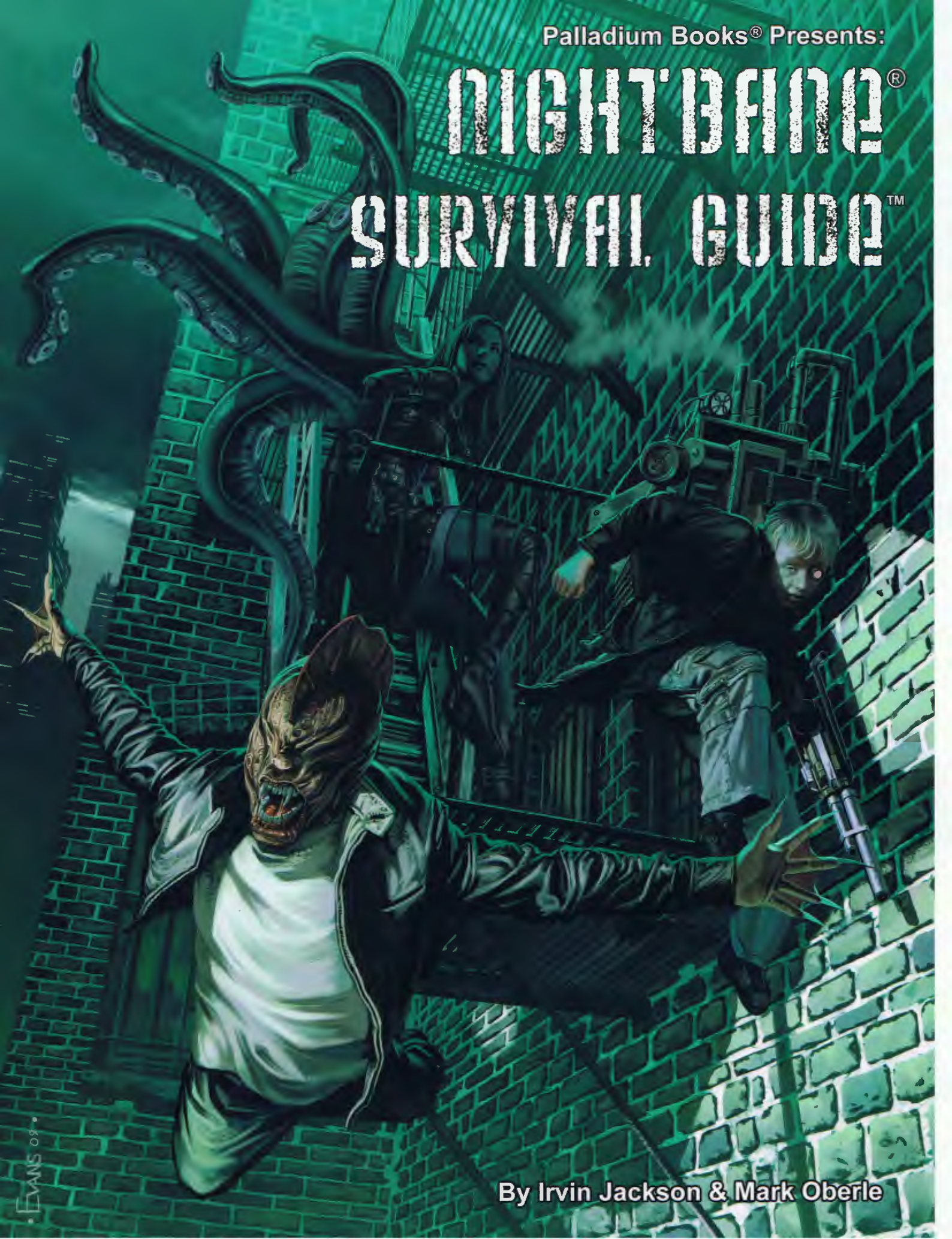


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NIGHT'BEARD® SURVIVAL GUIDE™



By Irvin Jackson & Mark Oberle

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Nightbane® Survival Guide™ is a sourcebook
for the ***Nightbane® Role-Playing Game.***

Dedications

To my loving family and loyal friends, who have stood beside me during my darkest hours and most brilliant triumphs, and always encouraged me to chase my dreams no matter if they understood them or not. You are my world, and I would be nothing without you.

– Mark Oberele, 2009

To Rachael Shapira and our son, Joseph.

– Irvin L. Jackson, 2009

To all the Nightbane fans who patiently waited for the saga to continue. This is just the start of a renewed focus on the Nightbane® series.

– Kevin Siembieda, 2009

The cover, by *Mark Evans*, depicts a trio of Nightbane on the prowl.

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– *Kevin Siembieda, 2009*

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Dark Day

“Where the hell is the sun?”

It was about the tenth time that morning Rick had asked himself that question. And like before, there was no answer forthcoming. There was no answer in the President’s plea for everyone to stay calm. There was no answer in the shaken call from his boss telling him the stock market wouldn’t open that morning, and there was no answer from the bible that he almost never opened.

At first he had looked out the window, wondering why he couldn’t see any stars. It was the city, but you should at least see a few of the brighter ones overcoming the glare of city lights. Then he’d thought he’d seen . . . something . . . chasing . . . *something* else down the street. Both were . . . well, monstrous. While his rational mind told him it was the panic and shock of the situation causing him to ‘imagine’ he was seeing monsters running down the back alley behind his apartment building, he hadn’t looked out the window since.

Bad enough the sun didn’t rise and the sky was black, pitch black. Bad enough there was shouting, gunfire and random acts of rioting. He didn’t need to scare himself imagining monsters lurking in the shadows.

Giving up on questions that, for now, had no answers, he went into the bathroom to shave. While there was no work today, sometimes routine was the best medicine when the world went nuts on you. At least that was what he’d always heard.

Looking in the mirror, a monster stared back at him. A monster with his own face.

The next ten minutes were a blur of screams, terror, denial, tears and vicious scrubbing to no avail. The pure white scales covering Rick’s body would not come off, and the armored pieces grafted to his shoulders, chest, and legs seemed to be as much a part of him as his wildly beating heart. His mind couldn’t handle it and he fled the monster in the mirror to join the screaming masses in the streets.

It didn’t take much of Rick scaring the hell out of already panicked bystanders before an incredibly powerful hand snatched him by the shoulder and pulled him between two buildings.

“Man, you picked the wrong morning for a stroll,” said a powerful, resonating voice behind him.

Rick turned slowly, a sense of camaraderie calming him even as he stared up at the hulking half-man, half-spider thing towering over him. Rick, speechless, could barely make out half a dozen other figures in the shadows behind the spider-thing. All of them were monsters. All of them looked different. And yet he felt he knew each one.

“Who . . . what are we?”

The man-spider somehow managed a kind smile on that horrible visage as he answered.

“We are brothers.”

Rick and numerous other *Nightbane* born in darkness and grabbed off the streets by an experienced member of the **Underground Railroad** would go on to survive *Dark Day*. Together, they would survive many of the tribulations that would follow after, but for many other young *Nightbane*, who were not fortunate enough to stumble across a more experienced *elder*, survival was a deadly guessing game that far too many lost.

In the Aftermath of Dark Day

To the general public, *Dark Day* was a horrifying event most people would like to forget. For the vast majority, it was the day the sun didn't rise and the stars disappeared. A 24 hour period of utter darkness. The kind of darkness that seemed to smother the artificial light of a lamppost or lantern and minimize its power of illumination. A darkness that seemed to radiate with fear and an ominous sense of change and danger.

Most people barred their doors, turned on the lights, clung onto each other, and stayed indoors. They thanked God when the sun finally rose and everything returned to normal.

Normal.

That's what people want to believe. That everything is back to *normal*. *Dark Day* was just some weird, cosmic fluke cause by a space storm, or space dust, or whatever it is the authorities claim to have temporarily blotted out the sun. Most people cling to that explanation and dutifully go about their lives praying that the world is, indeed, back to 'normal.'

They try to ignore the quacks, nutjobs, and conspiracy theorists who claim the explanation for *Dark Day* is a lie. A cover-up on a global scale. They try not to listen to the stories about monsters that rode in on the darkness and invaded our world that day. Monsters who, some say, can make themselves look just like you or I, but are really evil beings who serve a mysterious dark master. They denounce the conspiracy theorists who claim the governments and law enforcement agencies are somehow complicit in the cover-up and that, while 'monsters' may not be real, *something* sinister went on during *Dark Day*. Something that has changed our world forever. These faithful and law abiding citizens choose to believe that the stories about monsters, the supernatural, conspiracies and wild speculation only stir up more fear, and that people should stop talking about them and move on with their lives.

The problem is, almost everyone knows about somebody who had a child, niece, nephew, friend or loved one who they claim changed into a freak or monster that *Dark Day*, or simply disappeared into the darkness never to return. Many other people claim to have seen frightening, terrible things in the darkness that long night – and since. Not just rioters and people panicked by the event, or even those driven momentarily mad to commit terrible crimes of destruction, murder and rape. They claim to have seen monsters. Real, flesh and blood monsters. Of course, others claim to have seen zombies, devouring insects, winged gargoyles, faeries, angels, and beings of pure light or devouring darkness.

Mass hysteria. Mass hysteria is the easy answer offered by most government agencies, as well as noted experts who did not

venture out into the long night. *Dark Day*, they insist, created such fear and panic on a primordial level that many people around the globe suffered from mass hysteria. In this extended, hyper period of terror, people imagined the worst. Many thought it was the end of the world. Some committed suicide. Others ran amok looting and destroying. Some engaged in much worse behavior. Many others *thought* they saw things – monsters, demons and angels – that didn't really exist. Images of primordial terror provoked by the fear and uncertainty of *Dark Day*. Thus, one person might have *imagined seeing* a vulture in the shape of a man with leathery skin and massive bat wings. Another insists he saw a vampire, or werewolf, or skull-faced demon, or giant insect, or a winged serpent or any number of monsters born from myth, legend, superstition, story books and horror films. Some people of faith reported seeing devils complete with horns and cloven hooves, while others claim they were rescued by beautiful angels or monsters with gentle eyes and a human soul. Others saw imps and faeries, some even claim to have seen robots, machine men and superheroes. Most of these "eyewitnesses," when pressed, admit that these 'visions' occurred during a moment of terror or blind panic. Many also confess 'the encounter' or sighting lasted only a few seconds, in the dark, and they couldn't be absolutely certain about what they saw. As is typical with cases of mass hysteria, even large groups of people who experienced the exact same event, describe it and the 'monsters' they saw differently than others present. Further evidence, the experts say, of delusion caused by mass hysteria.

Somehow more disturbing are reports from people who claim their spouse, neighbor or co-worker is not the same person since *Dark Day*. Literally not the same person. They look the same, act similarly, but they aren't the same. They've been replaced by . . . someone or something else. The authorities and experts have dubbed this the *Body Snatcher Syndrome* – an irrational fear or belief that the person you know has been replaced with a doppelganger. A post-traumatic effect of the mass hysteria resulting from *Dark Day*. A lingering itch at the back of the brain that something is not right, that monsters or invaders have somehow, almost imperceptibly invaded our normal world. Of course, it is not true, assure the experts, civic leaders, and our rational mind, and yet . . .

Most people are happy to be convinced that they *imagined* it all. They are happy to believe their minds – whipped into a frenzy by fear – played tricks on them and made them misinterpret what they really saw. Monsters aren't real, everyone knows that. Angelic saviors never appeared to rescue anyone. And *Dark Day* has been explained by the greatest minds of our day. The average person accepts and welcomes the idea that fear and darkness played tricks on the human mind, and that with the return of the sun, everything is *back to normal*. They dismiss lingering stories about monsters roaming the streets ever since *Dark Day*, just as they refuse to believe crazy stories about a secret war between good and evil, tales of doppelgangers with a sinister purpose, government cover-ups and an evil force called the *Nightlords* secretly usurping control over governments around the globe. It's all nonsense. It has to be.

The *Nightbane* know better.

The truth about monsters

If you never saw a monster that night, or since, it is easy to believe they don't exist. If you are a Nightbane, however, you know better because you *are* one of those monsters.

Like Rick, a small percentage of ordinary humans were inexplicably and forever changed on Dark Day or in the days that have followed. *Nightbane* just seem to happen. One day, you are an ordinary person. The next, you find yourself transformed into something more (or *less*, depending on how you look at it) than human. Most Nightbane experience the "Becoming" in their teens or early twenties, but it can happen to anyone of any age. No one knows how or why this happens.

So you are an ordinary kid, a teenager or college student dealing with all the grief and uncertainty that comes with finding your place in the world when you discover you possess superhuman powers – psychic and/or magical powers. That may seem exciting at first, but to use those special abilities you have to physically transform into something not human. Something that is usually bizarre, hideous and frightening. Something known on the street as the *Nightbane*.

Actually, some Nightbane are beautiful, while others are twisted, freakish, or outright monstrous. Yet even the beautiful 'Bane have an eerie, inhuman quality about them, whether it's faerie or angel wings, scales or skin that glows, an unnatural color, glowing eyes, fangs and many stranger features.

So you discover you can turn into a weird creature with superpowers or magical abilities. How does someone deal with that in real life? How do you not feel like a freak or a monster. Who can you turn to and confide in without freaking them out? This isn't comic books or television, it's real, and it's traumatic.

The authorities deny the Nightbane's existence, though there is a special government agency – the **National Security Bureau**, or the **NSB** – that investigates all reports of "monsters" and paranormal incidents. The government claims this is to allay people's fears about monsters and magic since Dark Day, and prove they don't exist. But there are some people who insist the NSB are the Men in Black from the old UFO days, and are part of the government conspiracy to hide the fact that these monsters are very real. Word on the street is the NSB hunts, captures and terminates Nightbane and that local authorities, the FBI, CIA, NSA, Homeland Security, and all the other alphabet agencies are in on the conspiracy to cover up the existence of Nightbane and eliminate them.

As the "Bane of the Night," these changed people are the natural enemy of darkness – and that makes them the enemy of the *Nightlords* and their demonic servants. The Nightlords and their evil minions are supernatural horrors that crossed over from an alien dimension to invade our world on Dark Day. They are malevolent beings from a shadowy veil known as the *Nightlands*, a dark and violent parallel dimension that is a twisted mockery of Earth. The Nightlords have quietly usurped the seats of global power on Earth, replacing our leaders with evil Doppelgangers or faithful servants, and now secretly rule our world. Most appear human, but many are wicked beings disguised as human leaders in government and business.

For reasons unknown to the Nightbane, the Nightlords fear them and seek their destruction. To that end, the Nightlords use conventional law enforcement and government

agencies, as well as the NSB and a long list of demonic beings, to hunt the Nightbane down like fugitives and kill them in the streets like mad dogs. Thus, the Nightbane, still discovering the extent of their powers, and searching for purpose in an uncertain world, live in secret and seclusion. Most hide their true, super-human nature even from their friends and family for fear of rejection or traumatizing the ones they love, and hide from the minions of the Nightlords who seek them out for destruction with relentless resolve. All the while, the Nightbane search for answers, seek others like themselves and hone their powers as best they can.

The Nightbane Survival Guide

The Nightbane are a part of a mystery and an elaborate conspiracy even they don't understand. Some choose a life of adventure and heroics, some hide and deny their inhuman side, and others embrace the monstrous in dangerous and terrible ways. But all seek the truth and hunger for answers. A Web-based codex known as the **Nightbane Survival Guide** holds the promise of at least some answers, but it has been corrupted and distorted by fools, tricksters and the enemy. Truth be told, it was never clear if the original version of "the Guide" held many answers or was the well-intentioned ramblings of a madman.

The **Nightbane Survival Guide** first appeared on the web in the summer of 2003. At first it could only be found at obscure places on the Internet. Its appearance seemed to coincide with what the **Nightbane Underground Railroad** believed to be a crackdown on young, emerging Nightbane by the Nightlords and their minions. The Railroad itself was hit particularly hard that year due to increased secret operations to destroy it, and compromised by the young, inexperienced Nightbane the group worked so hard to rescue.

The Nightlords tried to stamp the Guide off the Internet wherever it was found, but once something has been on the net a few times, it is nigh impossible to eliminate. Today, the Guide can be found in a hundred locations on the web, and has even hit mainstream websites and blogs, most of which assume the document is some kind of manifesto or criticism of our modern world, society and our leaders. Readers who are not Nightbane themselves often believe the "Nightlords" refers to members of the *Preserver Party*, or authority in general, and there are regular net debates, sometimes heated, on "decoding" the message of *the Nightbane Survival Guide*. Most people never think to take the Guide literally. Those who do are labeled crazy, paranoids, and conspiracy theorist lunatics. The Guide itself is generally dismissed as conspiracy theory rubbish with a sci-fi/horror twist to make it appealing to teenagers and young adults who like to see the world as dark and dangerous. Others think it is just an Internet hoax, or half-baked conspiracy theory meets television pop-culture shows like *Fringe* or the *X-Files*.

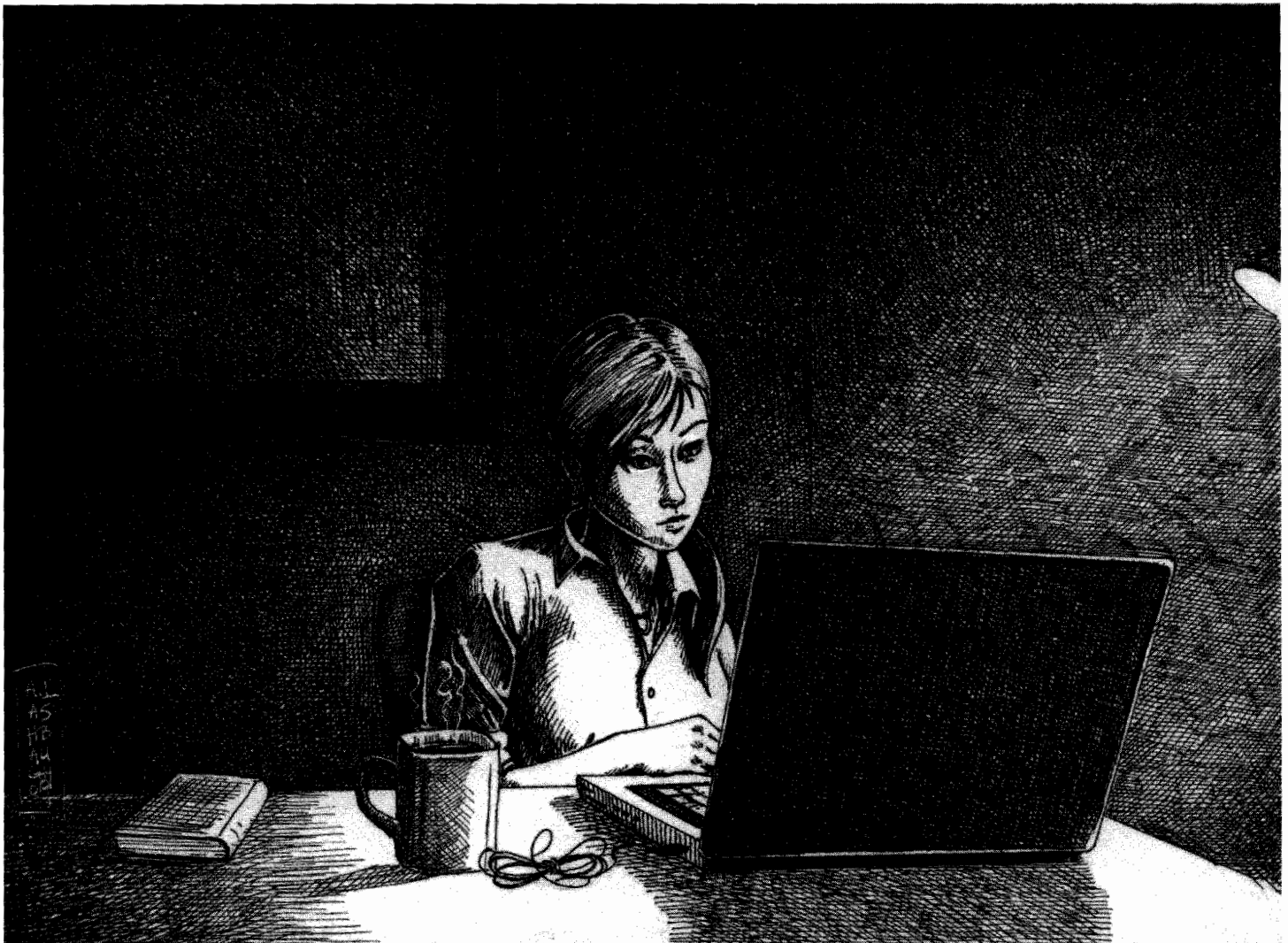
No one, including the Nightbane, knows who authored it, and the writing style changes from time to time suggesting there may have been two or more writers. There is enough correct data and insider information to suggest a Nightbane was the author, but no Nightbane with a shred of sense would dare take credit for it.

What is the truth and the original intent of the Nightbane Survival Guide? That too is a mystery. There are multiple versions online. Some contain more detailed information about the Nightbane and Nightlords than others. Many offer helpful advice and firsthand accounts of the Nightbane's struggle. Some versions even include information, clues and hints about how to get in contact with various *Nightbane factions*, friends and allies. However, such data is usually old and invalid, a dead end, or all too often, Nightlord/NSB traps designed to lure Nightbane out in the open and reveal themselves so they may be destroyed. Even with warnings all over the web and word on the street that the *Nightbane Survival Guide* does NOT contain reliable information or safe ways to contact other Nightbane, many confused and desperate 'Bane searching for answers fall victim to the Nightlords' traps, lies and disinformation.

Finding the Nightbane Survival Guide online is fairly easy, since it has become a part of Internet pop culture and the Nightbane and Nightlords a thriving *urban myth*, especially among those under the age of 30. A few search engine attempts (simple Computer Operation or Research skill roll does the trick) lands the searcher a copy in a matter of minutes. However, there is no guarantee it is the *genuine article* as originally posted. It is more likely to be any one of a hundred modified and expanded versions full of nonsense, false leads, lies and Nightlord traps; some of it deliberately aimed at leading

Nightbane to their doom. Some of the false documents also have *spyware* and other malicious computer programs that monitor and track the user's computer activity. **Note:** A successful *Computer Hacking* skill roll or *Computer Programming* (at -20%) should reveal the presence of spyware and tracking programs, but additional skill rolls are needed to eliminate the spy program. The *Nightbane Lore* skill may help a character to determine if the document is the *real* Nightbane Survival Guide, but there are so many versions of it, one needs a copy of the verified original to compare it with to be absolutely certain. Even then, there is some debate as to which of a handful of slight variants is the original, and even most of the fakes contain large portions of the original document and present enough insight about the Nightbane and Nightlords to *seem* genuine and helpful even when they are NSB/Nightlord traps. After all, who better than the devious Nightlords to know the most convincing lies are those filled with bits of truth and the promise of hope?

Among the many rumors about the **Nightbane Survival Guide** is one that claims hidden within the real document are clues that lead to an **Nightbane Underground Railroad safe house** in Baltimore (and possibly elsewhere). **Note:** A successful *Cryptography* skill roll at -15% will indeed reveal what seems to be a location in Baltimore. However, the house has been burned down and abandoned since 2005. There is also a good chance a *Namtar* (or NSB agents) has the location staked



out, since the Nightlords have already analyzed the Guide in every possible way. Most savvy player characters should realize any hidden information in the *Nightbane Survival Guide* is no longer likely to be valid, especially once they understand it has been on the net for several years.

Another rumor is that the names of several elder Nightbane, at least a few of which are members of the Underground Railroad, and one of which is rumored to be the original author of the Survival Guide, are also encrypted in the manifesto. Again, while some names may be real Nightbane leaders, some are dead or in hiding, and others are fakes designed to lead inexperienced Nightbane to their demise.

The Hidden War

Excerpts from the Nightbane Survival Guide

So, you made it this far, eh? Congratulations. Just given the fact that you took the time to look this little bit of net info up means you've got one of the essential drives to survive in your new life: *self preservation*.

It may not seem like much, but at this point you're doing a lot better than some. You think I'm kidding? You may feel like the rug was pulled out from under you, but at least you decided to do something about it. Some just decide a bullet chaser is the answer and end it right in front of the mirror.

You decided you were a Nightbane and dealt with it. You sought to know more and you found this guide.

I wrote this to walk you newbies through your first days as a Nightbane. There's nothing in here to compromise anybody, which is why you found this on the open web. The Nightlords (those are the bad guys, more about them later) zap this wherever they find it, but I've use netted and P2P'ed this thing all over creation. They'll never get rid of it at this point.

Let's start with the basics: To even find this little document, you must have figured out you're a Nightbane. Bully for you. Now, any idea what that name means?

I didn't think so. Don't sweat it, you're not alone. In fact, if you ever figure it out, let me know. Nobody is really sure what we are, except maybe the Nightlords, and they're not talking.

The least I can do is tell you what most of us do know.

As far as we can tell, we ain't strictly human. Are we a completely different species? Maybe. Though since we seem to be born of human parents, that seems unlikely. More likely than not, we possess some special ability, like a dormant monster gene or something that links us to the supernatural. Since Dark Day, that link changed us. That's good and bad, because while it gives us superhuman abilities it makes us different, obviously different. That's one theory. Another is that we are some kind of supernatural creature, like vampires (which exist by the way) or Changelings. We look human, were raised by humans, but we ain't entirely human ourselves. Maybe we are half human, half-supernatural being or Faerie Folk, or dragon, or some other creature of myth and magic. You might be getting the gist that none of us knows exactly what we are, and you'd be right about that.

Okay, here is something we do know. The Nightlords fear us. We can hurt them. Hurt them and their stinking henchmen and demonic servants. That makes us humanity's protectors. Maybe

we are born of human parents so we know and remember and appreciate what it means to be human. Maybe we are humans who can change into something more to save lives and drive the Nightlords from our world. Maybe when that happens we turn completely human again. Maybe not. But know this for sure, whatever the Nightlords might try to tempt or bribe you with, we ain't like them, and no Nightbane should ever serve them.

Let's get back to you. So one day something happened and you changed. You looked down at your hands and they were claws or blades, or machine parts. You looked into a mirror and a monster stared back at you, only you knew it was you you were looking at. You still knew it was you even if you didn't recognize your own face. That's your **Morphus**. The reflection of the *power* (some would say monster, but I don't) within you. It's a reflection of yourself, which is why we all get used to it so quick, even if others see our Morphus as ugly or terrifying. Your human self, that's your **Facade**. The way you're born and the place you can hide, but it's only half of you. Some would tell you that your Morphus is the real you, but they are both you. Two sides of the same coin. One is your humanity, one is your supernatural id. And which one is the real reflection of your humanity and inner strength depends on the individual.

Your first change was probably involuntary. Most are. Most come without warning, and most scare the crap out of you. It did for me. But if you haven't discovered this already, you should know you can change back and forth whenever you like. The human form, your Facade, is the identity you've been wearing for the last umpteen years and allows you to blend in among humanity as one of them. In your Facade, even the Nightlords can't tell you are a Nightbane. It is a safe skin to wear and remain undetected. It's also good for running around with the neighbors, grocery shopping, and visiting family. Personally, I don't have much use for it myself, except as a way to hide in plain sight, but that's me.

Your other form, the one that's not strictly human, that's your *Morphus*. That's the Nightbane aspect of you. It's in this form that you are at your most powerful and, in a way, your most vulnerable. The Nightlords, their Hounds, their Hunters and other creatures of the night can smell you and sense you as a Nightbane. In this form, they recognize you as someone to fear. And in your Morphus, you have the power to destroy them. Use it. Use your powers to destroy them before they destroy you. Trust me on that one.

The Morphus gives you Supernatural Strength, senses beyond those of your average Joe Bagodonuts, and you probably have two or more *special abilities* that are a cross between magic and superpowers. Don't worry if you haven't figured them out yet, they'll come when you are ready or need them most. Wait, it gets better. We think we might – MIGHT – be immortal. There are Nightbane said to be thousands of years old. I know several elders who are hundreds of years old and look like they are in their twenties.

But don't break out the capes and tights yet. There are some obvious, and not so obvious, drawbacks to all this power. One is you ain't quite human, my friend. Your family and pals might not be too thrilled with that revelation. Mine weren't. My own father called me a monster and tried to kill me while mother just wept. Not pretty. I never went back. That spells loneliness. Your purpose as a Bane of the Night is probably to rid the world of

the Nightlords and other supernatural horrors that go bump in the night. Only you're a monster too. Or are you? Remember, you were born human. Your Facade is human. You just look like something that crawled out of a Wes Craven movie. That's all harder to deal with than you might think. Ain't nothing worse than feeling like a freak, unloved and alone. Don't fret none though, boys and girls, because you ain't alone, though there are times when you might wish you were.

The Hidden War. Years after Dark Day plunged the world into an uncertain millennium, a *shadow war* rages across the planet Earth. It is a war fought in every corner of the globe, on every continent, in every city and small town, and it has claimed thousands upon thousands of lives. It is a war that has shattered nations, wreaked havoc on the planetary ecology and the global economy, and has touched the lives of every single person on the planet in ways most people don't even realize. It is a war whose outcome will decide the fate of humankind.

Ironically, for the most part, Joe Average is utterly unaware such a war is even being waged. There isn't any flag waving or parades. No History Channel documentaries about it or nightly news updates. While there is no official body count, plenty of people have died and many more suffer in its wake. This may be the most important battle the human race has ever fought, against a foe of unparalleled evil, and most people have never heard of it. Hell, this may be the first time you've been told about it, so listen close.

On one side are the Nightlords, enigmatic beings who have covertly infiltrated nearly every government on the planet. Their minions control the police, media, bureaucracy and militaries of nations across the globe. They employ fearsome supernatural predators who can wield an array of frightening powers, often including the power to disguise themselves as humans and walk among us undetected. Those persistent stories about Doppelgangers, they're real. There ain't no Body Snatcher Syndrome, those bodies have been snatched. Taken by sinister forces under the thrall of the Nightlords. Slowly, but surely, the darkness is dismantling human society, de-constructing every vestige of civilization brick by brick. Unchecked, the Nightlords will reduce humanity to an incoherent pack of broken, starving, abused and mistrustful victims, huddling in their homes. Slaves to fear and darkness.

The other side in the war is a lot less clearly defined. The Nightbane are part of it, or at least most of us are. So are numerous groups that have sprung up since the Dark Day invasion of 2000. Many founded by *supernatural beings* whose intentions outwardly *appear* to be good, or at least better than the Nightlords'. We *Nightbane*, our origin shrouded in mystery, seem to be the *lynchpin* of these efforts. We fight alongside the *Guardians*, glowing beings with power over light, and *Wampyrs*, would-be vampires who have shaken off the control of malevolent Vampire Intelligences to decide their own fate while still battling their eternal thirst for blood. An array of humans that include men of magic, psychics, spies, soldiers and ordinary people also fight at our side. Many are victims of the Nightlords who have suffered personal loss at the hands of the Nightlords or borne witness to the carnage behind their curtain of lies. These unlikely heroes try to work together, but they are not a unified front, but comprised of numerous factions whose

goals are not always the same. Our side in the war has no central leader, precious few resources, and many do not even know or understand our own nature, let alone the nature of our allies and enemies. Still, we are the Earth's best hope for survival, so we press on.

Survival is what the Guide is all about. Survival is the first order of business for us soldiers in the Hidden War against the encroaching night. For what good can you do humanity, or whatever species you are fighting for, if you don't know how to get home from the grocery store alive?

For the past several years, the forces of *good* (or sometimes the forces of Not Quite Evil, depending on who you are talking about), have had to scramble. I mean, how do you battle an in-human enemy that can read minds, inflict magical curses, travel through dimensions, copy and imitate your loved ones, and literally sniff out supernatural heroes where they hide? Many of the early soldiers in this war – the newborn Nightbane – did not survive the first few years. Those who did, however, have learned. We've gotten smarter. We've learned to use our powers better and our numbers grow daily. We have established *safe houses*, hidden strategic weapons caches, secured communications networks, and developed code words for talking on systems we cannot secure. We have become better at finding and recruiting other Nightbane, and we are better skilled at sniffing out a rat when we smell one. We attack the Nightlords from the very shadows these invaders once dominated. We save lives, the lives of Nightbane and innocent people, we destroy minions, and challenge authority. When a battle is done, we fade back into the shadows and disappear without a trace. That's how this war must be fought. On the streets, guerilla style.

Introducing new blood into this war is not easy, but it is necessary. *The Darkblades* wielded by the Nightlords' minions are regularly quenched in the blood of heroes, and the least experienced of such heroes are the most likely to fall. To survive and become experienced, successful veterans, initiates into the Hidden War must unlearn almost everything you ever thought you knew about the world and adapt to fighting the enveloping darkness.

New recruits must, whether you be young Nightbane who have undergone your first *Becoming*, apprentice mages, or ordinary people drawn into a world of darkness, learn to live as warriors and survivors. You cannot call the police when you are in trouble. You cannot trust the authorities for it is they who hunt you and serve the Nightlords. Nor can you believe the lies spun by a media that is a dupe or complicit in the Nightlords' conspiracy. You must learn to distrust the people you once believed in, and often place your lives in the hands of total strangers. You must often put the fate of humanity into the hands of those who, on the outside at least, appear to be monsters. That would be you, my Nightbane brothers. You are humanity's salvation.

If you can't adapt to this shadow war, you'll quickly fall to the agents of the Nightlords. Those who do adapt, may live to fight another day, and pass on what they have learned to the next batch of raw recruits fighting the Hidden War.

– *The Nightbane Survival Guide*



Surviving a war in the shadows

This conflict, what the Lightbringers refer to as the “War of Light and Dark,” is unlike any mankind has ever fought. The closest analogy might be the *Cold War* fought between the United States of America and the Soviet Union during the latter half of the 20th Century, but even that analogy doesn’t work completely. The USSR and the USA were, for the most part, on an equal footing with comparable resources, technology and military might. However, they fought through agents, back-alley espionage, assassination, and through proxy wars in other countries.

The Nightlords and the good guy factions arrayed against them are in no way on equal footing. Almost all the advantage would seem to go to the Nightlords. The factions, like freedom fighters of old, must fight an asymmetrical war. Their small numbers, flexibility and unpredictability are their strongest weapons to oppose the monolithic evil of Nightlord domination and corruption. They must hit and disappear, almost never stand their ground, and choose targets that inflict the maximum damage to the plans of the Nightlords with little risk to themselves. Meanwhile, the Nightlords use their numbers, the authorities in their pocket, the media under their control, their dark influence over human society, and their lack of any notable morals to try and smother the rebellious factions once and for all.

What makes the war even more complex is that these forces, both of which wield paranormal powers, must battle *out of sight* of a human race that would likely destroy them both if the truth were known. Even the Nightlords, with their thousands of Hounds, Hunters and other minions with magical powers and arcane knowledge, know they cannot stand up to six billion frightened humans who believe themselves to be under siege by demonic invaders! Most strategists believe a planetary uprising resulting from worldwide knowledge of the Nightlords’ nefarious plans (especially if the true intent of *King Moloch* became known) would cause the fall of the Nightlords in a matter of weeks, maybe even days!

So why don’t the Nightbane and their allies just go out and unmask the Nightlords to the rest of humanity? Easier said than done. There are several problems with that idea.

First, the Nightlords control the media and the telecommunications industry. There is no way to ensure such a message would ever get to the masses. The Nightlords have instituted a five-second or more time delay on ALL major media outlets across the planet, allowing them to intercept images and stories of Nightbane battling Hounds in the streets, their avatars being exposed during press conferences, and the obvious use of magic in public. It is only through the tabloids, pirate radio stations and the Internet that small bits of information have gotten out.

Second, it is almost too incredible to believe: Demonic beings have invaded and infiltrated the highest seats of power throughout the world. That is the stuff of science fiction, comic books and horror movies. Many people have heard words like *Nightbane*, *Nightlords*, and others, as well as stories about monsters, strange occurrences and cover-ups, but they treat it the same as they treat belief in UFOs, Bigfoot and the Loch Ness Monster. Maybe they are real, maybe they are not, but the vast majority of the population on Earth places a higher priority on the cost of a double latte than on proof of the existence of monsters. Except for the **Nightbane Survival Guide** online and young people who dare to question the status quo, virtually no word about the Nightlords has seeped into the public lexicon. The media seldom covers the subject, and when they do, they treat it as “kook” literature and eyewitnesses or believers as nut cases to be mocked and laughed at.

Another problem with revealing the existence of supernatural beings on Earth is the fact that humanity is not likely to make a distinction between “good” supernatural beings and “bad” ones. Most normal humans who have been exposed to the supernatural only feel comfortable around Guardians and the most “Ken” or “Barbie” looking examples of Nightbane. In the event of a grand revelation regarding the existence of monsters among them, humans are likely to destroy the Nightbane, Wampyrs, psychics and practitioners of magic right along with the Nightlords and their minions. Remember the Salem witch trials? Why take chances, burn everyone who is different.

Even the **Spook Squad**, which is almost entirely human in membership but knows about and works with Nightbane against the conspiracy of the Nightlords, hesitates to reveal the existence of the Nightlords to humanity. They don’t think it will be a good idea for humanity to toss the Nightlords all at once. For one thing, that will leave NOBODY in control, and once that control is lost, there’s no telling who might take up the mantles of leadership across the globe. For another, they would like to ensure that when the Nightlords do finally fall, they will be replaced by the leaders of Spook Squad or their puppets.

Finally, many of the supernatural beings opposing the Nightlords fear the possibility of a “scorched Earth” policy. If the Nightlords believe they will lose, they might unleash Armageddon and utterly destroy the planet by letting loose the world’s nuclear arsenal. They are, after all, the leaders of nations that possess such frightening capabilities, and the Nightlords are without mercy or compassion. If they lose, EVERYONE loses. It’s a tricky situation.

So both sides, in silent agreement, keep the war from the eyes of humanity. At least for now.

Keeping to the Shadows after Dark Day

Excerpts from the **Nightbane Survival Guide**

Stay Hidden.

Let’s be real. You’re a freak and you probably look like a horror show when you change, unless you’re a Barbie or Ken, in which case, screw you, lucky bastard. This inescapable fact, combined with the reality that you’re being hunted by a de-

monic invading army, means you shouldn’t go announcing the fact that you’re a Nightbane to anybody and everybody. Fortunately, Mother Nature, God, or whoever, gave us a natural defense mechanism: Our human facade.

Once you are in your Facade, only another Nightbane is able to sense what you truly are. Use this! A good rule of thumb is to keep your Facade activities distinctly separate from your Nightbane Morphus. You don’t see Clark Kent battling evil before he takes off his glasses and puts on his cape and tights, do you? No, of course not. You need to preserve your secret human identity. If for no other reason than it may be the only way to hide from the Nightlords.

Hell, some Nightbane don’t even show their Facade to their own allies, living two entirely separate lives. But this means always meeting with other Nightbane in Morphus. That’s easy if you have a Morphus that can pass for a normal human in the dark or under a trench coat, not so great if you’re sprouting bat wings and have skin that looks like it’s made out of tree bark. Traveling as a monster means back alleys and sticking to the shadows. Fortunately, most people don’t want to believe we exist so they deny seeing us and only about one third report a ‘monster sighting.’

Try to maintain a job, a place of residence and at least an illusion of normalcy, even if you have another source of income. You just hacked a Night Prince’s off-shore account for several million? Wonderful. Now be discreet about it. If Jimmy the shoe salesman suddenly buys a Jaguar on eight bucks an hour, someone notices.

A lot of us laugh and chide the *Warlord Faction* (and there’s a lot to laugh at and way more to chide), but you can say this for them: They have wonderful money laundering resources. It’s no shame to drop a few Benjamin Franklins in the hands of the local Warlord gang leader to put you in contact with a guy who can ‘fix’ your standing with the IRS so that nothing seems to be amiss. Trust me, that will be the least of your sins in the long run.

Next, and I would really hope this would be obvious, but you never can tell, pick a **street name** for yourself. You know, like you do for your online name. Most Nightbane tend to pick a particularly noteworthy or unique aspect of their Morphus or their personality. Sometimes, other Nightbane just start calling you something they think fits and it sticks for life. Personally, I’d choose my own if I were you. Some of us have a sick sense of humor, so you don’t want us picking your street name for you. First, this keeps you from having to be called by your Facade name while in Morphus form, which would defeat the entire point of having a Facade and secret identity, now wouldn’t it? Second, a Doppelganger is much more likely to roll over on some vital information if being pressed by *Knifehand Jack* or *Countess Bloodraven* than they are for John Fairchild or Brittany Jones. And even if you’re lousy at picking out a street name, you can still sucker punch ‘em while they’re laughing at your nom de guerre. Oh, and don’t tell your girlfriend/boyfriend your secret identity just because he or she puts out. I don’t care how much you’re in love, it is ALWAYS a bad idea. Things fall apart. People change and love can die. If you have gone and told all your secrets and now you’ve got a spurned lover, you have a lot more problems on your hands than getting your music collection back.



Lastly, in the secret identity department, take a cue from house pets everywhere and don't crap where you eat. What I mean by that is keep your Morphus activities away from those of your Facade. Don't use your home as a meeting place for the local Resistance cell. Don't keep that enchanted sword on the wall over the mantle, and don't run www.destroy-the-preserver-party.com from your home computer. It's stupid, and it WILL come back to haunt you.

– *The Nightbane Survival Guide*

Game Master Note: One of the coolest things about the **Nightbane® RPG** is that it incorporates elements of the supernatural, the mystical and superhero action with horror, espionage, mystery and suspense. Games can, and probably should, have some big smash-up battles from time to time, with player characters going all-or-nothing against packs of Hounds or an Ashmedai or two. However, the Nightbane and other factions operate successfully after Dark Day by keeping to the shadows. And player characters are more likely to survive until tomorrow by knowing how to do so themselves.

To survive in a world falling increasingly under the control of the Nightlords, the Nightbane need to keep their identity a secret and fight from the shadows. Some of these tactics can be gleaned from the Cold War mental chess matches between the

CIA, KGB and other intelligence-gathering agencies. But the world of Nightbane® also has magic, psychics and the supernatural, which has given rise to all kinds of new tactics as well.

What follows is a list of espionage tactics and ideas put to frequent use by Nightbane factions and other secret groups after Dark Day. All are presented in the genuine, and many of the altered versions of the **Survival Guide**.

Clean Cell Phones

The constant use of so-called “clean” cell phones is one of the most common safety tactics employed by all factions. Step one is having a hacker provide the character with a listing of unused phone numbers in your area. This list, obviously, must be regularly kept up to date. Generally, each faction has a hidden website or an old-style BBS (Bulletin Board System) where members can check in and look up a consistently updated list.

Next, the user of this technique purchases unused cell phones for each mission. Using their own knowledge, or a tutorial on the website where they got the phone list, they convert the cell phone to an unused telephone number off the list. Anyone with Computer Hacking can do this themselves in about 10 minutes. Fortunately, with the stagnation of technology, cell phones in Nightbane are older (a little bulkier) and a lot less secure than the one you probably have in your pocket right now.

Finally, the operative uses the cell phone for one mission or one purpose, and when that mission or purpose is complete, the character discards the phone. A “pay as you go”/disposable cell phone is untraceable and suitable for such use as well.

The advantage of this is that a clean cell phone allows safe communications between members of a group when on a mission without them having to know or trust each other completely. If a group of individuals from different factions have to work together for just a few days, they might all bring clean cell phones for the mission, exchange those numbers, and then discard the phones after the mission is complete. Only close friends and allies have their real phone numbers or e-mails. Also, it’s very hard to trace the calls to any one particular person, meaning that even if the calls are intercepted and overheard, it is still impossible to trace the source.

Discarding a cell phone can be tricky in the Nightbane setting. The user does not want to just drop it or throw it away where it might be found. An enemy with *Object Read* or *Impression* is able to use their ability to read the object and learn a lot about the user/owner. Furthermore, unless the character wiped the phone clean, he may have left fingerprints on it, and the Nightlords can use the NSB, the local police, and any number of other law enforcement agencies to run the prints, identify the user, and track him down.

The best way to dispose of a cell phone is to convert it back to normal, erase its memory, and then sell it to one of those corner store *electronic goods dealers* you see in many urban areas. Most of them ask no questions, and once they purchase the phone, ownership changes hands, making it useless for Object Read and Impression.

Public Coded Messages

This is a highly effective way to get out a limited message to a lot of people with virtually no risk. The tactic is simply to have some number or message displayed in a public place that can be changed at will to convey different meanings without letting on to the general public that the message has any importance or special significance.

In the old days, this was done in newspapers. Someone would take out a classified advertisement that read like gibberish, an inside joke, or even an ordinary ad, but with a secret code or key words that meant something to those in the know. For example: In the classifieds you might see, “*Joan, your cup runneth over. Red is the new black.*” Or, “*Missed you at the party last weekend. See you at the dance hall next Saturday night.*” Newspapers would print these things if you had the money, no questions asked. Many such messages were actually coded espionage messages for any agents of a particular group in an area (such as Washington, D.C.). Every agent of, say, the KGB, would know to buy the paper on Sunday and look for such a message. The above message could be aimed at a particular female agent, telling her it was time to put a particular plan into motion. Other messages might be a warning for everyone to keep their heads low for a while, or where to meet, or where to attack, or notice to put a major plan into action, and so on.

This tactic has a LOT of flexibility and can be really easy to hide in plain sight. For example: A head agent puts a used car for sale outside of a safe house. The car is a junker, and the sale

price is priced high enough to discourage genuine interest, but not ridiculously high. The price is soaped onto the window. But look closely at that \$10,659 price tag and you’ll notice that sometimes the last three digits change. Not all at once, and not all the time. But in a few days it might read \$10,959 or \$10,640. Most people wouldn’t notice. But any member of that particular faction working in the area will know that changing the 6 to a 9 means there’s a meeting tonight at another safe house across town. If the 5 changes to a 4, it means the Nightlords have begun an expected operation against the faction. And if the car is ever marked “sold” it means the Nightlords are gunning for every member of the faction in the area!

Likewise, similar messages might appear on the bulletin board at a local grocery, hardware store, library, civic center and other places that might allow such things. The same tactic can be used in online message boards, ads, and profiles, and so on. The use and application of coded messages is only limited by the imagination. Such a message could be an out-of-place letter on a gas station sign, graffiti on an alley wall, a message about a missing tabby cat stapled to a lamppost, even which flowers are planted in a garden facing a busy street. Unless you know the code, you aren’t likely to even know what you are looking at. You’ve probably seen an ad in the classified section of your paper that just quoted a bible passage. That’s a classic example of this tactic.

Dead-Drops

This is a pretty well-known, but still effective, tactic. A particular location is used to pass sensitive materials between operatives, some of whom may have never met. This location is cleverly hidden, but easily accessible, with some way to signal another operative that there is something that needs to be picked up.

For example: The underside of a dumpster in an alley is used as a Dead-Drop. Operatives know when something needs to be picked up because the dumpster (on old rusty wheels) will be moved four feet further up the alley than usual. The information is taped to the bottom of the dumpster, which is so heavy, only someone with Supernatural Strength can move it easily. Information is only put there on Tuesdays, because garbage pick-up is on Monday, giving an agent a week to get the information. Once the information is retrieved, the receiving agent moves the dumpster back to its normal place, letting whoever dropped off the information know the package was received.

Dead-Drops may be airport or bus terminal lockers (very common during the Cold War), bird feeders, the trunk of an abandoned car in a bad neighborhood, a hollow tree stump or anything that looks innocuous, has a space to hide a small package, is reasonably secure, and will generally go unchecked by the average passerby.

Invisible Informant

Only possible in a *supernatural world*, this tactic relies on someone having the ability to become *invisible* or use some other method of concealment. Using an *Invisibility spell* or the Nightbane Talent of *The Shroud*, an operative can meet with very public figures who might be under surveillance by the

Nightlords. This could be a Mayor who was never replaced by a Doppelganger, or a news reporter who has seen the light, or a fellow Nightbane/operative under suspicion by the authorities, and so on. They might, for example, walk their dog every morning at 6 a.m. At that time, an invisible contact will be standing on the corner, and slip a message into the other person's pocket or speak to him to deliver a message when he stops to let the dog "water" a fire hydrant. Or they might run alongside for a moment and have a brief conversation, passing along vital information.

A variation of this uses the psychic ability of *Telepathy*. The deputy police chief, sympathetic to the Lightbringers, might eat lunch at the same café every day. When he sits down, he begins "thinking loudly" about crucial information. A psychic member of the faction, two tables away, uses *Telepathy* to read his surface thoughts and get the information. Likewise, the telepath is able to send another person information or hold a silent conversation via mental telepathy.

The danger of this tactic is that if someone can see invisible beings, detect psychics, or use *Telepathy* himself, the gig might be up. However, this would require them to suspect the individual in the first place. If there is no suspicion, these methods of communication could continue indefinitely.

Astral Spotter

Available to people who can Astral Project, particularly those who have the ability to become an *Astral Ghost* without transferring to the Astral Plane. An Astral Spotter is often sent ahead to scout out the site of an important meeting, particularly between members of different factions. They fly around, look everything over, and make sure there is no ambush or trap. They can read over shoulders, peek inside locked boxes and trunks for bombs and generally make sure there are no nasty surprises.

There have been times, however, that the Astral Spotter never reported back. Sometimes the other guy brings his own Spotter, and they might be faster, more powerful, and more ruthless than your own. When a Spotter doesn't return, it is a safe bet he has been captured or destroyed.

Unwitting Go-Between

Never underestimate the value of a dupe or pawn. While using somebody without their knowledge may be morally questionable, it is an excellent means of passing information to someone who knows the unwitting go-between has the data he needs. This can be accomplished through various means. The simplest is to use a person in a way similar to the Public Coded Message to deliver a message without even realizing it ("Hey Ted, tell Bob at the restaurant he shouldn't miss seeing the Black Orchard perform on Monday."). Likewise, the patsy can be used to deliver packages, documents and sealed letters, without ever realizing he's the go-between or doing anything nefarious or dangerous. However, the most effective method involves psionics or magic.

A psychic, magic user or someone with the power to dominate the human mind finds an unsuspecting victim, takes control

of them, and uses their body to pass on a message, deliver a package or even deliver weapons, money or important equipment. Have a buddy in jail? Use *Hypnotic Suggestion* to make the guard pass him a key, money or weapon. Need to get important information to a famous actor? *Mind Control* the waiter serving his table to give him a letter or package.

In some cases, evil individuals have used the unwitting victim to engage in even more dangerous operations, such as stealing something, breaking and entry, causing a distraction, and so on. Likewise, a Flesh Sculptor might alter the face of a homeless person once a week, using his or her face as a means to convey information, like a twisted version of a Public Coded Message. The Cult of Night is known to have passed on sensitive information by killing an innocent person and leaving their body in a public park. The means of murder contained the message, meaning if the victim was beheaded, cultists were to target a particular political official, if a hand was missing it meant something else, and if the person was completely chopped up, the cult needed to disband for a while until things cooled down. Horrible and cruel, but effective.

Game Master Note: The one connecting thread between all these different tactics is that they allow the user to pass crucial information to others while keeping his identity unknown, at a distance and relatively safe. Applying these to a role-playing game can lead to endless fun and adventure, especially when things go wrong.

What happens when a young boy, hiding from bullies, scurries under a dumpster and finds a CD with vital information about the Preserver Party? Who does he turn to? How many different groups may be hunting this boy for the information? Does he know what he has? Does he tell anyone? How does the information being accidentally intercepted (or destroyed) affect the situation and the player characters? Do they miss a critical meeting or battle? Does an innocent person die, or an evildoer get away? All questions that can add to the elements of an adventure or campaign.

A good friend of one of the player characters complains of nightmares about meeting with a horrible monster. Has he been made an unwitting pawn? Is he just being used as a go-between, or has he been hypnotized to betray all he knows and loves at the proper time?

Are the bodies being fished out of the river once a week a message to someone? Or were they all members of the Seekers who used one particular phone number for their "clean" cell phones?

One of the player characters' full name appears in a classified ad in the newspaper along with a cryptic message. Is someone trying to contact him? Warn him? Lure him and his buddies out of hiding? Could someone have put out a hit on him? Is the entire group compromised?

Not only do these tactics add a lot of depth, realism and role-play opportunity to a Nightbane campaign, but they can also be the gateway to worlds of adventure and intrigue!



You are Nightbane

Now that you've come to grips with the fact that this ain't a nightmare you can wake up from, you are probably trying to figure out your next move.

That next move depends a whole lot on what has happened up to this point. To keep things simple, we are going to assume no one saw you turn into a creature that looks like it crawled out of a B-grade horror flick or the Twilight Zone. In that case, you now have a very important choice to make. Do you try to hold on to what's left of the life you still have, or do you go for broke and start over as your new, freak show Morphus?

At the end of the day, only you can make that decision, but either way, your life will never be the same. Just remember, there's good and bad things about whichever way you go. Now as for you people that gave your Granny a heart attack, we will get to you in a minute.

— *The Nightbane Survival Guide*

For some Nightbane, the **Becoming** destroys their previous life by alienating them from their family, friends, job, and pretty much everything else they used to know or consider normal. This is especially true if the individual transformed into a Nightbane in a public place or in front of his family, friends or workmates. It is pretty hard to deny you are a monster when that's exactly what you look like and Mom and little sister are screaming their lungs out, little brother is pulling them away from you, and Dad is fumbling for his shotgun or pistol. If you think it is hard coming out of the closet about being gay or having a drug problem, revealing to your family or friends you are a supernatural being who can transform from an ordinary person

into something inhuman and, usually, grotesque, is a whole other level of shock and trauma. A trauma that is, sadly but understandably, all too often followed by fear, loathing and rejection.

However, for many Nightbane, their Becoming occurs when they are alone, or takes place in a secluded place or among people who don't know them. Such Nightbane have a choice to either leave their previous life behind and start a new one as a supernatural wanderer, warrior, hero, criminal, magician, or scholar, or attempt to hold on to their previous life to some degree. Holding on to the old life not only provides an anchor and support system for the frightened Nightbane, but also a secret identity that enables him to hide among ordinary people. Those who manage to keep some portion of their life and relationship with people, also have a tendency to be better grounded, hold on to their humanity, and deal with accepting their superhuman nature.

We might all imagine what it would be like to have special powers and be a superhero, and it might sound fun and wonderful, however the reality is a sour pill to swallow. Super abilities alone would make a person different, an outsider or a freak. Now add in the fact that a Nightbane transforms into something inhuman, and often horrific or frightening, and he is an instant outsider. Something inhuman and terrifying. A monster.

How many people, even a loving parent, sibling or best friend, can accept their loved one as a monster, especially something that looks hideous or demonic? Even under the best conditions it is traumatic for everyone involved, and that includes the Nightbane. As a teenager or young adult, the individual is already struggling with issues of identity, purpose, self-worth, social acceptance and a sense of alienation. Multiply those a hundredfold when that teenager discovers he or she is a monster with supernatural powers. A monster secretly hunted by evil forces. To say it is a lot to deal with is putting it mildly.

"Don't judge a book by its cover" takes on a whole new meaning. Fear of rejection, being hated and not fitting in become reality. How would you react to discovering you can turn into a superhuman monster? At first, it might be horrifying and debilitating. Some might never accept what they are and keep their powers locked up inside them and concealed. After awhile, others might find it exciting, exhilarating and fun to be superhuman. That, however, opens up a whole new can of worms. Does the person use his or her powers responsibly, and what exactly does that mean? Is the person a hero, a villain, or a freak? Is he the inhuman monster his outside appearance might suggest, or is he a hero inside the body of a gargoyle? Does that power go to his head and make him a bully, a brawler, or worse? Or does he use those powers to help, build and save lives?

Every person is different, and every Nightbane will respond to his "Becoming" in a different way.

Those who walk away from their old life after their first Becoming typically either don't have the most desirable life to begin with (or at least feel they don't) or are afraid of what might happen to them, their family, or their friends if they were ever found out. These Nightbane either go it alone using their wits and powers to survive, fail to do so and perish at the hands of the Nightlords, vampires, or enemy factions, or they join forces with similar individuals or like-minded factions in an attempt to

forge a new life. Many of these confused and alone Nightbane end up amongst the ranks of the Warlords or the Underground Railroad because they have nowhere else to go and both factions actively recruit newcomers.

Of course, there are also those who take the opposite route. They attempt to hold to their old life while denying their supernatural nature. These individuals hide behind their Facade and try to pretend that their Becoming never happened, that everything is still normal. Such individuals are extremely resistant to efforts to recruit them and resent being drawn into the Hidden War by others like them. Unfortunately for them, things are definitely not normal, and often their human Facade doesn't last and they are discovered by one side or the other.

Sometimes, Nightbane are drawn into the growing conflict by witnessing evil acts perpetrated by man or monster against innocent people. This makes characters of good alignment (and even Unprincipled characters) feel obligated to use their abilities to help others, right wrongs, and oppose the Nightlords. Other times, Nightbane are forced into accepting their nature (albeit grudgingly) by being attacked by the minions of the Nightlords, losing control of themselves in front of others (anger, fear and frustration are common catalysts for a transformation), or some other unfortunate occurrence. An accidental or forced revelation often makes the reluctant Nightbane bitter and depressed about being outed and probably feared, rejected, and hunted. Likewise, there are selfish or evil aligned Nightbane who would rather operate independent of any group to do as they please and resent it when they are dragged into a conflict they never wanted any part of (usually because they are targeted by the minions of the Nightlords). Likewise, some Nightbane of selfish or evil alignment hate what they are so badly, or are so hateful for being rejected by loved ones, that they turn against humanity and their fellow Nightbane and choose to serve the Nightlords. Thankfully, such turncoats are a tiny minority, as selfish and evil Nightbane are often the most bloodthirsty and ruthless in the battle against the Nightlords and their minions.

Finally, there are the majority of Nightbane, who attempt to lead a "dual-life" much like comic book heroes and villains. These individuals are unwilling or unable to give up their "human" identity, but realize that ignoring their new powers and place in the world as Nightbane is not an option. Sooner or later, the Nightlords' minions will track them down, so they might as well take a stand, even if it is motivated by pure self-preservation. Such "integrated" Nightbane try to live a relatively normal life by day and in the public eye, but work to thwart the Nightlords in secret. Many go on night patrols when the demonic minions are most active, to engage them in the ongoing shadow war. Others work behind the scenes digging around for information they can use against the Nightlords or one of their evil plots, while still others work to find and help other Nightbane survive in a world of shadows, conspiracy and war. ALL take action against criminals, vampires, Nightlords, and their minions whenever the opportunity presents itself. Likewise, most Nightbane are rather obsessed with finding out more about themselves, the 'Bane as people/race/society, and how they can better oppose the Nightlords. This often means getting involved with secret organizations/factions, magic and the supernatural side of the world. However, there are risks, benefits,

and all manners of complexities involved in pulling such double-duty.

Difficulties & Considerations of Maintaining a Normal Life. Maintaining the *appearance* of a normal life means continuing with at least some level of normal daily activity. Whether such activities consist of school, work, or even grocery shopping, it involves going out in public and interacting with other human beings. Unfortunately for new 'Banes, this can be a recipe for disaster.

Exposure to potentially emotionally charged situations may cause a Nightbane to lose control and change from his human Facade into his superhuman Morphus in the middle of a public venue, in front of friends, loved ones, co-workers or even the authorities, or just as bad, in view of any number of public or private surveillance cameras or clicking cell phone cameras. The authorities will not take long to arrive on scene, and the NSB (National Security Bureau) is ALWAYS immediately notified of 'monster sightings.' If the NSB makes it there before the Nightbane gets away, the agents will try to capture or destroy him. Furthermore, Nightlord minions, disguised as humans (even as NSB agents) or lurking in the shadows nearby, may get involved in the apprehension of Nightbane, especially in nighttime scenarios. This means a young, inexperienced Nightbane can get in over his head fast. Furthermore, he may have just blown his human secret identity.

If the Nightbane chooses to stand and fight, his best bet is to do so only long enough to effect an escape. This is because the Nightbane are sorely outnumbered, and while it may be Namtar and Doppelgangers that arrive on scene at first, if the 'Bane proves to be a problem, Hound Masters, disguised Hounds, other minions, and even Night Princes are likely to be called in. They will also attempt to force the Nightbane into a secluded area (such as a back alley, empty lot, abandoned building, parking garage, sewers, etc.) away from the public eye so that the minions can unleash their full power to pacify their target. Furthermore, other Nightbane are reluctant to make public, daylight appearances to help for obvious reasons. Thus, the Nightbane is on his own.

Running away from a large-scale conflict with the authorities and/or the Nightlords is almost always the better option. The 'Bane stands a good chance of managing to escape, lose his pursuers and either find a place to hide or return to his human appearance and lose himself in plain sight.

Extenuating problems may become an issue. Not only does a lone Nightbane or small group of 'Bane stand a high chance of capture or destruction in such an unfair public or daylight confrontation, but there is also a high chance of damaging surrounding property and harming innocent bystanders. On top of that, such a fight is likely to bring a concentrated force of minions down on the neighborhood, district, or even an entire town or city in order to "secure the area" and "restore order" – not to mention deal with any bystanders who witnessed anything they weren't supposed to see.

If that weren't bad enough, the disturbance may interfere with the operations of one or more local factions. Such an inconvenience can, in turn, cause all manner of unpleasantness for the Nightbane responsible (although the Resistance, Underground Railroad, Nocturnes, and even the Lightbringers are pretty understanding when it is a new 'Bane who loses control).

Such unpleasantness can take the form of a scolding, beating, sanctions, or, in rare cases, death! Although when dealing with the *Warlords* or *Spook Squad*, that last one is not so rare. The ultimate outcome will be determined by which faction one is dealing with, how bad the ruckus hurt the goals of their organization, and what reasons the offender can offer for creating the uproar.

Despite the fact that running is often the better option, it is in no way easy. First of all, if the Nightbane is *not* familiar with the area, he has no clue of where to go, must act on instinct and fast thinking in a fly-by-the-seat-of-the-pants escape. Being unfamiliar with the area may mean running right into a dead end or the hands of the enemy! Skills such as *Roadwise*, *Streetwise*, and even *Land Navigation* can be a great help in such a situation, though they offer no safe bet of delivering the individual from his pursuers. Still, a Nightbane may have speed, agility or powers that can help him to escape, and fast action and a little luck is likely to make his escape a success.

The secret to a successful escape is a) getting away before reinforcements arrive, and **b)** eluding, or hiding from, the enemy. Eluding means getting out of sight – not just from pursuers but from witnesses – long enough to turn back into the human Facade and lose oneself in the crowd, inside a store or building, and looking normal and innocent. That’s hard to do if one’s clothes are ripped to shreds or the character is bleeding from a gunshot wound or battered from a serious fight. Likewise, hiding may be complicated by the surroundings, presence of witnesses, and even the character’s Morphus form (moves slow, stands out too much, is too large to fit in small hiding spaces,

etc.). While reverting back into the human Facade is the goal, it must be done away from people who know the character, away from security cameras, and preferably with no eyewitnesses. That may be a more grueling task than one might imagine, especially in a crowded school, college campus, concert hall, office building, or downtown or other busy urban area. Furthermore, the character needs to regain his composure and self-control in order to shift back to his Facade. Again, that’s harder than it sounds when you are on the run and fighting for your life.

Maintaining control and avoiding public exposure means learning to control one’s anger, fear and stress – which is not easy, especially for young adults already under considerable stress as a Nightbane with a dark secret. Crowded stores or streets, driving in traffic, large social events such as concerts and political rallies, all are examples of situations that might trigger a *Becoming* or cause a Nightbane to switch from Facade to Morphus. Likewise, fear of injury or death, rage, sorrow, frustration and similar powerful emotions brought about by any number of things (being fired or expelled, being threatened or attacked, a car accident, seeing a loved one endangered, physical or mental torture, self-preservation, etc.) may create an emotional rush that triggers an instinctive transformation into the more powerful Nightbane Morphus.

Stress-reducing techniques such as muscle relaxation, meditation, breathing exercises, mantras, soothing music, and even sedatives can help combat stress and anxiety. However, they may be useless against sudden, unexpected and acute emotional spikes. Likewise, some Nightbane may have to fight the tempta-



tion to 'go hero' and use their abilities in situations where other people are in danger and in need of help.

Another source of stress, fear and anxiety involves dealing with all the issues that come with *being a Nightbane*. Whether this is as simple as learning about one's self or using one's powers or as complicated as dealing with life as a Nightbane or fighting a guerilla war against the Nightlords, it takes a considerable expenditure of time, thought, emotion and effort. For example, if a 'Bane has a typical nine to five, blue collar job or attends school, it means he probably has to relegate his "other activities" to nights, weekends and time off or risk losing his job or failing school. Even operating at night poses all sorts of problems including lack of sleep, physical exhaustion, getting hurt or captured, escaping trouble, maintaining his secret identity, and not bringing trouble back home with him.

