the area in question is part of the CS's recent border expansion. Even though it has been previously explored and mapped, further surveying and detailed observation could prove helpful to the Coalition States; provided said surveying and observation does not interfere with the higher priorities of this mission as detailed in #1-4.

*By order of Col. Bertram J. Lancourt
Commander, Base Caesar*

Note: In addition to the EPC, the patrol squad is also provided with a jeep, a palm video camera with 48 hours' worth of video film disks, and a pocket computer for taking and storing data about the region, its people and the performance of the EPC.

The Adventure Begins

Regardless of which option is selected, sooner or later the group arrives at the village of Kernois shortly before sunset. The first thing that the characters will notice is that it is too quiet! Even a cursory investigation shows the village is completely deserted. There are no signs of combat or foul play, but every *living thing* is missing, both people and animals.

Although there are no signs of a struggle, it looks as if the villagers all departed abruptly. A search of the village will turn up clues like half-finished chores (such as a partially painted fence with an open paint can nearby), stereos still playing, signs of meals in the process of being cooked (currently burning) or partially eaten, and then suddenly deserted, and so on. The fact that personal belongings and valuables were left behind further suggests that something is not right. In short, it looks as if everyone just stopped what they were doing and walked away.

All in all, the feeling is very eerie. Characters with psychic abilities will sense a general, but unspecified, feeling of supernatural evil in the air. Psi-Stalkers and Dog Boys will not recognize the psychic scent (it's something alien to them) and are unable to get a strong enough fix on it to track down the source; it seems to fill the entire area for at least a one mile (1.6 km) radius. Likewise, characters with magical abilities will definitely sense the presence of magic permeating the general area.

Characters who attempt to use detect magic to find the source of the magical emanations are unable to do so. However, any attempt to do this will cause intense feelings of anxiety to the magic user; roll vs. M.E. to continue. Failure to save will result in dissuasion from further efforts to identify and locate the source, and there's a 1-60% chance the character will pass out for one or two minutes. Further attempts by those unaffected will still be unable to locate the source (out of range?) but will leave the character(s) with the impression that the source of

magic is supernatural and unlike anything that character(s) has yet encountered.

Characters with neither magical or psionic abilities will not "feel" anything particularly out of the ordinary, other than the eerie silence and strange situation at the deserted village.

At this point, it should be getting dark as the sun sets. The characters have several courses of action open to them.

1. Spend the night in the village. There are plenty of buildings and empty beds for the characters to sleep in. The deserted village also offers a range of basic foodstuffs and supplies. Or they can camp out for the night in or around the EPC. Camp can be pitched in the village, on its outskirts, or some distance away (see #2).

2. Spend the night away from the village and return in the morning. The surrounding area can provide firewood, fresh water (from streams), and food (nuts, berries, and even game animals) to supplement the characters' supplies if they are running low on certain staples. If this is the CS patrol, then the characters should have enough supplies on hand and are likely to avoid using village goods for fear of enchantment or exposure to dangerous elements (unless they have been in a battle recently and had their supply vehicle wrecked).

3. Just leave the village completely and not deal with it. However, freelance adventurers may (through curiosity or hope of reward) want to investigate the situation further. Also, characters of good alignment will feel that they have a moral obligation to investigate and help the villagers who may be in some kind of trouble. Even characters of less than admirable alignments may feel some sense of responsibility to aid their missing friend(s) or kinsmen if that's why they came to town. Evil and selfish characters will want to stay and loot the town; easy pickings like this don't come often. Members of the CS are obligated to investigate, find and help the villagers, and "neutralize" the danger. Staying here and getting to the bottom of this mystery will be mandatory (especially if the patrol commander is the NPC lieutenant).

4. If the group is playing the CS patrol, they may wish to call in reinforcements. Their commanding officer back at the base is Colonel Lancourt. The patrol commander will be patched through to the Colonel who will tell him to investigate further and continue his reports; their present situation does not warrant additional support. **Note:** No reinforcements will be forthcoming unless the patrol reports that the situation is critical; even then, as the base is over 270 miles away, they may arrive too late to be of any assistance.

5. Conduct further investigations: Game Masters, see clues in the G.M. Background section below.

Game Master Background

Note: Players shouldn't read this section for fear of ruining the intrigue and fun of this adventure. The G.M. can reveal these details at various points during or after the adventure.

A secret coven of witches, new to this area, attempted to summon a powerful demon to do their bidding at a ley line nexus roughly two miles (3.2 km) away. Unfortunately for the coven, one of the subordinate witches had his eye on the position of

leader and betrayed the others. During the summoning ritual, the traitor broke the circle and attempted to summon up his own demon. This effectively screwed up the summoning and the coven ended up with a much more powerful creature than what they expected.

This being promptly proceeded to slay and siphon the P.P.E. of not only its intended sacrifices, but all the witches as well.

Soon afterward, the powerful creature mentally summoned the populace of the nearby village. Even animals fell prey to psionic attack. Consequently, the vast majority of the people fell into a trance, dropped whatever they were doing and walked off to be slaughtered by the monster. Many of those who managed to successfully resist the monster's summoning, followed their loved ones (or pet animals) to their doom; this was particularly true of children. After devouring half the village population (starting with those not under its mental command), it placed the remaining people in a deep trance and then went into hibernation, itself, to await the next stage of its development.

Currently, the entity is in hibernation (much like a snake after gorging) and its foul essence has permeated the surrounding countryside. The creature's foothold on Rifts-Earth is somewhat tenuous, and if attacked with enough conviction and firepower, can be driven back through a Rift or destroyed. The longer it remains on Rifts-Earth, the more it can assimilate and become stronger.

Clues for the Players

Further investigation of the village. The characters can spend as much time as they want investigating the town, however they will find only a handful of evidence that is truly helpful.

- Lots of evidence that the villagers simply walked away in the middle of their chores and breakfast and without taking a thing with them.
- A couple of houses do look like one or more of the inhabitants packed up in a hurry and fled. One house has a piece of paper tacked to its front door. The message reads:

"This village is cursed. Most of my neighbors have fallen under some sort of enchantment and left the village like zombies in a trance. The few of us not yet affected are leaving for our own safety. Do not linger. Leave while you can."

The books and other articles left behind in the house suggest that the resident was a rogue scholar.

- Psychics will feel the emanations of supernatural evil getting stronger in the night, but are still unable to identify it or pinpoint its source.
- A young man lays at the side of his home. He was apparently patching his roof, fell and broke his neck (actually he walked off it while entranced).
- Caged animals have killed themselves trying to get out of their pens. Other pens have been broken and the animals escaped. Observant characters *may* notice that the breaks on many (not all) of the pens are on the same side — that is to say, point in the same direction. Likewise, all the animals that killed themselves trying to escape (particularly chickens) were all trying to go in the same direction; this points to the slumbering monster.
- A pair of twins are discovered, a boy and a girl, both age five. They are found hiding in the bedroom of a shabby house. The

boy is sick and delirious with a fever. He has no idea what has transpired and needs medical attention (but is not yet in a life threatening condition).

The girl, Sara, is confused and frightened. All she can tell the player group is that Mom, Dad, and her two older brothers got up and walked out of the house. When she called after them, they ignored her. When she looked out the front door, the entire village was slowly walking into the woods (yes, she can point the direction). Nobody would answer her when she called out to them. This frightened her. Sara decided if *everybody* was going some place, she better stay and take care of her sick brother, Danny. Her parents have been gone all day; it's now night, she's been crying, and is glad to see somebody (including CS troopers). That's all she knows. **Note:** If our heroes rescue the remaining villagers, the children's parents and two brothers are among them.

- If the group spends the night in the immediate vicinity (a one mile/1.6 km radius of the village), some of the characters may have bad dreams. Characters who sleep in sealed, mega-damage structures (like the EPC), in full-environmental armor, or who keep their headgear on will be unaffected, as will characters who save vs psionics (telepathy).

Those characters who fall asleep and fail their saving throws will have vivid images of robed figures chanting in a circle. Then these robed figures are absorbed by some black blob. Two of the people try to run away, but suddenly stop, turn around and walk right into it, and disappear! Characters having these dreams will wake up in a cold sweat but be otherwise unharmed. They may wonder if this thing is real, and whether the villagers suffered a similar fate. Psychic characters, Dog Boys, Psi-Stalkers, etc., will know the dream is a psychic flash and is real! **Note to G.M.s:** The creature is still asleep and dreaming, these are just the first images in its recent memory being unintentionally transmitted by it.

Any characters who had this dream and then shares this information with the rest of his team may discover that some of his comrades had the same nightmare (NPCs do if the player characters don't). This should be a good indication, especially to psionic and magic oriented characters, that something supernatural is involved with the disappearance of the villagers.

There is little else the group can do till morning. However, if the group should track the monster down that night, or, the next day, if the characters dilly-dally till nightfall, the creature will wake up, sense their presence and attack them.

If they find it during the day, our heroes will have the luxury of surprise and first strike against the slumbering nightmare. Well-armed and trained fighters, especially if some of them possess minds which are immune to being probed (wearing full environmental suits or being psionic with mind block abilities) have an excellent chance of defeating the creature.

The Adventure Continues ...

The clues uncovered should point the characters in the right direction. In the morning, any character who has a tracking skill can easily follow the path taken by the villagers. A few dead animals who died from their injuries trying to escape may also dot the way. At this point, the group will meet **Redge**.



Unless he is immediately attacked, the figure will approach the group and introduce himself as "Redge;" a man in his mid-60's but still spry. The Huntsman armor that he is wearing looks to have seen better days and is dented and patched, but otherwise well maintained. He's holding a Wilk's 447 laser rifle.

Redge is searching for the villagers of Kernois and will welcome any assistance that the group can provide. If the characters are freelance adventurers, Redge will try to recruit their assistance. If the group is a Coalition patrol, he will offer his scouting skills to the patrol leader. He gladly relates how he got involved. Last night, three hysterical villagers barged into his camp, ranting about a magical abduction of their entire village. As far as they knew, they were the only ones to escape. They said they could feel evil in the air, and that the animals had gone crazy and all the people became entranced and walked into the wilderness (the direction the wizened old scout and the player characters are now heading). The one male told how he had to knock his wife unconscious and carry her away, to prevent her from following the others. Thankfully, when she regained consciousness several miles away, she was back to normal. She doesn't remember a thing!

Redge conceals the fact that he is suffering from a fever; a flu bug has hit the area. He is a proud man and worried that the player characters may either treat him like an invalid or leave him behind if they knew he was feeling ill. He will answer any questions about himself, the village and the area, but he wants to move quickly, as lives may be at stake. If the group does not agree he will leave without them (unless they stop him). Redge is honest and straightforward and should gain the player characters' trust. If the group doesn't already have an accomplished tracker and scout, they have one now. His skills can easily lead them to the villagers and their captor a few miles away. Psionic characters will also sense they are now heading in the right direction and that they are facing an alien supernatural being. **G.M. Note:** The scout's fever makes him *immune* to the crea-

ture's mind control powers, something that may serve the group well.

After traveling into the woods for a few miles (the G.M. can choose whatever direction works best for his story plans), the group comes upon the remains of an old brick house. The building was blasted into rubble years ago and serves only as a landmark for scouts, trappers and hunters, like Redge. Clustered around one of the two brick walls still partially standing are approximately 50 villagers — all standing motionless like stone statues, and locked in a trance. On the other side of the wall, inside what was once a house, is a black, energy cloud, hovering above the body of an unconscious woman. Scattered all around the thing are the bodies of at least 50 villagers and hundreds of animals, all drained of their life's energy! The cloud creature bobs slowly up and down as if swaying in a gentle breeze. It won't appear to notice any interlopers and does not react to any sounds or commotion near it. Any player who speculates that the cloud thing is asleep, is correct; after gorging itself, the monster has fallen into a sleep-like trance while it assimilates the life energy, grows and becomes more powerful. The woman also seems to be asleep (she's actually communing with it via telepathy).

No amount of jostling or shaking will snap them out of their stupor. Only a powerful stimulant or telepathic surge has any hope of snapping anyone out of their catatonic state (roll to save vs psionic attack or to save vs non-lethal poison; a roll of 16 or higher means the trance is broken). Characters who are revived this way will have no idea what has happened to them and may panic at the sight of all the dead bodies and other entranced people around them.

The cloud thing will awaken only if more than a dozen of its entranced victims are aroused, or if it is attacked in any way. See the creature's description for its strengths and weaknesses.

This could be the time to pull out all the stops. If left unchecked, the creature will continue to grow in size and power, eventually absorbing the P.P.E. from all the living things in the area! Given time, it could grow to catastrophic proportions and destroying it at that point will be a monumental task. Right now, it is still relatively weak (1000 P.P.E.; 1100 M.D.C.).

A pitched battle will follow.

G.M. Cavalry Option Another CS Patrol

Whether the player group is already playing a CS squad or not, they may meet up with an independent CS patrol of NPCs or the CS patrol will appear in the middle of the conflict and join the battle against the cloud thing (it is obviously the greater of two evils). This Coalition force will consist of: a Lieutenant (Military Specialist, 5th level), a communications Sergeant (Technical Officer, 4th level), a Staff Sergeant (4th level), two heavy infantrymen (3rd level), two light infantrymen (both 2nd level corporals), two Privates (2nd level grunts) and two Dog Boys (both Privates, 3rd level; one is a Wolfhound, the other an Airedale).

The Lieutenant will initially demand that the group state their business in Coalition territory. If the players explain the situation and cooperate, the Lieutenant (who is of *Scrupulous* alignment) will put aside any personal prejudice (if the player-character

group should have any mages, psychics, or D-Bees) and work with them. Although he will feel that he should be in command, he is no fool and is willing to let the player characters lead if they seem to have a better understanding of the situation and the enemy. The CS patrol can provide some immediate extra firepower, and, if necessary, serve as reinforcements to help rescue the villagers and/or the player characters (If the situation warrants it, two Death's Head Transports will be dispatched to saturation bomb the area).

At the end of the battle, the lieutenant is likely to let the player group "escape while his back is turned," even if it has D-bees and/or practitioners of magic in it. However, if anything happens to the lieutenant, the Staff Sergeant (who is of miscreant alignment and rabidly anti-nonhuman and anti-magic) will attempt to arrest or kill the players, even if he has to call in reinforcements. If the group really gets his goat, he and his squad may try to hunt the group down and destroy them. He might even make a good reoccurring enemy NPC.

GM's possible subplot: The Staff Sergeant is convinced that the lieutenant is making a big mistake in trusting these outsiders (the player characters) but will go along with it for the moment. However, as soon as a high ranking officer appears on the scene, or the NPC Coalition patrol returns to base, the Staff Sergeant will denounce the Lieutenant's actions in an effort to score points with his superiors. He may also request to lead his own squad to bring the "fugitives" (player characters) to justice (which is likely to be a gunshot to back of the head).

The players may learn of the sergeant's plot and warn the Lieutenant — all four privates are totally loyal to the Lieutenant and will not join in with the sergeant's plans. Or they may find out that the Lieutenant has been imprisoned and designated for

transfer and court-martial back at Chi-Town; a death sentence. Good aligned characters (especially those who have seen how honorable the lieutenant is may feel an obligation to help foil the sergeant's treachery or rescue the Lieutenant; another adventure possibility).

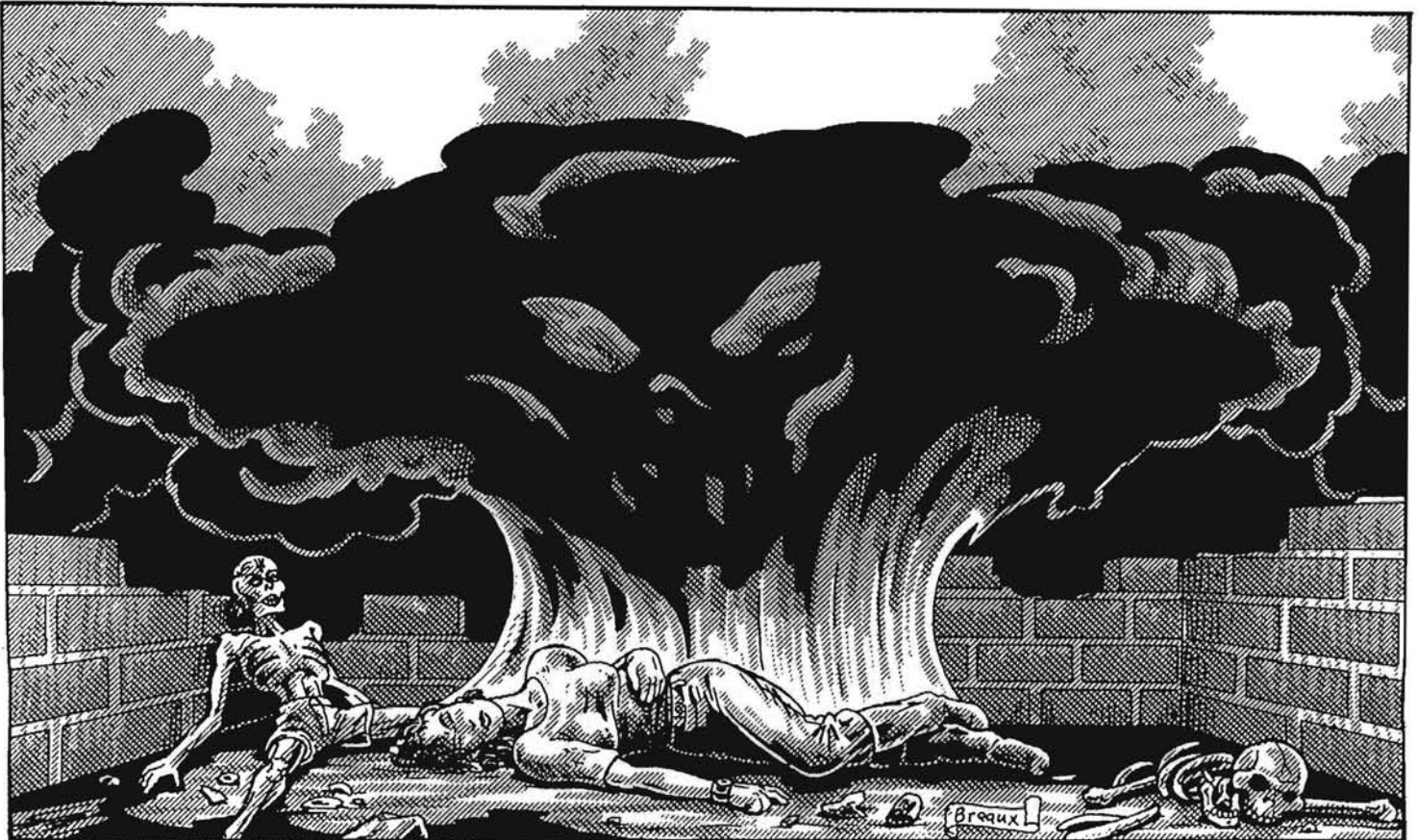
The Cloud Thing

This supernatural creature is reminiscent of an entity or a lesser alien intelligence, able to appear in its black, cloud-like, or blob-like, energy form and/or by possessing a physical host body, known as an avatar.

In its normal form, the being is a 20-30 foot (6-9 m) long, amorphous creature. It must absorb a minimum of 400 P.P.E. points within the first 24 hours of its arrival, or it will vanish, returning from whence it came. Likewise, if the cloud thing's P.P.E. reserve is reduced below 400 points, it vanishes to its native dimension. Nobody knows where this thing comes from. Thankfully, its appearance is extremely rare.

Whenever the creature absorbs its maximum 1000 P.P.E. in a single day, it falls into a hibernative sleep for 24 hours. During this period, it only burns up 100 P.P.E. points and is not compelled to hunt for more prey.

To hunt more efficiently, the cloud thing will attempt to link itself to a living, intelligent host by offering it unlimited power. This host is known as an avatar. If it succeeds in creating an avatar, it will ultimately increase its own power even more by infiltrating populated areas and feeding on the P.P.E. of the creatures around it without ever lifting a finger against them (see the life drain power described under *natural abilities*). Typically, the sudden and inexplicable deaths of dozens, even hundreds, of people is blamed on an alien virus, magic plague, and a variety



of other plausible causes, giving the monster free rein to feed undiscovered. This is, in part, due to the extreme rarity of the cloud thing's appearance on Rifts Earth. Once the creature reaches full strength (10,000 P.P.E. and M.D.C.), it will often reveal its true form, but even then the cloud thing will usually hide, sending forth its avatar to slay more victims. The psionic and physical link between the avatar and the cloud thing enable its servant to transmit any P.P.E. it absorbs directly to its master.

Cloud Thing; also known as the Black Entity

Alignment: Miscreant or Diabolic

Average Attributes in energy/cloud form: I.Q. 10, M.A. 3, M.E. 20, Spd 7 (hovers and flies), all other physical attributes are not applicable. The avatar has the natural attributes of the body the cloud thing possesses plus the following bonuses: +1D6 to M.E., +1D6 to P.S., P.E., and P.P. Also see natural abilities.

M.D.C./Hit points: Cloud or blob essence/energy form: 1D6x100 M.D.C. plus one additional M.D.C. point for each P.P.E. point stored up to 10,000 points.

- Avatar form: 1000 M.D.C. and fire and cold only do half damage.

Horror Factor: Blob/essence form: 15 (radiates pure evil). Avatar form: varies with the individual avatar, +2.

P.P.E.: 100 to start, needs 1D4x100 per day to survive in our world, but can absorb up to 10,000 P.P.E. in a matter of weeks.

Natural abilities (in any form): Bio-regenerates one M.D.C. per every new P.P.E. point absorbed by the thing. It can also see the invisible, nightvision 1000 feet (305 m), and can telepathically "speak" all languages. Special abilities are as follows:

P.P.E. Vampire: The horrible creature feeds off the life essences of other living beings and stores their P.P.E. (doubled at the moment of death). The cloud thing gains one M.D.C. point for every one P.P.E. point it can absorb and store. Up to 1000 points per day, with a maximum storage capacity of 10,000 points; absorbed and stored over a matter of days or weeks. The cloud thing cannot absorb ley line energy, and must absorb P.P.E. by killing living animals. Humanoids are its primary target, especially practitioners of magic and children, because they contain a large amount of mystic energy. The drained victims look like shriveled corpses.

Life Drain: In cloud or avatar form, the creature can absorb the life energy of any living beings within a 100 foot (30.5 m) radius, except plant life. Each living creature within its range loses 1D6 hit points per melee round (this attack bypasses S.D.C. and goes direct to hit points). Environmental body armor, power armor or robot encasement reduces the drain damage by half. However, the creature can create up to six tentacle-like tendrils (12 at night) to use as arms to strike or grab opponents/victims. The life draining touch of these tendrils inflicts 2D6 damage to hit points (1D4x10 M.D. if a mega-damage creature, like a dragon), even through protective armor.

Powers of the Night: The cloud thing is more powerful at night: double the number of attacks per melee, the number of tendrils the creature can create and the radius of the life draining attack, as well as add +2 to spell strength.

Create Avatar: The advantage of creating an avatar is that the cloud thing can disguise itself to look like the other creatures in the region. In this diabolically simple way, the fiend can enter a large community unnoticed and drain the life energy of the beings around it, without ever alerting them to its presence! Entire cities can be wiped out in a matter of weeks. Once 10,000 P.P.E. has been collected, the cloud thing can separate its energy essence from its avatar while maintaining its humanoid form as a separate entity and servant. At this maximum power level (provided the cloud thing's P.P.E. reserve doesn't drop below 8000 points for more than 24 hours), both the cloud energy essence and the physical avatar can exist simultaneously and both collect more energy for it. Up to 1000 P.P.E. can be stored in the avatar, but as two separate beings, the avatar has only 1000 M.D.C. and no magical or psionic powers, only the natural ones listed here.

To create an avatar, the cloud thing must find a willing subject who will let it bond to him. It can not simply overwhelm someone psychically or psionically and command them to bond with it. When this bonding occurs, the host will indeed gain the incredible power promised by the monster. However, until the creature stores enough energy to co-exist with its avatar (10,000 P.P.E.), the fiend completely possesses the body and dominates the mind and personality, the host. Only when the two are separated does the original personality resurface and allowed a certain amount of freedom, provided that the character serves its master to the best of its abilities. Failure means being completely absorbed (instant and automatic since the two are linked) and a new avatar will be sought. Only one avatar can exist at a time. **Note:** The woman laying under the hovering black blob is in telepathic communication with the horrid creature and is considering becoming its avatar.

Weaknesses: The creature's metabolism expends P.P.E. at a rate of 1D4x100 per 24 hour period, as well as through the use of spell magic, consequently it needs a great deal of P.P.E. every day (at least 400 points). This is why it must go on a daily killing spree. If the P.P.E. drops below 400 points, the creature fades into a mist and disappears back to whatever hellish dimension it came from.

Magic and plasma energy attacks do full damage. All other energy attacks do half damage; explosives, bullets and kinetic attacks do one-quarter their normal damage. Getting caught in a ley line storm disrupts the stored energy at a rate of 1D4x100 points per melee round! Note, practitioners of magic cannot draw on the cloud thing's P.P.E. except at the exact moment of its death, and that energy must be used within one minute or it all slips away.

Combat: In cloud/blob form, it has four physical attacks per melee (double at night) or two psionic or three magical attacks per melee round. When in the body of an avatar, it has the character's combat abilities +1 attack per melee round, +2 on initiative and +1 on all combat bonuses.

Bonuses while in Cloud Form: +3 to strike, +2 to dodge, +3 to save vs magic, and +10 to save vs horror factor.

Damage: See life draining power when in cloud form. When in the body of an avatar, the creature does the normal damage for that race plus 2D6 M.D. from its supernatural strength and nature.

Psionics (only in essence form): 100+1D6x100 I.S.P. plus 100 for every 1000 P.P.E. points it can absorb and store. Powers include presence sense, simple telepathy (communications only), psychic P.P.E. drain, and mentally possess others (can only mentally possess willing subjects to acquire an avatar). Considered the equivalent of a 6th level master psychic.

Special: Summon & Entrance Prey: A powerful mind control (or mind numbing) power that places the mind of any intelligent animal life form who fails to save vs psionic attack, into a deep trance. The entranced victims are compelled to come to the cloud thing and are oblivious to all else. When it is ready, the creature drains the life force of its prey and absorbs their P.P.E. at the moment of death, making it more powerful.

Range: A straight path that is one mile (1.6 km) long and a quarter mile (approx 442 m) wide.

Limitations: Can only be performed once every five days and costs 200 I.S.P.

Duration: 36 hours, or until the victim is jolted out of the trance via psionic probe or chemical stimulus.

Magical Powers: All level one and two spells plus the following calm storms, create wall of flame, circle of fire, fire ball, fuel flame, breathe without air, stop wind, wind rush, walk the wind, and call lightning. All are equal to a 5th level spell caster during the day, double at night.

O.C.C. & Skills: None, per se; communicates by telepathy and has the equivalent skill of land navigation at 80%. Add swim, climb, and prowl, all at 70%, for the avatar. The creature is not stupid, but is so completely alien that it cannot comprehend humanoid or the human mind. It can only read surface thoughts and finds most of them incomprehensible; it cannot do an extended telepathic probe. With time, the monster may learn and adjust to humans/humanoids and become an even more cunning predator.

Habitat: Anywhere, but prefers populated areas.

Enemies: None per se — or perhaps all living things.

Allies: None per se.

Size: 20 to 30 feet (6 to 9 m) long as a blob/in cloud form, or the normal size of the avatar host body.

Weight: 1200 lbs. (545 kg) as a blob/cloud thing or the normal weight of the avatar host body.

Although he took joy in teaching the rudiments of tracking and hunting to some of the village lads, Redge could not help but miss the old days now and then. Having faced down death a number of times in career by no means tame, Redge did not fear dying so much as he feared becoming a useless old man. Although not as strong or fast as he was, Redge is a cunning old man with a wealth of experience at his command and can still be a formidable foe. Unable to get the wanderlust out of his blood, Redge continues to hunt and live off the land. From time to time, he sells his services to the CS military, mercenaries and some of the larger communities for scouting, exploration, rescue and escort missions. He has also been known to disappear for months at a time, travelling to the Western Frontier to visit old friends.