A secret life as a crusading hero means sacrificing hobbies, recreational activities, human friends, and probably a normal social life. After a short while, most Nightbane involved with other factions and fighting the Nightlords find themselves forgetting about an ordinary life and becoming obsessed with learning more about the Nightbane and their purpose, destroying "real" monsters, stopping the Nightlords and saving lives – especially the lives of fellow Nightbane. When one becomes involved in any kind of life and death mission, the frivolity of comic books, videogames, movies, friends, school, work and a normal life becomes secondary at best. The mundane concerns of everyday life become unimportant in the greater scheme of the Nightlords' conspiracy and secret invasion of our planet. The heroic (or vengeful) character never seems to take a day off. He is consumed with saving innocent lives, helping fellow Nightbane, and interfering with the plans of the Nightlords and their minions. That's why some Nightbane eventually give up keeping a life for their Facade and spend most of their time as a Nightbane working against the Nightlords.

As laudable as that may sound, if not careful, these would-be heroes can become battle hardened and cold-hearted. Worse, they may lose touch with their own humanity and become monsters lost to vengeance and murder. Others burn out or get careless. Experienced or new to the scene, Nightbane locked in the conflict of the Hidden War or the life of a superhero suffer from physical, emotional and psychological strain. While Nightbane may be resistant to physical fatigue, a constantly full schedule can lead to a prolonged lack of rest and physical exhaustion. It can also result in a lack of clarity. *Mental fatigue*, stress, worry and anxiety can wear out the most positive and resilient mind. A character suffering from mental fatigue will not be as aware, sharp, quick on his feet, or capable of making the best choices and decisions as he should be. This is true even of the heartiest, biggest, most powerful Nightbane. It doesn't matter if the 'Bane is a walking tank, he still has a very human mind inside that hulking, armored body. The human mind needs moments of calm, peace, joy and rest to stay in top working form. Without it, he becomes tense, irritable, stressed out, emotional, distracted, forgetful, reckless or confused. Decision making suffers and the emotionally or mentally exhausted individual becomes a threat to himself and his teammates. **(Penalties for mental fatigue:** Reduce Perception Rolls by half, M.E. by 1D6x10%, M.A. by 10%, skill performance by 20%, -1 on initiative, and -2

to save vs possession, illusions, all forms of mind control and charm based attacks and influences!)

Maintaining a personal relationship with people unaware of the Nightbane's monstrous aspect is likely to be difficult. Discovery, rejection and betrayal are a constant source of concern. For the Nightbane who choose to stay amongst their friends and family, it usually means not only hiding their supernatural nature from the enemy and society at large, but also those they care about. This can take a severe emotional toll on the Nightbane living a dual life. On top of having to monitor his own emotions around loved ones (especially difficult during an argument), the Nightbane can never truly "relax" or be himself. This is all the more difficult if the 'Bane feels his *Morphus* is his 'true' form or identity. Only a small number of Nightbane ever believe they are able to reveal their supernatural nature to their closest friends and family members. Most, however, have to deal with keeping their dark secret every day of their lives.

Staying among friends and family also runs the serious risk of putting their lives in jeopardy. If the Nightlords, vampires, or even a rival faction discover the *identity* of the Nightbane, they may use their family to get to them for whatever reason they may have. The Nightlords love to threaten a Nightbane's family to lure him and any associates into a trap, blackmail them for information or services, or to turn them against their teammates or faction. Or the demonic Nightlords may decide to slaughter the Nightbane's entire family and/or friends, or worse, replace them with Doppelgangers or Namtar to spy on the Nightbane, or engage in other cruel forms of retribution for actions against them. Likewise, the more unscrupulous elements of many factions have no qualms about using an individual's family and friends in a similar manner, though they tend to use this tactic less often and are much less likely to kill their "leverage."

It is no surprise then that family ties and other relationships may be abandoned by a Nightbane altogether. Such 'Bane may leave home and break any and all ties with friends and family, starting anew somewhere else, or associate only with other Nightbane and 'soldiers' in the Hidden War. Once one becomes immersed in the shadowy world of the Nightbane, it just seems easier to surround oneself with other Nightbane, supernatural beings and people "in the know" regarding the Nightlords' invasion. It's also more relaxing to associate with people who accept the Nightbane for what they are.

The most extreme Nightbane reject contact with all other people, even their own kind, and become reclusive hermits who try not to socialize with anyone. Such loners tend to be some of the most depressed and cynical Nightbane alive. They believe it is best not to have people you care about and they shun social interaction. They also try to ignore what the Nightlords are doing and stay out of conflicts with them and their minions. Some hermits like to stay on the move, so they don't become attached to any one place as home, or get too complacent or feel too safe.

Among the Nightbane who dedicate themselves to the Hidden War or a life as a hero, there is the issue of how they support themselves financially. Some Nightbane take on part-time jobs or do work that has flexible hours or allows them to work at home. Others take the Robin Hood approach, stealing money and gear from Nightlord operatives, operations and resources. Such a Robin Hood crusader steals money from the wallet of a fallen NSB agent, charges up the agent's credit card,

and takes weapons, equipment and even vehicles used by any servant of the Nightlords. This *may* go so far as to include any law enforcement agency, from local police to Homeland Security and even the military (all believed to be pawns and servants of the Nightlords), to private companies and bank holdings believed to be owned by a Nightlord or Night Prince. Likewise, Nightbane of good alignment, and certainly selfish and evil alignments, may *steal* from criminals (drug dealers, number runners, car thief rings, gangs, etc.), rationalizing that they are putting the hurt on crime as well as using the ill-gotten money to help them help other people. When faced with the tough decision of scaling back their own efforts against the Nightlords (or other bad guys) and going hungry, this morally questionable route seems like a reasonable alternative. Of course, victimizing criminals, especially large crime operations, and the authorities means the 'Bane responsible has earned himself more enemies. Enemies who are likely to seek revenge and his destruction.

Less scrupulous Nightbane and factions may have no problem making their living through criminal means. They may rob, kidnap, blackmail, burglarize homes and businesses, engage in credit card fraud, offer their unique services as an enforcer or spy, and engage in all types of criminal activity. Such criminals are likely to prey upon innocent people rather than other crooks, the authorities or even the Nightlords, all of whom are likely to be deemed as too dangerous. Why tackle other super beings or the government when ordinary people are easy pickings? Not all Nightbane are heroes.

Nightbane Allies & Contacts

More often than not, it's not what you know, but who you know.

Yeah, you've probably heard that saying before, but it's as true of the world after Dark Day as it was before, perhaps more so. It pays to foster good contacts in as wide a range as possible.

You can't possibly learn everything you need to learn, and even a fairly well-rounded crew is going to have gaps in its knowledge pool and resources. That's where contacts come in. Be good to them and they'll be good to you. Usually.

On Earth after Dark Day, there are plenty of people and things that can kill you very quickly. You need friends. Friends you can count on. Friends who understand the way of the world since Dark Day. The right friends and contacts can also help you solve a specific task, unravel a mystery, or get you out of a sticky social situation.

Contacts are friends and allies that you can call on for aid and information. In return, they are going to ask for the same from time to time – *quid pro quo* – like information or cash. The better you help them, the stronger an ally they are likely to become.

Of course, fostering the *right* contacts is an investment of time, money and effort. You don't want to hook up with a free-loader nor a group that is reckless, has loose lips, or is going to put you and crew in jeopardy. You need smart, reliable contacts who know how to be discreet and will help you when you really need it. It's also important that they are the kind of person or

people with whom you are happy to return the favor. You don't want to be indebted to people you don't like or trust.

– *The Nightbane Survival Guide*

Having contacts is an important element to a Nightbane's survival. In a game context, these Non-Player Characters (NPCs) also add to the overall story and fun. A contact can provide tips and clues that lead to an adventure, warn a character or group they are being hunted, and even add an interesting social element to the game. All kinds of role-playing opportunities can arise from NPC contacts, and Game Masters should use them as the great adventure tools they are.

Each Nightbane starts with one or two contacts. It's suggested that every new Nightbane character be allowed to choose two low level contacts or one mid-level contact to start. Any additional contacts will have to be cultivated over time and through role-playing. The initial contact(s) could be an old friend, teacher, mentor, magic user, psychic, an insider member of a Spook Squad, a fellow NPC Nightbane, or simply a kindly person in the know who tries to help Nightbane or opposes the Nightlords. Depending on circumstance, the contact may be aware of the Nightbane and Hidden War or be an unwitting pawn/resource for information or personal assistance.

The following guidelines are suggested for players and Game Masters who want to use contacts in their campaigns.

Making New Contacts

New contacts can be tricky. They are mainly developed via adventuring and meeting new people (NPCs). Whenever the player character has in-depth interaction with someone who has



valuable skills, information, connections or resources, he can try to turn that NPC (Non-Player Character) into one of his (or the player group's) contacts. Someone the player character can contact in the future. Based on the interaction between the characters, the level of role-playing involved, the player character's "pitch" and what might be in it for the NPC, the Game Master can decide the NPC might become a contact or not. Ultimately, the decision is up the Game Master, and it should only be allowed if it makes sense. G.M.s should also bear in mind that not all contacts are long lasting or volunteers. That means the NPC contact might be available for the current story arc and then quit, become an enemy, get killed or simply disappear. Remember, as G.M. you can add or remove a contact at any time for any reason, just be fair and make sure it makes sense. Furthermore, the player has to make a compelling plea/case/pitch.

There also has to be some motivation for the Non-Player Character to help our hero(es). That might depend on the NPC's personality or background. It might also depend on the player character's reputation. If the player characters were just involved in some horrible blood bath or controversy that sullies their good name, the NPC might not want to associate with them. If the player character or group has a reputation for getting their "friends" killed or being too "hot" (i.e. wanted by the Nightlords) the NPC might not be interested. Heck, there are lots of reasons an NPC might NOT want to become a contact, but there are a lot of reasons he might. The Game Master should use good sense in deciding who could be a contact and who should not.

Here are 13 common reasons a character might become a contact:

1. The NPC likes the Nightbane, or player group. He/they have earned his trust and respect, and he wants to help. The NPC has seen enough of the Nightbane character to know he likes and trusts him or her and is happy to help. Help may be limited to information and/or the passing of information, to more risky endeavors such as giving the character (and his friends?) a place to hide, providing an alibi for his Facade, small amounts of cash, first aid, transportation, and so on.

2. Owes the Nightbane character a debt. The Nightbane (and/or his associates) did something very beneficial, such as saving the NPC's life or livelihood, or his family, etc., and the NPC feels he *owes* him/them a debt. Thus, this character will help whenever he can in whatever way he can, which may be limited or wide ranging depending on the character, the situation and the G.M. **Note:** His sense of obligation may come to an abrupt end if the Nightbane character or player group puts the NPC's loved ones in jeopardy. However, if treated well, this contact is likely to become a good friend and trusted ally in the future.

3. In it to save the world or right a wrong. The NPC is a patriot or hero who feels a need to stop the Nightlords. While he is just an ordinary human being, he (or she) wants to help in whatever way he can. Help may be limited to information and/or the dissemination of information, to more risky endeavors such as giving the character (and his friends?) a place to hide, providing an alibi for the Nightbane's Facade, providing small amounts of cash and/or supplies, first aid, transportation, and so

on. **Note:** As long as the patriot is convinced the Nightbane character has the same goal, he is a reliable, friendly and helpful resource. However, if the contact comes to believe they have different views or the Nightbane player character does not share the same goals or commitment, things could deteriorate fast.

4. In it for revenge. The NPC contact has suffered a terrible loss or injury at the hands of the Nightlords and wants revenge. Thus, he is glad to help the Nightbane any way he can. As usual, help may be limited to information or one particular area of expertise, to a wide range of assistance. **Note:** This character may be willing to do *anything* to hurt the Nightlords, but his hatred might cloud his judgement, cause the NPC to be reckless or to take unnecessary risks (risks that might jeopardize the Nightbane and his teammates or hurt innocent people), and the vengeful NPC's mental state might deteriorate, making him a dangerous loose cannon. Revenge is always a double-edged sword that cuts both ways. Be careful.

5. In it for the money. The NPC contact is happy to provide information, a hiding place, and other services as long as he is paid handsomely for his services. This applies to informants/stool pigeons, opportunists, smugglers and other criminal types, as well as those who claim to be patriots out to undermine the Nightlords – provided it lines their pockets with cold, hard cash. **Note:** This character is likely to be of selfish or evil alignment. There are two problems with this type of contact: **a)** If you can buy him, so can the enemy. **b)** If the Nightbane player character or player group do anything to hurt the contact's business interests, he will cut them loose or get rid of them one way or another. In the end, it is all about the bottom line for this opportunist.

6. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. This is a variation of the guy in it for the money, though these contacts are usually more street savvy, have a sense of loyalty and a reputation for fair dealings – they have to in order to stay in business.

This you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours NPC contact will get the information, gear or resources requested, but only *after* the Nightbane *does something for him first*. That *something* will be proportionate to whatever the Nightbane is asking for, and lead to more trouble if the 'Bane isn't careful. The tit for tat contact is usually involved in the criminal underworld or at least engaged in things that play upon, plunder and undermine the Nightlords and their government, like being in the business of helping, hiding and transporting Nightbane. **Note:** This type of contact seldom has any love for the Nightlords and is not likely to sell out a "client" to the enemy. However, they are criminals and cutthroats out for themselves. They cannot always be trusted and often hold out on all the details or information. Such a contact can only be trusted to a point. On the other hand, help him out big time, or above and beyond the call of duty, and a genuine friendship *might* develop. Or he might figure he owes you *one* big favor in return.

7. In it for the glory. Not everyone is interested in justice, freedom, helping others or even money and power. Some are in it for the glory. A contact who has delusions of fame and glory can be a reliable resource, but he is also going to have a tough time keeping his exploits and secrets to himself. This character gets a rush being involved in covert ops, keeping secrets and brushing shoulders with heroes, renegades, famous rogues and

Nightbane in general. **Note:** Loose lips sink ships and, sooner or later, this character *will* shoot his mouth off at the wrong time in front of the wrong person. When he does, all hell is likely to break loose. Be careful.

8. A matter of necessity. Your character might not like him, and the NPC contact doesn't like you, but you can help each other for the greater good. In this case, the contact or the Nightbane player character may be the lesser of two evils or a means to an end. Thus, the NPC is willing to help or become a contact/agent for the cause if not for the player character himself. **Note:** When the necessity ends, this relationship is also likely to end. However, it is possible that the NPC contact and player character might find common ground on which to stand and continue to help each other, or even come to actually like each other. Only time and circumstance will tell.

9. Intimidation is a wonderful motivator. The Nightbane character has scared the pants off this contact to get him to help. As long as the contact is scared of the Nightbane and/or the player group, this reluctant stoolie/informant/agent will provide the Nightbane character with the information and small types of assistance he needs (get a gun and ammo, medicine, basic supplies, a password, key, etc.). **Note:** This contact can *never* be completely trusted. If he gets the upper hand on the Nightbane, the contact will turn on him. Worse, this submissive contact will turn on the player character when threatened by someone or something even more powerful and scary, making him unreliable. Threats and extortion are always a messy business and create resentment that may backfire at some point. However, they can also be effective for getting cooperation out of some people, especially in the short term. Caution is advised.

10. Confidence scheme. Successful fast-talking, bluffing or outright deception might see a Nightbane player character cajole, con/trick and generally convince an NPC contact into helping him. In fact, he might convince the contact that he will benefit from being buddies or partners whether it is true or not. The conned contact does not really know who the player character is or what he is involved in. There is a good chance the NPC might not even believe in such things as the Nightlords. The conned NPC may think the character(s) secretly works for the government, has much more influence than he or she truly has, or that it is better to have the character as an ally than an enemy. **Note:** Conned contacts won over this way are fairly useful, however they generally cannot be told anything too sensitive, and are reliable only as long as the ruse is maintained. As soon as the conned contact realizes he is being played for a fool, his cooperation ends. Worse, the embarrassed NPC may seek revenge on those who tricked him and tell the enemy everything he knows. Nightbane of a good alignment are not likely to use lies and deception to get innocent (and even not so innocent) people to help them.

11. Seduction. The use of seduction is another method of tricking an individual into becoming a contact and providing help. Of course, spies have been romancing other people to secure information or their cooperation for centuries, however it is not nice and a Nightbane of a good alignment will not use the promise of love or romance to get what or she needs out of someone. Selfish and evil characters, on the other hand, should have no qualms about it.



Desire, love and outright lust are some of the most powerful motivators of the human psyche. People will do some downright foolish and dangerous things for love, or the promise of love. *On the plus side*, such a contact is devoted to the Nightbane, eager to please, won't ask for much in return, will probably work on blind faith, and generally wants to believe anything the Nightbane tells him/her. *On the downside*, the love struck contact will want a LOT of quality time, does not want the player character courting anyone else, is extremely jealous of his/her (imagined) relationship, and is intensely curious about *everything* the Nightbane player character is into ("I don't understand . . . where do you GO every night?" "Why do you need this information?" "What kind of trouble are you in?"). This means the love struck contact is likely to snoop into the Nightbane's business and may uncover his true identity or other compromising information. **Note:** The wrath of a *jilted lover* can be worse than that of a Nightlord, so this deception is playing with fire, and the Nightbane is likely to get burnt to a crisp when things go wrong.

12. Bribes: Hey, not everyone is a hero, but for the right amount of money, may be willing to look the other way, keep their mouth shut or do something ("Just this once") for the Nightbane. This isn't exactly a reoccurring character, but an implied threat, a reminder of his hippocratic oath and a couple of grand should be enough to convince a doctor or paramedic to patch up an injured buddy or get a small time crook or informant to fork over some information. Also remember that not all bribes are with money. They could be a street punk wanting access to drugs and those cool guns you keep coming up with, or a Cybermage who wants you to break into the city zoo and grab him up a couple Komodo dragons tomorrow night (and yes, it's

best if you don't ask). **Note:** Of course, this contact isn't loyal for squat, and if someone comes along with a bigger paycheck or more threatening, he's going to rat out your character in a heartbeat. Still, in the short-run his help could be invaluable. Also, choose your targets for bribes carefully. Not everyone is on the take and even offering the wrong person a bribe could buy you immediate trouble or that NPC's undying enmity.

13. A double agent for the Nightlords or a rival faction. This contact pretends to be a concerned individual, patriot, vengeful toward the Nightlords or a mentor who wants to help the Nightbane. However, he or she is really a double agent whose true loyalty lies with the Nightlords or a rival faction. While he pretends to be a helpful friend and ally, he is really trying to get information from the Nightbane player character and his associates (the player group) and feeding it to his true masters. **Note:** When the Nightbane's usefulness comes to an end, or the contact's true master orders it, the contact may cut him off, disappear or turn on his "friend" and may set him up for a trap, ambush or kill him outright.

Creating Contacts

While it is possible that the Game Master may want to develop the most important and frequent contacts into fully fleshed out NPCs, there's a much faster way to design useful contacts.

A contact may be *low level* (1D4 levels of experience), *mid level* (1D4+3 levels of experience) or *high level* (1D4+8 levels of experience). This affects both their pool of knowledge and resources, and how easy it is to win them over. The more experienced and savvy the contact, the less trusting, naive and defenseless he'll be.

Regardless of level, all quickly generated contacts should have four skills relevant to their profession or general life leaning at +10%. One skill, their main skill, is at +30% to the base skill. Then select 1D4+2 Secondary Skills. These skills are, of course, adjusted based on the contact's level of experience. Otherwise, roll up the character as normal. Speaking of *normal*, Game Masters who own the **Beyond the Supernatural™, Second Edition RPG** or **Dead Reign™ RPG** can create a quick and appropriate NPC contact by rolling up an *Ordinary Person* as presented in either of those games.

A few examples of contacts include:

Low level street punk: Primary skills are Streetwise, Hand to Hand: Basic, Pick Locks and Pilot: Motorcycle, plus 1D4+2 Secondary Skills. This character has his ear to the grapevine and knows the word on the street, as well as 1D6 small time criminal connections. He can also call up 1D6 fellow gang-bangers, petty crooks or bikers within a few minutes to cause a distraction, flex their muscle, or provide a flop house (albeit an unsavory one) for the night.

Low level mechanic: Primary skills are Automotive Mechanics, Basic Electronics, Locksmith and Pilot Automobile or Truck. He owns or has access to a small garage where you can repair or soup-up your car for cost, or get the bullet holes in your S.U.V. filled in and painted over, and knows where you can get used vehicles, parts and other repairs at a 30% discount.

Mid level occult researcher: Primary skills are Research, Photography, Lore: Geomancy, and Lore: Demons and Monsters (or Nightbane). He owns a small new age shop and has a moderate occult library. Also knows most supernatural legends and stories regarding a particular region (probably local) and can direct your character to the nearest psychic, Indian burial mound or ley line nexus.

Mid level computer hacker: Primary skills are Computer Operation, Computer Hacking, Computer Programming and Computer Repair or Surveillance Systems. He can hack into a good number of secured systems for you, recreate 2D4x10% of the data from a wiped hard drive, eliminate viruses, build and repair computers, and stays current on just about every whisper and twitch in the darker spots of the Internet. No, you can't use or even touch his computer (which he calls "Baby").

High level biologist: Primary skills are Biology, First Aid, Pathology and Chemistry: Analytical. He is a leading biologist at a prominent science research institute, able to pull a few strings and have a blood sample or strange, alien-looking corpse analyzed without the government knowing about it.

Mid level soldier or police officer: Primary skills are Military Etiquette, Hand to Hand: Expert and W.P. Rifle. Odds are that he's a discharged soldier or ex-police officer who knows about the Nightlords and their infiltration into government and law enforcement. He knows how the military and/or law enforcement operates, has pretty good information and intelligence on Spook Squad (of which he might secretly be a member), and has his own contacts in the field providing him with gossip and intel on the street. He can lay out a tactical combat situation for the player character and he can draw up good battle plans, strategies and tactics. He might even know a guy who knows a guy who once did "wet work" for the Agency as well as unconfirmed information about Nightlord (or criminal) weapon caches, safe houses, holding cells, and bases of operation.

Theories of Origin

Excerpted from *Origins*, a supplement to the original Nightbane Survival Guide.

You know, all the young Nightbane I've helped out these past years have all asked me the same question, *'What am I?'*

So, I know you must be asking yourself the same kinds of questions that they have. The same ones I asked when I was in your shoes. Of course, it doesn't help any that a lot of us who have been around for a while have our own ideas as to what we are and where we come from. That isn't including all the crackpot theorists out there who come up with such pearls as us all being *orphans*, though that's more of an honest mistake since a lot of us apparently were orphans in the old days.

I've heard us referred to as demons, monsters, aliens, mutants, and whatever else you can think of. It can get confusing for a new 'Bane to sort it all out, so I decided to write this document as an addendum to the original **Nightbane Survival Guide** and have subsequently attached it to any and all versions I have come across on the web. Hopefully, this discourse gives

you some answers instead of creating more questions or making your head hurt.

Might as well get the hard truth out right away. None of us knows exactly who we are or why we exist. Whether we play some divine role in the future of humanity or we are eternal heroes born whenever we are needed to combat the darkness, no one can say. It sure seems like it sometimes, but maybe the joke is on us. Maybe we're just the comic relief in a black comedy.

Every faction and group of people who knows about the Nightbane has their own theories about us. A lot of people have a lot of different opinions. Here are the most popular theories from some of the most notable factions. As to which is on the right track, that's a hard one to call.

Theories of the Underground Railroad

Having the most ancient Nightbane amongst their ranks, the Underground Railroad has the distinct advantage of hundreds (some say thousands) of years of research and experience behind them. So you'd think if anyone held the answer to, *what are we*, it would be them.

Many theories have come and gone within the membership of this legendary faction, but the latest dominant theory (first proposed in the late nineteenth century after a prominent member read Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*) is that Nightbane are a parallel evolution of human beings. Yeah, I know, that's a mouthful, here's what it means.

Some in the Railroad believe that we Nightbane represent the next step in human evolution. That some elite group of scientific minds going back to ancient times has been secretly experimenting with and breeding us like dogs for special traits.

That opinion is often regarded as wishful thinking at best, and dangerous elitism at worst. The parallel evolution part comes in because many who uphold this theory believe that we Nightbane are the result of humans colonizing the **Nightlands** and then adapting to that alien and magical environment. A few have even suggested that perhaps the Nightbane are the result of the interbreeding between human colonists and the fabled *Formless Ones*. Whether this parallel evolution was the result of accidentally being stranded in the Nightlands via dimensional magic, or deliberate intent is also a matter of debate.

This could explain the disappearance of Formless Ones, with interbreeding gradually weeding them out as a pure race. This theory could also explain the relatively steady numbers of Nightbane throughout the ages, since the genetic legacy would have gotten more spread out, but also more diluted from the intermarriage of recessive carriers and non-carriers. Thus, there would have been more *potential Nightbane* at the time of Dark Day than ever before, but roughly the same number underwent *the Becoming* because the genes weren't expressed as often. Proponents of this theory believe that Dark Day (the nearing of the Nightlands to Earth and the opening of dimensional doorways so that the Nightlords and their minions could invade) had some kind of effect on these genes, causing them to become more active. This theory also adds credence to those who believe our ancient ancestors discovered the Nightlands (or perhaps the Formless Ones discovered us), anticipated the Nightlords' invasion of the Earth and set about creating the Nightbane as a defense against them when that day came. These

progenitors were so forward thinking that they actually anticipated it taking centuries, giving them time to spread the Nightbane gene throughout all of humanity.

This theory is quite popular within the ranks of the Underground Railroad, not just because it justifies their nature as still being very close to the rest of humanity, but also because it uses modern science and sensibilities most people can wrap their head around.

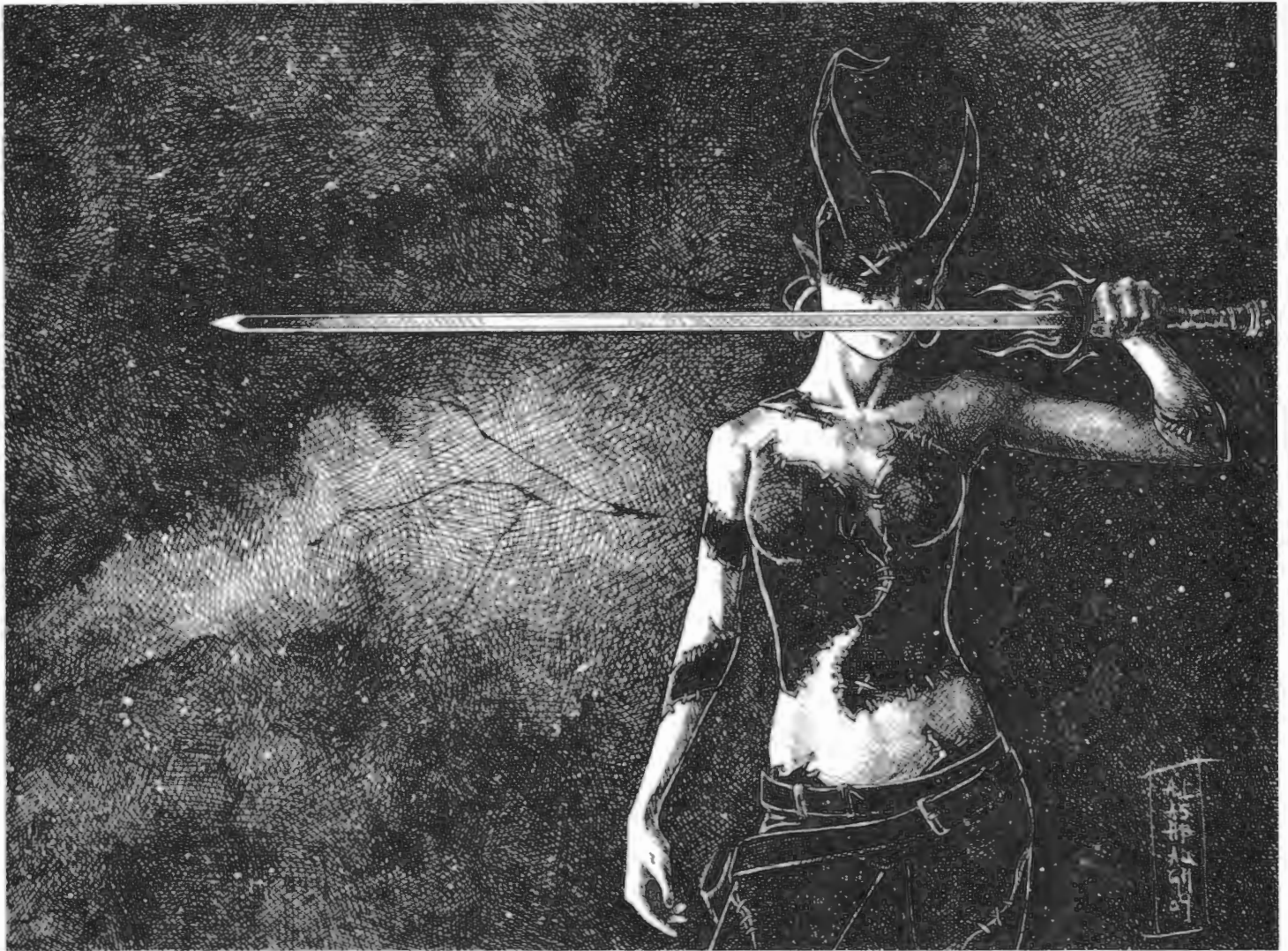
Detractors of this theory often cite its main appeal as its most glaring weakness. The explanation seeks to relegate something seemingly steeped in the supernatural to the confines of modern scientific theory and human history. The small amount of research done to date does not support the original theory, as no genetic differences have been found between Nightbane, potential Nightbane, and ordinary humans. This has not stopped supporters from revising the theory to explain the damaging results. The very newest versions of this theory claim that rather than genetics as people normally define it, perhaps the process of *Becoming* relies on a supernatural equivalent of DNA that is unrecognized by modern methods. That something in the genes triggers the transformation from ordinary human to supernaturally endowed Nightbane. That in the end we are all human, but some of us have a genetic defense against the Nightlords – we are Nightbane.

As a result, most members of the Underground work toward finding other Nightbane, to help them escape the Nightlords and survive in a world where they are hunted. They also work to help Nightbane find some measure of peace and understanding about themselves, as well as promote the idea that the Nightlords are their natural enemies.

The parallel evolution theory is regarded as dangerous by some members of the Underground Railroad as it is completely unsubstantiated. Indeed, while there are some within the Nightbane community who believe the theory proves they are *destined* to be heroes and the saviors of humanity, even this positive motivating belief compels too many Nightbane to believe they are better than ordinary humans, and that once the Nightlords have been sent packing, they are *destined* to inherit the Earth and rule over humankind.

Others twist this theory to advocate a life apart from humans and their problems with the Nightlords. These Nightbane profess the invasion of Earth is NOT the Nightbane's problem because they feel their origins and real home lie in the *Nightlands*. They point out that they "evolved" or "ascended" (a term used sparingly as it is viewed largely in the same light as theories that preach superiority to humans) in the Nightlands to become superior and enlightened. As enlightened beings, they can see, recognize, understand and combat the Nightlords and their minions where ordinary humans cannot. Some even suggest that they are not destined to save Earth, but have been hiding on Earth, waiting until the Nightlords bridged the dimensional divide so that they may return to the Nightlands and reclaim it as their true homeland! Nightbane elitists also point to **Spook Squad** (the PAB before Dark Day) and other instances of humans making a concerted effort to destroy that which is different or just misunderstood. To the more xenophobic Nightbane, images of villagers armed with torches and pitchforks and hunting down "evil monsters" come to mind when they think of humans learning of their existence on a large scale. All the more reason, in their

opinion, to stay secluded and leave those who would probably destroy them to their own fate. If they are, indeed, superior to humans, they will survive and find their place on Earth or back in the Nightlands.



Theories of the Resistance

Having only split off from the Underground Railroad in recent years, one might expect Resistance theorists would uphold many of the same beliefs. However, that is not the case, and many left to form the Resistance because of conflicting theories about the origin and purpose of the Nightbane. Namely, that they are the descendents of ancient heroes dedicated to the destruction of the Nightlords and the restoration of the Nightlands.

The basis for Resistance theories lies in a pair of ancient legends. **The first** and main source is an obscure document known as the *Chronicles of Light*. It is an incomplete epic that details an ancient battle between Light and Dark where the hosts of the Dark were driven into the “shadow lands” by the valiant “Heroes of the Light.” It goes on to speak of a group of heroes who decided that retreat could not suffice. Thus, a *holy order of champions and their kin* was established to travel into the shadow lands, where many of their allies apparently could not travel, to stamp out the forces of darkness for good and bring light to that “cursed land.”

Despite the fact that, according to the tale, they carried a powerful magical weapon with them called the “Sword of Righteousness,” this group of warriors and their families are never mentioned again in written history. Some believe that is because the group was defeated and became the slaves of the Nightlords (which would help explain the human population of the Nightlands), but there may be another explanation.

In the mid-nineties, an antiques dealer in North Dakota came across drawings done by a student of one of the mission schools set up for the “civilization” of Native Americans in the late 1800s. These drawings were done in secret to preserve the legend they portray, since students were not allowed to speak of the old ways during their schooling. The legend itself is a little-known parable about a strange warrior descending from the sky and laying down his sword for the ways of a medicine man.

While the dealer was not a Nightbane, he did have contacts within the Underground Railroad, and wrote them about the drawings and the legend. When a member arrived to look over the drawings, she immediately noticed the depictions matched descriptions of the warriors from the *Chronicles of Light*. This

has led many Nightbane scholars to theorize that perhaps the “Warriors of Light” suffered a fate similar to that of the medieval Crusaders, with members losing faith in the cause after decades (perhaps centuries) of brutal war. Whether or not this is the case is unknown, but it has the potential to lend more credibility to the beliefs of many Resistance members who believe *themselves* to be descendants of this ancient group of warriors that somehow established a symbiotic connection with the Nightlands themselves!

The second legend that is believed to support this theory is a tale of undetermined age that originates (as far as most can tell) amongst the infamous *Hell Riders of the Nightlands*. How the Underground Railroad even came by this information is unknown, and many consider its validity to be highly suspect. Despite this, many in the Resistance leadership have faith that the story is at least close to the truth. In fact, the Hell Riders themselves heard the legends from many of the human enclaves they raided during the formation of their fledgling nation. (Note: See **Nightbane® World Book 2: Nightlands™** for more information on these barbarians and their kingdom in the Nightlands.) The reason the story intrigued the Hell Riders so much is that many of these human enclaves had *magical weapons*.

According to the legend, there was once a great nation of humans that existed in the Nightlands. However, this kingdom was eventually overcome by the might of the Nightlords, even as they attempted a last-ditch ritual to seal the Nightlords’ evil forever. These enclaves claimed to be the shattered remnants of that once great kingdom, only able to escape by fleeing into the unclaimed wastes of the Nightlands.

More recent rumors circulating among the Hell Riders speak of bands of human and Nightbane nomads that have been sighted in the farthest and most uninhabitable reaches of the Northern Wastes. What is important about these mysterious nomads is they are reported to have attacked a couple of the raiding parties with powerful magic the likes of which have never been seen! This certainly supports the possibility that there were members of the ancient warrior-mystics who survived in the Nightlands. No one knows if the stories are true or not, but the Resistance has decided to investigate them. It is certain that if the *Seekers* or *Nocturnes* hear about these rumors they will send their own teams to see if they can establish contact with these warrior-mages in the Nightlands, potentially causing more tension between these three factions (as well as the Hell Riders who operate in the area).

Resistance members who hold to this theory often use it to help justify their war against the Nightlords. As the recipients of this mystic legacy, they feel it is their duty to take up the mantle of their ancestors, destroy the Nightlords once and for all and bring light to the Nightlands!

Members of the *Underground Railroad*, and occasionally the *Seekers*, are quick to point out that even if they are correct, the Resistance should take a lesson from the way the last war against the Ba’al turned out: Their heroic ancestors lost. None of this sways the conviction of the Resistance, however. Even if there were no legacy for them to live up to, the fact that the Nightlords seek to exterminate every last Nightbane is enough for these die-hard warriors to fight them tooth and nail. In their eyes, it is better to go down fighting than to lay down and die like cattle. Besides, the Resistance asks, why do the Nightlords

so fear and hate them if they are not destined to destroy them? In fact, many Resistance members believe there are missing tomes lost in antiquity that would prove they are descended from magic wielding champions of light. Some even believe such tomes must be in the clutches of the Nightlords.

Theories of the Nocturnes

Certain factions hold one theory over another due to research or ideals, while others do so more by design. The latter is the case for the mysterious Nocturnes, but not many outside their leadership know this. Truthfully, the vampires don’t know as much as they’d like to think they do about the origins of the Nightbane. That having been said, the older vampires and Wampyrs do seem to know a great deal about the “Ba’al-ze-neckt and the War of Light and Dark.” However, this is information they don’t just give out, leaving many to wonder what it is that they’re hiding, and others to speculate that they don’t know as much as they let on.

Thus, Nocturnes officially regard Nightbane as descendants of the same race that spawned the Nightlords. This is a controversial theory, as many ‘Bane cannot believe they share any common ancestry with their hated enemy. Whether it is true or not, most Nocturnes believe the Nightlords were never human, but a race that may be a distant cousin, several times removed. In other words, the Nocturnes theorize that Nightbane are not, and never have been, human since they were spawned from the same race as the supernatural Nightlords. The reasoning behind this belief is not based on hard fact, but rather a hold-over of arrogance from their former masters, as how could “mere humans” become such a powerful adversary to beings such as the great Vampire Intelligences? This, in effect, makes every Nightbane a supernatural being like the vampires and Wampyrs, at least according to the official doctrine of the Nocturnes.

This view is intended to foster more understanding between the Nightbane and other supernatural members of the Nocturne faction. The logic being it creates kinship between the Nightbane and other inhuman members of the faction. A sense of kinship means Nightbane should be much less likely to question, distrust, oppose or hunt other fellow *creatures of the night*. The Nocturnes want them to side with them in disputes, especially disputes with non-Nocturnes.

The end result is that a stronger relationship has developed between Nightbane and Wampyrs due to the perception that they have more in common with one another than with humans. Nocturnes also promote the idea that they and the Nightbane may come from similar *dark* origins, but try to do right by fighting the Nightlords, demons, and true vampires. This idea works out especially well given the theory that Wampyrs are actually potential Nightbane that were bitten by true vampires *before* their Becoming.

However, this theory of common, supernatural heritage leads many of the Nightbane who believe it to feel detached from humanity. In turn, this has led to a higher rate of depression, a higher degree of cynicism, and an increased number of Nightbane within the Nocturnes giving in to dark desires, crime, cruelty and self-serving behavior, giving in to the notion that they are not predestined heroes but evil monsters born in darkness. The worst are no better than the heartless villains they fight against. These kinds of dark thoughts and detachment from

humanity make Nocturne Nightbane much more susceptible to corruption by agents of the Nightlords. After all, if they and the Nightlords share a common ancestry, they are more alike than different. Why fight their dark nature to defend puny humans when they are the greater power? This has not been lost on the minions of the Nightlords (especially Night Princes), and thus the Nocturnes have the highest numbers of Nightbane that defect to the ranks of the Nightlords among all of the factions. The Night Princes and their demonic minions love to use that logic to get Nightbane to join them or at least turn against humankind or their own kind. This does not help the Nocturnes' reputation with rival factions, especially the *Underground Railroad*, *Lightbringers* and *Spook Squad*.

All of this has led to some recent debate within the upper echelons of the Nocturnes as to whether or not they should scale back the talk about Nightbane being kin to the Nightlords. After all, it's NOT TRUE. Nightbane DNA is human. However, the manipulative and more traditional-minded members of the faction argue that this could lead to renewed distrust within their membership and the loss of Nightbane members to their factions. Right now, the Nocturnes are the first choice of brooding, melancholy, depressed and confused Nightbane who mistakenly believe the faction allows them to vent their "true" dark nature as supernatural monsters. Thus, the Nocturne leaders feel they must perpetuate the lie lest they lose the trust of their membership and lose Nightbane to other factions.

Theories of the Warlords

If there is a single faction that is least concerned with the origins of the Nightbane, it would be the *Warlords*. These street-hardened souls don't care much about philosophy, science or the origin of the Nightbane or Nightlords, they are concerned with carving out a life on the streets. They see the world as rapidly decaying in chaos and they find it exciting, because they enjoy the conflict and challenges in their quest to be one of the last factions standing. For the Warlords it's all about being tough, smart, strong and earning respect (and fear) for their efforts. They see the world getting taken over and carved up by supernatural forces and they intend to get their piece of the pie. As a result, they see little value in wasting time wondering about who you are and where you came from. They are all about today, where they are heading and who is going to win. If a Warlord muses about his destiny, it's about Warlords ruling the streets and kicking ass. You'll never catch a Warlord searching for lost ruins and digging through dusty scrolls for obscure references about their past.

Make no mistake, the Warlords are NOT stupid, most are cunning, careful and extremely street smart, they just don't see the value of living in the past when the present is where you are and your future beckons. In fact, most Warlords regard those who cry about their past or pursue scholastic studies as pretentious and sissy bookworms who think they're better than anyone else. For a Warlord, being grounded in the 'real world' is more important. That means knowing what's real, who you can trust (i.e. your fellow Warlords), thinking fast on your feet and being able to handle yourself in a fight. Consequently, street-cred, courage and brute strength carry much more weight with Warlords than education or compassion; the former is a luxury, the latter is a weakness. Most of the 'Bane in the Warlords have

fought for everything they have for their entire lives, and they plan to keep fighting until they have it all. Get in their way and pay the price.

That said, even Warlords would like to know, where they come from, whether they are human or not (most assume not), and try to understand what they are. Speculating on the existence of the Nightbane and other supernatural beings has become a pastime among some of the local chapters. Even in the gangs where the leaders look down on such "nonsense," it's discussed in hushed voices behind their backs. Stories are swapped among members over a brew during late night parties, debates occur while on lookout duty, and generally various rumors circulate among the local Warlord gangs. Most of these rumors are based on personal observation, wild speculation, crackpot theories, and recycled theories from other factions.

Most of the theories developed by Warlord members have obvious pop culture roots, such as explaining supernatural beings as "mutants like in the comic books," or "aliens who breed with humans like in those old sci-fi movies and UFO books." The most ignorant of the Warlord theorists might even cite such works as evidence that their theories are correct. ("Hey, you don't know. It could happen!")

Despite the passing interest in their origins, many Warlords wonder about the larger picture of how they fit into the *here and now*, and what the future holds for them. These Nightbane are bold, organized and aggressive. They openly defy the authorities, actively battle the minions of the Nightbane, and work hard at building a life for themselves and "their kind" (i.e. the Nightbane) by establishing a strong base for their gang. That means they have an, albeit criminal, organization that generates revenue, has focus, strong leadership, and a growing level of respect on the street among humans and Nightbane alike. If you are a Nightbane who doesn't care about heady things, and craves action and enjoys violence, especially taking the battle to the authorities and the Nightlords, then the Warlords are the faction you're looking for. And though many other factions consider the Warlords to be thugs and barbarians, the gang is one of the few groups likely to work with other factions and help anyone who opposes the Nightlords without a great deal of debate, politics and consternation. If you want to carve out your place on the street and you're willing to obey orders and become a Warlord, you're in. If you have valuable information, the Warlords will listen. If you hate the Nightlords and want to strike back at them, the Warlords will help or let you fight at their side.

Theories of the Seekers

With the exceptions of the *Lightbringers* and perhaps the *Nocturnes*, the Seekers are the most knowledgeable about the origins of the Nightbane and Nightlords, their relationship between the Nightlands and Earth, and the ancient War of Light and Dark. Also, much like those other factions, the *Seekers* jealously keep this information to themselves. In fact, Seekers seem to have a reverence for knowledge, love secrets (because knowledge is power) and take steps above and beyond those of any other faction to keep their knowledge a secret. This even holds true within the Seekers' own faction, where only those at the highest levels within the organization have access to most of the

group's archives, and only the Council of Nine has access to it all and knows all the secrets.

Much of the time, the lower members have information that is considered to be common knowledge. However, whenever a low level acolyte stumbles onto a critical piece of information or critical piece of the puzzle in the Nightbane's origin, they earn an immediate promotion within the organization. While it is sincerely believed that the Seekers possess all sorts of ancient texts and knowledge about the Nightbane they refuse to share with the world, nobody knows what they really know. In fact, the Seekers' elitist attitude and institutionalized secrecy may have outsiders suspecting they know much more than they really do. This makes members, especially those in the upper echelon, a target for all kinds of unpleasantness. From rivals within the organization itself, other factions, the Nightlords, vampires, Lightbringers, and even ancient Nightbane to human scholars, there are many who covet the secrets guarded by the Seekers. Some are even hidden powers that wish the knowledge to remain buried and forgotten. For this reason, important discoveries are typically shunted up the chain of command as quickly as possible, with the lower members being "politely instructed" to forget what they saw.

So you might think the Seekers know the truth about us Nightbane. Ironically, the Seekers have more diverse theories on the origins of the Nightbane than any other group, and debate the merits of these and new theories endlessly. Even the members of the Council of Nine hold different theories on the Ba'al (Nightlords), Nightbane, and Nightlands. This is due, in part, to the fact that even the members of the Council keep certain information from one another.

Common beliefs held by the Seekers:

One common belief is that, regardless of what their origin might be, both the Nightbane and the Nightlords are supernatural in nature. Another point that most Seekers agree upon is that the Nightbane are neither *inherently* good or evil, nor destined for any one purpose. They believe that no matter what force or forces created them, they have *free will* to choose their paths in life.

About half of the Seekers believe the Nightlands is the birthplace of the Nightbane, if for no other reason than the fact that they are some of the few beings who possess the ability to traverse the *Mirrorwall*. Others argue that ability is due to their supernatural natures.

The predominant theory about the Nightbane's origin is that the Nightbane are the product of a *great magical experiment*. The source of that experiment and the Nightbane's creation, however, is a matter of great debate. The list of likely creators include the *Ba'al*, *Lightbringers*, *Formless Ones*, *Thoth* and several obscure names, as well as a number of pantheons of gods, a couple of notorious alchemists, and even a little-known group of human sorcerers referred to in ancient texts as the *Warriors of Light* (the same group from which the Resistance believes they are descended). Many astute observations have also been made noting several similarities between Nightbane and the legendary *Formless Ones*, but others are quick to counter with the fact that there are just as many similarities between Nightbane and *humans*, and Nightbane and *Nightlords*.

All other matters concerning the Nightbane's origins, including the reason behind their creation, whether they are part human, all human, evolved humans, human mutants, or none of the above, and a host of less thought provoking questions, theories and debates all rage on without resolve. In time, perhaps, it will be the Seekers who unravel the secrets of the Nightbane. For now, however, every new finding creates new theories, revisions, and endless debate. Furthermore, the Seekers' obsession with secrecy and their reluctance to share what they know may do more to prevent the truth from being uncovered than reveal it. Even now, there are ancient tomes and evidence locked inside vaults shared with only one or two others within their very own organization. For all anyone knows, the Seekers may already have the secret knowledge to unlock the truth about the Nightbane and/or the Nightlords, but they don't realize it.

Theories of the Lightbringers

Whereas the *Nocturnes* are the most devious pertaining to what they know, and the *Seekers* are the most secretive, the Lightbringers are the most tight-lipped. This is due, in part, to the fact that elders within the organization don't share much information of this nature with those in lower positions. This has led to a great deal of speculation as to what secrets they might be hiding and why.

It is said the elder *Guardians* know a great deal, especially about the Ba'al, vampires, and the War of Light and Dark. However, when it comes to the Nightbane, most appear to be as much in the dark about them as everyone else. This would explain why Nightbane are categorized by some members the same as vampires and other supernatural creatures, which also suggests they are a *threat* to the human race. This categorization would also seem to suggest that the Guardians consider the Nightbane to be a supernatural race separate from human beings. There are also a few elder Guardians and their disciples who seem to bear intense hatred against all Nightbane and hold a vendetta against them. These haters are currently in the minority, but they make their disdain for the Nightbane well known.

Despite this occasional prejudice, Nightbane are allowed to join the Lightbringers faction and most Guardians have an amicable relationship with many of them. Most Nightbane in the Lightbringers bring with them their own ideas about their origins, so there are a wide range of beliefs within the organization. While seeking answers to the eternal questions of "who am I" and "what is my purpose" is not discouraged, the Guardians counsel against becoming obsessed with them like the Seekers. Furthermore, the Guardians discourage beliefs that might run counter to, or interfere with, the established goals of their faction. When ideals clash, one or more Guardians take the Nightbane aside for private counseling. If counsel does not squash subversive or inappropriate behavior, either the Nightbane's beliefs are publicly denounced in an attempt to embarrass the 'Bane into disregarding such foolish notions, or the member is expelled from the group.

At least a third, perhaps as many as half, of the Nightbane who join the Lightbringers faction buy into the worst theories regarding the nature and origin of our species. Such negative and extreme views are advanced by the most suspicious and militant Guardians, but quietly condoned by the majority. When this happens, the young and confused Nightbane is convinced he

is born evil. That all Nightbane are flawed, born with a malevolent nature, and given to dark thoughts and deeds. Such a conflicted Nightbane often turns to the Lightbringers for guidance and direction to help him find his moral and spiritual balance. These pitiable individuals feel that they must fight their “evil nature” and ask the Guardians to help enlighten them and provide guidance. Too often the Guardians seem to encourage this self-loathing and use it to motivate the young ‘Bane to a) trust them, b) do as much good as possible, and c) sacrifice themselves for the greater good. By working hard to be “good” these Nightbane are told they can cleanse themselves of the evil that is their very state of being, and who better to direct them in such an undertaking than incorruptible beings of light?

Some of these Nightbane become the faction’s staunchest supporters, and heroic and obedient warriors. They seldom question the word of an elder Guardian and assume all Guardians are wiser and better than they. Since they believe they and all Nightbane are “tainted with evil,” Lightbringer Nightbane tend to view all other Nightbane outside the Lightbringers as “lost to corruption,” “unenlightened” and “impure.” So convinced are these ‘Bane of their own potential for evil that they usually take the word of a Guardian or human over that of a fellow Nightbane. It is not surprising then that Nightbane outside the faction consider Lightbringer Nightbane to be sycophants, turncoats or brainwashed. Thus, ‘Bane who are members of the Lightbringers are not well received by other factions and viewed with deep distrust. These zealots are often viewed in a worse light than even the heavily persecuted “Barbies” and “Kens.” Many wonder why the Guardians would allow any being, let alone an ally, to think so poorly of themselves. Not only that, but allow that mentality to flourish unchecked. It makes many of us wonder if all Guardians secretly see the Nightbane as “touched by evil” and “inherently unredeemable.” And if that is the case, are the Guardians the goodie two shoes they seem to be, or just another enemy of the Nightbane? And if they are the enemy of the Nightbane, are they really friends of humanity? Food for thought. And until we get some answers, I’d suggest you young ‘Banes stay away from the Lightbringers.

The Lunatic Fringe:

Theories of the Spook Squad

When the survivors of the ADA, PAB and other secret organizations came together after Dark Day, their explanations for the event, the Nightlords and the Nightbane were as varied as any other group. However, after years of observation in the field, common experience working together (and in spite of personal schemes and agendas), and general consensus, one theory is commonly accepted by the Spook Squad: *They are all extra-terrestrial.* You read right, according to the ‘true believers’ among the Spook Squad, the Nightlords, the Nightbane, the Guardians, and all of the inhuman beings involved in the Hidden War are *aliens*.

This theory was first offered up by the scientists in PAB (Paranormal Activities Bureau) before the organization was disbanded after Dark Day. Since then, the theory has been extrapolated upon and widely accepted in some circles. Spook Squad knows Nightlords have infiltrated and taken control of many of the world’s major corporations and governments, including the

USA and Canada. That makes the Nightlords *extra-terrestrial invaders* and Dark Day marks the day they declared war on the Earth and launched their invasion of our world. In fact, *the Realists* movement within Spook Squad have built their entire operation, strategies and tactics formulated on the principle that the Earth has been invaded by extra-terrestrials known as the Nightlords and their inhuman minions. (**Note:** For more information on the Realists and their secret agenda, see *World Book 1: Between the Shadows.*)

This theory has made it easy for the Spook Squad to deal with the idea of monsters and magic through a healthy dose of denial and crackpot theories about extra-terrestrials. The Nightlords aren’t demons or supernatural creatures, they are aliens. First, since the Nightlords are inhuman invaders actively engaged in a secret invasion with the express purpose of conquering our planet and enslaving human beings, they can be destroyed without a second thought as to the morality of the situation. Second, if they are flesh and blood aliens, they can be slain just like humans, taking away some of the fear factor a supernatural enemy might pose. Third, for those members of Spook Squad who still deny the existence of *the supernatural*, the Nightlords being “aliens” prevents them from having to consider the rather unpleasant alternative. Lastly, it justifies taking whatever action necessary to stop the *invading aliens*.

Within the boundaries of this theory, the powers wielded by the Nightlords and their inhuman troops are explained as superior technology, psychic abilities, and natural abilities common to that alien species. Indeed, since the discovery of the *Nightlands*, many Spook Squad agents have come to view it as the home world of the invading aliens somehow linked to Earth by advanced dimensional travel technology, and that if they could find the device or devices that create these dimensional portals, they could sever the connection forever! This clearly illustrates the greatest potential downfall of this theory, as it denies the true nature of the enemy. Clinging to this rationalization causes a number of problems for Spook Squad, such as sending agents off on wild goose chases like looking for the fabled dimensional portal devices, as well as largely ignoring the counsel of their more mystically inclined agents when developing attack strategies and countermeasures to the Nightlords’ magic abilities and defenses.

Also covered in this theory is the origin of the so-called *Nightbane* – clearly *human-alien hybrids*. Since the Nightlords and their minions were obviously alien beings, then it would stand to reason that Nightbane are alien-human hybrids of some sort. It is felt that either these “children of the Nightlords” must have turned against their creators because they feel more linked to their human ancestry rather than the extra-terrestrial, or the experiments that created the hybrids did not turn out as the Nightlords intended, and the Nightbane are not the mindless chattel they had intended to create. As a result, the Nightbane hybrids possess a strong “human identity” and fight against their makers.

Unfortunately for us Nightbane, Spook Squad sees us as the products of a “failed breeding experiment” and dangerous mutations that can never be trusted. According to these zealots, Nightbane are not the next step in human evolution, but something different and dangerous. To them, we are half human and half alien, and that alien half is the part they cannot come to



terms with. They fear it will only be a matter of time before we Nightbane succumb to our dark, alien heritage and use our superior alien powers to dominate human beings. This dark and unpredictable alien side means we are a danger to humankind. While we currently fight the greater evil that is the Nightlords, the members of Spook Squad are certain that once our Nightlord creators are beaten, we will try to seize control of the planet and enslave human beings. Some wonder if we are pretending to fight the Nightlords and are really spies and infiltrators for our evil masters. Obviously, this mentality creates a great deal of the mistrust and apprehension over the Nightbane by Spook Squad members. However, there is a small minority within the organization who believe many Nightbane retain their human faculties and have rejected the Nightlords. Brother, what a crock, but that's how many members of Spook Squad think. Believe it or not, some (about 25%) of the Nightbane who have become members of Spook Squad actually believe this rubbish.

Unknown to many even within the Spook Squad organization, this explanation for the origin of Nightbane has recently led to an important breakthrough for one branch of scientists within Spook Squad. With the cooperation of former *PAB* and *Pandora Project* researchers, one inventive scientist thinks he has found a way to curtail the *Nightbane problem*.

The project, code-named "Operation Id," is spearheaded by the unconventional (and some would say, deranged) **Doctor Francis S. Mang**. Doctor Mang had theorized that the Nightlords' methods of creating "hybrids" is psionic in nature, and is really a kind of psychic possession that stimulates the brain to create a physical transformation and the triggering of

mental powers. While it is all beyond human understanding, Doctor Mang is confident he is on the verge of a breakthrough. Numerous experiments, involving the torture of young Nightbane to force them into Becoming while monitoring their brain activity, have enabled the Doctor to identify and isolate the portion of the brain responsible for triggering the change between Facade and Morphus. Doctor Mang believes he can *cure* the human-alien hybrids by removing the part of the brain responsible for the transformation, in effect, killing the alien portion of the Nightbane and rendering the subject completely human. This can be accomplished via brain surgery or through a cocktail of medication that destroys that part of the brain, at least in theory. Unfortunately, all attempts to date have ended in death, debilitating brain damage, or a drug induced coma for the patient. Still, Doctor Mang is convinced he is very close to making a breakthrough that will render the hybrids completely human (i.e., no Morphus or superhuman abilities).

There are two saving graces here, one is that Doctor Mang's superiors are unconvinced the process works, and two, the Doctor has been unable to make his theory work. Without tangible results from his ghoulish "treatments," it is all just more crazy speculation and guesswork. If the lab could be discovered and the research destroyed, the Doctor's work could be kept out of the hands of other fanatics and human supremacists. Furthermore, if Doctor Mang should actually find a way to subvert the Nightbane persona of his patients and prevent them from accessing their Morphus and powers, without turning the patients into turnips or killing them, the Nightlords would love to have it. This is bad news for all Nightbane. If you get the chance, destroy this research and, well, is it really a crime to put the mad

Doctor Mang out of his misery? Rumor has it the research is taking place at a secret laboratory facility somewhere in the Rocky Mountains. I have been unable to find it, but maybe you'll have better luck.

The Quest for Truth

What are we? That's one of the questions burning a hole in your skull – assuming you have a skull, ain't it? The short version of that answer is: nobody knows. It's the \$64,000 question, and nobody has the winning answer. I don't even think the Nightlords are certain. But I'll tell you one thing: There's a hell of a lot of people trying to figure it out.

Why? Power.

All this rooting around in old ruins, scouring the most forsaken corners of the Nightlands, and trying to decipher books written in languages that have been dead since the last ice age . . . it's all about power.

The Nightlords are scared to death of us for some reason. Problem is, nobody knows why. A lot of people, human, Nightbane and other, suspect the Nightlords think we're holding the wild card that will end this little poker game once and for all.

Some believe that the first person to put our origin together right will be in a position to boot the Nightlords off this rock, or take their place at the top of the heap.

Think about it: What kind of secret will give you that kind of power? What else could you do with that kind of power once you'd sent the Nightlords to the not-so-great beyond? Yeah, now you know why so many people are so keen on our genealogy.

Word to the wise before you go shopping for your Indiana Jones hat: The more you uncover, the more likely you are to wind up confused or dead. Our origin has stayed a secret this long for a reason, don't you think? But what do I know, I'm just passing along information and observations to help other Nightbane find their way in the world.

In the time before Dark Day, many Nightbane and the select few others who knew about them, scoured the world for clues about our inexplicable genesis. They journeyed to and from the tombs of ancient China and Egypt, the cities of the Roman Empire, the frontier of the unsettled American West, and even the mysterious jungles of Central and South America. Some sought insights from the lore of the indigenous people, while others raided ancient ruins and tombs for artifacts that might bring the pieces of the puzzle together like a supernatural Rosetta stone. Despite finding evidence of Nightbane at all of the locations, it was the Middle East and North Africa that yielded the most promising signs for uncovering the truth.

Unfortunately, those who sought such knowledge would run up against factors that hampered their pursuits. Many ancient ruins were located in remote locations or political instability made getting permission to excavate or examine artifacts impossible. Territorial and ideological disputes could throw entire regions into chaos, making them dangerous for even local Nightbane. (Could outside forces have helped instigate some of these incidents to keep the truth hidden? It seemed like it sometimes.) In other instances, ruins had been looted, damaged or destroyed by bandits, war or centuries of exposure to the environment. Super-

stitution coupled with a suspicion of outsiders also worked against investigation. And don't forget, back before Dark Day, us Nightbane were few and far between, making our resources very limited.

Despite this, there was a discovery in the summer of 1999 that promised to reveal much about the origin and nature of the Nightbane. It involved the banishing of the Ba'al and the War of Light and Dark. Unfortunately for the research team that was excavating the secluded site, it was one of the first places hit by the minions of the Nightlords during Dark Day. The lead archaeologist on the project, a paranoid glory hound by the name of **Doctor Mitchell Fannin**, had kept the location of the dig a secret from his peers (even those at his prestigious Canadian university) and the location of the site is now lost.

The only insight to come of Fannin's efforts was the fact that there seemed to be a good-sized Nightbane community centered around what was once a large oasis in the desert, though he did not reveal which one. His initial report stated that this ancient Nightbane culture was similar to Babylonian society of old. An enclave the scribes called the "Dark Children." Doctor Fannin made two other reports to the university's dean, but by the time a local Seeker Convention obtained the initial report the Nightlords had already replaced the dean and key university staff with Doppelgangers, and the reports were reported to have been "misplaced" and nowhere to be found. (**G.M. Note:** Unknown to the Nightlords, the Dean's Doppelganger has kept the reports rather than destroying them, in case he needs bargaining leverage at a later date.

This is just one example of the Nightlords' crusade to keep everyone ignorant about the past and especially about the Nightbane's true nature.

Speculation abounds as to why this might be, but like the Nightbane's own shadowy past, there is only speculation rather than hard answers. Many, especially among the *Resistance* and the *Nocturne* factions, believe if the truth was revealed, it would undermine the Nightlords and unify and empower the Nightbane. Others seem to believe there is a sort of "driver's manual" – writings that would explain the full extent of Nightbane abilities and how to use them that would enable us to become stronger, more adept at using our powers and better prepared for war against the Nightlords. It is also suggested that this mysterious Book of Dark Power would reveal the weaknesses of the Nightlords, why they fear us Nightbane, and how we can destroy them. As intriguing as all of this might sound, don't get too excited. No such tome has ever been found and its very existence is mostly optimistic conjecture. If there is any truth to this tantalizing legend, it is that *knowledge is power*, and the Nightlords don't want to take any chances, so they take aggressive action to find, capture, keep or destroy anything that might help us learn more about our history and our powers. That makes finding the tome or any truths about our past a contest between the various factions and the Nightlords. For us, finding such knowledge is the *Holy Grail* of our species. For the Nightlords, suppressing that knowledge means preserving their domination of at least two worlds, the Earth and the Nightlands. If such a Holy Grail of knowledge even really exists.

Other Theories

Several other theories exist explaining the origins of the Nightbane and Ba'al, as well as the War of Light and Dark. In fact, it sometimes seems that every group has their own theory, especially major groups like the *Hell Riders* and *Atlantis Society*. The ones listed above are simply the most common ideas put forth so far.

(G.M. Note: Feel free to develop your own theories to explore, though the truth may never actually be discovered.)



Origin Subplots and Adventure Hooks

Game Master Note: Depending on the theme of the campaign, temperament of the players, and which faction (if any) the player characters belong to, knowledge about the history of the Nightbane, Nightlords, Lightbringers/Guardians, vampires, and the Nightlands may be of great importance and an aspect of many adventures and competitions between the player characters and the minions of the Nightlords, rival factions and others, or of little or no significance whatsoever. However, the question of the Nightbane's origin, their relationship to the Nightlords and why the Demon Lords fear and seek the Nightbane's destruction is an undercurrent that resonates throughout Nightbane culture and society, and personal psyche of most 'Bane. Various aspects of that can make excellent story hooks, subplots and rea-

sons for clashes with the Nightlords, their henchmen and other characters.

Provided below are some examples of places, people and artifacts that might provide information, quests and adventure. They can be used in the story as any of the following plot devices.

An objective/quest: The characters must retrieve this information or item before it is obtained, used or destroyed by the Nightlords or someone else.

A burden: Stumbling upon it creates more questions, sends our heroes on a new adventure, quest or mission that puts them in hot water, or makes them a target of the Nightlords, NSB, a rival or a new enemy.

A red herring: Nothing is what it first appears to be. The artifact, information or clue is a ploy to distract, trick, mislead or manipulate our heroes. Or it might be a fake, inconclusive or

dead end, or it leads to a wild goose chase that creates new problems, adventure hooks or leads to something unexpected.

A background detail: The artifact, information or clue is the backdrop or cause of something going on in the back story or serves as motivation for events and actions. For example: The word on the street is that *someone stole something* from the Nightlords (or one of the factions) and they want it back. While the player characters have nothing to do with the theft and have no interest in the subject, they might get caught up in events surrounding it. This could cause the minions of the Nightlords (and others who also want the item or info) to run around rousting and questioning Nightbane to find out who is responsible, or they might be out for blood and retribution until they get it back or in their search, uncover who has it. Our heroes might fall victim to such ripple effects. Worse, it is possible they could be misidentified as the ones responsible or the ones who currently have the item. Another result could be our heroes being hired to find it, protect it, deliver it or find and destroy it (or the people who took/have it). Or our heroes might accidentally stumble across the character(s) who does have it, or jump in to save an innocent human or Nightbane being attacked by Nightlord henchmen and inadvertently rescue the culprit (and the item or info), making the minions believe they are part of this plot and making them targets, or in helping, join the person/party under attack and so become embroiled in the plot. If the incident remains a background plot, it might cause other things to happen that impact the lives of our heroes, helping or impeding their own, completely unrelated schemes, e.g. increased security, decreased security, an opportunity appears because the Nightlords are directing their resources elsewhere, etc. Or the incident, info or artifact might simply offer some food for thought or background color to enhance the mood and atmosphere of the campaign, or serve as a lesson.

Game Masters, use the offerings that follow any way you deem fit. Also use them as examples and templates for creating your own adventure hooks and plot motivators. Please feel free to change or build upon any of the ideas offered in this book to better fit your own campaign and player groups. Enjoy.

The Kafka Lost Diary

Franz Kafka was a famous German author who lived and died in the early twentieth century. One of his most notable works is entitled **Metamorphosis**, a story and play about a young man who wakes up to discover he has changed into a *giant insect*. Many literary experts attribute the story to Kafka's fears of debilitating mental illness. However, those literary experts are not *Nightbane*.

The truth behind the Kafka short story lies with a childhood friend of Mr. Kafka's who he first met in his home town of Prague. The young boy was raised in an orphanage for most of his childhood, and adopted, in his early teens, by a family that treated him like an indentured servant. One night, after the boy had lived with them for two and a half years, he accidentally broke a family heirloom set of fine china dishes. This upset the couple so badly that the man scolded the boy harder than usual, slamming his head against the fireplace and shaking him violently as he screamed in the teenager's face.

The traumatic assault caused the young man to undergo *the Becoming* on the spot. His Morphus was a monstrous, insect-like humanoid. This sent his adoptive parents into an even wilder frenzy. Both were beyond reason, and as the wife screamed, the boy's adoptive father attacked him with a wrought iron fireplace poker to kill him. Not knowing his own strength, the new Nightbane grabbed the weapon and struck back, plunging the poker into the man's chest, killing him instantly. The insect-monster grabbed and shook his adoptive mother in an attempt to make her stop screaming, and accidentally broke her neck in the process. The trauma of the whole incident was more than the boy could handle and he passed out, returning to human form. When he awoke, he claimed to have no recollection of the event (denial is common among the Nightbane) and was sincerely horrified to learn the fate of his stern parents. The authorities cleared the frail young man of any wrongdoing and judged that the family had fallen victim to a burglary gone bad, probably at the hands of gypsies that passed through the area. The boy was sent back to the orphanage until he came of age to take over the couple's estate.

Franz Kafka was the young Nightbane's friend and the boy confided in him what really happened that day. Correctly determining that a truthful retelling of the account would not only be too ghastly to be received well by his audience, but that it might also cast suspicion on his Nightbane friend, already tortured by what he had done and the monster inside of him, Franz decided to alter the details of the story. This included changing the ending to the experience killing the young man after his father expresses his disapproval of him. Kafka found this to be both poetic and truthful, as the traumatic experience did destroy the real young man in a sense. Even though his adoptive parents weren't the most loving of people, they were the closest thing to family he had ever known and he did not mean to kill either of them. Their murder haunted the young man, as did the knowledge that a real monster lurked inside of him. Indeed, the experience sent him into a state of melancholy that finally caused him to take his own life at the age of twenty. He drowned himself in his bathtub after a night of heavy drinking. The authorities found him several days later still clutching a broken teacup.

The real story of this young man was captured in great detail by Franz Kafka in a series of notes he made after speaking with his friend on several different occasions. These original notes include a description of the man's earliest memories, the events that led to his *Becoming*, the powers and abilities he possessed as a giant insect, a sketch of his Morphus (drawn by the man himself), the young man's feelings and fears, and most importantly, conversations the young Nightbane had with a mysterious figure who offered to be his *mentor*. In these conversations, the mentor revealed to him the true nature of the Nightbane and how to deal with his monstrous id-self. The mentor also recounted his efforts to track down other Nightbane, teach them to deal with what they were, and educate them. Supposedly, Kafka's *Metamorphosis* notes contain the names of several ancient and elder Nightbane (who might still be alive), as well as what the mentor knew about the Nightbane's origins. The exact contents of these notes are unknown, but many would love to get their hands on them, not only for the secrets they may contain about the mentor and other Nightbane of the day, but also

because *Metamorphosis* is one of the best known stories believed to be about the Nightbane.

The Night World Puzzle Box

In medieval Germany, there was a legend about a mysterious individual who lived for hundreds of years in a small cottage deep in the Black Forest. Different versions of the story conflict as to the exact description of this individual, but all agree that he was known as the *Toy Maker*. Modern occult scholars suggest that this person may have been a Nightbane, Geo-Immortal, or other long-lived being. Whatever the case, the Toy Maker was said to be a sorcerer, alchemist, psychic, and artificer of great skill and power. Unfortunately, he was also said to be quite mad and known to spin fantastic and confusing tales about “other realities,” including one that matches the description of the Nightlands rather closely.

On one of his adventures to this “night world,” he claimed to have encountered an ethereal being that pleaded with him for his help. It explained that it had been made incorporeal by a being of incredible power and wicked intent, but that it knew many secrets that could be used to defeat this evil being and his demonic minions. If only the Toy Maker could rescue the being from his ghost-like state, he might be able to find champions to destroy the demon lord before he could hurt anyone else. To complicate matters, the ethereal being could not maintain its link to that world for much longer and would soon fade away into oblivion. The Toy Maker, convinced of the creature’s sincerity, worked some magic to imprison the being inside a large gem and returned with it to Earth.

Back in his workshop, the Toy Maker fashioned a beautiful and intricate puzzle box out of an unknown material. Much to the imprisoned spirit’s chagrin, he placed the gem inside this box and sealed it. As legend has it, the Toy Maker’s logic was that the ethereal being needed a suitable champion(s) to rescue it and destroy the demon lord of the night world. An individual or group of heroes possessing great power, courage, determination, and intelligence. Thus, anyone who could successfully open the intricate puzzle box and find the gem to contact the being trapped inside of it, would surely fit the bill. Shortly thereafter, it is said the Toy Maker, plagued by a series of misfortunes after his return from the night world, packed up his shop and went to live in another reality. He did, however, leave the puzzle box in the care of a nearby village. When they asked him what was inside he answered simply, “memories.”

No one seems to know if these stories have any basis in fact, or if such a puzzle box ever really existed. However, an ornate puzzle box is *known* to have been presented to the Roman Catholic Church as a gift by a lesser German noble shortly after this event is said to have taken place. From that point, the puzzle box has not been mentioned in any other tales or accounts to date.

Many have wondered what ever became of the toy. Could this mysterious box still lie in the vaults of the Vatican? Or was it deemed to be a dangerous or cursed magical artifact and sent elsewhere and hidden for safe keeping?

The truth is no less intriguing. There is evidence that the Night World puzzle box was given to an the owner of an orphanage in London, England. It is said to have been a favorite

plaything of the children and opened many times by the children in the orphanage’s care. After the orphanage closed down years later, the puzzle box was said to have been given to one of the orphans, who passed it down as a family heirloom for generations through his adoptive family. The puzzle box is soon to be put up for auction by a business called **Arkayne Collector’s Emporium**, a dealer in the “odd, interesting, and occult.” Many wealthy and influential figures are vying for this item, including a couple of ancient Nightbane, *Karl Hoffman* (the caretaker for the *Seekers* artifact repository), and his colleague, *Saul Van Der Hendt* (using an alias, of course).

What none of them realizes, however, is that *this box* is not the same one that holds the spirit. The Toy Maker made many puzzle boxes and this one is, indeed, an object of magic, but it is not the famed Night World Puzzle Box. It is a prototype for it. The box in the auction looks new, as if were made yesterday, and shows no sign of its true age or purpose. That’s because it is nigh-on indestructible (500 S.D.C. with a Natural A.R. of 18, and it regenerates 20 S.D.C. per minute). Those with arcane knowledge can verify it radiates with a modest magical aura. The box is special in another way, when the puzzle is solved, the box can be made to flatten itself out. When that happens it reveals a map that is inscribed on the inside. The map inscribed in the box points the way to a place where “the wall between realities is thin” and one can find a portal from our reality to the fabled night world (which *is* the Nightlands!).

The whereabouts of the real box remains unknown. One legend says it can be found at the center of a large, subterranean labyrinth. First, the labyrinth must be located. Then the subterranean maze must be navigated to find the resting place of the puzzle box. This is not an easy task as not only is it a maze, but the labyrinth is fraught with dangers of all kinds designed to test the mettle of those seeking the genuine puzzle box. In effect, the Night World Puzzle Box is nestled safely away inside another subterranean puzzle box.

If the box is found, its puzzle must be solved through trial and error until it opens to reveal the soul gem concealed inside. Like the other box, it is near indestructible (same stats), plus destroying the box requires so much force that it is likely to destroy the gem inside and release its ghostly inhabitant to fade away in but an instant.

Adventure Notes: The exact details around the puzzle box are left up to the G.M. to work out. The location of the labyrinth can be literally anywhere. The labyrinth could have been built by the Toy Maker, or it could be a secret and sacred place built or used by the Vatican, or a third party. If a secret location built by the Toy Maker or the Vatican, it is probably located in Europe. On the other hand, the Toy Maker was a dimensional traveler and explorer, so hiding it in the New World (North America) is a possibility (who would imagine he hid it there?). Likewise, if the puzzle box was really given to the villagers, it could have ended up anywhere and the labyrinth could be a new or ancient location.

The labyrinth could be a protective maze with physical traps and secret passages, or it may also have magical properties and even a portal to the Nightlands, Astral Plane, or even other planes of the Megaverse. The layout of the labyrinth and what traps or tests lie within are left up to the G.M. One suggestion is

that the floor plan of the place could shift much like an actual puzzle box.

Even if the group secures the actual box, how is it opened? Does it ask riddles of the characters or require P.P.E. to open or operate? Another question is, will the spirit even be in any condition to speak to the characters? We think yes, but centuries of imprisonment may have taken its toll (or perhaps it only feels like days or even hours for the spirit inside).

Finally, is the ghostly spirit good or evil, insightful about the Nightbane and/or Nightlords, or another dead end? What is the spirit exactly and what does it know? Was it even the Nightlands the Toy Maker visited, or was it an entirely different realm? Who or what was the Toy Maker, anyway? Maybe the spirit is or was good, but is insane and dangerous. Can it survive in our world? Will it lead our heroes on a valiant quest or mission into the Nightlands, or can it recapture its physical form on Earth? Presumably, it is an ancient (and powerful?) enemy of the Nightlords, which could lead to all kinds of adventures. Game Masters might even give the gem or the puzzle box (it's probably safest to keep the gem in the box when not actually using the gem or communicating with the spirit inside) special powers or magic that can help the player characters hide from or battle the Nightlords and their minions.

The Lost Mural of Verdicelli

The story of the Verdicelli mural states that a wealthy Venetian noble commissioned the skilled (yet relatively unknown) artisan *Francisco Verdicelli* to paint a depiction of an ancient battle. This noble paid Verdicelli handsomely with the stipulation that he was not to speak of the painting to anyone.

All went fairly well in the beginning, but the closer Verdicelli came to completing the painting, the more discontent the noble grew with his work. After a particularly difficult day working with the nobleman, Verdicelli and a couple of his contemporaries indulged in a bit too much wine during a festival. The artisan then began to complain loudly of the pig-headed patron he was working for and how odd it was that he had such a particular taste in the minor details of the mural since it was but a "work of the fool's imagination." The drunk artist laughed about the absurdity of the painting and divulged the work to be a battle scene between "angels and demons that was no part of scripture." That the demons were clad in baroque black armor and commanding winged gargoyles and demonic figures clad in similar black armor. The angels, the artist laughed, were the most ridiculous of all, for while some had feathered wings and glowed with God's divinity, others were grotesque monsters fighting alongside mortal warriors while others protected innocent women and children being ushered to safety.

Someone who found the description to be blasphemous (or not absurd or laughable at all) must have overheard Verdicelli, for the next night, the mural nearly finished, brigands broke into the studio, tore the unsuspecting artists throat out as he sat with brush in hand, deliberating upon his final brush strokes, and stole the mural. The noble vanished that same night and was never heard from again.

The mural is said to have been split into five pieces, each the size of a modern door. A few have reportedly surfaced several

times over the last few centuries, though there are no photographic records or sketches of any of them. One was part of *Benito Mussolini's* private collection, but it disappeared after the surrender of Axis Italy in World War II. Another had been in the collection of a private art collector, but it was stolen from an art exhibit in Melbourne, Australia, in 1988; it was the only item taken. A third is said to have recently sold at an estate sale in St. Louis, Missouri, February, 2000. The other two pieces haven't been seen in hundreds of years and are presumed to have been destroyed or forever lost.

The Atlantis Society

Billionaire-playboy *Richard Henessy* and his group of explorers have no clue as of yet, but they are soon to become some of the foremost experts on the lost Nightlands civilization known as the *Lost Race*. The underground city they have discovered was one of the final strongholds of these enigmatic beings in their war with the Minions of The Dark over 12,000 years ago. The various mosaic murals, stone carvings, inscriptions, and even a handful of scrolls that the team is busy attempting to translate have elements in common with several ancient civilizations found on Earth. However, there are a large number of aspects unlike any these historians have ever seen. It will take time, but the archaeological data found in the underground city will eventually divulge some of the history and culture of the *Lost Race*.

First and foremost, the archeological evidence tells a myth that suggests the *Lost Race* were dimensional travelers of some sort, arriving in a place known as the **Nightlands** eons before the Ba'al-ze-neckt (Nightlords). In fact, evidence will suggest that these mystical explorers visited Earth several times before the first known human civilizations appeared! Indeed, chronicles of such journeys will tell how these individuals made contact with Earth natives and how they tried to "enlighten" them. A couple of tales even tell of encounters with "Spirits of Light" and how they were suspicious of the *First Ones*.

One set of scrolls actually has a painting of such a meeting as well as a description of the dire warnings the creature gave to the *Lost Race* about "interfering with the natural course." Occult experts will note that the "Spirit of Light" in the painting bears a strong resemblance to descriptions of the beings known as *Guardians*.

Another important aspect covered by the art and writings found in the lost city is a piecemeal account of not just the war with the Ba'al, but even earlier conflicts fought against what appear to be both demons and vampires! Details indicate that the fight against demonic invaders was relatively short, with the dimensional magic of the *Lost Race* banishing these creatures back to their own realm. However, the conflict with the vampires appears to have lasted roughly one or two millennia, with no clear end to the war ever being detailed. Instead, accounts then shift to the topic of the "Dark Ones" and their bid to control the Nightlands.

It seems from the very beginning, the war against the Ba'al did not go well for the *Lost Race*. Perhaps this was due to the strain of a millennia of warring with the vampires, or perhaps they were not ready to deal with this new threat. Such details are

not revealed by the ancient records. What is shown is how the Ba'al swept across the Lost Race's kingdom like a plague of devouring locusts. Envoys were apparently sent to the legendary *Formless Ones* in a bid to solicit their aid, but the envoys never returned and it is unclear if they ever reached their destination or fell to a dire fate.

The last scraps of information are scrawled on crude parchment that has miraculously survived the passing eons. They tell of several groups of the Lost Race fleeing the Nightlands for places scattered across the heavens. The very last words speak of the remaining warriors and wizards retreating to the capital city in the North to pool their resources and break the siege from the enveloping Darkness. They decided to bury this city before they left to keep it from the enemy, hoping to reclaim it once the invaders had been pushed back. Apparently, they never got the chance, and the city has remained buried for thousands of years until now.

What the historians and researchers of the *Atlantis Society* do not realize is a number of the artifacts they have unearthed are both magical and sentient, and are just beginning to awaken and reach out to new potential champions. No doubt, these magic artifacts will try to aid the researchers in translating the ancient writings and depictions, as well as fill in some of the gaps about the ancient past.

On top of that, there is a magic forge still buried in the city the researchers are excavating. If it is found, and if it wasn't severely damaged or destroyed when the city was buried, some of the artifacts may even begin to instruct members of the Atlantis Society in how to create new magical weapons for the continuing fight against the Ba'al! However, this is an arduous training process that will take decades to complete, so results will not be had right away. Still, with the number of artifacts already being unearthed, and the archaic knowledge the ancient ruins have to offer, the *Atlantis Society* is poised to become a major force in the war against the Nightlords (the Ba'al). The Nightlords are already marshaling their forces and using their political influence to make that impossible. They are doing things that call to question or invalidate the claims and findings of the archeological discovery that is being heralded as the "the greatest historical discovery of the new millennium." They are also using political and financial pressure to impede the progress and stop further excavation. Behind the scenes, their minions and human henchmen look to steal and destroy artifacts that threaten the Ba'al, as well as discredit key members of the excavation with scandal and innuendo. If the discovery hadn't become an instant global sensation the researchers would have been massacred. Now, the media darlings of the Atlantis Society have to be dealt with in subtle ways.

Any player characters involved with the Atlantis Society, or who become involved with them in some way, could learn about the history of the Nightlands, the Nightlords, and possibly the Nightbane. Furthermore, heroes may be contacted by the enchanted weapons and recruited to protect the leaders in the Atlantis Society, protect or use the weapons, and help the sentient weapons build a *new Army of Sword Bearers*. **Note:** For more information on the Atlantis Society, the Lost Race, and the Sword Bearer O.C.C., see *World Book 2: Nightlands*.

The Crimson Ark

Having dealt with the supernatural for almost half of a century, the PAB (Paranormal Activities Bureau) had one of the most detailed sources of information on the paranormal ever compiled, complete with data involving sightings, descriptions of Nightbane and other supernatural beings, known facts and statistics about them, biographical data on the most notorious members of the occult, data on secret organizations obtained through moles and spies, and entire warehouses of seized materials and evidence (most of which hadn't even been catalogued). Then Dark Day came, PAB was disbanded overnight and much of the treasure-trove of information was sealed and taken away. Presumably, this incredible resource is used by the NSB (National Security Bureau) and is off limits to other government agencies. In short, the Nightlords seized and have the data.

However, some actual data files, some duplicate files and bits of other data on hard copy (e.g., handwritten reports and journals, photographs, etc.) were spirited away by members of the PAB before the Nightlords closed down their agency. These canny agents smelled conspiracy and foul play and salvaged what little they could. Since it was members of the PAB who helped found the *Spook Squad*, that information is now in their hands.

The Crimson Ark. With the surging integration of computers into government organizations in the late seventies and early eighties, much of what had been contained in dusty old file cabinets was transcribed into electronic form and later consolidated on a super-secure database only accessible by PAB personnel. This database, dubbed **Crimson Ark** for the agents who had shed blood in getting the data, is still in use today by the NSB! The Nightlords use it to identify, locate and terminate Nightbane, Guardians and other threats to their empire building on Earth. The files have been maintained and expanded to keep tabs on the enemies of the Nightlords and flag potential threats. The Crimson Ark is the most comprehensive database on the Nightbane and the supernatural (which includes the operations of the Nightlords and their minions) in the world. It serves as the focal point for the intelligence gathering operations of the NSB and the Hidden War against the Nightbane and other enemies. As a result, it contains information on known factions, large and small, known Nightbane, suspected Nightbane, Nightbane operations, and related data.

If someone were able to locate and tap into this database, it could provide a serious advantage in the form of intelligence on the various rival factions, rogue Nightbane and NSB/Nightbane surveillance and other operations, as well as a list of potential allies in the fight against the Nightlords.

Locating the facility that houses the database is no easy task, as the physical database was moved to a secret location shortly after Dark Day to prevent it falling into the hands of rogue PAB agents. There are several places *rumored* to house the database, including Fort Knox, the Cheyenne Mountain Complex, and a top-secret facility somewhere beneath the frozen plains of Alaska. There are even rumors that it was transported to, and somehow operates from, the Nightlands!

Even if the facility is located, it will be under super-heavy guard by at least 40 Hounds, 40 Hunters, 8 Hound Masters, and



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20 Hollow Men, and 100 loyal Doppelgangers who appear human as well as some (4D6) human NSB agents (loyal to the Nightlords) equipped with military-grade weaponry such as 9mm pistols, assault rifles and hand grenades with a few heavier weapons just in case. Some NSB personnel and all *agents* are protected by full suits of Class 4 hardened body armor (280 S.D.C., A.R. 17). This is in addition to the state-of-the-art electronic security that includes one-way data feed (only allows data to come in, inquiries are processed by facility personnel and sent by a completely separate network, meaning that even a Lightning Rider that made it through the line would only manage to get himself stuck in a super-secure facility on lock-down), an extremely advanced firewall, and a self-sealing facility with HALON-gas “fire suppression system.” In the event of a security breach, the entire facility is locked down, the server room flooded with HALON, and guards will not hesitate to *kill* any intruders. If intruders prove to be more difficult, three times the number of current minions can be *mirror walked* in from the sister facility in the Nightlands within ten minutes!

What no one realizes, including both Spook Squad and the NSB, is that there is still a way into the system without assaulting the housing facility. The man who designed the security protocols for the Crimson Ark, a systems engineer by the name of *Ryan Murray*, was tipped off by friends in the occult community and escaped the Nightlords’ purge by going underground a couple days before Dark Day. Furthermore, Murray wrote a personal “back door” into the system buried in the mountains of computer code in case the database was ever compromised. This Trojan horse program, known as the “Moses Cipher,” disguises

itself as an incoming report and tricks the filing program into allocating a massive amount of memory for it. The program then proceeds to copy the contents of the database to the allocated memory. It then reverses the buffers on the data-feed, allowing the transmission of the copied database to a pre-determined IP address (untraceable due to it supposedly being one-way), while leaving behind a self-replicating worm cluster designed to delete the entire archive and fry the system. The only hitch is that only computers in regional NSB headquarters have the secure uplink to the Crimson Ark system, meaning that one would have to *infiltrate an NSB stronghold* to transmit the program! Of course, this is all assuming the player characters even happen across this information, let alone make contact with Ryan Murray.

The Sable Diaries

These volumes were written by a previously unknown French author by the name of *Pierre Francois Jacquot* shortly before the French Revolution. The first of the pair detailed the origins of the dreaded Nightlords and how they were driven from their kingdom by a revolt of the people (similar to the account from the *Books of Night*). The second diary is an account of the life of a long-lived hero named *Pierot*, who aided the escape of Jewish slaves from Egypt, tried to defend Rome from a barbarian invasion, and attempted to secure peace between Charlemagne and Richard the First during the Crusades. Some scholars believe that there is also a *third book*, or at least there was supposed to be, as Jacquot seems to hint at what happened to the Nightlords

after they were driven away. Despite these opinions, no third book was ever published and no manuscript was ever found.

The first book was what made Pierre known as a writer, as it gained some popularity with the more scholarly members of the Revolution. They saw the Nightlords as a *metaphor* for the French monarchy, and themselves as the people rising up to overthrow these tyrannical leaders (though such a victory would require hard choices, many sacrifices, and the spilling of much blood). For these “treasonous” writings, King Louis XVI had Jacquot arrested. Shortly thereafter, though well before Bastille Day, Jacquot was found dead in his cell from unknown causes.

Despite their popularity during the French Revolution, the *Sable Diaries* quickly faded into obscurity. Today, there are only three *original sets* of the two known diaries believed to exist. One set is owned by a prominent French author rumored to be a member of *the Seekers*, another is in the care of a history professor at Oxford University, and the final set is split between the wife of a wealthy oil baron living in Idaho and a small rare book dealer in Brazil.

There are, however, a handful of translated copies in English, Spanish and Russian that are almost as rare and they too are scattered around the globe. A limited edition of the two diaries that claims to have been made from an actual first edition is currently being offered by an obscure publisher in Germany as a limited edition for \$1000. Unfortunately, this is a Nightlord operation designed to discredit the original volumes. When compared with the authentic diaries, the newer reprints have substantial portions that have been replaced with misinformation.

The Sable Diaries are infamous for many reasons, but one is because they offer one version of the origin of the Nightlords. According to the Sable Diaries, the Nightlords were once human practitioners of magic from a civilization before any currently known. They practiced dark magic and are said to have gained their sinister powers by following the teachings of a man known as *Molok*. Molok engaged in human sacrifices to a dark god and formed a dark cabal that overthrew the king to rule a small empire with an iron fist. The followers of Molok were eventually overthrown and banished by the people with the help of *angels*. The book only briefly mentions that without strong leadership, the civilization decayed within a few decades.

The existence of the third diary and its contents remain a mystery and may be nothing more than myth and legend.

Yuri the Mad

Imprisoned in the basement of a Nocturne safe house near *Chernobyl, Russia*, an interesting individual is kept under lock and key. His name is Yuri, and if he is to be believed, he is one of the most ancient vampires on Earth. Yuri claims that he was a Master Vampire who struck a bargain with another power in order to escape his life of servitude to his dark god. However, he was betrayed by the deal-maker (he refuses to reveal who this may have been) and cast out of what he calls his *Dark Eden*. At the end of this tale, Yuri always curses, spits on the ground, and mutters something about trading one evil for another.

After he was cast out of the brotherhood, he says he ended up in ancient Romania where he took the name *Vlad the Impaler*,

and raised an army of his own undead until an alliance of human sorcerers and “those damned glow-worms” dethroned and almost destroyed him. He also claims that these events have repeated themselves over and over throughout the ages, although this most recent time his “children” were the ones who thwarted his plans, which truly bewilders him. He would be glad to tell the player characters all about it, as well as answer any question they could ever want to ask about the Nightlords, Lightbringers, vampires, Nightlands, War of Light and Dark, etc. If only they would be so kind as to help him *escape*. Perhaps he will even make them generals in his army when he conquers the world, *again*.

The problem is, not only is Yuri delusional due to constant exposure to low levels of radiation to hamper his natural abilities, but he will *make up* anything in order to escape. Even if the player characters somehow managed to learn of Yuri’s existence and location (both of which are closely guarded secrets kept by a select few of the Nocturnes’ highest leaders), getting past the eight elite Nocturne guards (two Nightbane, Wampyrs, human sorcerers, and psychics, all 1D6+4th level) and extracting Yuri while dealing with an irradiated environment and avoiding the attention of Lord Mocker’s minions will be no small feat.

The Tomb of the First

In the search for answers regarding the origin of the Nightbane, there is one location considered to be the proverbial birthplace of their race. It is a place so highly regarded that even the most ancient of Nightbane refer to it in hushed, reverent tones. That place is known to most only as The Tomb of the First. This is because it is reportedly the final resting place of the first Nightbane ever to exist.

There are several versions of the *Tale of the First*, although one is regarded by most to be the true story. This legend states The First was a princess in the Assyrian Empire, somewhere around 640 B.C., named Anjara. The princess was a raven-haired beauty who had fallen in love with a peasant worker. Her father forbade the relationship, but Anjara was too stubborn to listen. She snuck away from the palace in the dead of night, intent on leaving her royal life behind to run away with the man she loved. However, her father had his soldiers watching the peasant’s abode, and they moved in as soon as the princess arrived. Since forbidding his child from marrying the commoner did not work, he had the man put to death. This heartbreak triggered the princess’ *Becoming*, and she fled into the darkened desert.

Anjara is said to have settled in a small village far from her home, and gathered peasants about her to educate them in the ways of peace and harmony. These peasants revered her as a god, and this pseudo-religious sect spread quickly through the countryside. When her father got word of this, he saw his “demon-child” as a threat to his own power and sent his soldiers to kill her and her followers.

Here, the stories diverge on what happened. Some say that the small village was slaughtered to the last person. Another tells how, faced with the slaughter of her innocent disciples, Anjara again took demon form and waged a great battle against her assailants. When the battle ended, she alone remained alive and vanished into the night. The most commonly accepted story

tells that the warlord in charge of this mission of death could not bear to enforce it, and let Anjara escape on the promise she would disappear and never be heard of again.

Whatever the case, it is believed that her remaining followers entombed her after her death some decades later, and that the tomb and her body still exist somewhere in modern day Egypt or Libya.

Those who search for the tomb may indeed find it, though it is not what it has been made out to be. Anjara did indeed exist, and was one of the first Nightbane in the ancient Middle East. However, she was not the very first to Become a Nightbane. The lesser-regarded version of the tale is actually closer to that title.

This version states that a young Native American squaw named Wihinape was actually the *first Nightbane*. While the first Nightbane to be “born” occurred somewhere in the *Nightlands* untold centuries before, Wihinape was the first Nightbane born on Earth. She was a brave young woman poised to become the next shaman in her tribe. Her first use of magic triggered her Becoming, the spell went awry, and a freak dimensional anomaly deposited her in the Nightlands. The dimensional ravages not only took their toll on her, but they also deposited her right into the lap of the Ba'al. Despite her formidable mystic power and newfound strength as a Nightbane, she was unable to avoid capture and certain death at the hands of her evil captors.

This means that the real Tomb of the First lies somewhere in the Nightlands. Another unfortunate truth is the fact that finding it will do nothing to reveal the origins of the Nightbane. However, if the right character(s) (the player group, perhaps?) should locate Wihinape's tomb, they would uncover a new, terrible chapter in the story of Wihinape. A chapter that could shake the foundation of the Nightlords' power.

Uncovering this story would require Object Read, Commune with Spirits, or various Necromantic spells, or some other means to contact Wihinape's spirit which still haunts her tomb.

The truth behind the tale of Wihinape is as unbelievable as it is tragic. She was indeed swept away from her tribe during a healing ritual for her ailing mother. When she appeared in the Nightlands surrounded by the “demon-men,” she fought like a trapped puma in an attempt to escape. Her efforts failed and she was captured by an up-and-coming Ba'al named *Magog*. While she had tried to kill him, Magog respected the tenacity of this small human woman. Thus, he imprisoned her in his small frontier fortress to be used as his plaything. Drowned in despair at being locked away from the sky and her people, Wihinape still refused to show weakness to her enemy. In time, Magog found that his respect for this woman's strength had given away to something more. Something alien stirred deep within his soul. Magog was falling in love. He began to listen to the maiden's stories about a simple life of hard work, simple pleasures, and the love of tribe and family. A life lived in harmony with nature rather than corrupting it and twisting it to one's wishes.

Magog found himself dreaming about this simple life, living in the warmth of sunlight with his beloved Wihinape. In truth, he had almost forgotten what the sun looked like. The Nightlord resolved to surprise the maiden with her freedom and take her back to Earth where he would ask her to accept him as her husband, and live out the rest of their lives under the glow of the

sun. None of his dreams were to come true. Without warning, Wihinape died in her sleep the eve before Magog intended to free her and ask her hand in marriage. Her death was a heavy blow to the Ba'al prince, who sunk into a deep melancholy and self loathing, seeking solace in his duties and dreaming dark dreams once more.

The truth is that it was not the conditions of her imprisonment that killed Wihinape, as tool-marks on her rib cage reveal that she was stabbed by a Darkblade. Communing with the spirit of Wihinape or using Object Read on the remains of her gown (Magog insisted she be entombed exactly as she was found), reveals the murderer to be none other than *King Moloch*. Magog's dreams had given him away to Moloch's spies in the Dreamstream. King Moloch would not allow a useful rising star such as Magog to be subverted and taken away from him by a *Nightbane savage*, as it would interfere with his plans and might encourage others to pursue life away from the Nightlands. Killing Wihinape, healing the external wound, and then promoting Magog in short order, kept the young Ba'al in line and in service to his master. Thus, King Moloch crept into her cell and did away with her while Magog slept. He then allowed Magog the ridiculous gesture of entombing his lost love. The rest, as they say, is history.

If someone could ever prove to Lord Magog what really happened to his beloved Wihinape, it could compel him to wage all-out-war against his “king.”

The Shadowboard & the Internet

The Internet, and more specifically, the *Shadowboard*, can provide a wealth of information to anyone who can operate a computer and navigate the web – or at least have someone do so for them. Various topics and theories are discussed freely. Historical accounts, scientific studies, theories, rumors, word on the street, and even little-known facts can be found with a certain amount of digging. There are even such documents as the **Wanderer Diaries** and the various versions of the **Nightbane Survival Guide** that may reveal several general facts and help new Nightbane sort out their situation. However, there are also several *pitfalls* to using the Internet to look into topics such as *Nightlords*, *Nightbane*, *magic* and *supernatural creatures*.

There are very few ways to determine whether information is fact or fiction. Even well-intentioned contributors to the online knowledge-base may only be repeating *false information* that they believe to be true themselves (and this does not speak to the volumes of disinformation spread by agents of the Nightlords, and propaganda put out by each faction). Despite this, anyone with both *Computer Operation* and the *Research* skill will be able to identify a handful (1D4) of sites with good reputations among the occult community (correct 60+3D6% of the time), with the new *Netwise* skill being even better. However, there is no guarantee that the sites will remain operational or accurate as they tend to fall prey to hackers, computer viruses and sabotage if the hosts aren't raided by the NSB first. This highlights another big danger of trolling these sites, as many are monitored by the NSB (if they are not specifically set up by them as traps) as a way to hunt down potential threats.

If one truly wants to go out on a limb, the *Shadowboard*, and to a lesser extent, the rest of the web, can actually be used to make contact with actual Nightbane, members from the factions, Spook Squad, and the NSB. Specifically, message boards, chat rooms, and even some file-sharing and e-mail services are monitored by the Underground Railroad, Resistance, Nocturnes, and the Seekers to keep an eye out for potential recruits. If one inquires in the right manner through the proper channels (a successful *Lore: Factions* at -10% or *Netwise* at no penalty), then contact with one of these recruiting agents or supporters can be achieved. Unaffiliated supernatural beings, including independent Nightbane, smaller groups, brotherhoods, societies, and mini-factions may also be contacted, though doing so is much more difficult (*Netwise* roll at -15%). Making contact in this way can be extremely dangerous as many new Nightbane have fallen prey to the NSB and other Nightlord minions pretending to be friends and allies or because the user got careless and his location traced via his Internet connection.

In a game context, the World Wide Web can be a source for information, clues, leads, quests, and all sorts of adventure and mischief, including the Nightlords and their henchmen like the NSB using such contacts to set traps for their enemies, lure Nightbane into their clutches, gather intelligence and so on. **Game Masters**, use this to your advantage and as a gateway to adventure, mystery and intrigue.

Libraries

Libraries are repositories of written knowledge that have existed for thousands of years. In the late twentieth century, the popularity of libraries faded somewhat, due mainly to the advent of computer archives. However, libraries must not be overlooked as a resource for those searching for information. In addition to thousands of physical books, many libraries, particularly university libraries and the main library of major cities, have an antiquities reference library where truly old books are kept, microfilm libraries (antiquated but effective), as well as banks of computers with Internet access available for public use.

There are many different reasons why libraries remain a valuable resource. Due to the sheer amount of written material in existence, most books have not yet been uploaded to the World Wide Web or any other electronic format. Some books, especially older tomes, aren't accessible unless one physically goes to the location where it is kept. Other books are on *private databases* that may be accessible only through membership to that site, university, library or hosting organization, and still others are misfiled or not included (for various reasons) in the results of Internet search engines.

This means that there is a large amount of information only available to those who actually visit the public or private library facilities in person. This is especially the case when the materials one is searching for are very obscure, very old, or not often requested, like most material dealing with the Nightbane. One-of-a-kind items are often even more impossible to find, as they are typically part of a private collection or library (especially if expensive) that may itself be in a faraway locale. Gaining access to such material could be an entire adventure in and of itself.

Another reason libraries are valuable resources is that they combine several different types of mediums under one roof. One can typically access a computer and the Internet, search for a book, view films, find reference periodicals, and sometimes access certain archived city records among other things. Don't think that this is strictly relegated to printed material either, as oftentimes larger libraries will have historical artifacts archived or on display much like a museum. Another service that may be offered by a library (more common among university libraries) is the ability to get printed material from other locations mailed to the partnered library rather than having to go and retrieve it.

Whether the library is large or small, public or private, university or otherwise, it could offer plenty of potential for adventure. Even beyond the obvious, libraries are a good, public place where characters could meet, pass information, and do research. The librarian could be a member of the Seekers. The NSB and other Nightlord minions might regularly stake out the library, alert for suspicious looking characters, or monitoring the computer and book section for anyone investigating the paranormal, Nightbane, Nightlords, the government, or conspiracies. A library, may have the info our heroes need, but maybe they need special authorization to see the "rare" books and documents or have to jump through hoops to get at the material they need, or to find the answers they seek. For example: Many university libraries require you to be a student or faculty to check out material or even to gain access to the rare books section and other archives. Most will not allow books designated as "reference" or "rare" to leave the room where they are kept. Similarly, old books need to be handled with care and photocopies are not allowed for fear of damage or because the tomes are too valuable an asset. Getting access might require the player group to take a class, get fake I.D., bribe or do a favor for one of the students or staff to get access, or even break in to see or to steal the book, etc. Don't forget others – rivals and enemies – may use the library for the same ends and might even be looking for the same information at the same time. (Hmm, that could spell a firefight on the steps of the library or even inside.)

Authors' Note: The value and resources of libraries extends into real life too. Libraries are amazing places to visit, offer a wide range of reference materials, access to computers and the web, and are good at generally expanding your mind. I know it sounds like a cheesy public service message, but it's true. As an additional aside, Erick Wujcik used to frequent the library, wherever he was, on a regular basis. Not just for research, but to check out books to read and return without having to buy them. Most libraries have a surprisingly current range of published works.

Museums

Whereas libraries and the Internet are the go to source for printed material, museums fulfill that role for historical artifacts and artwork of all kinds. Most major archaeological finds of the past 150 years can be found in a museum of some sort, even if it is a traveling exhibit or on loan. Paintings, statuary, tapestries, pottery, jewelry, garments, furniture, stone monuments, tribal masks, suits of armor, ancient weapons, ancient (human?) remains, sarcophagi, even pieces of buildings (pillars, mural walls, etc.), along with the stories and myths behind them, can

all be found on public display in museums worldwide with literally tons of other pieces of the past. Granted, it may take a keen eye and a lot of luck or knowledge to spot artifacts that are significant in the struggle against the Nightlords or the history of the Nightbane, but they are out there.

Of course, the minions of the Nightlords are busy acquiring and concealing artifacts that might have a negative impact on them or that might help their enemies. They are also taking over or eliminating experts on the subject to, again, preserve their secrets and power base. The largest and most well known institutions such as the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., the Field Natural History Museum in Chicago, and the Louvre in Paris, France, were the first to be "sanitized" by the Nightlords, but many smaller museums may still have items that have escaped their attention. The minions of the Nightlords aren't perfect either, which means they may miss critical clues and artifacts that remain on display right under their noses. Likewise, the main focus of the Nightlords is to gain control of important institutions to better manipulate and control the human population. With their own resources stretched thin across the globe, it will take them years, maybe decades, to find and remove all the artifacts that might implicate or hurt them. **(Fun Fact: Only 20-30% of a museum's entire holdings are on display at any given time. The rest are tucked away in their archives.)**

Gaining access to such treasures may be more than a little difficult as most museums keep many artifacts behind glass and locked up. If a piece needs to be examined closer than what the display case will allow, the characters will have to find the means to get at it. This could include breaking into the museum after hours, bluffing their way in as new staff or students, gaining the trust of the curator, wooing a security guard or caretaker, or any number of things. Most of these will, of course, still require that the piece stay on-site and in good condition. If the piece needs to be moved to another facility or is damaged in the process of examination, things could get more than a little interesting and alert the authorities.

The Seekers

This faction, as well as the Nocturnes, though to a lesser extent, is an excellent potential source of information that player characters may or may not be associated with already. If they are not, they will have to go through the relatively difficult task of finding a member or alternative way to make contact with the faction. Even after making contact, they will have to prove to the member or convention that they can be trusted. Depending on the level of paranoia maintained by that contact, this could be a long and arduous process that takes *years*.

Seekers (and Nocturnes) may be willing to provide information or access to select books and artifacts to outsiders if doing so benefits the faction in some way, or is vital in undermining a Nightlord plot or saving lives. The faction may also be willing to sell information, but the cost is likely to be high. Performing some favor for the faction might also earn the character(s) the privilege of seeing the book or library or artifact, or getting the info he/they desire. However, the best method is to dangle something (a book, artifact, or piece of information) the Seekers want badly as trade for what the player characters need, includ-

ing access to one of the Seekers' infamous and well stocked libraries on the paranormal, the occult and the Nightlords. Surprisingly, Seekers are usually pretty fair about such trades or exchanges. Furthermore, they always have an eye open for resources from which they can acquire information, and the player character(s) may fit the bill. If that is the case, even if they are not official members, the Seekers may want to maintain an open line of communication with them and let the player group know that the faction is always in the market for any valuable information or artifacts they might happen upon. That said, it helps if one or more of the player characters haven't interfered with Seeker activities in the past, and that they make it a point to avoid conflicts with the faction in the future, otherwise membership and any type of cooperation with the faction is unlikely. Seekers are notoriously intolerant of outsiders and fools. Seekers are also known to hold grudges.

Of course, this all assumes the information the group is looking for is something the Seekers have and are willing or able to divulge. Even when a character is one of their members, asking for or about secret information is trouble and seldom a successful venture.

Now, if the members of the group have no qualms about less civil measures, such information may be acquired through thievery or other such unsavory means (threats, trickery, a friendly interrogation). Those who would attempt such a feat should be warned: stealing secrets from the Seekers is a transgression that is rarely forgiven and never forgotten.

Remember, the Seekers may not possess the information the player characters are trying to find, as there is still much they do not know. On the other hand, relatively simple information might be shared without much difficulty of fanfare. It all depends on the situation, what questions are being asked of whom, and how they are asked.

The Seekers, and any faction, can be a source of clues and a catalyst for adventure any time. The faction may offer current news, rumors, clues and information that might unwittingly help the player characters, but Seekers will also offer information when it serves their purpose. They may also use independent Nightbane and small groups of outsiders as pawns and agents of misdirection (i.e. while the player group has everyone's attention over here, a band of Seekers is doing something over there).

Other Nightbane

There is something to be said for going straight to the horse's mouth when it comes to getting information on the Nightbane about current events, Nightlord activity, rival factions, and even the origin of the Nightbane. While the average Nightbane doesn't have much insight as to what they are or how they came into being, several have endeavored to find answers about themselves and their race. Most Nightbane are also usually tapped into the street scene and know all the current gossip and goings-on in their city or general area. That often includes the shady underworld of nightclubs, dives, hot spots, underground doctors, danger zones and criminal operations. There is considerable knowledge dispersed amongst the Nightbane themselves.

For no other individuals is this truer than independent Nightbane. Many of these individuals have lived several lifetimes and have spent considerable time searching for clues

about their ancestry, the nature of their powers, survival on the street, ways to battle the Nightlords and their minions, and the Nightlands. A fair portion of the evidence used to justify the various theories amongst the factions was actually discovered by such individuals, and many independent Nightbane continue to scour the Earth, Nightlands, Astral Realms, and even the Dreamstream for lost and hidden knowledge.

Despite the fact that independent and ancient Nightbane can be priceless sources of information, this does not necessarily mean that they are *reliable* or willing to share what they know. Locating individual Nightbane with vital knowledge about their race is quite a difficult undertaking, as they do not advertise the fact that they possess such data. Such knowledge-hunters are often traveling from one obscure location to another (including other planes of existence), making them hard to track down even when their identity is known.

A more accessible source is the larger body of Nightbane as a whole via the various factions. While they may not possess specific knowledge or ancient lore that isn't more readily known, their experiences and personal insights may be able to shed some light on whatever a character needs to know. Join the faction and you become a brother in arms, and information and resources flow even more freely.

Commonality between Nightbane that may hold some significance:

Most Nightbane have a penchant for food and drink that has a fairly strong taste, whether it be sweet, sour, salty, or bitter.

Almost all of them have experienced some kind of tragic loss or traumatic event during childhood. The death of a close friend or family member, losing track of friends due to a move, the splitting up of parents, being orphaned, feeling like an outsider or freak, etc., almost all Nightbane seem to have experienced some profound loss at some time before their Becoming. This is not to say that all Nightbane are maladjusted trauma victims, though some are, just that they have known a deep and often lingering sorrow at some point in their life.

Many Nightbane experience a slight personality shift after their Becoming. Whether it is a slight change in mannerisms, preference in movies, or even a favorite color, they are never quite the same again. There are some cases of major changes in mood and behavior after a Becoming, and a few cases of Dissociative Identity Disorder (formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder). Then again, this could easily be due to the psychological strain of becoming a Nightbane and struggling to survive.

Another fact worth mentioning is that a significant number of Nightbane report incidents of short blackouts that are sometimes accompanied by very vivid dreams. These dreams typically involve the Nightlands or unfamiliar landscapes, apocalyptic battles between shadowy figures, and someone or something trying to communicate with them in an unknown language. Unfortunately, such dreams do not occur often enough to have an outside observer enter them and attempt to record the proceedings or otherwise investigate the dream.

As odd or unsettling as many of these trends are, they are typically downplayed as insignificant even if they are noticed, and perhaps rightly so, considering becoming an inhuman looking monster is about as disconcerting as things come. However,

such small clues might serve as starting points for other aspects about Nightbane and their nature and origin.

In a game context, Nightbane Non-Player Characters (NPCs) can be a source of all types of conflicts and adventure. Something one or a small group does could have ramifications for the entire community or region. The most obvious is that the actions of one might bring down the wrath of the Nightlords upon them all. If an NPC friend gets in trouble the player group is likely to want to help. Similarly, an NPC buddy or associate might turn to the player characters for help, or lead trouble right to them, or give them the information, a clue or detail they've been looking for. A fellow Nightbane might suggest a scheme or activity or attack on Nightbane henchmen or the authorities, or on a smaller scale, cause a brawl or minor disturbance that leads to X. Or a Nightbane goes missing, or is found dead and maybe the player group investigates, or finds a voice message from the NPC before he was killed. A message (or letter or package, or who knows what) that is a clue to what happened, who did it and why. Even a fellow 'Bane chatting about something he saw or heard, might lead to an adventure.



The Nightlords & their Minions

As a rule, it is ill-advised for any Nightbane, Guardian, human, or Wampyr to seek the counsel of the Nightlords or their minions, but there are some exceptions.

There are certain subjects, like the Nightlands, in which the Ba'al are the undisputed authority. They also seem to know a lot about the Nightbane they refuse to share, but what if you could make one talk or find something in his possession that provided some of the answers?

There are some situations where the Nightlords willingly release information, clues and warnings to would be heroes. For instance, the Ba'al are usually more than happy to talk about the vampire threat to those who they believe are hunting the undead, as they see it as playing two enemies against one another. They also release such information to manipulate heroes and enemies, to use them as pawns in their own schemes, to create dissension between factions or within their ranks, to challenge or torment them, as well as to lure them into traps or display the superior power of the Ba'al (i.e. we told you when and where something was going to happen and you still could not stop us).

Of course, any information offered or given up by the Nightlords, even under torture, must be viewed with suspicion. The Ba'al always paint vampires and other enemies in the most negative light possible, whether it is deserved in that instance or not. Often their information is only half truths, and frequently it is a flat-out lie designed to trick, confound, mislead or infuriate. Heroic Nightbane must also be careful of not bringing too much attention to themselves, for that can only lead to the Nightlords either manipulating them to hurt others, or make the "heroes" – and their family, friends, faction and associates – a target of Ba'al wrath.

Nightlords are easily provoked by signs of disrespect and he or his minions won't hesitate to attack on the spot. Likewise, even if the heroes get away from the initial encounter unscathed, the Nightlord may have them tailed to find where they hide out or where their faction is based. Thus, characters not only have to worry about getting in and out of a meeting with a Nightlord (or Prince) with their lives, but also keeping away from prying eyes that could put them in a great deal of peril.

Nightlords and Princes are also willing to share information about the Lightbringers. Unfortunately, most of what they have to tell about them is either outright lies or insidious rumors that are so overblown they might as well be. However, the occasional grain of truth has been known to come out of such meetings, and they are almost always truths that the Guardians would rather not have known. With that said, it is always an intelligent thing to try and verify such nuggets of information with a different source. The Nightlords and their minions aren't called "masters of deceit" for nothing.

Certain Ba'al may also be willing to help out their enemies if they think it will damage a rival Nightlord or ambitious Night Prince, or at least make them look bad. This is especially the case when dealing with a lesser Nightlord who wants the rival's power and status for himself.

Of course, there are also the rare cases of minions going rogue. Such free agents are typically willing to share whatever information they know, but it will often cost a character dearly to get it. There are those who will tell all that they know just to strike back at their former masters, but these individuals are exceedingly rare and likely to have an agenda of their own. Others will insist on money or a favor for the information they possess. The more important or helpful the information the more it will cost. There is always the chance a rogue minion is nothing of

the sort, but a Nightlord mole sent to spread disinformation, infiltrate a Nightbane group, and spy for their masters. Remember, making any kind of deal with a Nightlord or one of their minions is like making a deal with the Devil himself.

Another way to get information about the Ba'al is to capture and interrogate a minion. While this may seem like a simple proposition, it is not. Minions such as Hounds, Hunters, and Shadow Scorpions either can not or will not communicate with the enemy, and minions such as Doppelgangers and Namtar are not privy to much useful information. This leaves minions such as the Ashmedai or Night Princes, and capturing either is to flirt with suicide. Even if one were to capture one of these beings, it would still leave successfully interrogating them to get information. This would take a very creative and intelligent interrogator, a powerful psychic, or the more brutal option of torture. Whatever information gleaned from torture and intimidation must be highly suspect.

Other Supernatural Beings

Much like Nightbane, many supernatural creatures have extended life spans, and with long life comes greater knowledge. Thus, those supernatural beings who have lived on Earth for a hundred years or more have considerable experience with the Nightlords and Nightbane before Dark Day, or at least knew of their existence. Due to the circles that such individuals travel in, they often pick up scraps of information regarding the Nightbane, Lightbringers, and Ba'al, the War of Light and Dark, etc.

One race in particular that seems to know a fair amount about the Ba'al and Nightbane are the **vampires**. If the average vampire can be persuaded or forced to talk, it is usually able to recite how vampires and the Ba'al have hated one another for untold ages. None, however, can seem to recall how the conflict started between the two, at least none that are willing to reveal why. With a little digging, characters could find out that several of the Vampire Intelligences have tried to invade the Nightlands over the past few millennia, leading many to believe that the Nightlords are simply trying to eliminate a dangerous rival.

Similarly, the **Guardians** are only too willing to disclose the evil deeds of both the vampires (most of the time Wampyrs are lumped in with them as well) and the Ba'al to any trusted individual willing to listen. These are actually some of the few subjects of lore that are passed down to new members of the faction as well allies of the Lightbringers. Of course, there is little way to verify most of the tales that are told, and thus they have the potential to be nothing but zealous propaganda. Of course, the pendulum swings both ways on this matter, with vampires doing their part to discredit the Lightbringers. However, most of what they have to say is either pure rumor or based so loosely on the facts that it is unreliable.

Supernatural beings not aligned to any side or faction tend to be the least biased with the information they choose to give, though that doesn't necessarily make it any more truthful. In fact, the more devious beings get a kick out of sending intrepid heroes off to their doom with false information. Others simply refuse to part with whatever knowledge they have, and many will not converse with humans, Nightbane, or Lightbringers without a price.

There are also those beings who just don't get involved. Whether they are too dull-witted or animalistic, or whether they just don't wish to concern themselves with the current conflict. Such creatures shun contact, have nothing of value, or might opt to kill anyone who bothers them. Then there are those willing to give aid or information to any or all of the sides as long as they get something in return. Indeed, there are a number of businesses and organizations around the world run by such beings. The Nightlords are typically aware of them, though they seldom take action against them, because they are potential sources of valuable information for them as well. As long as such places and individuals stay low key and take no active hand against the Ba'al, they are allowed to live, for now.

The Becoming

Excerpted from *The Nightbane Survival Guide*

So you've just turned into a creature that looks like it crawled out of a nightmare. Congratulations, you are a Nightbane.

First things first, stay calm. If you lose your head, you'll be putting yourself and everyone around you in even more danger than you already are facing.

You've come to my post seeking advice because you're going through something that defies explanation. You've come here looking for answers to questions like, 'What's going on?' 'What am I?' 'What do I do now?' 'How can I be a monster?' and probably 'Why me?'

I'm sorry to say that I don't have those answers for you. Although, you follow the advice I'm about to give you and you should live to see the next few sunrises.

Worry about the rest later.

If you are reading this because you've freaked out, but nobody has seen you transform, that's a good thing. Take a deep breath and relax. Though you don't know it yet, you have the power to change from your human form into that monster form you're all panicked about.

We call your human form the Facade and your monster form, that's your Morphus. Funny thing is that while you're freaking out about being a monster, you're probably going to enjoy your Morphus. In fact, many Nightbane consider their Morphus to represent the real them.

Oh yeah, YOU ARE NOT A MONSTER. Try to remember that.

Feeling better? I hope so.

Here is more good news for you: you can change from human to Nightbane and back again. Yes, you can resume your human appearance and you should probably do so before any regular folk see you like this. All you need to do is relax and think about being human or hiding within your human Facade.

If you turned into a 'Bane hours or days ago and haven't returned to human form yet, you are still okay. You are not stuck in your Morphus form, you are just so worked up and frightened that you can't relax enough to effect the change. It works like that sometimes, kid. Trust me, I've seen it plenty of times.

Couldn't change back when it happened to me for three days. I hid in the woods and prayed to God a lot and begged for mercy. It's alright, you'll be okay. I bet you haven't been able to sleep more than an hour or so either. You're too worked up and need to calm down. I know it's difficult, but you need to do it.

You see, the Morphus is sort of a knee-jerk defense mechanism for us Nightbane. When we feel threatened or scared we instinctively want to transform into our Morphus. Why? Look in the mirror kid, you're bigger, stronger and more capable. Heck, you even have powers you probably ain't aware of yet. Don't sweat any of that right now. Calm down and think about hiding back inside your human Facade. If you can calm down enough you'll change, or you'll fall asleep from exhaustion and you'll change back.

The "Becoming" is the first metamorphosis of a Nightbane, and your life has just changed forever. It's okay. You'll learn to live with it. There ain't nothing you can do about it anyway.

If no one witnessed the change or if the people who saw the transformation don't know you, you don't have anything to worry about. If you've been so freaked out that you ran away and have been hiding, don't worry about that either. As soon as you resume your human Facade and calm down, you can go home. If you're a kid and have parents or a guardian to answer to, come up with some cock and bull story about some teenage thing like a lost love or other line the grown-ups are likely to buy into. Tell them you were so distraught that you ran away from home. You're sorry about that, because now that you've thought it through you've come to your senses and have come home. Then beg for them to forgive you. Tears are optional. Just don't work yourself up too much, because until you get used to shifting from Facade to Morphus, you don't want to risk accidentally 'going monster' on them.

If you changed in front of your teenage buddies, you're still mostly okay and you can still go home. You call your pals liars, tell your parents it was all part of a stupid prank or they were high on drugs – parents are always quick to believe that one – and that you were so ashamed you ran away not knowing what to do. Same drill, stay calm, beg forgiveness, accept whatever punishment they dish out and you'll be good as gold. The thing about parents, especially in a loving home or mostly loving home, is they'll be glad just to have you back. They won't ask too many questions and they'll accept you back. Your buddies are a whole other story. Unless they really were using hallucinogenic drugs, they know you ain't human. That sucks for your friendship, because you'll probably need to find new friends, but nobody is going to believe you turned into a monster. Not most adults anyway. Just pray no minions of the Nightlords catch wind of it. You should also probably steer clear of your friends, because if you really freaked them out, they might try to take matters into their own hands and kill you.

If you became a Nightbane in front of your parents, other trustworthy adults, the authorities, your spouse, or co-workers, dude, I'm sorry, but you are out of luck. Most ordinary humans are not willing to accept what you really are. Maybe you'll be one of the lucky ones and Mom and Dad or your old lady will accept you no matter what, but it ain't likely. It is time to move on and start a new life, ideally somewhere far, far away. The only thing you have going for you is the eyewitnesses ain't



likely to talk about what they witnessed and if they do, most people will think they are crazy or speaking in metaphor.

Regrettably, the Becoming is always unexpected, life altering, traumatic and painful. Think of it as a rite of passage from puberty to something even more amazing than becoming an adult.

A newly forming Nightbane undergoes a radical transformation akin to something from a horror movie, comic book, or role-playing game. In most cases, the person becomes a living nightmare that is often a reflection of his own worst fears or an outward appearance that reflects his inner feelings or a secret view of himself. Almost all of us who experience *the Becoming* find it terrifying and confusing. You can't believe what's happening, you feel like you are cursed or damned, and that you're a freak, monster or something worse. Don't worry, that initial horror will fade over time, and like most of us, you'll come to appreciate that you are special and important.

As the initial shock and fear wears off you'll have more and more questions. Like I said, I'm afraid there ain't no easy or commonly accepted answers for you. You aren't a mutant or superhero, though we can't be certain of that, and there are plenty of similarities, right down to keeping your human identity a secret and making your superhero Morphus your mysterious alter ego. That means if your face is still recognizable in Morphus, you want to wear a mask to conceal your identity.

Before Dark Day, Nightbane were few and far between. Some guess there were probably fewer than 10,000 around the world, maybe less. That's a drop in the bucket when you figure there are 6 billion people in the world. Somehow an older mem-

ber of the Nightbane race would find the fledgling Nightbane and guide and mentor him. It was like those of us nearby, say within a thousand miles, could sense when a new 'Bane came into the world. Dark Day changed all that. There was such a massive influx of new Nightbane on that day alone that it was impossible to pinpoint them all and there weren't nearly enough of us to mentor even a quarter of you. Mystic interference by the Nightlords didn't help none either. So nowadays, finding a personal mentor is the exception rather than the rule. Now, most Nightbane are forced to go it alone, join one of the established Nightbane factions, or really go out on a limb and create a new group of your own. That's why I'm writing this – guide book, I guess you could call it – and posting on the Internet. I hope it helps fill in some of the gaps in your knowledge and gives you newbies at least some orientation to your new life as a Nightbane. Problem is, I'm no professional writer and I'm already getting ahead of myself by mentioning the *Nightlords* (they are your arch-enemy, never trust them) and *factions* (secret organizations and gangs of people like you, but they ain't all necessarily your friends).

I keep using *superhero* comparisons because with all the superhero movies, videogames and comic books out these days, everybody in most of the world understands that frame of reference, especially those of us born and bred in the United States.

I already covered some of the immediate consequences of the Becoming for many of you. With any luck, your Becoming happened in a safe, secluded place with nobody or few people to witness it.

In the case of Nightbane undergoing the Becoming in a public place, or more common than that, being discovered by a family member or friend, there can be serious repercussions. Thing is, the worst case scenario is probably worse than you're imagining. It ain't that the life you knew until a few minutes ago is irrevocably changed and you can never go back. Hell, I wish it was that easy for you, kid. In addition to your loved ones freaking out on you, maybe even trying to kill you, government men from the NSB or demonic minions of the Nightlords are probably gunning for you right now. And trust me, they want you dead. If you're someplace you can be traced, or if you're at home or hiding in some known place of yours, spend the next two minutes reading the next three paragraphs and then get the hell out fast.

The short version is this: the **Nightlords** are powerful Demon Lords. No kidding. They're honest to God supernatural demons who have a hate on for all Nightbane. They track us down and exterminate us like dogs in the street. You're worse off if they try to talk you into turning yourself in or taking you captive, because torture like you can't imagine is in store for the rest of what will not seem like a mercifully short life. They command a bunch of minions that are basically monsters, lesser demons and goons who do their dirty work. Now for the really bad news, the police, the FBI, the media, they are all infiltrated and filled with Nightlord minions. Seriously, you need to trust me on this. Most of these minions are *supernatural creatures* who can make themselves look just like normal people, so you can't tell a real human from a monster.

Remember when I said you are not a monster? Well, you're not. Maybe you can change into something monstrous looking, but you are human. You think, feel and act like any other human being. You just happen to have superhuman powers that come out when you transform into your – sucks for you – *inhuman Morphus*. These Nightlords and their minions, *they* are the real-deal monsters. They are wicked, evil and don't have a shred of decency or humanity in their bones. They'll lie straight to your face, kill your mother with a smile, do terrible things to you, your loved ones and innocent people without a qualm. **THEY ARE YOUR ENEMY AND THEY WILL KILL YOU.** Do not doubt that for an instant or you are as good as dead. Do whatever it takes to escape.

If you are in this type of situation it is time to stop reading this guide and get out of town. Go somewhere else. Find a library or Internet cafe and read the rest of this crap later! After you escaped and after you returned to your human Facade. **Here is something you need to know:** Many supernatural beings can sense, track and locate their fellow supernatural brethren, which is what you are in Morphus, supernatural. However, they can not recognize you as a supernatural being, as a Nightbane, when you are in your human Facade. That means once you escape their line of sight you can hide in your own human body.

Now your life is about to get difficult and challenging. You have to figure out how to live with what you are, and you ain't human. Not anymore. Not strictly speaking. You're a **Nightbane**, whatever the hell that is. Nightbane is what the

Nightlords and other supernatural beings call us. Supposedly, we are the natural enemy of the Nightlords and possess the power to destroy them. Sounds good, wish I knew how we're supposed to do that.

Don't figure you're safe from any of this if you are pushing thirty or older. While it is true most Nightbane discover their true nature in their late teens and early twenties, it can happen to you at any age. The earliest known Becoming took place at the age of eleven, and there have been reports of Becomings taking place during Dark Day and since with people as old as sixty. Eighty percent are under the age of 26, but there are a fair number who Become in their thirties, and a small number who Become at an older age.

Young Nightbane

For those who change young, especially before the age of 16, there are some complications. The typical adolescent isn't fully physically or emotionally developed. This ain't no slam on your age, it's just a fact. You still have growing and learning to do both as a human and as a Nightbane.

(Game Note: All characters under the age of 16 are rolled up as usual, but suffer the following modifiers: -2 to I.Q. -4 to M.E. [-2 for girls], -3 to M.A., -3 to P.S. [-4 for girls], and -3 to P.P., P.E., and P.B. [same for both males and females], -1 on Perception Rolls, and -5% on skill performance. These penalties are temporary and disappear when the character becomes 16 years old.)

Young Nightbane are also going to be a bit more emotionally raw and tend to react in extreme ways. The teenage years are emotionally turbulent for a "normal" kid who's trying to figure out how he fits into the world. Now throw in being a monster and, well, if you felt like you didn't fit in before, you really feel like a freak now. If you were hot stuff on campus and part of the "in crowd" before, you're out now. Welcome to the world of freaks and misfits. Don't laugh, these guys and gals have it bad because they ain't used to being outcasts, and this turn of unwanted events is very hard on them. At least those of you over the age of 17 can legally leave home and get a job. The younger ones don't have such rights and have it bad if turned out onto the streets, or forced to run away. A kid will not be able to legally get a job or place to live on their own, which is why many runaway Nightbane end up living on the streets, exposing them to many more dangers than just running from the Nightlords' minions. A Nightbane under the age of sixteen ain't likely to even have (and may never get) a legal driver's license, increasing the difficulty of blending in, securing a legal I.D., getting a credit card, and a whole lot of other details you probably ain't thought of yet.

Even if you young 'Bane initially manage to keep your Morphus hidden from those that wouldn't understand, there are still major mental and emotional hurdles to deal with, the least of which is coming to terms with the fact you ain't strictly human. There's also figuring out who can you trust (which ain't many), keeping your dual identities secret, learning how to use your powers, and what to do with them. Heck, you probably have to figure out if you're going to stay in school, stay at home or leave, and all kinds of deep painful stuff. 'Bane in their teens are usually under a good amount of scrutiny from teachers,

peers, and family members, so you have it rough. It certainly means having to exercise even greater control over your emotions than ever before, as distress, anger, fear and such has a chance of triggering a shift to your Morphus. If it's any consolation you, *all* of us Nightbane have had to deal with these issues and it is never easy for anyone, whether you're a kid, a college student or thirty-plus. None of us asked for this, it's just the way things are. Come to terms with it fast or end up dead before you see your next birthday. Understand? You need to stay calm, think clearly, and be smart.

If it helps, you young 'Bane usually accept what you are much faster and adapt much better than them old farts in their thirties or older. Did that make you smile? Good. It ain't all bad to be a Nightbane, just awfully complicated.

Okay, now it's time to lay down a couple of ground rules. Rule number one: keep your Morphus a secret. The term 'Morphus' refers to your new scary-lookin' self. For most of you it's pretty easy to figure out why you don't want to parade down Main Street wearing your Morphus form. Even if you're one of the uncommon pretty or handsome 'Bane, what we tend to call a 'Ken' or 'Barbie,' odds are you don't look like Joe Average anymore. The easiest way to keep your Morphus secret is not to transform in anyone's sight. That way, even if someone spots your weird, ugly mug, it usually won't be traced to your human Facade, unless your Morphus looks enough like your Facade, then it sucks to be you and you need to take additional precautions to conceal your human identity.