Redge has seen enough weird things in his former career to know that what is happening to the village is pretty serious. He already fears the worst for the villagers that he has come to know and love and is ready to reap a grim vengeance if need be. In addition, Redge senses that this will likely be his last adventure and he's bound and determined to make it memorable. If he cannot defeat this opponent, he intends to go down fighting.

Full Name: Harley Redgenaldo

Alignment: Unprincipled

Hit Points: 43; **S.D.C.:** 16

Weight: 180 pounds (81 kg)

Height: 6 feet (1.8 m)

Age: 65

P.P.E.: 6

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 14, M.A. 11, P.S. 12, P.P. 10, P.E. 14, P.B. 11, Spd 10

Disposition: Friendly and considerate, but strong willed and rough around the edges.

Experience Level: 8th level Wilderness Scout

Magic Knowledge: None

Psionic Powers: None

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic

Attacks per Melee: Three (3)

Bonuses: **Combat:** +1 to strike, +2 to parry, +2 to dodge, +2 to damage, +2 to roll with impact/fall, 1D6 karate style kick, critical strike on unmodified 19 or 20

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. energy rifle, automatic rifle, bolt-action rifle, knife, and targeting, all at 8th level proficiency.

Weapons & Armor: Redge still has an old set of Huntsman armor (38 M.D.C. remaining). He carries a Wilk's 447 laser rifle, and a vibro-knife as well as S.D.C. weaponry.

Skills of Note: Speaks Euro, Gobblely, and Spanish 98%, horsemanship 88%, climbing 85%, wilderness survival 85%, track animals 75%, land navigation 84%, identify plants 80%, prowl 70%, fishing 90%, cooking 85%, and hunting.

Description: A peppery grey-haired man in his 60's. Redge speaks informally to everyone, except to people in obvious positions of authority who are "Sir" and "Ma'am," everyone else is either "Boy," "Sonny," or "Girlie".

Non-Player Characters of Note

Redge

As a young boy, Harley "Redge" Redgenaldo, always wondered what was beyond the next hill or valley, so it was inevitable that he would become a wilderness scout when he grew old enough. Redge's (he never liked the name Harley) career took him to some interesting places and allowed him to meet many fascinating people (not to mention other creatures) until he finally decided to retire. Never having married, he settled down near the village of Kernois, a quiet little place that he has enjoyed visiting and trading with for nearly two decades.



CS Reinforcements

Lt. Toller Kimbrough

Toller Kimbrough was an idealistic young man who grew up in the upper levels of Chi-Town. It was this idealism that led him to join the Coalition military to help serve and protect his country, although it was the influence of his well-to-do family that helped him get into the Coalition military officer program.

Toller's intelligence and determination enabled him to get through the special training and earn his commission. However, he soon learned that the grim realities of military life were far different from his childhood dreams.

The years of service in the field have not totally destroyed Kimbrough's idealism, although they have given him a more cynical view toward life. Several incidents in his career involving non-hostile D-Bees have caused him to question the official CS policy of "The only good D-Bee is a dead one."

Despite his doubts and misgivings, Kimbrough is still totally loyal to the Coalition and will not disobey a direct order (even one that he feels is wrong). However, when left to his own initiative, Kimbrough is more tolerant than the average Dead Boy officer when dealing with D-Bees (even with psychics and mages) and is willing to grant them far more slack. He is highly respected by most of the men under his command and would have advanced higher in the military if his superiors were not aware of his "inappropriate" attitude toward "undesirables." Kimbrough always watches out for the men under his command and never needlessly endangers them.

Alignment: Scrupulous

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 12, M.A. 13, P.S. 10, P.P. 13, P.E. 12, P.B. 12, Spd. 23

Hit Points: 25; **S.D.C.:** 58

Height: 5 feet, 11 inches (1.8 m)

Weight: 190 pounds (86 kg)

Age: 30

P.P.E.: 8

Experience Level: 4th level Military Specialist

Psionic Powers: None

Magic Knowledge: None

Combat abilities: Hand to Hand: Expert

Attacks per Melee: Four by hand to hand combat

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +2 to strike, +5 to parry, +5 to dodge, +4 to roll with impact, +3 to pull punch, and Karate-style kick (1D8 damage).

Skills of Note: Literacy: American 55%, speak Spanish 70%, radio: basic 70%, pilot: hovercraft 75%, pilot: robots & power armor 65%, pilot jet pack 54%, robot combat: elite, read sensory equipment 60%, weapon systems 65%, intelligence 54%, computer operation 60%, detect ambush 55%, detect concealment 50%, land navigation 48%, tracking 50%, wilderness survival 55%, climbing 55/45%, prowl 40%, math: basic 70%, running, W.P. energy pistol, W.P. energy rifle, W.P. automatic pistol, and W.P. knife.

Weapons: CV-212 variable laser rifle, C-18 laser pistol, vibro-knife, .45 automatic pistol, and 4 plasma grenades.

Equipment of Note: Standard for Military Specialist; G.M. can provide additional equipment, weapons and armor as he or she sees fit.



Body Armor: CA-2 armor (50 M.D.C.)

Cybernetics: Amplified hearing, thermo-imager eye and bionic climb cord.

Money: Fund of 6500 credits in gems and other bartering items (for emergency usage).

Description: Toller Kimbrough is a man of above average height with dark hair and grey eyes. When on assignment, Kimbrough is a tough, no-nonsense officer who wields a firm but tolerant hand towards his troops. Off duty, Toller is a friendly individual who enjoys meeting new people and experiencing new things.

Sgt. DeRoy Blevins

Born and raised in the Burbs of Chi-Town, DeRoy Blevins grew up without a great deal of respect for either law or order. Had he been more (or perhaps less) fortunate, he might never have joined the Coalition army. A military career was the last thing that Blevins had ever considered. His inducement to enlist came when he and some of the members of the gang he was running with were caught trying to mug the wrong person. Their intended victim was none other than a CS inspector on an undercover assignment. Blevins and his buddies were given a simple choice: "Join the army or go to prison." Blevins opted for the army.

Much to his surprise, Blevins found that he was good at his military assignments. Perhaps it was because he thought of the army as simply a much larger gang. At any rate, Blevins has managed to connive and work his way up to the rank of sergeant.

Alignment: Miscreant

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 9, M.A. 8, P.S. 14, P.P. 8, P.E. 13, P.B. 12, Spd. 21

Hit Points: 30; **S.D.C.:** 32

Weight: 200 pounds (91 kg)

Height: 6 feet, 2 inches (1.9 m)

Age: 31

P.P.E.: 4

Experience Level: 5th level Coalition Grunt

Psionic Powers: None

Magic Knowledge: None

Combat abilities: Hand to hand: Expert

Attacks per Melee: Three (3) by hand to hand combat

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +3 to parry, +3 to dodge, +2 to roll with impact, +2 to pull punch, kick attack (1D6 damage).

Skills of Note: Radio: basic 75%, pilot: hovercraft 80%, pilot: tank & APC 62%, pilot: robots & power armor 68%, robot combat: basic, read sensory equipment 60%, weapon systems 70%, prowl 45%, land navigation 52%, pick locks 50%, pick pockets 45%, climbing 65/55%, streetwise 36%, concealment 36%, hunting, body uilding, running, W.P. energy pistol, W.P. energy rifle, and W.P. knife.

Weapons: C-27 plasma cannon, vibro-knife, and two fragmentation grenades.

Equipment of Note: Standard for Coalition Grunt; G.M. can provide additional equipment, weapons and armor as he or she sees fit.

Body Armor: CA-1 armor (80 M.D.C.)

Cybernetics: None

Money: None carried on this patrol.

Description: DeRoy Blevins is a husky man of above average height with sandy hair and dark eyes. He is cruel and ruthless, always on the lookout for the best deal he can get and will willingly back-stab almost anyone who stands in his way.

To the troops under him, Sgt. Blevins can be disarmingly friendly as he tries to win their cooperation for his schemes; however, if rebuffed, Blevins will bully anyone who does not go along with him. To his superiors, Sgt. Blevins is always respectful and courteous (to their faces) but may try to undermine their efforts if he feels he can get a better deal by doing so.

Blevins is a hard-liner when it comes to the official Coalition doctrine. This is partly due to an inherent bigotry towards all non-Coalition citizens (especially mages and D-Bees) but primarily because he feels that being a "loyal party member" will serve him best in the long run.

Coalition Mark IX EPC

Exploratory Personnel Carrier

The Coalition Mark IX exploratory personnel carrier is a less deadly version of the Mark V APC. Unlike the Mark V, the Mark IX is not designed as a front-line combat unit, but as a transport vehicle for long-range reconnaissance and exploration expeditions. It does provide adequate firepower and protection for its crew and passengers under heavy fire, so if the player characters encounter something too powerful for them to handle, they can survive long enough to call for reinforcements and try to make an escape. The land vehicle can transport 10 people comfortably. SAMAS troopers will take up 2 places.

Model Type: EPC

Class: Infantry and Scientific Transport Vehicle

Crew: Three: pilot, copilot, and gunner.

Transport Capabilities: Standard is 10 troops (including crew)

M.D.C. by Location:

Center Laser Turret - 50

Forward Mini-Missile Launcher - 20

Forward Headlights (2) - 2 each

Smoke/Gas Dispenser - 6

**Main Body - 220

Reinforced Crew Compartment - 60

Treads (2) - 100 each

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

Speed: 110 mph (176 km) maximum on land. In water, speed is about 20 mph (32 km) (The EPC is not designed for major water travel).

Statistical Data:

Height: 10 feet, 7 inches (3.16 m)

Width: 7 feet (2.1 m)

Length: 15 feet, 8 inches (4.75 m)

Weight: 7 1/2 tons fully loaded.

Cargo: Storage space of about four feet (1.2 m) for extra clothing, supplies, weapons, specimens, and personal items; 2 C-14 assault rifles, 4 C-12 laser rifles, 1 C-27 plasma rifle, 1 rocket launcher and 8 fragmentation grenades.

Power System: Nuclear, average energy life is 10 years.

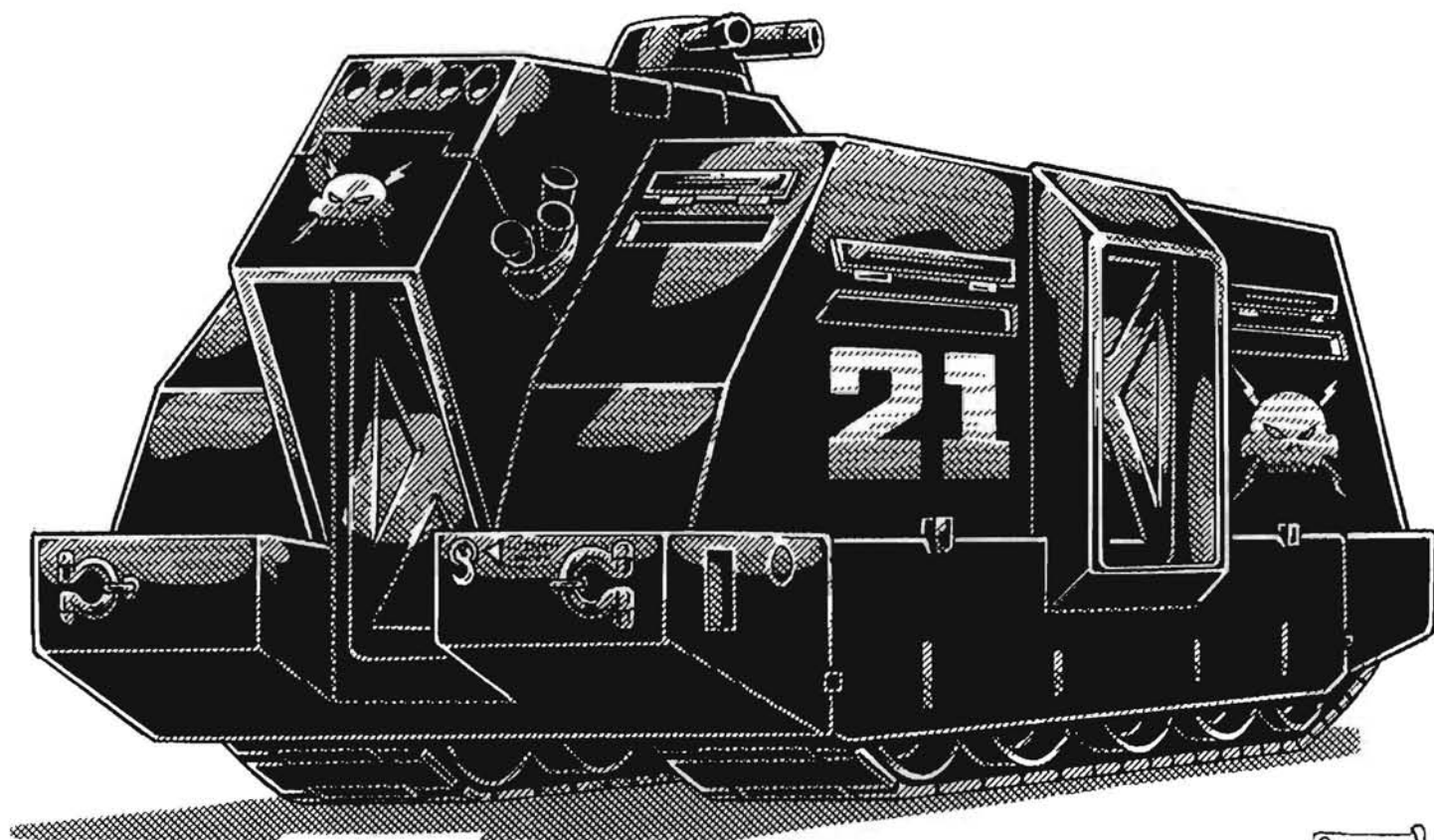
Black Market Cost: Six million credits, and up, for a new, undamaged, fully powered Coalition EPC complete with armament. As low as one million rebuilt and without any weapon systems. Limited availability, still being tested.

Weapon Systems

1. CR-2T Laser Turret (1): A double-barrelled laser turret mounted on top of the EPC, can rotate 360 degrees and has a 70 degree angle of fire (up and down).

Primary Purpose: Anti-Personnel

Secondary Purpose: Defense



Mega-Damage: 4D6 per dual blast.

Range: 4000 feet (1200 m)

Rate of Fire: Equal to the total number of hand to hand attacks per melee (usually 4 to 6).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

2. CR-10 Forward Mini-Missile Launcher: Located in the front of the EPC is a rapid-fire mini-missile launcher. The missiles are usually fired by the pilot.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Personnel

Secondary Purpose: Defense

Missile Type: Any type of mini-missile can be used, but standard issue is fragmentation (anti-personnel, 5D6 M.D.).

Range: One mile (1.6 km).

Rate of Fire: One at a time, or in volleys of 2, 3, 5, or 10.

Payload: Twenty (20)

Note: Less expensive to build than the Mark V APC, the EPC is fairly scarce in Chi-town (because of the many SAMAS troops) and Free Quebec (who prefer the use of Glitter Boys), but is finding increasing usage in Iron Heart (who need relatively inexpensive vehicles for exploration of their territories).



Revenge is a dish best served ...

By Kevin Kirsten

with additional text by Kevin Siembieda

Plot Line Overview:

A band of dragons have been terrorizing a cluster of villages and towns in Wyoming. The beasts have been attacking the villages around **Fort Mackenzie** in savage fury for a defeat 20 years earlier at the hands of the Cyber-Knights who protect this region. One dragon's old adversary, a Cyber-Knight of some repute, was last seen leading a group of heroes to slay the dragons — one of which is a foul creature that has resurfaced after a twenty year absence.

For one reason or another (whether it's to help the beleaguered villagers or to lay their hands on the dragons' treasure hoard), the player characters will become embroiled in the conflict, find the dragon's lair, fight the dragons and rescue any of their captives (perhaps including the missing Cyber-knight and his companions). This adventure is suited for experienced player characters of any level, but is ideal for players of third to sixth level. Some Game Masters may want to add to the opposition if they think the players can handle it or vice versa. Feel free to tailor the adventure to best accommodate your players, ideas and campaign.

The Setting

The adventure takes place in the remote northwestern wilderness of what used to be the pre-Rifts state of Wyoming. After nearly twenty years of peace and prosperity, a dragon that once terrorized the countryside has resurfaced in the *Big Horn Mountains* and has been threatening numerous villages scattered in the wilderness. A small cyber-knight monastery built on the ruins of the pre-Rifts American Empire's *Fort Mackenzie* has dispatched numerous patrols within the area but the dragon always appears to strike in at least three places at once. The savage attacks have attracted all types of champions of good, but most are never seen again.

Recently, the head of the monastery, a cyber-knight by the name of **Sir Garrett Moorison**, rode out from Fort Mackenzie with his two sons and a couple of companions to deal with the beast. They have not been heard from in two weeks. The villagers around the monastery are worried that their old friend and protector has met a terrible fate, and are increasingly scared as to what lays ahead for them. Panic and paranoia is epidemic.

Collecting rumors and information from the townsfolk at local villages around Fort Mackenzie will reveal the following: Unfortunately, the townspeople don't really know too much. Furthermore, most hide, locked away inside their homes and refuse to come out to talk to anybody.

- Many villagers view newcomers with suspicion and fear. After all, they could be a metamorphed dragon, or the dragon's minions! Consequently, many are loath to talk to strangers unless they can find some assurance as to the characters' intentions. The only exception to this is if one of the characters

in the players' group is a Cyber-Knight. The people love and trust these heroic knights and cheerfully tell them everything they know.

- The dragon, Old Mearindhal, has returned to reclaim the villages and territory as his dominion.
- Most believe the dragon's motivations are revenge for defeat at the hands of the Cyber-Knights over 20 years ago, Sir Garrett Moorison in particular.
- Two weeks ago, Sir Garrett Moorison, accompanied by four other champions, rode out from Fort Mackenzie to stop the dragon. They have disappeared and the dragon continues its campaign of terror. Most believe the knight is dead.
- The people are terrified of the dragon and its minions, which includes three other dragons! The people are quickly losing hope.

For additional information, Game Masters can have the characters make a streetwise roll to search for information. For every encounter ten miles (16 km) away from Fort Mackenzie, give the characters a -10% penalty to their skill roll (no penalties at the villages). This will reflect the townsfolk's and farmers' terror, paranoia, and sometimes, outright hostility towards anyone other than the Cyber-Knights. The people are especially cautious around CS troops. They've "heard" a lot of bad things about the Coalition States and the terrible things going on in Minnesota. If they think any member of the player's group is a dragon, they will shun the entire group like they have the plague!

At some point, while the player characters search for information, they'll meet a grizzled old man by the name of Billy Wilder. He walks with a pronounced limp and appears to be in his eighties, but his grey eyes shine bright with experience. He can offer a wealth of information about *past* trouble with the dragon.

"Word is that you people were asking 'round bout the dragon. Yeah. I figured you'd be coming through here sooner er' later. Everyone within thirty miles have 'eard you were coming.

"The dragon, you know, that is something I know about. 'Bout twenty years ago, this land was overrun with nasty D-bees. Their leaders was a bunch a dragons. Made their lair up in the Big Horn mountains. People were scared out of their wits and huddled together, too afeared to leave their homes. The communities you see now all sprung up over the last generation or so."

The old man stares off into the distance, his grey eyes misting over with tears. "Those bastards killed most of my ... my family ... even my poor Karen." He pulls a faded and tattered photograph out of his pocket, looks at it and gently kisses it before showing it to the player characters. It's a picture of a pleasant looking woman in her forties, wearing a homespun dress and holding a kitten. Wiping his eyes, the old man continues in a voice choked with tears.

"We was nothing to them monsters but playthings. We lived under their claw fer 15 years. It was hell, but we managed. Them beasts rode us hard, but their time was ending. A group of young adventurers like yerselfs rode into town one day. Their armor and weapons gleaming in the sun like somethin outta a picture book or vid-disk. They called themselves Cyber-Knights, champions of good or something like that. We heard of 'em, but never seen one before. We was sure they could only bring trouble. We tried to scare 'em off. Didn't want anymore trouble. We just wanted to live in peace. But good ole' Sir Garrett wouldn't hear of it, bless his soul."

After a slight pause, the old man continues in a voice full of pride and emotion.

"He done taught us how to look ourselves in the eye again. With his help we took back our farms and fields and drove those damnable monsters and their inhuman scourge back where to where they come from over the Northern mountains! Ol' Mearindhal, the head dragon, come back at us in one last charge, mad as hell. But them knights refused to give up. When their leader Sir Darek Bearclaw fell in battle, young Sir Garrett took command. He tracked the beast to its lair and wounded it to the point of death, he did. Shoulda kilt it, but he spared the dragon when it begged fer mercy. Told the vile beast to never come back or it'd git more of the same.

"Yep, shoulda kilt the damn beast when he had the chance. Poor ol' Garrett. Probably didn't think the thing would ever come back for him ... I ... fear he met his death at the beast's hands. And iffen he can't kill it, nobody can ... You boys, be smart to git while you can. That there scaly monster come for revenge as much as anything else. We all gonna die before long ... no reason to add your names to the body count."

The old man's voice fades and he walks away, shaking his head, his face twisted into a mask of depression and sorrow. If pressed for more information, there's not much he can tell them about the present situation. Nobody knows where the monster is "holed-up" this time. However, he's full of tall-tales about Sir Garrett and his two sons. He can also tell stories about how the dragon Mearindhal once ruled this area (roughly 1000 square miles) and orchestrated the raids of nonhuman bandits throughout the Northwest and into the 'ol Canadian Empire, before the Cyber-Knights ran it out of town.

Before progressing any further, have the characters roll for their lore: demon & monster skill, if they possess it. If there is a Cyber-Knight among the party, give that character an additional +10% to his skill roll (the character is also likely to have heard of Sir Garrett, but won't know anything other than that he's a noble knight renowned as a dragon slayer). The lore skill is to remind the player characters of some basic facts about dragons. If the group has no knowledge of dragons, the old man *may* be able to offer some points to consider.

Some Important Facts About Dragons:

1. Dragons are virtually immortal by human and D-bee standards, thereby making them dangerous enemies.
2. The wrath of a dragon is terrible to behold. Especially if it is to avenge the death of a loved one or to right some personal injustice. The dragon will not rest until that vengeance is sated to its satisfaction, which is often ten times worse than the offense committed against it. In this case, rumor has it that Mearindhal

intends to torture and slay Sir Garrett and the family members of every person who stood at his side when he opposed the dragon 20 years ago. In the dragon's mind, that's at least half the original residents in the area.

3. Since they are so long-lived, dragons can plan their revenge for a long time and wait for the perfect moment to strike.

4. Dragons do not like other dragons. It usually takes a powerful force to make the solitary and greedy creatures work together.

5. There are a number of different dragon species. Each of them has a number of different abilities, but most share the abilities of shape changing, incredible resistance to injury, super-quick healing, resistance to magic and psionics, and have hundreds to thousands of M.D.C.

6. The older the dragon, the more powerful it is (M.D.C. into the thousands and powerful spell magic).

Encounter one: Fire in the sky

For more information, the townspeople will direct the characters to go to Fort Mackenzie, some twenty miles (32 km) south-east of the town. Actually, if the characters realize this is an outpost of the legendary Cyber-Knights, they may want to pay them a visit without any prompting. The fort is easy to find, because a broken line of frightened villagers are making a pilgrimage to the fort in hopes of finding protection behind its walls.

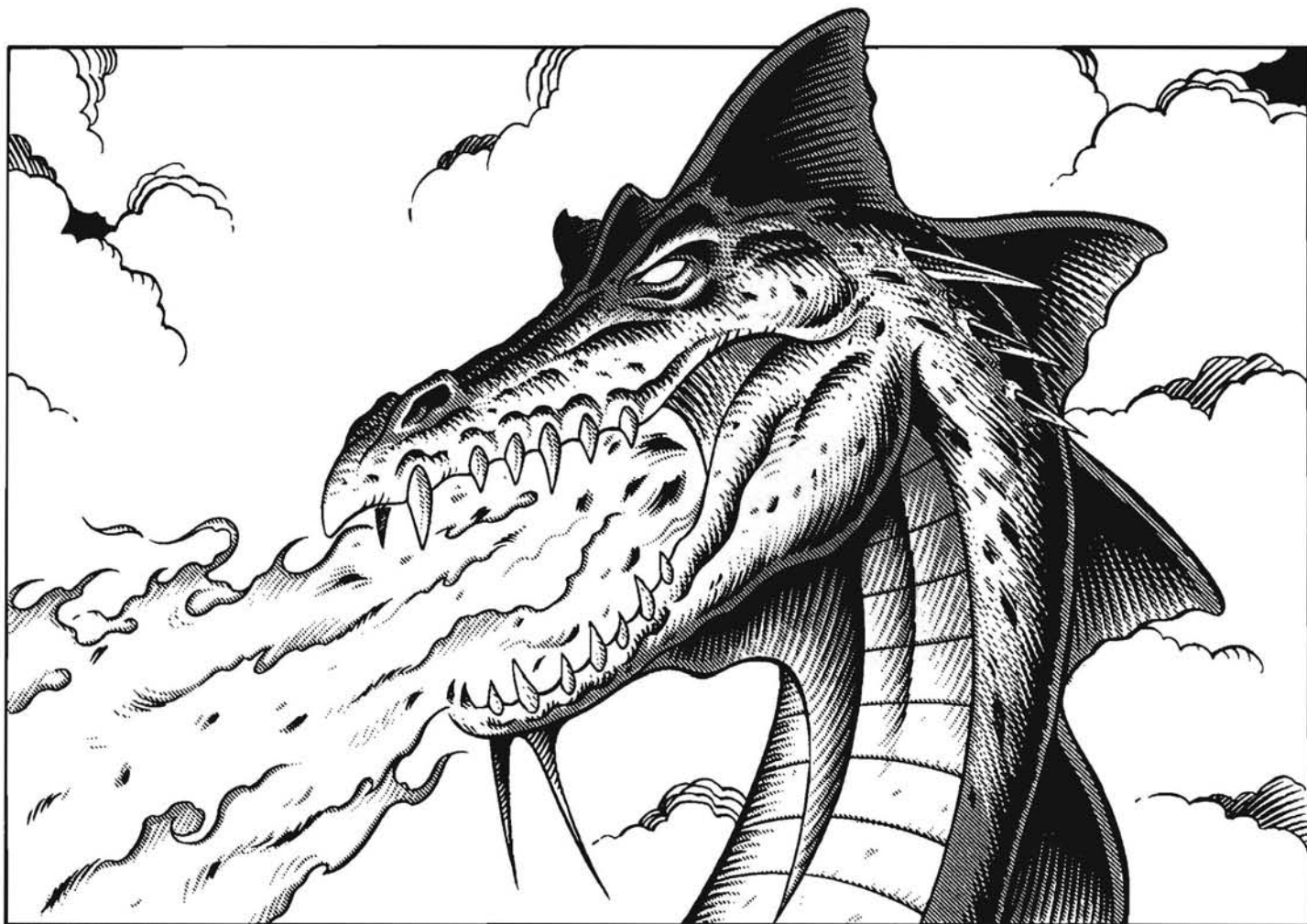
Before our heroes have an opportunity to do anything else, a large building in the center of town explodes into splinters. Fingers of flame reach high into the sky as a long, serpentine head roars in fury. In the distance, black smoke billows up from two neighboring villages. The town erupts in panic as the dragon sweeps other buildings with his fiery breath and balls of flame. Townsfolk run in all directions in an attempt to escape their impending doom. The dragon targets homes, men, women and children without any apparent discretion.