Your Morphus is much stronger than your Facade. If you aren't careful in your Morphus, you can easily wreck stuff, and even hurt or kill somebody by accident.

You'll also discover you have special abilities. Yeah, like superpowers, but you'll need to be careful about when and how you use them too. I recommend finding a secluded spot away from your house or any hangouts you may have to practice and master what we call Nightbane 'Talents.' Even then you gotta be real careful, as some of those that want you dead can sense when Talents are being used and track em' like a bloodhound. Hang around too long in one spot, and you may find yourself surrounded by a pack of demons or NSB goons out for your blood. Also keep in mind that you only have so much energy to funnel into your Talents at a time. When you run out of that energy, it's gone until you can rest up. So it's just like running out of bullets for a gun, you're out of juice and easier prey. Some of these powers can be dangerous to those around you, and sometimes even to yourself, so learn how to handle them before you unleash them in public.

You have certain advantages undergoing the Becoming at a young age. Young 'Bane tend to have a less rigid mind set and are more open to the potential of the life-altering experience. Young 'Bane find their Morphus exciting and challenging, so you're more likely to find a lot more time to figure out, use and master your abilities. Young 'Bane ain't as afraid to use their power either, and like the idea they are part of something bigger and better than the average mook on the street. Heck, we represent humanity's survival in a secret war with demons and cavort with friggin' vampires and other amazing creatures the average Joe don't even know are real. There is just something cool about that, you know? Who says we ain't some kind of superheroes? Just use your powers for good. And be warned, the slide to dark-

ness is a quick and easy one if you aren't careful. You don't want to become one of those Nightbane who don't give a damn or work for the Nightlords.

My final words of advice, the older 'Bane will tend to underestimate you and put you on the sidelines because of your age. Tell them to go to hell. Don't you go underestimating yourself because of what someone else tells you. Listen to those you trust, but live bold. Be who you're meant to be. Don't live in fear. Don't doubt yourself. Be a hero and set the example for the rest of us old-timers.

Older Nightbane

For some of you, the Becoming will happen in your twenties or older. Most 'Bane, even after Dark Day, Become between the ages of 13-26, with about 17% Becoming in their late twenties and thirties, and 3-5% at an older age.

The older you are, the greater the physical pain and discomfort when you first Become one of us. Whereas young Nightbane, under the age of 26, report slight discomfort associated with the Becoming – usually a strong pulling, burning, itching, or crawling sensation – older Nightbane undergoing the Becoming report feeling as if their body resists the transformation and is being torn apart. This can be a painful to excruciating experience as every cell of your body feels like it is exploding under the strain of a tug-of-war contest when your Morphus first manifests. This doesn't seem to happen if an older Nightbane Becomes in his sleep, leading many to speculate the cause of the pain is as much mental as physical, and is caused by you trying to resist and stop the inevitable. Sorry, but once the Becoming starts, it cannot be stopped.

You are like a snowflake, every Morphus is different and no two are exactly identical. Depending on the form your subconscious mind creates, limbs may contort to odd shapes and angles, horns, spikes and protrusions may burst from the skin, steam may rise from your body, you are likely to grow in size and bulk, you may be covered in scales or thick body armor, or machine parts may grow from your arms, legs or body. It's all pretty standard fare for a "normal" Becoming. In the most severe transformation, it is said that the Becoming feels like the body literally tears itself apart. Thankfully, you'll only experience that level of pain once, when you first Become a Nightbane. After that, there will be some discomfort and minor pain, but it becomes less severe with every transformation till it becomes second nature to you.

You're going to face all the same challenges and consequences as the young Nightbane, plus some others.

Nightbane above the age of 21 tend to have already made plans for their lives. They may have started their career, have a job they enjoy, plan to gotten married, started a family, or made a long-term financial commitment like buying a house. The Becoming is likely to force dramatic changes on you and those goals. For instance, how does one justify starting a family if they are a Nightbane locked in the Hidden War against the forces of darkness. Sound melodramatic? It's not. Can you live in constant fear of putting your loved ones in danger? Your wife? Your child? Parents? Friends? I doubt it. Will your wife and loved ones accept you if they know what you are? Maybe, but does that really change anything? You and they are still in

danger simply because you are a *Nightbane*. The Nightlords want you destroyed. Humans, if they knew you were a monster hiding among them, would want you destroyed too. Are you special or cursed? Been asking myself that question for going on 100 years and still can't answer it.

Most 'Bane over the age of 26 find it more difficult to psychologically adjust to their fate. The Becoming shatters your life plans and the stability you've built over the years. It forces you to deal with a whole new life you ain't prepared for and never wanted. Everything is changed in a heartbeat. You need to start your life all over again, beginning with trying to figure out who you are, what is your place in the world, and how do you fit in. It's a lot to deal with – mid-life crisis times 100. The older and more established the Nightbane was before the Becoming, the more difficult the transition and the more likely he is going to suffer from depression and anxiety over it.

Odds are you need to abandon your family and leave behind everything you've worked toward and built for the last 10, 20 or 30 years. That's damn hard, sorry dude. As difficult as that decision is, your next one ain't any easier. You need to create a new identity, leave your home and find a new life. Some even choose to live completely apart from society.

Of course, there are some of you who will try to pretend like it never happened. Good luck with that. This is especially true if you managed to shift back into your human Facade quickly, and most older 'Bane can. The older you are, the more likely your mind is resistant to what just occurred, and the more likely you are to want to reject your true nature. While the young often find themselves temporarily stuck in the monstrous form of their Morphus, older Nightbane quickly resume their human shape.

Luckily, most Becomings are not witnessed by others, so you can try to pretend it never happened. Even when you Become in front of your spouse, parents, kids or best friend, the result may not be catastrophic. Odds are they are initially scared *for* you, not scared *of* you. They can't understand what's happening to you, love you, and want to help you. If you can change back to human quickly, say in less than a minute or two, they are more likely to be willing to write the entire "weird fluke" off and join you in pretending it never happened. You'd be amazed how many times loved ones completely deny what they just saw when it comes to something like this. Part of it is they want to preserve their happy life as much as you do, maybe more. Consequently, your loved one is willing to try to pretend it's all over and everything is back to normal. About a third can actually do that.

For those who cannot, your transformation will haunt them forever, and they will never look at you the same way, or it may take years for them to get to that point. Others will reject you out of hand. And like I said, the longer it takes for you to turn "human" the less likely anyone can accept that you just turned into a big, scary monster. The longer it takes, the more time they have for the horror of it to sink in. If the transition is brief, ideally a minute or less, the sooner they can look into your lovely human face and say to themselves, "thank God, it's over." If only.

The bigger question is, can you really forget it and pretend it never happened? Most of you are probably thinking yes, "yes, I can." And maybe you can, for a while.

Thing is, human beings, assuming we're still human, are just too damn inquisitive and selfish. We want answers and we want to fulfill our destinies. Odds are, you'll deliberately shift into your Morphus a week or so later when nobody is around. You'll drive out to the woods and test your powers, and think about what you can do with them. You'll search the web for answers and you'll read my guide. That's when all the issues and questions we talked about earlier, and then some, will weigh on you, and you'll have to decide what your next step is going to be. Deny what you really are and continue with your pretend life, or embrace what you are and accept your dangerous and uncertain future.

The above scenario is moot if your spouse or the family member who bore witness to your Becoming ain't so fond of you. If your marriage was in trouble, your Becoming will end it for certain. Likewise, if you have issues with your sibling, parents or kids, this unhappy development will make you a pariah. And let's not forget that the majority of people are going to flip out and shun you right off the bat, making your decision easier if not any less painful for you: It is time to build a new life for yourself. Same holds true if you Become a Nightbane in front of your co-workers or in public. Life over, run, hide, move and build a new one.

Take solace in the fact that even when things do go badly, many Nightbane of any age prove to be extremely resilient and emerge from the worst of circumstances without any severe or lasting mental or emotional trauma.

Maybe I do have the answer

Maybe I do have the answer to the question, *what are you?*

You're a soldier. And soldiers fight. Our enemy is the Nightlords and their demonic host. They threaten us. They threaten humankind. They threaten everything and everyone we know and love. They need to be stopped and we have the power to do it. Us Nightbane, we're soldiers whether we want to be or not. Accept that, and you have your direction, purpose and new life. Maybe it really is as simple as that.

– *The Nightbane Survival Guide*

Transformation Rules

Even after a Nightbane has mastered the ability to switch between Facade and Morphus forms, there are circumstances in which it will be difficult to return to the Facade.

As noted earlier, though the initial Becoming is shocking and frightening, over time, the Morphus feels as normal, natural and comfortable as the Nightbane's original human form once did. This is true to the point that many Nightbane believe their "true" form is that of the Morphus and can maintain it indefinitely. They even remain in Morphus form when rendered unconscious.

Furthermore, the more powerful Morphus is a natural defense, so like an adrenaline rush, a Nightbane's first instinct is to transform into his Morphus at the first sign of danger. This knee-jerk reaction also occurs when the Nightbane character becomes angry, enraged, scared, stressed out and even frustrated. It is at these moments that a Nightbane must consciously focus on maintaining his human Facade lest he transform into his su-

pernatural Morphus. Failure to maintain mental control risks exposing one's self as a Nightbane.

The following is an optional set of rules to determine if a Nightbane character can maintain his composure under extreme stress and extenuating circumstances.

The saving throw to maintain the Facade requires the player to roll a saving throw vs his Mental Endurance (M.E.) using a D20.

To save and maintain his Facade, the character must roll *under* his M.E. attribute number. Obviously, the higher the character's M.E., the easier it is to save. A character with a low M.E. will have a much more difficult time of it.

To complicate matters, consult the table below to see if one or more modifiers/penalties to save apply. Depending on the character's state of mind and the influence of drugs and other outside forces, penalties may apply that make the saving throw much more difficult.

A **failed save** means the character cannot maintain his focus and changes from his human Facade into his Morphus by accident. Thus, even a character with an M.E. of 20 will find he needs a much lower roll if he is, for example, enraged and drunk. In which case he would need to roll a nine or below to successfully maintain his Facade.

Likewise, while changing back into the Facade is usually performed at will and in a heartbeat, if the character is enraged, drugged or otherwise out of control, he may be unable to change back into his human Facade; use the same modifiers table to determine outcome.

Saving Throw Penalties vs Maintaining the Facade

Note: Penalties are accumulative and more than one may apply to any given situation.

-1 to save when physically exhausted or sleepy.

-1 to save when one's self or another person (depending on alignment) is in danger of being harmed.

-2 to save if in a paranoid state (may be due to circumstances, mental illness, or drug use).

-3 to save when one's own life is in immediate danger.

-1 to save when suffering from a slight fever, concussion or mental confusion.

-3 to save when suffering from a high fever (102 degrees or greater), concussion, poisoning, or mental confusion.

-1 to save under the influence of mild stimulants (including high levels of caffeine).

-3 to save under the influence of strong stimulants (cocaine, amphetamines, etc.).

-2 to save when under the influence of a mild sedative, depressants, or a little alcohol (two drinks in the last hour).

-5 to save when under heavy sedation (strong painkillers, tranquilizers, etc.), depressants, or drunk (four or more drinks in the last hour).

-1 to save when a little stressed, frustrated, scared or angry.

-2 to save when moderately stressed, frustrated, scared or angry (embarrassed in front of friends, reprimanded by a superior, a minor physical altercation or threat, questioned by the authorities, etc.).

-4 to save when seriously stressed, frustrated, scared or angry (a serious situation, facing public ridicule, fired from the job, a potentially life and death altercation or threat, enduring severe torture, the lives of many other people are in jeopardy, and similar).

-6 to save if enraged, terrified or afraid for the life of a loved one (*excluding* fellow player characters as the Nightbane knows they all accept the danger of their lifestyle, unless romantically involved).

Random Character Detail Tables (Optional)

By Kevin Siembieda

Age

01-10% 13-15 years old.

11-25% 16-18 years old.

26-40% 19-21 years old.

41-47% 22-23 years old.

48-55% 24-25 years old.

56-63% 26-27 years old.

64-70% 28-29 years old.

71-75% 30-32 years old.

76-80% 33-35 years old.

81-85% 36-39 years old.

86-90% 40-45 years old.

91-93% 46-49 years old.

94-96% 50-55 years old.

97-98% 56-60 years old.

99-00% 60+ years old.

Sex

Note: We have found it is usually best to let the player *pick* the sex of his or her character. For those who would prefer to make a random roll, here's the table:

01-60% Male.

61-00% Female.

Witnesses to your Becoming

01-50% None, secluded. Nobody saw the transformation, your identity is safe.

51-60% Witnessed by one close friend, sibling or child, and he isn't telling. Roll again to determine his reaction & consequences: *01-50%* Accepts the character same as always and will never tell a soul. *51-60%* Accepts the character, but is haunted and disturbed by what he knows. Might slip by accident and mention it to a confidant (priest, therapist, friend, etc.). *61-70%* Terrified and shuns the Nightbane. Has told him to stay

away from him and his loved ones or else. If the “monster” complies, the witness will keep his mouth shut in deference to their old friendship/relationship. **71-85% Terrified!** Rejects and shuns the Nightbane character, and reported the incident to the authorities. **86-00% Terrified,** attacked and tried to *kill* the Nightbane character. The witness will do so again if the ‘Bane ever shows his face. The incident was reported to the authorities. **Note:** If the authorities were notified, the Nightbane character is a fugitive wanted by the NSB. Life as you once knew it is over. You must leave and start a new, discreet or secret life elsewhere.

61-70% Witnessed by parents or spouse. Roll again to determine their reaction: Roll again on the table above (#51-60%) to determine reaction & consequences.

71-80% Witnessed by 1D4+1 friends or family members. Roll again to determine their reaction & consequences: **01-30%** Accept the character same as always and will keep his secret always. **31-40%** They keep his secret, but are haunted and disturbed by what they know. Haunted by the truth, they keep their distance and try to avoid contact with the Nightbane character. They talk about it among themselves sometimes and might slip by accident and mention it in front of the wrong person or confess to a confidant (another friend, co-worker, priest, therapist, etc.) as this is a hard secret to keep. **41-60% Total denial.** They pretend as if it never happened and are too scared to ever mention it to a living soul. Their Nightbane “friend” is shunned. No contact. Telephone calls are not returned and if the ‘Bane tries to rebuild the relationship they will threaten to call the authorities. **61-80% Terrified!** Rejects and shuns the Nightbane character, and reported the incident to the authorities. **81-00% Terrified,** attacked and tried to *kill* the Nightbane character. The witness will do so again if the character ever shows his face again. The incident was reported to the authorities. **Note:** If the authorities were notified, the Nightbane character is a fugitive wanted by the NSB. Life as you once knew it is over. You must leave and start a new, discreet or secret life elsewhere.

81-90% Witnessed in public in front of 2D6+6 strangers. Witnesses were shocked and horrified. You got away, but the authorities were called. Roll again to determine what happened next: **01-10%** NSB has a few suspects and leads as to who the “monster” might be, but does one of those leads point to YOU? **11-90%** You got away clean, nobody knows who the “monster” was. Are you safe or a suspect? Can you feign innocence if questioned? Is it time to leave town just to be safe? **91-00%** The NSB has identified you and you are on their Most Wanted List. Your life as you knew it is gone. You must leave and start a new, discreet life elsewhere.

91-00% Witnessed at work or school by 2D4+4 people who all know and identified you. The NSB knows who you are and you are on their Most Wanted List. Your life as you knew it is gone. You must leave and start a new, secret life elsewhere.

Alignment

01-25% Principled: Good, honest, loyal and law-abiding team player.

26-50% Scrupulous: Good and trustworthy, but sometimes bends the rules.

51-75% Unprincipled: A rogue with a heart of gold. Tempted to take shortcuts and watch out for number one (himself), but when push comes to shove, always does the right thing (even if he hates himself for it).

76-00% Anarchist: Self-serving, may choose to be a team player or not. Tends to look out for himself.

Note: These are supposed to be heroes, so no evil alignments are selected unless at the player’s option; check with your G.M.

Height

01-25% Short: Under 5 feet, 8 inches (1.73 m).

26-75% Average: 5 feet, 8 inches to 6 feet (1.73 to 1.8 m).

76-95% Tall: 6 feet, one inch to 6 feet, 6 inches (1.85 to 1.98 m).

96-00% Very Tall: 6 feet, 7 inches to 7 feet (2-2.1 m).

Birth Order

01-25% First Born.

26-50% Second.

51-75% Middle.

76-00% Last.

Special Aptitude Bonuses

01-10% Sure Shot: +2 to strike with all types of projectile and energy attacks, from pistols to Nightbane Talents. Furthermore, the usual penalties for being off balance, moving, etc., are half.

11-20% Natural Fighter: Pick one bonus Physical skill or W.P. (any). Also +1 on initiative, +1 to parry, and +1 to pull punch.

21-30% Natural Affinity for Magic: Gets Lore: Magic and one Lore skill of choice, both get a +10% bonus. Also +1 on Perception Rolls, +2D6 to permanent P.P.E. base, and +1 to save vs all types of magic.

31-40% High Perception and Solid Gut Instincts: +1 to dodge and +1D4 on Perception Rolls. Roll 1D4 once in front of the Game Master when the character is first created to determine what this bonus is from that time forward.

41-50% Quick Reaction Time: +1D4 on initiative. Roll 1D4 once in front of the Game Master when the character is first created to determine what this bonus is from that time forward.

51-60% Strongman: +1D6+3 to P.S. attribute and +1 to pull punch.

61-70% Fast Learner and Jack of Many Trades: Select 1D4+1 extra R.C.C. Related Skills (each gets a +2% bonus; selections are made from the character’s usual available categories) or add an additional +10% bonus to four of the skills from the character’s usual selection to make the Nightbane exceptionally good at them.

71-80% Quick Reflexes: +1 attack per melee and +1 to dodge.

81-90% Fearless: +1D4+2 to save vs Horror Factor. However, as a result, the character *may* also be a hot shot who takes foolish risks and daring chances.

91-00% Charismatic/Charmer: +1D4+2 to M.A., this character is especially likable and affable in both his Facade and Morphus forms.

Sense of Identity

Note: This category should be completely optional. Players should not be forced to roll on, or pick from, this table.

01-15% Human. This character may be able to turn into a supernatural creature of formidable power, but he considers himself to be 100% human and his loyalties are always with humankind.

16-30% Uncertain what he is. He wishes he was human, but is afraid he might be something . . . else, like a human mutant or alien hybrid, or half human, half demon. Loyalties are torn between humans and Nightbane 50/50%.

31-45% Superhuman. Thinks of himself as more than human, like a superhero, but not as a supernatural monster or a magical creature. He cares about the welfare of human beings, but his loyalties go first to his fellow superhumans: the Nightbane and other super-beings like the Guardians, then humans, but not magical beings, vampires, the Nightlords or demons.

46-60% Supernatural. Considers himself to be a supernatural being, not a human. His loyalties are with the Nightbane first, and other supernatural beings second, though he has a soft spot for humans and probably tries to help and protect them.

61-75% Freak and an outcast. Considers himself to be a freak and a monster who has no place in human society. He feels no loyalty to humans who fear and shun him and his kind, but doesn't trust most other supernatural beings either. His loyalties are to himself first, and the Nightbane second, but he is wary even of other 'Bane.

76-90% I am Nightbane. Considers himself 100% Nightbane, a race of supernatural beings unto themselves. A sort of demigod able to walk among humans disguised as them in his Facade. He doesn't hate humans, but his loyalty is to the Nightbane and Nightbane only. This character considers his Morphus to be his "true" form, and his Facade his human "disguise."

91-00% Child of Darkness. Considers himself a superior, supernatural being, and while he wishes he was human, he sees them as inferior. Worse, this character suspects he is probably born from evil and is the progeny of the Nightlords and created for the service of evil. Though the character may try to be a good or selfish alignment and help people, he fears he is drawn to darkness and evil for that is his true nature. He fears he has more in common with the Nightlords than any other, and is fascinated by them, perhaps even wishes he was one of them. Believes he, and all Nightbane, are superior to humans and considers the Guardians, vampires and all other supernatural beings to be rivals.

Disposition

Note: This category should be completely optional. Players should not be forced to roll on this table.

01-05% Bitter and hardened by war. Has little compassion or sympathy for others, especially those who are foolish. Tends to be intolerant, short-tempered and gruff with everyone. Shows

no mercy to the enemy. The carnage of war and the sight of the dead has no obvious impact on this "war is hell, suck it up," soldier.

06-10% Shy, timid, tends to be a loner.

11-16% By the book. Tends to follow orders to the "T," is very formal, follows procedures and is, well, by the book military. Always against breaking the rules, and hates bending the rules except under exceptional circumstances.

17-23% Gung-ho, guts and glory type who sees self as a hero. Likes combat, is quick to action, and hates sitting around, waiting.

24-29% Worrywart, nervous and cautious.

30-36% Hot-head, quick-tempered, emotional, but basically a good guy or gal.

37-43% Schemer, gambler who likes to take chances.

44-50% Blabber mouth, nice person, but too talkative and has trouble keeping a secret.

51-56% Wild man, cocky, overconfident, takes unnecessary risks.

57-63% Nice, friendly, courteous and hospitable. Cares about his teammates and their mission.

64-70% Snob, arrogant, feels superior to others.

71-76% Tough guy, self-reliant, independent, and a bit of a cocky lone wolf.

77-83% Paternal, overprotective of others, especially young characters and green soldiers.

84-90% Complainer, constantly aggravated about something.

91-95% Paranoid, trusts no one until they have proven themselves trustworthy and loyal many times over.

96-00% Glory hound whose number one priority is seeing himself promoted through the ranks to become as important and powerful as possible (whether he/she deserves it or not). Quick to take credit for the accomplishments of the team and individuals whenever he thinks he can get away with it.

Prejudices & Paranoia

The character doesn't trust or like (may even hate) one of the following, roll percentile dice. **Note:** This category should be completely optional. Players should not be forced to roll on this table.

01-05% Dwellers of the Astral Plane/Astral Travellers.

06-10% The Warlords.

11-15% Ancient Nightbane.

16-20% Spook Squad.

21-25% The Underground Railroad.

26-30% The Shadowleague & Shadowboard.

31-35% The Seekers.

36-40% The Lightbringers/Guardians.

41-45% Humans in general; they are frightened and unpredictable.

46-50% Demons and similar supernatural monsters.

51-53% Psychics.

54-55% Strangers.

56-57% Practitioners of magic.



58-60% Fleshsculptors.

61-65% The Nocturnes/Vampires, Wampyrs, zombies, all types of undead.

66-70% The Mirror Wall.

71-75% Denizens of the Dreamstream.

76-80% The Authorities/The NSB/Hollow Men/Men in Black.

81-90% The inhuman minions of the Nightlords.

91-00% Nightlords.

Outlook on the Hidden War

Note: This category should be completely optional. Players should not be forced to roll on, or pick from, this table.

01-20% A sense of duty. Whether the character considers himself human or not, the Nightlords are evil and his natural enemy. It is the responsibility and duty of the “Bane of the Night” to destroy the Ba’al, or failing that, to at least force the Nightlords from Earth and send them back to the Nightlands. The character was born on Earth and is happy to help, but he isn’t sure there is a place for him among human society. Opposing the Nightlords is his heritage.

21-40% Earth is home, the War must be fought and won. Whether this character considers himself to be human or something else, he was born on Earth, it is his home, he loves it, and

he will fight to the bitter end to liberate it from the evil Nightlords.

41-60% Win the Hidden War and win acceptance. This Nightbane sees the conflict through rose-colored glasses. Not only does he believe the Nightbane *can* defeat the Nightlords, but when they succeed, people will praise the Nightbane as heroes and welcome them back into human society with open arms. The character has an unrealistic and idealized view of human nature and a wonderful future.

61-70% Resentful about the Hidden War. Why are the Nightlords his problem, or the problem of any Nightbane? Who says it is their duty to oppose and destroy the Ba’al? He didn’t sign up to be a monster or fight any damn war. This character resents being drafted into the Hidden War against the demonic Nightlords and their supernatural minions. He’d prefer to stay out of it, except the Nightlords won’t let him. This Nightbane would much rather go about his own business and avoid the Nightlords, only he can’t stand by and do nothing while innocent people and Nightbane are suffering or being killed. That attitude may change, but for now, he’s a reluctant hero.

71-80% The Hidden War and Earth, for that matter, is frightening. Ever since turning into a Nightbane, the world has become an awful place. The government has been taken over by demons, monsters roam the streets and hunt you, there are conspiracies and cover-ups everywhere, people fear you, Nightlords

and their henchmen want to destroy you, and you don't know what you are, who you can trust or where to go. And it's all just because you're what they call a Nightbane. This character recognizes the War is necessary, the Nightlords are evil incarnate, people are suffering, and the Nightbane can make a difference. He wants to help, he's just a little shaky about doing so. Most confident when he's fighting along the side of other heroes and when things are going well.

81-90% Let the Nightlords have the place. This character sees the Hidden War as unwinnable and fighting it is suicide. As a result, he'd rather stay out of it.

91-00% The Nightlords must die. Forget about the philosophical, moral or emotional arguments for fighting the Hidden War. For this character it comes down to this: The Earth has been invaded by Demon Lords and their monstrous legions. He and other Nightbane can do something about it. The Nightbane can make a difference, so he does. The Nightlords are evil invaders who need to be sent back to whatever Hell they crawled out from, and that's his mission. It's as simple as that. Is this attitude heroic patriotism? This Nightbane doesn't think so. Is it vengeance? He wouldn't say that either. For him it is the right thing to do. He'll save lives, help people and fight with his last dying breath.

New Skills for Nightbane

Domestic

- Gardening (36%+4%)
- Housekeeping (35%+5%)
- Wardrobe & Grooming (50%+4%)

Espionage

- Undercover Ops (30%+5%)

Mechanical

- Vehicle Armorer (30%+5%)

Military

- Camouflage (20%+5%)
- Demolitions: Underwater (56%+4%)
- Field Armorer & Munitions Expert (40%+5%)
- Recognize Weapon Quality (Military; 25%+5%)

Physical

- Aerobic Athletics
- Kick Boxing
- Outdoorsmanship
- Physical Labor

Pilot Skills

- Bicycling (44%+4%)
- Boats: Paddle Type (50%+5%)
- Combat Driving
- Tracked & Construction Vehicles (40%+4%)

Rogue

- Find Contraband (26%+5%)
- I.D. Undercover Agent (30%+4%)
- Netwise (20%+4%)

- Roadwise (26%+4%)
- Safe-Cracking (20%+4%)
- Seduction (20%+3%)
- Tailing (30%+5%)

Technical

- Barter (30%+4%)
- Begging (30%+3%)
- Business & Finance (35%+5%)
- Construction (30%+5%)
- Excavation (30%+5%)
- Firefighting (40%+5%)
- General Repair & Maintenance (35%+5%)
- History (60%/40%+4%)
- Jury-Rig (25%+5%)
- Law (35%+5%)
- Lore: Factions (30%+5%)
- Lore: Magic (25%+5%)
- Mythology (30%+5%)
- Philosophy (30%+5%)
- Rope Works (30%+5%)
- Salvage (35%+5%)

Weapon Proficiencies (Ancient)

- W.P. Paired Weapons

Weapon Proficiencies (Modern)

- W.P. Shotgun

Notes About New Skills for Nightbane

By Kevin Siembieda, Publisher

When C.J. Carella developed the **Nightbane® RPG**, he wanted skills to be kept to a minimum and the focus placed on the Nightbane characters, their supernatural abilities and life. Since the vast majority are *ordinary people*, and young people at that, a wide range of skills and expertise was deemed inappropriate. I agree. The two authors of this World Book lobbied hard for the inclusion of new skills (most from other Palladium RPGs, actually) and submitted what would have been approximately 40 pages of skills reprinted from other books. I've pared that down to about five pages. My skill selection offers skills I believe have the most *game value* – i.e. make sense for, and will get the most use by, player characters in this particular setting.

Game Masters *may* choose to allow additional skills from other Palladium RPGs if *they* find it desirable and appropriate. The most suitable skills for the Nightbane setting would include those from the **Beyond the Supernatural™** and **Dead Reign™** role-playing games.

Similarly, the G.M. may create a Nightbane character complete with his (probably ex-) occupation and skills by using the *Ordinary People O.C.C.* as described in the **Beyond the Supernatural™** or **Dead Reign™** RPGs.

Just food for thought.

New Skill Descriptions

Domestic Skills

Gardening: This skill offers a basic understanding of plant care and aesthetic garden design as well as the ability to grow garden crops, and the skill to create beautiful, decorative gardens with flowers, plants, shrubs, trees, and decorative rocks that create a feeling of tranquility and harmony with nature. This skill can be practiced by anyone, but selecting it twice provides a +12% bonus and the skill is that of a professional groundskeeper. **Base Skill:** 36% +4% per level of experience.

Housekeeping: Techniques and methods of cleaning clothes, bedding, bathrooms, floors, and surfaces, as well as knowledge of the types of cleaners, solvents, soaps and materials for housekeeping. Professional maintenance personnel, maids, and hotel housekeepers will know additional “tricks of the trade” to make a room look spotless, sparkling and inviting; everything in its place, folded properly and presented attractively. **Base Skill:** 35% +5% per level of experience.

Wardrobe & Grooming: This skill represents a knowledge of clothing, make-up, hair style, perfume, walking, talking and how one carries his or herself to create a particular “look” or style. In short, this is how to dress to kill or make the right impression. Keeps an eye on fashion and trends. **Bonuses:** +1 to the P.B. attribute when dressed to impress, as well as +2% bonus to the skills of *Disguise*, *Undercover Ops* and *Seduction*. **Base Skill:** 50% +4% per level of experience.

Espionage Skills

Undercover Ops (replaces Fieldcraft): Training in undercover operations in which the character learns the methods and techniques of blending smoothly into the background and appearing as if he belongs there (just another unmemorable face in the crowd or one of the guys), as well as assuming a false identity and playing a “role” to track, spy upon, or gather information or evidence. Also includes methods for the covert exchange of information, necessary for keeping in touch with the individual’s “handler” (i.e. their contact with the organization they are undercover for). Such methods may include “dead drops” (leaving information in a hiding place to be picked up by another agent or sometimes a courier), ways to avoid or notice someone tailing them, selecting passwords or phrases, and similar techniques. **Note:** This skill is typically reserved for law enforcement, espionage agents, military Special Forces, mercenaries, con artists, and other criminal types. **Base Skill:** 30% +5% per level of experience.

Mechanical Skills

Vehicle Armorer: A specialized skill in which the character can do more than just tinker with the mechanics of a vehicle.

Extra Armor: Add more S.D.C. to armor at 25 S.D.C. per level of experience to military/combat vehicles, full-sized vans and large trucks; 10 S.D.C. per level on commercial (non-combat) vehicles. Increase the A.R. of pre-existing or added vehicle armor by 1 point per 3 levels of experience. Add a ram prow (does an extra 2D6 S.D.C. damage on ram attacks, plus 1D6 S.D.C. for every 40 mph/64 km of speed; ram prow has 2D4x10 S.D.C. +15 S.D.C. per level experience). Reduce speed by 5%

for every extra 40 S.D.C. of armor on military vehicles or every 20 S.D.C. added to commercial vehicles. Reduce speed 10% for a ram prow.

Custom Body Modifications: Repaint, modify or completely reconfigure the body of a vehicle to change or disguise its original appearance, or to make it look innocent, old, new, scary or sleek. Can turn the interior into a sealed, *environmental compartment* and/or add a *reinforced pilot or crew compartment* (50 S.D.C., +10 S.D.C. per level of experience) inside the vehicle, move the location of the engine and/or gas tank, add an extra gas tank, soup-up with heavy-duty shock absorbers (in effect adds 40 S.D.C. to reinforced pilot or crew compartment), extend and shorten wheelbases, add secret compartments, and similar changes.

Replace Components and Parts: May include such things as adding handgrips (2D4 S.D.C. each) and railings (1D6+4 S.D.C. each), extra (or fewer) headlights (1D6 S.D.C.), adding a spotlight (small; 20 S.D.C.) or searchlight (medium to large; 30 S.D.C. to 50 S.D.C.), remove doors and replace them with locking hatches (60 S.D.C./square foot. +10 S.D.C. per level of experience with an A.R. of 16), change windows to slits with armored glass (75 S.D.C. +5 S.D.C. per level of experience with an A.R. of 14), add a roof mounted turret (250 S.D.C. +10 S.D.C. per level of experience with an A.R. of 12), add or repair weapon mounts for heavy vehicle-mounted weapons (machine-guns, missile launchers, flame throwers, etc.) but cannot hook up the weapon or ammo drum or modify the actual weapons unless he also has the *Weapon Systems* skill.

The Vehicle Armorer can also drive/operate basic military vehicles and trucks at the *Base Skill* for that vehicle type.

Note: Most of the above is *illegal* outside the military (or certain authorized agencies and organizations) in most industrialized nations. Acquiring military grade weapons, ammo, parts, and vehicles can also be a challenge and may be half the adventure (see the *Find Contraband* skill). **Base Skill:** 30% +5% per level of experience. **Note:** Automatically gets the *Basic Mechanics* skill at +20% as part of this skill. Taking this skill in conjunction with *Automotive Mechanics* provides a +10% bonus to the automotive skill. This skill is usually reserved for bounty hunters, mercenaries, and mechanical specialists working for criminal organizations, survivalist or anti-Nightlord groups, military contractors, or somebody’s military.

Military Skills

Camouflage: The skill of concealing a fixed base position, vehicle, equipment or individual, using natural and/or artificial materials. A fair amount of time is involved in the preparation of a larger position. Large cargo nets, cut branches or underbrush are used most often in camouflage. This skill is also used to conceal traps. **Base Skill:** 20% +5% per level of experience.

Demolitions: Underwater: Fundamentally the same basic skills and training as *Demolitions*, but with an emphasis on using explosives in an underwater environment, including underwater techniques, area effect, sound wave damage, different types of explosives, as well as arming, disarming and repairing torpedoes and depth charges. **Base Skill:** 56% +4% per level of experience. **Note:** Any character with the *Demolitions* skill can use explosives underwater, but is -10%. Conversely, this skill can be used on dry land at the same penalty.

Field Armorer & Munitions Expert: This is a fundamental knowledge of infantry weapons, ammo and body armor. Such knowledge is likely to be limited to survivalists, gun enthusiasts, some street gang members/criminals and select military personnel and experts in the field. The character can maintain, unjam, fix, modify, mount, reload ammunition (can even produce most specialized rounds with the proper equipment), and figure out most *small arms* (conventional and military grade pistols, rifles, shotguns, and submachine-guns). As an armorer, the character can repair such weapons, fix minor damage to body armor (restore 20% of the armor's maximum S.D.C.), adjust targeting sights, use and repair optical enhancements, reload missiles and ammo drums, install/mount machine-guns and rocket launchers on a vehicle, as well as sharpen blades, make arrows and arrowheads, make horseshoes and basic metal items (nails, spikes, and chain links). A major overhaul is not possible. **Base Skill:** 40% +5% per level of experience. **Note:** Automatically gets the *Basic Mechanics* skill at 30% +5% per level as part of this package.

Recognize Weapon Quality: The ability to accurately determine a weapon's durability, reliability, and quality by physically examining it. This includes knowing which manufacturers are reputed to make the best weapons, the ability to recognize damage or signs of wear or misuse, modifications/customization, whether the weapon can be made as good as new with a little repair work and/or cleaning, whether it is a cheap (or quality) "knock-off" (copy/imitation), and so on. The character can also recognize if the weapon is stolen (serial numbers filed away, etc.), new, old, and if it has any other special features or properties as well as what the fair price should be. **Base Skill:** 25% +5% per level of experience. **Note:** Reduce the skill ability by half if the item is not actually handled (seen but not physically examined).

Physical Skills

Aerobic Athletics: A type of aerobic exercise to build the body, develop reflexes and grace, and learn a few very basic self-defense moves. **Bonuses:** +1 to disarm, +1 to pull punch, +2D4 S.D.C. and +2 to kicking damage. Sense of balance (30% +5% per level of experience).

Kick Boxing: Kick Boxing is a form of martial arts self-defense. The character who takes Kick Boxing has done maybe a few months or a year of casual training as a supplement to his usual Hand to Hand Combat skill. **Bonuses:** +1 to P.E., +1 to P.S., and +1D10 to S.D.C., plus add the following strikes to the usual list of known attacks: Roundhouse Kick (3D6 damage), Axe Kick (2D8 damage), Knee Strike (1D8 damage) and Leap Kick (3D8 damage, but counts as two melee attacks).

Outdoorsmanship: Being an avid outdoorsman and survivalist, this character has spent a significant portion of his/her life living off the land or in the wild. As a result, the character is hardened to the rigors of outdoor life. **Requires:** *Wilderness Survival*. **Bonuses:** Add +1 to P.E., +2D6 to S.D.C. and +5% to the *I.D. Plants and Fruit, Land Navigation, and Wilderness Survival* skills.

Physical Labor: Not all strength and conditioning comes from deliberate training or sports, some comes from old-fashioned hard work. This skill represents the strength and endurance gained from hard physical labor either due to a physi-

cal occupation (such as construction, ditch digging, warehouse work loading and unloading boxes, etc.) or really demanding chores at home such as chopping wood, bailing hay, mending fences, etc. **Bonuses:** Add +2 to P.S., +1 to P.E. and +2D8 to S.D.C.

Pilot Skills

Bicycling: The character knows how to ride bicycles and can ride over rough terrain, reach two times normal running speed, travel cross-country at normal running speed, and perform tricks and jumps (roll skill level; failed roll means a crash) on a bike. Maximum speed can be maintained for a time equal to the P.E.x5 in minutes. Skill also includes basic maintenance/repairs of bicycles. **Base Skill:** 44% +4% per level of experience.

Boats: Paddle Types/Canoe/Kayak: Includes paddled boats and canoes, rowboats and knee boards, as well as the Kayak. Speed in still water is usually equal to the character's P.S. attribute (treated for all purposes as Spd) and can be maintained for P.E. x5 in minutes without pause. The skill also includes basic principles behind using currents, maintenance, and even "tricks" like sculling and right-siding a flipped canoe, etc. **Base Skill:** 50% +5% per level.

Combat Driving: This skill supplements other driving skills by helping to make the character a master of the roads when driving automobiles, jeeps, trucks, motorcycles and other ground vehicles. It helps to turn the character into an aggressive road hog and cool-headed "chicken" player. In fact, tricks, dangerous maneuvers, and high-speed car chases are no sweat for this character, although his passengers are likely to fear for their lives.

In game mechanics, skill penalties for tricks, vehicular attacks (ram, sideswipe, etc.), and evasive maneuvers are reduced by half when this character is at the wheel, plus he is +2 to dodge when driving, +2 to roll with a crash/impact, can fire a weapon from a moving vehicle at only a -2 penalty, and can even make an Aimed or "Called Shot" (at -2 to strike) while in a *moving* vehicle (or talk, or engage in some other activity while driving without penalty). This is a supplemental piloting skill applicable only to ground vehicles and does not have a base skill or level of progression other than reducing penalties an additional one point per three levels of the driver's experience.

Tracked & Construction Vehicles: Includes landcrawlers, half-tracks, light tanks, and big-wheeled heavy construction vehicles and Earthmovers like bulldozers, steam shovels/excavators, scrapers, graders, tractors, loaders, backhoes, dump trucks, haulers, etc. **Base Skill:** 40% +4% per level of experience. Can pilot tanks and APCs but at a -15% penalty and -1 attack per melee round.

Rogue Skills

Find Contraband: The character with this skill knows where to find illegal arms dealers, the Black Market, smugglers, thieves, forgers (mainly fake I.D.s), fences, pawn shops, blind pigs (illegal gambling establishments), exotic animal dealers (illegal wild animals, endangered species, and the bizarre), automobile chop-shops, slavers, prostitutes, drug dealers, illegal medical treatment, stolen antiquities, and other people and places that traffic in illegal goods and services. The skill makes

the character familiar with underworld hangouts, gangs, criminal operations, and the general practices, codes of conduct, pricing structures and modes of operation of the criminal underworld. Likewise, the character has a good idea of what illegal weapons, ammo, and items should cost and what these people pay for contraband items (typically only 20% of the retail market price). The character also knows the penalties for being caught with contraband. **Base Skill:** 26% +4% per level of experience. **Bonus:** +10% to *I.D. Undercover Agents*. **Note:** Typically taught to military police and armed forces personnel occupying other countries.

I.D. Undercover Agents. A combination skill, good eye, and knack for identifying undercover agents; typically members of law enforcement, but may also include NSB agents, private detectives, spies, bounty hunters, and anybody snooping around. **Base Skill:** 30% +4% per level of experience.

Netwise: Similar to the *Streetwise* skill, the character is familiar with the ins and outs of the World Wide Web. This includes navigating the Internet, using search engines and social networks, and all the usual with a focus on finding obscure sites and information, locating and accessing hidden boards and chat rooms such as the *Shadowboard*, finding and using “backdoors” into various databases, a knowledge of what sites are frequented by hackers, Nightbane, factions, NSB agents, and other special interest groups, as well as the reputations of various online service providers (email clients, file sharing programs, etc.), where to download free programs (such as anti-virus and anti-spyware tools), popular rumors floating around the net, Internet jargon (such as afk and rofl), and other bits of net “culture.” The character can generally find data on even the most obscure topics rather quickly (on a successful skill roll), but whether it is reliable is another issue entirely. The character is also likely to have 1D8 online “contacts” of various ages and professions who he may be able to ask for help when searching for information. Exactly who these contacts are and what help they may be able to provide is left up to the G.M. and player to work out. **Base Skill:** 20% +4% per level of experience. **Bonuses:** +10% to *Research* and +5% to any *Lore* skill and *Computer Hacking*. **Note:** This skill is distinct from the *Research* skill as it focuses entirely on using the Internet to find information and contact others. The major advantage of *Netwise* is that most information can be located rather quickly (half the time of traditional research if not quicker), although such information also has a higher likelihood of being at least partially incorrect (1D4x10%). **Requires:** *Computer Operation*.

Roadwise: A regional skill in which the character knows the streets, alleys, back roads, shortcuts, fastest routes, construction zones, speed traps, highways, police stations and posts in his city and state (or province) like the back of his hand. Also knows all the local junkyards, the best mechanic garages (including a few who don’t ask questions), and the best places to hide a vehicle or lay low for a few hours or a few days, as well as the best place to abandon a vehicle where it will not be found any time soon (authorities or an enemy must conduct a serious and expansive search to find it – if so, roll percentile to see how quickly it is found: 01-25%: 2D4 days, 26-50%: 3D6 days, 51-75%: 3D6 weeks, 76-90%: 1D4 years, 91-96%: 1D4x10 years, 97-00%: Never! **Base Skill:** 26% +4% per level of experience. **Note:** Typically reserved for characters who live on the

street, patrol officers, delivery drivers, paramedics, car thieves and other criminal types.

Safe-Cracking: A specialized skill in which the character studies the strengths, weaknesses, and construction of safes and how to open them without damaging the contents inside. The fingers of the safecracker are so sensitive that they can “feel” the subtle calibration of combination locks and other locking mechanisms. When using explosives, they can use their abilities to such precision that they can “blow” the lock off a safe, security door, safe deposit box and similar without creating a big, area effect explosion or inflicting damage to the contents (a failed *Safe-Cracking* skill or *Demolitions* roll means the explosion was too much and the contents are damaged). **Base Skill:** 20% +4% per level of experience. **Bonuses:** Adds +5% bonus to the *Pick Locks* and *Demolitions* skills. The character gets a +4% bonus if a *Locksmith* and +6% if a *Mechanical Engineer*. **Penalties:** Requires focus, concentration and keen hearing, so characters with an M.E. of 14 or less are -10% on this skill.

Seduction. This is the ability to make the opposite sex melt with desire. This skill is somewhat similar to the *Interrogation* skill in that the seducer knows how to ask the right questions to get information without being obvious. The seducer usually seems attentive, sympathetic, alluring and sexy. Men and women who are seduced tend to have loose lips and will spill secrets. They also lose track of time, spend big money to impress and please their seducer, and lavish her or him with their affection, time and attention while oblivious to everything else around them.

Anyone who has been successfully seduced is distracted, skill performance is half and takes twice as long to perform, the character doesn’t notice people and events around him/her, and is easily caught off guard (no initiative and all bonuses are at half when attacked by a character other than the seducer). Worse, the victim(s) of seduction is completely vulnerable to the seducer. The seducer always gets the first attack/strike/action, and the victim has no chance at self-defense against that first attack, plus the victim loses one attack/action from surprise or horror. **Base Skill:** 20% +3% per level of experience. **Skill Bonuses:** +1% for every one M.A. attribute point over 20, and every two P.B. points over 17 (round up). So a character with a P.B. of 23 (+3) and M.A. of 24 (+4) would be +7% to successfully seduce. The seducer can influence more than one person at a time; one additional victim per every three levels of experience. In addition, the seducer is +5% to pick the pockets of, palm, or plant things on his/her victim of seduction, as well as adding +10% to *Con Artistry* and *Fast Talk*, and +5% to *Sing*, *Dance*, and any gambling-related skills. Also, *Seduction* victims who are intoxicated or drugged are easier to seduce (+5%).

Tailing: The practiced ability to follow someone without their knowledge. Includes basic stake-out procedures. A failed *Tailing* roll indicates that the character being “tailed” has noticed that he is being followed and may take evasive action to lose the “tail,” or confront or attack the person (unless he makes a run for it). Either way, the subject of the “tail” is likely to escape being followed any further. **Base Skill:** 30% +5% per level of experience. **Bonus:** +5% to the *Tailing* skill if the character also has *Prowl*. **Note:** *Tailing* is also part of the *Surveillance* skill.

Technical

Barter: A skill at bargaining with merchants, businessmen, thieves, traders, smugglers, street persons, and other characters to get a fair price or fair exchange of trade goods or services. Depending on the character's point of view and effort at bartering, he can raise the amount he gets or lower the price he pays by 3D6+2%; not applicable to rare items and alien technology. Generally, if the haggler rolls under his Bartering skill percentage, he gets the discount when buying, or the better price when he is the one doing the selling or trading. If the price is disputed, the two bartering characters can each make rolls on percentile dice, the highest roll wins and gets their price and not a penny less or nickel more. **Base Skill:** 30% +4% per level of experience. **Note:** *Mathematics* and *Literacy* are not required but helpful, with each adding a +2% bonus to Barter. **Begging:** Though usually learned out of necessity in the school of hard knocks and poverty, this skill can be particularly useful to collect food, money and clothing when down on one's luck, especially in large cities. It can also enhance characters with the *Disguise* skill when posing as a beggar or refugee (+5%). The base skill determines the chance of collecting a donation from one in every ten passersby, and on a crowded street that could be pretty lucrative. The amount of money, food or goods depends on the local economy, the generosity of the individual (typically small) and where the begging is taking place, but is typically in the 50 cents to \$5 range. Note that begging may be outlawed in some communities and the character may be arrested for vagrancy, shooed away, or even mugged. **Base Skill:** 30% +3% per level of experience. **Note:** Many characters are likely to consider this skill to be beneath them; most common among young runaways and those living on the street.

Business & Finance: This skill represents a basic understanding of business, management, banking, and the financial world. The character can set up a business, prepare mission statements, business proposals, and stockholder reports, manage and supervise others, handle all aspects of a small business, or get work as a stockbroker or advisor. **Base Skill:** 35% +5% per level of experience. **Requires:** *Literacy* and *Basic Mathematics*.

Construction: This skill includes the basic knowledge of construction and carpentry needed to build simple structures and buildings, roads and bridges, and similar construction projects. Characters with this skill make competent workers for major civil engineering projects as well. This skill includes a basic understanding of woodworking, welding, riveting, concrete and asphalt pouring, flooring and drywall installation, insulation, basic wiring and plumbing, painting and sealing, and the use of most common construction tools excluding heavy machinery (see *Pilot: Tracked & Construction Vehicles* for that). **Base Skill:** 30% +5% per level of experience.

Excavation: A mixed bag of abilities that includes finding one's direction in underground rooms, estimating one's approximate depth, "digging out" relics and evidence from debris, collapsed tunnels, and underground, as well as digging out and fording up/repairing collapsed tunnels, underground chambers, and caves. The skill gives the character a good understanding of how to best perform an excavation without any major setbacks, where to dig, what is the best type of soil, how deep to go, how to pack and secure tunnel walls and ceilings, where to place support beams and what building materials to use in underground

construction. Included are techniques for rescuing victims of collapsed tunnels, structures, and similar circumstances, as well as for surviving such situations. **Note:** Tunnels and excavation sites that are made quickly are not permanent, and can be collapsed by gunfire, earthquakes, traffic vibrations, etc. Trying excavations without this skill is just asking for trouble and is performed on pure luck. **Base Skill:** 30% +5% per level of experience.

Firefighting: A basic understanding of fire and how it works. This includes how fire is fueled and how it spreads, as well as firefighting methods and techniques, rescue procedures, and the practiced use of firefighting tools, equipment and gear. **Base Skill:** 40% +5% per level of experience.

General Repair & Maintenance: Not everyone can be a mechanic, blacksmith or carpenter, but many are good with their hands and capable of doing satisfactory repairs on simple mechanisms, gears, pulleys, wheels, and so on. The *General Repair/Maintenance* skill includes: sharpening blades, minor repairs on weapons, packing their own common bullets, sewing tears in clothes (it may not look pretty, but does the job), changing a tire, shoeing a horse, repairing furniture, painting, varnishing, nailing and assisting in basic woodworking, and even doing minor patchwork on armor (restores 2D6 S.D.C.). Roll once to see whether the character can figure out what is broken, what must be done to fix it, and whether it is beyond his meager abilities to repair. Roll again to determine success or failure in making the actual repair. If failure, the player may try again, but only twice. **Base Skill:** 35% +5% per level of experience. Reduce skill proficiency by half if the item is extremely damaged, complex, high-tech, or alien.

History: The first percentile number represents a very general historical knowledge of the *world* and the most famous myths, legends, people and events. The second percentile number indicates a more in-depth knowledge of a particular *subject* or *region* in the world (pick by nation or continent). For example: History of a *region* such as North America is a deep knowledge about the United States, Canada and Mexico, their origin, leaders, key figures in history and science, lore, religion, traditions, famous people, and so on, as well as the myths and legends of that land and culture. An example of a historical "subject" rather than a place, might include American military history, industry, science, music, art, and so on.

The History skill may be taken repeatedly to cover multiple regions of the world or various subjects. So, a character who takes this skill three times might apply it to North America, Western Europe, and Russia. The two base skill percentages indicate the approximate degree of information the character has learned or can remember accurately; remember, the first number is for a general knowledge of world history and the second for a more specific subject. **Base Skill:** 60%/40% +4% per level of experience. **Note:** This skill will NOT cover subjects dealing with the paranormal, the various factions, or other such information. See the *Lore* skills below for such subjects.

Jury-Rig: A character with this skill can repair almost anything, and even build something out of scrap components. There is no guarantee that the jury-rig will hold for very long (4D6 hours or 2D4 days, whichever is most appropriate), or will even work in the way intended (roll again, a failed roll means the system is only 50% functional/works at half its normal speed or

power level), but it may well save a character's life until they can acquire the proper parts, buy a new unit or get a skilled mechanic to do the job right. **Requirements:** At least *Basic Mechanics* and *Basic Electronics*. **Base Skill:** 25% +5% per level of experience (add an extra +10% bonus if the character is an *Electrical* or *Mechanical Engineer* or *Field Armorer*).

Law: The character knows the criminal code for his country, what constitutes a criminal act, the typical punishment and many legal precedents, procedures, and decisions common throughout a particular nation or region (e.g. North America, but not each specific state or small town). This can be an invaluable skill when trying to determine if someone is breaking the law, how grave or petty the criminal act is, as well as determining the likely punishment. The skill is also important for making a criminal charge stick, setting bail, using legal protocol, and defending those unjustly accused. The character also knows the legal protocol and proper conduct for conducting searches, police investigations and other aspects of law enforcement. **Base Skill:** 35% +5% per level.

Lore: Factions: A general knowledge about the various factions including all of the most infamous (the Lightbringers, Underground Railroad, Warlords, etc.) and a little about the Nightbane in general. Includes a passing knowledge about the NSB and other agencies that sometimes interact with or battle factions. Local and smaller, lesser known factions are not known unless the character lives in the city, state or province in which they operate. **Base Skill:** 30% +5% per level.

Lore: Magic: This area of study does *not* give the character any magic powers nor the ability to use Cybermagic devices or read magic symbols. It provides a scholarly general knowledge and history of the magic, how it works, common magical powers and spells, their effects, who possesses such magic, notable creatures of magic, the various types of practitioners of magic (Mystic, Sorcerer, Cybermage, Fleshsculptor, Mirrormage, etc.), places of reputed magical significance and power (Stonehenge, Kahokia Mounds, etc.), and myths and legends about the most famous magic items and notorious practitioners. **Base Skill:** 25% +5% per level of experience. The following abilities come with this layman's skill: Recognize Magic Symbols, Runes and Circles: 15% +5% per level of experience. Although the character may recognize whether the symbol, ward, or rune is *real*, and if it is meant to be a warning, used for protection, or is a component of magic, he cannot read or use magic. Recognize Enchantment: May be able to tell if a person is under the influence of magic charms, possession, curses, mind control, and similar: 5% +5% per level of experience. Identify Magic Artifact: 10% +5% (+10% if the item is famous or he's seen pictures or drawings, but -15% to identify an unknown or alien magic item.)

Mythology: A general knowledge of the most well known world myths, including Greek, Roman and Egyptian, plus extensive knowledge of ONE particular country's or culture's myths relating to ghosts, spirits, demons, Goblins, Faerie Folk, monsters, dragons, immortals, undead, Elemental forces, supernatural animals, gods and magic. All countries have their share of unique myths. In North America that includes myths about Big Foot, Ogopogo, and the Chupacabra. **Bonuses:** Adds a +5% bonus to *Lore: Magic* and +5% to *Lore: Demons & Monsters*. **Base Skill:** 30% +5% per level of experience.

Philosophy: The principles of philosophy, ethics and morals, methods for effective debating and examining a subject from a wide perspective, and touching upon aspects of sociology and social consciousness. **Base Skill:** 30% +5% per level of experience. **Bonuses:** +5% to *Public Speaking* and *Creative Writing*.

Rope Works: This is a skill that takes into account the various needs and uses of rope. The character knows a variety of ways to tie knots, the advantages to various types of ropes and cords, their tensile strength, and how to weave/make rope. A failed roll to tie a knot means that it is loose and sloppy and easy to untie, slip out of, or likely to unravel or snap when strained. **Base Skill:** 30% +5% per level of experience. Characters bound/tied by this character are -10% to escape/slip knots.

Salvage: This skill allows characters to find, identify, pick up, strip down, evaluate, and possibly sell any debris, wreckage, and junk that they can locate. Salvage covers everything, but typically includes paper, lumber, plastic, glass, scrap metal, electrical wiring and components, circuit boards, and machine parts. This is not like the *Jury-Rig* skill; a character with *Salvage* cannot make something out of odd components but, given some time and equipment, they can strip down a damaged machine to its *basic component parts* or gather useful materials to repair an existing machine or build something new. Has a very rudimentary understanding of metallurgy. **Base Skill:** 35% +5% per level of experience.

Ancient Weapon Proficiencies

W.P. Paired Weapons: A tactic in which a one-handed weapon is held in each hand (up to four) to be used in any combination of combat moves simultaneously. For example, two short swords, or a short sword and broadsword, sword and knife, mace and shield, and so on. Two-handed weapons cannot be used as a Paired Weapon. Users of Paired Weapons can choose to do one of the following in any one melee action:

1. *Strike and parry simultaneously.* In other words, those skilled in W.P. Paired Weapons can often perform two actions for every one melee action/attack. Of course, a character with W.P. Paired Weapons can parry an attack and strike simultaneously only if he still has attacks left. A character who has already used up his attacks can NOT counterstrike (hit back) until the next melee round begins, but he can parry until then.

2. *Twin, simultaneous strikes* against the same target. Both weapons hit the same opponent or target at once, making it ONE melee attack/action (roll only once to strike with both weapons). The defender under attack can only try to parry one of the two weapons coming at him for his defensive parry. The other will strike unless he too has the W.P. Paired Weapons skill and is using two weapons, or a weapon and a shield, to try and block both simultaneous attacks; needs to roll one parry.

3. *Strike two different targets* (or strike one and parry another incoming attack), simultaneously; both must be within reach.

4. Parry two different attackers, one with each hand.

Note: A character with W.P. Paired Weapons needs to make two separate rolls if he is: a) Striking two different opponents; b) parrying attacks from two separate opponents; or c) striking with one weapon and parrying with the other against either one or two targets. The only time that just one roll to strike or parry with paired weapons is necessary is when the character is either

striking the same opponent twice or parrying two attacks from the same opponent.

Characters with the *W.P. Paired Weapons* skill may use any weapons that can be effectively used with one hand (i.e., one suitable weapon in each hand) as long as they possess the *W.P.* for that weapon (do not apply off-hand penalties). However, any weapon being used in which the wielder does not have a *Weapon Proficiency* or which is too large or heavy effectively negates the *Paired Weapons* skill, making it impossible to use both hands and weapons simultaneously; can only attack one opponent and each swipe of the weapon counts as one melee attack.

A character with *W.P. Paired Weapons* using both of his attacks simultaneously on someone is vulnerable to attack from a second opponent. When fighting three (or more) attackers, the character would be able to try to parry two of the attackers, but any other attacks before the defender's next available action would be impossible to parry.

Four-armed characters only need to take *W.P. Paired Weapons* once, not once for each pair of arms. A character who already has *W.P. Paired Weapons* would not gain any additional bonuses or benefits by taking the skill a second time. Only weapons in which the character has a *Weapon Proficiency* (*W.P.*) can be used with *W.P. Paired Weapons*. *W.P. Paired Weapons* is designed for melee weapons like knives, swords, clubs, etc., not guns. When shooting two guns at once there is a penalty of -2 to strike with the regular hand and -6 to strike with the off-hand.

Modern Weapon Proficiencies

W.P. Shotgun: A familiarity with the classic double-barrel shotgun and police and military versions of shotguns with ammo drums.

Damage: Buckshot: 2D6 S.D.C. (half damage for rock salt) to a 10 foot (3 m) radius; 2 S.D.C. (stings like the dickens) for riot control rubber bullets. Light Shot: 3D6 S.D.C. Medium Shot: 4D6 to 5D6, Heavy Shot/Large Bore: 6D6 S.D.C. **Note:** In all examples listed above, damage is for a single round, double the damage if both barrels are fired simultaneously.

Average Range: Sawed-Off: 60 feet (18.3 m), Hunting: 200 feet (61 m), and Police/Military Shotgun: 300 feet (91.5 m).

Typical Payload: 2-6 in common shotguns, 20, 50 and 100 round ammo drums for police and military style (each single blast counts as one melee attack; can't fire two simultaneous blasts but has rapid-fire and larger payload).

W.P. Bonuses: +1 to strike at levels 3, 6, 10, and 14.

Education Modifiers

To help expedite and vary the *Nightbane* character creation process and what types of skills are available to the character, we've put together the following table (suitable for *Wampyrs* and *NPCs* too).

You still need roll up the *Nightbane* as usual, but for skill selection and background, a player may opt to roll on the table below (instead of going with the *Basic Nightbane Skill Package* on page 89 of the *RPG*). If the *G.M.* thinks it is appropriate and allows it, the player may *choose* the background and education

that he wants for a character. The age of the character should be considered.



01-10% Street Schooled

Whether a runaway, impoverished, dropout, a wanted fugitive by the *NSB*, an orphan, or victim of some other circumstance, this character never obtained a formal education. Instead, he learned what skills he has from people and experiences on the streets. Life on the streets means scrounging, salvaging, begging, bartering, doing odd jobs and petty theft. This is probably a young character, age 12-20, living on the streets of a big city, but can be any age.

R.C.C. Skills: Starts with *Hand to Hand: Basic* (Can be upgraded to *Expert* at the cost of two *R.C.C.* Skill selections, or *Martial Arts* at the cost of three), *Barter* (+12%), *Begging* (+20%), *Bicycling* (+16%) or *Automobile* (+4%), *Language: Native* (+10%), *Literacy* (+5%), *Lore: Nightbane* or *Nightlands* (+25%), *Roadwise* (+12%), *Salvage* (+15%), *Streetwise* (+30%), and either *W.P. Knife* or *Blunt* (pick one).

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select one *Rogue*, one *Domestic* skill, one *Technical* skill, and three skills of choice from the following list at level one. Select one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9 and 13.

Communications: Radio: Basic only.

Domestic: Any (+5%).

Electrical: Basic Electronics only.

Espionage: Detect Ambush, Detect Concealment, and Disguise only.

Mechanical: Automotive and Basic Mechanics only.

Medical: None.

Military: None.

Physical: Any except Acrobatics, Gymnastics or S.C.U.B.A.

Pilot: Any Boats (except Ships), Automobile (+6%), Bicycling (+10%), Motorcycle (+10%), or Truck (+10%) only.

Pilot Related: None.

Rogue: Any (+5%), except Computer related skills and Safe-Cracking.

Science: Mathematics: Basic only.

Technical: Any (+10% to Lore skills only).

W.P.: Any, excluding Pole Arm, Whip, Automatic Rifle, and Heavy (Military).

Wilderness: None.

Secondary Skills: This character may select three Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, and one additional Secondary Skill at levels 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 13.

11-20% Street Thug

Another character who is a runaway, dropout, orphan or victim of poverty who never obtained a formal education and grew up on the streets. Only this character fell in with the wrong crowd and has survived as a small time criminal and street muscle. This is probably a young character age, 16-30, growing up on the streets of a big city, but can be any age.

R.C.C. Skills: Starts with Hand to Hand: Expert (can be upgraded to Martial Arts at the cost of one R.C.C. Skill selection), Language: Native (+15%), Literacy (+10%), Lore: Nightlands or Factions (+25%), Body Building, Wrestling or Boxing (pick one), Roadwise (+10%), Streetwise (+30%), Streetwise: Drugs (+25%), and W.P. Knife or Blunt (pick one), and W.P. Automatic Pistol.

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select two Espionage skills, two Rogue skills, one Physical skill, and two skills of choice from the following list at level one. Select two additional skills at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12.

Communications: Radio: Basic only.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Basic Electronics only.

Espionage: Any (+10%), except Sniper, Tracking and Wilderness Survival.

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

Medical: First Aid only.

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

Physical: Any except Acrobatics, Gymnastics or S.C.U.B.A.

Pilot: Boats (any, except Ships), Automobile (+6%), Bicycling (+10%), Combat Driving, Motorcycle (+10%), or Truck (+10%) only.

Pilot Related: None.

Rogue: Any (+10%).

Science: Mathematics: Basic (+10%) only.

Technical: Any (+5%).

W.P.: Any, excluding Pole Arm, Whip, and Heavy (Military).

Wilderness: None.

Secondary Skills: This character may select three Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, and one additional Secondary Skill at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14.

21-25% High School Educated

This character finished high school before going out into the world to find work or being forced to go underground when he became a Nightbane. This is probably a young character, age 17-21, years old with little work experience, but can be any age.

R.C.C. Skills: Starts with Hand to Hand: Basic (can be upgraded to Expert at the cost of two R.C.C. Skill selections, or Martial Arts at the cost of three), Bicycling (+10%), Computer Operation (+15%), Language: Native (+15%), Literacy (+20%), Math: Basic (+20%), and Pilot: Automobile (+4%).

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select three Domestic skills, one Technical skill, and five skills of choice from the following list at level one. Select one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12.

Communications: Radio: Basic and T.V./Video only.

Domestic: Any (+5%).

Electrical: Basic Electronics only.

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Automotive and Basic Mechanics only.

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: None.

Physical: Any.

Pilot: Any, except Helicopter, Jet Aircraft, Jet Fighters, Jet Packs, Ships, and Tanks.

Pilot Related: None.

Rogue: Computer Hacking and Netwise only.

Science: Any (+5%).

Technical: Any (+10%).

W.P.: Any, excluding Pole Arm, Whip, Automatic Rifle, and Heavy (Military).

Wilderness: None.

Secondary Skills: This character may select three Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, and one additional Secondary Skills at level 3, 6, 9 and 12.

26-30% Associate's Degree or Vocational Training

The character has received his or her Associate's Degree, or the equivalent of two years of college or vocational education. This is probably a young character age, 19-25 years old, with little work experience, but can be any age.

R.C.C. Skills: Starts with Hand to Hand: Basic (can be upgraded to Expert at the cost of two R.C.C. Skill selections, or Martial Arts at the cost of three), Bicycling (+6%), Computer

Operation (+20%), Language: Native (+25%), Literacy (+30%), Math: Basic (+20%), and Pilot: Automobile (+10%).

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select two Domestic or Piloting skills, three skills from one of the following skill categories as your area of special training (Communications, Electrical, Medical, Mechanical, or Science; all three skills get a +10% bonus), and select five skills of choice from the following list at level one. Select one additional skill at levels 3, 5, 7, 10 and 12.

Communications: None, except as special vocational training, above.

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: Any (+5%).

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Any (+5%).

Medical: None, except as special vocational training, above.

Military: None.

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics.

Pilot: Any, except Helicopter, Jet Aircraft, Jet Fighters, Jet Packs, Ships, and Tanks.

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Netwise only (+5%).

Science: Any (+10%).

Technical: Any (+10%).

W.P.: Any, excluding Pole Arm, Whip, Automatic Rifle, and Heavy (Military).

Wilderness: Any.

Secondary Skills: This character may select four Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, and one additional Secondary Skill at levels 3, 5, 7, 10 and 13.

31-35% College Graduate with a Bachelor's Degree

This character graduated from a 4-year university or similar program, obtaining a Bachelor's degree in some field, or has a vocational education that is roughly equivalent. This character can be any age, but is probably 22-28 years old with minimal work experience.

R.C.C. Skills: Starts with Hand to Hand: Basic (can be upgraded to Expert at the cost of two R.C.C. Skill selections, or Martial Arts at the cost of three), Bicycling (+6%), Computer Operation (+25%), Language: Native (+30%), Literacy (+40%), Math: Basic (+30%), and Pilot: Automobile (+10%).

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select three skills from one of the following skill categories as your area of special training (Communications, Electrical, Medical, Mechanical, Science or Technical; all three skills get a +20% bonus), and select nine skills of choice from the following list at level one. Select one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12.

Communications: None, except as special vocational training, above.

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: Any (+10%).

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Any (+10%).

Medical: None, except as special vocational training, above.

Military: None.

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics.

Pilot: Any, except Helicopter, Jet Aircraft, Jet Fighters, Jet Packs, Ships, and Tanks.

Pilot Related: Any (+10%).

Rogue: Netwise only (+10%).

Science: Any (+15%).

Technical: Any (+10%).

W.P.: Any, excluding Pole Arm, Whip, Automatic Rifle, and Heavy (Military).

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: This character may select five Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, and one additional Secondary Skill at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12.

36-40% Rescue/First Responder or Law

The character is a high school graduate and may have 1D4 years of college and special training. Includes occupations such as firefighters, paramedics, law enforcement (any branch), disaster relief, and similar (select skills to fit the desired occupation). Can be age 22 and older.

R.C.C. Skills: Starts with Hand to Hand: Basic (can be upgraded to Expert at the cost of one R.C.C. Skill selection, or Martial Arts at the cost of two), Climbing (+20%), Combat Driving, Computer Operation (+20%), Paramedic (+20%), Language: Native (+25%), Literacy (+30%), Math: Basic (+30%), Pilot: Automobile (+12%) or Pilot: Truck (+16%), and Radio: Basic (+20%).

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select two Pilot or Pilot Related skills and two from Medical or Technical skills that relate to the character's role as a First Responder (e.g. Excavation, Firefighting, Law, Rope Works, etc.; +20% skill bonus) as the character's area of special training and select six skills of choice from the following list at level one. Select one additional skill at levels 3, 5, 7, 10 and 12.

Communications: Any (+15%).

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: Any (+10%).

Espionage: None for most, available only to law enforcement (+10%).

Mechanical: Any (+10%).

Medical: None, except as special vocational training, above.

Military: None.

Physical: Any.

Pilot: Any, except Jet Fighters, Jet Packs, Ships, and Tanks.

Pilot Related: Any (+10%).

Rogue: Find Contraband, Netwise, Roadwise, and Streetwise only (+10%).

Science: Any (+10%).

Technical: Any (+10%).

W.P.: Any, excluding Pole Arm, Whip, Automatic Rifle, and Heavy (**Note:** Law enforcement may select any Modern Weapon).

Wilderness: Any (+10%).

Secondary Skills: This character may select five Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, and one additional Secondary Skill at levels 3, 5, 7, 10 and 12.

41-50% Laborer/Worker: Light

The character is an unskilled or semi-skilled laborer and has probably finished high school and possibly one or two years of college or vocational education. The character can be age 17 and older.

R.C.C. Skills: Starts with Hand to Hand: Basic (can be upgraded to Expert at the cost of two R.C.C. Skill selections, or Martial Arts at the cost of three), Aerobic Athletics, Computer Operation (+20%), General Repair & Maintenance (+15%), Language: Native (+25%), Literacy (+30%), Math: Basic (+20%), and Pilot: Automobile or Truck (+10%).

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select three skills from one of the following skill categories as the character's area of work/special training (Communications, Domestic, Mechanical, Science or Technical; all three skills get a +15% bonus), and select five skills of choice from the following list at level one. Select one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12.

Communications: None, except as special vocational training, above.

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: Any (+5%).

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Any (+10%).

Medical: First Aid only (+5%).

Military: None.

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics.

Pilot: Any, except Jet Aircraft, Jet Fighters, Jet Packs, Ships, and Tanks.

Pilot Related: Any (+5%).

Rogue: Netwise only (+5%).

Science: Any (+10%).

Technical: Any (+10%).

W.P.: Any, excluding Pole Arm, Whip, Automatic Rifle, and Heavy (Military).

Wilderness: Any.

Secondary Skills: This character may select four Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, and one additional Secondary Skills at levels 3, 5, 7, 10 and 13.

51-60% Heavy Laborer/Construction

The character is a *skilled laborer*, has finished high school, 1D6 years of college or trade school/vocational education for his job. Work can be construction/building, carpentry, crane operator, mechanical engineering, and similar. The character can be age 21 and older.

R.C.C. Skills: Starts with Hand to Hand: Basic (can be upgraded to Expert at the cost of two R.C.C. Skill selections, or

Martial Arts at the cost of three), Barter (+16%), Computer Operation (+30%), General Repair & Maintenance (+20%), Jury-Rig (+15%), Language: Native (+25%), Literacy (+30%), Math: Basic (+30%), Physical Labor, Pilot: Automobile or Truck (+10%), Radio Basic (+10%), and Salvage (+15%).

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select three skills from one of the following skill categories as the character's area of work/specialty (Electrical, Mechanical, Pilot, or Technical; all three skills get a +20% bonus), and select seven skills of choice from the following list at level one (many are probably related to building such as Boat Building, Carpentry, Construction, Excavation, etc.). Select one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12.

Communications: Any.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Any (+10%).

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Any (+15%).

Medical: First Aid only (+10%).

Military: Demolition skills only (any; +20%).

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics.

Pilot: Any, except Jet Aircraft, Jet Fighters, Jet Packs, Ships, and Tanks.

Pilot Related: Any (+5%).

Rogue: None.

Science: Any (+5% to most; +10% to Chemistry skills and Math: Advanced).

Technical: Any (+10%).

W.P.: Any, excluding Pole Arm, Whip, and Heavy (Military).

Wilderness: Any (+10%).

Secondary Skills: This character may select six Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, and one additional Secondary Skill at levels 3, 6, 9 and 13.

61-70% Mechanic & Repair

The character is a skilled mechanic. He may be a high school dropout with on the job/vocational training or a college graduate. The character can be age 18 and older.

R.C.C. Skills: Starts with Hand to Hand: Basic (can be upgraded to Expert at the cost of two R.C.C. Skill selections, or Martial Arts at the cost of three), Basic Electronics (+15%), Computer Operation (+25%), General Repair & Maintenance (+20%), Jury-Rig (+10%), Language: Native (+25%), Literacy (+30%), Math: Basic (+20%), Pilot: Automobile (+10%), and Salvage (+15%).

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select four skills from the Mechanical skill category (+15% skill bonus for each) as the character's area of specialty, and select five skills of choice from the following list at level one. Select one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12.

Communications: Radio Basic only.

Domestic: Any (+5%).

Electrical: Any (+10%).

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Any (+10%).

Medical: First Aid only (+5%).

Military: None.

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics.

Pilot: Any, except Jet Aircraft, Jet Fighters, Jet Packs, Ships, and Tanks.

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Find Contraband, Netwise, Palming and Roadwise only (+5%).

Science: Chemistry skills and Math only (+5%).

Technical: Any (+5%).

W.P.: Any, excluding Pole Arm, Whip, Automatic Rifle, and Heavy (Military).

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: This character may select four Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, and one additional Secondary Skill at levels 3, 5, 7, 10 and 13.

71-80% Computer/Electronics

This character may be a high school dropout with a natural talent and self-taught expertise in computers and/or electronics, a graduate from high school and trade school to a college graduate. This character can be 16 and older.

R.C.C. Skills: Starts with Hand to Hand: Basic (can be upgraded to Expert at the cost of two R.C.C. Skill selections, or Martial Arts at the cost of three), Bicycling (+4%), Computer Hacking (+25%), Computer Operation (+30%), Computer Programming (+30%), Computer Repair (+20%), Language: Native (+30%), Literacy (+40%), Math: Basic (+30%), Netwise (+25%) and Pilot: Automobile (+6%).

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select two skills from Communications and two from Technical (each of these skills gets a +15% bonus), and select six skills of choice from the following list at level one. Select one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12.

Communications: Any (+10%).

Domestic: Any (+5%).

Electrical: Any (+10%).

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Basic Mechanics only (+10%).

Medical: None.

Military: None.

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics and Boxing.

Pilot: Any, except Helicopter, Jet Aircraft, Jet Fighters, Jet Packs, Ships, and Tanks.

Pilot Related: Any (+10%).

Rogue: None, other than the allotted R.C.C. skills.

Science: Any (+5%).

Technical: Any (+10% bonus to Lore skills, Mythology, Philosophy, Photography, Research and Writing only).

W.P.: Any, excluding Pole Arm, Whip, Automatic Rifle, and Heavy (Military).

Wilderness: None.

Secondary Skills: This character may select five Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, and one additional Secondary Skill at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12.

81-90% Military/Soldier

This character may have completed high school and a year or two of college or be a dropout, but ultimately he joined the military where he learned new skills and discipline. The Nightbane is likely to be ex-military (Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine), probably recently honorably discharged from service or went AWOL after the Becoming. Age 20 and older.

R.C.C. Skills: Starts with Hand to Hand: Basic (can be upgraded to Expert at the cost of one R.C.C. Skill selection, or Martial Arts at the cost of two), Climbing (+20%), Computer Operation (+25%), Language: Native (+30%), Literacy (+35%), Math: Basic (+30%), Military Etiquette (+20%), Pilot: Automobile (+10%), Radio: Basic (+20%), Running, W.P. Knife and W.P. Automatic Rifle.

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select three skills from Military, two from Physical, and two from Communications or Espionage, and two W.P.s (any) of choice (each of these military related skills gets a +20% bonus; not applicable to Physical skills). Also select five skills of choice from the following list at level one. Select one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12.

Communications: Any (+15%).

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Any (+5%).

Espionage: Any (+5%).

Mechanical: Any (+10%).

Medical: Any (+10%).

Military: Any (+15%).

Physical: Any.

Pilot: Any (+10%).

Pilot Related: Any (+10%).

Rogue: Any.

Science: Astronomy and Advanced Math only (+10%).

Technical: Any (+5%).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+10%).

Secondary Skills: This character may select five Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, and one additional Secondary Skill at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12.

91-00% Driver/Delivery/Trucker

The character is a high school graduate and may have a year or two of college or trade school education. Can be any age, 20 and up.

R.C.C. Skills: Starts with Hand to Hand: Basic (Can be upgraded to Expert at the cost of two R.C.C. Skill selections, or Martial Arts at the cost of three), Combat Driving, Computer Operation (+15%), Land Navigation (+20%), Language: Native (+25%), Literacy (+30%), Math: Basic (+20%), Pilot: Automobile (+12%), Pilot: Truck (+20%), and Roadwise (+30%).

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select three Technical (+15%) or Pilot (+20%) skills (any except military vehicles) for the character's area of expertise, and select five skills of choice from the following list at level one. Select one additional skill at levels 3, 5, 7, 10 and 12.

Communications: Radio: Basic only.

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: Basic Electronics only (+5%).

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Aircraft Mechanics, Automotive Mechanics, and Basic Mechanics only (+10%).

Medical: First Aid only (+5%).

Military: None.

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics.

Pilot: Any, except Jet Fighters, Jet Packs, Ships, and Tanks.

Pilot Related: Any (+10%).

Rogue: Any.

Science: Astronomy and Math only (+10%).

Technical: Any (+10%).

W.P.: Any, excluding Pole Arm, Whip, and Heavy (Military).

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: This character may select four Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, and one additional Secondary Skill at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12.

Psychology of a Nightbane

A lot has been speculated about how Nightbane *tend* to feel, think, react, and behave.

How does it feel to be a normal human being one day, and without any prior indication or warning, turn into a hulking monster the next? What's it like to wield Supernatural Strength and magical powers? What toll does it take to be feared by your friends and family, or forced to keep your dark secret from them? What is it like to know things about the world you live in that others know nothing about or deny exist? How do you deal with knowing demonic beings rule our government and seek your destruction because they fear you? Why do these Demon Lords fear you so much, exactly? When do you give up your human life to become a soldier in a Hidden War, or do you try to do both? Why do so many Nightbane strive to be heroes? When is it all too much to deal with?

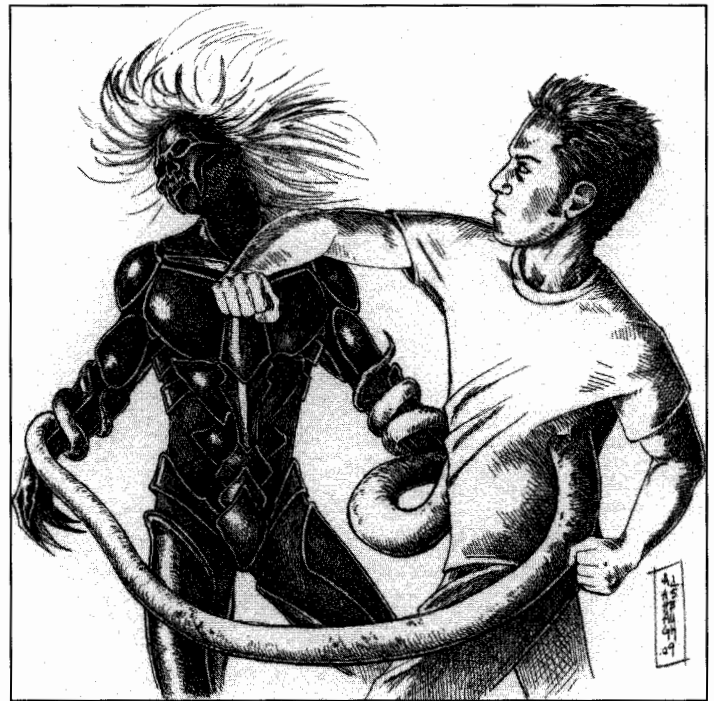
These are just some of the most immediate questions and demanding pressures that plague the Nightbane. Any one or two of them would be hard to deal with, but the Nightbane must deal with them all and there are no easy answers. They must face fear, hatred, rejection, uncertainty, identity crisis, life and death secrets, the trauma of war (secret or otherwise), and a life turned upside down. Yet the majority deal with it reasonably well.

Despite their gruesome or strange inhuman appearance, they are still ruled by emotions that are very much human. They are the living embodiment of *Doctor Jekyll & Mister Hyde*, though one could argue in reverse, for while there is a monster inside the human Facade, there is a *human* inside the monster. This means the eight foot tall grizzly bear with a flaming skull and razorblade claws may be the kindest, gentlest soul on Earth. Since Dark Day, one cannot judge a book by its cover more than

ever, as that softly glowing Nightbane with the delicate attractive features, porcelain skin, and angel wings may hide a soul as wicked and cruel as any Nightlord, and that small twig of a teenage girl might turn into a hulking monster. Whether ugly or beautiful, spindly or musclebound, fuzzy or scaly, every Nightbane started life as an ordinary human and pretty much feels and thinks like any other human being. It is that early life as a human that lays the foundation of who they are and is what gives these "monsters" deep rooted humanity.

The shock of finding out one isn't *exactly human*, combined with the supernatural abilities gained through the Becoming, usually has a profound impact on the mind of the individual. At first, they may be horrified or repulsed by what they've become. They may feel alienated and detached from humanity. Some may feel as if they are cursed by an evil force or damned by God. Others may feel empowered and exhilarated. Everyone responds differently and everyone deals with it in their own way.

The initial, knee-jerk reaction is to keep their dual identity a secret. That is a good instinct, because a Nightbane quickly learns he or she is hunted by demonic beings known as the Nightlords.



A hero's mindset

The monumental stress of the Becoming and a life of secrets, let alone being inevitably drawn into a secret war with demonic monsters, can take a heavy toll on the strongest mind. Disorders such as clinical depression, anxiety, paranoia, phobia, obsession, neurosis, delusions of grandeur, suicidal thoughts, death wish, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder are all common among the Nightbane, though the degree varies widely, and a surprising number (at least 62%) come to terms with the realities of being a Nightbane rather quickly and quite well. Most adjust to their strange new reality in a matter of months. Some observers have speculated this is because becoming a Nightbane gives the person a strong sense of *destiny and purpose*.

For the vast majority of people, their Becoming occurs at the age of 14-30, when they are searching for a purpose and open to all possibilities. Consequently, being a Nightbane makes them special, important and potentially heroic. Many embrace their supernatural nature, powers, and purpose. A *heroic purpose* of saving lives, liberating their fellow man from the secret machinations of evil (i.e. the Nightlords), and making the world a better, safer place. It is a heady proposition that most Nightbane embrace. It makes them heroes and even the negatives attached to their situation *feel right*. It makes them *tragic heroes* who must overcome great personal tragedy or challenges so they may learn, grow and defeat a great evil and, literally, save the world. Especially to a young, idealistic mind, does it get any better than that?

It is a mistake to think of Nightbane as angst-ridden, teenage monsters playing heroes, because it's a great disservice to them, and flat out wrong.

Most are no younger than the young men and women who have joined the military and fought our wars since the beginning of human history. The Nightbane fight a war too, only it's not a war recognized or sanctioned by any government. In fact, the enemy is the governments and mega-corps of the world who have been secretly taken over by the evil and corrupt demonic creatures known as the **Nightlords**. This places the Nightbane in an underdog, *David versus Goliath* role which actually reinforces their self-image as unsung heroes. This *hero mind set* is what gives many Nightbane the mental and emotional strength and courage to accept their fate and keep going.

Hero or villain, most Nightbane are not brooding loners. Most try to be proactive and positive. This is especially true when it comes to interactions with other Nightbane. Many feel an inexplicable connection with others of their own kind. A connection that brings them together and helps them to feel less isolated and alone. A Nightbane often seeks and finds solace with others like himself, which is one reason gathering places like *Club Freak* are so popular. In fact, this connection is so strong that some Nightbane, even some of the most malevolent, refuse to kill their brethren despite being on opposite sides of a conflict! It is also what attracts them to Nightbane gangs and factions.

A faction, or any group, provides a sense of stability, camaraderie, family and purpose. Human beings are social animals with a need to belong and build a family. Unfortunately, some members rely too heavily on their faction for direction and purpose, and some follow their gang leaders with blind faith. Belonging to a faction can also lead to a sense of rivalry with other factions and "outsiders." This can cause a person to judge others unfairly based on the faction with whom they are associated. While most Nightbane are individuals with opinions, beliefs, goals and aspirations separate from their faction (some may even run counter to those of the faction), some buy into the company line and take on the more narrow, intolerant and biased views of their faction. At its worst, it creates a sense of elitism and a "them and us" mentality.



Optional Nightbane

Specific Insanity Table

Of course, not all Nightbane handle the pressure well. Some use their powers for crime, evil or selfish purposes. Some crack under the strain, giving in to depression and despair, anxiety, fear, or self-recrimination, or become bitter, cruel, or vengeful, while others feel helpless, confused or lost.

01-10% Death Wish: Though never outright suicidal, the character takes crazy chances, foolish risks, takes on extremely powerful and dangerous opponents, and seems to want to die. Ironically, when truly faced with a life and death situation, the character does everything in his power to survive, short of ratting out his friends, or sacrificing innocent lives. Enjoys talking about death and ways to die.

11-15% Superman Syndrome. The character thinks he is indestructible either due to his inhuman powers and Morphus, or because he is a Nightbane and it is his destiny to be a super-hero, save lives and destroy the Nightlords. Takes foolish risks, makes dangerous snap judgements, tends to underestimate the enemy, and is always putting himself in the line of fire to protect others.

16-20% Doctor Jekyll & Mister Hyde Syndrome: Facade is a good alignment and the Morpheus is Anarchist, Miscreant or Aberrant evil, or vice versa, the Facade is selfish or evil and the Morpheus is good and heroic. When in the Anarchist or evil form the character may become more intolerant, arrogant, vengeful and cruel.

21-25% Recluse: Tends to keep secrets, prefers to be alone, acts cool and aloof and doesn't like or trust strangers. Fiercely loyal to those who are his trusted friends and teammates.

26-30% Nightbane-centric. Only trusts and feels comfortable around other Nightbane. Looks upon human beings as beneath him/inferior, doesn't like or trust Guardians, vampires or any other race, and despises the Nightlords and all who serve them.

31-40% Scared secret identity will be discovered and that he will either lose his human life and be shunned by friends, family, and society, and/or that his family will suffer for what he is.

41-45% Gloom and Doom (a form of depression). The character sees only the bad, dark, sad, dangerous side of life and worries about the grim outcome of every venture. Has difficulty finding joy and being positive, but struggles with it and presses forward. -2 on initiative, -1 on all saving throws.

46-50% Performance Anxiety. -2 on initiative and Perception Rolls in combat and high stress situations, and -20% to skill performance.

51-55% Post-Traumatic Syndrome: 01-40% Goes berserk when locked in combat and wants to make it stop, typically by killing all the bad guys! 41-70% Goes wild when locked in combat, determined to rescue and protect all innocent bystanders, especially children and women. 71-90% Becomes vengeful and murderous. 91-00% Curls up into a ball and whimpers until the fighting is over.

56-60% Evil Seed Syndrome. Constantly worried that he really is some kind of evil monster or demon, is losing touch with his humanity, and will one day snap and hurt innocent people, join the Nightlords, or descend into wickedness and become evil. As a result, this character tries hard to do the right things and be a good person.

61-70% Common Nightbane Phobias (fears, distrusts and avoids):

- 01-05% Alien bugs and parasites.
- 06-10% Law enforcement officers and police stations.
- 11-15% Black Magic.
- 16-20% Psionics.
- 21-25% Hounds (i.e. the minions of the Nightlords).
- 26-30% Hunters (i.e. the minions of the Nightlords).
- 31-35% Beetles.
- 36-40% Mind Control.
- 41-45% Tentacles.

46-50% Dead Bodies.

51-55% Confined Spaces.

56-60% Openings that lead to darkness.

61-65% Nightlords or one specific minion.

66-70% Nightlands.

71-75% Torture.

76-80% Rooftops.

81-85% Sewers.

86-90% Family.

91-95% Magic weapons and devices.

96-00% Large crowds.

71-80% Common Nightbane Obsessions. 01-50% Loves/Desires or is fascinated with; wants to know everything about, and/or be it/near it/associated with it. 51-00% Hates the subject of the obsession and may seek its opposition, destruction, elimination, or answer.

01-05% Uniting the Nightbane or rescuing/helping 'Bane.

06-10% The origin of the Nightbane.

11-15% The purpose of the Nightbane.

16-20% Are Nightbane human or supernatural monsters?

21-25% Secrets and secret identities (keeps them or hates them).

26-30% Being a hero: strives to be one, or is an anti-hero.

31-35% Conspiracies.

36-40% Authority and order.

41-45% Vampires and undead of all kinds.

46-50% The Guardians.

51-55% NSB and other secret government agents.

56-60% Minions of the Nightlords.

61-65% The Nightlords.

66-70% Nightlands.

71-75% The Hidden War.

76-80% Magic.

81-85% Combat.

86-90% Fame and glory.

91-95% Revenge against the Nightlords or a specific faction, group, or minion of the Nightlords.

96-00% The monster I am. (01-50% Embraces the idea he is a supernatural creature, and likes scaring and intimidating people, playing up on being a monster, and considers his Morpheus to be the real him. 51-00% Hates and fears the idea of becoming a monster and works hard for that not to happen; considers his human Facade to be his true nature.)

81-85% Roll on the Random Phobia or Obsession Table in the RPG.

86-90% Roll on the Random Insanity Table in the RPG.

91-95% Roll on the Neurosis Table in the RPG.

96-00% Roll on the Psychosis Table in the RPG.



Anatomy of a Morphus

The appearances of Morphus forms are as unique as the individual Nightbane who wear them. Despite how bizarre and frightening the inhuman form can appear, the looks and abilities of the Morphus are hardly random. Even the smallest of details about the the Morphus is a reflection of the Nightbane and determined by the psyche of each individual. Therefore, the appearance of a Morphus is affected by the Nightbane's personality, how he sees the world and his place in it, his darkest fears, insecurities, deepest hatred, strongest desires, wildest dreams, personal aspirations, interests, and the people, places and things that affect/touch him in some way. That may include a particularly vivid childhood memory or impression, a spiritual belief, a favorite animal, person, how he thinks of himself (or wishes he was, or how he fears others think of him), even a fictional character, image, sentiment or aspiration inspired by a movie, TV show, book, comic book, videogame, song, or anything that had a profound impact on the individual's life.

While strong elements of the Nightbane's personality determine the appearance of his Morphus, not every factor dictates his appearance, just the elements that had a significant and profound impact on the individual, and not even all of them. For example, if a Nightbane simply had a pet cat while growing up, that doesn't mean he or she has feline characteristics for the Morphus Form. On the other hand, if the person had a deep fondness for the cat, or more to the point, felt he could relate to

cats, wished he was a cat, or felt he was a cat in a past life, then that Nightbane might have a feline Morphus Form. However, there are many other contributing factors, so that feline Morphus might be thin, sensual and agile, or bulky, powerfully built and armed with large claws and fangs. Likewise, the feline might have machine parts or weapon limbs, or wings or . . . just about anything, all representing some subconscious aspect of the individual.

All of us have a lot going on in our *subconscious* of which we are unaware. Strong subconscious feelings, desires, fears, etc. can have a large impact on the appearance of the Morphus. This means oftentimes even the Nightbane themselves can't explain why they look the way they do! Body armor, for example, could represent power and strength, or insecurity and the need for a protective shell.

Although the initial shock of the Becoming is usually terrifying, most Nightbane quickly become comfortable in their Morphus skin. Monstrous or not, a character's Morphus soon feels right. Many Nightbane actually come to think of their inhuman looking *Morphus* as their "true self." This is likely due to the fact that the Morphus is indeed a reflection of the person's inner self; that which is often kept hidden and locked up, but is as real and as important (maybe even more so) as the outward Facade we all let the rest of the world see. Consequently, a short

while after the Becoming, most Nightbane do not see themselves or other 'Bane as monstrous, ugly or frightening.

Of all the questions, shocking revelations and life changing transitions, the three questions that a Nightbane are likely to struggle with the most go to the core of human identity: *Who or what am I? What is my purpose and place in the world? How do I fit in?* This is why Nightbane wonder which is the real them: Their human Facade or their monstrous Morphus? Are they human or Nightbane? Depending on the individual person, they may regard their human self or their inhuman Morphus as the "real" them. Ironically, *both* are the real them; different sides of the same coin.

Likewise, there is much debate over whether the Nightbane are human or supernatural. That question seems more difficult to answer, as they are born ordinary humans, raised as humans, and think and behave as humans. When they Become a Nightbane, their physical form is clearly more than human and they wield supernatural abilities. However, they are the same person inside, and isn't that person human? Again, the question really seems to come down to appearance, emotional trauma and personal perception as to whether a Nightbane chooses to think of himself as *human* or *inhuman*. To make the matter worse, the Nightlords and their minions try to divide the Nightbane's ranks and create confusion and emotional turmoil by raising the question of their humanity and whether a supernatural being or monster has any loyalty to the human masses. Of course, making the Nightbane feel separate and ostracized by the rest of humanity works in their favor and weakens their Nightbane enemies. It's psychological warfare, and the masters of lies are very good at it.

Finding meaning behind a Morphus

In a game context, Players are encouraged to explore the possible meanings behind their Nightbane's Morphus as an exercise to develop their character's personality, hopes, dreams and back story. It can add a lot of depth to the personality of the character.

One way to develop meaning and personality around a Morphus. This is just a suggestion, but it has worked for one of the authors in creating Nightbane characters.

Step 1: Roll one four-sided die and add two to the total. This determines the number of Nightbane Characteristics that are clearly reflected in the Morphus.

Step 2: Determine personality elements equal to the number rolled. These may include fears, goals, interests, experiences, beliefs, and the like, but they have to play a part in who the character is and his personality.

Step 3: Look over the Morphus tables and either pick a particular Morphus characteristic or table that relates to each personality element, rolling on the tables (re-roll if duplicate rolls result) and assign them to your Nightbane character.

Step 4: Obtain the G.M.'s approval of the Morphus to make sure the relationships make sense and the power won't unbalance the game. You now have a Morphus Form that relates directly to the character.

For example, Nadine is a fourteen year-old girl who lost her parents in an automobile accident a year ago. Before that, she always tried to change how she looked and acted to fit in with the

"cool kids" at school. Recently, she has taken up bird-watching as she has always found birds beautiful and wishes she had wings so she could fly away somewhere.

When Nadine undergoes her *Becoming*, she finds her Morphus to be an elegant humanoid with no face (since she sacrificed her identity to fit in), bird wings (to fly away with), broken glass imbedded in her skin (from the car accident), and four arms (because though she was unaware of it, she has been feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work she has to do in school).

Behold, a Morphus Form that makes sense. To further the concept, Nadine might start with a Nightbane Talent such as *The Shroud*, allowing her to hide her true self.

Another example is *Charlie*, a seventeen year-old high school student who is a bit of a science fiction geek. He is sensitive and caring which, in concert with his sci-fi nerdiness, gets him picked on every day at school. He never seems to stand up for himself, or fight back physically, leading even his father to think of him as a "wimp."

However, Charlie deliberately draws the bullies' attention away from the younger kids and upon himself to save them the torment he's known all his life. Deep down he knows that he is meant for something greater, he just doesn't know what.

His greater purpose manifests in his Morphus as a thick metal exoskeleton (from both his sci-fi interests and to represent the "inner emotional armor" with which he defends himself against the bullies and the disappointment of his own father), he is tall and powerfully built to heroic proportions (because he's always wanted to prove to his father and those who laughed at him that he isn't a wimp), and an inner light (representing the nobility and kind heart that most don't see) glows from within. He would also likely have a starting Nightbane Talent that deals with defense, such as *Shadow Shield*.

In the alternative, roll up a Nightbane character using or picking from the usual tables, and/or the new ones in this book, and then build the personality traits around the appearance of your fictional character. In other words, figure out the personality, fears, emotions, etc. based on the Morphus traits randomly rolled or selected.

Nightbane Morphus Tables

A New Nightbane *Appearance Table* and a new *Nightbane Characteristics Table* are presented below. They both *replace* the original tables found in the **Nightbane® RPG** (page 92), and take into account the *current Nightbane Morphus Tables* from the RPG and sourcebooks.

For tables that have multiple incarnations (e.g. Stigmata I, II, and III, Alien Shape II, and Biomechanical II plus Biomechanical Aquatic, etc.), the player can select the table he would prefer to roll on or make selections, or the Game Master may assign the table the player should use. Similarly, a player may elect to roll on the *Aquatic Animal Form Table* in place of the original *Animal Form Table* found in the RPG, if he so desires.

Note: When there is more than one table with the same or similar name, e.g. *Unnatural Limbs Table II* or *Biomechanical Table II*, the “other” table (e.g. *Table I* is not in this book) is likely to be found in the **Nightbane® RPG**, (*Mineral Table I* and *Plant Life Table* are found in **Nightlands**, page 142), and the player may roll on, or make his selection from whichever table he finds most interesting or desirable.

Game Master & Player Note: Flexibility and imagination are key to enjoying this game. It is fun to allow a player to roll a lot of inhuman characteristics for his Morphus. The more combinations to the appearance, the more horrific, weird and fun it is to play. However, multiple Morphus characteristics also mean multiple bonuses, powers, and penalties.

Too many bonuses are likely to create a ridiculously powerful character. C.J.’s original advice was for the G.M. to “put a cap on the number of attribute and S.D.C. bonuses if the Game Master felt their players were just trying to stack bonuses for the sake of power.” It was also stated, “don’t let rolls rule the game; be imaginative and have fun.” While we agree with this statement, the new tables offer a great many multiple selections and bonus stacking, so we felt it necessary to drop in some formal guidelines.

If you want truly superhuman Nightbane with incredible power, let all bonuses (and penalties) be accumulative, and you are done.

However, if you allow the bonuses for characters who roll on 4, 5, 6 or more Morphus characteristics tables, you are likely to have a character with bonuses to strike, parry, dodge, etc., in the range of +12 and greater. That takes away from game balance and even game play. If the character is, say, +18 to strike, where is the fun in that? Dice represent luck and happenstance. If the bonus modifiers are too high, it removes the element of chance, and makes the game much less exciting. Here is Kevin Siembieda’s solution:

1. Morphus Attribute Bonuses: Add the Morphus bonuses for each individual attribute together. For Example: Three of your character’s four Morphuses provided a different P.S. bonus. Add all three of those P.S. bonuses together. Before you add that total to the character’s P.S. attribute, you may have to adjust the number. If the total bonus is greater than 6, divide the bonus number by half. Round up in the case of fractions, and add the halved number to the character’s attribute. Thus, if the character has P.S. attribute bonuses that add up to 9, divide by half. Half is +4 1/2 – round up to +5. The +5 bonus is added to the P.S. attribute, not the original +9.

Do this for EACH attribute. The only exception is Spd. Let Spd bonuses add up and apply the bonus unchanged.

If the total bonus is 6 or less, it gets added to the attribute without modification. As always, high attributes provide greater bonuses to strike, parry, dodge, etc.

Morphus Combat Bonuses: In addition to attribute bonuses, a character often also enjoys *combat bonuses* for things like *Perception Rolls*, *initiative*, *strike*, *parry*, *dodge*, *pull punch*, etc., as well as *Horror Factor*.

In this case, add the bonuses for each of the different combat moves (i.e. bonuses to strike, then parry, etc.) and divide the total for *each by half* and round down. Thus, if the combined Morphus bonuses were say, +14 to strike, +10 to parry, +9 to

dodge, +6 to Perception Rolls, and +9 to Horror Factor, the number actually given to the character is HALF rounded down. Using the example above, the bonuses given to the character would be +7 to strike, +5 to parry, +4 to dodge, +3 to Perception Rolls, and +4 to Horror Factor. This is in addition to bonuses from high attributes and skills, so the character is still a powerhouse.

Morphus S.D.C. Bonuses: If the total is 180 S.D.C. or less, I say let it stand. After all, Nightbane are, a) monsters, b) supernatural in Morphus form, and c) superheroes. If the S.D.C. is more than 180 points, reduce by half or bring it down to 180 S.D.C., whichever is greater. For example, if the bonus S.D.C. amount was 90, 100 or 134, the character gets that number because it is under 180. However, if a character had a combined S.D.C. of 220 the S.D.C. bonus would be reduced from 220 to 180. If it was, say 430 S.D.C., dividing it in half would make the S.D.C. bonus 215 because the number after division was greater than 180.

New Appearance Table

Roll percentile dice or, if the G.M. allows it, select one of the following.

01-05% Almost Human: This is your “Ken” or “Barbie” a Nightbane Morphus that looks almost totally human, except for one inhuman trait. Roll once on the *Disproportion Table* or *Unusual Facial Features Table* to determine the type of unusual characteristic. If the result asks for more than one characteristic, ignore it and re-roll. **Bonuses:** In addition, the Almost Human Nightbane gets +1D4 to M.A., +1D4 to P.B., +2D6 to S.D.C. and +1 to Perception Rolls.

06-10% Inhuman but Beautiful: The Nightbane’s Morphus combines a beautiful appearance with a touch of the bizarre and inhuman. Roll once on the *Unearthly Beauty Table* (page 92 of the **Nightbane® RPG**) and then once on the *New Nightbane Characteristics Table* that follows.

11-15% Marred Beauty: The character has a beautiful Morphus, but it is marred by a gruesome stigmata. Roll on the *Unearthly Beauty Table* (page 92 of the **Nightbane® RPG**), the *Stigmata Table* (page 101 of the **Nightbane® RPG** or the one in this book) and once on the *New Nightbane Characteristics Table* that follows.

16-20% Dimensional Traveler: A blending of science and magic, this Nightbane appears to be something from an alien dimension. Roll 1D4 times on the *Extraterrestrial Table* or *New Nightbane Characteristics Table*, or roll once on each of the following tables: *Biomechanical Table* (any), *Fantasy Table*, and *Stigmata* or *Undead Table*. Ignore and re-roll any result that calls for multiple rolls.

21-25% Lycanthrope: The Nightbane’s Morphus is a mixture of animal and humanoid traits. Roll on the *Animal Form Table* or on any of the *Aquatic Animal* tables.

26-30% Anthromorph: The Nightbane’s Morphus is an odd blend of human and animal characteristics that borders on caricature. Roll once on the *Unearthly Beauty* or *Angelic Table*, and once each on the *Animal Form* (any) and *New Nightbane Characteristics Tables*.

31-35% Monstrous Lycanthrope: Not only is the Morphus animal-like, it has hideous deformities that give it a terrifying

appearance. Roll once each on the *Animal Form*, *Stigmata* (found in the **Nightbane® RPG** or this sourcebook) and *New Nightbane Characteristics Tables*.

36-40% Carnifern: This Morphus appears to be a walking, talking plant come to life. Roll once each on the *Plant Life Table* and the *New Nightbane Characteristics Table*.

41-45% Inorganic: The Nightbane appears to be made of stone or some other material that is not flesh and bone. Roll once on the *Mineral (Table I or II)* or *Artificial Appearance Table*, plus once on the *Biomechanical (any)* or the *New Nightbane Characteristics Table*.

46-50% Inhuman Shape: The Nightbane's Morphus is a gruesome mockery of humanity. Roll on the *Stigmata Table (any)* and once on the *Nightbane Characteristics Table*.

51-55% Patchwork Horror: The Nightbane's Morphus appears to be stitched together as if made from spare parts that did not quite match. Roll once each on *Unusual Facial Features*, *Disproportion*, *Unnatural Limbs*, and *Stigmata Table (any)*. Additionally, all the limbs are connected to the torso by some form of artificial attachment, such as large staples, heavy stitches or even duct tape.

56-60% Amalgam: Ever play the game of trying to guess whether something is animal, vegetable or mineral? Well this Morphus falls under the category of "All of the Above." Roll once each on the *Animal Form (any)*, *Plant Life*, and *Mineral (I or II) Tables*.

61-65% Morbid: This Morphus has a connection with the dark. Roll once each on the *Infernal*, *Stigmata*, and *Undead Tables*.

66-70% Bizarre: Roll on the *Unearthly Beauty*, *New Nightbane Characteristics*, *Animal Form (any)*, or *Aquatic Animal (any)*, and *Aquatic Biomechanical Table* or *Unusual Limbs Table II*. Then exercise your imagination to combine the results.

71-75% Chosen One: Roll once on each of following tables: *Unearthly Beauty Table*, *Angelic* and *New Nightbane Characteristics Table*. If the table asks for more than one characteristic, ignore the result and re-roll.

76-80% Condemned: These Nightbane often believe they are a product of supernatural evil, demonic forces or cursed. Roll once on each of the following tables: *Infernal*, *Stigmata (any)*, *Unusual Facial Feature*, and *Biomechanical (any)* – or – *Undead*, *Alien Shape*, and *Unnatural Limbs*. If the table asks for more than one characteristic, ignore the result and re-roll.

81-85% Dinosaur Freak: This Morphus is a blend of human and dinosaur. Roll once each on the *Dinosaur*, *Animal: Reptilian* (see the **Nightbane® RPG**) and *Unusual Facial Features Table*.

86-90% Victim: This Nightbane bears deep psychological and/or emotional scars from some trauma which has manifested as his Morphus. Roll once each on the *Victim*, *Unearthly Beauty*, and *New Nightbane Characteristics tables* or once on the *Victim Table* and twice on the *Stigmata Table (any)*.

91-95% The Drowned: This Nightbane looks like a nightmarish monstrosity from the ocean depths. Roll once each on the *Aquatic Animal Table (any)*, *Biomechanical: Aquatic Table*, a *Undead Table*.

96-00% Living Myth: Everything about this Nightbane's Morphus seems derived from medieval times, fantasy and/or pop culture mythology. Roll once on the *Fantasy*, *Extraterrestrial*, and *Angelic* or *Infernal* tables.

New Nightbane Characteristics Table

This new table replaces the original and takes into account all of the current Morphus Tables.

01-05% Geo-Creature: Roll on the *Mineral Table I or II*.

06-10% Divine: Roll on the *Angelic* or *Unearthly Beauty Table*.

11-15% Depraved: Roll on the *Infernal* or *Undead Table*.

16-20% Unusual Facial Features: Roll on the *Unusual Facial Features Table (any)* of choice.

21-30% Facsimile: Roll on the *Artificial Appearance Table*.

31-40% Biomechanical: Roll on the *Biomechanical Table (any)* of choice.

41-45% Prehistoric Nightmare: Roll on the *Dinosaur Table*.

46-55% Alien Creature: Roll on either the *Alien Shape Table* or *Extraterrestrial Table*.

56-65% Misshapen Freak: Roll on the *Disproportion Table*.

66-75% Unnatural: Roll on the *Unnatural Limbs* or *Undead Table*.

76-85% Fantasy/Medieval: Roll on the *Fantasy Table*.

86-90% Botanical: Roll on the *Plant Life* or *Mineral Table (any)*.

91-95% Underwater: Roll on any one of the *Aquatic Morphus Tables* of choice.

96-00% Two Characteristics: Roll or select two categories, ignoring and re-rolling any result above 95%.

New Morphus Tables

Inspired by the works of Eric Baierl, Roy C. Craigo, DeAnna Renae Bearce, Aaron Oliver, David Solon Phillips, and Edward Woodward III from various issues of **The Rifter®**. Much new material developed and written by Kevin Siembieda

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Alien Shape Table II

Here are some more odd and disturbing features for a truly freakish Morphus.

01-08% No Bones: This Nightbane may appear normal (or as other Morphus forms allow), but his freakish movement suggests he has *no bones*. The arms, legs, neck, etc., move and bend any which way, yet somehow the appendages and body parts keep their shape. **Note:** This does not allow the Nightbane any type of stretching power or shape shifting abilities. **Bonuses:** +3D6 S.D.C., +6 to roll with impact and +1 to dodge. This Morphus form also gives the Nightbane an anti-grappling bonus: A.R. of 10 + dodge bonuses against grapples and holds (can wriggle out of holds like nobody's business); +20% to the *Escape Artist* skill (or a base of 40%) and +2 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Reduce P.S. and Spd by 20%.

09-17% Armored Scales: Thick, heavy scales like an alligator's cover the Nightbane like armor, protecting him and adding to his frightening, alien appearance. **Bonuses:** +6D6+6 S.D.C., a Natural A.R. 9, and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1 to P.P. and P.B.

18-26% Multiple Heads: The Nightbane has two or more heads resting on his shoulders (01-75% two heads, 76-98% three, 99-00% four heads). These heads usually have the same personality, however Nightbane with multiple personalities or multiple Morphus characteristics could have a different head for each personality or each Morphus. Each head is capable of speech and can look in a different direction from the others. **Bonuses:** +1 to Perception Rolls and Horror Factor for each additional head; +1 to I.Q. and +1 on initiative. **Penalties:** -1 to M.A. and -1 to P.B. per each head.

27-35% Shadow Man: This character appears pitch black, like a three-dimensional shadow or silhouette with no visible features. Makes no sound when he moves and is 80% invisible in darkness (this does not count if lights, such as street lamps or headlights, are turned on the Nightbane). **Bonuses:** +20% to Prowl (or base of 45%) in low-light environments, but -20% in bright lighting, +1D4 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Day vision is half normal, and the Nightbane sticks out like a sore thumb in daytime or in well-lit areas.

36-44% Slimy, Slug-Like Skin: Disgusting slime-covered skin that moves and ripples in strange ways covers the Nightbane's body. The Nightbane leaves slime on everything he touches (-10% to Prowl) and everyone who touches him needs to save vs Horror Factor or they will be so disgusted that they can't bear to touch him again. **Bonuses:** +3 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -2D6 to S.D.C., -1D4 to P.B., -10% to Prowl skill, and enemies are +20% to Track or Tail this character.

45-53% Abnormally Large Sensory Organs: The eyes, ears, nose, tongue and fingertips of this Nightbane are extremely large, but the senses are proportionately better too. **Bonuses:** Eyes: +3 to ALL Perception Rolls, hawk-like day vision, and Nightvision 2,000 feet (609.6 meters). Nose: Track by Scent is 20% +5% per level; recognize scent is 25% +5% per level of experience (+30% for common scents); recognize specific scent (your cousin Al, your dog, etc.) is 20% +3% per level. Ears: Can clearly hear a whisper at 150 feet (45.7 m). Mouth: Can discern specific substances by taste (including ingredients in food, poisons, etc.) at 30% +5% per level. Fingers: +5% to any skills requiring a light touch such as *Safe Cracking* and *Art*. **Penalties:** -3 to P.B.

54-62% Shaggy Hairy: The Nightbane's body is covered by thick, shaggy hair. The hair can be any color the player desires, even unnatural colors like green or blue. The hair covers every part of the Nightbane's body except the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet. It may even cover the face and hang over the eyes unless it is moved aside, or the face may be more like an orangutan, hairy everywhere but on the face around the eyes, nose and mouth. **Bonuses:** +4D6 S.D.C., +10% to the *Concealment* skill, and +2 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Hair may leave clearly discernable trace evidence and may get in the way from time to time.

63-71% Wrinkled Skin: The body is covered by a tough, wrinkled hide similar to that of a rhinoceros. **Bonuses:** +5D6+5

S.D.C., Natural A.R. of 8, and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalty:** -2 to P.B.

72-79% Brute: Increase body size and weight by 50%, limbs are muscular and thick, teeth have fangs and the Brute has claws in place of fingernails. Body hair is dense and looks more like fur, and the face has a Neanderthal appearance. **Bonuses:** +1D4x10 to S.D.C., +1D4 to P.S., +1 to P.E., bite attacks do 1D6 damage and claw attacks do 2D6 damage in addition to Supernatural P.S. punch damage. +2 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1D4 to P.B., -1 to I.Q., and custom clothing is necessary to clothe the Brute.

80-87% On Fire: This is an odd one, perhaps the product of someone who is deathly afraid of fire, or fascinated by it. The Nightbane remains unchanged in appearance except that he is on fire in Morphus form. The fire may only cover his head, neck and shoulders or the entire body. This fire cannot be put out as it does not rely on oxygen (though the Nightbane still needs air to breathe), nor does it produce smoke. Even stranger, the flame catches flammable items on fire only when the Nightbane wishes it (although scorch marks are left everywhere). **Bonuses:** +2 to Horror Factor. Heat and fire attacks do no damage, but the character can cause his hands to be inflamed and fire punches inflict +2D6 S.D.C. to hand to hand damage from the fire. Likewise opponents who make physical contact with the fiery Nightbane take 1D4 damage every round they are touching him – unless the attacker is protected against fire, or the Nightbane doesn't wish them harm. **Penalties:** Cold attacks do double damage and Prowl and hiding are impossible due to the light and noise of the flames.

88-96% Baggy Flaps of Skin: The character's skin seems too large for his body, or there seems to be too much skin for his frame, causing it to sag, flap, and fold in triple and quadruple layers, all over. This occurs most prominently at the neck, upper arms, legs and belly, but the skin sags everywhere. **Bonuses:** Natural A.R. of 8, +5D6 S.D.C., +1 to Horror Factor, +25% to the *Concealment* skill, as he can easily hide small objects beneath the folds. **Penalties:** Reduce P.B. by 30%, Spd by 10%, -10% to all Physical skills, and -30% to disguise.

97-00% Cone head. The character's head is elongated and conical rather like the aliens in the movie of the same name, or straight up as if the forehead was 4x higher than usual. **Bonuses:** +1 to I.Q., +1D4 to M.E., +2D6 to S.D.C., and +1 to Perception Rolls. **Penalties:** -1 to P.B., -10% on balance, -10% to Acrobatics, Climb, Gymnastics, and -30% to disguise.

Angelic Table

Characters with this Morphus often believe they were chosen by the deity they worship or some other benevolent supernatural power for a purpose, such as to fight evil, protect the innocent, drive away the Nightlords, to serve as an example for others, and so on. Such 'Bane usually have great faith and a strong sense of goodness, right and wrong. Most are of good alignment and try to fulfill their purpose.

The physical appearance varies depending on the cultural and/or religious background of the Nightbane, and all don't look human. Regardless of their appearance, many Nightbane do not get along well with an Angelic 'Bane, as they see them as arrogant or as a mockery of their own beliefs. On the other hand,

members of the Lightbringers (and Guardians, in general) tend to accept them.

01-10% Inner Light: The character glows with an inner brilliance that seems to radiate from under his skin. This character may also have a halo around his head. Ordinary people are either in awe of the Nightbane or fear him out of ignorance. **Bonuses:** +1 to M.A. and M.E., +4D6 S.D.C., +2 to Awe/Horror Factor and laser and energy blasts do no damage. **Penalty:** Can-



11-20% Angelic Wings: The 'Bane has a beautiful pair of 6-10 foot (1.8-3 m) feathered wings sprouting from his or her back. The feathers can be any color, solid or a mixture of 2-3 colors, and even metallic colors (exact colors are left up to the player), and each wing has 1D6x10+50 S.D.C., regenerate at the same rate as the Nightbane (will grow back in one day if destroyed), can hover, glide (silent) and provide a flight speed of 1D4x10+26 (25-45 mph/40-72 km). **Bonuses:** +4D6 to S.D.C., +1 to P.P., +1D4 to P.B., +1 to strike and parry, +2 to dodge and pull punch while in flight, and +3 to Awe/Horror Factor. **Penalty:** -20% to Prowl on foot, cannot use disguise or perform un-

dercover work in angel form (unless it is as another angel), and requires custom clothing to accommodate the wings.

21-30% Melodious Voice: Talented singers are sometimes said to have a “voice like an angel,” but this ‘Bane puts them to shame. Whenever the character speaks, those around him listen. His voice also has a calming effect on even the most angry or beleaguered souls, and to hear him sing is to be left speechless (also all who hear the singing are so distracted by it that Perception Rolls are -10, -2 on initiative and -15% on skill performance. **Bonuses:** +1D4 to M.A., +1 to Awe/Horror Factor, and +20% to any skill that involves speaking, performance or singing. **Penalty:** Vulnerable to sonic attacks (they inflict 50% greater damage and penalties are double).

31-37% Living Armor: The Morpheus appears as a suit of impressive, polished armor. The armor may be highly ornate with etched graphics or designs, spikes or spines, to simplistic or without decoration at all. A helmet is optional and can be removed, but the rest of the armor cannot; it is part of the Nightbane. **Bonuses:** Regardless of its appearance, +4D6x10 S.D.C., a Natural A.R. of 14, +1 to P.S., and +1D4 to Awe/Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -10% on all skills involving flexibility of movement (Acrobatics, Climbing, Prowl, Swimming, etc.), double the character’s weight, -30% to Disguise skill, and cannot be easily concealed without something bulky like a cloak, poncho, or oversized overcoat or trench coat, which might be nearly as conspicuous.

38-44% Living Holy Weapon: In his Morpheus the ‘Bane possesses a gleaming weapon of exquisite craftsmanship. The type of weapon and its decoration vary with the tastes of the ‘Bane, but is always an ancient weapon (01-25% short sword, 26-50% large sword, 51-70% battle axe, 71-85% mace or other blunt weapon, 86-00% pole arm, scythe, pitchfork or other large weapon). The Nightbane also has a scabbard, sling or case for the weapon so that he doesn’t need to hold it in his hands all the time. This weapon may be lent to others, dropped, or stolen, but it will disappear when the ‘Bane switches back to Facade form and reappear with him when he assumes his Morpheus the next time. The weapon is a living part of the character. **Bonuses:** +2 to Awe/Horror Factor, the weapon does 4D6 damage regardless of type, +14 damage to Nightlords, their minions, demons, undead, and other supernatural creatures; half damage to creatures of magic, and +1 on initiative, +2 to strike, +3 to parry, disarm and pull punch with the Holy Weapon (plus any applicable attribute or skill bonuses). **Penalties:** Prefers to use this weapon above all others and feels naked without it, and the weapon is likely difficult to conceal or hide. The Holy Weapon has 40 S.D.C. +10 per level of experience, but the ‘Bane feels any attacks leveled against the weapon, and he takes damage or feels the effect after the weapon’s S.D.C. is reduced to one point or less, as it is a living part of him; damage is inflicted to the weapon only when it is specifically targeted. When the S.D.C. of the Holy Sword and his own S.D.C. are *both* reduced to zero, the weapon vanishes and cannot be made to reappear until the character recovers all of his own S.D.C. Most outsiders do not know about this vulnerability.

45-51% Living Holy Shield: A shield appears strapped on one arm (or suitable appendage) or slung on the back of the Nightbane when in Morpheus form. The shield’s appearance may vary from ornate to plain. **Bonuses:** +1 to M.A. and P.P., +5D6

S.D.C. to the Nightbane, +1 to strike and disarm, +3 to parry and pull punch with the shield (in addition to any applicable attribute or skill bonuses). The shield has 100 S.D.C., is only damaged by attacks that specifically target it, and regenerates at the same rate as the Nightbane. Should the shield be destroyed, it vanishes and does not return for 24 hours. **Penalties:** The weapon is difficult to conceal or hide and is definitely conspicuous in hand.

52-60% Heroic Proportions: In his Morpheus, the Nightbane is tall, has broad shoulders, a square jaw, handsome face (different than his human Facade), and is heavily muscled. **Bonuses:** Increase height by one foot (0.3 m) and weight by 50%. +6D6 to S.D.C., +4 to P.S., +1 to P.E., +1D4 to P.B. **Penalty:** Reduce Horror Factor -1D4.

61-70% Halo of Power: The Nightbane radiates with a glow around his head and shoulders or has a circular halo hovering above his head. In the latter case, this may be a golden glowing light, or it may be a physical gold ring or full gold disk that gleams in the light, radiating like a miniature sun symbol. Whatever its appearance, the halo will attract a lot of attention. **Bonuses:** +1 to P.B., +1D4 to M.A., +4D6 S.D.C., resistant to fire and cold (takes half damage), +1 attack per melee round, +2 on initiative and pull punch, and +2 to Awe/Horror Factor. **Penalty:** Disguise is impossible, and the character is likely to be among the first to be targeted by evil.

71-80% Mystical Protection: The Nightbane radiates with a thin white or light blue aura that is, in effect, a field of mystical protection. The character also has a small or large mystic symbol on his forehead or neck, and on his chest or the backs of his hands. It appears to be a tattoo or branded and the symbol glows during combat or times of apparent danger. **Bonuses:** The Nightbane’s Natural A.R. is increased by 1D4 points (A.R. 19 maximum), the field provides 1D6x10+30 S.D.C. in addition to the character’s own, +2 to save vs magic and illusions, +4 to save vs possession, and +1 to all other saving throws. **Penalty:** Offers no protection against weapons made of silver and damage goes right to the character’s own S.D.C. then Hit Points.

81-90% Noble Bearing: This ‘Bane moves with the confidence, sense of importance and grace of royalty; fluid and deliberate, with shoulders square and head held high. **Bonuses:** +4D6 to S.D.C., +1D4 to M.A., +1 to M.E., +1 to P.P., +1 to P.B., +1 to Awe/Horror Factor, +5% to Dance and all Physical skills (as applicable). **Penalties:** Reduce Spd by 10% and -10% on Disguise and Undercover skills.

91-00% Icon of the Faith: The Morpheus appears with a large iconic symbol of the closest faith (a Crucifix, Star of David, wreath, etc.). This is typically worn around the neck on a chain, but may also appear on, or in addition to, a headdress, helmet, armor, tunic, cape, etc. and/or carried as a staff, scepter, statuette, handheld holy symbol, or fetish. In the case of the Nightbane, the symbol might even be fused to the body (typically head, neck or chest). This icon may be lent to others, dropped, or stolen, but it will disappear when the Nightbane switches back to Facade form and reappear with him when he assumes his Morpheus the next time. The icon is a living part of the character. **Bonuses:** +4D6 S.D.C., +2 to M.E., +1 to M.A., and a +2 bonus to all saving throws, and impervious to possession, the vampire’s bite and mind control of the vampire. The icon is also capable of repelling and holding the undead, ani-

mated dead, were-beasts and other creatures susceptible to holy symbols at bay.

Aquatic Animal Form Tables

Random Determination of Morphus. To make a random determination of the Nightbane's aquatic characteristics, first roll on this table, then roll on the table it sends you to (Dolphin, Fish, Shark, etc.). If the Game Master allows it, players may choose a selection from the following Aquatic Animal tables rather than make a random roll.

01-19% Cetacean: Roll on the *Dolphin/Whale Table*.

20-38% Crustacean: Roll on the *Crustacean Table*.

39-57% Fish: Roll on the *Fish Table*.

58-76% Octopoid: Roll on the *Octopus/Squid Table*.

77-95% Shark: Roll on the *Shark Table*.

96-98% Combination of Two: Roll twice on this table (ignore and re-roll any result of 96% or higher), and combine the aspects from the two animals, but simply choose the one set of bonuses that applies to the character, or roll 1D6 with 1-3 meaning the first animal and 4-6 meaning the second.

99-00% Combination of Three: Roll three times on this table (ignore and re-roll any result of 96% or higher), and combine the elements from the three animals. Choose and combine two sets of the animal's bonuses and ignore the third completely.

Aquatic: Crustacean Table

The character has an affinity for crustaceans and this is reflected in his Morphus. **Note:** All Crustacean Nightbane can *Swim at 85%* and can breathe underwater, indefinitely, as well as air.

01-20% Giant Crustacean: The Nightbane is a giant, talking crab, lobster, crayfish, or similar creature with an armored, humanoid head. The overall body looks completely like the animal, right down to the body shape, ridges, spines, multiple legs, pincer claws, and eye stalks. Typically 6-8 feet (1.8 to 2.4 m) long and has no human hands – arms and hands are the two pincer-limbs. **Bonuses:** +4D6x10 S.D.C., Natural A.R. 15, +1D4+4 to P.S., +1D4 to P.E., +1D6 to Spd, +3D6 to swimming speed, +1 to strike, +3 to parry, +3 to Horror Factor, and claws inflict 4D6 damage in addition to Supernatural P.S. punch damage. Depth tolerance: Three miles (4.8 km). **Penalties:** Triple weight, impossible to disguise, difficult to hide, transportation may be a problem (e.g. cannot fit inside a vehicle, but can cling to the roof), and skills requiring manual dexterity and fingers are often impossible (-70% to skill performance).

21-40% Were-Crustacean: The Morphus is a humanoid shape with an armor-plated humanoid head and body, a pair of large humanoid arms, but both hands are claws, and otherwise resembles a crustacean with four legs, a tail, antennae and eye stalks. The face resembles both a humanoid and a crustacean. **Bonuses:** +2D6x10+20 S.D.C., Natural A.R. 13, +1D4+1 to P.S., +2 to P.E., +1 to P.P., +1D6 to Spd, +2D6 to swimming speed, and +1 to strike and parry, +2 to Horror Factor. Claws add 2D6 Damage to Supernatural P.S. punch damage. Depth tolerance: Two miles (3.2 km). **Penalties:** Impossible to disguise,



difficult to hide, transportation may be a problem (e.g. can fit inside a vehicle, but takes up two spaces), double weight, and skills requiring manual dexterity and fingers are often impossible (-50%). All were-beasts are vulnerable to silver (it does double damage).

41-60% Humanoid Crustacean: The body is completely humanoid, though it is still covered in a light exoskeleton, the face is roughly human-like, with normal eyes, there is an impression of a nose, and a small mouth, but the Nightbane would not pass for a human under close inspection, only from a distance or in shadows. **Bonuses:** +2D4x10+8 S.D.C., Natural A.R. 11, +2 to P.S., and claw attack adds +2D6 to Supernatural P.S. punch damage, +1 to Horror Factor. Depth tolerance: One mile (1.6 km). **Penalties:** Impossible to disguise, difficult to hide, clothing must be custom made, and -5% to skill performance.

61-70% Lobster Claws: One or both hands (player's choice) have been replaced with large lobster claws. The claws are limited in their usage, as skills requiring manual dexterity are often impossible (-50% to skill performance), but the arms are armored and very strong, the claw can be used as a weapon, and both arms can be used to parry other weapons without injury. **Bonuses:** +3D6 S.D.C., +1D4 to P.S., +1 to P.P., +2 to parry, +1 to disarm, claw attack adds +1D6 to Supernatural P.S. punch damage, and depth tolerance is 2,000 feet (610 m). **Penalties:** Impossible to disguise, clothing must be custom made, -50% to skill performance with claw hand.

71-80% Crustacean Shell: The Morphus is completely human looking, except for the exoskeleton that covers the body. Some are segmented shells like a lobster's, others are a sin-

gle-piece shell like that of a horseshoe crab. **Bonuses:** +3D6x10 S.D.C., Natural A.R. of 14, +2 to Horror Factor, and depth tolerance one mile (1.6 km). **Penalties:** Impossible to disguise, clothing must be custom made, -15% to Prowl, Acrobatics and Gymnastics.

81-00% Lobster Centauroid: The upper torso is completely human, but the lower body has been replaced by that of a crustacean, complete with six legs and tail for quick, watery escapes. The Nightbane can still walk on land easily, but makes a clattering sound (-30% to Prowl). **Bonuses:** +2D6x10 S.D.C., lower body has a Natural A.R. of 13, +2D6+6 to swimming speed, and +2 to Horror Factor. Depth tolerance: 2,000 feet (610 m). **Penalties:** Impossible to disguise, difficult to hide, transportation may be a problem (e.g. can fit inside a vehicle, but takes up all the space in the back seat and is cramped), triple weight, and skills such as Climbing, Acrobatics, Gymnastics, and Prowl are -50% to perform.



Aquatic: Dolphin/Whale Table

Cetaceans, also known as dolphins and whales, are intelligent and playful creatures, and seem to possess almost human-like personalities. All these creatures are mammals and must breathe air. All Nightbane with these features can hold their breath for 1D6+6 minutes and have an echolocation power similar to radar. In other words, they can pinpoint objects in the dark or when blinded, and are able to operate perfectly under such conditions. Unless otherwise mentioned, they also have a natural *Swimming skill of 90%*, swimming speed is running Spd plus 50% (e.g. a character whose Spd on land is 24 can swim at a speed of 36), but land Spd may be slower or nonexistent.

01-20% Full Cetacean: The Nightbane is fully dolphin or whale-shaped. The body is long and tube-shaped with wet, rubbery skin and little hair. The arms are replaced with simple flippers (incapable of manipulating any objects) and the legs become a tail. Exact size, shape, and coloration depend on the species. Dolphins are typically 5-7 feet (about 1.5 to 2.1 m) long, while the whale Morphus can range from 9-20 feet (2.7 to 6.1 m) long; about the size of a killer whale. **Bonuses:** Dolphins: +1D6x10+6 S.D.C., +1D4 to I.Q., +1D4 to M.A., +4 to P.S. and P.P., +3D6 to Spd, and +2 to Perception Rolls. A head-butt or tail strike does Supernatural P.S. punch damage +1D8 S.D.C., while a bite does 1D4 Damage regardless of strength. Depth tolerance: Two miles (3.2 km). Whales: +2D6x10+12 S.D.C. +1D4 to I.Q., +1 to M.A., +8 to P.S., +1D4 to P.E., +1 to P.P., +2D6 to Spd, and +2 to Perception Rolls. Triple the character's weight and add 20 pounds (9 kg) and 2D6 S.D.C. for every two feet (0.6 meters) larger than 8 feet (2.4 meters). A head-butt or tail strike inflicts 2D8 damage in addition to Supernatural P.S. punch damage, while a bite does 2D4 damage regardless of strength. Depth tolerance: Two miles (3.2 km). **Penalties (Dolphins & Whales):** Helpless on land (attacks per melee round, P.S., P.P., and Spd are all reduced to two), unless they possess another means of locomotion (wings, legs, jets, etc.). In a pinch, these characters can manipulate objects with their mouths (-50% to delicate skills, -5 to strike or parry with melee weapons, cannot use modern weapons), and cannot be disguised. Transportation on land may also represent a problem for these large, heavy characters.