If the player characters are going to help, this is a good time to do it! Even if they only try to take cover themselves, it is likely that the dragons will randomly attack them or their hiding place, especially if they think they are town defender or Cyber-Knights. **G.M. Note:** None of the dragons are likely to fight to the death, unless they get angry or underestimate the player characters and are slain before they realize their in over they're heads.

Igneous

Igneous is one of Mearindhal's more ambitious lieutenants and was ordered to create as much chaos as possible. His diversion will allow two other dragon hatchlings to strafe the other two small towns within the area. If he attracts any resistance, he will use magic to hold his attackers at bay for about two minutes (8 melee rounds), and will then teleport out of town and fly away.

If Igneous comes under heavy fire from the player characters and appears to be on the point of death, his fellow hatchlings will teleport in (see below) to aid in his escape. If Igneous is



killed (he will fight to the death if given no other option), the other hatchlings will abandon him and teleport out of the area.

Igneous is originally from Dracona but fled after an altercation with some priests of the Cult of Dragonwright. After reaching North America, he spent some time in the territory dominated by the Federation of Magic territory. After several attempts on his life by jealous rivals, he flew to the east to find some place where he could formulate new plans. He had the fortune of running into Mearindhal and was coerced into the older dragon's scheme of revenge and the promise of power.

Igneous, the Fire Dragon

Alignment: Diabolic

M.D.C.: 356

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.A. 12, M.E. 22, P.S. 23, P.P. 18, P.E. 20, P.B. 14, Spd. 22

Level of Experience: 6th level dragon hatchling.

Natural Abilities: Claw: 2D6 M.D., bite: 2D4 M.D., fly 50 mph (80 kmph), nightvision: 90 feet (27.4 m), see the invisible, impervious to fire, can bio-regenerate 1D4×10 M.D. every 5 minutes, metamorphosis for 12 hours a day, fire breath: 6D6 M.D., range: 60 feet (18.3 m), teleport: 34%, can sense ley lines and nexus points and other dragons: 20 miles (32 km).

Skills of Note: Speaks American and Dragonese at 98%, math: basic: 98%, hand to hand: basic, demolitions: 76%, land navigation: 56%, lore: demons & monsters: 50%, prowl: 50%, radio: basic: 70%, streetwise: 40%.

Combat: Hand to hand: basic, with four attacks per melee.

Bonuses: +3 to strike, +4 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch/fall or impact, +4 vs psionics, +3 vs poison/magic, +10% coma/death, critical strike on a 19 or 20.

Magic: 70 P.P.E. and the following spells: cloud of smoke, fear (horror factor 16), armor of Ithan, shadow meld, thunder clap, cloud of smoke, fuel flame, energy bolt, fire bolt, fire ball, impervious to energy and time slip.

Psionics: 40 I.S.P. and the following powers: alter aura, mind block, presence sense, see aura, sense magic, sixth sense and telepathy.

Combat Note: Igneous will use defensive magic to hold off the players as long as possible and will swat anyone who comes too close. He will reserve his breath weapon for characters in powered armor (like glitter boys) and Cyber-Knights. He will target any ammunition sources, such as missile packs, bandoliers of grenades etc., in an attempt to detonate them and inflict greater damage. Igneous is arrogant and cruel, but cunning and resourceful. He is surprisingly loyal to Mearindhal. If Mearindhal is defeated, Ymir will try to plunder the old dragon's treasure hoard hidden away in his lair (mostly equipment and odds and ends; little gold or gems, this is a poor community) and flee. Igneous will also consider betraying Mearindhal and the others if it works to his advantage.

Ymir

Mearindhal ordered Ymir to attack one of the smaller towns to the west of Fort Mackenzie. His orders were identical to Ignou's: to create as much chaos as possible for about two minutes and then teleport out. If the others slack behind, he is to help them escape. He doesn't know why Mearindhal wants them to do this but he will support the older dragon on this mad quest, at least for now.

Ymir is the oldest of the three hatchlings and is perhaps the craftiest among them. Originally from the Great Northern Wilderness in the Palladium world, he was brought through a dimensional portal by a young Shifter on Rifts Earth. After killing and disposing of the Shifter's body, Ymir accidentally discovered Mearindhal's new lair in the Big Horn mountains. The two struck a deal and Ymir now serves his elder. However, Ymir has his own agenda, and is using Mearindhal as a means to securing himself a place of power in the west. Neither dragon trusts the other, but find their alliance of the moment convenient.

Alignment: Aberrant

M.D.C.: 341

Attributes: I.Q. 17, M.A. 14, M.E. 15, P.S. 26, P.P. 14, P.E. 26, P.B. 13, Spd. 20

Level of Experience: 8th level Ice Dragon Hatchling.

Natural Abilities: Claw: 2D6 M.D., bite: 2D4 M.D., fly: 50 mph (80 kmph), nightvision: 90 feet (27.4 m), impervious to cold, can bio-regenerate 1D4×10 M.D. every 5 minutes, metamorphosis for 16 hours a day, ice breath: 5D6 M.D., range: 60 feet (18.3 m), teleport: 38%, can sense ley lines and nexus points and other dragons: 20 miles (32 km).

Skills of Note: Speaks American and Dragonese at 98%, math: basic: 98%, hand to hand: basic, radio: basic: 88%, demolitions: 87%, pilot: hovercraft: 93%, prow: 68%, streetwise: 55%, lore: magic: 68%, lore: demon & monster: 48%

Combat: Hand to hand: basic, with four attacks per melee round.

Bonuses: +1 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch/fall or impact, +6 vs poison/magic, +22% coma/death, critical strike on a 19 or 20.

Magic: 70 P.P.E. and the following spells: Cloud of smoke, chameleon, float in air, armor of Ithan, magic net, carpet of adhesion, sense magic, call lightning, invisibility: superior, invulnerability, wind rush, negate magic, and wisps of confusion.

Psionics: 30 I.S.P. and the following powers: Detect psionics, empathy, impervious to fire, levitation, presence sense, sense magic, see the invisible and see aura.

Weapons: Ymir carries a giant blue club shaped like an icicle that is covered in silver runes. It does 4D6 M.D.

Combat Note: Ymir will teleport into the sky and use call lightning and wind rush to attack opponents while cloaked in magic invisibility. If forced into melee combat, he will use icicles to pound his opponents into the ground. If Mearindhal is defeated, Ymir will try to plunder the old dragon's treasure hoard hidden away in his lair (mostly equipment and odds and ends; little gold or gems, this is a poor community) and flee. Ymir will also consider betraying Mearindhal and the others if it works to his advantage.

Cloud

The third hatchling is a young Serpent of the Wind, named Cloud. Cloud's job is to attack the town north of the fort and, if necessary, to help the others escape. She has no intention of helping anyone but herself, however, as she will try to loot the town of valuables before any Cyber-Knights or other rescuers can stop her.

Mearindhal saved Cloud from destruction at the hands of the Coalition, but she serves the older dragon not out of gratitude but because of the size of his treasure hoard. Cloud thinks that if she serves him faithfully, that he will give her part of it, or allow her to collect an impressive one of her own through looting and terrorism (two of her favorite pastimes). No one has ever accused her of being bright or loyal. Mearindhal recognizes this and uses her greed as an easy way to manipulate and control her. He considers Cloud to be nothing more than expendable cannon fodder, no better than the humans they torment.

Alignment: Anarchist

M.D.C.: 359 3rd level dragon hatchling.

Attributes: I.Q. 8, M.A. 20, M.E. 18, P.S. 29, P.P. 19, P.E. 20, P.B. 23, Spd. 50, 110 flying (75 mph/110 kmph)

Natural Abilities: Full strength punch or bite: 2D6 M.D., slashing tail strike: 3D6 M.D., power punch: 4D6 M.D. (counts as two attacks), fly: 75 mph (110 kmph), nightvision: 90 feet (27.4 m), resistant to fire and cold (half damage), can bio-regenerate 4D6 M.D. every minute, metamorphosis for 6 hours a day, see the invisible, turn invisible at will, track by smell: 45%, teleport: 44%.

Skills of Note: Speaks Dragonese at 98% and American and Gobblely at 49%, plus forgery: 32%, literate in dragonese: 98% and american at 49%, lore: demons & monsters: 40%, lore: faerie: 40%, mathematics: basic: 49%, streetwise: 40%, and W.P. heavy energy weapons.

Combat: Instinctive combat abilities, with three attacks per melee.

Bonuses: +3 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, 60% to gain trust of or to intimidate, 65% charm or impress, +1 to initiative, +1 to roll with punch/fall or impact, +2 vs psionic attack, +4 vs poison/magic, +11% coma/death.

Magic: 80 P.P.E. and the following spells: breathe without air, cloud of slumber, cloud of steam, create light, create mild wind, stop wind, thunder clap, howling wind, miasma, call lightning and wind rush.

Psionics: 20 I.S.P. and the following powers: death trance, empathy, impervious to poison/toxins, mind block, telekinesis and telepathy.

Weapons: Cloud carries a Mechanoid M-15 plasma rifle that does 1D4×10 M.D. It has a payload of 15 shots and a range of 4000 feet (1220 m). She carries four long E-clips in a bandolier on her arm.

Combat Note: Cloud will remain invisible during her attacks and will only help the others if she can gain something out of it, or if she believes Mearindhal will be angry if she doesn't make at least a token effort to help. It is very likely that one of the players will possess something that strikes her fancy. If this happens, she will approach the player character(s) invisible or metamorphosed into a non-threatening shape like a dog or other smallish animal. Magic, gems and gold are on the top

to protect the many, if ... that is what must be. But please tell me it is not so. Tell me that you will try!"

Mrs. Moorison will deliver her speech with such sincerity and hope that it should touch even the most hard-hearted person. After looking each one of them in the eye, she lowers her head and says in a soft voice.

"I'm sorry. I ... ask strangers to risk their lives for a man they have never met. I know it is unfair and I do understand if you should decline. Yet, I would get down on my knees and beg you for help if that's what it took. I will not desert my sworn duty to these people, but I cannot forget that I am also a wife and mother. So please, if you could I regret that I have nothing to offer you ... except my eternal gratitude and the respect and gratitude of the Cyber-Knights of Fort Mackenzie and the people of this land."

Decisions, decisions

Captain Moorison turns away and with a quivering voice, barely above that of a whisper, she asks, "Please, I ... must know ... can you help ... us?"

What will the player characters do? They have come upon people in desperate times and in need of heroes. Few adventurers ever get the gratitude and respect of the legendary Cyber-Knights.

Will they walk away in a time of need or buckle down and help those in need? Good aligned characters should need no prompting to help Fort Mackenzie (especially if the players' group includes one or more Cyber-Knights!), while those of selfish and evil alignments should be able to smell the potential riches from a dragon hoard.

Still, it could be a suicide mission.

If the player group turns her down, she thanks them and asks their forgiveness regarding her behavior. They are welcome to stay at the fort if they so desire and are offered food and a place to sleep on the bare ground. *Game Masters* may try to entice the group in other ways, such as rumors of a vast treasure, etc. Otherwise, this adventure becomes a short one, as they leave the area and go about their business.

If the player group accepts (I can't imagine any heroic type turning down this plea), she will turn to them, smile, thank them and wipe away a tear. A moment later she is composed and, along with Sir Kay, tells them what they know. Basically, they are certain there are at least, four dragons: Old Mearindhal and three very young, but ambitious and cruel hatchlings (the players may have already encountered one or all of these in the village).

More Data: The knights are certain the dragon's lair is somewhere in the Big Horn Mountains some fifty miles (80 km) south of the Fort. They even have a report as to one possible location, but don't know how reliable that information is. A trapper claims he saw one of the dragons fly into a cave in that area. As one might expect, he fled rather than investigate, but he ran straight to the Fort to report what he saw. They can offer our heroes body armor, E-clips, one transport vehicle, food and psionic healing if they need it. They can also try to come to their aid if they are not forced to defend the Fort. They also agree that the group can have any and all booty found in the dragons' possession, but strongly suggest that getting booty or even killing one or more of the dragons is low priority; top priority should be res-

cuing the Moorison Cyber-Knights and returning safely to Fort MacKenzie.

The Rider

The player characters are interrupted by a commotion at the fort. The cry rings out: "Capt. Moorison it's...it's Sir Randall Aswell! He's alive! Sir Randall!! He just rode into the fort!" Sir Kay and the Captain react at once, leaping from their chairs and running into the courtyard.

A heavily damaged robot horse paws at the ground in the center of a circle of people. A knight in battered black crusader armor sits slumped over on his mount. He falls in an attempt to dismount, but is caught by the crowd. He takes off his helmet and addresses Captain Moorison, who has pushed through the crowd. "They are alive," he gasps as if able to read minds.

"Mearindhal has returned! He ... has them."

Cries of dismay, anger and fear sweep through the fort like a fierce wind. Sir Randall continues,

"The wyrm was waiting for us ... in the valley by Cloud Peak. He ambushed us. There were three others. Dragons. Hatchlings ... but caught us by surprise. We fell faster than we could react. Only Garrett managed to strike Mer ... Mearindhal ... but one man was not enough. He fell to the monster. The others ... were torn to pieces ... Garrett ... the boys ... they live, though they endure nightly tortures. I too suffered such ... cruelty, but was sent



her want list, but she is growing to realize that technology has its advantages and is starting to collect tech items she believes are useful and valuable. Cloud is not above shooting the characters in the back with her plasma rifle or engaging in other acts of treachery to get something she wants. However, her greed, treachery and foolishness are likely to lead to her doom.

After the Battle

As the last dragon teleports or flies away (or is slain), the sky will darken and jagged bolts of lightning will strike random targets within the area. A roar of anger will echo throughout the valley and huge bolts of lightning and balls of fire will strike from somewhere to the southeast. The sky will lighten back up within ten minutes. The sobs of people crying for their dead fills the valley.

Read to the players: The devastation within the town is complete. The cries and screams of the wounded echo throughout the town as does the crackle and roar of raging fires. Village fire teams struggle to put out the flames and pull the injured and the dead from the wreckage of their shattered homes (our heroes may want to help in any way they can). Of the three dozen homes and half dozen shops in the village, only seven stand unscathed, half have burnt to the ground and others are on fire. A few moments later, the rumble of vehicle engines comes from the edge of town. A converted Big Boss A.T.V. helps battle the flames with a water cannon and two figures fly from the sky, dousing the fire with magic.

When the fires are all out, a stern faced man dressed in blue crusader armor exits the Big Boss and approaches the player group. His face is covered in soot and dirt. A line of blood streams down from a wound on his forehead, which he ignores. Smoothing down his long mustache, he speaks in a deep voice.

"I am Sir Kay Varen. (see *People of Interest Section*). The mayor's son radioed us at Fort Mackenzie and told us of your brave attempts to save the town" (or the knight may have witnessed first-hand, their efforts to rescue people from burning buildings and fight the fire).

Looking out over the dying flames, he shakes his head. "Our leader would thank you personally, but he has been missing for some time now, as you may have heard. I know you must be tired. I insist that you accompany me back to the fort. We're evacuating as many people as we can to Fort Mackenzie. We can talk on the way."

Game Masters, Sir Kay will offer to ride with the player group if they have vehicles or offer to give them a ride in his. Use this opportunity to provide the characters with more bits of data, although there isn't much Sir Kay can tell them, other than confirm many of the rumors they've already heard. If asked about the other towns or the fort, he shakes his head and with a sad face, says, "It's a tragedy. Scores have died, dozens more injured. Entire farms burnt to the ground."

The stream of refugees to the fort appears somewhat small compared to the populace that lives in the area. Sir Kay explains that Mearindhal has vowed that all who turn to the Fort for protection shall suffer a terrible fate. The town that was just laid under siege was one of the few that had defied the dragon, hence the attack.

Fort Mackenzie

The stone and metal walls of Fort Mackenzie are only a few minutes away by vehicle (about 20 miles/32 km). A number of scorch marks and gouges pit the walls. At several points, the metal and stone walls are melted and a few holes reveal the walls are not invulnerable. Armed sentries and small groups of young knights and soldiers on horseback ride out to escort and protect the refugees. As our heroes ride through the scorched, mega-damage steel gates (80 M.D.C. each is all that's left), they get their first glimpse of the fort's interior. The first thing that will strike them is that the fort is stretched to its limits, overflowing with refugees.

Women and children are led away to shelter as the men and women able to fight are formed into a shabby militia by the few Cyber-Knights within the walls. Sir Kay will direct the characters past a small tent-camp for the refugees to his office, a tent in the center of the battered fort (his regular office, a mega-damage structure, is being use for refugees because it provides them with better protection).

As the characters enter the large room, a beautiful middle-aged woman rises from the huge oaken desk and walks over to the characters with a forced smile on her face. Lines of worry strain her face and her hands are scarred with burns. Before any of the characters has time to say a thing, she speaks to them.

"Greetings to you all, and welcome to Fort Mackenzie. I am Captain Jainine Moorison, the acting commander of Fort Mackenzie. From what I've heard, you helped defend one of the towns attacked earlier. On behalf of us all, I thank you.

"I ... I hope you won't think me too presumptuous, but I need a favor of you. I will understand if your answer is no. We are desperate. Our supplies are dwindling, we are undermanned, overcrowded and morale is low. We've sent messages for help from Lord Coake, and pray that reinforcements are on their way. Even without them, we should be able to hold our position here and defend the people behind these walls for a month, perhaps longer. I need your help in regard to a matter close to my heart." Sir Kay moves forward as if too say something but Captain Moorison raises her hand and says, "Kay please. We don't have the manpower to spare. We need every knight we have to protect the townsfolk within the fort!" She turns to the player characters with pleading eyes.

"My husband, Sir Garrett Moorsion, and ... my ... two oldest sons ... disappeared almost two weeks ago. They went to slay the dragon, Mearindhal, and have not returned. The dragon and his minions continue to ravage the land, so most people believe my husband and children are dead. I know they are not! Please, don't think these are the words of a desperate wife. My husband and this creature are old adversaries. I have no doubt that he has fallen into Mearindhal's clutches, but the monster would not kill him quickly. No, he will make my husband and my children suffer. Mearindhal will not slay them until he has destroyed this fort and reclaim this kingdom. Until then, my family lives!

"I implore you, please, find them and bring them back to me. Not just for me, but for everyone. Seeing Sir Garret will give the people renewed hope. And with Garret to lead us, we can destroy these monsters once and for all! I would go myself, but I am needed here. So would Sir Kay and any hundred men outside, but they too are needed here. We ... must sacrifice the few

out by Mearindhal to ... to deliver his message. Those who leave the fort ... abandon the Cyber-Knights, and ... accept him as their Master, will be spared. All others shall be slain. The people have one week to decide. After ... that week, he promises to destroy the fort and slaughter all who have placed their allegiance with his enemies. He ... he says, forgive me, My Lady, ... he says on that day he will feast on the entrails of your children and ... use their bones to build his throne, and Sir ... Garrett's lifeless skull as his scepter."

The knight falls to his knees, clutching the feet of Captain Moorison, weeping and begging forgiveness for failing her and his fellow knight. She forces back her own tears and bends down and consoles him like a mother comforting her child. The crowd watches in silence, pondering the warning the good knight has just presented. In a voice strong and confident, Captain Moorison addresses the crowd.

"You are all free to do what you think is best for your families. I promise no one will think poorly of those who decide to leave. As for we knights, we shall not surrender to tyranny. Nor will we abandon our post or our friends. We will stand and we will fight to the last man. And god willing, I will sever the head of this beast and restore peace to this land and its gentle people."

Sir Randall weakly protests, warning that the dragons are too powerful and that they all should leave the valley. A few moments later, he passes out from his ordeal.

Note: If the player characters have already agreed to try to rescue the captive knights, she turns to them, smiles and says, "I know it is hard to find hope in these terrible times, but I have hope today. It came to me today, in the form of five (or however many people are in the players' group) strangers. Brave champions of justice who will help us destroy the pestilence that plagues. Strangers who will leave this fort tomorrow, with my gratitude, whether their mission be successful ... or not. It is enough that they would dare to try. Now, the rest of you must make your decision, while we prepare for war and victory!"

The crowd erupts with cheers and sobbing. It is little wonder why Lady Garrett is in command. If her husband is half the person she is, he must be a great hero.

If the players have not decided to help these people by now, pump up their egos and appeal to their compassionate sides by tossing out images of the cheering crowd, with small children waving small knight dolls in their small hands.

To The Rescue

Note: Remember, if the player characters do not own a land vehicle, one will be provided, along with basic adventuring equipment like rope, basic E-Clips, food and supplies.

It is time for our heroes to do their thing. They are encouraged to be swift and careful. They can leave for their mission in the day or night, whichever they prefer. Sir Randall, despite his beatings and weariness, has volunteered to lead the group to the area where he and the others were ambushed and captured. Unfortunately, he doesn't know the location of the dragon's lair. He was unconscious when originally taken there, and was again beaten and knocked unconscious when he was dispatched to de-

liver the warning. The characters should be made to realize that Cloud Peak is not too far from the suspected lair in the mountains — perhaps giving that information more credence. Sir Randall doesn't put much faith in that report.

The Journey to Cloud Peak is uneventful; it can be reached in under two hours by land vehicle. Sir Randall says little except to guide the characters as they swiftly travel through rolling hills and grazing lands. In the distance, the Big Horn Mountains loom, their snowy peaks giving them a cold, ethereal beauty. The Cyber-Knight will not allow other characters to outpace him or scout ahead of him at any time. He is, understandably, nervous and jumpy, constantly suggesting caution.

As they approach the peak, the land becomes barren of most vegetation. The skeletons of trees dot the once green countryside and a prevailing sense of danger, gloom and deep oppression seems to ooze from the tortured earth. Psychics will detect a tangible sense of evil that permeates the air like a pungent stench. Those practitioners of magic who can sense ley lines will be able to sense the location of a line some ten miles (16 km) near one of the central peaks.

Sir Randall leads the players to a small, rocky clearing near the base of a large snowcapped mountain. The signs of the knight's battle are obvious. Blast marks scorch the earth, the remains of a full conversion borg are strewn around the clearing, as well as the remnants of half a dozen robot horses. A set of huge tracks are set into the ground in the center of the clearing. There is no doubt that these are dragon tracks. No humanoid bodies lay within the clearing. The air is cold and frigid and Sir Aswell will suggest that they try to find a cave of some kind to take shelter in for the remainder of the day, suggesting it might be best to proceed under the cover of night (or attack in the light day if it is already nighttime).

Game Master Information

Players' Note: From this point forward, all the data provided should be for the Game Master's eyes only. To read any further may reduce your enjoyment of the adventure.

What's Next

1. Characters with tracking skills can try to make a skill roll at -30% to uncover specific information about the battle. There are six sets of humanoid prints on the ground and the same in hoof prints from the robotic steeds; none leave the area. There is one area, near the dragon foot prints, covered in a great deal of blood. Observant characters will realize it is too much to be a single human. So unless this is the site of a blood sacrifice of several people, it must be Mearindhal's blood! By the looks of things, Sir Garrett got in a few good licks before he was taken.

2. The use of the psionic power of *object read* on the pieces of the borg or horses have a small chance (01-30%) of providing some mental snapshots of the battle. The image of a great horned dragon will be the most prominent. Energy bolts and scaled claws did the damage. All the knights fought bravely (including



Randall), but caught by surprise, they fell easily. If Sir Garrett's horse is found, the psychic can confirm that the knight *is* still alive!

3. Unknown to the players, after a week of torture, Sir Randall saved his own life by accepting Mearindhal as his master and betraying the other knights! Unfortunately, Randall promised he could get the majority of the townspeople to leave the fort. His attempts failed miserably (including a private discussion with the Captain to give up her foolish plans to send the strangers on a rescue mission). He's starting to get nervous and jumpy by the time they reach the base of the mountains. Despite his best efforts, Fort Mackenzie still stands strong and protected. Less than 10% of the people left after his dramatic warning, the rest have vowed to stand and fight. Randall knows if he does not come up with something fast, Old Mearindhal will have him for lunch. So he plans on leading the characters into a trap and then trying to escape back to the fort with a wild story to cover his treachery.

4. **The Cave.** Sir Randall knows of a cave that could be used as a dragon's lair (and which is in the opposite direction of the one identified by the wilderness scout). It is also near the ley line, which a dragon is likely to find attractive. Following Sir Randall's lead, they move eastward between a ley line (all practitioners of magic and psychics receive a 50% increase in duration and range) and the mountain range which he identifies as Cloud Peak.

Dark and threatening sky gives way as the wind howls down from the mountains and a huge squall begins to dump icy sleet on the characters. Sir Randall suggests pitching camp and waiting till the storm blows over, but will go along with the group without arguing. Within a quarter of an hour, he locates a large cave and motions the characters inside to gain shelter from the elements. If the player characters pitch camp, Randall will tell them that he'll scout ahead and be back shortly. He refuses any company. If they let him go unescorted, he will try to alert Mearindhal or Cloud to their presence and their plans to rescue the captives.

5. Regardless, the group is led to a cave. As the characters enter the mouth of the cave, a thunderous roar comes from high above their heads, somewhere (anywhere) in the peaks above. To make things worse, another roar sounds from within the cave. At the far end of the cavernous expanse, three serpentine necks wind through stalactites and stalagmites. At the end of each of the necks is a monstrous animal head; a lion, antelope and serpent. Our heroes are likely to think it's the three dragons (or other dragons if one or more were slain earlier) but they will be mistaken. It is one creature, a beast dragon (see **Rifts Conversion Book One** for complete details on this monster).

Sir Randall is nowhere to be seen.

Groksh, The Beast Dragon

The stupid beast had just recently adopted this cave as his new lair; Mearindhal has usurped his old home after soundly beating the beast to a pulp several weeks ago. In return for his life, Groksh has agreed to serve as one of Mearindhal's minions and patrols the mountain region near his "Master's" lair, killing

and eating all intruders. He was going to take a nice nap when Mearindhal's roar awakened him. A moment later, he/they caught the scent of intruders in his new home! All three of Groksh's heads are angry, tired, cranky and hungry. He will fight to the death. Need I say more?

Alignment: Diabolic

M.D.C.: Main Body: 250, Each Head has 40

Attributes: I.Q. 6 (lion head), 4 (antelope head), 2 (serpent head), M.A. 1, M.E. 8, P.S. 24, P.P. 12, P.E. 20, P.B. 4, Spd. 21

Horror Factor: 16 **P.P.E.:** 20

Natural Abilities: Each head has a separate brain and power; all work together as one.

Lion Head: Nightvision 40 feet (12.2 m), track by smell: 80% and impervious to psionics.

Antelope Head: Nightvision 40 feet (12.2 m) and impervious to magic.

Serpent head: Can see the invisible, infrared vision: 1200 feet (365 m), and is impervious to poison.

General: Prowl: 30%, climb/scale walls: 60%/50%, swim: 78%, bio-regenerate 2D6 M.D.C. per melee.

Skills of Note: Dragonese/Elf, Dwarven, Gobblely, American and Brodkil: 65% (guttural)

Combat: Nine (9!) attacks per melee! Each head directs and controls three attacks per melee.

Lion Head: Bite: 4D6 M.D.

Antelope Head: Bite: 1D6 M.D., head butt with horns: 2D8 M.D., or fire breath: 3D6 M.D. (range: 80 feet/24.4 m; can breathe twice per melee).

Serpent Head: Bite: 2D6 M.D., or toxic breath doing 6D6 S.D.C. damage to all who breathe it unless victim makes a saving throw versus poison (range: 40 feet/12.2 m, covers a 20 foot/6.1 m area).

Main Body/Claws: 3D6 M.D.

Bonuses: +3 to strike, +4 to parry, +6 to dodge, +4 on initiative, +6 to save versus poison and magic, +3 on all saving throws.