21-40% Were-Cetacean: Essentially a dolphin 6-7 feet tall (1.8-2.1 m) long/tall, or whale 9-12 feet (2.7 to 3.6 m) long/tall that has two short, thick arms and two short thick legs with webbed fingers and toes, no neck and a stubby tail. The head is fully animal, though it may be oriented to face forward when walking upright. **Bonuses:** Were-Dolphin: +1D6x10+8 S.D.C., +2 to I.Q., +1 to M.A., +2 to P.S. and P.E., +2D6 to Spd, +1 attack per melee round, +1 to Perception Rolls, and +1 to Horror Factor. Bite does 1D6 damage and a tail strike does Supernatural P.S. punch damage +4. Depth tolerance: One mile (1.6 km). Were-Whale: +2D6x10+16 S.D.C. +1 to I.Q., +2 to M.A., +1D4+2 to P.S. and P.E., +1D6 to Spd, +1 attack per melee round, +4 to damage, +1 to Perception Rolls, and +1D4+1 to Horror Factor. Bite does 2D6 damage and a tail strike does Supernatural P.S. punch damage +8. Depth tolerance: Two miles (3.2 km). **Penalties:** Double the weight for dolphins, quadruple weight of whales, speed on land is half, weight and size may be a problem on land and for transportation, -10% to skills requiring a delicate touch (Palming, Lock Picking, etc.). All were-beasts are vulnerable to silver (it does double damage).

41-60% Humanoid Dolphin or Whale: The Morphus is humanoid in shape with a pair of legs with large feet with webbed toes, arms and hands with webbed fingers (-5% to delicate skills), and the head looks more like the animal than a human, though it is a pug-version. There is still a triangular dorsal fin on the back, and the coloration is that of the animal. Size is six feet (1.8 m) for a dolphin, and 8 feet (2.4 m) for a whale. The skin is thick, smooth and rubbery. **Bonuses:** Dolphin: +1D4x10+4 to S.D.C., +1 to I.Q. and M.A., +2 to P.S. and P.P., +1D6 to Spd, +1 to Horror Factor, +2 on Perception Rolls, +1 on initiative, and +2 to dodge. A head-butt does Supernatural Punch damage

+2 damage. Depth tolerance: One mile (1.6 km). **Whale:** +1D6x10+6 to S.D.C., +1 to I.Q. and M.A., +1D4 to P.S., +1 to P.P., +1D6 to Spd, +2 to Horror Factor, +1 on Perception Rolls, +1 to strike. A head-butt does Supernatural Punch damage +4. Depth tolerance: One mile (1.6 km). **Penalties:** Double the weight for dolphins, triple weight for whales, speed on land is reduced by 20%, weight and size may be a problem on land and for transportation, -5% to skills requiring a delicate touch (Palming, Lock Picking, etc.).

61-80% Finned Humanoid: The Morphus is relatively human, though the skin has a rubbery feel and is a pale grey with a white underbelly, and there is a triangular fin growing from each forearm, each lower leg, and a dorsal fin in the middle of the back. The fingers and toes are webbed as well (-5% to delicate skills), hair is black, blue, blue-gray, or white and the character has no visible ears. **Bonuses (same for Dolphin or Whale):** +4D6+4 S.D.C. +1 to P.S. and P.P., +2D6+3 to swimming Spd, and +1 to Horror Factor. Depth tolerance: One mile. **Penalties:** Impossible to disguise as human, custom made clothing is necessary, increase weight by 30%, and -5% to perform delicate skills.

81-90% Aquatic Humanoid: The Morphus appears almost entirely human, except the skin is firm, a tanned tone, ears are small, fingers and toes are slightly webbed (-5% to delicate skills), the hair is black, blue-black, silver/gray, or white, and the eyes seem a bit more round than usual, but warm and inviting; can easily pass for human. **Bonuses:** +3D6+3 S.D.C. +2 to P.P., +1 to P.B., +2D4 Spd, and +1 on Perception Rolls. Depth tolerance: 4,500 feet (1371.6 m).

91-00% Mermaid/Merman: From the waist up, this Morphus appears to be an attractive human, often with long, lustrous hair of any color (blonde, red, green and black are most common), but from the waist down is a long, dolphin-like tail. The tail is slightly longer than the rest of the body, giving the average "mermaid" a length of about 7-9 feet (2.1 to 2.7 m). Speed on land is limited to crawling on the hands or slithering, but in the water the character is fast and nimble. The lower aquatic torso can be concealed with a blanket and the character made mobile with use of a wheelchair or via the *Air Swim Talent* or other means of locomotion. **Bonuses:** +4D6+8 S.D.C., +2 to P.S. and P.P., +1D4 to P.B., and +3D6 to Spd, +1 on initiative, +1 to strike and dodge underwater. Depth tolerance: One mile (1.6 km).

Aquatic: Fish Table

Nightbane with a Fish Morphus have an affinity for fish or fishing and probably spent a large portion of their time in and around water before their Becoming. All Nightbane with Fish Morphus have the *Swimming* skill at 98%, can breathe underwater indefinitely, as well as breathe air (though labored). Depth tolerance is 1000 feet (305 m) unless stated otherwise.

01-25% Full Fish Form: The Morphus is a large fish of any species, 6-9 feet (1.8 to 2.7 m) long, has full fish features, and flops around like a fish on dry land, as he does not have any hands, arms, legs or feet. **Bonuses:** +1D6x10 to S.D.C., Natural A.R. of 8, +1D4 to P.S., +1 to P.E., +5D6 to Spd, resistant to cold (half damage), Nightvision 2,000 feet (610 m), +1 to dodge, and +1 to Horror Factor. Depth tolerance: Three miles

(4.8 km). **Penalties:** Double weight. Helpless on land (attacks per melee round, P.P., and Spd are all reduced to two), unless he possesses another means of locomotion (wings, legs, jets, etc.); cannot manipulate objects even with his mouths and cannot be disguised. Transportation on land may also represent a problem for this cold, slippery, large, heavy character.



26-50% Fish Man: A humanoid Morphus, with a pair of arms and hands, legs and feet, but the head is that of a fish complete with gills and large round eyes, the body is covered with large scales, and a large fin protrudes from the back. Color may vary from dull browns, grays and black of most freshwater fish or the brilliant colors (yellows, blues, reds, etc.) and patterns of tropical saltwater fish. **Bonuses:** +6D6+4 S.D.C., Natural A.R. of 8, +2 to P.S., +2D6 to Spd, resistant to cold (half damage), Nightvision 1,000 feet (305 m), and +2 to Horror Factor. Depth tolerance: Two miles (3.2 km). **Penalties:** Double the weight, speed on land is half, weight and size may be a problem on land and for transportation, -10% to skills requiring a delicate touch (Palming, Lock Picking, etc.).

51-60% Bioluminescence: The Morphus looks entirely human, at least at first glance. Closer inspection shows tiny, fine scales for skin and the skin has a translucent quality showing veins through it. This character has the ability to glow like some deep sea fish. In half of the cases (01-50%) this ability is uncontrollable and the character glows the entire time in Morphus form. Other characters (51-00%) can control the light they radiate, turning it on and off as desired, and controlling the intensity from a soft glow to a mild bright light. The glow can be any color and radiates from the hands, arms, neck and chest, or in

some cases from small globes that hang from 1D4 short stalks above the Nightbane's head. The glow has a radius of 20 feet (6.1 m) and makes prowling impossible unless concealed or controlled. **Bonus:** +2D6 S.D.C., +1 to M.A., Nightvision 1,000 feet (305 m), and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Disguise, prowling and hiding in the dark are impossible if the luminescence cannot be controlled.

61-70% Scaly Skin: Though otherwise human looking, the Morphus is covered in fish scales. Color may vary from dull browns, grays and black of most freshwater fish or the brilliant colors (yellows, blues, reds, etc.) and patterns of tropical saltwater fish. The character may have hair on his head (01-50%) or is bald (51-00%), has small ears, but is otherwise human in appearance. **Bonuses:** +4D6 S.D.C., Natural A.R. to 8, resistant to cold (half damage), +1 to Horror Factor and +1 to escape from wrestling holds and entanglement attacks. Depth Tolerance is 3000 feet (914 m). **Penalties:** -1 to P.B., impossible to disguise as human, custom made clothing may be necessary, increase weight by 20% and reduce Spd by 10%.

71-80% Puffer Fish Skin: The Morphus has loose skin covered with small spines. When not in use, the spines lay harmlessly against the skin. However, the Nightbane can cause the skin of his torso, arms, hands, neck and head to expand like a puffer fish, increasing its size three times (maximum of 10 feet/3 m), the body is covered in spines that stab and cut anybody who tries to touch or move them. **Bonuses:** +4D6+4 S.D.C., spiny punch does normal punch damage +6, puffer defense does 3D6 damage per each action in which someone attacks, touches or tries to move the character, resistant to cold (half damage), +2 to Horror Factor only when skin is inflated. **Penalties:** Difficult to disguise as human even when the spines are down and normal size (-30%). Needs to remove clothing from upper torso, increase weight by 20% and reduce Spd by 10%.

81-90% Gills: The Morphus looks almost entirely human except for the large pair of gills located under the jaw line. They make the otherwise human face appear slightly monstrous. **Bonuses:** Can breathe underwater indefinitely, resistant to cold (half damage), Nightvision 100 feet (30.5 m), and +1 to P.E. Depth tolerance: Two miles (3.2 km). **Penalties:** Gills are easy to conceal with a scarf or high collar, -5% to Disguise skill, -1 to P.B., and reduce Spd by 10%.

91-00% Piranha Jaws (and Nature): This Morphus has a wide, oversized mouth, no lips and a mouth full of narrow, jagged teeth (twice as many teeth as a normal human). Enjoys the taste of blood and raw meat. **Bonuses:** +1D4 to P.E., bite attacks inflict 3D6 damage, +1 attack per melee, +1 on Perception Rolls, +1 to strike, +2 to pull punch or bite, and +1D4 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1 to M.A., M.E. and P.B., -5% to Disguise skill, tends to be a bit jumpy, and reduce Spd by 10%.

Aquatic: Octopus/Squid Table

This character is fascinated by marine biology, octopi, squid or tentacles as is reflected in his Morphus. All Nightbane with Octopus/Squid Morphus have the *Swimming* skill at 85% and can breathe underwater indefinitely as well as breathe air, and are resistant to cold (does half damage). Depth tolerance is 1000 feet (305 m) unless stated otherwise.

01-20% Giant Octopus/Squid: The Nightbane is a giant octopus or squid with eight tentacles, a hooked beak like that of a parrot, and a large, pliable body. The 'Bane can function on land, albeit at reduced speed and agility, but still possesses great power. The body is roughly three feet (0.9 m) in diameter and the eight tentacles are 10-12 feet (3 to 3.6 m) in length. **Bonuses:** +2D4x10+10 S.D.C., +1D6+4 to P.S., +1 to P.E., +3 to P.P., +2D6 Spd, +1D4 to Horror Factor, +2 attacks per melee, +2 to strike, +4 to parry and entangle, bite inflicts 3D6 damage, and each squeeze from a crush/squeeze attack inflicts Supernatural punch damage, +20% to Prowl, +30% to Climb and can scale smooth surfaces and climb vertical walls! Depth tolerance: Three miles (4.8 km). Has the power to change color to match its environment, including mottled gray or black and gray in the dark or dimly lit environments. Color change counts as one melee attack/action. **Penalties:** Increase weight 50%, these characters can manipulate objects and use melee weapons with their tentacles, but the bonus to strike is half. Cannot be disguised or easily concealed. Transportation on land may also represent a problem. On land reduce P.P. and Spd by half, number of attacks are unchanged, and fire does double damage.



21-40% Were-Octopus/Squid: 01-75% A humanoid body with a pair of arms, hands, legs and feet, but the the head is that of an octopus, complete with 1D4+4 tentacle 1D4+4 feet (1.5 to 2.4 m) long that protrude from the neck/head region. A beak is in the place of the normal mouth and the entire appearance is quite disturbing. 76-00% is the same as above except the arms and hands are replaced by a pair of large, thick tentacles 12 feet (3.6 m) long (can use melee weapons and operate most equip-

ment, but -15% on skills requiring hands). **Bonuses:** +1D6x10 S.D.C., +1D6 to P.S., +2 to P.P., +2D4 to Speed, +1D4 to Horror Factor, +1 attack per melee, +2 to strike, +3 to parry and entangle, bite inflicts 2D4 damage, and each squeeze from a crush/squeeze attack inflicts Supernatural punch damage. Depth tolerance: Three miles (4.8 km). Has the power to change color to match its environment, including mottled gray or black and gray in the dark or dimly lit environments. Color change counts as one melee attack/actions, and adds a bonus of +20% to Prowl or hide; also +20% to Climb. **Penalties:** Increase weight 30%, these characters can manipulate objects and use melee weapons with their tentacles, but the bonus to strike is half. Impossible to disguise or conceal, and custom clothing may be required. On land reduce Spd by half and fire does double damage.

41-60% Humanoid Octopus/Squid: The body is that of a human with normal legs, feet, arms, and hands. The head is human like, though the mouth is small and beak-like (has an overbite), hair on the head is thin or bald, no body hair, and the skin under the neck is saggy. However, there is one tentacle located under each of the normal arms. The tentacles are six feet long (1.8 m) and have twice the P.S. attribute of the Nightbane. **Bonuses:** +5D6 S.D.C., +1D4 to P.S., +1 to P.E. and P.P., +1D6 to Spd, +2 to Horror Factor, +1 attack per melee, +1 to strike, +2 to parry and entangle, bite attack does 1D6 damage, and each squeeze from a crush/squeeze attack inflicts Supernatural punch damage. Depth tolerance: Two miles (3.2 km). **Penalties:** Increase weight 20%, these characters can manipulate objects and use melee weapons with their tentacles, but the bonus to strike is half. Impossible to disguise or conceal, and custom clothing is required. On land reduce Spd by half and fire does 50% more damage.

61-80% Octopus/Squid Head: The body is completely human, but the head appears as a full grown octopus or squid, with eight tentacles (each tentacle is 1D4+2 feet/0.9 to 1.8 m long) and a central beak. **Bonuses:** +3D6 S.D.C., +1D4 to Horror Factor, +2 on Perception Rolls, +1 on initiative, +1 to parry, +2 to entangle, bite inflicts 2D4 damage, and each squeeze from a crush/squeeze attack inflicts half the Supernatural P.S. punch damage. Depth Tolerance: 1,000 feet (305 m). **Penalties:** Increase weight 20%, these characters can use their tentacles to manipulate objects and use melee weapons, but the bonus to strike is half. Impossible to disguise or conceal, and custom clothing is required. On land reduce Spd by 25% and fire does 50% more damage.

81-00% Octopus/Squid Centauroid: The head and upper torso is completely human, including a pair of arms and hands, but the legs have been replaced by eight, 12 foot (3.6 m) long tentacles. The Nightbane can crawl and climb at half his Spd attribute number, as well as use and manipulate objects and wield melee weapons with the tentacles, but the bonus to strike is half. The tentacles can be used as rudimentary hands and can even operate computers and other machinery. **Bonuses:** +5D6 S.D.C., +8 to the P.S. of the tentacles only, +2 to P.P., +2D6 to Spd, +1D4 to Horror Factor, +20% to Prowl, +30% to climb and can scale smooth surfaces and climb vertical walls! Depth Tolerance: 3,000 feet (914 m). **Penalties:** Increase weight 40%. Cannot be disguised or easily concealed, custom clothing may be required. On land reduce Spd by half, and fire does double damage.



Aquatic: Shark Table

Feared by mariners since ancient times, the shark has been referred to as a perfect hunting and eating machine. These predators are truly a fearsome sight whether they are silently gliding through the water or violently devouring their prey. They represent ferocity and power. No wonder the character was fascinated by them, or may have defined himself as a shark in business or competition (hence the terms “card-shark” and “pool-shark”). Nightbane with a Shark Morpheus tend to be aggressive and quick to fight, have the *Swimming* skill at 96%, and can breathe underwater indefinitely, as well as breathe air. Depth tolerance is 3,000 feet (914 m) unless stated otherwise.

01-20% Full Shark Form: The Morpheus is that of a large shark of any species (player’s choice), 8-12 feet (2.4 to 3.6 m) long, has full shark features, and thrashes around on dry land, as he does not have any hands, arms, legs or feet. **Bonuses:** Double Spd attribute for swimming speed, +2D6x10 S.D.C., +1D6 to P.S. and P.E., +3 to P.P., +2D6 to Spd, +2 to strike with a bite attack, +3 to Perception Rolls, 2D6 damage with a head-butt or tail strike, bite does 4D6 damage regardless of P.S., resistant to cold (half damage), Nightvision 2,000 feet (610 m), +2 to Horror Factor, and can detect the presence of blood in water up to two miles (3.2 m) away underwater, half that on dry land. Depth tolerance: Three miles (4.8 km). **Penalties:** Triple weight. Helpless on land (attacks per melee round, P.P., and Spd are all reduced to two) unless he possesses another means of locomotion (wings, legs, jets, etc.); cannot manipulate objects even with their mouth, and cannot be disguised. Transportation on land

may also represent a problem for these cold, slippery, large, heavy characters.

21-40% Were-Shark: Essentially a shark 7-8 feet (2.1 to 2.4 m) long/tall that has two short, thick arms and two short, thick legs with webbed fingers and toes, no neck and a short tail. The head is completely that of a shark (player picks species), although it may be oriented to face forward when walking upright. **Bonuses:** +1D6x10+6 S.D.C., +1D6 to P.S., +1D4 to P.P. and P.E., +2D6 to Spd, +1 attack per melee round, +1 to initiative, +1 to strike, +2 to strike with bite attack, and +1D4 to Horror Factor. Bite does 3D6 damage, a tail strike does Supernatural P.S. punch damage +4, impervious to cold (no damage), Nightvision 2,000 feet (610 m), and can detect the presence of blood up to one mile (1.6 km) away underwater, half that on dry land. Depth tolerance: Two miles (3.2 km). **Penalties:** -1D4 to M.A. and P.B., triple weight, speed on land is half, weight and size may be a problem on land and for transportation, cannot be disguised or easily concealed, -10% to skills requiring a delicate touch (Palming, Lock Picking, etc.), and all were-beasts are vulnerable to silver (it does double damage).

41-60% Humanoid Shark: The Morphus is humanoid in shape with a pair of legs with large feet and webbed toes, arms and hands with webbed fingers (-5% to delicate skills), and the head looks more like the animal than a human, though it is a pug version. There is still a triangular dorsal fin on the back, and the coloration is that of the animal. Size is seven feet (2.1 m). The skin is thick, smooth and rubbery. **Bonuses:** +1D6x10 S.D.C., +1 to I.Q., +1D4 to P.S., +1 to P.P., +1D6 to Spd, +1D4 to Horror Factor, +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, bite does 2D6 damage, a tail strike does Supernatural P.S. punch damage +4, resistant to cold (half damage), Nightvision 2,000 feet (610 m), and can detect the presence of blood up to 3500 feet (1067 m) away underwater, half that on dry land. Depth tolerance: One mile (1.6 km). **Penalties:** -1D4 to M.A. and P.B., double the weight, speed on land is reduced by 30%, cannot be disguised or easily concealed, and -5% to skills requiring a delicate touch (Palming, Lock Picking, etc.).

61-80% Shark Eyes & Senses: The Morphus looks nearly human except the nose is rather flat and pointed, and the eyes are large, round, dark, nearly black and the teeth are a bit pointed. **Bonuses:** +2 on Perception Rolls, +1 on initiative, Nightvision 2,000 feet (610 m), can detect/smell the presence of blood up to 6,000 feet (1828 m) away underwater, half that on dry land, and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1D4 to M.A., -1 to P.B., reduce speed on land by 10%.

81-00% Shark Head: The Morphus has a completely human body, but the head of a shark! **Bonuses:** +4D6 to S.D.C., +1 on initiative, Nightvision 2,000 feet (610 m), resistant to cold (half damage), can detect/smell the presence of blood up to two miles (3.2 km) away underwater, half that on dry land, +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, bite does 3D6 damage, +2 to strike with a bite attack, and +1D4 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1D4 to M.A. and P.B., increase weight by 30%, speed on land is reduced by 20%, and cannot be disguised or easily concealed.



Artificial Appearance Table

These Nightbane appear, in various ways, to be artificial or man-made. This might be the result of an appreciation for artwork, particularly sculpture/statues, puppets or art, or perhaps they always felt they were somehow fake, not genuine, junk like trash, broken (like glass), or somehow artificial. Colors vary widely.

01-10% Store Mannequin: The Nightbane appears to be a real, department store mannequin. One can see where the arms, legs, and head attach, the hair is coarse and wiry, the facial features are painted on but can move, and the eyes are unblinking. The clothing, even if leather, is usually what the character considers to be stylish or the latest fashion and will change over time. Perhaps this Nightbane loved shopping, worked in a department store or was just so concerned with outer appearance that his Morphus reflects this. Or maybe he never felt real. **Bonuses:** +1D6x10+12 S.D.C., +1 to P.B., +2 to damage, +1 to Horror Factor, impervious to cold, floats on water, +10% to Swim skill, +20% to Wardrobe and Grooming skill, +5% to Disguise, +5% to Prowl and can stand motionless for any length of time, as well as hide in a store among mannequins and be indistinguishable from them. Resistant to cold, heat, poison and toxins (half damage). **Penalties:** -1D4 to M.A., and fire does double damage.

11-20% Crash Test Dummy: The Morphus looks like a scuffed and dirty crash test dummy with a few dents and a slightly torn jumpsuit, as if it had been in a minor accident.

Maybe this character feels like a protector, or as if his birth or his whole life was an accident. **Bonuses:** +6D6+11 S.D.C., +1 to P.P., +2 on Perception Rolls, +5 to roll with impact, +1 to Horror Factor, impervious to cold, heat, poison and toxins. **Penalties:** -1 to M.A., -1 to P.E., and fire does normal damage.

21-30% Scarecrow: Quite plainly, this Morphus looks like the classic animated scarecrow – a straw stuffed shirt and pants probably tied together with rope, gloves for hands, a sack for a head, maybe a hat, and comes with a sickle sword (does 2D6 damage), machete (does 2D6 damage) or scythe (does 3D6 damage). This weapon may be lent to others, dropped, or stolen, but it will disappear when the 'Bane switches back to Facade form and reappears with him when he assumes his Morphus the next time. The weapon is a living part of the character. **Bonuses:** +4D6 S.D.C., +2 to P.P., +2 to Horror Factor, +1 to roll with impact, and if torn apart, knocked apart or blown to pieces, the character reforms in 2D6 minutes at half S.D.C. and Hit Points or the 'Bane can turn back into his Facade (if he does the latter he can't use his Morphus for 1D6+1 hours thereafter), floats on water, and is impervious to cold, heat, poison and toxins. **Penalties:** -2 to P.S. and P.E., and takes double damage from fire (though he will not catch ablaze like a normal scarecrow). Prefers to use his Scarecrow weapon above all others and feels vulnerable without it. The weapon is likely to be difficult to conceal or hide. It has 40 S.D.C. +5 per level of experience, but the weapon only takes damage when it is specifically targeted. When the S.D.C. of the weapon and the Nightbane's own S.D.C. are *both* reduced to zero, the weapon vanishes and cannot be made to reappear until the character recovers all of his own S.D.C.

31-40% Porcelain/Ceramic: This Nightbane appears to be a giant porcelain doll or a ceramic doll or statue and can be quite beautiful. These Nightbane have a difficult time displaying emotion since their skin is so stiff their faces don't move much. The skin is also tougher than normal ceramic or porcelain, but bullets and heavy impacts may cause chipping and a web of hair-line fractures to appear; heals as the 'Bane heals. **Bonuses:** +1D6x10+6 S.D.C., +1D4 to P.B., and +3 to damage in hand to hand combat, does not register on heat sensors, and resistant to heat and cold (half damage). **Penalties:** -1D4 to M.A., cannot swim (sinks like a rock), -10% to Climbing skill, and is difficult to disguise (-10%).

41-50% Junk Golem: The character may always have considered junkyards and alleys as treasure troves, or full of adventure, or he may have felt like he or his life was junk. At any rate, this Morphus is composed of junk. The following are most common: *01-25%* A human body imbedded with a hodgepodge of small pieces of junk such as bottles, cans, rusty nails, bricks, bits of wire, broken glass, etc. *26-50%* A junk body made of old car parts such as tires, fenders, car batteries, shocks, spark plugs, etc. *51-75%* A junk body made of nails, wire and wood from pallets and shipping crates. *76-00%* A junk body made of paint cans, paint chips, paint brushes, bits of metal, plastic sheeting and tarps. **Bonuses:** +2D4x10+10 to S.D.C., +1D4 to Horror Factor, +1D6 damage in hand to hand combat, and resistant to heat, cold and poison (half damage). **Penalties:** Double (01-50%) or triple (51-00%) weight. -1D4 to P.B., -10% to perform any skills that require a delicate touch, cannot swim (unless mostly wood), is impossible to disguise, and -30% to Prowl.

51-60% Glass: This Nightbane's body is made from (01-50%) impact resistant, cloudy, clear or colored glass (typically white, blue, green, amber, or red), or even stained glass, or (51-00%) has a human body imbedded with shards of broken glass and bottles. **Bonuses:** +5D6+2 S.D.C., +1D6 to damage in combat, +2 to Horror Factor, +20% to hide/Prowl underwater (difficult to see). The character takes half damage from laser and light based attacks and does not register on heat sensors. **Penalties:** -1D4 to M.A., -1 to P.P., cannot swim (sinks like a rock), and -15% to Prowl due to light reflections.

61-70% Soft Clay: Appears to be made of soft, gray or tan colored clay. **Bonuses:** +1D6x10 S.D.C., +3 to roll with impact, kinetic attacks (punches, kicks, falls, impact, bullets, etc.) do a quarter their normal damage, so do blades (cut, stab, impale). Big explosions do only 25% damage but blow the character into 1D6x10 clay globs that take 1D6+4 minutes to reform. +15% (or a base skill of 40%) to Disguise skill as the Nightbane can shape his own features and even mold and shape his body; can only impersonate those of similar size and weight, cannot impersonate specific individuals, and the color of the skin cannot be changed without makeup or face paint. **Penalties:** Fire, water and electricity attacks inflict double damage. Cold-based attacks and freezing temperature do half damage but reduce the number of attacks and Spd by half. Being submerged in water or sprayed with gallons of water melts the Nightbane into a mound of wet clay, effectively immobilizing him until dried out (takes 2D6 hours!). Likewise, a blast from a garden hose does 1D4 damage and a blast from a fire hose does 2D6 damage. Cannot swim (sinks like a rock).

71-80% Wood Statue: Looks like a simple, rough hewn, human shaped statue carved from bare wood or looks like a giant marionette, but neither has any distinctive facial features. **Bonuses:** +6D6+6 S.D.C., +2 to P.S., +1 to P.E., +3 to damage in combat, +1 to Horror Factor and floats on water (+20% to Swim skill). **Penalties:** -1 to P.P. -1 to strike, parry, and dodge, -4 to Spd, double weight, fire does double damage, and -15% to Prowl (clunks when he walks).

81-90% Mirror Man: *01-33%* A smooth, featureless humanoid figure made of a mirror-like reflective material that bends with body movement. *34-66%* A human body covered in small mirrors, all the same shape and style; facial features obscured or the head is a box made of mirrors (can still talk). *67-00%* The body is covered in the cracked and shattered pieces of broken mirrors. In bright light the 'Bane creates flashes of light that make looking at him difficult (opponents are -5 to strike, parry, and dodge): This Morphus enables the character to *Mirror Walk* at will! No one knows how this works, as any mirror used is supposed to have a counterpart in the opposite world, but some see it as a sign that the barrier between Earth and the Nightlands is continuing to thin. Whatever the case, these Nightbane are highly sought after specifically for this ability. **Bonuses:** +5D6+5 S.D.C., +1 on Perception Rolls, +2 to Horror Factor, impervious to laser and light attacks, and takes half damage from energy attacks. **Penalties:** -2 to M.A., -2 to P.P., cannot swim (sinks like a rock), and -50% to Prowl in daylight/bright light and -20% to Prowl in darkness due to light reflections.

91-00% Stuffed Animal: Roll on the *Animal Form Table* (any) to determine the type of giant stuffed animal, or the player

can elect to go with the classic stuffed *Teddy Bear*. Fur coloring may be realistic or not (purple, pink, polka dotted, etc.) and the face may be simple or wildly exaggerated to look sweet or dangerous (has pointed teeth and fangs, horns, etc.). The animal may be a humanoid caricature, a la the *Teddy Bear*, or a more realistic stuffed rendition of the creature, but all are roughly human size, can speak and walk on two legs. The *animal abilities* remain roughly the same as those described in the *Animal Form* table, however, S.D.C., Spd, and bonuses are half, and the animal is made of fabric and stuffing so weight is half that of the character's normal weight. **Bonuses:** +2D6 S.D.C., +1D4 to M.A., +20% to Prowl, impervious to heat, cold, and poison, kinetic attacks (from punches to bullets) do half damage, and floats on water until it becomes waterlogged and sinks (takes 4D6+20 minutes). **Penalties:** Reduce Spd by 20%, skills that require a delicate touch or fingers are -15%, and fire does double damage.



Biomechanical: Aquatic Table

Nightbane with a Biomechanical: Aquatic Table part often feel a need to explore the world, especially beneath the waves. The character may have a love for adventure, exploration, swimming, snorkeling, or S.C.U.B.A. diving, or water, or may like to remain unseen, hidden below the surface. Nightbane with this Morphus have the *Swimming* skill at 80%, can breathe underwater for 2D6+20 minutes at a time whether air tanks are present or not, and have a depth tolerance of 1,000 feet (305 m) unless stated otherwise.

01-10% Deep Sea Diving Suit Skin: The body is completely covered in an old-style deep sea diving suit complete with a large metal helmet with glass view ports, heavy, lead-weighted boots, a severed air hose and tow line and breathes heavily (think Darth Vader). **Bonuses:** +1D6x10 S.D.C., +2 to P.E., +2 to Perception Rolls, +1 to Horror Factor, has an air supply of 4D6+60 minutes, and a depth tolerance of 3,000 feet (914 m). **Penalties:** Reduce speed on land and in the water by half, -1 to P.P., and -20% to Acrobatics, Climb, Gymnastics, and similar skills, -30% to Prowl, and cannot be disguised.

11-20% Flippers: The Nightbane has large, plastic swimming flippers permanently attached to his feet. Walking on land is difficult, but manageable. **Bonuses:** +1D6 S.D.C., +2 to P.E., and double Spd when swimming. **Penalties:** On land, reduce Spd by half, and -20% to Acrobatics, Climb, Gymnastics, Prowl, and similar skills, and cannot be disguised.

21-30% Spear Gun Limb: One hand and forearm is either replaced (01-50%) by a spear gun, or has one incorporated into the forearm (51-00%). When the 'Bane assumes Morphus form, the gun is loaded. However, it takes one melee action to reload the gun after firing it, and additional ammunition must be carried with the Nightbane. **Bonuses:** +1D6 S.D.C., +1 to Horror Factor, spear gun damage is 2D6+2 per normal spear (can use special rounds such as explosive-tipped, double damage, tranquilizer dart, 1D4 damage plus knockout for 2D4+2 minutes, etc.), spear gun range is 300 feet (91.4 m), +2 to strike with the weapon. **Penalties:** -15% to all skills if one hand is replaced by the spear gun, and cannot be easily disguised (-20%), -1 to P.B., and may need custom made clothing.

31-40% Propellers: The Morphus has two propellers protruding from the back and two small ones attached to the legs. Speed on or under water is 35 mph (56 kph), and the use of propellers does not tire the 'Bane. **Bonuses:** +1D6x10+10 S.D.C., Natural A.R. 12, +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Double weight, reduce Spd on land by 30%, difficult to conceal/disguise (-30%) on land and needs custom made clothing.

41-50% Sonar Screen: The Nightbane has a large, circular, glass screen in his chest which constantly "pings" and registers all movement within 1,000 feet (305 km) underwater. **Bonuses:** +5D6 S.D.C. and a Natural A.R. 10, and +2 to Horror Factor. When underwater, sonar constantly tracks everything within a 1000 foot (305 m) radius, and gives the character +1 to initiative, +1 to parry, +1D4 to dodge and makes surprise attacks impossible. It also registers depth. Depth Tolerance: 2,000 feet (610 m). **Penalties:** Increase weight 30%, reduce Spd 10% on land, unit continues to ping, making Prowl (-20%) and hiding difficult.

51-60% Hydrofoil Engine: The Nightbane has wide forearms, large hands, and a jet engine pointing down towards the legs. Travels on water like a hydrofoil and underwater like a torpedo. **Bonuses:** +6D6+12 S.D.C., Natural A.R. 10, +1 to Horror Factor, and when the character leans forward in a prone position, arms elevated, as if doing a push-up on water, the 'Bane can hydrofoil across the surface of water at up to 60 mph (96 km) +5 mph (8 km) per level of experience; half that speed underwater. The engine cannot be used to fly, but can make short leaps of up to 15 feet (4.6 m) high and 30 feet (9.1 m) across.

Penalties: Double weight, reduce Spd on land by 40%, difficult to conceal/disguise (-40%) and needs custom made clothing.

61-70% Fins: Two large metal fins, like those on a submarine, protrude from the back, while two smaller ones are in the arms and lower legs. They make the Nightbane more maneuverable when underwater. **Bonuses:** +4D6 S.D.C., +2 to parry and can use arms to block melee weapons without injury, +1 to Horror Factor, also +1 to parry and +2 to dodge when in or under the water. **Penalties:** Reduce Spd on land by 10%, difficult to conceal/disguise (-30%) on land and needs custom made clothing.

71-80% Catch of the Day: The Morphus appears to have been caught in fishing nets but able to break free. The whole body is clad in a skin diving wet suit that has heavy-duty netting imbedded into, and sticking out of, his upper torso (front and back), with shredded bits of it hanging from his arms and legs, and net marks impressed across his limbs and body; he may even have a few (1D6) small buoys tied to the netting. **Bonuses:** +4D6 S.D.C., Natural A.R. 9, +1 to Horror Factor, automatically gets the Escape Artist skill at 60% (or +10% bonus if the skill is already taken), and enables the character to take Talents that require a Stigmata trait. **Penalties:** Reduce Spd on land by 10%, -15% to Disguise skill.

81-90% Torpedo Tubes: The Morphus has 1D4 miniature torpedo tubes built into each shoulder, or forearm, or the back. While each tube is fully loaded with four torpedoes when the Nightbane assumes his Morphus, there is no way to reload them externally. Instead, each tube regenerates one round per hour. The 'Bane must also permanently sacrifice 6 P.P.E. per torpedo tube. **Bonuses:** +4D6 S.D.C., +2 to Horror Factor, and damage from the torpedoes is 1D6x10 S.D.C. to a five foot (1.5 m) radius, the torpedo has a range of 1000 feet (305 m) +100 feet (30.5 m) per level of experience. However, they are only useful *underwater*; +3 to strike with torpedoes. **Penalties:** Double weight, reduce Spd on land by 30%, difficult to conceal or disguise (-40%) on land and needs custom made clothing.

91-00% Scuba Gear: This Morphus is in complete S.C.U.B.A. gear, with wet suit, air tanks, removable breather unit, air hose, goggles and flippers. **Bonuses:** +6D6 to S.D.C., Natural A.R. 9, +2 to P.E., +1 to Perception Rolls, and increase underwater swimming speed by 20%. **Penalties:** On land, reduce Spd by half, and -20% to Acrobatics, Climb, Gymnastics, Prowl, and similar skills, and cannot be disguised.

Biomechanical Table III

01-10% Batteries: Visible batteries – one type or a wide variety of C and D-cells, 9-volts, large batteries and car batteries – are imbedded into the character's back, sides, chest, neck, shoulders, arms and upper legs. The batteries store electrical energy that is generated by movement and physical activity. This enables the Nightbane to fire short-range (200 feet/61 m) electrical blasts (inflict 3D6 damage) and a light electrical shock touch (1D6 damage) or an electricity charged punch (3D6 damage plus punch damage). **Bonuses:** +6D6+12 S.D.C., Natural A.R. 10, +2 to Horror Factor, impervious to electrical and acid attacks. **Penalties:** Double weight, reduce Spd by 20%, cannot be easily disguised (-20%), and custom clothing may be required.

Note: Can be used to charge a car battery with the proper cables, but cannot be used as a generator to run equipment.

11-20% Gimmick Toy Switches: A large wind-up key protrudes from the back, and 1D6+1 wind-up keys, knobs, push buttons, pull strings, levers and switches are located in the chest, 1D6 in each of the arms and legs, one on the back of each hand, two in the neck or side of the head, and one in the back of the head. Each time one is pressed, pulled, or wound up, it causes a different effect or ability as is common to toys and action figures.

Here are some possibilities. Once selected the ability is always the same and it should relate to the corresponding body area. The Nightbane quickly learns which switches do what.

- **Theme music** plays for 30 seconds (may be from a well known movie or TV show), can be used to be fun, funny, dramatic, startling or as a signal.
- **Sings beautifully** for 1D6x10+20 seconds.
- **Whistles a happy tune** for 1D6x10+20 seconds.
- **Loud barking** as if from a large dog for 1D6x10+10 seconds.
- **Loud, angry growl** like from a bear or T-Rex for 1D6+6 seconds.
- **Loud siren** plays for 1D4x10 seconds, may be used as a warning.
- **Talks in a different voice** for 1D6x10+30 seconds.
- **Talks in a different language** (pick one) for 1D6x10+20 seconds.
- **Talks in a distorted mechanical voice** for 1D6x10+30 seconds.
- **Eyes glow yellow** for 1D4x10+20 seconds and emit a beam of light equal to a *flashlight* – range is 500 feet (152.4 m).
- **Eyes glow green** for 1D4x10+20 seconds and provide *Nightvision* 300 feet (91.5 m).
- **Eyes glow white** for 1D4x10+20 seconds and provide *telescopic* binocular vision – 3,000 feet (914 m).
- **Eyes glow orange** for 1D4x10+20 seconds and provide *thermal* and infrared vision – 300 feet (91.5 m).
- **Eyes glow red** and the 'Bane can fire *lasers* for one melee round (15 seconds); 2D6 damage per dual blast, 1000 foot (305 m) range!
- **Tiny blinking lights** concealed in the upper torso (no noise), blink for 1D4x10 seconds, and may used as a single or warning.
- **Quick Disguise:** With the press of a button or pull of a string, the head spins around and turns into a completely different face wearing a mask. Lasts until activated again to return it to the original face. Has only two faces, masked and unmasked, but the unmasked face is different from the Nightbane's Facade.
- **Secret Compartment:** Chest opens up to reveal a storage cavity about the size of a lunch box. Cannot be seen or found unless lever, switch, or button to open is activated.
- **Pop-Apart Body:** Arms and legs fall from the body without blood. This may be used for shock value (it has a Horror Factor of 16) or to fake a death, or to hide or put the character into a small container or suitcase. Comes back

together when the switch is activated again or within 3D6+20 minutes, whichever comes first. If a limb goes missing, the character can restore himself by reverting back to his Facade, but he cannot use his Morphus again for 2D4+22 hours, at which point all limbs are back in place and at full S.D.C.

- **Missile Firing Action:** One melee attack, +1 to strike, does 4D6 blunt damage, does NOT actually explode, 500 foot (152.4 m) range. Has a payload of four, and unless the "missile" is retrieved and put back into the Morphus, this attack is gone until missiles reform 24 hours later.
- **Squirt Gun Finger:** One melee attack, no damage but may be startling (victim loses one melee action) and does 1D6 damage to vampires and beings vulnerable to water; 30 foot (9.1 m) range, unlimited payload.
- **Flying Fist:** One melee attack, +2 to strike, does 2D6 damage for that character, 120 foot (36.6 m) range and reappears on the character's wrist a second after it hits.
- **Power Punch Action:** One melee attack, +1 to strike, punch does double normal punch damage.
- **Karate-Chop Action:** One melee attack, does 3D6 damage and is +2 to strike, regardless of normal punch damage.
- **Karate-Kick Action:** One melee attack, +2 to strike and does 4D6 damage, regardless of normal punch damage.
- **Retractable Claws (small):** Claws extend from the fingers, do +2D4 damage with claw attacks (P.S. damage bonus applies), and claws remain extended for one melee round (15 seconds).
- **Sword Arm:** A sword extends from the forearm, does +2D6 damage, +1 to parry and disarm, and remains extended for one melee round (15 seconds).
- **Fire Fist:** One melee attack, fist glows red and inflicts 1D6 burning damage, plus normal punch damage for that character, 120 foot (36.6 m) range.
- **Laser Fist:** One melee attack, fist glows blue and shoots a laser beam, 3D6 damage, 120 foot (36.6 m) range.
- **Running Action:** Runs at double normal speed for 1D6 melee rounds.
- **Spinning Action:** One melee action, makes a quick spinning action that is +3 to dodge.
- **Dancing Action:** Character dances flawlessly for 1D6x10 seconds, +1 to dodge.
- **Jumping Action:** One melee action, leaps 20 feet (6.1 m) high.
- **Kung-fu Leaping Action:** One melee action, leaps 10 feet (3 m) high and 20 feet (6.1 m) across.
- **Flying Action:** The character can hover and fly up to a speed of 50 mph (80 km) for 1D4 melee rounds (15-60 seconds).
- **Pop-Out Roller Blade Feet:** A pair of roller blades pop out from the soles of the character's feet; double speed on smooth, hard, flat surfaces; reduce speed by 70% on grass, dirt, carpet or rocky surface.
- **Transforming Tank Legs:** Legs and lower torso turn into tank treads and has motorized locomotion: 35 mph (56 km) but can ride over broken terrain and debris.

- **Transforming Motorcycle Legs:** Legs and lower torso turn into a motorcycle and has motorized locomotion: 80 mph (128 km) on the road.

Note: Players may suggest other possibilities like those above, but it is up to the Game Master to allow them. Make sure they are not too powerful or overwhelming, and respect the G.M. if he or she says "no." **Gimmick Toy Bonuses:** +3D6+3 to S.D.C., +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1 to M.A., disguise is impossible, and custom clothing is necessary for the Morphus.

21-30% Hidden Compartments: Although the Morphus may appear to be made of flesh and blood (or not), the character can open up a flap or door in his body to reveal a small hiding space. The chest or stomach opens up to reveal a storage cavity about the size of a lunch box. Each shoulder has a compartment large enough to hold a deck of playing cards, each forearm has a compartment long and deep enough to hold a banana, and so does each upper leg. When closed the compartment is completely invisible. **Bonuses:** +4D6 to S.D.C., +1 to Horror Factor, +20% for Concealment skill and +5% Palming. **Penalties:** -1 to M.A. and P.E.



31-40% Computer Brain: As a rule, this Morphus makes it so the top of the head is a bulletproof glass enclosure in which circuit boards and microchips are clearly visible (01-50%), or the head, face and neck are covered with computer circuitry, like a circuit board, imbedded in the skin, and the eyes look as if they are made of glass. **Bonuses:** +2D6 to S.D.C., +1 to Horror Factor, *Total Recall* (the equivalent of the psionic power of the same name), Mathematics: Basic and Advanced are performed at 90%, +20% to all computer skills and +10% to all other skills

known by the character. **Penalties:** -1D4 to M.A., P.P. and P.B. attributes, and tends to be a bit cool and aloof.

41-50% Internal Machinery: Although the character is likely to appear as flesh and blood (or not), whenever he moves, the whirl and click of machine parts can be heard, and in combat a metallic clunk can be heard when struck. Indeed, the internal organs and bones are replaced with machine parts and the bones with metal replacements; may look like clockworks, modern mechanics, or futuristic bionics. **Bonuses:** +2D4x10 to S.D.C., +2D6 to Hit Points, +2D6 to Spd, +5 to roll with impact, +6 to save vs poison, toxins, and disease, +4 to save vs possession, and tires at half the normal rate. **Penalties:** -2 to M.A., -30% to Prowl, Disguise and Undercover Ops skills, and the constant hum, clicks and whirls of the machine are disturbing to some people.

51-60% Radar System: The Nightbane has a large, circular, glass screen in his chest or in the forehead which constantly and registers all aerial movement within a 3,000 foot (914 m) radius. **Bonuses:** +4D6 S.D.C., a Natural A.R. 9, and +2 to Horror Factor. The radar constantly tracks incoming objects in the air, including bullets, arrows, thrown objects, aerial attacks and even fast moving (30 mph/48 km or faster) ground attacks, as well as tracks up to 2D6+12 specific aerial targets within a 3,000 foot (914.4 m) radius. Radar provides +1 on initiative, +1 to parry, +1D4 to dodge and makes surprise attacks against him from the air impossible. **Penalties:** Increase weight 30%, reduce Spd 10%, unit continues to flash and blip making Disguise, Prowl, and hiding difficult (-20%).

61-70% Gyroscope: Somewhere within the 'Bane's body, either visible or concealed deep inside him, is a gyroscope, granting the Nightbane an incredible sense of balance. **Bonuses:** The gyroscope imparts an unerring sense of which way is up, down, or sideways even underwater or in the air, +2 to roll with impact, +1 to dodge, +10% to skill with Maintain Balance rolls like Gymnastics and Acrobatics.

71-80% Drill/Auger Hand: One or all hands (player's choice) have been replaced by large auger drill bits and the forearm is the machine that drives the drill. The face is concealed behind a protective face mask or helmet similar to a welder's mask. **Bonuses:** +4D6+4 S.D.C., +2 to P.S., +1D4 to Horror Factor, +1D6 to punch damage when inactive, but does 5D6 damage when the drill is active. In addition, an opponent's A.R. is -3 points against this attack. **Penalties:** If all hands are replaced, skills requiring the use of the hands are impossible. Increase weight 30%, reduce Spd 10%, disguise is impossible, and custom made clothing is probably necessary.

81-90% Universal Connection Port: This Nightbane has an unparalleled ability to link to electronic devices via a socket and connector cable from his arm, chest, neck or head. This allows him to link himself to computers, televisions, electronic music instruments, most types of video and communications equipment, and any type of electronic device. Once connected, the Nightbane can control and manipulate the device, turn it on or off, etc. The only limitations are those of the device. **Note:** The 'Bane cannot drive a car by plugging into the cigarette lighter, nor can he have unrestricted access to a computer if he doesn't know the passwords. This is not Telemechanics or Deus Ex Machina, it only allows hands free use of the device. If the 'Bane has some kind of onboard computer himself and computer

skills, he may be able to send to and download from the memory of the device to which he is linked.

91-00% Heavy Plating: This Morphus appears as high-tech body armor or exoskeleton and helmet or face plate, all of which looks to be built for war. The armor can have any style the player desires, but will always be bulky looking. **Bonuses:** +3D6x10+40 to S.D.C., Natural A.R. of 15, +2 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Double weight, reduce Spd by 30%, -1 to P.P., -2D6 to Spd, -20% to Acrobatics, Climb, Gymnastics, Prowl and Swim, impossible to disguise or easily conceal, and fitting inside an average vehicle is cramped and takes up two spaces.



Dinosaur Form Table

Dinosaurs have captured the imaginations of both young and old and they have influenced the Morphus of this character.

01-11% Sauropod Humanoid: The Morphus is a humanoid Sauropod, with a small sauropod head and long neck (1D6+1 feet/0.6 to 2.1 m long). The neck can bend to look behind himself, stretch to see from a height advantage, fit through small openings and twist to a limited degree. The nostrils of a sauropod are on top of the head, rather than the front of the face, allowing the creature to be underwater indefinitely and still breathe as long as the very top of the head is above the surface, but can also hold his breath for 2D6+10 minutes. **Bonuses:** Add 2D6x10 to S.D.C., +1D4 to P.S., and +2 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Triple weight, reduce Spd by 40%, impossible to disguise and -10% to Prowl or hide unless it is underwater (+15%).

12-22% Raptor Legs: The Raptor family contains several dozen species of bipedal dinosaurs all sharing quick wits and an

even quicker set of legs and feet. This Morphus has an upper torso of a humanoid though the face is elongated, the eyes twice the normal size and the neck is 50% longer than usual for humans. The legs are those of a Raptor completely covered with dark mottled scales that may vary from red, brown, and black to tan and green. The feet are twice as large as a human's, and have three large, clawed toes, the largest of which can be used to slash and rip at opponents. **Bonuses:** +6D6+30 S.D.C., Natural A.R. of 10, +1 to P.S., +4D6+12 to Spd, +1D4 to Horror Factor, can leap 8 feet (2.4 m) high and 12 feet (3.6 m) across, +1 on initiative and +1 to dodge. The 'Bane also possesses a large scythe claw on the big toe of each foot that does 3D6 damage with a kick. **Penalties:** Double weight, -1D4 to M.A. and disguise is impossible.

23-33% Triceratops Head: The Morphus is a humanoid body with a thick neck and the head of a Triceratops, complete with three horns (one on the nose, two on the forehead; only juveniles lack the nose horn) and a thick, bony frill or collar around the head. A head-butt will do 2D6 damage, a jab with the horns does 4D6 damage, a running ram attack does 6D6+6 damage (counts as two attack), and the bite does 1D6 damage. **Bonuses:** 2D6x10+16 to S.D.C., Natural A.R. 10 (A.R. 17 for the head and frill protecting the neck), +2 to P.S., +1 to P.E., +3 to parry with horns/head, +1 to disarm, +3 to pull punch, and +2 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Double weight, -2 to M.A. and disguise is impossible.

34-44% Ankylosaur Humanoid: The Morphus is a humanoid with thick limbs, barrel chested, and covered in a tough, leathery and calcium shell. The head is large, square, hard, and covered in small, hard spikes above the eyebrows, above the tiny, round ears, and along the spine of the neck. **Armor:** The front/belly shell has 2D4x10+12 S.D.C. and a Natural A.R. of 12, the back shell (makes the character look a bit hunchbacked) has 3D6x10+55 S.D.C. and a Natural A.R. of 16! The 'Bane also has a long, lightly armored tail (6 feet/1.8 m long) that ends in a hard, bone club (+1 to strike). The rim of the shell and tail are covered with small horns (tail has 1D6x10+12 S.D.C.). **Bonuses:** +1D4 to P.S., +1 to P.E., +2 to Horror Factor, Swims 80%, and the mace-like tail adds +1 attack per melee and inflicts double the Nightbane's usual punch damage. **Penalties:** Triple weight, reduce height 10%, reduce Spd by 50% (normal Spd in water), -2 to P.B., impossible to disguise and -40% to Prowl or hide unless it is underwater (no penalty).

45-55% Duckoid Humanoid: The Morphus is humanoid with webbed toes, and a head that has a protruding mouth, large, flat nose, large lips, and a large, boney crest that resembles an upside down ski only much thicker, rising from the crown of his head. The character can make deep, resonating noises through his nose and crest that can be heard up to two miles (3.2 km) away! Anyone standing within 5 feet (1.5 m) of him when he calls at full volume needs to make a saving throw of 16 to avoid temporary deafness for 1D4 melee rounds (no initiative and -2 to parry, disarm and dodge). **Bonuses:** +2D4x10 S.D.C., +2D6 to Spd, +1 to Horror Factor, head-butt does double damage, automatically gets Sing skill at 80%, Swim at 60%, hold his breath for 1D6+8 minutes, and can disguise his voice with 2D6+4 different voices 85%. **Penalties:** Double weight, reduce Spd by

25% (normal Spd in water), -2 to P.B., impossible to disguise and -40% to Prowl or hide unless it is underwater (no penalty).

56-67% Tyrannosaur Humanoid: The Morphus is humanoid except the head has an oversized, elongated head, muzzle-like maw filled with sharp teeth, tiny nose, the eyes are large, the head bald, the skin scaly, the feet large with only four toes, and the arms are 20% shorter and the arms and hands are spindly and weak (half the character's P.S.), while the legs are 20% taller/longer and thickly muscled. 01-50% have a 1D4+6 foot (2! To 3 m) tail (tail slap does 4D6 damage), 51-00% no tail. **Bonuses:** +1D4 feet (0.3 to 1.2 m) to height, +4D4x10 S.D.C., Natural A.R. of 11, +1D6 to P.S. but to *legs only*, +2 to P.E., +3D6 to Spd, +1D4 to Horror Factor, +1 attack per melee, bite attacks do 5D6 damage, clawing foot attack does 3D6 damage, stomp attack does 2D4 damage, can smell blood and decaying bodies/meat up to one mile (1.6 km) away and can track those scents at 79% proficiency, and +10% to Tracking skill. **Penalties:** Triple weight, -1D4 to I.Q. and M.E., -10% to Physical skills, -15% to any delicate skills (Computer Operation, Palming, etc.), impossible to disguise and -40% to Prowl or hide.

68-78% Pterodactyl Humanoid: The Morphus has a humanoid body with short legs, normal arms and hands, a human but elongated face, large taloned feet and a pair of massive leather wings. Talon feet are prehensile like a hawk, allowing the character to claw at opponents from the air or hovering (3D6 damage), can also grasp and hold items but cannot use any type of weapon. **Bonuses:** +2D4x10 S.D.C., Natural A.R. of 9, +2 to P.P., +2 to Horror Factor, flying Speed is 45 mph (72 km), gliding is silent but half speed, +2 on Perception Rolls. **Penalties:** Double weight, -2 to P.B., impossible to disguise and -40% to Prowl or hide unless gliding (no penalty), and cannot swim, flounders and sinks. Wingspan is 3x the character's height.

79-89% Lesothosaurus Humanoid: The Morphus rather looks like a Komodo dragon that walks upright on two legs. The arms and hands are human, the head is not, it looks like that of a lizard, the neck is twice as long as a human's, and the tail narrows to a thin point and is as long as the body is tall. **Bonuses:** +2D4x10 S.D.C., can leap 8 feet (2.4 m) high and 12 feet (3.6 m) across, +2 to P.S., +3D6+6 to Spd, bites does 1D6 damage, +10% to Prowl, and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Reduce height by 40% (typically 4 feet/1.2 m), weight by 40%, and impossible to disguise.

90-00% Stegosaur Plates: This Morphus is a barrel chested humanoid with scaly skin, a reptilian human head, twin rows of triangular plates running from the back of the neck along the spine, to the rump. These plates provide armor protection from attacks from behind. However, the shoulders also have a pair of large plates and three pair of small triangular plates line the forearms enabling the character to block melee weapons with his arms without damage, plus 1D4 spikes grow just behind the knuckles on the backs of the hands (+2D6 damage to punch attacks). No tail. **Bonuses:** +4D4x10+16 S.D.C., Natural A.R. of 13, +2 to P.S., +1 attack per melee, +1D4 to parry, +1 to disarm, +1 to roll with impact, and +2 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Triple weight, -1D4 to dodge, -5% to any delicate skills (Computer Operation, Palming, etc.), impossible to disguise and -30% to Prowl or hide.



Disproportion Table

Body image has always been one of the most common fears throughout time. People thinking they are too fat, too skinny, have huge feet or ears, etc., leading to fear that one's body is ugly and malformed. Perhaps this character obsessed about such things, and now has a Morpheus body that is grossly out of proportion (2-3 times *larger* or *smaller* than normal). One could have thin, spindly arms or normal arms and massive, oversized, clawed hands, or large, muscular legs and tiny feet, or normal legs and oversized feet, a button nose or large nose, tiny ears or elephant ears, or head too small for the character's hulking body, and so on.

Step One: Roll percentile dice to determine the appendage/body area that is out of proportion.

01-20% Head.

21-50% Arms & Hands.

51-70% Torso.

71-90% Legs & Feet.

91-00% Roll twice for two disproportions.

Step Two: Roll on the appropriate table to determine the details of the disproportionate body part, bonuses and penalties.

Disproportionate Head

01-10% Large Head: The entire head is twice as large as usual. +1D4 to I.Q. and +2 to M.E. attributes. **Penalties:** -1 to P.B. and P.E. attributes, and the character may seem more vulnerable and unable to defend himself than he really is; -2 from Horror Factor.

11-15% Huge Jaw, Strong Neck: +1D6 damage with bite attacks, can hold onto rope with teeth with the same strength and grip as his hands without injury to the neck, and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1 to P.B. and -20% to Disguise and Undercover skills.

16-20% No chin. The character's chin is small, flat, and seems to practically fade into the neck. **Penalties:** -1 to P.B. and -1 from Horror Factor.

21-25% Huge Teeth: +1D6 damage to bite attacks, +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalty:** -1 to P.B.

26-30% Tiny Teeth: The teeth look like those of a young human child or even smaller, and if the 'Bane has fangs they are tiny too. The character may have twice as many teeth because they are so small. **Penalties:** -1 from Horror Factor and any damage from bite attacks is half the normal amount.

31-35% Large, Thick Neck: +1D6+2 S.D.C. and +1 Horror Factor.

36-40% Pencil Neck: The neck seems unusually thin and long. The advantage is -1 to be hit by a Called Shot to the neck. **Penalties:** -1D6 S.D.C. and -1 from Horror Factor.

41-50% Very Small Head: The head is a small, low-profile target to hit; attackers must make a *Called Shot* to target it and still suffer a penalty of -3 to strike, +2 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1 to I.Q. and P.B. attributes.

51-55% Large Mouth: The mouth is unusually large and creepy, lips may be large and plump or thin; +2 to bite damage and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalty:** -1 from P.B.

56-60% Tiny Mouth: The mouth is unusually small, practically a slit with no lips, and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalty:** -1 from M.A.

61-67% Huge Ears: 1D4 times larger than is common; +1D4 to Perception Rolls dealing with sound. **Penalties:** -2 to P.B. and -20% to Disguise and Undercover Ops skills.

68-75% Tiny Ears: +1 to Perception Rolls dealing with sound.

76-82% Huge Eyes: Perfect vision, excellent peripheral vision (can see 180 degrees) and Nightvision (1,000 feet/305 m; increase range an extra 1000 feet if the character already has Nightvision), and +1 to Perception Rolls involving vision in the dark and in dim lighting. **Penalties:** Light sensitive – sunlight and other bright lights hurt the eyes, cause the character to squint, reduce normal (daylight) vision by half, and -2 to Perception Rolls involving vision in well lit areas and daytime.

83-89% Tiny Eyes: Perfect 20/20 vision, but poor peripheral vision (only 90 degrees), +1 to Horror Factor and Perception Rolls. **Penalties:** -1 to P.B. attribute, -1 to parry and dodge, and is not likely to see anyone sneaking up on him from behind or the side (opponents are +2 to strike with surprise attacks from behind)!

90-95% Huge Nose: Keen sense of smell, can track by scent: 20% +4% per level of experience, and +2 to Perception Rolls dealing with scents and odors. **Penalties:** -2 to save vs gas attacks (including smoke, tear gas, stench, and other strong odors) and -3 to save vs nausea and vomiting resulting from foul odors and airborne toxins.

96-00% Tiny Nose: +1 to P.B., +2 to save vs gas attacks (including smoke, tear gas, stench, and other strong odors) and +4 to save vs nausea and vomiting resulting from foul odors and airborne toxins. **Penalties:** This little button nose has only a fair sense of smell: -10% to identify odors and cannot track by scent and -3 to Perception Rolls dealing with scents and odors.

Disproportionate Arms & Hands

01-10% Huge Forearms: The character has forearms like Popeye, +1D4 P.S., +1D6 to S.D.C., and +1 to parry. **Penalties:** Wearing tight clothing and long sleeves is impossible, unless very loose and oversized. Furthermore, the character has trouble fitting his arms through narrow openings and tight spaces.

11-20% Thin Forearms: Spindly, pipe-cleaner arms. Can easily fit through small openings and narrow spaces, +2% to Escape Artist skill. **Penalties:** -1D4 to P.S. and may look weak and vulnerable. Clothing looks baggy in the arms and even normal hands may look oversized and disproportionate.

21-30% Unusually Long Arms: The character has long upper and lower arms reminiscent to a gorilla or ape. The character looks out of proportion, but has an extended reach (20% longer than usual), +1 to parry and entangle. **Penalties:** -1 to P.B., -20% to Disguise and Undercover Ops skills and requires custom clothing, otherwise shirts, jackets, etc., look too short/small in the arms.

31-40% Large, Muscular Upper Arms: +1D4 to P.S., +1D6+2 to S.D.C., and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Makes wearing tight clothing and even normal sized clothing impossible (too tight); needs oversized shirts, jackets and coats or custom-made clothing.

41-50% Huge, Broad, Shoulders: +2 to P.S., +1D6+1 to S.D.C., and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Makes wearing tight clothing and even normal sized clothing impossible (too tight); needs oversized shirts, jackets and coats.

51-60% Small, Narrow Shoulders: Can fit through small, narrow spaces, +5% to Escape Artist skill. **Penalties:** -5% to Disguise skill and makes even tight clothing seem loose, baggy, and frumpy; needs custom clothing and padded shoulders to look normal and well dressed.

61-80% Huge Hands: Hands are two or three times the size of normal. +1 to P.S., +1 to entangle and disarm, +2 to damage, +1D4 to S.D.C. and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1 to P.P., -1 to pull punch, -5% to delicate skills, and makes wearing tight clothing and long sleeves impossible, unless very loose and oversized. Furthermore, the character has trouble fitting his arms through narrow openings and tight spaces.

81-00% Small Hands: Are small and delicate, like those of a small child; +1 to P.P., +5% to all manual dexterity related skills (Forgery, Palming, Pick Locks, Sewing, etc.) and +10% to Escape Artist skill. **Penalties:** -2 to damage from punches and claw attacks, -2 to entangle and disarm, -5% to Disguise and Undercover Ops skills, and hands always look odd and disturbing.

Disproportionate Legs & Feet

01-20% Huge Legs: Large, thick, muscular upper legs reminiscent of a frog's legs; +2 to P.S., +1D6+6 to Spd, can jump twice the usual distance and height for that character (12 feet/3.6 m minimum), +5% to Climbing skill, and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -5% to Prowl and may need custom clothing.

21-40% Long, Thin Legs: Increase length/height by 10%, straight legs like a board, +1 to dodge, +1 to kick damage, and +1D4 to Spd attribute. **Penalties:** -1 to P.E. attribute.

41-60% Short Legs: Short, stubby legs like those of a gorilla; +1 to P.S., +5% to sense of balance, and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Reduce Spd attribute by 10% and kick attacks do half damage.

61-80% Huge Feet: +5% to Swimming skill and swimming speed, +2 kick and stomp damage, +10% to balance, and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Reduce Speed by 10%, -5% to Prowl, and may need custom shoes.

81-00% Small Feet: +1 on initiative, +1 to P.P. **Penalties:** -10% to sense of balance and -10% to Climbing skill.

Disproportionate Torso

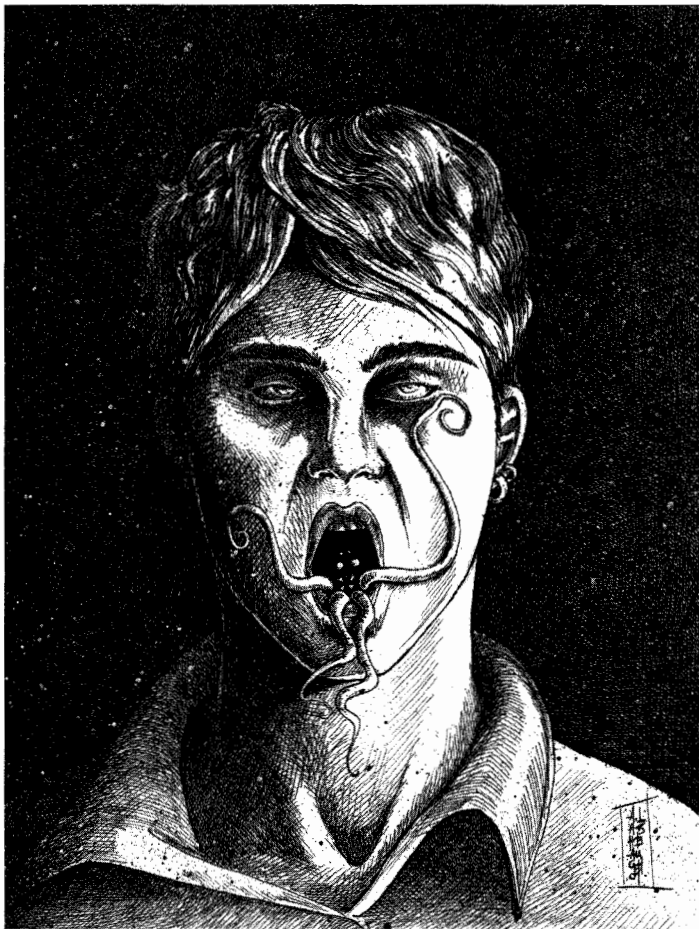
01-20% Muscular: Chiseled and sculpted stomach, chest, and shoulder muscles; +3D6+6 S.D.C. +1D6 to P.S. **Penalties:** -1 on initiative and -1D4 from Spd.

21-40% Puny Build: The upper body looks like the proverbial 90 pound weakling or an emaciated concentration camp victim; skin and bones; +10% to Escape Artist and Prowl skills, +2 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Reduce weight by 50%, -4D6 from S.D.C., and -1 from P.E. and P.B.

41-60% Barrel-Chested and Stoutly Built: The character's overall body is stout with a thick, short waist and muscular, barrel-chested upper body like a bear or gorilla; +3D6 S.D.C., +2D6 to P.S., and +1 to P.E. **Penalties:** Reduce Spd by 5%, -1 to pull punch, -15% to Disguise and Undercover Ops skills, and wearing tight clothing is impossible, unless custom made, otherwise clothing must be loose or a bit oversized.

61-80% Morbidly Obese: Double the character's weight; +4D6+6 S.D.C. and +1D4 to P.S. **Penalty:** Reduce Spd by 20% and -10% to Disguise and Undercover Ops skills.

81-00% Thin and Tall/Long: The upper body is narrow and long waisted, not spindly or puny, but tall and narrow like a board; increase height 2D4 inches (5-20 cm); +1 to dodge and entangle, +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalty:** Reduce Spd by 10% and -10% to Disguise and Undercover Ops skills.



Extraterrestrial Table

Extraterrestrials have been a staple of science fiction for decades. Perhaps a Nightbane with one of these characteristics is a big fan of sci-fi, or dreams of being special and exotic, or is in love with the idea of aliens. Whatever the case, the Morphus appears to be one of these beings from beyond our planet.

01-20% Roswell Gray: The Morphus appears to be one of the little gray aliens associated with the supposed Roswell flying saucer crash: Small, thin, pasty gray skin, a frail-looking body with thin arms and legs, no hair and a huge, bulbous head and large, black, almond-shaped eyes, tiny nose, no apparent ears and a slit for a mouth. **Bonuses:** +1D4 to I.Q. and M.E., +10% to Prowl, +20% to all computer and medical skills, +2 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Reduce size and weight by 20%, -1D4 to P.S. and Spd and -1 to P.E. and P.B.

21-50% B-Movie Alien: The Morphus is what's fondly known in the trade as a "Bug-Eyed Monster." **Head:** Always oversized, bald, bulbous with large, round, black "bug eyes" (or large cat-like eyes, sometimes large glowing eyes) with insect or fish-like facial features. **Hands:** 01-25% have clawed for hands, 26-50% have lobster pincers for at least one hand, 51-75% have an extra finger and delicate hands, 76-00% have an extra pair of arms and hands. **Body Type:** 01-20% have a hulking, shaggy, animal-like body, 21-40% have a weird, thick skin that is lumpy and bumpy, 41-60% are small and have an insect-like body, 61-80% have a tall, thin humanoid body, 81-90% have a robot/android body, and 91-00% is a hot babe with a body and

face to die for; may have feline features and usually scantily clad. **Note:** Fifty percent of alien bodies have a rubbery quality and resemble a man in a rubber suit. **Optional Features (pick two):** Pair of antennae (insect or mechanical), tentacles instead of arms and hands, robotic hands or mechanical pincer hands, robot/artificial looking face, insect-looking face, ape-like face, vestigial bat wings, spacesuit (space helmet optional), tinted goggles that cover the eyes, air/gas mask-like breather, pointed ears, large pointed ears, feline eyes, small horns, strange skin color (red, blue, green, etc.), scaly reptilian skin, and snake tongue. **Bonuses:** 2D4x10+12 S.D.C., -1D4 I.Q. and M.E. for savage "monster aliens" or +1D4 to I.Q. and M.E. for "intelligent/evil mastermind aliens," +1D6 to P.S., +2 to P.E., +3 to damage (+6 for claws, +2D6 for pincers or robot hands), +2 to Perception Rolls and +1D4 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1D4 to M.A. and P.B., reduce Spd by 20%, and probably impossible to disguise or pass for human.

51-65% Parasitic Alien: The Morphus Nightbane appears to be a normal human under the control of an icky, slimy, alien parasite. The eyes are blank and lifeless or solid black or solid red, speaks in an even, monotone voice even when excited or shouting, and possesses superhuman strength. The alien parasite is a hideous thing (large leech, worm, insect, crustacean, tentacle thingy, or something else repugnant) attached to the base or side of the neck, spinal cord between the shoulder blades, chest, belly, side of the head, or even over part of the face (mouth or eyes), or under the skin, but the skin can be seen moving and undulating on a regular basis. Killing or removing the parasite means killing the Nightbane! **Bonuses:** +1D6x10+6 S.D.C., +1D6 to P.S., +1 to P.E., +4 to save vs mind control and possession, and +1D4 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1 to I.Q. and M.A., and reduce speed by 10%.

66-75% Energy Being: The Morphus appears to be a humanoid that glows brightly with energy or light, or has light glowing from inside the body and hovers six inches above the ground instead of using the legs to walk. **Bonuses:** 1D6x10 S.D.C., takes half damage from all forms of physical attacks and lasers, +1 to I.Q., P.P., P.B., and Spd, moves silently, and hovers above bodies of water. **Penalties:** Electricity, fire and other forms of energy do full damage, magic energy does double damage, magic weapons do their normal damage, hovers above the waves but cannot swim or be immersed in water (takes 2D6 damage per melee round under water, rain slows Spd by half), and impossible to disguise, Prowl or hide in dim lighting or darkness unless completely covered by a thick, heavy fabric (but then the character can't see).

76-90% Alien Robotic Body: 01-50% the Morphus appears as a small humanoid robot with two arms and legs, or as a robotic upper torso on a tracked machine body or robotic spider body with 1D6+2 legs; stands 4-5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 m) tall. 51-00% the character appears as a large, bulky alien robot with a humanoid body, thick arms and legs, with a retractable forearm blade in one arm and a retractable drill or cutting torch (like a welder's torch); both weapons inflict 3D6 damage. Whether small or large, the robot has no human facial appearance, it looks alien, weird and inhuman/mechanical. **Bonuses:** Small alien robot: +2D6x10+30 to S.D.C., a Natural A.R. of 15, +1D6+6 to Spd, +1 to save vs magic, and +1 to Horror Factor.

Large alien robot: +3D6x10+30 to S.D.C. and a Natural A.R. of 16, +1D4 to P.S., resistant to cold and heat (half damage), and +2 to Horror Factor. Small or large, they do not need to breathe and can function in a vacuum; depth tolerance is one mile (1.6 km) underwater. **Penalties:** Double the character's weight in Morphus, -1D4 to P.B., disguise is impossible, cannot swim (sinks like a rock), and -30% to Acrobatics, Gymnastics, Climbing and Prowl skills.

91-00% Spheroid: The Nightbane is not shaped like a human, but is actually a large floating sphere, 1D4+2 feet (0.9 to 1.8 m) in diameter. 01-50% organic body with human facial features that cover the surface of the front of the sphere, plus a pair of humanoid arms, hands, legs and feet. 51-00% entirely mechanical features, no legs, but has a pair of mechanical arms on the sides. The method of flight is undeterminable (Anti-gravity? Magic?); maximum altitude is 12 feet (3.6 m) off the ground and can float about the surface of water; and speed is ponderous. **Bonuses:** +2D4x10 to S.D.C., +1 to Natural A.R., +1 to I.Q., +1D4 to M.E., +2 on Perception Rolls, +5% to Tracking skills, +20% to Prowl, and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Reduce Spd by half, -1D4 to P.B., disguise as a human is impossible, hovers above water and can also float on water (cannot sink), but is -10% on all skills that require the use of hands.



Fantasy Table

This Nightbane was either a fan of fantasy online games, RPGs, novels and films, or had a romantic idea about the noble knights of old, Arthurian legend and similar myths.

01-10% Wizard Robes: The Morphus is the classic wizard, complete with flowing grey or white beard, bushy eyebrows, tall pointed hat and a hooded robe. The robe is made of a rich fabric and decorated in colorful magic symbols, runes, gemstones, and inscriptions along the edges of the sleeves, hem, collar and hood. The hat is similarly decorated. While the colors, design, style and decorations may differ greatly from one character to another, there is no mistaking the occult nature of the garment. **Bonuses:** +3D6 to S.D.C., +1 to Spell Strength if the character is a Mystic or Sorcerer, +3D6 to P.P.E. base, +1 to save vs magic, +2 to save vs possession, and +1 to Awe/Horror Factor. **Penalties:** The robe reduces Spd by 10% and -5% to all Physical skills that require considerable freedom of movement and flexibility, such as Acrobatics, Climbing, Gymnastics, and Swimming (no penalty to Prowl).

11-20% Enchanted Knight Armor: The Morphus is wearing of a suit of plate armor complete with helmet, however, the armor may have a demonic, monstrous or distorted features or proportions, as well as glowing eyes visible from behind the visor or from the eye slits, horns, spikes, and so on. **Bonuses:** +2D6x10+45 to S.D.C., Natural A.R. 14, +1 on initiative, +1 to parry and disarm, resistant to magic energy blasts including magic fire (half damage), +2 to save vs magic cast by a Night Prince or Nightlord, the armor cannot be forcibly removed, there is no movement penalty for the enchanted armor (no penalty to skills like Acrobatics, Climb, Prowl, etc.), and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Double the character's weight, increase height by 10%, -25% to Swimming due to weight, and cannot be disguised or easily concealed in Morphus (the armor is part of the character).

21-30% Aura of Magical Power: The Morphus is a character whose eyes and body glow with magical energy. The color of the magic energy varies with the individual and can be shades of white, yellow, orange, red, green, blue, purple and even black. The face of the character is different from that of his Facade, and may be more attractive, alien or demonic in appearance. **Bonuses:** +1D6+6 to Hit Points, +1D6x10 to P.P.E. +3 P.P.E. per level of experience, +2 to save vs magic, the effects and duration of magic cast against him are half, his own aura cannot be read, +5 to save vs possession, +4 to save vs magic cast by a Night Prince or Nightlord, +1 to M.A., and +1D4 to Awe/Horror Factor. **Penalties:** The glow cannot be disguised (the character glows right through clothing), making Prowl and Undercover Ops impossible. Furthermore, the character attracts considerable attention and is likely to be one of the first attacked in combat. Beings who can sense magic can sense this character's presence at double their usual range.

31-40% Branded with Magic Symbols: The Morphus is a muscular humanoid with dark skin (gray, brown, red, or purple), and a face covered in magic symbols and runes. Every inch of the body, from head to toe, is covered with the symbols. All are raised as if branded onto his skin. The symbols faintly glow whenever a Night Prince, Nightlord, or spell caster is within 100 feet (30.5 m) of the character, and they also glow when he is locked in combat. **Bonuses:** +6D6+6 to S.D.C., +1 to M.E. and P.E., +1 to Perception Rolls, impervious to possession and the bite/controlling powers of the vampire, +2 to save vs magic cast by a Night Prince or Nightlord, and +1D4 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -30% to Disguise and Undercover Ops.

41-50% Prince/Princess: The Morphus is an attractive human dressed in rich clothing, a flowing cape or cloak, and adorned with a crown, tiara, or gold wreath worn on the head. This character looks very much like a prince (or princess) from a book of fairy tales. **Bonuses:** +2D6 to S.D.C., +1 to M.A., +1D4 to P.B., and +1 to P.P. **Penalties:** The character seems out of place in our modern world and cannot remove his crown; -30% to Disguise and Undercover Ops skills. Looked down upon by other 'Bane as a "Ken" or "Barbie."

51-60% Stone-Like Flesh: The Morphus has a hide of rough stone more reminiscent of a Golem than a sculpted statue. Facial features are rough hewn and abstract, and the color of the stone can range from black or gray to browns, reds, yellows and marbled. **Bonuses:** +2D4x10+22 to S.D.C., +1D4 to P.S., and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Triple the character's weight in Morphus, increase size by 10%, -1D4 to P.B., disguise is impossible, cannot swim (sinks like a brick), and -50% to Acrobatics, Gymnastics, Climbing and Prowl skills.

61-70% Faerie Wings: The Nightbane has a pair of colorful or translucent insect-like wings on his back. The wings can be like those of a butterfly, dragonfly, wasps, or some weird, stylized faerie wing unlike anything found in nature. **Bonuses:** +2D6 to S.D.C., +1 to P.P., +1D6 to Spd, can hover in mid-air, flying speed is double the Spd attribute number, maximum altitude is 15,000 feet (4572 m), +2 to dodge in flight, and each wing has 1D6x10+11 S.D.C. (an attacker must make a "Called Shot" at a penalty of -3 to hit a wing). **Penalties:** Impossible to disguise, difficult to conceal wings, can not sit inside a vehicle without crushing wings, and custom clothing may be required.

71-80% Wee Folk: The Morphus is like a fairy tale book elf or leprechaun. The build is human, but slight and delicate, the ears pointed, the face attractive and cute, the clothing like that of a fantasy ranger or jester, complete with a Robin Hood style hat, feather and all. Weight is 15 pounds (6.75 kg) per foot (0.3 m) of height in Morphus, and the Nightbane might be mistaken for a doll or a child. There are no faerie wings, but the Morphus is very nimble and fast. **Bonuses:** +1 to M.A., +1 to P.P., +1D6 to Spd, +4D6 to P.P.E., +2 dodge, can leap three times his height, can slip through small openings, and +15% to Acrobatics, Climb, Escape Artist, Gymnastics, Palming, Pick Lock and Prowl skills. **Penalties:** -1D4 to Horror Factor, P.S. punch and kick damage (Supernatural or not) does half, disguise is impossible, and custom clothing, children's or even doll clothing are necessary to change the character's appearance.

81-90% Ogre Warrior with a Magic Weapon: The Morphus is an ogre clad in a loincloth and leather straps, a pair of gauntlets and armed with a large, wicked looking melee weapon that glows of magic (a battle axe, sword, morning star, mace, or club are most common; regardless of what it is, the weapon does 4D6 damage). This weapon may be lent to others, dropped, or stolen, but it will disappear when the 'Bane switches back to Facade form and reappear with him when he assumes his Morphus the next time. The weapon is a living part of the character. **Bonuses:** +2D4x10 to S.D.C., +2 to P.S., +1 to P.E., increase size by 20%, +1 to Horror Factor, and the weapon does double damage to Night Princes, Nightlords and demons. **Penalties:** Very tall, double weight, -1 to P.B., the face and voice is that of a brutish Ogre, all of which make disguise and

Undercover Ops impossible. Prefers the use of his magic weapon and feels naked without it.

91-00% Dragon Lord: This Morphus is a large humanoid body covered in scales, with the neck and head of a dragon and a pair of large, leathery wings! **Bonuses:** +2D6x10 to S.D.C., Natural A.R. 12 (or +1D4 to and existing A.R.), +1 to Perception Rolls, +2D6 to Spd, +2 to Horror Factor, can breathe fire (30 foot/9.1 m range, each fiery blast counts as one melee attack and does 3D6 damage; double damage to Night Princes and Nightlords), can hover in mid-air, flying speed is triple the Spd attribute number, maximum altitude is 25,000 feet (7620 m), +1 to dodge in flight, and each wing has 1D6x10+50 S.D.C. (an attacker must make a "Called Shot" at a penalty of -2 to hit a wing). **Penalties:** Triple the character's weight in Morphus, increase size by 20%, disguise is impossible, cannot swim (flounders for 1D6 minutes then sinks like a brick), and -50% to Acrobatics, Gymnastics, Climbing and Prowl skills. Wings fold up, but the character still cannot fit inside a car.



Infernal Table

This character may have been fascinated with mythology and tales about demonic supernatural beings. Or he may believe himself to be cursed, possessed, unwanted, unloved, or just plain "bad." In the latter cases, an abusive parent or guardian might have constantly told him he was bad, or that he had the devil in him, or always rejected him. Thus, this Nightbane *may* struggle with his dark side and struggle against becoming evil, or he may seek to destroy evil, or he may embrace and become evil. If this

Morphus table is selected or randomly rolled, the player may elect to change his alignment to *Anarchist*, *Aberrant* or *Miscreant*. **Note:** Holy Weapons inflict 50% more damage to all characters rolled up on the Infernal Table, and they are likely to want to avoid churches and sacred places.

01-10% Demon Claw: The Morphus gives the character a demonic appearance: The face is an evil or twisted version of his own, the skin is a gray, pale white, sickly green, or red color, 1D4 small horns appear in the center of the forehead, 1D4 larger horns protrude from the temples or top of the head, another small or medium sized horn protrudes from the jaw, the eyes glow when angry, and the voice is distorted in a strange and frightening manner (raspy, unnaturally deep, or sounds like he is gargling while speaking). However, the most startling change is the hands and forearms are ugly, gnarled limbs, with skin like dry leather and long, withered fingers that end in six inch (0.15 m), blade-like claws. A pair of medium-sized horns also protrude from the shoulders. **Bonuses:** +1D6x10 to S.D.C., +1 on initiative, +1 to strike and parry, +2D6 to damage with a claw attack in addition to Supernatural P.S. punch damage, can parry blades and other weapons with bare hands without injury, +2 to Horror Factor but only when speaking, and +5% to Interrogation skill. **Penalties:** -1D4 to P.B., -25% to all skills requiring a delicate touch or nimble fingers, as well as those requiring charisma and trust such as Barter and Seduction, and -40% to Disguise and Undercover Ops.

11-20% Shadow Demon: The Morphus is humanoid with dark gray skin, a pair of bull-like horns that project from the forehead and dark eyes that glow red at the center when angry or in combat. Even in broad daylight or under a spotlight, deep shadows creep and crawl across his body as if they were alive, and they always obscure half to two-thirds of the Nightbane's face and body, making it impossible to discern his entire features or clearly identify what he may be holding or wearing. **Bonuses:** +2D6 to S.D.C., suffers half damage and effect from magic and Talents involving shadows and darkness, +20% to Escape Artist, Concealment, and Palming skills, +20% to Prowl and Tailing but only in darkness, and +1D4 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1D4 to M.A., -1 to P.B., -20% to Prowl in well lit conditions, -30% to all skills requiring charisma and trust such as Barter and Seduction, and impossible to Disguise and Undercover Ops.

21-30% Feral Monster: The character looks rather like a minotaur, with a pair of large ram or bull horns, red, gray or black skin, muscular arms and upper body, hairy legs, and a face that is more like that of a rabid, wild animal (goat or bull) than human. The character almost always looks angry or upset, with teeth clenched, furrowed brows, flared nostrils, and a voice that is more like a growl. **Bonuses:** +2D4x10+16 to S.D.C., +1D6 to P.S., +1 to P.E., +13% to intimidate others, +13% to Interrogation skill, a bite attack does 2D4 damage, head butt does 2D6 damage plus the usual P.S. punch damage, and +1D4 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1D4 from M.E., reduce Spd by 10%, double weight, increase size/height 20%, impossible to disguise and engage in Undercover Ops, and likely to require custom-made clothes.

31-40% Cloven Hooved Beast: The Morphus is reminiscent of the classic devil image, that of a humanoid with red skin, snake eyes, black hair, a small pair of goat or ram's horns pro-

truding from the forehead, and the legs and cloven feet of a goat. **Bonuses:** +1D6x10 to S.D.C., +1 to P.P., +2D4+4 to Spd, can leap 12 feet (3.6 m) high and across (double with a running start), +10% to balance, +1D6 damage to all kick attacks and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Impossible to Disguise and engage in Undercover Ops, and likely to require custom-made clothes.

41-50% Fire & Brimstone: The Morphus is a humanoid with a pair of small horns, dry, cracked yellow or tan skin, and flaming red hair. Heat vapors rise from the head and shoulders and radiates with the faint smell of brimstone which is a combination of garlic, burning flesh and rotten eggs. Even as a faint smell it can be nauseating, and everyone within a 20 foot (6.1 m) radius must roll a 10 or higher to save vs nausea. A failed roll means the character's stomach is queasy and any sudden movement has a 50% chance of making him throw up. When this 'Bane is angry or in combat, the stench intensifies and those around him must roll a 16 or higher every minute of exposure or suffer from nausea and vomiting. A failed save means the victim is -1 on all combat rolls, -10% on skill performance, and reduce Spd by 50% (going any faster causes vomiting). Vomiting causes the victim to lose initiative and 1D4 melee attacks. **Bonuses:** +5D6 to S.D.C., resistant to heat and fire (half damage), impervious to foul odors, gas, and airborne toxins/poison, +4 to save vs all other types of poisons, and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1D4 to M.A. and P.B. This character literally stinks of death and brimstone, Disguise and Undercover Ops are impossible.

51-60% Demon Eyes: The Morphus is a red-skinned devil, with medium-sized horns projecting from the forehead, demonic features, forked tongue, and a devil's tail. The most distinguishing feature is the Nightbane's eyes which are capable of a chilling gaze, as if he were looking into your very soul. Eye color is typically a glacial blue, smoldering red or purple, or dead black. **Bonuses:** +5D6 to S.D.C., +2 to Perception Rolls, +10% to intimidation, Interrogation and Seduction rolls, +1 to Horror Factor, perfect, 20/20 vision, Nightvision 2000 feet (610 m), see the invisible, see aura (same as the psionic ability) and cannot be magically or psionically blinded. **Penalties:** Blinded by intense, bright light, Disguise and Undercover Ops are impossible, and the character always has a sinister or dangerous expression on his face; -1D4 to M.A.

61-70% Mark of the Profane: The Morphus is a burly demon with brownish-gray skin covered in scars and the symbol of an upside down cross as if it were carved or branded into his flesh. These markings of the "profane" cover his entire body, including the head and neck, and a pentagram is etched across his full chest and back. **Bonuses:** +3D6x10 to S.D.C., Natural A.R. of 11, +1D4 to P.S., +1D4 to Horror Factor, +3 to save vs magic that involves mind control, domination or pain, +1 to save vs all other types of magic, inflicts 50% greater bite, punch, and claw attack damage to Guardians and supernatural beings of light. **Penalties:** Holy symbols have a Horror Factor of 13 (usual effects), Holy Weapons inflict double damage, and dislikes and distrusts clergy, angelic beings, Guardians, and gods of light.

71-80% The Mask of Darkness: The Morphus appears mostly human, only the face is covered with what appears to be a strange or exotic and elaborate mask, plus the body is covered in black, dark gray or blood red patterns that wrap around the arms, legs and torso. The mask is often leather and demonic or

monstrous in appearance with horns, spikes, fins, or ribbing, but it may also be made of feathers, or strips of cloth, or porcelain. The mask conceals the character's identity and cannot be removed. Inscribed on the Nightbane's chest or back as well as the shoulders or forearms is a strange symbol which the 'Bane believes marks him as an agent of destruction – a deathbringer to the Nightlords. **Bonuses:** +2D6x10 S.D.C., +2D6 P.P.E. per level of experience, +1 to all saving throws, and attacks leveled by the 'Bane at Night Princes, Nightlords and demons inflict 50% more damage. **Penalties:** -2 from M.A., impossible to Disguise and engage in Undercover Ops.

81-90% Burning Soul of Hell: The Morphus is a humanoid whose skin seems to be composed of, or covered with, hot coals. This makes the skin a hard, blotchy and mottled ash gray color with bits of glowing red from hot embers. Flakes of ash drop from the character when he moves quickly, the air visibly shimmers around him from heat vapors, and he burns to the touch. Only the palms of his hands, the underside of his fingers, soles of his feet, and the front and cheeks of his face are not hot, but the rest burns like hot coals, as does his inner spirit, making most Nightbane with this Morphus hot-tempered, aggressive and quick to action. **Bonuses:** +2D6x10 to S.D.C., Natural A.R. 12, +1 on initiative, impervious to heat and fire (including magic fire; no damage), and +2 to Horror Factor. Burning touch does 1D4 damage, burning punch does 2D6 damage plus Supernatural P.S. damage. When others punch/touch the character even for a moment, they are burned and suffer 1D4 damage. To grab and hold the Burning Soul inflicts 2D6 damage per melee action (i.e. every 3 seconds). **Penalties:** Increase weight by 30% and size by 10%, water, ice and cold attacks inflict double damage, rain does 1D6 damage per melee round, being immersed in water does 6D6 damage per melee round when in this Morphus form; no damage in Facade, but probably doesn't care for water.

91-00% Living Weapon: The Morphus appears as demonic humanoid with jet black skin, fangs, glowing eyes, clawed fingers, and a pair of large horns. The Nightbane's entire body is a living weapon. The shoulders are covered in 2D4+2 spikes, blades, or horns, blade-like fins line the forearms, the fingernails and toenails are sickle-shaped claws, the teeth are pointed and the canines are fangs. A single bone-like stabbing blade can be extended from the right forearm to be used as a short spear or sword. Moreover, 1D4+1 long strips of flesh hang from the left forearm. At the end of these strips are needle-sharp barbs that can be used like a whip to lash at the enemy, entangle, or climb like a whip. 1D4 spikes jut from the knees. **Bonuses:** +3D6 to S.D.C., +1 attack per melee, +1 to parry, disarm and entangle, +2 to pull punch. +1D6 damage to melee attacks using any body weapon, bites do 2D6 damage, +1D4+1 to Horror Factor.

Mineral Table II

Note: All mineral Morphus forms make the character impervious to the vampire's bite and mind control.

01-10% Amethyst Crystal. The character appears to be a sleek humanoid composed of purple, translucent and prismatic amethyst crystal. Facial features are obscured as the face appears to have been cut from one or more giant gemstones. Among mages and healers, amethyst is said to have a property to improve powers of intuition. **Bonuses:** +3 to Perception



Rolls, +1 on initiative, +1 to save vs mind control, possession and illusions, +1D4x10+26 S.D.C., +1 to M.A. and P.B. attributes. **Penalties:** Double weight in Morphus form, cannot swim (sinks like a rock) and -10% to skills like Acrobatics, Gymnastics, and Climbing.

11-20% Arsenic: Appears as a thick, bulky humanoid that seems to be made of living rock – rock formed from hundreds of porous, metallic balls fused together, giving the surface a lumpy, bumpy texture; brownish-gray to gray in color. **Bonuses:** +6D6+12 S.D.C., +1 to P.E. attribute, and +2 to Horror Factor. Clawing, biting and any attack by the Nightbane that cuts or stabs an opponent with the character's mineral body does the usual damage plus 2D6 damage from poison. Furthermore, the 'Bane can scrape grains of arsenic off his body to use as ingested poison typically mixed into food or drink. Anyone who eats arsenic suffers 3D6 damage direct to Hit Points. A Nightbane made of arsenic is also impervious to poison, +3 to save vs toxins and drugs, and resistant to fire and heat (does half damage). However, when heated the character exudes the smell of garlic which is repugnant to vampires, Wampyrs, were-beasts and select other supernatural beings, and holds them at bay for a 20 foot (6.1 m) radius around the Mineral Nightbane. **Penalties:** Triple weight in Morphus form, cannot swim (sinks like a rock) and -15% to skills like Acrobatics, Gymnastics, and Climbing.

21-30% Emerald/Tourmaline: The character appears to be a sleek humanoid composed of rich green, translucent emerald or tourmaline crystal. Facial features are obscured as the face appears to have been cut from one giant gemstone or made up of several. Among mages and healers, green crystals are believed beneficial to the healing process anti-poison. **Bonuses:**

+2D4x10 S.D.C., +1D4 P.E., +3 to save vs poison and toxins, +1 to save vs disease/illness, plus the 'Bane can heal others, restoring 4D6+6 S.D.C. or Hit Points twice per 24 hours, or completely negate poison (restoring all lost H.P./S.D.C. from poison). When the healing touch is used, the emerald hand glows as if there were a light inside the palm and radiates through the forearm. **Penalties:** Double weight in Morphus form, cannot swim (sinks like a rock), -10% to skills like Acrobatics, Gymnastics, and Climbing, and reduce Spd by 10%.

31-40% Gold: Appears to be a man made of solid metallic gold. The body is sleek, smooth, lustrous gold and the character weighs 10x more in his golden Morphus. Facial features are smoothed out and unidentifiable. **Bonuses:** +2D6x10+12 S.D.C. +1D4 to P.S., +6 to punch and kick damage (in addition to P.S. bonus), electricity does no damage (goes right through him), blunt attacks, bullets, projectiles, impacts and explosions inflict half damage, bullets and projectiles become imbedded in the soft gold mineral, but can be easily plucked out without any additional damage and a few minutes after being removed, the indentation smooths over to leave no mark/scar of any kind. Fire and heat do full damage. **Penalties:** Heavy as lead, the gold character's weight may be a problem in certain situations, he cannot swim while in the gold form (sinks like a lead weight) nor perform Acrobatics or Gymnastics, -40% to Climbing skill and reduce Spd by half.

41-50% Orpiment: Appears to be a man made of a rich lemon yellow, prismatic crystal that resembles amber with many fine fracture lines running through it. The body is sleek, chiseled, smooth, lustrous, facial features are smoothed out and unidentifiable/nondescript and weighs 3x more in Morphus. A sulfide mineral, the Orpiment Morphus is impervious to the effects of stench and other powerful odors, and when heated smells of garlic, which is repugnant to vampires, wampyres, werebeasts and select other supernatural beings, and holds them at bay for a 20 foot (6.1 m) radius around the Mineral Nightbane. Among mages and healers, yellow crystals represent inspiration. **Bonuses:** +1D6x10+6 S.D.C., +1D4 M.A. (radiates warmth and genuineness), +1 to M.E., +1 to P.B., impervious to stench and airborne toxins, and +1 to save vs poison and toxins of all kinds. **Penalties:** Triple weight in Morphus form, cannot swim (sinks like a rock), -15% to skills like Acrobatics, Gymnastics, and Climbing, and reduce Spd by 20%.

51-60% Iron: Hematite: Appears to me made of smooth gray, black or brownish-red iron. The body is heavy, weighing x6 more in his iron Morphus than his Facade. Facial features are smoothed out and unidentifiable/nondescript. **Bonuses:** +3D6x10+66 S.D.C. +1D6 to P.S., +2 to P.E., +2 to Horror Factor, +4 to punch and kick damage (in addition to P.S. bonus), and +3 to roll with impact. Blunt attacks, bullets, projectiles, impacts and explosions inflict half damage, and bullets and projectiles bounce off the iron body; fire, heat and extreme cold do half damage, and the character can parry weapons and fiery torches with his bare hands. **Penalties:** A heavy material, the iron character's weight may be a problem in certain situations, he cannot swim while in the iron form (sinks like a rock) nor perform Acrobatics or Gymnastics, -30% to Climbing skill and reduce Spd by half.

61-70% Iron: Magnetite: Appears to be a man made of either smooth, dark gray metal/iron or a grainy black rock with

flecks of bronze crystals and/or streaks. The body is heavy, weighing 6x more in his iron Morphus than his Facade. Facial features are smoothed out and unidentifiable. **Bonuses:** +2D6x10+40 S.D.C. +1D6 to P.S., +2 to Horror Factor, +3 to punch and kick damage (in addition to P.S. bonus). Blunt attacks, bullets, projectiles, impacts and explosions inflict half damage, and bullets and projectiles bounce off the iron body; fire and heat do half damage, and the character can parry weapons and fiery torches with his bare hands. This is a *highly magnetic* iron mineral, thus any iron or steel weapon or object that touches his body is held fast to it and requires a P.S. of 24 or greater to pull it free. The Nightbane can momentarily cancel the magnetic field to release any metal object attached to him, and can make any metal object within 6 feet (1.8 m) come to him, and one can be made to fly right into his hand (maximum weight 20 lbs/9 kg per object, and it must have sufficient iron/steel content). The character can also affix himself to iron/steel, enabling him to stand, walk and hold onto vehicles, boxcars, and even rockets or the hull of ships. This enables him to scale such structures or affix himself to them with such force that a combined P.S. of 50 is necessary to pry him loose. Always knows where north is located, +20% to Navigation skills, +5% to Land Navigation. **Penalties:** A heavy material, the iron character's weight may be a problem in certain situations, he cannot swim while in the iron form (sinks like a rock) nor perform Acrobatics or Gymnastics, -30% to Climbing skill (unless using magnetic powers on steel) and reduce Spd by one third.

71-80% Silver: Appears to be made of a sleek, lustrous, metallic silver. Facial features are smoothed out and unidentifiable. **Bonuses:** +2D6x10+6 S.D.C. +1 to P.S., +3 to punch and kick damage (in addition to P.S. bonus), electricity does no damage (goes right through him), blunt attacks, bullets, projectiles, impacts and explosions inflict half damage and bounce off his body, and the character can parry weapons with his bare hands. Fire and heat do full damage. The punches, kicks and other attacks from a Nightbane made of silver inflict double damage to vampires, werebeasts and other beings vulnerable to silver. Furthermore, such beings view him with apprehension and fear, giving the silver character +2 on initiative and +1 to strike, parry and disarm when battling such creatures. **Penalties:** Heavy 8x normal weight, the silver character's weight may be a problem in certain situations, he cannot swim while in the silver form (sinks like a rock) and is -20% to perform skills such as Acrobatics, Gymnastics, and Climbing, and reduce Spd by one third.

81-90% Clear Crystal/Quartz. The character's body appears to be covered in clear, translucent crystal rods sticking out of his flesh, face and skull (+2 to Horror Factor), or he may appear to be made entirely of cut, clear crystal (+1 to H.F.). He may also have a crown, horns or mane of crystals on his head instead of hair, and the face is covered and distorted by crystals as to conceal his human identity. Resistant to fire and heat, and the character can parry weapons with his bare hands. **Bonuses:** +1 to P.S., +3 to damage, +1 to Perception Rolls, +1 to save vs psionic attacks, +1D6x10+30 S.D.C., impervious to laser attacks, half damage from electricity and other energy attacks, blunt and projectile attacks do full damage, and the Clear Crystal Morphus can see and attack Astral Beings, the clear crystals of his body able to inflict damage to Astral Being with punches, kicks, and any crystalline weapon. Can form one crystalline

weapon from his hand, typically a rod or sword-like weapon that does 2D6 damage (+1D6 to Astral Beings). **Penalties:** Double weight in Morphus form, cannot swim (sinks like a rock) and -10% to skills like Acrobatics, Gymnastics, and Climbing.

91-00% Uraninite: Appears as a normal sized humanoid that seems to be made of living rock – rock formed from hundreds of granular habits/balls fused into stone, giving the surface a lumpy, bumpy texture; a dark, charred grey or black color with a few small specks of yellow that look like chip marks. Highly radioactive. Resistant to fire and heat (half damage) and can parry weapons and fiery torches with bare hands. **Bonuses:** +2D4x10 S.D.C., +1 to P.S., +4 to punch and kick damage (in addition to P.S. bonus), impervious to radiation, burning touch/fire fist – no flame but radiates heat from the hands to inflict 2D6 damage per attack. Can fire heat blast up to 20 feet (6.1 m) inflicting 2D6 damage. **Penalties:** The character weighs 10x more in his Mineral Morphus. Heavy as lead, the Uraninite character's weight may be a problem in certain situations, he cannot swim while in the mineral form (sinks like a rock) nor perform Acrobatics or Gymnastics, -50% to Climbing skill and reduce Spd by half.

Stigmata Table III

Mockingly named after the “sacred wounds” said to appear on saintly people, stigmata are among the most disturbing deformities among the Nightbane. Most appear as an open wound or grievous injury that never closes or heals; most weep or seep.

01-10% Splitting Headache: The Nightbane's head has been split open and spread apart in two pieces! It may look like a sword or axe cleaved the entire head down the middle, or like a small bomb blew a sizeable chunk out of his skull, to expose his brain and splatter blood and gore across his face, neck and clothing. If split in half, the head is divided down the middle, stopping at the jaw/chin so the two halves are spread apart in a V-shape and wobble when the character runs. **Bonuses:** +3D6 S.D.C., +1 to I.Q., and +1D4 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -2 from P.B. and Disguise and Undercover Ops are impossible.

11-20% Dangling Intestines: The abdomen appears to have been slashed open, causing some of the intestines to spill out and dangle from the grievous wound. The wound and the intestines constantly drip blood, leaving a highly visible trail wherever the Nightbane goes. Only enough, though uncomfortable and gruesome looking, the 'Bane does not suffer blood loss or pain. **Bonuses:** 2D6 S.D.C., +1 to P.E., +1 to Horror Factor, and the 'Bane can actually use his intestines to entangle or strangle an adversary, using them like a rope, or to climb (+5% skill bonus). **Penalties:** Reduce Spd by 10%, and -30% to Disguise, Prowl and Undercover Ops.

21-30% Outer Veins: Every blood vessel that would normally be an inch under the character's skin is seen just under the surface of his pale skin. Countless lines of blue and purple veins cover the body from head to toe, pulsing with every heartbeat. **Bonuses:** +3D6 S.D.C. and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -2 from P.B., -20% to Disguise and Undercover Ops.

31-40% Missing Eyeball: The face of the Nightbane looks battered and beaten, is covered with bruises and swollen lumps, but the most gruesome aspect is one of the eyes seems to be missing. 01-50% The eye socket is empty except for a tiny, eerie

speck of light in the center or, 51-00% one eye dangles from an empty socket by its nerve ending and bobs and swings when the Nightbane moves. Either way, the Nightbane can still see, even out of an empty socket. **Bonuses:** +2D6 S.D.C., +1 on Perception Rolls, +2 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1 from P.B. and -2 to dodge.

41-50% Raw Meat: This Nightbane appears to have no skin, revealing bare, raw muscle. Cold and wet to the touch, and sweats a mixture of blood and ooze; makes a disgusting squishing sound when pushed/slapped/struck. **Bonuses:** +3D6 S.D.C., +1D4 to P.S. and +1D4 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1D4 to P.B., Disguise and Undercover Ops are impossible (makeup won't stick and causes irritation), the moist blood and ooze slowly stains any clothing until they are saturated, and -10% to Climbing and Prowl.

51-60% Nightmare Pet: Roll once on the Animal Form Table, or choose a common type of animal for this Stigmata. Dogs, cats, rats/rodents, birds, toads and snakes are all common. The head and/or head and front half of the body appears to grow out from the neck, shoulder or chest of the Nightbane. The animal is often (01-66%) without fur, adding to the grisly appearance and acts and reacts like a living independent animal. It growls, barks, hisses, squawks, and snaps at adversaries as if it were a loyal pet or attack animal. Get too close and you'll get hurt. **Bonuses:** +4D6 S.D.C., +1 attack per melee, +1 on initiative and +1D4 to Horror Factor. The animal's bite/attack does 2D6+2 damage. The animal is +3 to strike, dodge and pull punch/bite (these do not apply to the character's combat bonuses). **Penalties:** -2 from P.B., -25% to Prowl and Swim, Disguise and Undercover Ops are impossible, custom-made clothing may be required.

61-70% See No Evil, Speak No Evil: The 'Bane eyes are sewn closed and the mouth is also sewn shut though a bit loose so the character can speak in a muffled mumble, as well as groan, hiss and growl. Although the eyes are sewn shut, the character can still see as normal. **Bonuses:** +1D6 S.D.C., cannot be blinded by any means, +1 to save vs illusions, and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Cannot shout nor speak loudly nor clearly (-10% to all skills requiring clear speech and presentation), spell casting (if applicable) takes twice as long, and -1 from P.B.

71-80% Third Eye: A third eye is located in the center of the forehead, it weeps silent tears whenever it witnesses acts, or the results, of torture, disfigurement and cruelty. **Bonuses:** Nightvision +1000 feet (305 m), +2 to Perception Rolls, +10% to Tracking and Tailing skills, and the 'Bane can see the invisible (as per the psionic power) at will. **Penalties:** -1 from P.B. and -30% to Disguise and Undercover Ops.

81-90% Horrific Acne: The worst acne you have ever seen. The Nightbane's face, neck and most of his body is covered in thousands of large, infected zits that pop and ooze pus or blood whenever bumped, struck or scratched. Otherwise the skin is pockmarked and lumpy. **Bonuses:** +2D6 to S.D.C. and +1D4 to save vs disease/infection. **Penalties:** -1 to P.B., -40% to Disguise and Undercover Ops.

91-00% Crushed: Some part of the Morphus looks like it has been crushed beneath a heavy weight or vehicle. The crushed portion of the body is flat or mangled, has broken and shattered bones sticking out through the skin at several spots, and cuts and tears in the skin are constantly dripping blood and

ooze. **Bonuses:** +6D6 S.D.C., +1D4 to roll with impact, and +1D4 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1 to P.B., and -40% to Disguise and Undercover Ops. If a leg or foot is crushed, the character walks with a limp and reduce Spd by 20%. If a hand or arm is crushed, reduce all combat bonuses (for that limb) by half; likewise, skill performance for all requiring the use of a hand is reduced by half.



Undead Table

This Morphus may manifest if the character has been traumatized by a near-death experience, the passing of someone close to him, or he comes from a war-torn nation or other setting plagued by death. On the other hand, the character may have been fascinated by death, dying, the afterlife, immortality, zombies, vampires and other undead. Lastly, he may have felt his life was a dead end, he toiled like a mindless zombie, or, contrarily, longed for immortality. Most Nightbane with this Morphus have little or no fear of death and some even believe they are immortal or eternal champions. **Note:** All Undead Nightbane have absolutely no life signs (e.g. no pulse or respiration, etc.), and the body gives off no heat. Though the Nightbane is not truly “undead,” he or she is immune to the effects of extreme cold and heat, does not need to breathe, and is impervious to the bite and mind control of vampires and other undead creatures, and will not be attacked by zombies unless he attacks them first.

01-20% Partial Skeleton Form: The Morphus is a human body half stripped of its flesh and muscle. Half the face is skeletal and the lower body or one side of the body, or the four limbs are skeletal. **Bonuses:** +1D4x10 S.D.C., the ‘Bane takes half damage from bullets and other piercing attacks. In addition, if a limb is severed it can be reattached simply by placing it back on the body. This can even be done with the head if the Nightbane survives the damage done! +1D4 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1D4 from M.A., -40% to Disguise and Undercover Ops, -10% to Prowl.

21-40% Walking Corpse: The Morphus is the *classic zombie* – a human that looks dead and half decayed, with putrefied flesh, sunken eyes, and a body in any state of advanced decomposition. Tattered clothing is optional. **Bonuses:** +1D6x10 S.D.C., the ‘Bane takes half damage from bullets and other piercing attacks. In addition, if a limb is severed it can be reattached simply by placing it back on the body. If the head is decapitated or destroyed, the Nightbane dies. +1D4 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Has a craving for brains (animal or human), reduce Spd by 30%, -15% to Prowl (shuffling walk), -1D4 on initiative, -1 from I.Q. and -1D4 from P.B.

41-60% Walking Mummy: The Morphus is a human body that is wrapped in linen strips of cloth, leaving only a slit for the eyes and mouth. Under the linen wrapping is a shriveled, desiccated corpse. **Bonuses:** +2D4x10 S.D.C., Natural A.R. 11, +1 to P.S., never hungers, thirsts, or fatigues, +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Reduce Spd by 10%, -10% to Prowl (shuffling walk), and fire does 50% greater damage.

61-80% Vampiric Nature: The Morphus is the classic handsome human vampire: Pale, flawless skin, smoldering eyes, cool to the touch, strong, a pair of fangs, and no reflection in a mirror (cannot Mirror Walk or use other Mirror Magic, but is +5 to save vs Mirror Magic leveled against him). **Bonuses:** +2D4x10+13 S.D.C., Natural A.R. 10, +1 to M.A., +1D6 to P.S., +2 to P.B., +1D4 to Spd, can leap 10 feet (3 m) high and 15 feet (4.6 m) across, +10% to Climbing and Prowl skills, +20% to Seduction skill, bite attack does 1D6 damage, and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -2 to M.E., weapons made of wood, silver or Holy Weapons inflict double damage, dislikes water, especially large bodies of water (-20% to Swimming), hates sunlight and can only see 200 feet (61 m) in daylight (double distance with sunglasses). **Note:** Craves blood! Yes, just like a real vampire, this Nightbane loves the taste of fresh, warm blood, and drinking 10 ounces restores 1D4 Hit Points and 2D4 S.D.C. (6 ounces of blood from a Night Prince or Nightlord restores 1D6 Hit Points and 3D6 S.D.C.!). Whether one considers this ability a bonus or a curse/penalty varies with the individual and alignment. Cannot turn into a bat or wolf, nor create and command other vampires, nor mind control people.

81-00% Nosferatu Vampire: The Morphus is a demonic vampire with an ugly face, oversized cranium, large pointed ears, sunken eyes, pale skin with a yellow or green hue, long, slender fingers that end in long, claw-like fingernails, and a thin body, like a desiccated corpse. **Bonuses:** +2D4x10+36 S.D.C., Natural A.R. 12, +2D4 to P.S., +2 on Perception Rolls, Nightvision 2,000 feet (610 m), detect the scent of blood up to 3,000 feet (914 m) away and can track it to its source (82% skill

proficiency), +20% to Climbing, Escape Artist, Prowl and Seduction skills (as is applicable) *in darkness*, +2D6 to claw strike plus Supernatural P.S. damage, bite attack does 2D6 damage, and +2 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -3 to M.E., weapons made of wood, silver or Holy Weapons inflict double damage, being impaled through the heart puts the character in a coma (stasis), hates water (it stings the flesh), especially large bodies of water (cannot swim), hates sunlight which hurts the eyes and blisters unprotected skin, can only see 100 feet (30.5 m) in daylight (double distance with sunglasses). **Note:** Craves blood just like a real vampire. Drinking 8 ounces of fresh, warm blood restores 1D6 Hit Points or 2D6 S.D.C. (6 ounces of blood from a Night Prince or Nightlord restores 2D6 Hit Points and 6D6 S.D.C.). Whether one considers this ability a bonus or a curse/penalty varies with the individual and alignment. Cannot turn into a bat or wolf, nor create and command other vampires, nor mind control people.

Unnatural Appendages & Limbs Table

This Morphus may manifest if the character has felt like an outsider, clumsy or awkward, or if the character always wanted to be exotic and special.

01-10% Chains: The Morphus has 1D4+1 chains made of metal, vertebrae bones, sinew, intestines, or plant vines. 01-50% the chains are attached to the character's flesh by hooks and pins, or 51-00% seem to grow right out of his body. Each can lash out on its own like a tentacle or whip to strike (does 2D6 damage), entangle, wrap around and hold an opponent or be used to climb. Each can move as if it were a living part of the Nightbane's body and is 2D4+4 feet (1.8 to 3.6 m) long. Extremely long lengths of chain may wrap around the body when not in use, or drag along the floor (which can have a dramatic effect). **Bonuses:** +3D6 S.D.C., +1 attack per melee round, +1 to parry, +2 to disarm and pull punch, +3 to entangle, +25% to Climbing with the chains, and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Increase weight by 10%, -10% to Prowl and Swimming, and -20% to Disguise and Undercover Ops.

11-20% Eye Stalks: The Morphus has 2D4 eye stalks protruding from the shoulders, neck, head, or back. The stalks are prehensile but only 1D4+6 inches (17 to 25 cm) in length. The stalks can look around 360 degrees at any given moment making surprise attacks difficult. Each stalk has only 2D6+4 S.D.C., but if one is cut off, it will completely grow back within six hours. Each has perfect, color vision. **Bonuses:** +1 on initiative, +1D4 on Perception Rolls, +1 to parry and dodge, +1 to Horror Factor, and cannot be surprised as long as he can see around him. **Penalties:** Cannot see in the dark nor possess any other special optics, -2 to P.B., and -40% to Disguise and Undercover Ops, and cannot see (no bonuses apply) if they are covered up.

21-30% Prehensile Hair: The Morphus gives the Nightbane thick, long (1D4+2 feet/0.9 to 1.8 m) hair. The character has complete control over his hair and is able to section it off into as many as three clumps or braids, and use them as if they were tentacle-like limbs. Hair-limbs have a P.S. and P.P. of 10 and

can be used to pick up and carry items, open doors, flip switches, climb, entangle and even wield a melee weapon to strike or parry though with a penalty of -2. **Bonuses:** +1 action/attack per melee, +2 to entangle, +10% to Climbing. **Penalties:** Increase weight by 5%, hair cannot use modern weapons/guns, or a bow and arrow, and -20% to Disguise and Undercover Ops.

31-40% Elephant Trunk: The Morphus is a human with leathery gray skin and an elephant's trunk somewhere on the body: 01-25% on the face in place of the nose, 26-50% on the side or back of the head, 51-75% chest, and 76-00% back, between the shoulder blades. If some body location other than the nose, the trunk is an additional nose built into an elephant's trunk. The trunk can be used to breathe through and used under water, like a snorkel, and is prehensile like a tentacle. The trunk has a P.S. of 1D6+15, P.P. of 1D4+14, and can be used to entangle, pick up and carry items, open doors, flip switches, climb, and even wield a melee weapon to strike or parry though with a penalty of -4. **Bonuses:** +3D6+3 S.D.C., +1 action/attack per melee, +2 to entangle, +5% to Climbing skill, can hold breath for 1D4+6 minutes, has a keen sense of smell, and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Increase weight by 10%, trunk cannot use or fire modern weapons and Disguise and Undercover Ops are impossible if the trunk replaces the nose or is located on the head, -30% if it is located on the body.

41-50% Mandibles: The mouth is replaced with a pair of mandibles like those of a giant ant or termite. Bite attacks do 3D6 damage (to a living opponent or inanimate objects/doors), and the character can chew through wood, plaster, fabric, rubber and plastic with relative ease. **Bonuses:** +1 attack per melee, +2 to strike with bite attacks, and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Impossible to Disguise or engage in Undercover Ops, -2 to P.B., has a poor sense of taste, and can NOT damage or chew through metal, stone, concrete or ballistic material.

51-60% Flexible Limbs: The Nightbane's arms, hands, fingers and legs are able to bend and twist as if they were made out of rubber or like the body of a snake. This enables him to bend in impossible ways. **Bonuses:** Automatically gets the *Escape Artist* skill at 80% proficiency (+2% per level of experience), +5% to Pick Locks, Palming and Concealment skills (as applicable), can parry attacks behind his back as long as he can see them coming. **Penalties:** Walks in a bobbing and swaying fashion, reminiscent of an ape, -10% to Disguise and Undercover Ops.

61-70% Dual Forearms and Hands on Each Arm: The Morphus causes the Nightbane's arms to split at the elbow into two separate forearms. This does not grant an additional attack due to their unusual configuration, but it does allow the character to simultaneously strike a single opponent with a two-handed weapon, use two light one-handed weapons or perform tasks that require two hands with one. For example, the Nightbane could fire two revolvers, strike with two short swords, or use a computer keyboard with one arm. **Bonuses:** +2D6 S.D.C., automatically gets the *W.P. Paired Weapons* skill, +1 on initiative, +2 to entangle, and +10% to Climbing. **Penalties:** -1 to P.B., impossible to Disguise or engage in Undercover Ops, and requires custom-made clothing.



71-80% Snake Body: The Morphus turns the character's lower body and legs into a long, prehensile serpent's body – 2D4+6 feet (2.4 to 4.3 m) long. **Bonuses:** +1D6x10 S.D.C., +2 to Horror Factor, moves like a snake and can rise up on its tail like a cobra to tower over normal humans – +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +2 to automatic dodge when this is done, and is +10% to climb trees and similarly shaped constructs. **Penalties:** -1 to P.B., reduce Spd 20%, reduce Spd by half when crawling across a smooth surface such as a polished floor, glass or ice, impossible to Disguise or engage in Undercover Ops, and requires custom-made clothing.

81-90% Spider Legs: The Morphus turns the Nightbane's legs and lower torso into eight large, hairy spider legs. **Bonuses:** +3D6 S.D.C. and +2 to Horror Factor. The legs are about as long as the character's normal legs and enables him to walk up the sides of walls and upside down on ceilings, as well as walk along rope and wires with ease; automatically gets Acrobatics and Climbing skill at 80% proficiency (+2% per level of experience), but only applicable in Morphus form. **Penalties:** -1D4 to P.B., reduce Spd 10%, reduce Spd by half when crawling across a smooth surface, cannot climb smooth surfaces such as a polished floor or enamel painted walls, glass/windows, or ice, and impossible to Disguise or engage in Undercover Ops.

91-00% Additional Arms in Unusual Places: The Nightbane has an extra pair of arms, but they are attached in an unusual place such as on his chest, back, legs or similar odd place. **Bonuses:** +1 to parry and entangle, and +2 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1 to P.B., impossible to Disguise or engage in Undercover Ops, and requires custom-made clothing.

Unusual Facial Features Table II

More faces only a mother could love . . . or run away from in terror.

01-10% Heat Pits: This 'Bane has a sunken, discolored area in each cheek, just below where the eyes would normally be (even if he doesn't have eyes). These pits are receptive to heat, similar to the type of snake known as a pit viper. **Bonuses:** Allows the Nightbane thermal vision at a range of 500 feet (152 m) and +2 to Horror Factor.

11-22% Multiple Faces: The Nightbane only has one head with 1D4 additional faces on it. Each face points in a different direction and each looks different (none look like his human Facade). **Bonuses:** +2D6 S.D.C., +1 to Perception Rolls for each additional face, can see in the back of his head and cannot be surprised by attacks from behind or from the side, +1 to parry, +2 to automatic dodge, and +2 to Horror Factor.

23-35% Chest Face: The Morphus is such that the Nightbane appears to have no head! Instead the face either, 01-50% is set in the center of the chest, or 51-00% appears to be stretched and nailed or hooked to the chest, stomach or across the chest and stomach. The face is different from that of the Facade. **Bonuses:** +6D6 to S.D.C., +1 to save vs toxic gases, and +1D4 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -2 from P.B., -1 to Perception Rolls, the Nightbane must turn his entire body in order to look



around, the face is vulnerable to stomach strikes, and Disguise and Undercover Ops are impossible.

36-45% Angel Face: The Morphus is an innocent and exquisite beauty (male or female) with warm eyes, and metallic gold hair. **Bonuses:** +2D6 S.D.C., +1D4 to M.A., +1D4+4 to P.B., and +15% to evoke trust and automatically gets the *Seduction* skill at 72% proficiency (+1% per level of experience). **Penalties:** Everyone notices this character which makes him or her -20% to Disguise, Prowl, Undercover Ops, Palm, Concealment and Escape Artist.

46-55% Masked Face: The structure of the Nightbane's face is such that it looks like the character is wearing an artificial mask made of leather, fabric, ceramics/porcelain, or plastic. The "mask" can look like just about anything and may have no discernable features (a blank face), distorted features (huge nose, large pointed ears, bird's wings for ears, etc.), horns, spikes, metal studs, feathers, and so forth. **Bonuses:** The artificial appearance of the Masked Face means unless the character has some other deformity or weird feature, most bystanders will assume he or she is an ordinary person in a store bought mask (and maybe likewise assume any other monstrous aspect of the character is a Halloween costume), not a Nightbane or monster. +2D6 S.D.C. and the mask cannot be removed by any means. **Penalties:** Disguise and Undercover Ops are impossible.

56-68% Snake, Worm, or Millipede for a Tongue: The Morphus gives the Nightbane a weird, distorted looking face and a long tongue that appears to be a snake, large worm or millipede. While this is disgusting to look at, it does not interfere with the ability to speak. **Bonuses:** Voice is distorted and is ei-

ther deep and ominous or lyrical, in either case it is different from his Facade voice, +2 to Horror Factor when the mouth is open or the tongue is out. **Penalties:** -1 from M.A. and P.B., Disguise and Undercover Ops are impossible (at least the minute the 'Bane opens his mouth to speak).

69-78% Strange Ears: This Nightbane's ears are not those of a normal human, but any of the following: 01-20% large canine-like, 21-40% large and pointed, 41-60% pointed and has 1D6+4 peircings, 61-80% tiny, flat and noticeable only when one looks closely, 81-00% literally elephant ears or something large and alien looking (covered in spikes or spines, unusual shape, etc.). Regardless of their appearance, they provide exceptional hearing, roughly equal to that of a dog. **Bonuses:** +4 on Perception Rolls involving sound and +1 on initiative. **Penalties:** -1 from P.B., -20% to Disguise and Undercover Ops, and high-pitched sound hurts the ears (-2 on initiative and no Perception Roll bonus).

79-90% Metal Head: The Morphus gives the Nightbane a face, neck and head that appears to be one of the following: 01-25% robotic face and head. 26-50% metal plates are bolted or fused seamlessly to the skin and bone of the face, head and neck. 51-75% the man in the iron mask – an iron helmet is clamped around his head and locked tight. 76-00% a polished metal face plate, reminiscent to the face plates used in samurai armor is bolted to the head; it is probably gold, silver, or black, and may have ornate designs etched into it, but it looks the most human of the four possibilities. **Bonuses:** The face and head have 1D6x10+60 S.D.C., +1 to save vs psionic attacks and possession, and the mask cannot be removed by any means. **Penalties:** Disguise and Undercover Ops are impossible.

91-00% Worm Face: 2D6+13 worms or short tentacles (under one foot/0.3 m) seem to grow from the flesh around the mouth, chin and lower jaw, or across the forehead and around the eyes. All squirm and writhe constantly. Any that are killed or cut off grow back in 1D4 hours. **Bonuses:** +2D6 S.D.C., +1 on Perception Rolls, understands all languages at 60%, and +1D4 to Horror Factor. Distracting and disturbing to others who are close enough to see them and such people are -5% to skill performance and -1 to strike the Nightbane. **Penalties:** -1 to M.A., -1D4 to P.B., and Disguise and Undercover Ops are impossible.

Victim Table

Most of these Nightbane were (or perceive themselves as having been) victims of circumstance, abused, tortured, neglected or unwanted, or they may simply feel helpless or vulnerable. Such Morphuses generally appear to be frail and weak, whether they really are or not.

01-09% Horribly Burned: The Morphus is a humanoid with 90% of the body scarred and covered in third-degree burns. The face looks as if it was melted, there is only a hole for a nose and there are no lips, ears, or facial hair. **Bonuses:** +1D6x10+6 S.D.C., +2 to P.E., fire and heat resistant (half damage), +1D4 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -2 from M.A., -1D4 from P.B.

10-18% Filthy: The Morphus of an emaciated human covered with filth – dirt, grime, old food, and dried blood. The hair is matted and has stuff sticking out of it, and any clothing is



similarly filthy, crumpled and unkempt. **Bonuses:** +2 to P.E., +1 to M.E., +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** -1D4 to P.B. and -25% to all skills involving appearance and performance, including Disguise and Seduction.

19-27% Broken Body: The Morpheus is of someone so badly beaten that his hands are gnarled, limbs bent and twisted, and the spine so damaged and deformed that the Nightbane stands hunched over, has a short, thick neck, and walks with a severe and noticeable limp. **Bonuses:** +4D4x10 to S.D.C., +1D4 to P.S., +1D4 to I.Q., M.E. and M.A., +1 on Perception Rolls, +5% on all R.C.C. Skills, and +2 to Horror Factor; the body may be broken, but the mind is as sharp as ever. **Penalties:** Reduce speed by 30%, -1 on initiative, leaping height and distance is half, -20% to any and all Physical skills, and Disguise and Undercover Ops are impossible.

28-36% Beaten: The Morpheus is that of someone covered in scars and bruises, the fingers are gnarled from having been broken many times, and limbs are crooked and lumpy from where broken bones have knitted back together improperly. Any clothing is likely to be torn or tattered. **Bonuses:** +3D6+6 Hit Points, +2 to P.E. and +1 to dodge. Highly resistant to pain and interrogation (interrogators suffer a -35% skill penalty against this character), suffers half the normal penalties for physical pain, any spell or power that causes pain has absolutely no effect, and the 'Bane heals at double the normal rate. **Penalties:** Reduces Spd by 1D4x10%, -2 from P.B., -1 from P.E., and -5% to Prowl, Disguise and Undercover Ops.

37-45% Frail: The Morpheus is an emaciated human, all skin and bones, frail and starving. Most opponents will underesti-

mate the 'Bane in combat, discounting him as a real threat. **Bonuses:** +1 on initiative, +1 attack per melee round, impervious to spoiled and rotten food, +1 to save vs poison and drugs, and +2 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Reduce weight by 50%, S.D.C. by 20%, -2 from P.E., -1D6 from P.S. and Spd, and -25% to Disguise and Undercover Ops.

46-54% Escaped Captivity: This Morpheus is of someone with long dirty hair, a few noticeable scars, and a dirt smudged face. Manacles are clamped around the wrists and ankles, and a 1D4 foot (0.3 to 1.2 m) length of heavy iron chains hangs from the manacles. The manacles cannot be removed, and the Nightbane doesn't even try. Instead, he uses the chain lengths around his wrists as weapons (a chain whip attack does 2D6 damage plus Supernatural P.S. punch damage). **Bonuses:** +6D6 S.D.C., +2 to P.S., +1 to strike, parry and entangle with the chains, +5% to Climbing, and is impervious to the magic of Night Princes and Nightlords. **Penalties:** -30% to Prowl and Swimming, -15% to all skills involving appearance, including Disguise and Seduction, and the character has a phobia (terror) of being chained up again, or locked in a confined space or jail cell.

55-63% Hollow Eyes: Also called the thousand yard stare, the Nightbane's eyes are vacant. It's as though they are staring at something off in the distance even when looking directly at someone or something, which most people find quite unnerving. **Bonuses:** Hawk-like vision, enabling him to read small signs or identify a face 2 miles (3.2 km) away, doubles the range of him night vision, and +1 to Horror Factor.

64-73% Child: The Nightbane appears to be a youngster 1D6+9 years old. Height and weight are reduced appropriately. Except for any injuries from other Morpheus features, he appears healthy. However, voice is weak and the character is timid and shy until attacked or provoked. On the good side, people usually trust the character, but on the down side they treat him like a child, even if they know he is an adult. **Bonuses:** +1 on initiative, +3 to M.A., +1 to P.B., +4 to Spd, +3D6 to P.P.E. base. **Penalties:** Reduce Spd, P.S. and P.P. by 10%, and needs children's clothes.

74-82% Dead Man Walking: The Morpheus is someone who appears to be an animated corpse of a murder victim. He is splattered or covered in blood, obvious wounds (bullet holes, cuts, crushed skull, etc.), and when applicable, the murder weapon is apparent (a hammer or hatchet stuck in the skull, noose around the neck, a knife in the belly or neck, etc.). **Bonuses:** +5D6+5 S.D.C., +1 to Perception Rolls, resistant to the magic of the Nightlords (half damage, duration and effect), +1 to Horror Factor, and +10% to all skills involving surveillance, tailing and investigation. **Penalties:** Obsessed with solving and stopping murders, injury cannot be easily concealed and the murder weapon, if present, cannot be removed, -40% to Disguise and Undercover Ops.

83-91% Faceless Victim: A Morpheus without a face – no eyes, mouth or any facial features (but can still see and talk), just a blank face. There are also ligature marks around the neck, wrists and ankles. This Morpheus represents the multitude of people who simply vanish and victims of crimes that are never solved, as well as so-called victimless crimes. Tends to be an avenger and protector of the innocent. **Bonuses:** +1D4x10 Hit Points, +1D6 to P.S., +1 attack per melee round (+2 against the

Nightlords and Night Princes), fatigues at half the usual rate, and +1 to save vs mind control and illusions. **Penalties:** Reduce I.Q. and S.D.C. by 10%.

92-00% Face of Comedy and Tragedy: This Morphus has two faces made of the porcelain masks used to represent film and entertainment. One is the face, one is the back of his head, but their position (front or back) can reverse depending on the mood of the Nightbane or the situation he faces. The character's back is covered in blood and there will be a gaping wound or a knife sticking in it. This Morphus represents the victims of treachery, lies, deception and betrayal. **Bonuses:** +1D4x10 S.D.C., +2 to M.A. and M.E., +1 to Perception Rolls, +3 to Perception Rolls involving lies, deception, and traps, impervious to Seduction, impervious to magic and psionic charms, automatically gets the skill I.D. Undercover Agent at 90%, and +1 to Horror Factor. **Penalties:** Distrusts strangers, the Guardians, and authority figures, hates the Nightlords, and Disguise and Undercover Ops are impossible.



New Talents

Talent Manifestations

Talents are unlike any other ability in Palladium's role-playing games. While powered by P.P.E., they are not spells. Nor are they psionics or super abilities. Talents are more akin to tangible expressions of will on the behalf of the Nightbane (and Shadow Mages).

As such, they tend to manifest in different ways for different Nightbane. What this means for players and Game Masters is that the mechanics of the powers are always the same, but visually they can be quite different.

For example, Stony Lonesome, a Nightbane with rock-like skin covered in razor wire, has the *Darkwhip Talent*. So does Crosswire, a Nightbane with a camera-like head and a robotic body. For both individuals, the *Darkwhip Talent* works the same way. However, Stony's *Darkwhip* comes out as a long, deadly strand of barbed wire, and Crosswire's *Darkwhip* flashes out as a bundle of seemingly animated electrical wiring. Such variations and effects do not add damage or functionality, but reflect aspects of personality and individuality to each Nightbane character.