Magic: None

Psionics: None

Note: The beast dragon has had little time to plunder and destroy so there is little of value within the cave. The corners are littered with the bones of several animals and humanoids, including the remains of a ape-like humanoid wearing strange body armor (only if the characters are familiar with the Kitani will they realize what it is). A KEP Pump energy pistol (see *Rifts Atlantis*, pg. 137, for details) still lays in its rotting hand. The armor itself could be used if characters are desperate (it has 32 M.D.C. left), and has an attached jet pack (the jet pack has only 20% of its original M.D.C. (5 M.D.C.) left). There is a 25% chance it has a leak in its nuclear power core and is spewing out deadly amounts of radiation. Any character in sealed environmental armor will detect this.

The beast has a leather sack tied around the lion head's neck that holds 2D6x1000 credits in salvageable valuables (gold ore, jewelry and a couple pre-Rifts trinkets).

The Ascent — G.M. Data

As the beast dragon's last breath leaves its body, the squall outside lets up. The ground is wet and covered in a fresh, slushy snow. Two huge tracks like the ones at the clearing etch their way down the mountain face. Visibility is under 300 feet (91.4

m) as the wind whips the blowing snow around and flurries continue to fall from the sky.

A trace of blood and the absence of Sir Randall suggests that he's fallen prey to one of the dragons, perhaps Mearindhal himself. Without Randall to guide them, the group is on its own. They have an idea as to the location of the other cave (up) and they may be able to follow the occasional droplets of blood or a dragon footprint (touching down on the snowy ground for a moment) if the G.M. is in a generous mood.

- Mearindhal has indeed snared Sir Randall. He saw him with the group from a perch above and assumed the knight had betrayed him, hence the roar.
- Mearindhal knows that there are other humanoids with Randall; presumably a small group of knights. But in his overconfidence, he does not believe that they could possibly be a threat to him. In fact, he figures Groksh will finish them off, and if not, he'll deal with them when the time comes.
- In his arrogance, he has injured and stunned Sir Randall without giving him a chance to speak. The battered knight listens as the dragon taunts Sir Garrett about Randall and his plans for the destruction of Fort Mackenzie. He does not know that Mackenzie stands ready for him and is in for a nasty surprise.

If the characters have hover vehicles or jet packs, the ascent to Mearindhal's lair should be fairly easy. If they don't, it will take them a while and the vile monster will be gone when they arrive. If they are careful and not seen, the dragon will leave for a while, giving them an opportunity to see what's inside.

G.M. Data: The Dragon's Lair

The way up the cliff was not an easy trip. Whether the characters climbed or jet packed up, the howling winds are cold and strong. Roughly a 1000 feet (305 m) up the cliff face is a large ledge that appears to have been carved into the rock (approximately 50 feet/15.2 m wide and 2000 feet/610 m long). Following the ledge (they start at the far end), they see a cloud of steam rising from what might be a cavern. Drops of blood suggest they are on the right trail. The snow at the mouth of the cave seems to be melting and turn into steam. The air is almost tropical as waves of steam seem to exit the cave.

Cave Description: Read to the players. "The inside of the cave is immense. The structure seems to be almost melted into the rock itself. Piles of bones, both human and animal, litter the floor for several feet and then mixes with an immense treasure pile. Gold and gems rest alongside partial suits of body and power armor. A fortune in credits lay in front of you. To the left is Sir Randall, his face contorted in a mask of pure agony. His armor has been literally torn away and he has been beaten badly (his cyber-armor is down to 20 M.D.C.). Blood oozes from several cuts. Without proper medical attention, he will die in a matter of hours.

Sir Garrett and his two sons (treat them as 1st level Cyber-Knights; no psi-swords) are chained to the wall. All three have clearly endured severe torture. Sir Garrett will call out as soon as he sees the characters with his one good eye, the other has been gouged out by his enemy. The two youths are in only slightly better condition. Without psionic or magical healing, none of

them can climb down the mountain under their own power — the alternative is to carry them down. If this is the case, Sir Garrett warns the group to save themselves — to flee before Mearindhal returns.

It will only take a few minutes to free the trio. Once Sir Garrett is freed he will search the treasure pile for his rune sword, *Wyrmslayer*, so that he can finish something he should have done years ago (Sir Moorison's armor is down to 36 M.D.C. and he is weak and blind in one eye). He then sees his two sons and will help the characters get them out of the cave and onto the ledge. Sir Garrett will chide any character who sifts through the treasure pile unless it is for a better weapon to fight with.

At this time, any or all of the remaining hatchlings will return home to roost, see the intruders, and attack. They will attack to kill but Igneous and Ymir (if they still live) will teleport out if they are getting beaten too badly. Cloud will fight to protect "her treasure" and will sooner die than let the characters get her share of the loot!

Escape

Assuming our characters can defeat any of the hatchlings who might appear, the G.M. has a couple of options.

Option One: Our heroes escape with Sir Garrett, the two young knights and Sir Randall. They get back down the mountain and get safely back to the fort where there is much rejoicing. The return of Sir Garrett and the others, gives the villagers (and to a lesser degree, the knights) a morale boost and proves that the dragons are not all powerful. If they can be hurt and tricked, they can be defeated!

When Mearindhal returns and finds his prisoners gone he flies into a berserker rage and swoops down on Fort Mackenzie! At this stage he is crazed and will fight to the death! An epic battle is the conclusion of this adventure. If the good guys are losing the reinforcements sent by Sir Coake could arrive in the nick of time. Or despite their heroic efforts, the Fort falls. Do the player characters die heroes or escape to reap their own vengeance later? **Option Two:** Mearindhal returns before they can escape! The dragon can be at full strength and angry or injured.

If injured, it's because he's just finished battle with the reinforcements sent to Fort Mackenzie by Lord Coake. He has successfully ambushed them (perhaps with one of the other dragons who died in the conflict) and slaughtered them! However, he has paid the price and is severely hurt. Even with his bio-regenerative powers, he only has 35% of his original M.D.C. (875; less if the G.M. wants), but is regenerating at an astounding rate of 1D4x10 per minute (every 4 melee rounds). His P.P.E. is also down to a mere 180 points. Our heroes will never have a better chance at slaying him than they do right now! Sir Garrett will realize this and attack. The dragon will be surprised by this turn of events, so our heroes automatically have *initiative*. The dragon will be enraged beyond belief and will fight to the death. Mearindhal is an irrational beast driven by hatred. There is no reasoning with him. The only thing that will sate him is the death of everyone within the cave. However, because of his unthinking rage, his attacks will be straight forward and he will forget about teleporting to save himself. No fancy tricks, although he will use magic (its use is second nature to him). He wants blood! This should allow the player characters to use his own anger against him and defeat him.

The battle can go as hard or easy as the Game Master wants, or as the dice happen to roll. Mearindhal is an adult dragon and should not go easy. On the other hand, the players should never have the impression that they are hopelessly overpowered with no chance of survival.

If Mearindhal should escape, he will return as a future nemesis for the player characters and will continue his efforts to destroy the Cyber-Knights and enslave the valley.

Note: A repentant Sir Randall may do something heroic to help the group or his fellow knights, even if it costs him his life.

The Aftermath

Depending on how things unfold, the characters should have an opportunity to go back to get the treasure. Whether or not they share any of it with the knights or the villagers is left strictly up to them. However, if even one of the hatchlings survives, that dragon will have beat them to the treasure, taken 80% (all the good stuff) and be long gone before they arrive.

Mearindhal's hoard consists of 500,000 credits in gold, gems and jewelry, 40,000 credits' worth of pre-Rifts artifacts, 400,000 credits' worth of weapons and armor, and 1D4 magic items (G.M.'s choice of what they are; nothing too powerful). See the *Palladium RPG, 2nd Edition*, for a complete listing of magical items and *Rifts Conversion Book 1*, pg. 53-54, for conversion notes.

Possible Adventure Ideas

In addition, if the G.M. wants to, he or she can continue the story line with the following possibilities

1. Claim Jumpers: A group of bandits found the dragon's treasure and are claiming it for their own. They will shoot any trespassers. Do the players try to run off the claim jumpers or approach in peace and work out a deal?

2. To Protect and Serve: Fort Mackenzie and many of the villages and towns are in ruins and their defenses in tatters. The player characters are asked if they'd like to stay on awhile and help the knights of Fort Mackenzie rebuild and defend the people from others. The Moorisons' would consider it an honor if they would. All sorts of adventures can unfold under this premise.

3. Rest in Peace: Reports around the towns and fort have said that Sir Randall's ghost has been seen wandering the area moaning and wailing. The ghost grieves for its betrayal of Moorison and his fellow Cyber-Knights. Can the player characters put it to rest?

4. Fact or fraud? A self-serving and evil wizard has set up shop in one of the newly rebuilt towns and is using magic to create convincing illusions of the famed Mearindhal. After several attempts by knights and the towns' militias' to destroy it, he tries to profess himself as the new protector of the Big Horn Mountains. Can the characters uncover his ruthless scheme?

5. More Monsters! Recent accounts from local wilderness scouts say that a force of 1D4x10 Xiticix warriors are aggressively destroying any humanoid life in their path, and unless the creatures change course, the valley is directly in their path. Worse, this could just be an advanced scout group for a larger force.

Non-Player Characters of Note

Sir Kay Varen

Sir Kay was young when Mearindhal and his legion of D-bee followers rolled across the Big horn Mountains killing and destroying everything in their path. After Mearindhal and his minions were defeated, he looked to Sir Garrett as a god. For the next twenty years, Kay has worked as a champion of justice and peace alongside his childhood hero.

When Garrett rode out to slay the dragon, he left Sir Kay behind to help his wife run and protect the fort. He takes his job very seriously and will do everything in his power to protect those within it. He is ready to sacrifice his life or trade his own for the protection of others. No one could find a more noble person.

Alignment: Principled

S.D.C./Hit Points: 70 S.D.C. and 39 hit Points
M.D.C.: A.R. 16, 50 M.D.C.

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.A. 17, M.E. 24, P.S. 20, P.P. 14, P.E. 20, P.B. 13, Spd. 19.

Disposition: Sir Kay acts just like one of the knights of old. He is noble, courageous, kind, gentle and honest. He is a rock of strength and support for those who know him and he is respected and loved by the people he protects. Like the other knights of this region, he cares for the people in the area like a father protecting his children. He would not hesitate to sacrifice his own life to save those he protects.

Level of Experience: Sixth level Cyber-knight.

P.P.E.: 17

Natural Abilities: Psi-Sword: 3D6 M.D.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Energy - all, W.P. Sword, W.P. Bolt-Action Rifle, W.P. Blunt, W.P. Archery & Targeting, W.P. Chain

Skills of Note: American: 98%, detect ambush: 60%, tracking: 55%, horsemanship: 75%, land navigation: 68%, literacy american: 75%, lore: demons & monsters: 70%, radio: basic: 70%, wilderness survival: 55%.

Combat: Five physical or psionic attacks per melee.

Bonuses: +1 to initiative, +6 to pull/roll with punch, fall or impact, +5 vs psionics, critical strike on an unmodified 18-20, 45% trust or intimidate, +5 S.D.C. damage bonus, +2 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge, +10% coma/death, +3 poison & magic, entangle.

Magic: None, other than the applications of magic in combat.

Psionics: Mind block, see the invisible and summon inner strength I.S.P. 48

Weapons of note: C-14 "Firebreather", Wilk's 320 laser pistol, silver-plated broadsword and a .45 with explosive ammo.

Armor: A suit of silver crusader armor (55 M.D.C.).

Combat Notes: Sir Kay knows how to use a variety of different weapon types but prefers one on one combat with his foes. If at all possible, he will engage his combatant in combat with his psi-sword.

Capt. Jainine Moorison

Jainine Moorison was born in New Lazlo during the height of its construction. Her parents were scholars from the great University of Lazlo and educated her well. She had full access to her parents' library as well as the great treasure-trove of books that were found in the ruins of Ann Arbor. She has met Erin Tarn (who is one of her role-models) and lives by the ideal that all people, humans and D-bees, should live free.

When she was twenty, she set out for the Coalition States to see first-hand the atrocities committed by the government against its people. Once inside the Burbs, she learned a hard lesson as she saw the poor, illiterate people who eked out their existence in the slums. Horrified at what she saw, she began to secretly teach several groups of people to read and write; a crime punishable by death within the Coalition States.

Within a matter of months, she was branded a dangerous subversive and was wanted for "questioning." Staying one step ahead of the dog packs, she fled Chi-Town and headed west with Coalition troops on her heels.

After a long and tiring journey, she and her companions reached the Big Horn mountain region. A sudden attack by Xitix sent them reeling as they were pushed back into a gorge. Then the Cyber-Knights came. Riding on hovercycles and mechanical steeds, the knights, led by a young Sir Garrett Moorison, rushed the Xitix and won the day. Sir Garrett also won the heart of Jainine. The knights took them back to Fort Mackenzie where Jainine fell in love with Garrett. Within the year the two were married and she began to teach the people of the region to read, write, count and to fight for freedom and what was right.

Alignment: Principled

S.D.C./Hit Points: 31 S.D.C. and 47 hit points.

M.D.C.: By armor only.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.A. 23, M.E. 12, P.S. 11, P.P. 15, P.E. 11, P.B. 20, Spd. 29.

Disposition: Jainine is a kind and compassionate person who cares deeply for all living thing. She has the spirit, courage and integrity of a knight. She abhors brutality and senseless violence and will not strike another living thing unless it is in self-defense. The consummate diplomat, she will try to defuse any situation before it turns ugly. Recently though she has been presented with a number of situations where she has had to order the death of several beings (creatures and monsters terrorizing the countryside). She knows in her heart that it was the right thing to do but it pains her deeply.

Level of Experience: Eighth level rouge scholar.

P.P.E.: 13

Natural Abilities: None

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. energy pistol, W.P. knife, W.P. revolver and automatic pistol.

Skills of Note: American: 98%, Dragonese: 85%, literacy: American: 98%, math: basic: 98%, anthropology: 65%, archeology: 65%, holistic medicine: 65%, first aid: 90%, pathology: 85%, prowl: 60%, and wilderness survival: 65%.

Combat: Three physical or psionic attacks per melee.

Bonuses: +3 to pull/roll with punch, fall or impact, critical strike on 19-20, 50% trust or intimidate, +2 S.D.C. damage bonus, +1 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, 50% to charm or impress.

Magic: None, other than the applications of magic in combat.

Psionics: Minor Psionic: telepathy and total recall, I.S.P. 48

Weapons of note: Stun Gun, NG-56 Northern Gun light ion pistol, vibro-knife and two NG smoke grenades.

Armor: A suit of huntsman padded armor (40 M.D.C.) with armor of ithan and chameleon (at 6th level strength).

Combat Notes: Jainine is a charismatic leader and diplomat. She is strong, decisive and compassionate. If forced into combat she will use a stun gun first, trying to subdue her opponent. If that does not work, she will use the ion pistol to wound, not to kill. Sir Kay is usually nearby to protect her.

Sir Randall Aswell

A sickly child when he was young, Randall was beaten on a regular basis by the cruel children in the small town where he grew up. When he heard the tales of the great knights of old riding out across the western plains, dispensing justice and having great adventures, he knew what he wanted to do with his life. Already a latent psionic, the young boy tracked down a Cyber-Knight and petitioned to be his squire. The knight agreed and used the young boy like a slave while teaching him the finer aspects of being a knight-errant. Once he manifested his psi-sword, the young knight drained all the training he could out of his mentor and then killed him in his sleep. Tired of being a servant, he set out into the world to make a name for himself.

Sir Randall was lucky that he happened upon one of Garrett's patrols when he wandered into Montana, as he was near death from lack of food and battle wounds. The knights took him back to Fort Mackenzie where he was healed and then stationed for the next three years.

Sir Randall pleaded for his life when he fell into the hands of Mearindhal, who saw in this pathetic excuse for a worm a potential use in his revenge. He gave Randall his life in return for his loyalty. Seeing no other option, the knight agreed and plans were set into motion.

Alignment: Anarchist

S.D.C./Hit Points: 86 S.D.C. and 36 hit points.

M.D.C.: A.R. 16, 50 M.D.C.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.A. 15, M.E. 12, P.S. 21, P.P. 21, P.E. 20, P.B. 11, Spd. 25.

Disposition: Sir Randall is a coward at heart. He will be the first to give an order to retreat and the first to guard the rear in a fight. That's not saying he cannot hold his own, because he can. He prefers to let others do the dirty work while he takes the glory. He loves his position as a knight and uses his title and power whenever possible to make himself look good. The ordeal with Mearindhal has recently given him a twinge of guilt and the beginning of a conscience. Sir Garrett will forgive him and give him a chance to prove himself. What he does with that chance remains to be seen.

Level of Experience: Third level Cyber-Knight.

P.P.E.: 34

Natural Abilities: Psi-Sword: 2D6 M.D.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. energy pistol, W.P. energy rifle, W.P. knife and W.P. sword.

Skills of Note: American: 98%, horsemanship: 63%, land navigation: 56%, literacy American: 60%, lore: demons & mon-

sters: 55%, radio: basic: 55%, prow: 35%, intelligence: 45%, concealment: 28%, running, and sniper.

Combat: Three physical or psionic attacks per melee.

Bonuses: +1 to initiative, +6 to pull/roll with punch, fall or impact, +6 S.D.C. damage bonus, +5 to strike, +7 to parry and dodge, +10% coma/death, and +3 poison & magic.

Magic: None, other than the applications of magic in combat.

Psionics: Mind block, sixth sense and summon inner strength, I.S.P. 25

Weapons of note: NG-57 heavy-duty ion blaster, NG-LG6 Northern Gun laser rifle & grenade launcher, silver-plated long sword and four CS plasma grenades.

Armor: A suit of black crusader armor (55 M.D.C.) with invisibility (superior) at 8th level strength.

Combat Notes: Sir Randall will be the first to guard the rear against possible attack (though he will not let it be obvious). If forced to fight, he will use ranged weapons first and then his psi-sword to finish opponents off. He is not above putting a couple of shots in an opponent's back if needed.

Sir Garrett Moorison

Sir Garrett grew up on a small farm in the state of North Dakota, near the old Canadian Empire border. By the age of sixteen he was the head of his household and forced to take care of his three siblings. During a particularly harsh winter, his farm was attacked by a group of D-Bee marauders led by a young dragon hatchling. His farm was sacked and he was nearly killed. His sisters were carried off and his younger brother was killed trying to stop them. Alone and near death, he was approached by a group of mounted men who appeared to be knights out of old story-books he had seen. They bandaged his wounds and took him to the nearest town. After he recovered, he convinced the knights of his usefulness and went with them as a tracker and guide.

They picked up the monsters' trail fairly quick, as the beasts had made little attempt to hide themselves. The knights found the dragon and his allies and a ferocious battle ensued. The six knights slew the dragon and captured four of the bandits, but it was too late for Garrett's sisters. He found their broken and battered bodies just outside of camp. After burying them, he grabbed one of their energy handguns and went to kill the D-bees responsible. The knights stopped him and showed him the error of his ways. With their counsel, he vowed to protect the weak and less fortunate. With his great psionic potential, the Cyber-Knights took young Garrett Moorison to a hidden monastery where he was taught to harness his psionic powers for good.

Once his training as a knight was complete, he rode out with five other knights into the state of Montana where supernatural creatures were rampant. The knights rode into the territory and disposed of a number of evil and vile creatures before they came to a small group of towns and village by the Big Horn mountains. The people were terrified and had been cowed into submission. Garrett urged his leader, Sir Derek Bearclaw, to help these people. In a series of small battles, the Cyber-Knights turned the tide and the people began to retake their lands. Hope flourished.

In one last attempt to take back the town, the leader of the supernatural creatures, a dragon named Mearindhal, attacked. Like a fierce tornado, the dragon ripped through the town, destroying everything. The Cyber-Knights regrouped and attacked the fiend again and again. In what Sir Garrett thought would be their final battle, Sir Derek was killed, and Sir Garrett led the charge that gravely wounded Mearindhal. The dragon begged for mercy, swearing that it would repent its evil ways and leave forever. The dragon convinced the knight of his sincerity by opening himself up to a death blow, saying, "I understand if you cannot believe me. Make my death fast and merciful." Sir Garrett showed the beast mercy and allowed it to leave. Unfortunately, it was all a meaningless ploy by Mearindhal, who has been festering with dreams of revenge for these past 20 years.

Garrett returned triumphant and his remaining two companions helped the town to rebuild. After a number of years patrolling the area, Garrett returned and set up a small monastery and base over the ruins of an old, pre-Rifts, American military base. For the next fifteen years, Garrett Moorison trained promising recruits to become Cyber-Knights and vowed to keep the area safe from harm.

When Mearindhal recently returned, slaughtering dozens and screaming for revenge, Sir Garrett felt responsible and set off to finish what he should have done so many years before.

Alignment: Scrupulous

S.D.C./Hit Points: 57 S.D.C. and 51 hit points.

M.D.C.: A.R. 16, 50 M.D.C.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.A. 22, M.E. 20, P.S. 19, P.P. 17, P.E. 18, P.B. 18, Spd. 17.

Disposition: Garrett is a kind, compassionate and strong leader who puts the people he protects above all else. His single-minded dedication to the protection of all free people from the enslavement of the supernatural has made him a legend and a hero among the locals. Unlike so many others, he refuses to acknowledge his living legend status and lives a humble existence. Doing what he can to alleviate the pain and suffering of those unable to defend or help themselves has made him a beloved hero. His loyalty to his people and fellow knights is unmatched. As a leader, there is none to match him, unless it's his wife; he is also a competent strategist and tactician, and fearless in battle.

Horror Factor: 10/awe to everyone within forty miles of Fort Mackenzie.

Level of Experience: 9th

P.P.E.: 23

Natural Abilities: Psi-Sword: 4D6 M.D.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Bolt-Action Rifle, W.P. Energy Rifle, W.P. Knife, W.P. Sword, W.P. Automatic Pistol, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Heavy Energy and W.P. Blunt.

Skills of Note: American: 96%, horsemanship: 87%, land navigation: 80%, literacy American: 90%, lore: demons & monsters: 85%, climbing: 90%, paramedic: 90%, prow: 65%, wilderness survival: 65%, lore: d-bees: 35%, radio: basic: 85%, tracking: 70%.

Combat: 5 physical or psionic attacks per melee.

Bonuses: +1 to initiative, +5 to pull/roll with punch, fall or impact, critical strike on 18-20, paired weapons, +3 vs psionics, 70% trust or intimidate, +4 S.D.C. damage bonus, +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +6% coma/death, +2 poison & magic, 40% to charm or impress.

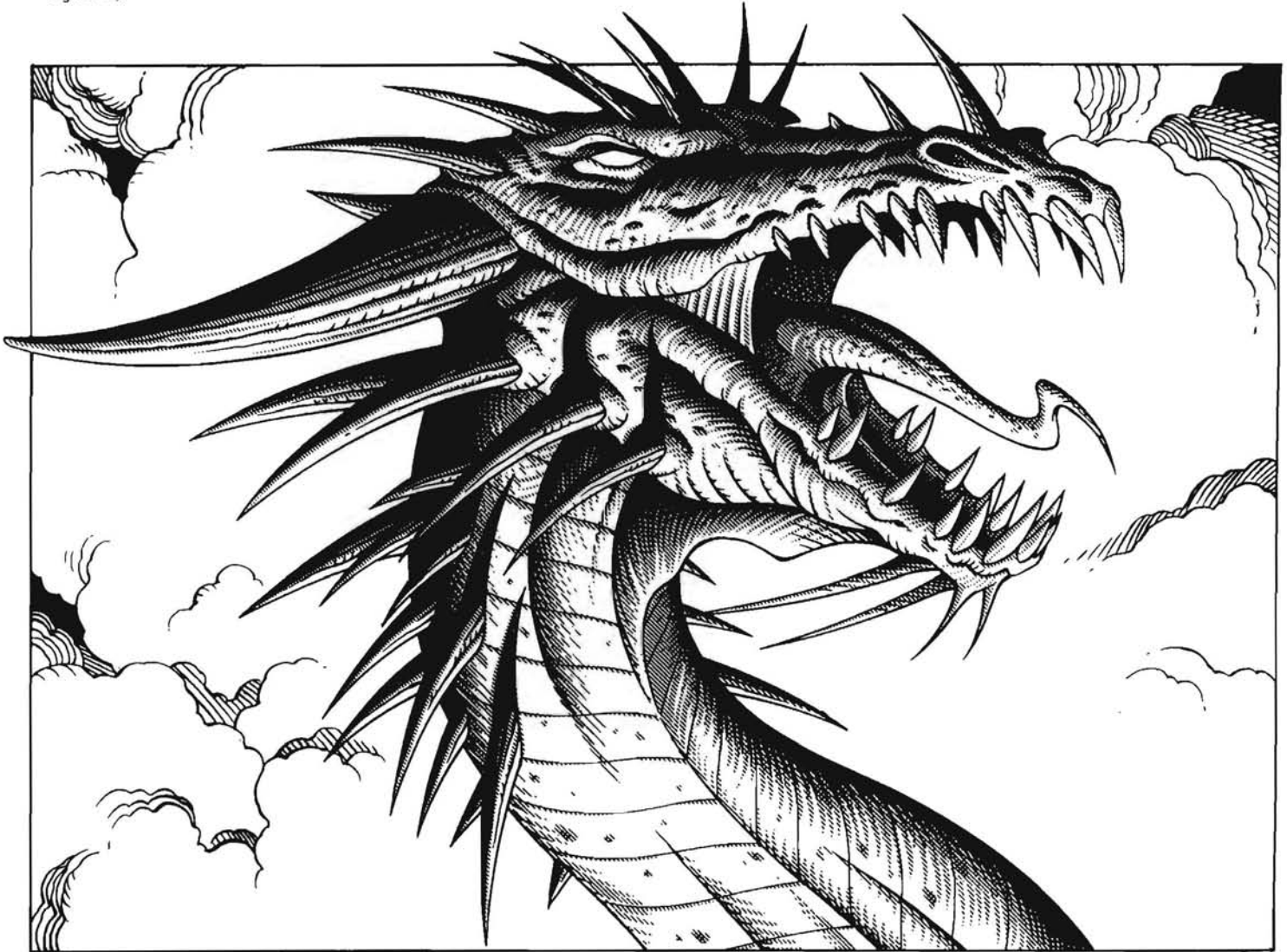
Magic: None, other than the applications of magic in combat.

Psionics: Mind block, sense evil and sixth sense. I.S.P. 62

Weapons of note: NG-57 heavy ion blaster, NG-LG6 Northern Gun laser rifle & grenade launcher and a magical broadsword named "Wyrm Slayer" (does 3D6+3 M.D., is eternally sharp and does triple damage against dragons!); the weapon also prevents a dragon from immediately regenerating the damage inflicted by the sword (takes 2D4 hours to regenerate those injuries).

Armor: A suit of white gladiator armor (70 M.D.C.) with invulnerability (6th level strength).

Combat Notes: Garrett will take charge during battle and will always be first in line to attack or draw the enemy off guard. His battle experience has made him a deadly fighter but his main goal is always to see his people make it out alive.



Mearindhal

Mearindhal was the terror in a small region of the Palladium World known as the Old Kingdom Mountains for over three hundred years. After several failed attempts to take over the region, he gathered up a small group of supernatural beings and made hit and run raids across the lowlands. Success after success fueled his ego and he began to take foolish risks. He attacked a fortified city, only to be driven back by its champions, a trio of eleven warriors and their army. His forces were scattered to the winds and he was left with the mocking calls of the elves and humans to remind him of his defeat.

Fleeing back into the mountains, he plotted his revenge against the town and those who mocked him. He delved deeply into the realm of magic and began learning the arts from captured mages from the Kingdom of Bizantium. As his knowledge

grew, so did his lust for power. He wanted more and more. After learning about dimensional travel he spent four hundred years searching for its secrets. He strived to become the most powerful wizard the world had ever known.

Once Mearindhal harnessed the power of dimensional magic he decided to explore other worlds and wander the Megaverse. Upon arriving on Rifts Earth, he realized the incredible magical energies on the planet immediately transformed him into a near invulnerable god (or so he believed). The humans lacked willpower and fled like bleating sheep before his majesty. This is where he would rule.

He searched through the wilds of Montana and the Dakotas, gathering a force of subservient supernatural fiends and monsters that conducted raids in those areas, as well as western Can-

ada. Eventually, he settled in the Big Horn mountains, enslaving the populace and destroying at whim. It was when a group of strange knights rode into town that trouble began.

Dozens of knights fell before him, except one annoying human. He didn't realize until it was too late, that he had nearly exhausted his supply of magical energy. In a titanic battle he was defeated and nearly slain by the young Cyber-Knight, Sir Garrett. He was able to trick the knight into sparing his life, but the defeat has eaten away at him ever since. Mearindhal considers Sir Garrett his arch-enemy and has sworn vengeance against him, his family and all who follow him.

Alignment: Miscreant

M.D.C.: 2500

Attributes: I.Q. 24, M.A. 27, M.E. 23, P.S. 45, P.P. 17, P.E. 21, P.B. 23, Spd. 50 running, 170 flying.

Disposition: Mearindhal is a power-hungry megalomaniac with delusions of godhood, and those are his good qualities. He has become obsessed with revenge upon anyone who he believes has caused him any sort of setback, no matter how little. In his mind, the murder of a servant, even in self-defense, would be equal to attacking him.

Horror Factor: 18

Size: 20 feet tall (6.1 m), 70 feet long (21.3 m), with a wingspan of 120 feet (36.5 m)

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 100 feet (30.5 m), excellent color vision, see the invisible, turn invisible at will, bio-regeneration 1D4×10 M.D. per minute, resistant to fire and cold (does half damage, includes M.D. magic fire and plasma energy), teleport self: 92% (5 miles/8 km every other melee), dimensional teleport: 52%, and metamorphosis at will (indefinite time period).

Skills of note: Basic and advanced mathematics: 98%, literate in Dragonese/Elven, Spanish, American, Dwarven, Wolfen and

Gobbely at 98%, can speak Dragonese/Elven, American, Spanish, Dwarven, Wolfen, Gobbely and Techno-can at 98%, lore: demon & monster: 98%, lore: faerie: 90%, prowl: 95%, radio: basic : 98% and W.P. sword: +3 to strike and parry.

Combat: Eight physical attacks per melee, or four fire breath and four physical, or three by magic. Favorite weapon is magic.

Damage: Restrained punch does 1D6×10+30 S.D.C., full strength punch does 6D6 M.D., power punch does 1D6×10+20 M.D. (counts as two attacks), kick or slashing tail attack does 6D6 M.D., bite: 6D6 M.D., or fire breath: range: 100 feet (30.5 m), six feet wide (1.8 m), inflicts 6D6 M.D. and can be used as many as four times per melee.

Bonuses: +10% skill bonus, 92% trust or intimidate, +8 vs psionics, +30 S.D.C. damage bonus, +4 to strike, +5 parry and dodge, +4 initiative, +4 to pull punch, +12% coma/death, +7 to save vs poison & magic, 65% to charm or impress and a +4 on all saving throws.

Magic: All spell magic from levels 1-15 equal to a 10th level practitioner of magic! **P.P.E.:** 1000

Psionics: All physical, sensitive and healing psi-powers, plus bio-manipulation and psi-sword. **I.S.P.:** 140

Combat Notes: Mearindhal is sly and cunning even for a dragon. When Mearindhal appears, he will always take the form of a great horned dragon hatchling at less than half his full size so his opponents will underestimate him. He uses his magic at whim and is arrogant and overconfident. Despite all of his cunning, guile and intelligence, he is a creature bent on revenge. He does not care who or what he destroys in the process of exacting his justice against all of the Cyber-Knights, Moorison in particular.

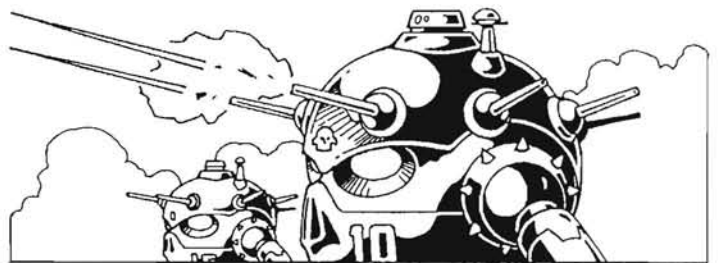
Dark Secrets

An Adventure by Kevin Siembieda

The Setting

Something strange is going on in territories *near*, but outside of the "official" Coalition States and their territories. It appears that a group or several groups of mysterious bandits have been ravaging the countryside. That, in and of itself, is not strange, there always seems to be some human or D-bee misanthropes looking for trouble, stealing from others or seeking to conquer somebody else. The strange part is that these scoundrels appear, do their dirty-work, and seem to vanish off the face of the earth. Furthermore, there is no apparent rhyme or reason to their "raids." They have attacked D-bees, mercenaries, villages, towns, caravans, and monsters for the sheer pleasure of battle. Valuables are seldom taken and no land or property ever claimed. Nor is there any connection between the victims. These so-called "Skeleton Raiders" attack, destroy and vanish!

Their antics have elicited a frenzy of speculation based on a combination of observations, rumors, hearsay and coincidence. Whether any of these rumors are true, only time will tell.



This adventure can take place in wilderness areas in Missouri, Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas, away from Coalition State military outposts, bases, or strongholds.

The player characters can be simply passing through an area and get drawn into a conflict with the *Skeleton Raiders*, also known as the Black Destroyers, Black Death and the Death's Head gang. The player group could be attacked at random or stumble into an ongoing raid against a D-bee band, community, mercenaries or fellow adventurers. In the alternative, the group may be the protectors of a community or caravan that is attacked, or they may have come to the region to investigate the stories about these mystery men.



The Coalition

Conspiracy Theory

The idea that the Coalition States are somehow involved in all this skullduggery is a favorite theory among conspiracy fans and those frequently persecuted by the CS. There are at least ten variations on this theory, but the bottom line is: The Coalition States are covertly building an advanced army and secretly testing weapons and equipment in remote areas around the Mid-western States. To support their claims they point to the following:

1. All the attackers wore body armor reminiscent of the Coalition States "Dead Boy" armor, although, admittedly with striking differences. Even many who would like to believe that the CS is up to something have argued that the armor is extremely different.

True, it has the "death's head" motif, and true, the armor is black, but the design is quite a departure from the famous Dead Boy armor. The helmet has a large visor area for the eyes (offering a greater range of peripheral vision), the head/helmet is more skull-like and frightening, the skeleton design is much more pronounced, with actual design patterns to indicate bones and a spinal column; even the armored plates have a more skeleton-like appearance. Hence the increasingly popular nickname of "Skeleton Raiders." Furthermore, the armor seems a bit more sleek and mobile than the CS designs, and is considerably more resistant to mega-damage (has more M.D.C.).

Those who support the Coalition Conspiracy theory, counter with the argument that these are advanced weapons and armor for a more powerful and deadly army. They are quick to point to the Coalition States' more aggressive policies against Tolkeen and other lands bordering on CS territory.

2. Although usually away from CS territory and "known" military bases, Coalition troops have been on maneuvers or nearby (within 500 miles/800 km) in 86% of the cases! Furthermore, in nearly every incident, an unusually high number of Death's Head transports (capable of concealing large number of troops) were part of the CS military operation in that area. This could explain how the raiders seem to vanish, they rendezvous with the giant transports! After all, nobody questions the Coalition States!

3. Although some attacks by these "Skeleton Raiders" have occurred in CS held territory, they are always in remote areas and have *NEVER* been directed at the Coalition's military, communities or its human citizens.

4. Most (but not all) attacks have been against D-bee and free-thinking societies. Except for two notable exceptions, all such attacks have been leveled against non-humans. The two exceptions: 1) an encampment of mercenaries hired by Tolkeen, and 2) a town known to supply and harbor members of the Federation of Magic; both known enemies of the Coalition States!

5. Most (but not all) acts of violence have been without provocation. In many instances no valuables were taken.

6. Most (but not all) acts of violence seem to be completely random and/or without motive — other than to fight or destroy.

7. No witnesses are left at the scene. Entire villages have been obliterated and every man, woman and child have been slain.

8. The attackers have never left behind any casualties or equipment. Why so careful if they didn't have something to hide?

9. The few surviving victims of these attacks tend to mysteriously disappear. Two (nonhumans) have been arrested by the CS for crimes against the State.

10. Except for the Coalition State of Free Quebec (the furthest away from the actual incidents), the Coalition government does not seem to be concerned.

11. The Coalition States have acknowledged "hearsay reports" from outlying wilderness communities, but report that they have had no contact with the so-called Skeleton Raiders. "After a thorough investigation, we have found no evidence to support the existence or activities of a threatening force from another dimension. Rift activity has been light to moderate. Those who suggest otherwise are alarmists and rabble-rousers."

The CS propaganda machine routinely suggests that these "reports, rumors and wild imaginings" are the result of unsubstantiated paranoia, mass hysteria, coincidence, D-bee activity, the deliberate acts of terrorist groups trying to instigate conflict between the CS and other communities, and swamp gas. However, in an act of good faith and to help allay fears, the Coalition government has increased its patrols into outlying areas, has mobilized 80,000 troops, and is establishing new border outposts to create a sense of increased security in the areas most troubled by these "phantom" raiders. This course of action has only served to stimulate more speculation that the CS is involved or is using the situation to more firmly entrench itself along its borders.

Corroborating Rumors & Innuendo of CS involvement:

- **Rumor:** Fort El Dorado, in Arkansas, has found a cure for the slow death caused by Juicer augmentation. If true, a Juicer's life could be extended for decades.
- **Rumor:** The Coalition State of Chi-Town has been funding experimentation with Juicer technology at *Fort El Dorado*. Some rumors have even suggested that Chi-Town is building an army of Juicers! Of course, Emperor Prosek denies such allegations noting that Juicer augmentation is illegal in the Coalition States.

Innuendo: Fort El Dorado has been engaged in Juicer experimentation which offers new types of chemical augmentation. The CS, a strong ally, has not publicly condemned this "illegal" and spurious form of augmentation.

Innuendo: Fort El Dorado is an outspoken supporter and ally of the Coalition States, particularly of Chi-Town and Emperor Prosek.

- **Rumor:** The Coalition States is considering "officially" allowing cyborgs into their armed forces, and have been conducting experimentation in bionic augmentation for over a year.
- **Rumor:** Triax and the New German Republic are helping the Coalition States to build their cyborg army.

Innuendo: Increased trade with the New German Republic and the outlawing of the independent sale of Triax weapons, cybernetics and robotics.

- **Rumor:** A pair of wilderness scouts reported seeing Skeleton Raiders rendezvousing with CS troops.

Innuendo: The two scouts were found a few days later, torn to pieces by a pack of wild animals, probably wolves — or was it an attack by a CS Dog Pack?

- **Rumor:** A Minnesota farmer and his son, reported seeing a pair of huge transport ships. At first they thought they were Coalition Death's Head Transports, but realized they were distinctly different when the ships passed overhead (without incident).

Innuendo: New Coalition war machines undergoing field testing in remote and hostile territories.

- **Rumor:** A Minnesota Xiticix hive was attacked by the so-called Skeleton or Death's Head Raiders. Unsubstantiated reports tell of a well organized army equipped with hover vehicles, sky cycles, and armored vehicles. According to at least one version of the story, this army swept down and engaged the insectoids in a battle that lasted for three days. 100 human and D-bee Xiticix captives were said to have been slaughtered by the raiders as they rushed forward to embrace their liberators. One alleged survivor claims that loudspeakers on one of the airships blared: "No witnesses. No witnesses." This survivor has since disappeared without a trace.

Innuendo: A CS armored division (5160 troops) was on maneuvers only 100 miles (160 km) away and did not come to investigate. An official spokesperson claims the Coalition troops are not aware of any "incident" involving the Xiticix and that such reports are unsubstantiated rumors.

Innuendo: CS Special Forces engaged in a secret operation; perhaps the field testing of new war machines.

Other Popular Theories

Dimensional raiders using hit and run tactics. Where do they go? To another dimension, of course. The answer seems obvious, at least those who ascribe to this theory.

Invaders from another world. Many fear that these raiders are an advanced force from a much larger invasion force from another world. Their seemingly incomprehensible actions and selections of targets is either their trying to test our strengths and weaknesses, or that they think in ways humans can't understand. This also explains how they "disappear," they Rift back to their homeworld.

The Naruni Scam. Some have speculated these black clad criminals are actually a secret Naruni force who enters an area, stirs up trouble — creating an atmosphere of fear and thus a market for weapons and even mercenaries — and then vanish, while the Naruni profit. Where do they vanish to? To whatever dimension the damn Naruni come from! Heck, they may be the Naruni salesmen in disguise. If this theory isn't correct, then why do the Naruni "always" seem to show up right afterward, offering the sale of weapons and security systems or the services of mercenaries?

Truth be told, the Naruni don't "always" show up. In fact, they have shown up to hawk their wares in less than one out of ten incidents. There is no evidence whatsoever that the Naruni

are involved. They are just unscrupulous opportunists who keep an ear out for incidents such as these. It's also interesting to note that the Naruni have come on the scene only in areas where they already have a presence (a clever ploy to throw off suspicion is the claim of anti-Naruni groups).

The Naruni insist that it's the other weapon manufacturers who are behind these acts of violence in an effort to discredit them! Naruni Enterprises denies any wrongdoing.

The Skeleton Raiders are Coalition Troops from a parallel dimension. This is perhaps one of the most outlandish theories, but among the most popular. This would explain why the CS troops and territories have not been targeted, attacks directed against nonhumans, the Death's Head/skeleton motif, and how they disappear. A variation of this theory is that the CS of Rifts Earth has made an alliance with their CS counterparts in the parallel dimension.

Possible Encounters, Adventure Plots & Ideas

In this air of paranoia, all sorts of encounters and adventure are possible.

The Coalition

The player characters hear gunfire and an explosion in the distance. Smoke rises above the tree line, marking the location. Our heroes arrive within a few minutes to find a squadron of CS troops (in standard gear) standing over the still smoldering remains of a band of D-bees. The CS troopers respond to the characters by pointing their weapons at them.

Each group may assume the other side is responsible for this carnage! In reality, both the Coalition troops and the player characters are innocent of any wrongdoing. Both simply were in the area and responded to investigate the sounds of combat. However ...

If the player characters jump to conclusions and attack, they will become embroiled in a deadly firefight. CS troops will assume that they are bandits responsible for this battle moments earlier and fight them without mercy. The CS forces include three 3rd level Dog Boys, two 2nd level grunts, two 3rd level SAMAS, and a Psi-Stalker officer; all are heavily armed. If these two groups fight, the real perpetrators will slip away unseen.

If the player characters hold their fire, look around and ask questions, they will realize that none of the CS soldiers' weapons are hot (i.e. haven't been fired), their armor shows no sign of being involved in a recent battle and they are as startled as the player group. If given the time, the CS soldiers will realize the same is true of the player characters. Both sides should quickly realize the other is not involved and, in the heat of the moment, cooperate in trying to figure out what happened, something like this:

CS officer: "This battle lasted a while. Whoever jumped these guys were pros; well organized, well trained ..."

Player character: "Yeah, well they ended it with a fusion block from the size of the crater, fallen trees and residual traces of radiation."



CS trooper: "He's right, sir. Looks like a standard type two block."

Player character: "Take a look at these footprints. Don't recognize them, but they're not Coalition. I guess you guys are clean, after all."

CS officer: "Thanks, we'll all sleep easier knowing (a mutie, freak, D-bee, rogue, etc.) like you has cleared our good name."

Other character (CS or Player): "Look at this! I think our perps took off this way. Some of them must of been hurt. Look at the blood ... and these marks in the ground, like somebody was dragging a body or two."

CS Dog Boy: "Yeah, human blood. No alien or supernatural beastie did this and popped outta here. Oh, yeah, I've got their scent! Clean, clear, fresh. They're only a few minutes ahead of us. I say we get us some meat, sir!"

CS officer: "Let's do it." His glance at the player characters as he says this is the only invitation they're going to get.

If the player characters follow along, the CS troopers will not complain. Considering the rumors, they're kind of glad to have the extra support. If the characters don't come along there'll be a firefight moments later and unless they come running, they'll miss the action.

The fight! The SAMAS take the high ground at tree-top level, trying to peer through the trees to the ground below. The rest run through the underbrush, spread apart to avoid getting

caught in a bunch. Moments later, rail gun and particle beam gunfire blasts through several trees! All characters must dodge to avoid 2D4 trees from falling on top of them (each player must roll at least once; two or three times is not unreasonable).

If any character or CS trooper fails their roll, the character will take 1D6 M.D. and will be pinned! Does everybody stay and try to help those pinned? Leaving them could mean the enemy could circle back and slaughter them. The SAMAS and several characters with a P.S. of 24 or higher should be able to get the character out. Likewise, the fallen tree could be blasted into smaller, more manageable chunks. In any case, the group is likely to lose 1D4 minutes while the enemy escapes.

Pursuing the enemy will reveal they are the so-called Skeleton Raiders! It's hard to tell how many; at least six, two are carrying a pair of fallen comrades (there are actually 12). The enemy will blast more trees but also shoot at their attackers, especially the player characters. After only a melee round or two of battle, the SAMAS calls for them to retreat. Their radio message is on all bands so the player characters hear this too:

"Shit! Fall back! Fall Back!! There's got to be two dozen bogeys coming up fast! And I mean real fast! Faster than us! Get the hell out of there! It's a trap!! We'll cover! Repeat, get out, we'll cover!"

At the same time, it becomes clear there are at least 10 enemies and the CS Command radios its patrol the following message. "An unidentified squadron is headed in your general direction. Take immediate evasive and defensive action. Do not engage. You will be over powered. Repeat. Do not engage. Take immediate evasive and defensive action. Air support and transport is on its way. Head toward the EZ (evacuation zone) for immediate evac. Good luck and god speed."

The CS troops will warn the player characters and begin an immediate retreat. Surprisingly, they will work with the characters and help them make their escape with them. The CS officer shouts his command over the radio. "Watch your partner. Nobody is left behind. No human or nonhuman. Do you copy? These pukes helped cover our butts, we ain't leavin' 'em now. Together or we aren't going to make it."

The rest of the action should be a scary mad dash to retreat. The SAMAS are below tree level to offer support and will snatch up any fallen comrade. Thankfully, the Skeleton Raiders do not pursue, presumably because they intercepted the CS message about "air support and transport."

Before the CS back-up arrives, the troopers have a chance to thank player characters for their cooperation. If the group appears to be completely human and without any practitioners of magic, the officer will invite them to be flown out with them. If nonhumans and sorcerers are among the group, he'll thank them and tell them they better get away and hide before reinforcements arrive. 1D4 minutes later, the CS troopers are evacuated and disappear into the clouds. Our heroes may dig in and wait for an attack, but the Skeleton Raiders do not appear again. Following the trail back to their battle site will reveal no evidence of who or what they fought, except that the villains they fought were obviously air-lifted away — broken tree branches and a few locations of scorched earth where a vehicle landed; a small vehicle the size of a sky cycle. No other trace of them can be found.

Reflections of Battle

Thinking and talking about the incident among themselves, the player characters should make the following observations.

- The CS troopers they encountered *genuinely* knew nothing about the Skeleton Raiders and were genuinely out for blood.
- The psi-hound said they were human, not supernatural beings or D-bees.
- They used a “standard type two fusion block;” hard to get, but not impossible. But aliens from another world aren’t likely to use CS weapons, would they?
- The forces they fought were tough, but not on a superhuman level, and two (or more) were injured or killed.
- The armor was reminiscent of the Dead Boy armor, but really quite different.
- Some observations are suspicious. Thinking back, most of the attacks were not lethal. Blasting trees to fall on them was a common tactic, and one not used against the slain D-bees. Why?
- CS troops on patrol in the area and a battalion (600+ troops) was on maneuvers not far away. Coincidence?
- The CS reinforcements didn’t try to engage the raiders or investigate the battle scene; at least not while the characters were around. Why?
- The Skeleton Raiders didn’t pursue the group. Again, why? They clearly had the advantage of superior numbers. According to the rumor mill, these maniacs *never* leave eyewitnesses. Were they afraid of the CS reinforcements? Are the rumors just wrong? Or are they going to hunt the group down (no)?

For the moment, they are left with more questions than answers. If they investigate other rumors and leads, they may discover some answers or more disturbing questions, or stumble into the Juicer Uprising, or get themselves killed.

Have fun.

Typical Skeleton Raider

Basic stats for Armored Warrior:

Class: Unknown; appears to be mega-damage body armor or light power armor. Definitely not robots.

Size: Human equivalent.

Weight: Appears to be human equivalent in heavy armor.

Speed: Roughly human equivalent; giving credence to the body armor theory.

M.D.C. by Location:

Head/Helmet — 80

Arms — 60 each

Legs — 80 each

Main Body — 125

Weapon Systems: Full range unknown. Heavy rail guns, particle beam rifles and fusion blocks of unknown origin and manufacture are at least part of their armaments. All seem equal to the most powerful known CS weapons; possibly equal to Triax.

Race: Human?

Note: In addition to the armored foot soldier, there appears to be an aerial trooper. Evidence would seem to point to armored troops on sky cycles, but inconclusive.

Other Related Adventures

Hook, Line & Sinker™ Style

The following are few adventure ideas that could take place after the group’s adventure with the “real” Skeleton Raiders.

The Raiders Reappear

Hook: The current atmosphere of fear and suspicion regarding the Skeleton Raiders.

Line: Our heroes are at a tavern, restaurant, shop or similar public place when 1D4+1 thugs rush through the door. Each is armed with a Coalition CS-27 plasma rifle. They are clad in what appears to be identically modified CS Dead Boy armor.

Somebody screams, “Skeleton Raiders!” The leader blasts her and shouts, “That’s right! Now give us all your belongings or we’ll kill you all!”

Sinker: Our heroes know these guys are a bunch of murderous, thieving impostors! They look nothing like the raiders the group fought; besides, the raiders rarely loot, they just kill. However, the crowd doesn’t know that. They believe these are the genuine article and hand over their possessions, whimpering, crying and pleading for mercy. What do the player characters do? If they attack now, a lot of innocent people might get hurt. Then again, these villains may kill everybody anyway, the “real” Skeleton Raiders would.

The plot may thicken if the player characters let the bandits leave with their booty (they don’t kill anybody else). They leap on non-CS issue hover cycles and zoom into the night amidst a few warning shots and screams of terror. The player characters can try to track them down or somehow discover later that these “raiders” are rogue Coalition soldiers, still active in the service, but who have added a life of crime and murder to their list of hobbies. Bringing them to justice suddenly got a lot more difficult.

A False Alarm

Hook: The current atmosphere of fear and suspicion regarding the Skeleton Raiders.

Line: Our heroes are at a tavern, restaurant, shop or similar public place when a figure clad in black armor with a skull helmet walks into the establishment. Somebody screams, “Skeleton Raider!” Our heroes think, “Oh no, not again,” while people scream and dive for cover. Three powerful D-bees jump the dark figure and prepare to blow him away.

Sinker: This is just some poor schmoe who happens to have the poor taste of wearing black armor and a skull helmet. He’s not a raider. Do the players intercede on his behalf or let the terrified and angry mob lynch him? They’ll have to calm the mob down before they can talk sense into them and may be accused of being Skeleton Raiders in disguise — spies! Lynch ‘em all!

Juicer Trouble

Hook: The current atmosphere of fear and suspicion regarding the Skeleton Raiders.

Line: Our heroes encounter a drunken or drugged up Juicer with a big mouth. He can't be more than 17. He claims to be part of a secret military force sponsored by the Coalition States. Something called the "Prometheus Project." He brags about his powers (standard fare) and how he and a few of his friends cheated the Coalition by going AWOL. He blathers on about being able to kick anybody's butt and gets into a brawl before any other questions can be asked. His two, more somber and sober buddies help pull his fat out of trouble and they all take off.

Sinker: Just as things are about to settle down, Coalition Troopers appear to take the three Juicers into custody. The drunk screams, "Don't let them take us! They'll kill us! Somebody help us!" Do the player characters help, in hopes of learning more, or do they stand back? Nobody else will lift a finger; after all, the kid was just bragging about how he cheated the Coalition, this is between them and the CS. Or is it?

The Rifter™

Source material and adventures by Kevin Siembieda

Setting: Our group of adventurers can be in any part of the world when they encounter a Rifter. The creature is disrupting life wherever it goes. G.M.s remember, playing a Rifter is like playing a storm that can turn into a squall or tornado at the drop of a hat.

The Battered Brodkil

A group of six Brodkil sub-demons limp out from behind the smashed and burning remains of a small village. They have clearly been in a battle and carry four wounded comrades. They are startled to see the player group and snarl.

"Don't think we were responsible for this." The creature snarls again and spits at the feet of one of the player characters and starts to move away. Any questions or attempts to stop them will be met with animosity and restrained aggression, probably because of the injuries (and defeat) they have already suffered.

"I told you. We ain't responsible for this, so leave us be."

If pressed further, the giants will grumble, but relate how a single, human sorcerer did all this. "Done this to us, too. We thought, one puny human, 'gainst all of us, easy pickings, even if she is a practitioner of magic. Hell, I don't be thinking she was human at all. Blue flames coming from her eyes and all. Took energy blasts like they was nothing. Bastard never said a word. My guess is she was a demon lord looking for some entertainment. Now, let us pass or you'll be seeing some entertainment yourself."

If the player group gets physical with these brigands they will attack. Otherwise, they move on without further incident.

The destruction of the village is clearly the handiwork of magic forces and the handful of survivors already trying to rebuild their broken lives will confirm the Brodkil's report.

Following the trail of destruction wherever this "thing" walks is easy; uprooted trees, overturned vehicles and the occasional corpse mark the way.

Beware the Rifter

Sooner or later, the player group will catch up with this lone traveler, a female human, clad in the garments of a Shifter. Her eyes crackle with energy like that seen at ley lines. She stops and glances at the characters when she realizes they are there, but ignores them, and turns away to continue her journey. Any attempt to stop her will meet with immediate retaliation and extreme force. Whatever she is, she is a juggernaut who will not be stopped.

If the player characters are not familiar with Rifters (few people are), they may want to follow and observe for awhile, but eventually, they are likely to find themselves in a situation where they must destroy it. It's just too dangerous to leave wandering around unchecked.

The Rifter & Rift Entity

Nobody knows exactly what a Rift Entity may be or how it comes into existence. Most Shifters and other dimensional travelers believe that these insane creatures were once flesh and blood beings, probably Shifters, who accidentally slipped out of sync while Rifting. This caused them to slide between realities, where they became trapped — a nightmare that most Rift users fear. Many scientists contend that the notion of slipping into a limbo somewhere between non-existence and coexistence with all realities (or at least hundreds of them) is impossible. Of course, these are the ancestors of the same people who said magic was a myth and Rifting to other worlds, science-fantasy.

A Rift Entity is indeed trapped in an energy limbo between realities from which it cannot escape. While within this transdimensional hell, time is nonexistent. Everything, every time and every place exists at once. The poor creature is bombarded with flashes from an infinite number of realities throughout time, past, present and future, from throughout the Megaverse. These sights, sounds and sensations flood the consciousness at a maddening pace, like an insanely swirling kaleidoscope with patterns and events that are everchanging. The images and sensations never stop or slow down. The trapped person is forced to endure everything for all eternity without ever truly being a part of it, because he/she/it no longer exists in any reality as we understand it. The experience is like a scream that never ends.

In an instant, the body is forgotten and ceases to exist — it has no meaning or place between infinite realities. The person that once was is gone, replaced by everything and nothing. In that same instant, the once-person is forever destroyed. He/she/it has no idea which of the infinite people, places, times and realities it belongs to — in truth, it no longer belongs to any. In that same eternal instant, the mind is forever expanded and sanity forever lost. The human (and not so human) mind shatters like a delicate wine glass cast upon stone. Without any one reality to call its own, it has no focal point, no focus, no identity, no purpose. The mind is shattered like that wine glass, but not into a hundred pieces, but atomized into zillions of atomic particles, with each particle flung into zillions (more?) of realities at once, yet never existing in any.

It sees, hears and feels as one consciousness, a zillion different things at once, yet it cannot react or interact, only watch and endure.

The only way for it to escape, even for a moment, is to focus entirely on one fixed reality. This is impossible until someone opens a window of opportunity. This occurs whenever somebody creates a Rift. A dimensional Rift is a *tear* in the fabric of space and time, violently ripping open a momentary hole through all realities and all times. The being who caused the Rift controls it with his thoughts and force of will (even though that person may not realize it). Thus, he can manipulate reality to satisfy his desires, and step through the Rift to another world or time in complete defiance of the laws of science.

If a fragment of the *Rift Entity* can stay focused long enough, it can soar through the Rift like a fly through an open window. Once loose in a specific time and place, it must bond with a person in that reality within one minute (1D4 melee rounds) or automatically teleport back to the limbo between realities. Consequently, the entity has precious little time to bond with that world. It will usually try to merge with the Rift maker. Many Shifters, Stone Mages and other masters of dimensional travel have reported being momentarily enveloped by what most call ley line or temporal energy. This phenomenon causes energy to crackle around and within the character, instilling a sensation of power and oblivion. In most cases, the energy is gone before the individual realizes it. Only one in a billion make a connection by mentally accepting the energy as a part of him. In that instant, the character merges with the Rift entity and becomes a being known as a **Rifter**.

A Rifter is not human, but a living extension of the Rift Entity, itself an aberration of reality and the embodiment of ley line energy. The person who accepts "power and oblivion" becomes engulfed by it and lets the invading/inviting force take him over completely — pushed back into the recesses of consciousness, enraptured by the experience. Meanwhile, the Rift Entity becomes a creature of that world, bound by its principles of physics and consciousness. The intense experience allows the creature to block itself from all other realities and focus, at last, on one. For the Rift Entity, this is Nirvana. The torrent of sights, sounds and emotions are stopped, at least for a little while. The Rifter clings tenaciously to its link with *one* world and reacts with ferocious desperation to those who threaten its peace of mind. Sadly, it is too late to preserve even a fragment of its sanity or to recall any part of its previous existence. As a Rift Entity, it has lived billions of lives and forgotten many more. The Rift Entity is forever trapped between realities, it has simply been able to select one as a momentary respite from its usual torture and madness.

Rifters don't display emotions. They don't sleep, eat, dream, fear or want of anything other than to exist. They have been called a force of nature, the embodiment of a raging storm (a ley line storm) that rolls across the land without direction or purpose. Those who get caught in the storm may suffer from its terrible and indiscriminate use of force.

As a Rifter, the creature can look relatively human, but its eyes crackle with the blue light and energy of a ley line and possesses the powers of a ley line storm! Although its mortal appearance may suggest otherwise, the Rifter is a primal force driven by instinct and insanity. Its goal: simply to wander free and experience the illusion of life. Ironically, the Rifter has no appreciation for life. To this creature, life is nothing more than

suffering and change. It has witnessed the birth pangs and struggles of life on countless worlds, in countless time periods. To it, the story is always the same: birth, struggle, pain, death, in endless repetition. As a result, the Rifter has no regard for life. Any who get in its way are forcibly removed. Any who try to break its bond with one reality (a fate worse than death, for while the Rifter can be destroyed, the Rift Entity cannot die) will feel the full force of its primal energy and is terminated. If innocent people are hurt or killed in the process, the Rifter doesn't even notice and certainly doesn't care. Thus, it is wise to give Rifters a wide berth, for the creature lashes out with the fury of a ley line storm over the slightest provocation and goes where it pleases.

Thankfully, Rifters are a rarity. They are most common at dimensional nexuses like Rifts Earth and Phase World, where the odds of escape are greatly enhanced, but even in such a situation, there are seldom more than 1D4 in the entire world at any given time.

The Rifter is not invincible, despite its great power, and can be destroyed. If its host body dies, it loses its hold on that reality and is thrown back into the maelstrom of infinite possibilities. Its past life (lives) as a Rifter is forgotten, lost among the cacophony of sights and sounds from a zillion different realities. Until the entity can find another opened window and muster the force of will to send a piece of itself through it, it languishes in the limbo between someplace and nowhere.

Rifter Statistical Data:

The Rifter: A Shifter who links to a Rift Entity to become a being of power and carnage. The fragmented essence of a Rift Entity links with a willing host and completely possesses him. A Rift Entity can link and focus on only one world at a time, so only one Rifter is possible per entity. This character is not intended for use as a player character, but can make for an interesting villain or represent danger.

Alignment: How would one assign an alignment value to a force of nature? The closest alignment equivalent would be anarchist or miscreant; self-serving and devoid of feelings. Other creatures have no meaning to it and are swept away like bothersome gnats. It is what it is.

M.D.C.: 2D4×100; x5 at ley lines, x10 at a ley line nexus or stone pyramid. Regenerates 2D6×10 M.D.C. at ley lines, stone pyramids and nexus points. **Note:** Destroying all of the Rifter's M.D.C. and then killing the host body (even sending it into a coma; e.g. one point below zero) will send the Rift Entity's consciousness back to the void from where it came! If medical attention can be administered to the person who was its host, that character's life may be saved (-10% penalty to save vs coma/death)! However, the survivor will be obsessed with power and always feel like something is missing from his/her life. The character remembers nothing of its life as a Rifter, but will know who is responsible for his loss of power and enraptured state and may seek revenge (particularly if a selfish or evil character).

Attacks per Melee Round: Five

P.P.E.: 1D6×1000 and can completely tap a ley for an additional 1D6×1000 points!

Skills: None to speak of; it has seen all kinds of life forms and can speak virtually all languages, except people mean nothing to a Rifter and it has nothing to say.

Rifter Abilities:

1. Complete control over ley lines. A Rifter can completely



control the energy of a ley line. This means the being can open and close Rifts at will along any ley line or nexus point, close Rifts opened by others, make the mystic energy disappear (remains gone for one hour or as long as the Rifter remains on the line and concentrates on preventing its flow), stop the energy flow (like a living dam) at any point, use a stone pyramid, and summon a ley line storm at will and control it (same as the Millennium Tree)!

2. Possesses abilities 1-7 of the Ley Line Walker with triple the range.

3. Can create a Rift to thousands of other worlds (G.M.'s call); because as the Rift Entity, it has been to countless places and times. A Rifter can teleport or Rift to any place it has visited without flaw.

4. Special Powers: Turn invisible at will, see the invisible, see aura, see into the 4th dimension, time slip, mystic portal, teleport: lesser, teleport: superior, levitate, float, wind rush, energy disruption, life drain, negate magic, summon storm, and control/enslave entities; all equal to 10th level spell magic.

5. Possesses the power of the ley line storm:

- The Rifter is impervious to ley line storms and can seize control of any random storm.
- The Rifter is impervious to all magic except circles and all energy based magic spells (fire ball, lightning, etc.).
- Ley line teleportation is possible without risk.
- The extra P.P.E. available at ley lines and nexuses cannot be tapped while the Rifter stands on it (it's being burned up by him, a living ley line storm).

- The effect of magic used against a Rifter is distorted. Roll percentile each time magic is used or a spell cast against this strange being (this includes the use of techno-wizard devices and magic weapons).

01-20 Magic powers are increased! Double range and damage (duration is not increased). The spell caster cannot regulate damage or range. The magic is more powerful but less controllable. The Rifter is not adversely affected!

21-40 Magic powers are decreased! Reduce range and damage by half (duration is not decreased). The Rifter is not adversely affected!

41-60 Magic powers are completely negated!! The P.P.E. is expended but completely absorbed by the Rifter! NOTHING magical works within a 100 foot (30.5 m) radius of the Rifter (a temporary predicament; lasts 2D4 melee rounds).

61-80 Magic powers are completely wrong! The GM can switch spells at will (anything goes). It is not wise to use magic under these circumstances. The range, damage, effects, and duration of the spell are normal. The Rifter is not adversely affected!

81-00 Magic discharge. Every time a spell is cast or a magic weapon is used, there is the sound of thunder and the magic user is knocked off his feet from a sudden explosion in his face! Loses initiative and one melee attack and suffers 2D6 S.D.C. damage (2D6 M.D. if a mega-damage creature).

- When annoyed or angered, the Rifter can cause bolts of ley line energy to strike anything magic within a 100 foot (30.5 m) radius just like a ley line storm. This includes practitioners of magic, creatures of magic, (like dragons and tattooed men), magic talismans, amulets, techno-wizard devices, and magic weapons. The energy bolt looks like a blue-white bolt of lightning. Humans and D-bees struck by the bolt suffer the following consequences: 1D4 S.D.C. damage, lose initiative and one melee attack, lose 1D6 P.P.E. points, and is teleported 2D6×10 yards/meters away from the Rifter (instant and disorienting). **True creatures of magic**, like the dragon, sphinx, faerie folk, elementals, many demons/godlings, alien intelligences, etc., lose initiative and two melee attacks, suffer 4D6 mega-damage and lose 6D6 P.P.E. as the Rifter's storm temporarily drains them of energy. Getting hit by such an energy bolt may (1-44% chance) transform any creature magically disguised into their true shape.
- Creatures who are disguised by metamorphosis or magic suddenly appear to grow or shrink and their features become distorted when touched by a Rifter.
- P.P.E. blast: The Rifter can discharge an energy blast from his hands or eyes at a specific target and inflicts 4D6 M.D. and causes 6D6 P.P.E. to be torn from his victim's body (can be recovered as normal). Range: 1000 feet (305 m).
- Summon rolling thunder! A huge black cloud races low to the ground along the entire width of the ley line or as directed by the Rifter (away from a ley line, the width is 100 feet/30.5 m and 500 feet/152 m long). Speed is about 60 mph (96.5 km). Everybody hit by the thunder cloud is drenched with water, temporarily deafened by the sound of the rumbling thunder, lose all attacks/actions for one full melee (15 seconds) and are swept off their feet with the same consequences as a **wind rush** spell.
- Summon euphoria. Everybody within a 100 foot (30.5 m) radius feels good, happy and cheerful. Many will start to

laugh, sing or act silly, as if intoxicated. Those who are wounded will have 2D6 hit points restored (2D6 M.D.C. if a mega-damage creature) and minor illnesses will disappear. On the downside, the characters feel no fear or hostility toward anything, including known enemies. They will not attack unless attacked first, at which point all combat bonuses are half and they lose one melee action/attack. Euphoria typically lasts 2D4 minutes.

- Psi-Stalkers, Dog Boys, and all psionic characters suffer from headaches when within a 100 foot (30.5 m) radius of the being; -3 on initiative, -1 to strike, parry and dodge, and their psionic/sensing powers are scrambled, reduce by half.

The Rift Entity: Beyond comprehension. Nobody knows if a Rifts Entity can be freed from its limbo prison between realities, or what would happen if it did (Does it retain its powers? Is it insane? What will it do? etc.). The only thing Rift scholars can agree upon is that the end result can only be disastrous.

Other Related Adventures

Hook, Line & Sinker™ Style

The following are a few adventure ideas that could involve a Rifter.

More Power

Hook: A Rifter has been reported in the area. A powerful force (Coalition States, the sorcerers of Tolkeen or the Federation of Magic, a dragon, alien intelligence or other power) has decided to try to capture and harness the mystic energy contained inside this strange being!

Line: Option one: The player characters have been hired to do the capturing. They may be given special equipment to fight and contain the creature.

Option two: The player characters realize that such action is doomed to failure and likely to provoke the Rifter to strike back by unleashing incredible destructive forces that will hurt and kill hundreds (thousands?) of innocent people (in this case, the Rifter would be in or near a population center). As a result, they elect to stop the group who plan to capture the being.

Option three: The Rifter has been provoked and has already slain his would-be captors. The being is now lashing out at everybody around it; hundreds have already been injured and property damage is immense.

Sinker: Options one and three, the player group faces the fury of a Rifter and may have to try to destroy it before it kills hundreds more.

Option two pits our heroes against fellow humanoids. The plot may be complicated if the people they are trying to stop are friends, allies or an organization/cause they support, but who are making a mistake. Confrontations can include appeals to their logic and compassion and/or force — perhaps to the death (old allies may consider them cowards or traitors).

No Power

Hook: A Rifter has settled down at a ley line nexus and has dammed the flow of energy along three intersecting ley lines; he can be found at the nexus.

Line: Either the player characters, other heroes or a community needs access to the lines of energy (for protection, healing, to open a Rift, etc.).

Sinker: It becomes the responsibility of the player characters to remove the Rifter and restore the flow of energy. The Rifter is as stubborn as a mule and refuses to budge.

The Stranger

Hook: Our heroes are visiting a community (large or small) to get new supplies, or just to rest and relax. The town is abuzz with word about a stranger who just walks around staring at things. When Mean Jack tried to get him to say something, the stranger blasted him with bolts of blue energy and sent him flying 10 yards/meters. Nobody has bothered him since and has given the character a wide berth.

Line: Coalition troops or gang members pull into town and expect everybody to cow-tow to them. When the stranger ignores them, they decide to teach him a lesson.

Sinker: The player characters can watch in amusement as these bullies get their butts kicked. This entire scenario can be played for laughs with a serious undercurrent. The Rifter could happen to appear wherever the characters go and where trouble inevitably erupts. For example: One of the player characters could be bothered by a bully, thief or other nuisance. He's bumped (presumably by the person who has been bothering him) and spills his drink in his face or lap. In anger, the character turns to confront this little creep only to find the accident was caused by the Rifter. The character can try to apologize or talk to the alien being, but ultimately the creature doesn't care and will knock or blast him out of his way. If things get out of hand, some innocent people could get hurt.

Dark Clouds

Hook: A Rifter has taken control of a ley line nexus and has been causing all kinds of unnatural disasters! Ley line storms run up and down the two connecting paths of geomantic energy, which in turn, has created rainstorms, flooding (which threatens crops as well as lives), has caused harmless alien "things" to rain down on the area, has caused two dimensional fluxes, and has created numerous random Rifts, some of which have unleashed entities and supernatural predators into the region.

Line: Our heroes feel compelled to help, are asked to help, or offered 2D4×10,000 credits to help.

Sinker: Just getting to the Rifter is difficult as the landscape within one mile of the Rifter is in a constant state of flux, changing every few minutes and filled with dangers (entities, demons, etc.). Ironically, when they finally get to the ley line nexus to battle the Rifter, he has gone to parts unknown (Rifted away), so their trials and tribulations are all for naught (they'll have to lie to get any reward offered them).



About Face

An adventure by Kevin Siembieda & Julius Rosenstein.

Skelebot Order Classifications:

Recently, the Coalition States (particularly Chi-Town) have started using Skelebots to a much greater degree than previously. In an effort to give the Skelebots more initiative, their orders have been given various rankings as to how acceptable such orders are, which orders are to be obeyed, and whether or not other action is to be taken. The various order classes are:

Class A: These orders are well within accepted parameters; they can be followed, regardless of who issues them.

Example: A D-Bee monster attacks the outpost. A civilian with no authority over the skelebot shouts out, "Skelebot, destroy that thing!" The skelebot's reaction: Creature is hostile, falls within parameters of legitimate target, order from civilian is acceptable, hostile action initiated!

Class B: These orders are somewhat questionable; although pushing the boundaries of accepted parameters, they may be followed if issued by a legitimate superior, otherwise, the orders are ignored.

Example: The D-Bee monster continues its attack, engulfing a truck containing Coalition supplies that the skelebot was to help

protect. The civilian yells, "Keep firing, skelebot! Never mind about the supplies!"

The skelebot's reaction: Continued hostile action will destroy supplies, previous orders were to guard supplies, guarding supplies takes priority over destroying hostile creature, order is unacceptable, cease hostile action and try to move/remove supplies.

However, if the squad leader (a lieutenant or higher) shows up and shouts, "Keep firing, skelebot! Never mind about the supplies!"

The skelebot's reaction: Re-prioritized orders as per command of authorized superior. Recommence hostile action!

Class C: These orders are definitely outside accepted parameters; they may only be followed if issued by a legitimate superior with proper override authorization, otherwise the orders are ignored and the issuer is to be apprehended and turned over to superiors.

Example: The D-Bee monster continues its attack, taking control of its victims and forcing them to fight on its side. Among the victims are some Coalition soldiers. A civilian or CS grunt yells, "Those soldiers are now against us, kill them!"

The skelebot's reaction: Order calling for hostile action against CS personnel, illegal order, apprehend! "Halt, you are under arrest..."

The lieutenant shouts, "Skelebot, return fire. Kill those soldiers!"

The skelebot's reaction: Order from superior calling for hostile action against CS personnel, illegal order without proper authorization, obtain or apprehend! "Halt, request confirmation of orders or face arrest!"

The lieutenant yells, "Override code Klaxon Gamma 5 (or whatever)!"

The skelebot's reaction: Proper override code checked against voice recognition; normal parameters suspended, cancel apprehension mode and obey command!

Class D: These orders are totally outside accepted parameters; they are NOT to be followed and the issuer is to be apprehended immediately. Terminal force is acceptable if issuer demonstrates resistance.

Example: In Chi-Town, a CS major who never got along with Prosek's son has been passed over for promotion again (probably due to the younger Prosek). Having gotten quite drunk, the major staggers back to headquarters, notices young Prosek, and says "Skelebot, hic ... there's that blasted Prosek, shoot him!"

The skelebot's reaction: "YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!!!" And may consider that person to be an enemy of the State and use deadly force against him!

The Setting

Skelebots stationed at outposts along Lake Erie and the Ohio Valley have proven to be unreliable. Someone or something seems to have been overriding the bots and causing them to act in ways contrary to their programming. At first, the CS thought it was a defect in one particular manufacturer's run, but soon found that the problem existed in several different product runs. While the CS was considering recalling all Skelebots in the area, three entire companies (120 bots) went berserk and attacked the base to which they were assigned. Sixty-three CS troopers were killed (caught off guard, many attacked in their sleep), forty-nine injured. Only a

handful of the Skelebots were destroyed in the conflict. The other Skelebots have gone AWOL.

An estimate 210 rogue bots are feared to be on the loose somewhere in Ohio and/or Michigan. The CS has dismantled and recalled all remaining bots from those areas. However, this leaves these two rebel filled territories vulnerable to attack, and there is some concern that the large, man-piloted robot vehicles might also be overridden. Tension is high as troops in Ohio and Michigan wait for the other shoe to drop. **Note:** This "crisis" has been neatly covered up; the public knows nothing about this military matter. The CS is investigating the matter and has dispatched seek and destroy patrols to eliminate this "problem."

The Characters

The player characters (whether located in Michigan, Ohio or the Midwest) will accidentally run into a series of encounters with these berserk Skelebots.

The first encounter is a half dozen Skelebots blasting away at a group of people caught in a crossfire. They are holding their own for the moment, but are dead meat unless the player characters intercede. The bots fight till they are destroyed. The people (and perhaps the group) may assume this is the handiwork of the Coalition, since the group is composed mostly of D-bees.

The second encounter is more puzzling. Four Skelebots have captured several human, peasant farmers. Three are chained to a tree. Four others have been stripped naked, tied spread eagle to stakes. A menacing Skelebot stands above each as the bots prepare to slice and dice them to pieces. The remains of four other victims lay in a pile not far away! This grisly sight is unbelievable! The Coalition States have been accused of many atrocities, but nothing like this! Especially against humans!!

Unless the characters do something fast, four more people will die. The bots will return fire, but will retreat as soon as they realize they are outnumbered or one of their members suffers serious damage. They will fight to the bitter end if pursued, otherwise they slip away into the woods (tracking is possible). The people are hysterical and traumatized. According to them, the bots came to their farm (not far away), demanded they accompany them at gunpoint to this location and began to torture and dissect people alive! More puzzling is the fact that these people were CS sympathizers.

The third encounter is a shock. While they pause to rest or to pitch camp, they hear two or three people running toward them. Whoever it is, is making no effort to be stealthy. A few laser blasts crashing through the trees punctuate the appearance of three CS troopers who dive into the group's camp.

"Get down! Down! Take cover!"

If the members of the player group don't take cover each must roll for a dodge or get hit by a CV-213 robot variable laser rifle set on maximum (4D6 M.D.). Six skelebots (more if the G.M. thinks the group can handle it, but not more than two to one) are circling around the camp in attack formation. The group should be able to destroy their attackers without casualties. When the battle is done, they'll have time to ask questions.

The CS troops who survive are badly battered (armor is down to one-third normal and each has only one E-clip left). If the group is predominately human, the soldiers may confide in them as to the situation with the rogue Skelebots, speculating that they have fallen under the control of a magic or alien force. The soldiers are from one of the seek and destroy teams (10 men per team/squad). They were ambushed by two dozen skelebots and caught a glimpse of

some sort of other robot who disappeared as soon as the battle began.

If the group is predominately nonhuman, the soldiers will apologize, but reveal nothing, saying, "I'm sorry, but this is a military matter. I can't tell you anything. I hope you understand." A psionic probe will reveal the truth, if that option is available. The battered soldiers may also respond to threats or persistent badgering, figuring, "Who cares? Somebody's going to find out sooner or later, and you guys did save our lives."

If the player group has had any experience fighting *The Mechanoids*, the sketchy description of the mystery robot will send chills up and down each individual's spine — a Mechanoid Runner. This explains the acts of violence and butchering of innocent people. It's also a disturbing realization, because the Mechanoids are bloodthirsty monsters dedicated to the destruction of all humanoids!

If the group is not familiar with the Mechanoids, it is clear that something or someone has taken control of the Skelebots and has been using them to strike at the Coalition and torture innocent people.

Tracking down The Mechanoids® is easy if the group has a scout or somebody with tracking skills. The monsters' base is a

giant Digger that died from combat injuries after it burrowed under a hill. Inside are a pair of Runners and a Mechanoid Brain, along with six Runts, four Thinmen, two Brutes and a dozen Skelebots (the other bots have been dispatched on missions of scouting, murder and mayhem throughout the area). It is these insane creatures who have managed to seize control of Skelebots through a device created and used by the Brain. Kill the Brain and the Skelebots return to normal and will join in the battle to destroy the "invading aliens." As many as 600 Skelebots can be controlled by a single Brain.

The player characters should realize that the Mechanoids are a serious threat that must be eliminated. If the aliens think their base has been discovered they will dispatch Skelebots to track down the people who have found them out and move to a new location. Thus, our heroes need to destroy the two Runners and the Brain before they can get away. They can proceed anyway they deem appropriate.

Notes: 1. There is no tangible reward other than a few CS weapons and E-clips.

2. See *Rifts® Sourcebook Two: The Mechanoids* for complete details about these insane aliens.

Quickie Mechanoid® Stats

Mechanoid® Brain

The Mechanoid brain is not unlike a general in an army, although they sometimes change hats to play the role of the mad scientist. They wield great authority and nearly absolute control over those assigned to their command. Only an oracle or overlord can supersede the authority of a Mechanoid Brain. As far as the average human can tell, it is the ever present brain, commanding his troops, who is the leader of the Mechanoids — the overlord and oracle are seldom observed in action.

Model Type: Brain: Free thinker, coordinator, commander and scientist.

Class: Cyborg

M.D.C. by Location:

Hands (2) — 10 each

Arms (2) — 50 each

Large Rear Jets (2) — 30 each

Small Rear Jets (2) — 10 each

Forward Plasma Sphere (1) — 25

Containment Chamber — 120

*Forward Sensor Domes (3) — 20 each

**Main Body (upper portion) — 150

***Lower Body — 120

* Destroying the sensor domes will knock out all optic and sensor systems, including radar. The creature must rely on its normal vision and psionic senses. **Note:** The sensors are comparatively small and require attackers to make a **called shot**. Even then the attacker is -2 to strike.

**Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body destroys the cyborg's mechanical body housing, however the organism's environmental containment chamber (effectively the pilot's compartment) holds the majority of the living organism. The

Mechanoid organism can be rescued and installed into another mechanical body of the same design. Except for its psionic powers, the creature is totally helpless and will die within 5D6 days. **Note:** The brain can also survive for 6D6 minutes without any environmental system. It has an S.D.C. of 35.

***Depleting the M.D.C of the lower body destroys the anti-gravity system and the power of flight, leaving the upper body with its slower, more limited hover jet system.

Speed

Running: 50 mph (80 km) maximum. Note, movement does not tire the Mechanoid inside. **Leaping:** 10 feet (3 m) high or across.

Flying: Its secondary means of movement is a limited anti-gravity propulsion system built into its lower body. Maximum speed is 200mph (320 km); cruising speed is typically about half. Maximum altitude is 20,000 feet (6100 m). The more limited hover jet system of the upper body has a speed of 60 mph (96 km) and a maximum altitude of 500 feet (153 m).

Range: Unlimited.

Statistical Data

Height: 14 feet (4.2 m)

Width: 6 feet (1.8 m)

Length: 8 feet (2.4 m)

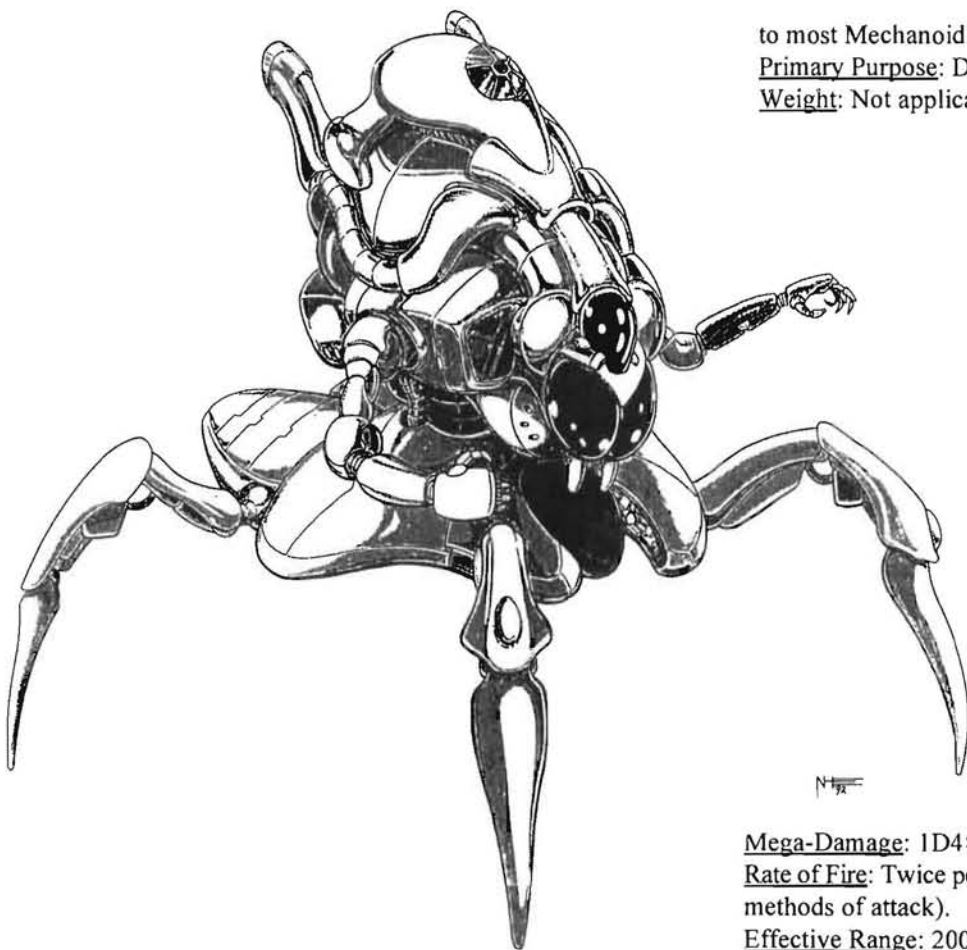
Weight: Three tons

Cargo: There are two small storage compartments in the rear of the lower body, about the size of the trunk of a car.

Armored Body: Standard full environmental system. **Note:** The Mechanoid Brain is able to survive outside its containment chamber longer than any other Mechanoid, about 6D6 minutes!

Power System: A Mechanoid power crystal gives the cyborg a life of 100 years before requiring a replacement crystal.

Black Market Value: The Market will pay 2D4 million credits for



to most Mechanoid weapons.

Primary Purpose: Defense

Weight: Not applicable, it is part of the body.

a Mechanoid power crystal that has 50 years or more energy, 2D4×100,000 if less. The crystals cannot be duplicated!

Alignment: Any

Horror Factor: 13

Physical Strength: Equal to a P.S. 30

Other Attributes of Note: I.Q. 2D6+15, M.E. 2D6+13, M.A. 2D6+11, and P.P.E. 5D6.

Number of Attacks Per Melee: Four physical or psionic attacks.

Combat Bonuses (includes all bonuses): +5 to strike with laser, +3 to strike with plasma generator and all other weapons. +3 to strike with a punch, +3 to parry, +3 to dodge, +1 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact, +6 to save vs horror factor, and +4 to save vs psionic attacks, +2 to save vs magic and poison.

Psionics: Master psionic with 1D6×100+1400 I.S.P.! Psionic powers include all healing and all physical powers, plus telekinesis (super), telepathy, empathy, empathic transmission, bio-manipulation, hypnotic suggestion, mentally possess others, mind bond, mind wipe and mind block auto-defense.

Average Level of Experience: 2D4+6

Skills of Note: All medical skills (excluding holistic medicine) at 95%, all science and pilot related skills at 98%, computer operation and programming at 98%, computer hacking 68%, pilot hover vehicle, robot vehicle (and robot combat basic), and spaceship at 90%. Weapon proficiencies include W.P. energy pistol, energy rifle and knife.

Weapon Systems

1. Forward Plasma Generating Sphere (1): The dark sphere in the front of the lower body is the plasma generator. This is a powerful weapon that can inflict massive damage. Fortunately, it is limited to two blasts per melee and has a short range compared

Mega-Damage: 1D4×10 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Twice per melee (can be combined with laser or other methods of attack).

Effective Range: 2000 feet (610 m)

Payload: Effectively unlimited; patched into the armor's power supply.

2. Laser Fingers (2): A utility laser is built into the first finger of each hand (concealed). It is an S.D.C. weapon used for dissection, surgery and soldering.

Primary Purpose: Tool

Weight: Not applicable, it is part of the body.

Mega-Damage: Laser finger: 1D6 to 1D6×10 S.D.C. (regulated by 1D6 increments).

Rate of Fire: Equal to the number of hand to hand attacks.

Effective Range: 50 feet (15 m)

Payload: Effectively unlimited; patched into the armor's power supply.

3. Energy Rifles, pistols and other hand-held weapons can be used by the Mechanoid Brain.

4. Hand to Hand Combat: Rather than use a long-range weapon, the Mechanoid can engage in hand to hand combat using its fists and/or hand-held weapons. The creature can also use its psionic powers of telekinesis or ectoplasm to wield weapons or hurl objects.

Restrained Punch: 4D6+15 S.D.C.

Full Strength Punch or Kick: 1D6 M.D.

Power Punch: 2D6 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Body block/ram: 2D6 M.D. damage and has a 1-50% chance of knocking one's opponent off his feet (victim loses initiative and one melee attack), but counts as two melee attacks.

5. Sensor Systems of Note

Optics: Full optical systems, including the visible light spectrum, infrared, ultraviolet, polarization, passive night vision (light amplification), thermo-imaging, laser targeting, and telescopic. Telescopic optics function like built-in binoculars with

a range of about two miles (3.2 km). All the other optic systems have a range of about 5200 feet (1560 m).

Radar: Can identify and track up to 72 targets simultaneously at a range of two miles (3.2 km). Applicable to flying targets at 500 feet above the ground or higher. The radar can not track ground movement.

Radio Communication: Medium-range directional radio. Range: 100 miles (160 km). The radio system can also eavesdrop on enemy transmissions and track transmissions to its source (60% success ratio); tracking range is limited to 20 miles (32 km).

Built-in Language Translator: Same as the portable unit, see *Rifts RPG*, page 247.

Mechanoid® Runner

The runner is a creative, resourceful and ingenious free thinker who serves as the right-hand assistant to the brains and overlords.

Model Type: Runner — Free thinker, scientist and technician.

Class: Cyborg

M.D.C. by Location:

Laser Rod (1, typically the left forearm) — 40

Hands (1 or 2) — 20 each

Lower Arms (2) — 30 each

Upper Arms (2) — 50 each

Legs (2) — 100 each

Hover Pod (an optional accessory) — 150

Containment Chamber — 120

*Head — 90

**Main Body — 150 (also see psionic force field)

* Destroying the head will eliminate all optics and sensory systems, and reduces the maximum speed, the number of melee attacks and all bonuses by half. **Note:** The head is a small and difficult target to hit. Thus, it can only be hit when a character makes a **called shot** and even then the attacker is -3 to strike.

**Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body destroys the cyborg's mechanical body housing, however the organism's environmental containment chamber (effectively the pilot's compartment) holds the majority of the living organism. The Mechanoid organism can be rescued and installed into another mechanical body of the same design. Except for its psionic powers, the creature is totally helpless and will die within 5D6 days.

Speed

Running: 90 mph (112.6 km) maximum. Note that the act of running does not tire the Mechanoid inside.

Leaping: The powerful robot legs can leap up to 20 feet (6 m) high or across unassisted by psionic telekinesis.

Flying: Flight is not possible without the addition of a hover platform. The propulsion system enables the pod to hover stationary or fly at speeds of up to 200 mph (320 km); cruising speed is typically about half. Maximum altitude is 20,000 feet (6100 m).

Range: Unlimited.

Statistical Data

Height: 15 feet (4.6 m)

Width: 6 feet (1.8 m)

Length: 8 feet (2.4 m)

Weight: 2.2 tons

Cargo: None.

Armored Body: Standard: See the Mechanoid Brain. **Note:** The Mechanoid will die in 1D4 minutes if the containment chamber is breached — they cannot breathe Earth's atmosphere!

Power System: Standard: 100 years.

Black Market Value: Standard: The Market will pay 2D4 million credits for a Mechanoid power crystal that has 50 years or more energy, 2D4×100,000 if less. The crystals cannot be duplicated!

Alignment: Any, but typically selfish or evil.

Horror Factor: 11

Physical Strength: Equal to a P.S. 30

Other Attributes of Note: I.Q. 2D6+12, M.E. 2D6+10, M.A. 2D6+8, and P.P.E. 4D6.

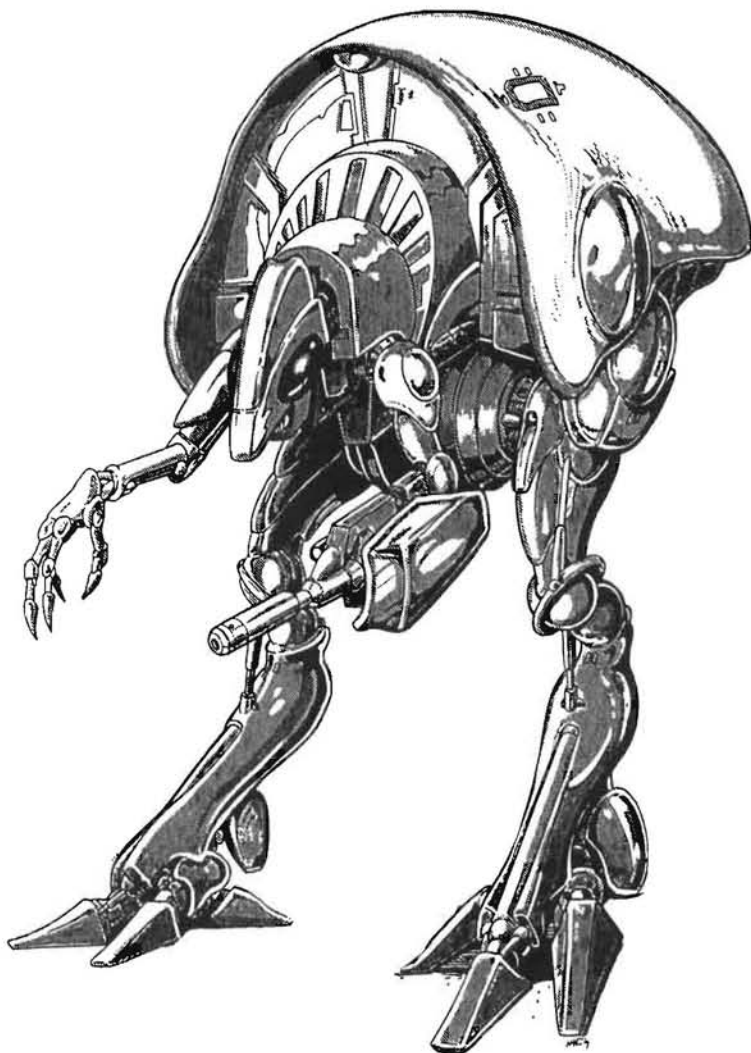
Number of Attacks Per Melee: Five physical or psionic attacks.

Combat Bonuses (includes all bonuses): +1 on initiative, +5 to strike with laser rod, +3 to strike with all other weapons. +4 to strike with a punch or kick, +4 to parry, +4 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact, +2 to strike on a body block/ram, +5 to save vs horror factor, and +3 to save vs psionic attacks.

Psionics: Major psionic but considered a mind melter. 1D4×100+290 I.S.P. and possesses all sensitive psi-powers plus, hypnotic suggestion, telekinetic force field, and telemechanics.

Average Level of Experience: 1D4+6

Skills of Note: All communication skills at 98%, all electrical, mechanical, and pilot related skills at 90%, basic and advanced math 98%, computer operation and programming at 90%, computer hacking 40%, pilot hover vehicle and spaceship at 85%, and intelligence, forgery, tracking, wilderness survival, and land navigation 75%. Weapon proficiencies include W.P. energy pistol, energy rifle, heavy energy and knife.



Weapon Systems

1. Multi-Purpose Forearm Laser Rod: This multi-purpose appendage is used as both a weapon and a tool.

Primary Purpose: Multiple; weapon and tool.

Weight: Not applicable, it is part of the body.

Mega-Damage: Long-range laser 4D6 M.D. or 6D6 M.D. (two settings), short range laser: 1D6 M.D. or 3D6 M.D., laser scalpel: 1D6 to 1D6×10 S.D.C. (regulated by 1D6 increments) or 1D4 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the number of hand to hand attacks.

Effective Range: Long range laser: 5200 feet (1560 m), short range laser: 1200 feet (366 m), laser scalpel: one foot (0.3 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited; patched into the armor's power supply.

2. Rail Guns, energy weapons and other weapons can be substituted in an emergency or as a back-up weapon.

3. Hand to Hand Combat: Rather than use a long range weapon, the Mechanoid can engage in hand to hand combat using its fists and/or hand-held weapons.

Restrained punch: 4D6+15 S.D.C.

Full strength punch: 2D4 M.D.

Kick: 3D6 M.D.

Leap Kick: 5D6 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Head Butt: 1D4 M.D.

Body block/ram: 2D6 M.D. damage and has a 1-50% chance of knocking one's opponent off his feet (victim loses initiative and one melee attack), but counts as two melee attacks.

4. Sensor Systems of Note: Same as the Mechanoid Brain.

Mechanoid® One Brute

The Brute is the Mechanoids' enforcer, bristling with weapons.

Model Type: Type One Brute — Infantry leader, assistant and technician

Class: Cyborg

M.D.C. by Location:

Upper Arms (2) — 60 each

Lower arms & hands (2) — 100 each

Legs (2) — 150 each

Containment Chamber — 120

Tri-Laser Cannon (1, optional) — 120

Secondary Sensor (1, right side) — 20

*Forward Particle Beam Guns (2, tiny) — 20 each

**Head/Main Body — 280

* The tiny particle beam nozzles are difficult to hit, thus they can only be struck when a character makes a **called shot** and even then the attacker is -4 to strike.

**Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body destroys the cyborg's mechanical body housing, however, the organism's environmental containment chamber (effectively the pilot's compartment) holds the majority of the living organism. The Mechanoid organism can be rescued and installed into another mechanical body of the same design. Except for its psionic powers, the creature is totally helpless and will die within 5D6 days.

Speed

Running: 50 mph (80 km) or 40 mph fully loaded with weapon options. Leaping: 10 feet (3 m) high or across; not possible with weapon options.

Flying: Its secondary means of movement is a limited anti-gravity propulsion system similar to the wasp's. 90 mph (144 km), cruising

speed is typically about half, maximum altitude is 2000 feet (610 m). Speed is reduced to 60 mph (96 km) with weapon options.

Range: Unlimited.

Statistical Data

Height: 15 feet (4.6 m) or 17 feet (5.2 m) with tri-laser.

Width: 6 feet (1.8 m) or 11 feet (3.3 m) with missile launcher and plasma cannon.

Length: 8 feet (2.4 m) or 11 feet (3.3 m) with any optional weapon system.

Weight: 3 tons or 4.6 tons with full weapon system package

Cargo: None.

Armored Body: The cyborg body is a full environmental system with internal cooling, air purification and independent air supply as is common to most suits of power armor. This also makes the creature impervious to poison, gas, and biological agents unless the containment chamber is breached by depleting all its M.D.C. **Note:** The Mechanoid will die in 1D4 minutes if the containment chamber is breached — they cannot breathe Earth's atmosphere!

Power System: A Mechanoid power crystal gives the cyborg a life of 100 years before requiring a replacement crystal.

Black Market Value: The Market will pay 2D4 million credits for a Mechanoid power crystal that has 50 years of energy or more, 2D4×100,000 if less. The crystals cannot be duplicated!

Alignment: Any except diabolic or miscreant evil. Typically good principled or scrupulous.

Horror Factor: 12

Physical Strength: Equal to a P.S. 30

Other Attributes of Note: I.Q. 2D6+10, M.E. 2D6+10, M.A. 2D6+10, and P.P.E. 3D6.

Number of Attacks Per Melee: Five physical or psionic attacks. The complete weapon package adds three physical melee attacks. The weapons can be used in any combination.

Combat Bonuses (includes all bonuses): +2 on initiative, +5 to strike with particle beams, +5 with all other weapon systems, +5 to strike with a punch, +4 to strike with a flying body block/ram, +5 to parry, +5 to dodge, +3 to pull punch, +4 to roll with impact, +4 to save vs horror factor, and +3 to save vs psionic attacks, +2 to save vs magic and poison. **Note:** Reduce all combat bonuses, except specific weapon strike bonuses, by -2 when the optional weapon package is used (two or more weapons).

Psionics: Major psionic but considered a mind melter. 1D6×10+100 I.S.P. and possesses all physical psi-powers plus telepathy, empathy, electrokinesis, psi-sword, and mind block auto-defense.

Average Level of Experience: 1D4+2

Skills of Note: All communication skills (+15%), all mechanical skills (+15%), basic electronics (+20%), all pilot related skills (+20%), all military skills (+15%), computer operation and programming (+15%), basic math (+30%), pilot hover vehicles and spaceships (+20%), prowler (+10%), and detect ambush, detect concealment, intelligence, tracking, wilderness survival, and land navigation (all +15%). Weapon proficiencies include W.P. energy pistol, energy rifle, heavy energy, sword and blunt.

Weapon Systems

1. Particle Beam Guns (2): A pair of tiny particle beam guns are built into the chest of the brute. Although terribly destructive these guns are fixed forward and are considered short range weapons by Mechanoid standards. Furthermore, the brute must turn its entire body to point and shoot.

Primary Purpose: Assault

Weight: Not applicable; it is part of the body.

Mega-Damage: 1D4×10 M.D. per single blast or 2D4×10 per simultaneous, double blast (aimed at the same target). A simultaneous, double blast counts as one (1) melee attack.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the number of hand to hand attacks.

Effective Range: 1600 feet (488 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited; patched into the armor's power supply.

2. Weapon Package Option Number Two: Tri-Laser Cannon

(1): This long range weapon can be attached only to the back of the type one brute. It is forward facing but can be raised up and down in a 90 degree arc of fire. The lasers also have the standard variable light frequency capabilities.

Primary Purpose: Assault

Weight: 1100 lbs (495 kg)

Mega-Damage: 4D6 per single blast, 1D4×10+6 M.D. per double blast or 1D6×10+10 per simultaneous, triple blast!

Rate of Fire: Equal to the number of hand to hand attacks.

Effective Range: 6000 feet (1828 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited; patched into the armor's power supply.

3. Hand to Hand Combat: Rather than use a long range weapon, the Mechanoid can engage in hand to hand combat.

Restrained Punch: 4D6+15 S.D.C.

Full Strength Punch: 2D6 M.D.

Power Punch: 4D6 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Kick: 2D6 M.D.

Leap Kick: 3D6 M.D.

Body Block/ram: 1D6 M.D. The brute has a 1-50% chance of knocking its opponent off his feet (victim loses initiative and one melee attack), but counts as two melee actions regardless of the speed.

4. Sensor Systems of Note: Standard: Same as the brain.

Coalition Skelebot™

M.D.C. by Location:

Hands (2) — 10 each

Arms (2) — 30 each

Vibro-blades (2) — 5 each

CV-213 Laser Rifle (1) — 5

Legs (2) — 50 each

*Head — 40

**Main Body — 100

* Destroying the head of the robot will eliminate all optics and sensory systems. In most cases the robot shuts down as a safety feature. However, in some cases, about one in ten, the robot continues to fight, blasting blindly until its ammunition is expended and even then it will continue to grope around, lashing out and hitting anything it touches. Under these conditions the robot enjoys no combat bonuses to strike, parry, or dodge! **Note:** The head is a small and difficult target to hit, especially on a moving target. Thus, it can only be hit when a character makes a **called shot** and even then the attacker is -2 to strike.

Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body will effectively destroy the bot, shutting it down completely/useless. **Note: Additional body armor or power armor can NOT be worn by the skelebots.

Speed

Running: 90 mph (144 km) maximum. Note that the act of running does NOT tire the robot and speed can be maintained indefinitely.

Leaping: The robot legs, although strong, are not designed for leaping. Leaps are limited to approximately 6 feet (1.8 m) high or across.

Flying: None, without the addition of the conventional CS jet pack or vehicle.

Range: The nuclear power pack gives the Skelebot approximately two years of life even under the most strenuous and constant amount of use, nearly three years under less active conditions.

Statistical Data

Height: 7 feet (2.1 m)

Width: 3 feet (0.9 m)

Length: 2 feet, 9 inches (0.9 m)

Weight: 390 lbs (175 kg)

Physical Strength: Equal to a P.S. 30

Cargo: None

Power System: Nuclear, average skelebot energy life is two (2) years.

Black Market Cost: Three million credits for a new, undamaged, fully powered unit complete with an assault rifle. Rarely available.

Weapon Systems

1. CV-213 Robot Variable Laser Rifle (1): The CV-213 is the robot modified version of the Coalition's C-212 variable light frequency laser designed to overcome laser resistant armor. In the case of the CV-213, the robot's combat computer will automatically analyze an opponent's armor (if not already preprogrammed into its memory) after one melee round to instantly adjust to the light frequency that will inflict maximum damage.

Primary Purpose: Assault

Weight: 7 lbs (3.2 kg)

Mega-Damage: 2D6 M.D. or 4D6 M.D.; two settings

Rate of Fire: Aimed, burst, wild; see Modern Weapon Proficiencies.

Effective Range: 2000 feet (610 m)

Payload: E-clip is 20 or power pack hand link effectively unlimited.

2. 18 inch (0.45 m) vibro-blades (2): Hidden between the slot of each skeletal forearm is a retractable vibro-saber that swings out and down, locking into close combat position.

Primary Purpose: Assault

Secondary Purpose: Defense

Weight: 2 lbs (0.9 kg)

Mega-Damage: Vibro-Saber: 2D4 M.D.

Range: Hand to hand with about a 5.6 foot (1.7 m) reach.

Rate of Attack: Five (5) per melee; hand to hand combat skill.

Payload: Not applicable

3. Energy Rifles and other normal weapons can be substituted in an emergency or as a back-up weapon.

4. Hand to Hand Combat: Rather than use a weapon, the skelebot can engage in mega-damage hand to hand combat using its fists or vibro-blades. Five attacks per melee! Equal to hand to hand expert.

Damage:

Controlled S.D.C. punch: 2D6+15 S.D.C.

Full mega-damage Punch, elbow, knee, or body block: 1D6 M.D.

Kick or head butt: 1D6 M.D.

Vibro-saber: 2D4 M.D.

Bonuses: Includes all bonuses from programming, robotics and sensors +2 to strike with an automatic rifle, energy pistol, or energy rifle (see W.P. skills), +5 to strike on an aimed shot, +4 to strike with vibro-blades or hand to hand attack (punch, kick, etc.), +5 to parry with fists/arms, +7 to parry with vibro-blade or knife/sword, +6 to dodge, +4 to parry and dodge attacks from behind (motion detectors), +2 to roll with impact or fall (no pull punch), critical strike on natural roll of 19 or 20. Impervious to poison, gas, and biological agents, as well as psionic and magic mind control, charms, bio-manipulation, and S.D.C. attacks. See sensors for optical capabilities.

5. Sensor Systems of Note:

Optics: The skelebots have full optical systems, including the visible light spectrum, infrared, ultraviolet, and polarization, passive night vision (light amplification), thermo-imaging, laser

targeting, and telescopic. *Telescopic optics* function like built-in binoculars with a range of about two miles (3.2 km). All the other optic systems have a range of about 3000 feet (914 m).

Radar: Can identify and track up to 12 targets simultaneously at a range of two miles (3.2 km). Applicable to flying targets at 500 feet above the ground or higher only. Radar can not track ground movement.

Motion Detector: 100 foot radius (30.5 m), adds to ability to parry and dodge (see bonuses).

Radio Communication: Medium-range directional radio for coded messages between skelebots. Range: 10 miles (16 km).

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Hook, Line & Sinker™

Adventure Ideas

By Jolly Blackburn

What is a Hook, Line & Sinker™?

Hook, Line & Sinker™ is the popular Game Master's tool that I created for SHADIS magazine. The idea behind them is simple - give the GM just enough information to spark his own creative energies and then step out of the way. They come in handy when the GM has nothing else prepared, or finds the party has outpaced him and the prepared adventure suddenly ends. Palladium Books gave unfailing support, encouragement and advice during my tour of duty at SHADIS. (In fact, Kevin has the distinction of writing the first check for a paid ad in SHADIS. A whopping ten bucks!) As a token of my appreciation I have given Palladium Books permission to use the HLS format freely in their game publications. I hope Megaverse fans find them a useful addition to a product line that has become the envy of the gaming industry.

Explanation

Hook: The current situation or location of the adventuring party.

Line: An opportunity for adventure that presents itself to the party. A line is normally presented as a short paragraph. Think of the line as the "bait" to lure the party into an adventure.

Sinker: The clincher to the line. The sinker presents the GM with a dilemma that makes the situation a true adventure.

Requiem of a Fighter (Solo-Adventure)

Hook: While drinking in a bar, a fighter is approached by a stranger who strikes up a conversation.

Line: The stranger claims he is a famous gladiator. His curse is that he has never lost a fight and now tires of the sport and wants to retire. The problem is he doesn't have enough money to start a new life. The Stranger then explains his plan to the player. He wants the player to fight him in the arena the next day. The stranger explains that he will bet against himself through a friend and 'throw' the fight. He will pay the player 500 gold pieces (6000 credits) for the favor. He also explains that once the player wins the fight, he will be bestowed with all manner of honors and prestige. "It's too sweet a deal to pass up," coos the stranger, "I'll be rich and you'll be famous for besting an unbeatable fighter."

Sinker: The stranger is indeed a famous fighter. The problem is he is too famous and nobody will fight him. In order to find new opponents, the fighter frequents bars and finds newcomers to town he can con. The clincher is that the Arena fights are to the death. This fighter has no intention of laying down and will fight to the utmost of his ability.

Enemy/Ally Mine?

Hook: Over the past several days there have been numerous reports of planes and vessels having disappeared for short periods of time (a couple of hours at most) in the area known as the Bermuda Triangle. None of the passengers or crew have any recollection of anything having occurred, and cannot explain the loss of time. After a couple of days the reports of disappearances slow and finally stop.

Line: The players are sent to investigate the disappearances and report back with their findings. They are given a list of the people who experienced the disappearances and details on these people. The players' superiors will provide them with standard personal equipment, but the players must give a good explana-

tion for anything else they might need. The superiors will approve of providing the players with a ship to go to the Triangle if the players feel it is necessary to investigate the site in person.

Sinker: Those people who are interviewed will initially be cooperative. However, with time, they will become combative and at some point (when the players begin to get too close to the answers), the people will simply refuse to give any more information. If the players put any tails on the people, they will note no real changes in their schedules for the first two weeks or so. After that, the people who disappeared will begin to meet secretly. Sometimes they will meet with others from the same craft on which they disappeared. At other times they meet with people they could never have met before but who also disappeared. Through various means, the players can learn what is really occurring. The players can go to the Triangle and investigate the Rift, spy on the people and infiltrate one of their meetings, or possibly abduct one of these people for interrogation. With time, they will learn that the people are really agents for a new group of invaders. The people who had disappeared have been replaced by shapechangers (?) who are scouting out this dimension to ascertain what threats they may be facing. The shapechangers, realizing the abductions have drawn more attention than they wanted, have stopped their activities for now. Instead they are returning to report in small groups while establishing a base of operations for further use. The shapechangers could be enemies/allies (or possibly try to remain neutral throughout) to help/hinder the players.

God of Thunder

Hook: Towards night, on a miserable day of cold winds and rain, the players come across a town that appears to be abandoned. Several buildings are burnt to the ground and scorch marks are visible everywhere. They easily find a place to spend the night and set up a watch rotation. That night they are visited by a little girl in tattered clothes and starvation pinched features.

Line: The girl, distrustful at first, explains that the townsfolk fled when the "Thunder God" came to the town amidst a terrible squall. Calling down the lightning, he struck down buildings and people with equal ease. The girl explains that she became separated from her parents during the chaos that ensued and has been grubbing around the town for food ever since. When asked, she explains that the god of thunder took up residence in the town hall in the center of town. Every night since then, she has witnessed lightning streaking up into the sky through several of the windows of the building. Also she has noticed that her hair stands up on end for some time afterwards and she has been shocked a couple of times from remaining static charges.

Sinker: A scientist has taken up residence in the town because of its remoteness and consistent overcast conditions. He is presently working on perfecting a lightning gun for the Empire along with several other devices. He is to meet with one of the higher ranking officials of the Empire soon and is working hard at finishing his various projects. He scared out the townsfolk to minimize his contact with people and reduce the risk of people interfering with his work.

Brain? Brain? Silly human, Brains are for queens!

By Wayne Wallace

Hook: The party has stopped overnight in a small village and is lodged in a local inn where they find themselves impatiently waiting for their food to be served.

Line: A mysterious stranger engages the group in conversation and offers them brief employment. The stranger explains that he had been traveling with his brother and sister on a pilgrimage of sorts. For several months the siblings had been staging explorations in the wilderness regions west of the Mississippi. They were attempting to map the physical dimensions of the closest ley line to the village, and the stranger, Tarxus, had come back for supplies. When he returned to their campsite, he found no trace of his siblings. This would normally be of little concern since each could take care of themselves, but in the last week, travelers have been passing through the village very quickly, warning all who would listen that an unstoppable Doom is coming their way, eliminating all within its path. Tarxus has grown worried at the exceptionally long time his siblings are taking to investigate whatever drew their attention. Given the village's current state of panic, he cannot convince anyone to accompany him on a search for his brother and sister. Would the party, perhaps, be interested in assisting him? Tarxus suspects that a group of D-Bee bandits are responsible, and would likely have fairly valuable possessions, all of which the party would receive for helping Tarxus recover his siblings. Tarxus also offers the location of an abandoned cache of stolen Coalition weapons likely worth several hundred thousand credits on the black market upon recovery of his siblings.

Sinker: A new group of Xiticix have come through a rift, bringing with them a mutant queen whose psionic powers focus more on controlling the minds of (to them) alien species instead of the typical list of powers. Tarxus' brother (Gronthos) and sister (Kythras), like Tarxus, have previously been captured and had their minds dominated by this new group of Xiticix's queen. Each was told to go to a different village and try to attract more humans to come into Xiticix territory so the Xiticix would have a never-ending supply of 'food.' Tarxus and his siblings' minds have been changed so that they believe the story they are telling. Party psi's might be able to detect the mental changes, but the true story cannot be found from any of the siblings' minds. When the PCs are ambushed by the Xiticix in the wilderness, they will probably be able to win. However, the Xiticix are trying to capture the PCs so that they too will become unwilling agents. The PCs, however, are not everyone. Others have been less fortunate and in the aftermath, the PCs will have to figure out how to deal with the possible subversion of all human outposts within range of this new Xiticix hive.

Alamo

Hook: The party is traveling through a desolate region of North American wilderness when they come across a small settlement that has fallen on hard times.

Line: The characters are hired by the local strongman to help the local defense forces stave off a month-long siege by unidentified D-Bees, who seem to have no identifiable goal in their assault. Over the next two weeks, the characters will fight unknown D-Bees. (use Xiticix or something close) The strongman informs them that there'll probably be a large assault soon, based on the steady buildup of D-Bee attacks.

Sinker: The local strongman is actually a practitioner of rather nasty magic, and has entrapped the "queen-equivalent" of the attacking D-Bees in a Techno-Mage device designed to leech life energy from the occupant. However, the queen is highly telepathic, and has been summoning the entire tribe to free itself. The reason for the imminent assault is that the strongman is planning to sacrifice the entrapped queen as he feels she is at the end of her usefulness.

Too Good to be True

Hook: The party is browsing through an open market looking for supplies and equipment.

Line: The party is approached by a traveling salesman in the classic "miracle-tonic" wagon and tacky suit. He's selling an assortment of gadgets and gizmos, bottles, etc. His main product line, however, is what he calls "Energy Savers." They're like small microcomputer modules that the user attaches to any energy-powered device (between the energy source and the device itself), which conserve power and effectively boost the number of shots or duration of use. "Buy 'em while they're cheap!"

Sinker: While the components will register only as electronic gizmos, they're actually dormant artificial intelligences, entities stolen from another dimension through a Rift. When attached to a gun or suit of powered armor, the viral intelligences slowly reawaken, and the item gradually acquires a mind of its own. To make matters worse, each device will want to carry out its own goal in life, and guns may decide they will only fire in order to kill vermin, or power armor may decide it wants to explore Arctic terrain. The intelligences do increase the number of shots or duration by 10% though, due to better power management.

Must Every Cloud have a Silver Lining?

Hook: The party comes across what seems to be an underground storage bunker, dating from the "time before the Rifts" (possibly full of useful items).

Line: The bunker's only entrance is a pair of large metal doors, flecked with rust, and stuck half-closed by rust, dirt and weeds. A massive metal chain has been welded together to seal the doors, and a half-busted sign can be found nearby, reading "keep out." Once opened, the doors will open on an apparently solid block of concrete, although the top of a ladder can be seen leading down into the concrete-filled shaft.

Sinker: Approximately 100 feet down the shaft can be found a cache of 200 toxic waste-filled barrels. The route down will be obstructed by concrete, locked grates and numerous warning signs. Even the barrels are sealed tightly. If opened, the radioac-

tive gas inside will prove to be very dangerous. If the players open the barrels and complain, the GM can smile and explain that they were warned about the dangers.

Who's on First?

Hook: As fascist policy becomes more oppressive, resistance to the Neo-Nazi government grows. The players are sent in by a small resistance group to infiltrate the fascist government's secret police, uncover their power structure, and escape.

Line: The players should be allowed to infiltrate the fascist government's secret police fairly easily. However, the secret police captain will suspect their loyalties. In order to test them, he will order them to infiltrate the main resistance group who opposes the fascist regime, and help the secret police destroy them.

Sinker: The name of the game here is confusion. The players are sent in by one faction of the resistance to get information on the fascist regime's secret police, only to be sent in by the secret police to infiltrate the main resistance group. To make things worse, a member of the first group is present in the main resistance group and thinks the players have turned traitors. The players will have to decide how to both fool the secret police and convince the resistance that they are not traitors, and get out with their lives.

Tasmora's Troupe of Traveling Oddities

Hook: The players enter a nondescript small town. A traveling carnival is in town called Tasmora's troupe of traveling oddities.

Line: They present the most amazing show the players have ever seen. Fire eaters actually eat fire, the boneless man can contort his body into impossible positions, the sword swallows swallow large swords, a knife catcher catches knives by letting them sink into his flesh (thud, thwap). Step right up, step right up. A mere pittance to see the gallows man lose his head, retrieve it from the basket where it has fallen, and replace it seemingly without a trace of blood or severance. The players will be amazed by the show, and slightly spooked, for Tasmora has a secret.

Sinker: Tasmora is a powerful necromancer and your garden variety sicko. She recently entered the region and slaughtered a whole town, the first members of her troupe. The players may have even passed through some of the towns left deserted in her wake. The troupe's performers are able to perform such awesome feats because they are the risen dead, revived by Tasmora to perform in her grisly show. Tasmora thrives on the fear her troupe generates in the townspeople, and as the coup de grace, she and her troupe slaughter the entire town.

Tasmora is a beautiful and powerful necromancer who has been around for as long as the first rifts in America. She has been conducting her troupe for a very long time, and the chaos caused by the rifts has only made it easier for her to continue her macabre journey throughout the land. Each slaughter rejuvenates Tasmora, giving her the ingredients necessary for maintaining her young and beautiful appearance.

The players have walked right into the middle of a performance, and in only a few more hours, after the show, the curtain will go up on the grand finale.

Ambrosia of the Gods or Strange Brew

Hook: The players stumble upon an old brewery, complete with its own side tavern. Inside the tavern is the mother of all parties. Several large silos of beer are apparent as they enter the large building housing the brewery and its tavern.

Line: The players have a great time, free beer!! The bartender sets each of them up with a cold one and the patrons make themselves well known right away. "Ya gotta try this!" says the guy mixing drinks at the end of the bar, and the babe he's with winks at the guys in the party (The night promises to be great indeed!). However, when the players finally decide they want to leave, their new found drinking buddies won't let them (After all, nobody likes to drink alone), and absolutely won't take no for an answer. The players lose stamina for continuing on with no sleep (not to mention the effects of intoxication). The patrons will, of course, retain their jolly demeanor even as they thrash the players attempting to forcefully leave the party.

Sinker: The idea here is to make the bar as fun as possible, containing everything the players love at a party; until the moment they try to leave, and then have it slowly turn into a nightmare as the players are stuck for hour after hour, and perhaps even days. Most of the fun will come from all the muddled attempts and drunkenly slurred excuses offered by the players in a vain attempt to leave such a great party. The regulars are always jolly and never get tired or drunk.

The opening of a nexus near this brewery/tavern has turned the beer in the silos into a literal Ambrosia of the gods. The townspeople are made nigh invincible by it, not needing sleep or food, just the great company the players offer. The patrons are the proverbial town drunks, and for them it seems as if they have died and gone to heaven. Before the nexus opened, these players were the John Deere drivers who came to the bar every night, got drunk till they puked and went home. Now, the party never ends.

One If by Land

Hook: The players are sent in as an advanced recon team for a major assault.

Line: The players have to sneak into enemy held territory and set up a recon post. It should be neither too easy nor too hard. After the players have set up their recon position, it is up to them to call in the assault and guide it.

Sinker: The assault is doomed to fail. Overwhelming enemy reserves are passing through the area and are called in to wipe out the assault group the players are guiding in. One by one they hear the screams of their comrades, until the even more awful sound of silence fills their com links. Stuck in their forward recon position, deep in enemy held territory, they must either blast or sneak their way back to safety. However they choose to do it, they must act quickly before they are discovered.

Roanoke Revisited

Hook: The players make camp at the end of a long day. At some point during one of the players night watch, torches appear in the distance. When the players go to investigate, they find that a wooden fort has mysteriously appeared.

Line: The players, should they attempt to make contact, are fired upon by crudely equipped people, armed with ancient weapons (flintlocks, matchlocks, etc.). After awhile, the obviously terrified shouts from the stockade can be made out to be Elizabethan English (with plenty of Thees and Thous). The fort is attacked by a large number of nexus creatures shortly after the players are able to make contact.

Sinker: The fort is actually the lost colony of Roanoke, which disappeared in the middle of the 16th century when the Americas were first colonized. The terrified men, women, and children who disappeared from Roanoke have appeared here. The reason for the initial attack upon the characters was for fear that they were Indians about to raid the colonists. The colony is also the center of a nexus. The players must figure out why.

Some of the people of Roanoke were practicing occult rituals which they brought with them from Europe. These witches of Roanoke caused the colony to be sucked through the nexus before these witches could meet the same fate as their counterparts at the Salem witch trials.

The colonists will fear the characters as Protestant English nationalists who've come to end the free way of life they have developed. Although the majority of the town will coolly welcome the players, the witches will try to clandestinely kill off the players in subtle ways, with spells and the like. The players may actually use Roanoke as a supply point in further adventures in the region, but supplies will subtly break, and foods bought may cause aches and pains from the poisons slipped into them by the witch folk of the colony. The players must ultimately solve the mystery of Roanoke and uncover the occult practices before it brings a more serious evil force upon the colony itself, or eventually causes casualties in the ranks of the party members.

Evil for Hire

Hook: The players are hired to find and investigate some specific old ruins. They are met by a man who offers them a map and tells them that his associate would like them to find the site, loot and recover all items found, kill off any opposition to the expedition, and to begin construction on some kind of defensible stockade. They are offered a huge sum for the deed, with the promise of twice the amount when they have achieved the objectives successfully.

Line: The players will have to fight their way through swarms of mythical creatures generally regarded as Good. These creatures will, however, ferociously fight the characters to the death.

Sinker: The associate is actually a powerful and diabolically evil creature. He has been banished from his stronghold and a powerful ward has been placed upon it so that only good creatures may enter. He has thus hired the unsuspecting party to clear it. After they have secured the area and accomplished their

goals, they will be paid as promised. After all, the evil which had been cleared out of the place long ago can now terrorize the area it once did, again. The players will now either have to undo what they have done and attack the evil creature or let stand their misdeed.

An Errand of Mercy

Hook: The party is in a small village scouting out the local pubs and listening for rumors.

Line: A finely dressed merchant approaches a member of the party and seeks his/her employment. It seems the merchant's younger brother died while the two were en route to the capital city. The brother must continue his urgent business and cannot spare the time to accompany his brother's body back home (which is approximately four days' ride from the party's current location).

He offers 1000 credits to the party if they will take his brother's corpse back home. The merchant provides a wagon and a small mule for the purpose.

Sinker: The brother has neglected to tell the party that his brother was killed by a vampire. The dead brother will rise as a vampire on the second night of the trip home. Some interesting side adventures could spring up from this scenario. If the vampire flees, the party will have to explain to his family what happened to him. (Perhaps the brother was placed in his coffin with his valuables and the family will suspect thievery.)

Body Double

Hook: A member of the party has died and his comrades have sought out a high level cleric to resurrect him.

Line: The party locates a cleric who agrees to perform the ceremony for the traditional fee. He insists on being alone during the ceremony.

Sinker: The cleric is actually a Doppelganger. Once left alone with the corpse, the Doppelganger will assume the identity of the dead character. He will then hide the body and emerge from the private chambers. Feigning weakness, he will suggest something must have went wrong with the ceremony because, as he explains, the cleric disappeared in a cloud of smoke. If the party becomes suspicious, the Doppelganger will claim to have lost his memory.

That Ol' Black Magic

Hook: The party is in a town restocking supplies and equipment.

Line: A store proprietor will offer a member of the party a very special deal on a fine weapon. He explains that his son, who owned the sword, was killed in battle just weeks before. The memories are too painful for him to bear so he wants to get rid of the weapon. The price he's asking is extremely cheap.

Sinker: The weapon is actually the prized possession of a Coalition officer. It was custom made for him by some very wealthy patrons. The weapon is famous locally and virtually

everyone knows who it belongs to. If a party member buys the weapon and displays it openly around town, he's certain to attract the wrong kind of attention.

Country Hospitality

Hook: The party has set up camp along a roadside in a wilderness setting.

Line: A weary traveler stumbles upon the party. He asks if he can spend the night in the safety of the camp. He even has several rabbits to contribute to the evening's meal. The traveler appears very harmless. In fact, he is very friendly and likeable.

Sinker: The 'weary' traveler is actually a master thief. He is the leader of a band of thieves who have been spying on the party for quite sometime. If the party allows the thief to spend the night in the camp he will attempt to steal anything of value.

If he is caught in the act he will attempt to blow a whistle he wears about his neck. If he successfully blows the whistle his band of thieves (2D6 thieves) will storm the camp in 1D4 turns.

Worlds Apart

Hook: The stalwart band of adventurers have ventured into a wilderness area that is traditionally believed to harbor strange, and as of yet, unencountered D-Bees. Pausing on their journey, the party sets up camp along a gentle stream.

Line: During the night a strange ghost-like apparition appears in the flames of the campfire. The figure appears to be a young man in a military uniform. He repeatedly wails a solitary request, "You who are there! Come here with me." He reaches out translucent arms to emphasize his request.

Sinker: The strange apparition is not technically a ghost. He is a poor unfortunate caught in a strange backwash created in the fabric of time/space by the ley lines/rifts. He is eternally caught between planes of existence, alive in neither world and yet not truly dead. The figure is incredibly tormented with grief from hundreds of years of solitude. The party can question the apparition and it may engage in limited conversation with the party asking questions and the apparition replying in two to four word sentences. Anything requiring more of an answer causes the apparition to once again wail its request for the party to join him and keep him company. There is no solution for this tragic soul. The GM can use him to give the players cause for concern and to remind them they are in a world filled with unknowns and dangers.

Judge Not

Hook: The party stumbles into a small village they've never been to before. They are surprised by the relatively large number of people crowding the small clutch of buildings at the center of the village.

Line: As chance would have it, a tribal-court has been called to determine the guilt of two young men. As the party squeezes toward the center of attention — they are a little surprised to find that the accused appear to be Coalition soldiers. By the looks of

their bloodied faces and tattered uniforms, the soldiers have been badly treated and appear to be extremely shaken and frightened by their predicament.

Sinker: As the party watches the proceedings it becomes extremely clear — with no doubt whatsoever, that the soldiers are innocent and have been set up. The so-called Judge presiding over the event seems extremely bitter toward the Coalition in general and seems to be in the process of justifying a sentence of death. What happens next is purely up to the party. Do they put themselves at risk and intervene? The GM should emphasize the fact that the crowd seems extremely agitated and is apparently intent on seeing the accused punished. If the party chooses not to get involved, they will find it difficult to put the matter out of their minds. During the course of the following days and weeks as the party travels, they encounter postings announcing a reward for the killers of two Coalition soldiers. The local garrison commander is a particularly ruthless and unforgiving individual. He has ordered the systematic mass-execution of several small villages in the area until the guilty parties surrender or are turned in. Obviously there's no single solution to such a dilemma. The party will simply have to deal with the situation through action or inaction, but either way, a choice.

Judgment

Hook: During a rest stop from one event to the next, the group or one of its members stumble onto a woman who seems to be ill. She seems more odd than the norm for she is dressed in a white lab outfit. She will be in hysterics and think the group or persons trying to speak with her are after her for some reason. As the person or group try to speak, her eyes will become milk white and she will collapse to the ground unmoving. Anyone checking her over will suddenly cause the woman to stir, her milk white eyes will leak a clear liquid that will get onto the person checking her out. As she starts to choke, she grabs at the arm of the closest person. She seems to come to her senses all at once. In surprise, she yells for the group to get away from her, and that it may already be too late. She is already infected and past the incubation period, so she cannot be helped. If she is pressed for more information she will stiffen.... in her fist she holds a torn piece of paper that now drops from her grip as she dies. The paper is a rough map to the (insert name of area here) area. Scrawled at the top is the word JUDGMENT. The map shows a rough location of what looks like a base of some sort. The map is drawn on what looks like an old military order form, the letterhead states "Bio-Weapons department".

Line: Almost at once the group is attacked by people who hide their faces behind strange, dark colored hoods. The number of people will be up to the game runner. They will open fire, trying to scare the group away. If this does not work, they will seem to be unwilling to cause any real damage to the group. As they retreat, one of the number trips and breaks an ankle. The group will see on closer inspection that the strange hood is barrel shaped with a Plexiglas shield for the face and an oxygen bottle breather hooked to it. The man will be terrified as he sees a crack in the Plexiglas. He will explain that his group had been searching for an old bio-weapon that would make them very

powerful and help define a new world order amongst the chaos. He will be close to tears as he stares at the dead woman. He explains that the only cure for the bio-weapon is at the hidden Biological base and only the woman knew where it was... now no one will know. At death, the biological germs become airborne, he goes on to explain. We have all been exposed, without the location of the base ... we are all going to die in two week's time.

Finding the base is going to be harder than the group may think, the mountain terrain works against them. The area is home to a small tribe of humans that have all but reverted to Cro-Magnon ways over a few generations. Worse, the tribe numbers but four, and are not particular in what, or who they eat. Their teeth are all pointed and they have long, dirty fingernails. They have many traps in the area, and the group will have to work against these people and the hidden dangers. The traps are spike pits, snares, and bent limbs of trees that will swing in and do a great amount of damage to anyone hit. The going is slow and dangerous and the urgency gets even more so as some of the group (those that had touched the woman or were closest) start showing signs of illness, a strange rash forms on the tops of the hands.

The entrance to the base is at last found, in the side of a rocky cliff face. The old elevator does not work and the group will have to somehow climb down two floors to the base. Inside the shaft in the darkness, is the home of a spider that had been exposed to the bio-chemicals and is now as large as a small dog. The creature's webbing is very strong and it will seek to bind anyone climbing down with its webbing. It will not put up much of a fight against something that is far stronger, and will run from fire. Its bite can cause breathing to become labored as the muscles are partially paralyzed.

Sinker: Getting to the bottom, they will find an old medical lab; in its center is a giant glass enclosure. Inside of the glass is something black and seem to move. Getting closer, anyone will be able to see that inside the glass enclosure are hundreds of flies. They seem a bit larger than normal flies and have huge green eyes. The front of the glass enclosure has the words JUDGMENT painted over the glass. As this discovery is made, the lights of the complex will come on, as will many of the dormant machines. The flies within the glass will all start to buzz and can be heard past the glass. Men in lab clothes will come from behind a sliding steel door. One will be in charge, and will explain that they had wanted to test the biological weapon in an uncontrolled environment outside of the lab, so they infected one of the lab assistants and sent her forth. They will be disappointed because the exposure to the biological death should have taken the group by now, and they can only surmise that people on the outside have a far stronger immunity than those who have lived here in the labs. Soon a stronger version of the bio-weapon shall be unleashed by way of nature. He points to the flies. He will tell the group they are free to go, he and his team have a lot of work to do. The group can leave or do what they want. It should be obvious that they have been human test subjects and that these people will soon release a stronger bio-weapon. If the group tries to destroy the base, the scientists (six of them in all) will produce small hand-held pulse weapons, and will have no qualms about killing the group now. They will try not to fire near or at the glass enclosure. If a shot hits the glass, all the flies will surge out and fly up the shaft to escape.

Weapon of Tomorrow

Hook: Someplace far off in the woodlands, an explosion lights up the night. The explosion is the strangest any of the group has ever seen; it is green flame. They can tell that the walk is at least a half day away and will take that long if so choose to investigate. Finding the spot where the explosion took place is no problem. A wide area is charred and burned away; at the center of this devastation lays a body, and to everyone's surprise in spite of the obvious burned condition, he is still alive. On the man's right hand is a strange metal object that looks like a heavy beam weapon of some kind, but no one has ever seen a grip that extends over a hand and forearm before. Investigating the man further, they will see that he may not live long with his injuries. He drops the object to the ground. The person closest to this object will get a surprise as electrical wiring shoots forth from the object's arm hole, and wires dig into that person's forearm, pulling the weapon onto the person. The pain as the wires dig deep into the person's arm and into the nervous system is great.... so great that he will depress the firing trigger on the inside of the weapon, causing pulse beams of energy to fire out, cutting down trees. This soon stops and the character feels better, but he cannot remove the weapon.

Line: As time goes on, the character will find that his reflexes have doubled in speed. This will aid the character in any encounters he may have against beings seeking to do him harm. Also, the character's knowledge will seem to expand and new skills will manifest themselves.

Sinker: To his companions' horror, the character will start to become more and more robot-like, and lacking in emotion as the weapon, in truth a computer that believes it is alive, takes over the character. Only extensive electronic and computer skills can save the character from becoming something else altogether... a weapon of tomorrow with no remorse for its actions, a cold, calculating killer.

Hunter's Moon

Hook: The group is hired on or somehow has interests in exploring the new northern reaches. The people that are going with the group are very secretive and will only smile and say they have a special interest in going to these new unexplored areas.

Line: On getting out into the far reaches of the wilderness, the group of men will, one by one, disappear into the woods. After a time, only the characters will be left.

Sinker: The men are part of a strange group of thrill seekers. The latest thing that they have decided to do for thrills is a hunt, and the targets are the characters. The men will use different types of weapons on the hunt and will do their best to kill the group of characters. All the characters have to do is make it out of the wilds in 24 hours.

Maiden in Distress?

Hook: The party is in a bar or tavern in a fairly good sized town or city. While being served, they notice that the waitress is bickering with the establishment owner and he is bullying her.

Line: The waitress is an extremely attractive young lady and seems to take it all in stride, but looking more frazzled with each grab, push or insult from the owner. The abuse is bad enough, characters of good alignment will feel compelled to intervene.

Sinker: The waitress is actually a very skilled assassin. She has been egging on the owner into abusing her so she can set him up.

She plans on killing him in front of witnesses as soon as his physical abuse warrants her to act in 'self defense.'

If the party intercedes she will do one of two things. If she thinks the party may help her complete her job, she will have no problem befriending one or more of them and conning them into killing the old man.

If she doesn't think they can help, she will politely thank them but tell them she can take care of herself. Which she will very soon do by putting a dagger in the owner's gullet.

Either way, if the party keeps a close eye on this maiden in distress, they may be pulled into a web that will be very sticky to get out of.

The Silver Medallion

Hook: The party is travelling down a road when they find a body lying on the side of the road.

Line: The body is of a man obviously dead for more than a few hours but there is no clue as to how he died. If the party searches his body, they will find a vid-disk which outlines the payment of hundreds of thousands of credits from one Coalition officer to another. The party will also find on the body a small medallion with a Coalition military crest on it.

Sinker: The medallion is a covert vid-disk piece with highly sensitive military information stored on it. It's obviously worth thousands of credits to the right people, but passing on military secrets carries a death penalty. The party will have a tough decision to make since the GM will strive to make both options very appealing.

A Mother's Love

Hook: The party has entered a new town or city for the first time. After settling in and finding room & board, the party decides to seek out a tavern and have a few drinks.

Line: As the party is heading for the tavern they pass a woman on the street. The woman is quite wealthy and accompanied by her entourage of bodyguards and personal servants.

The woman stops dead in her tracks as if she's seen a ghost. Singling out one character in the party she begins to scream and point, "My Lord, John it's you! You're alive! You're alive! I knew it was all a lie!"

Sinker: The woman is the widow of a very powerful merchant. Adding to her grief, her only son, John, was killed under

mysterious circumstances a few months after her husband's death. Under local law, a woman cannot inherit her husband's wealth. The money goes to the eldest son. In cases where there are no sons, the wealth goes to the closest male blood relative of the husband.

In this case the woman's brother-in-law now stands to inherit the fortune. The fact is, the brother-in-law had John killed so that he would inherit his brother's wealth. The member of the party singled out by the woman looks almost identical to her dead son. The distraught woman snaps and nothing will be able to convince her that the party-member is not her son.

If the party ignores her commotion and continues on, she will follow and call out for 'John' to wait. If the party flees, she will order her bodyguards to catch 'John' and bring him back. If the other party members attempt to intervene, the woman will accuse them of kidnapping her son and 'turning' him against her.

This scenario could develop in several directions. The party-member may choose to exploit the situation. "Yeah, that's right lady, I'm your long lost son. By the way, where's daddy's money?"

Of course the evil brother in-law will know the party-member is an imposter and will try anything to get rid of him.

The Setup

Hook: The party has just returned concluded an adventure. To celebrate, the party decides to go to a local tavern and drink.

Line: After the party has finished several rounds, the tavern doors burst open. Several dozen city guards enter the tavern and

order everyone to sit fast. After order is achieved, an elderly man is ushered into the room. The old man appears to be concentrating and holds one hand to his forehead as he moves about the crowd slowly. Finally he stops in front of a party member and says, "He is the one who has it!"

Several guards will approach the party member and will demand that he put all his belongings on the table. If he refuses, a battle is likely to start. If he agrees, the guards will go through his possessions with great zeal. Finally one of the guards will pick up a completely ordinary item from the table and hand it to the old man. The old man will handle it and nod his head. "Yes, this is it."

The guards and the mage will then leave as quickly as they appeared, leaving the poor party wondering what it was all about.

Sinker: This HLS is just a harmless joke devised to teach players the benefits of thinking things through before jumping into combat. The old man has been hired by a very wealthy client to find an item. The item once belonged to the client's father, who is now dead. He has been searching for years in an attempt to recover it. The item taken is actually worthless and quite ordinary to anyone else. The party, of course, will probably go insane with rage, thinking they lost something of great worth or power. If the party insists on getting the item back and finally manages to track it down, they will find a pathetic old man who simply longs to have something that belonged to his father. Once they realize the truth of the situation, there may be several red faces in the party, especially if the party hacked and slayed their way to retrieve the item.

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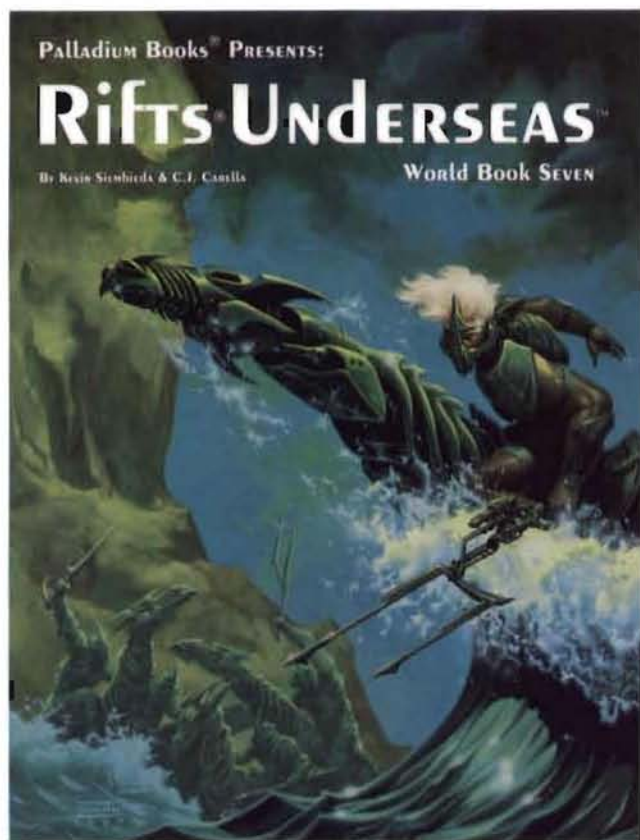
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