It also means that other Nightbane sometimes have to guess at what Talents a Nightbane is using. When you see a holographic image overlay Crosswire's *Facade*, making him look like someone else, did he just use *Reshape Facade* or is it something else? The observers are not 100% certain.

And there's the fun.

A group of player characters may see Stony embrace with a badly injured woman, appearing to vomit liquid concrete into her. He may be using *Infectious Control* or he might be using the *Sharing the Flesh* ability. If they attack and take the woman from him, they may save her life . . . or they may prevent him from healing her, and the shock could cause her to die.

Likewise, when special lenses drop over Crosswire's camera-like eyes, did he just use *See Truth* or is he peering at that mirror on the wall and using *Mirror Sight*?

The manifestation of Talents usually have some connection or similarity to the Nightbane's Morphus or personality. For example, *Darksong* may be a long, blood-curdling howl for a Nightbane with wolf-like attributes in Morphus, but a strange, unearthly choir begins singing whenever a Nightbane with an Angel Morphus uses the same Talent. Gloppy the Kid, a Nightbane with a plasmoid, shapeless body, oozes into his computer through the disc drive or DVD-ROM slot when he uses *Lightning Rider*, but Crosswire streams into his screen as a series of glowing "1"s and "0"s.

The only limit to the different *Talent manifestations* is your imagination. Just remember, the manifestations are only *cosmetic* visual variations. They do NOT provide any tangible benefit to the actual Talent; the Talent always functions the same, does the same damage and has the same effect, duration and range, it may just look different. **Note:** Other Talents are described in the **Nightbane® RPG** and **Between the Shadows™**.

New Nightbane Talents

- Air Swim
- Fire Breather
- Heal Facade
- Severance
- Shadow Pockets
- Shadow Weapon
- Speed Darkling

Note: Also see *Elite Talents*, which follow.



Air Swim

This Talent enables the Nightbane to *swim* through the air the same as if it were water. A Nightbane does not suffer penalties from drying out or breathing air when using this Talent when his Morphus is of an aquatic nature.

Limitations: Maximum height above the ground is 15 feet (4.6 m) per level of experience. Speed is the same as Swimming.

Cost: 7 P.P.E. to permanently acquire; 5 P.P.E. to activate for the first minute and 2 P.P.E. for each minute after that.

Fire Breather

The Nightbane is able to exhale a powerful jet of flames, similar to that of a flamethrower. The gout of fire inflicts 5D6 damage to anything caught in its path, unless stopped by a wall, vehicle or large object (including a large Nightbane), otherwise the flames continue to their full range, burning everything they touch. The 'Bane is impervious to his own flames, as well as natural fire and heat when this Talent is active (which is only the one melee round the fire breath is used). However, the character takes full damage from magical fire or the breath of other Nightbane.

Limitations: Can only be used in Morphus form and only once per melee round (15 seconds), but counts as an *extra* melee attack. Range: 30 feet (9.1 m) +5 feet (1.5 m) per experience level.

Cost: 8 P.P.E. to acquire permanently; 10 P.P.E. per melee round of use.

Heal Facade

This Talent enables a Nightbane to extend the superhuman regeneration rate of his Morphus to his Facade for a limited amount of time. When activated, the Facade form heals 1D6+4 S.D.C./Hit Points per melee round!

Limitations: Healing is applicable only to the Facade. Duration: One melee round per level of experience.

Cost: 10 P.P.E. to permanently acquire; 10 P.P.E. to activate for the first melee round, and 5 P.P.E. for each subsequent melee round.

Severance

The Nightbane is able to temporarily shut down his *supernatural aura*, making himself undetectable to other Nightbane, psychics, mages and supernatural creatures who can sense and track the supernatural aura of Nightbane and other paranormal beings. It can prevent detection by *Hounds, Hunters, Great Hounds, and Soul Trackers*, as well as defeat the "Sense Nightbane" ability inherent to other *Nightbane*. Furthermore, it makes the character's aura appear to be that of an ordinary human.

However, using the Severance Talent comes at a cost. As long as the Severance is in place and the supernatural aura is *suppressed*, the 'Bane can *not* use any of his other Talents nor cast any magic if the Nightbane is a Mystic or Sorcerer. Furthermore, the Nightbane feels cut off from the metaphysical world, and the sensation of alienation can be unsettling, particularly for Mystics, who tend to feel the most attuned with the supernatural world.

Limitations: Not available until 4th level. Range: Self, only. Duration: One minute (4 melee rounds) per level of experience.

Cost: 15 P.P.E. to acquire permanently; 10 P.P.E. to activate.

Shadow Pockets

This Talent enables the Nightbane to access a mini-dimension suitable for storing small objects. Though it can be used in both the Facade and Morphus, P.P.E. must be spent for each item brought into or out of the pocket. The Shadow Pocket may hold up to five pounds (2.25 kg) per level of experience, but no single object may weigh more than 15 pounds (6.75 kg). Placing an object into or retrieving an object from the pocket takes one melee attack/action.

There are many different ways this Talent can appear to function. One is for the Nightbane to actually reach into the pockets of his clothing and another is to put his hand into a shadow and seem to remove an item from it like a sleight of hand trick.

While inside the pocket, objects are held in a state of limbo, and can only be brought back by the Nightbane who put them there. The objects can remain in the pocket indefinitely without ill effect, even if the Nightbane is sleeping or knocked unconscious. If the character is *killed* in Morphus form, his Morphus vanishes and all the objects in the Shadow Pocket appear where he last stood. If the character is killed in Facade form, the objects in the Shadow Pocket remain in the shadow dimension and are presumably lost forever.

Limitations: Not available until 5th level.

Cost: 16 P.P.E. to acquire permanently; 8 P.P.E. to place or retrieve one object.

Shadow Weapon

A Nightbane with this Talent can create a melee weapon made of dark energy. The weapon can look like any type of one piece melee weapon, such as a sword, knife, axe, pole arm, pick, mace, morning star, etc., but not bows or modern weapons with moving parts. The character can only create one type of weapon and must decide what the weapon will look like when he first gains this Talent. From that point forward, his Shadow Weapon is always the same. Regardless of the weapon type it inflicts



New Elite Talents

A Face in the Crowd
 Abduction
 Commanding Presence
 Forbidding Woods
 Gorgon's Touch
 Guardian Angel
 Kill Switch
 Lend a Hand
 Nightshade
 Spelljack
 The Taint
 True Reflection
 Vicious Cycle
 Voice of the Beast
 Zombie Master

A Face in the Crowd

This powerful and useful Talent enables the Nightbane to temporarily conceal his inhuman appearance under the guise of a very average looking human being. The specific appearance of the human disguise automatically varies to fit the situation – i.e. attire will match the occasion, sex is that of the Nightbane, ethnicity mimics the local population, etc. – which also prevents the 'Bane from being recognized from use to use. When this Talent is in effect, the Nightbane temporarily loses all Morpheus abilities (flight, weapon limbs, claws, horns, and Horror Factor). However, his attributes, P.P.E., S.D.C., Hit Points, and the like remain unchanged. Physical Beauty of the false appearance is 1D4+8.

Prerequisites: At least one monstrous or alien trait/feature from any appropriate table. This talent will not work on “Kens” and “Barbies” or other attractive or completely human looking Nightbane.

Limitations: Can be used only in Morpheus form and not available until 4th level. The Talent does *not* mask the supernatural nature/aura of the Nightbane, meaning beings like Hounds and Hunters will recognize them for what they really are and are easily able to hunt those using this Talent!

Cost: 15 P.P.E. to permanently acquire; 10 P.P.E. to activate plus 5 for each minute of continued duration.

Abduction

Upon the activation of this Talent, a single target is whisked away by dark energies to a limbo-like pocket dimension. These energies can take the shape of a swirling vortex, sweeping portal, or even a beam of darkness that strikes the target from above. No harm comes to the target, but unless they can dimensionally teleport they are stuck in limbo until the Talent's duration expires.

Prerequisites: One or more characteristics from the Alien Shape or Extraterrestrial Table.

3D6 damage +1D6 additional damage at levels 6, 9, 12 and 15 – and does 50% greater damage to Night Princes and Nightlords! W.P. skill bonuses are applicable if the Shadow Weapon fits the Weapon Proficiency. The weapon is substantial and can be used to parry, but can NOT be thrown; the weapon disappears if it leaves the Nightbane's hands.

Limitations: Usable in Morpheus form only; not available until 3rd level.

Cost: 15 P.P.E. to acquire permanently. 10 P.P.E. to activate for the first melee round and 5 P.P.E. for each melee round of subsequent use.

Speed Darkling

This Talent gives the Nightbane incredible speed. Take the Spd attribute number x10 mph (16 km). Thus if the character has a Spd of 9, he can now run 90 mph (144 km), if he had a Spd of 96 he can now run 960 mph, and so on. **Speed Bonuses:** +1 attack per melee, +1 on initiative, +4 to automatic dodge (the act of dodging does not use up a melee attack/action). **Speed Penalty:** When the duration of the enhanced speed ends, the character feels spent, his normal Spd is half, and he is -1 attack per melee, no initiative (is the last to attack) and is -2 to strike, parry and dodge for 1D6 melee rounds.

Limitations: Usable only in Morpheus form and lasts for one minute per level of experience.

Cost: 20 P.P.E. to permanently acquire it; 15 P.P.E. per melee to activate for the first minute and 5 P.P.E. for each minute of additional use.



Limitations: Usable in Morphus only. The target can attempt to save by rolling a 15 or better on a D20 with P.E. bonuses included. Range: 90 feet (27 m) +10 feet (3 m) per level of experience. Duration: One melee round (15 seconds) per level of experience.

Cost: 20 P.P.E. to acquire permanently; 6 P.P.E. to activate with a one melee round duration, +6 P.P.E. for each additional melee round.

Commanding Presence

When activated, a Nightbane with this Talent has his Mental Affinity temporarily increased by six points, with a minimum M.A. of 22. On a successful Trust/Intimidate roll, any person who sees the 'Bane will be affected by his charisma and supernatural charm. The subject(s) of the charm must roll under their M.E. attribute number to save vs the Nightbane's Trust/Intimidate or become completely swayed by the 'Bane. Those who fail to save will do nearly anything, short of endangering themselves or a loved one, to please the Nightbane. Even if the save is successful, others will still view the 'Bane with awe and reverence. This ability is cumulative with *Animal Magnetism* if the Nightbane possesses that trait, but Nightbane and other supernatural creatures are +3 to save against this Talent.

Prerequisites: Only Nightbane with an Unearthly Beauty or Angel trait may take this Talent.

Limitations: Usable only in the Morphus form and not available until 3rd level.

Cost: 20 P.P.E. to acquire permanently; 12 P.P.E. to activate for the first two minutes, and an additional 6 P.P.E. for each two minutes thereafter.

Forbidding Woods

The Nightbane radiates an aura of fear and confusion over a large area of woodland. This can be a forest, city park, jungle, bamboo forest or anywhere with moderate to dense stands of living trees of any variety. For every 5 P.P.E. spent, the Nightbane transforms a 100 foot (30.5 m) radius of forest into a haunted wood. Shadows deepen, the trees become threatening and seem to sway with no apparent breeze, and there is the overwhelming sensation of being watched, followed, or stalked like prey. Those inside the area of effect who do not save vs a Horror Factor of 16, immediately attempt to flee the area in fear. Such frightened individuals are confused and disoriented, and are likely to get lost (must make a *Land Navigation* or *Navigation* roll at -50%), stumbling around the haunted grove terrified until the Talent elapses. Those who make their save vs Horror Factor are jumpy and nervous, but keep their wits about them.

Prerequisite: At least one Plant Life characteristic.

Limitations: Usable only in Morphus and not available until 3rd level. **Duration:** 30 seconds (2 melee rounds) per level of experience.

Cost: 15 P.P.E. to acquire permanently. Activation costs 7 P.P.E. per 100 foot (30.5 m) radius of woods affected.

Gorgon's Touch

The Nightbane's physical touch turns the target temporarily into stone! Physical contact is necessary and the victim must roll a save of 14 or better (P.E. bonuses apply). A successful save prevents the character from turning to stone, but the P.P., P.E. and Spd attributes are (temporarily) reduced by 20% as he feels his joints and muscles stiffen. The effects of the touch are cumulative and any attribute bonuses from a high P.P. or P.E. disappear when reduced (adjust accordingly). Once the intended victim fails to save, or his P.P. and P.E. numbers are reduced to one, the victim is turned completely into stone. While stone, the victim is completely immobile and feels as cold and as hard as rock. There are no life signs (breathing, heartbeat, or even brain activity) whatsoever and the victim could be confused for an amazingly lifelike mannequin as items on the victim's body (clothes, weapons, etc.) are not turned to stone.

The Gorgon's Touch penetrates clothing and most armor, but will not penetrate modern full body armor unless the Nightbane's attack roll beats the Armor Rating (A.R.). The penalties and the stone form last one minute (4 melee rounds) per level of the Nightbane's experience. All the usual bonuses to strike apply when pressing the Gorgon's Touch attack, but does not inflict any punch, claw or P.S. damage since it is only a touch. The intended victim can either dodge or try to parry with something other than his or her own body, like a sword, piece of wood or gun.

Prerequisite: At least one characteristic from the Mineral Table.

Limitations: Usable only in Morphus. Not available until third level. **Duration:** The victim remains stone for one minute per experience level of his attacker. The 'Bane possesses the Gorgon's Touch for one melee round or until his intended victim is turned to stone, whichever comes first.

Cost: 15 P.P.E. for permanent acquisition; 10 P.P.E. to activate for one full melee round in which the 'Bane's touch can turn a target to stone.

Note: The petrified individual weight is doubled, but if he can be transported, he can be placed inside a jail cell, the trunk or back seat of a car, surrounded, stripped of his weapons and gear, but cannot be destroyed. Furthermore, the petrified victim is NOT aware of what transpires while he is turned to stone. It is as if he experienced a blackout.

Guardian Angel

A character with this Talent has a great desire to protect others even at his own expense. When the Talent is activated, a single target is selected for the Nightbane's mystical protection. This creates a ghostly image of the 'Bane superimposed over the protected individual. As long as the Guardian Angel Talent is activated and in place over the person it is to protect, any damage directed at him is transferred to his Nightbane Guardian Angel – the protected person remains unharmed, all damage comes off his Nightbane Guardian Angel, first from S.D.C. then his Hit Points. When the 'Bane is down to 15 Hit Points of his own, the protective aura vanishes and damage directed at the innocent person will again hurt that person. This Talent is used by heroic and kind-hearted 'Bane to keep friends, allies, and innocent bystanders from being injured in a fray and can be cast upon as many as two people per level of the hero's experience.

Prerequisites: Useable only in Morphus form and only by characters with an Aberrant, Unprincipled, Scrupulous or Principled alignment.

Limitations: Not available until 2nd level. **Range:** Line of sight. **Duration:** Until the hero who cast it chooses to cancel the Talent or until his own S.D.C. is depleted to zero and Hit Points are reduced to 15.

Cost: 8 P.P.E. to acquire permanently; 4 P.P.E. to activate.

Kill Switch

This powerful ability mimics the effects of an electromagnetic pulse, temporarily shutting down all unprotected electronic devices (computers, cell phones, walkie-talkies, GPS devices, digital cameras, video cameras, surveillance bugs, flashlights and any small battery operated device, and even has a 01-40% chance of knocking out the electrical system of most automobiles and trucks) within the area of effect. The Talent temporarily overloads such devices, rendering them momentarily inoperable. This Talent also erases electronic data if stored on an unprotected hard drive or computer disk/CD/DVD as well as magnetic tape.

Prerequisites: At least one Biomechanical characteristic.

Limitations: Usable in Morphus form only and not available until 3rd level. Any high-tech systems with *hardened circuits*

(such as most military electronics, sophisticated alarms and surveillance systems) are unaffected by a shutdown attempt, and continue to operate. **Range:** 100 foot (30.5 m) radius around the Nightbane (his own gear is not affected). **Duration:** Shuts down electronics for 1D6+1 minutes.

Cost: 14 P.P.E. to permanently acquire; 12 P.P.E. to activate with instant results.

Lend a Hand

This power allows the Nightbane to temporarily lend his Unnatural or Weapon Limb to another character, whether that other person is a human or Nightbane. The 'Bane does not lose his own Morphus characteristic or limbs, but can make an exact duplicate of one of his limbs appear on another character. The recipient of the Nightbane "special limb" sees his own arm turn into a copy of the Nightbane's, complete with claws, blades, tentacles or whatever, or one additional Nightbane appendage temporarily appears as a third arm/limb with the special Nightbane features that come with it. The lent limb has all the characteristics and abilities of the Nightbane lending it, such as Supernatural Strength, claws, tentacles, etc. This Talent does NOT transfer spell casting abilities, Talents or any other ability except those associated with that one limb. Typically limited to the arms and hands, tails, or an extra limb.

Prerequisites: At least one Unnatural Limb or Biomechanical Morphus feature.

Limitations: Usable only in Morphus form and not available until 2nd level. Does not work on supernatural beings, must be a mortal or fellow Nightbane.

Cost: 12 P.P.E. to acquire this Talent permanently; 6 P.P.E. to activate this Talent for a single melee round, and 3 P.P.E. more for every additional melee round.

Nightshade

Upon activation, the Talent releases a chemical scent into the air that has debilitating effects on everyone who inhales it. Characters get to save vs Non-Lethal Poison (16 or higher to save). Those who fail their saving throw fall into a deep sleep, remaining comatose for up to 2D4+2 minutes. Victims who successfully save are still affected, losing one attack per melee, -2 on all combat rolls, and -10% to all skills.

Prerequisites: At least one Plant or Extraterrestrial characteristic.

Limitations: Can only be used in Morphus form and is not available until 5th level. If someone under the effects of this Talent is attacked, he immediately awakens and can defend against the attack with full bonuses. **Range:** 20 foot (6 m) radius around the Nightbane, +5 feet (1.5 m) per level of experience.

Cost: 15 P.P.E. to permanently acquire; 11 P.P.E. to activate with immediate effect.

Spelljack

This powerful Talent enables the Nightbane using it to hijack control of a spell cast either by someone near him or on an area, object, or person within his range! Once in control of the magic

spell, the Nightbane may immediately cancel it, keep it in effect, reduce the duration or range/area of effect, or seize control of those affected by it. In order to affect spells with instant durations, the Nightbane must roll against the spell caster's initiative (though he gets to include his own initiative bonus to that roll). If the 'Bane wins the initiative, he seized control of the spell cast. If the mage wins initiative he casts his spell before the 'Bane can seize it, and it has the intended effect on the intended target (range, duration, level, and effects of the spell remain unchanged).

Another way this Talent can be used involves *Living Spells*. These enigmatic beings fall under the complete control of a Nightbane using the Spelljack Talent when they fail a save of 15. If Spelljacked, the Living Spell is forced to do anything the 'Bane commands for a duration of 1D4 minutes per experience level of the Nightbane, but is likely to feel very threatened and/or angry with the user of the Talent as soon as this duration elapses.

Prerequisites: At least one feature from the Fantasy Table or Infernal Table.

Limitations: Usable only by the Morpheus form and not available until 4th level. The caster or target of the spell must be within 25 feet (7.6 m) of the 'Bane, +5 feet (1.5 m) per level of experience. Only effective against spell magic; cannot affect rituals, wards, circles, runes, magic weapons, and so on.

Cost: 20 P.P.E. to permanently acquire; one quarter the P.P.E. the spell cost (rounded up) is needed to gain control of it.

The Taint

When this vicious Talent is used, anything the Nightbane *touches* seems to decay. Metal rusts where it is touched, cloth tatters, wood and plaster crack and splinter, rubber rots, and plants wither. Living creatures who fall prey to this Talent feel dark energy spread through them like ice water through their veins, wracking them with chilling cold and pain. Damage inflicted by the Taint is equal to 1D6 damage per every 2 P.P.E. spent, so 8 P.P.E. would result in 4D6 damage.

Furthermore, this damage causes a kind of magical necrosis, as it actually decays the tissue around the area touched. This effect inflicts a -20% penalty to any skill used to try and repair an object damaged by the Talent. Living beings recover lost S.D.C. and Hit Points at half the usual amount and it takes twice as long to recover. Medical skills used to try and treat this damage are performed at -20%, and even magical and psionic healing is *half* as effective. For supernatural beings like Nightbane and Wampyrs, Natural A.R. does not protect them. If touched they are damaged.

Since this is a touch-attack, it can be dodged or parried. However, any object used to parry it will take the damage instead, so using one's own limb to parry inflicts damage to the character, while parrying with a weapon sees damage done to the weapon. Victims of this devastating attack are more horrified if the attack continues, adding +2 to their attacker's Horror Factor. Any victim dropped below zero Hit Points by this power is -10% to Save vs Coma/Death.

Prerequisites: At least one Undead or Victim Table characteristic.

Limitations: Usable only by the Morpheus form and not available until 3rd level. Can only spend 6 P.P.E. per level of experience on this attack. If the victim successfully saves vs magic, he suffers only one third damage. **Range:** Touch. **Duration:** Taint touch lasts for one melee round per activation.

Cost: 18 P.P.E. to acquire permanently; 9 P.P.E. to activate +2 P.P.E. = 1D6 damage. Up to 6 P.P.E. (3D6 damage) per level of experience can be spent on the amount to be inflicted. This Talent does 30% more damage to Night Princes and Nightlords. The P.P.E. is spent even if the attack fails to connect.

True Reflection

The use of this Talent temporarily imbues a mirror of any size with supernatural power. The mirror shows the "true" face of anyone reflected in it. Any shape-changing creatures are shown in their true form, Nightbane in Facade are shown in their Morpheus (but the Facade is not revealed when a Nightbane in Morpheus looks into it), and individuals under the effects of illusion or metamorphosis magic are revealed. Possessed individuals are shown with their true face as well as the ghostly image of the possessing being surrounding them.

This power is also alignment-based, allowing anyone who sees the person's reflection to be able to gauge the true alignment of the individual in front of the mirror. It is important to note that, in general, the average individual does not usually know what "alignment" they are. Some people can tell you that they are generally a good, selfish, or evil person, but most have no idea of their true selves.

Principled and Scrupulous individuals are shown as handsome, inspiring figures (Principled characters virtually glow) that radiate trust and surety. Those who see this in themselves in the mirror take heart as their beliefs are reinforced. The first time a Principled or Scrupulous person sees his reflection in a True Reflection mirror he receives a +2 to save vs Horror Factor and magic for 1D4 days. This bonus cannot be received again no matter how many times they look into a mirror affected by this Talent in the future.

Unprincipled characters see themselves generally as good-looking, but with several unsightly blemishes that they do not like, marring what would otherwise be a handsome or beautiful face. Still, there is beauty there enough to make them feel generally good about themselves and they are +1 to save vs Horror Factor for 1D4 days.

Anarchist characters see themselves as they are, but every little blemish, scar, and imperfection is enhanced greatly, dominating their faces.

Diabolic and Miscreant characters see twisted, monstrous visages of themselves that may horrify them. They must make a save vs Horror Factor of 14, or else they recoil from the mirror in fear or shame, losing an attack and initiative, and will attempt to flee the presence of all who may have seen their true face. The fear or shame lasts for 1D6 minutes until they regain their composure, but they will be shaken and unsure of their actions for 1D4 days, suffering a -2 to initiative as they second-guess

every action. The fear occurs every time they look into a mirror affected by this Talent, but the uncertainty only happens the first time they see their true reflection.

Aberrant characters also have monstrous reflections in the mirror, but there is a sense of nobility and a spark of something hopeful there, reflecting a chance for redemption if they want it. Aberrant characters must make a save vs a Horror Factor of 10 or suffer the same effects as a Miscreant or Diabolic character.

This Talent is a great opportunity for a character to undergo or finalize an alignment-shift, generally toward a more virtuous alignment. Aberrant and Anarchist characters are particularly affected by this Talent, as they are the most likely individuals to have an unrealistic view of their morals. Reaction over time to what they saw will vary from individual to individual. Some will later dismiss the mirror as a simple magic trick. Others may re-examine their lives, and some may grimly (or perhaps happily) accept what they saw as their real self and press on with the full knowledge that they are what they are, sinner or saint.

Supernaturally evil creatures are revealed in the mirror, but not affected by what they see. This includes the Nightlords and Night Princes who, although once human, have been permanently transformed into supernatural monsters. Vampires cast no reflection in a mirror affected by this Talent, giving their nature away. Humans, Wampyrs, Guardians, awakened Doppelgangers, and Nightbane, no matter what their alignment, are fully affected by this Talent.

Various uses. The Talent may also be used covertly, such as using a small compact to scan a group of people while pretending to fix your makeup. It can also be used very overtly by casting it upon a mirrored wall in a crowded ballroom, causing chaos. Some Nightbane within the Lightbringer organization have used this Talent to “screen” new recruits for both their true nature and moral fiber.

Prerequisites: Must have at least one Artificial or Unusual Facial Feature characteristic.

Limitations: Not usable until 3rd level. Range: Touch. Duration: 5 minutes.

Cost: 20 P.P.E. to acquire permanently; 5 P.P.E. for use on small pocket-mirrors, 10 P.P.E. for use on medium-sized mirrors (the size of someone’s head to half-torso length), 15 P.P.E. for full-body and larger mirrors, 20 P.P.E. for massive mirrors like the length of a wall or ceiling up to 100 feet (30.5 m) long.

Vicious Cycle

This Talent represents the tragic irony that often plays out in cases of abuse and neglect, that of the victim later becoming the abuser. When this power is engaged the Nightbane becomes more physically imposing and aggressive, boosting his P.S. and S.D.C. by 20%, and gains +1 attack per melee round.

Prerequisites: One or more traits from the Victim or Disproportional Table.

Limitations: Not usable until 3rd level. Cannot affect the Facade form. Range: Self. Duration: One melee round per level of experience.

Cost: 10 P.P.E. to permanently acquire; 5 P.P.E. to activate.

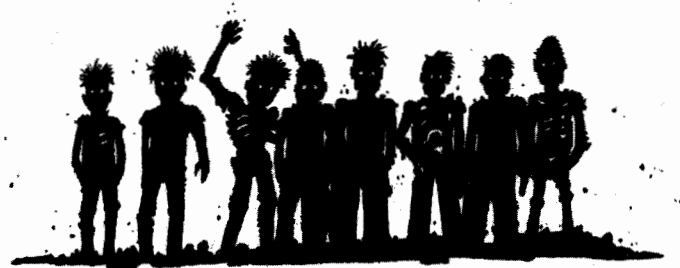
Voice of the Beast

A Nightbane with this Talent must have an Animal Appearance. It allows the Nightbane to communicate with the type of animal or animals whose traits he bears. To use this Talent, the Nightbane can communicate through a means similar to Telepathy by making eye contact with the animal, or by hissing, growling or buzzing, whatever is appropriate, but the method of communication must be chosen when the Talent is acquired. Though the Nightbane cannot command the animal in any way, he can ask it questions or request its help. The animal will consider the Nightbane a friendly member of the same species and listen to what he has to say, but it is the animal itself which decides if it helps, answers any questions or declines (G.M.’s discretion).

Prerequisite: At least one Animal characteristic.

Limitations: Usable only by the Morphus form. Duration: Will remain active as long as the Nightbane communicates with the animal only; if the Nightbane says anything to anyone other than the animal, he will need to reactivate the Talent. **Note:** Keep in mind that animals retain their animal level of intelligence and perspective. This means they are only able to provide answers to simple questions that pertain to their nature and experience. Again, G.M.s, use your best discretion.

Cost: 10 P.P.E. to acquire it permanently; 5 P.P.E. to activate.



Zombie Master

Though not nearly as powerful as Necromantic magic, this Talent enables the character to animate and control the dead. The dead animated by this Talent have the same statistics of dead animated by the *Create Zombie* ritual (**Through the Glass Darkly**, page 59). Even if the ‘Bane is incapacitated or killed, his animated dead minions continue to act on their last order until destroyed or the duration of the Talent elapses.

Prerequisite: Only Nightbane with an Infernal or Undead Morphus may acquire this Talent.

Limitations: Usable only by the Morphus form and not available until 3rd level. Can only animate one corpse (human or animal) per level of experience and only the dead bodies of mortals, not supernatural beings, though this does extend to Nightbane who died in their human Facade. Range: All animated dead must stay within 300 feet (91.5 m) of the ‘Bane. Duration: 5 minutes per experience level of the Nightbane.

Cost: 20 P.P.E. to acquire permanently; 11 P.P.E. to activate, animating one dead creature. One additional dead may be animated per level of experience, each costing 11 P.P.E., but they may all be animated in the same action.



Nightbane Factions

Faction Recruiting

“Okay, Renee. You’ve got me here,” Delilah said, looking around the abandoned church with a touch of trepidation. “What is so important that you can only tell me in an old, run down Cathedral?”

Renee looked her new friend over carefully, appraising her as she leaned up against a pew draped in moldy plastic. She had befriended her, quite intentionally, a month ago when it became obvious Delilah knew what books to buy at *Plato’s Pantry*.

“I know what you are,” Renee said, a part of her satisfied by the widening of her friend’s eyes. “I know there are times when you see another face in the mirror.”

Delilah couldn’t help her eyes darting into the dark corners of the room, fearing a trap. Something she could not explain had been pressing on her senses since she had entered the church, but until now she’d thought it felt familiar, not dangerous. It was the same feeling she’d had when she first met Renee at the New Age shop.

“I . . . I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Delilah lied, something she’d never been any good at.

Renee smiled.

“Yes you do, and you are not alone,” Renee said, and then added, “Don’t be frightened.”

With that, Renee took a deep breath and concentrated. She wanted the change to occur fast, so Delilah wouldn’t bolt before she was finished. Her hair shook out stark white, her skin became corpse-like and she slipped out of the sun dress to reveal a body covered in leather straps and buckles.

Delilah bit back a scream, staggering back into the pew behind her.

“See? You. Me. We’re both cut from the same cloth.”

Delilah tried to swallow, but her mouth was dry. Despite the fact that the thing Renee had become frightened her, she still felt that eerie sense of connection . . . maybe even stronger than before.

Renee waited patiently for Delilah to recover a bit from the shock.

“I’ve shown you mine. Time for you to show me yours,” she grinned.

Delilah looked at the ground, embarrassed as she began to undergo “The Change,” as she called it. It was strange doing it in front of someone. It was a bit like undressing, and she couldn’t prevent a flush rising to her cheeks.

Small, fawn-like horns poked their way out of her head, bones and muscle shifted into a body somewhere between that of a super-model and an Olympic athlete, and a plate mail bodice, shoulder plates and a chain mail skirt appeared to rip out of her skin, nailed in place from the inside, leaving the jagged,

old-fashioned ten penny nails pointing outwards at various places across her body.

Renee eyed her over with appreciation. "So, inside that meek little Facade lies the heart of a warrior."

Delilah looked up in surprise. "So it does mean something? What I look like?"

Renee shrugged.

"Maybe. Some of us think so." She raised her hands, looking at her own dead, decaying flesh. "Personally, I think I just watched too many zombie movies when I was a kid. Loved the stuff."

"You said 'we.' Are there more? More people like us?" Delilah asked.

Renee whistled, and out of the shadows stepped three more Nightbane. One man looked like a centaur with a shotgun for an arm, another seemed to be a bat with skeletal wings, and a woman stepped forward who looked for all the world like a living rag doll with claws going in and out as she flexed her fingers.

"We're all *Nightbane*. But just as importantly, we all use magic. I'm a Mystic, just like you," Renee said, and with a quick muttering and wave of her hand, a ball of pure sunlight appeared above her head. "We are all part of a group called the *Nocturnes*. Not all of the *Nocturnes* are *Nightbane*, in fact most of its members are not. But we thought it best if you were approached by your own kind."

Delilah looked around at the faces, which despite being monstrous, seemed to be friendly and radiate welcome. She tried to digest the new words. *Nightbane*. *Nocturnes*. She'd seen the words in the tabloids and on the Internet. As for the rest . . .

"What has all this got to do with me?"

"We'd like for you to join us," Renee said gently. "There's a lot going on in the world that you don't know. It's dangerous out there, even for us. Especially for us. There are other groups that would take you in and keep you somewhat safe, but I know you. You want more than that. The reason I was drawn to you wasn't just because you were a *Nightbane*, nor because you could use magic, although they were both factors. The reason I was drawn to you was because you want to help make things better."

Delilah stared at her friend for a long moment, before nodding.

"There's something really wrong with the world, isn't there?" she asked her friend.

Renee nodded. "And we want to make things right again."

"Go on," Delilah said, sitting down on the corner of the pew. "I'm listening."

Renee's pitch would be successful, and Delilah would go on to join the Baltimore branch of the *Nocturnes*, turning her innate mystical abilities and inquisitive mind toward unraveling the deeper secrets of the *Nightlords* and their dark plans for Earth.

Among the varied factions vying for power on the shadowy streets of the night, there is a commodity more precious than money, guns, influence and information: *New blood*.

There is a war going on against the forces of darkness, and factions tend to, unfortunately, go through members rather

quickly, and constantly need to replenish their ranks. They also need a regular flow of new faces that the *Nightlords* and their agents do not know for covert operations. These needs make the *Nightbane* the most heavily recruited of all the superhuman beings on Earth. They are also among the easiest to recruit.

The cold truth is that life after *Dark Day* is hard and brutal, especially for those on the *Nightlords'* *hit list*, like psychics, mages and those who know the truth and oppose them. But nobody is as hunted as the *Nightbane*.

The *Nightlords* have made their extermination a top priority. As a result, many *Nightbane* find some measure of security by aligning themselves with one of the more powerful factions. Many remain independent, hoping that by staying under the radar of the *Nightlords* they can stay alive a bit longer and maybe even strike back. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it doesn't. Most decide it's safer to join a faction.

The young age and circumstance of the *Nightbane* also makes them easy targets for recruitment. By comparison, human mages spend years developing their magical abilities and are older when they are exposed to the supernatural. Their studies and preparations also make them more prepared to cope with the dreadful reality of the *Nightlords'* invasion. Wampyrs could be several decades old without interacting with anyone except the occasional need to feed. Guardians are almost exclusively members of the *Lightbringer* faction, to the point that most other factions don't even try to recruit them. *Nightbane* – new *Nightbane* – are young, with almost all being teenagers or college age. Most run away from home after their *Becoming*, frightened of the monsters they've become. It's not something they can tell their parents or friends, and it's certainly not a bomb you drop on the school counselor! Most have little money, no place to stay, live in fear, and if they are lucky and have a job, it's probably barely enough to pay the bills.

Enter the factions.

A faction provides stability, camaraderie, information, training to hone one's *Nightbane* abilities, and the promise of making sense of it all. Furthermore, young *Nightbane* tend to be idealistic, hopeful, confident and anxious to make their mark in the world. That means they search for purpose and meaning, and a faction offers them all of that and more.

A faction is a large, secret, organized group of like-minded people who band together to oppose the *Nightlords*. *The three factions* that most aggressively recruit *Nightbane* are the **Underground Railroad**, the **Resistance** and the **Warlords**. All three groups are led and run by *Nightbane*, and their memberships are almost predominantly or exclusively *Nightbane*. This makes them very appealing to *Nightbane* who long to be with others like themselves, and to learn about who and what they are. Most other factions are a mixture of *Nightbane*, other supernatural beings, and humans.

The *Nocturnes* and *Seekers* specifically target *Nightbane* with *magical abilities*, but will take just about any *Nightbane* they can get their hands on. The *Nocturnes* have been more successful at this than the *Seekers*. There is a nasty rumor on the streets and the Internet that the inquisitive mages of the *Seekers* are more interested in *Nightbane* guinea pigs for their own mystical studies than as members with equal rights and position.

The Lightbringers tend to let “fate” decide new members and only actively recruit Guardians. If a Nightbane falls into their sphere of influence they’ll recruit him or use him as a resource and ally, slowly guiding him or her into the organization, without ever openly pitching the ‘Bane. One day the Nightbane just wakes up and realizes he is so entangled in Lightbringer affairs he cannot easily extricate himself. Likewise, if a Nightbane asks if he may join the organization, he is probably welcomed.

The Spook Squad is the only group that actively discourages its members from recruiting Nightbane, though it does have a few ‘Bane among its numbers. This group is predominantly (95%) human, does not entirely trust any Nightbane, and is much more interested in recruiting psychic humans and people with military or intelligence backgrounds.

The Club Freak circuit, which many consider to be a loose-knit faction, allows any and all Nightbane to attend its clubs, no matter what faction they belong to, but only extremely experienced and elder Nightbane seem to have a place of importance in the organization itself. The club’s “*Nightbane Only*” policy for admission often gives the Underground Railroad and the Resistance an edge in recruiting other Nightbane at the clubs before the other factions get a chance.

Each faction has its own rules and methods of recruiting new members. They can vary quite dramatically, depending on who is doing the recruiting and why. Recruiting can be very dangerous, both for the new Nightbane and the members of the faction doing the recruiting. This is because the Nightlords are constantly running operations designed to uncover and identify Nightbane, as well as flush them out of hiding and into the open where their assassins, agents and supernatural minions can attack and destroy the Nightbane and disrupt factions and recruiting efforts. The last thing the Nightlords want is an army of Nightbane.

The Underground Railroad

Easily the most experienced and skilled at recruiting new Nightbane, the Underground Railroad has several tried and true tactics for getting young Nightbane to join their organization, as well as ferreting out Nightlord spies.

One of the reasons the Underground Railroad is so successful is that it actively seeks out Nightbane *before* they’ve had their first Becoming. A Nightbane can still be detected by his brethren using their special ability to sense others of their kind, even if the young Nightbane has yet to experience his Morphus. The Underground Railroad sends experienced Nightbane into areas where youths are likely to congregate. Favorite places include malls, amusement parks, arcades, nightclubs, homecoming games, and concerts. Many Underground Railroad members have taken jobs as teachers and counselors where they can maneuver themselves into the role of trusted mentor. Not only does this allow the Underground Railroad to detect young Nightbane early, before anyone else is aware of their existence, but it also allows them to keep watch over the Nightbane before and after they Become.

Like a guardian angel, the older Nightbane try to protect the newlings until they are ready to be initiated into the realm of the supernatural. When the Becoming happens, a member of the Underground Railroad tries to be there in short order to provide

help and orientation. Help comes by way of a shoulder to lean on, the voice of experience, and things as simple as providing an alibi for strange behavior or a temporary disappearance. (“No, Jimmy had detention with me last night. That couldn’t have been him in that alley. Turned into a monster? You don’t really believe that sensationalized nonsense, do you?”) Other times, it may involve spiriting the young Nightbane to safety if he is rejected by his family or hunted by agents or minions of the Nightlords. Until the young Nightbane are officially approached by the Underground Railroad, however, they are not likely to know they have this protector watching over them, but they may *feel* a certain kinship (their ability to detect other Nightbane) which most presume to be “instincts” telling them so and so is a person they can trust.

Once the Underground Railroad believes the time is right – usually soon after the first transformation from Facade to Morphus, and before the individual accidentally exposes himself to the public, or worse, the Nightlords’ attentions – *the mentor* reveals himself and tries to help the newly born Nightbane to understand and come to grips with his true nature. This includes giving him someone to talk to and confide in, explaining his traumatic transformation, as well as offering him safe haven, and most importantly, the opportunity to meet and associate with others just like him.

The Underground Railroad has three types of members: Passengers, Agents and Conductors.

Passengers are the Nightbane the Underground Railroad has helped settle into new, safer lives, though no place is truly safe for them anymore. Recently, the Underground Railroad has set up numerous *farms* and *group homes* in rural areas, away from the city and prying eyes. These *stations* are both work homes and safe houses. *Passenger Nightbane* might be thought of as *associate members* of the Railroad. They are not active in the organization or the Hidden War, but are expected to provide a safe haven to all members of the faction whenever they need it, and contribute anywhere from 10-20% of their income back to the organization. To avoid undue exposure, Passengers are trained to do low-key jobs that are often work from home Internet-based jobs, telemarketing, farming, and some even have gotten quite wealthy as web designers and by playing the stock market. The phrase “Passenger” also refers to someone being shuttled along the Underground Railroad from one place or dangerous situation, to another, presumably safer, location or lifestyle. Since *safe* is a very relative term after *Dark Day*, not even the low key and passive operations of a Passenger are safe. At any point in their lives, Passengers may have to make a hurried, dangerous escape if their station becomes known to the Nightlords.

Agents are members of the Nightbane Underground Railroad whose job it is to detect, identify, approach, recruit and protect *new Nightbane*. Agents are also the active defenders of the Underground Railroad as a whole. They reach out to new Nightbane “on the train” – i.e. ‘Bane who recently learned they are supernatural beings with strange powers and are lost and confused, on the run, or trying to learn more about themselves. As protectors of the Underground Railroad, UR Agents guard “stations,” handle dead drops, and other operations, as well as recruit and train young Nightbane in the use of their powers and abilities. Agents are also soldiers in the Hidden War who expose



and disrupt Nightlord operations, particularly operations leveled against fellow Nightbane. (**Note:** The faction calling itself the *Resistance* was founded primarily by militant Agents of the Underground Railroad who felt the Underground Railroad wasn't doing enough to combat the Nightlords. They believe "evil triumphs when good people do nothing" (or not enough), and wanted the Underground Railroad to take direct and strong action to fight and destroy the Nightlords. When the Underground did not move fast enough for them, the disgruntled Agents formed the more aggressive and militant Resistance faction. The Underground Railroad understands the reasoning of the Resistance and applauds their heroics, but the UR also believes there needs to be an organization such as their own that tries to operate beneath the radar of the Nightlords and their minions, to give young 'Bane the opportunity to survive, find their legs and figure out their next step for themselves.)

Player characters who join the Underground Railroad faction are likely to operate as Agents. It's where the action is and where they are needed most.

Conductors are the leaders and organizers who see to the smooth operation of the Underground Railroad. They are its management and policy makers at all levels of the faction. At the lower levels, they are the folk who channel lost, frightened and hunted Nightbane on the run to get "on the train" and to a safe place where the Nightlords can't find them. They establish and maintain the many safe houses or "stations," as well as the railroad routes. Conductors are Nightbane who have chosen not to run, but stay behind in hot spots, often exposing themselves to danger, to help other Nightbane escape the clutches of the

Nightlords, and escort the refugees to a safe route out of town and to a haven where they can lay low. There are even Underground Railroad "stations" set up in the *Nightlands* where they help runaway slaves and prisoners escape the cities and even find their way back to Earth, if that is where they originated.

This sophisticated system of recruiting young Nightbane, smuggling refugees to safety, and establishing safe houses and entire communities for Nightbane on the run, has made the Underground Railroad incredibly successful at recruiting Nightbane to their cause. After all, the Underground Railroad does a great deal to save lives and give young 'Bane a chance to find their way in the world. At least half of the Nightbane they help join the organization. And even those who join other factions always have a soft spot for the Underground Railroad, and are quick to lend a helping hand or share information with them. The trick is hanging on to that other 50%. While it is likely that most young Nightbane who survive more than a few weeks on their own eventually have some contact with the Underground Railroad, many leave the faction because they do not feel the organization is doing enough to stop the Nightlords. As noble, worthy and helpful as the Underground Railroad is, many Nightbane, especially those full of ideals, courage and a desire to fight back, find the Underground Railroad to be too reticent to engage the Nightlords. While the faction argues it cannot jeopardize everything it has built, and that thousands of Nightbane would perish without them (all true), many Nightbane long to take the fight to the Nightlord invaders. When they learn about the nefarious enemy that has infiltrated our world, they want to do more than just huddle away in some remote farm house stuffing envelopes and mentoring newly awak-

ened 'Bane. They want to strike back, and the Underground Railroad, for all the good they do, is not the faction from which to do that.

The Resistance

Born from dissatisfaction with the Underground Railroad, **the Resistance** is the most militant of the major Nightbane factions, rivaled only by the *Lightbringers* for its aggressive approach toward stamping out the Nightlords and disrupting their evil plans.

While they have kept many of the successful, covert techniques of the Underground Railroad, the Resistance seizes every opportunity to openly strike at the Nightlords and their minions. They have assassinated NSB agents, Night Princes, Avatars and highly-placed Ashmedai. The Resistance has also led direct military assaults against Nightlord resources both on Earth and in the Nightlands, such as Darkblade armories and places of mystical power. The Resistance is also secretly behind a highly successful *smear campaign* against the **Preserver Party**, and is responsible for the derisive term "pree-verts" which has entered the popular language.

The Resistance uses the Internet, pirate radio, mailings, word of mouth and everything at their disposal to get around the Nightlord lock on the media. They've made it "cool" to be against the Preserver Party, and thus have put a serious damper on the Nightlords' control over the United States. The only thing they have not been able to do is expose the Nightlords to the public (i.e. humans) for the demonic monsters they really are. But they're working on it. One plan in the works is to somehow attack the 2008 Preserver Party Presidential Convention and expose *President Carson* as an inhuman monster on live national television. However, there is heavy disagreement over this plan, as some think the consequences would be catastrophic, even if the Resistance were successful. Opponents of the plan believe this would lead the Nightlords to drop all pretense and invade openly, causing a massive loss of human and Nightbane life. Supporters of the plan welcome that outcome, believing the Nightlords would lose in a stand-up battle against all Nightbane and humanity.

The end result of the Resistance's aggressive war on the Nightlords is that while most Nightbane start out in the Underground Railroad or even the Warlords, many end up signing on with the Resistance to take the battle right to the enemy. It doesn't matter if the Resistance is not making anymore headway than any other organization. They *seem* to be *doing* something! That means a lot, especially to many a young Nightbane who have just discovered their world is being controlled by brutal, murderous monsters from another dimension and that they have the power to do something about it.

Keep in mind that these Nightbane are young, idealistic, confident, and only recently discovered they have incredible, super-human powers. When they learn that the Nightlords fear them (all Nightbane), they feel empowered and destined to be heroes. If that were not motivation enough, when they learn the Nightlords' intention to wipe out all Nightbane and enslave the entire human race, young Nightbane scream for action. On top of that, they've got years of comic books, action movies and videogames stuffed into their heads. They've also been through

puberty 10 times worse than anything the typical human could imagine. They want to "morph out" and kick some Nightlord butt! That being the case, the Resistance just has to wait for new recruits to come to them.

The Resistance leaders believe that all Nightbane should be members of their faction, and see all Nightbane as potential soldiers in their war even if they don't know it yet. Nightbane who don't sign up with the Resistance are regarded as fools, and those who refuse to fight the Nightlords are considered cowardly, stupid, or even traitorous. Members of the Resistance grudgingly respect the decision of any Nightbane who join factions such as the *Lightbringers* or *Nocturnes*, because at least they are doing something against the Nightlords' regime of terror. But they have little respect for members of the *Underground Railroad*, who they see as cowards, nor do they respect the Warlords, who they view as a group of misguided thugs and bullies wasting their time doing petty crime while their species is being wiped out.

The Seekers claim to be fighting the Nightlords in their own way, but the Resistance doesn't see it, and warns young Nightbane that the Seeker faction is as likely to dissect them as to sign them up. As for the *Spook Squad*, the Resistance realizes most of these guys would have their heads in a New York minute, but there are times when the enemy of your enemy is your friend. Fortunately, they do not need to warn Nightbane about joining the Spook Squad as the human-centric faction does a good job of that on its own.

In general, the Resistance waits until a Nightbane has proven himself or herself to be noteworthy before they try to actively recruit them. This could mean the Nightbane has conducted independent operations against the Nightlords, has had a notable falling out with the Underground Railroad, or has grown out of the youthful rebellion that led him to join the Warlords. They approach Nightbane and make their pitch. While phrased differently, the Resistance recruitment pitch generally boils down to the same points:

1. Your species needs you, and you need your species if you hope to survive.
2. The Earth has been invaded by the forces of darkness. Join up and fight the good fight!

What else is there really left to say after that? Man up and make a difference!

The Resistance is good at making Nightbane feel special, empowered and important. There is a sense of destiny in the Resistance; a belief that the Nightbane were revealed at this time for a reason, and that reason is to drive the Nightlords back into whatever dark pit they crawled out of. Most of those who believe the Nightbane are the mysterious race known as the *Formless Ones* are members of the Resistance. They also tend to believe that the Nightlands are their homeland, and once they've driven the Nightlords from Earth they'll take the fight to the Nightlands and liberate it too!

Although the leaders of the Resistance would never admit it, there is a bias towards certain kinds of Nightbane. If you are big, tough, powerful, and/or ugly as sin, expect to be embraced with open arms. If you happen to be slight of build or more brains than brawn, the Resistance will accept you, but you'll never be one of the "real heroes or warriors of the Resistance."

Those 'Bane not well suited for combat may find "doing their part for the war effort" to consist of covert runs to Dunkin' Donuts for the local Resistance "cell" and writing anti-Preserver Party e-mail "spam" programs. Attractive Nightbane (and even worse, attractive and smart, or attractive and powerful) are snidely referred to as "Kens" and "Barbies" and treated with open disdain, ridicule and rejection.



The Warlords

Nothing makes a better recruiting tool than a lack of options. The Warlords thrive in depressed urban areas with the same veracity and flair as the common cockroach. If you happen to have the misfortune of being a Nightbane in Warlord-controlled territory, membership may not be optional. Their attitude, like many street gangs, is join up or get out. Get in their way, even accidentally, and expect to pay for it with your blood.

Like the Underground Railroad, the Warlords like to get their new recruits young, sometimes even before the first Becoming. However, unlike the Underground Railroad, if the Warlords find a Nightbane before his first transformation, they try to give it a helping hand. Young people who do not know they are Nightbane may find themselves grabbed and thrown in front of a cross-town bus on the way home from school, whacked upside the head with a baseball bat, or intentionally given a heroin overdose. In most cases, such a traumatic experience causes the young Nightbane's first transformation. And if it doesn't, the Warlords are not averse to giving the "kid" a couple more good whacks with the Louisville Slugger until he or she Becomes. The Warlords are then all smiles, passing the brew, and welcoming a new "brother" or "sister" into the fold. They'll explain

how they were really trying to bring out the real them, and how they are part of a special fraternity of superhumans. "Smile kid, you're a Warlord now, and the world is yours for the taking."

Of course, saying no to their recruitment pitch is generally unhealthy, and refusing their generous offer of brotherhood could lead to the young Nightbane discovering just how hard the Warlords could have swung that baseball bat if they'd wanted to do real harm. That being said, the Warlords are savvy in their recruitment. Like all factions, they offer a sense of family, camaraderie and purpose. They also prefer to target youths who have already had trouble with the law, drugs, or are just malcontents in general. For many of these troubled youngsters, running the streets in a monstrous, powerful body is karmic justice against a society that has too often kicked them to the curb. Now, alongside their Warlord brethren, they get to do the kicking. More than any other faction, the Warlords focus on the powers and superiority of the Nightbane over fragile humans. Many believe they are the next step in human evolution and meant to rule over humanity. Thus, the law doesn't apply to them. They live by the rule of the urban jungle: might makes right, and the strong rule over the weak and the frightened.

The majority of Warlords don't believe in the Nightlords and their invasion of Earth, or just don't care. Even when approached by the Resistance or another faction of Nightbane, and told that monsters have taken over the world and enslaved mankind, Warlords don't see the big deal. Why? Because they feel they've been living under the heel of a monstrous society out to grind up its people their whole lives, long before anyone started throwing around scary words like "Nightlords" or "Ashmedai." Under Nightlord or human control, Warlords believe their lives would be no different. It's an argument many find hard to refute.

Quite often, with age comes wisdom. Most Warlord members are young. As they grow older they tend to try to slip away and join another faction. Their gritty and violent background usually makes the Resistance the most attractive. The Resistance offers a focus for their rage and aggression, without the guilty burden of a growing conscience.

Still, not all Warlords ever leave the fold. They love the life of a street thug, a maverick bucking the system and living under their own code of the streets. They see human law enforcement, the NSB, Nightlords and other factions as rivals who want a piece of their turf, or to wipe them off the map. Some older Warlords keep their life on the streets because they have captured a sizable chunk of turf and/or created a lucrative business selling drugs or engaged in other criminal operations that keep them in money and make them the kings of their own little street kingdom. They enjoy the power of ruling the streets, and wielding power over other Nightbane and all people living in their turf. Like most gang members, they expect to live fast and die young. Whether the law, a rival gang or Hunters come calling, the Warlords are prepared to defend their turf and they've got their boys behind them.

While being a member of the Warlords may seem rough and dangerous, the life of a rogue is appealing to many Nightbane who see themselves as rebels and outcasts to begin with. The Warlords embrace *being monsters*. That serves two purposes: one, it creates a strong bond between its' members (we are all monsters, we must stick together), and two, it creates a 'them and us' mentality. Thus, the Warlords are the underdogs in a

world that would like to see them all dead or behind bars. That can be a pretty alluring prospect, especially for young Nightbane. A Nightbane in the Warlords is never alone, never without another Nightbane or a few gun-toting thugs within shouting distance. They know the streets better than any Hound, Hunter, Ashmedai, or any other lackey the Nightlords might send against them. Because the Warlords are not actively combating the Nightlords they are seldom targeted unless they make their presence too visible.

And then there's the money, the drugs, the respect (fear) and the power. All are there for the taking for the ambitious Warlord. The drug market is booming in the U.S. and around the world as the demand for escapism in these dark times skyrockets, and the Nightlords purposefully undermine the fight to control and limit the import of narcotics worldwide. As unemployment rises, so do drug dealing, prostitution, gambling, vice and other criminal and decadent pursuits that make demons like the Nightlords smile with delight. Successful Warlords can be millionaires in short order, as long as they keep a relatively low profile and are morally bankrupt.

Nocturnes and Seekers

The Nocturnes and the Seekers have an uphill battle when it comes to recruiting Nightbane. These two factions are not led or run by Nightbane, but by other supernatural beings unknown to the world at large. Thus, these organizations are regarded with suspicion and many Nightbane feel they are second-class members within them. The Nightbane who join them are either outcasts and rejects from other factions or candidates that the Underground Railroad, Resistance or Warlords missed in recruiting. Furthermore, the Nocturnes and Seekers have both decided to focus their efforts on recruiting Nightbane with magical aptitude.

Many Nightbane who develop into Mystics or Sorcerers have more, mentally and emotionally, in common with magic users than they do with other Nightbane. Their thirst for knowledge and arcane power, and desire to unravel the deepest mysteries of the universe means they likely associate with human practitioners of magic and seekers of knowledge about the supernatural. Those who begin dabbling in mysticism at a young age may know, or be known by, members of the Seeker or Nocturne factions before their Becoming. There have been many instances, in fact, where a new Nightbane discovered his or her natural abilities due to dabbling in magic. Their first response is likely to be to run to a fellow magic user or student of the occult for help in discovering what, exactly, has happened to them. (Are they possessed? Has magic changed them? And so on.) Quite often, the person they run to is already a member of the Nocturnes or the Seekers.

The Nocturnes have had better success at recruiting Nightbane than the Seekers. This is especially true with younger Nightbane. The Nocturnes are less formal, more risqué and “cutting edge” than the Seekers, and have shaken the “mage nerd” or “egg head elitist” image still associated with the Seekers. Doesn't seem like much, does it? But from the eyes of an impressionable 15-20 year old Nightbane, it makes a big difference. Who would you want to hang out with more? The nerdy guys in the library with their noses buried in books, or the guys who look like cast members from *The Matrix* or *Twilight*?

The Nocturnes are more action-oriented, dabble in the darker arts, and are more dangerous than the Seekers, striking a middle ground between the Seekers' reticence and the in-your-face attitude of the Resistance. They work in the shadows, focus on covert actions to gain knowledge and weaken the goals of both the Nightlords and the Vampire Intelligences. Plus, they still have a strong counter-culture attitude that appeals to many young Nightbane. However, the Nocturnes do not have it easy. There is a lot of confusion among the other factions regarding them, for the majority of Nocturnes are *Wampyrs* – reformed vampires who purport to have forsaken their evil and bloodthirsty ways and fight for a greater good. Many do not understand that there is an actual distinction between *Wampyrs* and *vampires*, and others just don't trust or believe them. Many suspect the *Wampyrs* that head the Nocturne faction are merely vampires with their own agenda. An agenda that is not likely to be as benign as they claim. This scares away many young Nightbane and other beings with supernatural abilities who don't want to be pawns of the undead. Thus, the Nocturnes don't get a chance to prove themselves one way or another. The Nocturnes cry slander quite often, but that rarely achieves anything. The simple truth is that the unknown element of the Nocturnes and the organization's vampiric ties are scary. Humans (and Nightbane) have an instinctive fear and loathing toward the undead that makes trusting the *Wampyrs* difficult at best. Still, for young Nightbane looking for a darker, rebellious purpose, working with reformed vampires and casting magic has its appeal.

The Seekers have less success recruiting Nightbane than the Nocturnes and Warlords. One reason is they are as interested in studying the Nightbane as they are in working with them. Many Nightbane object to the poking, prodding and endless questions by Seeker mages and scholars. Furthermore, the origins of the Nightbane and the nature of their abilities are something many Nightbane would rather only Nightbane know. There are some older Nightbane who seem to actively discourage research by non-Nightbane into the origins of the species – sometimes violently opposed.

Additionally, the Seekers are a lot like the Underground Railroad in that they are all about secret operations, working in the shadows, keeping a low profile and staying out of the Nightlords scrutiny. While the faction does work to undermine and disrupt the plans of the Nightlords, they do so by uncovering obscure knowledge and wisdom in the hopes that in some dusty, forgotten tome lays the secret to unraveling the Nightlords' powers. While this may be more productive in the long term, in the short term it can be rather unsatisfying to risk your life for one, half-legible page of a book that may or may not contain knowledge that will save the world. Plus, the Seekers are not fighters, and most would rather run and hide to fight another day than take a bloody stance against the Nightlords or their demonic minions.

This is not to say the Seekers are cowards. It takes a special form of courage to delve into the dark secrets of the universe studied by the members of this faction. Many in the Seekers have seen things that would cause a battle-hardened Marine's knees to turn to jelly. But they are not fighters, per se, and tend to avoid direct armed conflict when they can. This has led to a situation where Nightbane who are part of the Seekers, especially those who do not use magic themselves, are used as mus-

cle, defenders and fighters for the organization. Many Nightbane do not take too well to being used as a “meat shields” by humans standing behind them trying to get off a spell that may or may not work.



The Spook Squad & Lightbringers

Neither the Spook Squad nor the Lightbringers actively recruit Nightbane. In fact, the Spook Squad members generally lump Nightbane in the same basket as the Nightlords and their minions: supernatural invaders undermining human society. There are Nightbane in both organizations, however.

Nightbane in the **Spook Squad** mostly joined before they knew that they were Nightbane. Usually these members were military or covert ops in-training on Dark Day and fled underground along with the rest of the U.S. intelligence community. Only then did they realize that they were something different. Some Nightbane among the Spook Squad believe they are afflicted with something akin to lycanthropy and vampirism, and hope that Spook Squad can one day find a “cure” for their condition. These Nightbane are hesitant to change to their Morphus and are more likely to view themselves as “monsters” or “cursed humans” than other Nightbane. ‘Bane who are members of Spook Squad are never completely trusted, and generally deemed as expendable.

The Lightbringers have a significant number of Nightbane among them, but they never seem to have actually recruited such members. Ask a Nightbane who is part of the Lightbringers and he will likely tell you that he just seemed to “fall in” with a

Lightbringer cell after a chance meeting or shared adventure. That one incident led to more contacts and interaction and one day the Nightbane realized that he or she was a Lightbringer. This is the case with most members of the Lightbringers except the Guardians. The Lightbringers are not anti-Nightbane nor are they pro-Nightbane. If a Nightbane is willing to fight evil, he is an ally. If he works on the side of evil, he is an enemy. It is as simple as that.

Creating NPC Factions

One of the things throughout the years that Nightbane players have really warmed up to is the concept of the various, sometimes competing, factions. The clan-like attitude and politics is a big draw to those who love the dark atmosphere of Nightbane. The following section is a modification of the Palladium organization design rules originally created by *Erick Wujcik* for *Revised Ninjas & Superspies*, and used in many other settings ever since. They’ve been both updated for the realities of the 21st Century and tailored specifically for the unique flavor of Earth after *Dark Day*.

Factions in Nightbane can have a variety of purposes, memberships and resources. The major world factions are the **Underground Railroad**, **Spook Squad**, **Nightbane Resistance**, **Nocturnes**, **the Seekers**, **the Lightbringers**, **the vampires**, **the Red Flame Demons** and, of course, **the Nightlords**. However, there are many *smaller factions* out there, and some that are not-so-small. Some stay deliberately hidden, and others are striving to be noticed. Some seek to save the world, while others wish to enslave it, rule it, or even destroy it. These groups could include covens of mages seeking a particular artifact or path of power, a group of Nightbane whose only goal is to unravel their true origins, Nightlord puppet organizations that believe they are doing good but are truly dupes of unspeakable evil powers, and foreign intelligence agencies who, like Spook Squad, realize the world is in grave jeopardy and have resources squirreled away.

Group Participation in Faction Design. If the faction is an NPC run organization, whether the player characters are affiliated with it or not, the Game Master can create it all by himself. The G.M. has the option of allowing player characters in on the process, but in a game such as Nightbane, this is likely to be rare, as often the player characters do not know the extent of the reach or resources available to the faction they are working for. They are only able to guess at a faction’s true sponsors, benefactors, resources and goals.

However, a group of player characters can put together their own faction by using the point system that follows. This saves the G.M. time and assures the players that their faction is exactly what they want it to be. However, players must first consult with the Game Master to get his approval. G.M.s should try to be accommodating but not to the point of unbalancing the game or his plans for adventure. This means that players may not be able to select from all the potentially available organizations.

The type and size of the faction may be limited by the G.M. and the financial resources of the characters. Unless the group is hooking up with an established faction, they are not very likely to have the money to establish a large national or international

faction. In fact, part of the fun could be working from small potatoes and building the influence of their *small outfit* until it could potentially rival the larger factions for dominance. Of course, the danger for all such factions is in attaining power and influence without attracting the eyes of the Nightlords or their minions.

If the player group designs the faction it should be by consent and with everyone agreeing to the way the points are distributed. The exact number of points available depends on the type of faction.

Building a Faction

When players are involved with the creation of a faction, they should discuss with the G.M. the type of game they can expect. Will it be a game that keeps to the shadows with lots of covert operations and stealthy actions against the nefarious Nightlords? Will it be a rock-em, sock-em brawling game of heart-stopping, explosive action? Or will it be a complex, multi-layered political thriller where the players are never quite sure if they're the chess masters or the pawns being maneuvered by powerful, unseen masterminds? Keeping the atmosphere you hope to attain with the campaign in mind will help you design a faction that fits nicely into the storyline.

Note: The points listed under each category are the total available points for all the different agency features. Even with 500 points, selecting faction features can be difficult. If no points are spent on a particular feature, then the faction automatically has it at the worst level, *Level One (None)*, in that feature.

Step One indicates the size, orientation and points available for *Step Two*, the available design features of the faction in specific categories A-N.

Step One:

Faction Size & Orientation

1. Night Crew: A Night Crew is any small group, or cell, of urban mercenaries created after Dark Day. A Night Crew is usually composed of Nightbane and/or others who have supernatural abilities themselves. They may be beholden to and loosely associated with one of the larger factions, or may be completely independent with their own goals. They take on dangerous missions and errands with few questions asked, be it rescuing an Underground Railroad informant from a local police station or stealing a magical artifact from the home of a rich Night Prince. Some Night Crews are specialists, focusing on one type of activity, sabotage, tackling minions of the Nightlords, rescue, assault, undercover ops, intelligence gathering, brokering information, vampire hunting, etc., while others take whatever job is offered with few questions asked. Membership is generally limited to 3-12 individuals who have a high level of trust and camaraderie. **Faction Points:** 60 POINTS are available, plus an additional 5 POINTS for Vehicles, 10 POINTS for Reputation and 10 POINTS for Equipment.

2. Small-Time Gang or Private Agency: This is a very small organization seldom exceeding more than two or three dozen members, including those with supernatural abilities. These factions usually run on a shoestring budget and will have very few resources and even less political power (virtually

none). **Faction Points:** 78 POINTS are available, plus an additional 10 POINTS for Outfits, 10 POINTS for Equipment and 10 POINTS for Weapons.

3. Coven or Mystic Brotherhood/Psychic Circle: This is a small faction of fewer than two dozen members. Unlike a Private Agency or Night Crew, Covens tend to be more financially secure and thus, have more resources in certain areas. However, they are likely to suffer in non-arcanic areas such as outfits, vehicles and equipment. Furthermore, membership is highly restricted. Usually only *practitioners of magic* are part of a Coven, and often a Coven consists of only magic-users of one particular type. Psychic Circles are very similar to covens and Mystic Brotherhoods, though there tends to be more variety in membership. In cases, the faction can use the abilities of its members to gain political influence far beyond their limited size. **Faction Points:** 85 POINTS are available, plus an additional 5 POINTS for Budget, and an additional 25 POINTS for Magical and Occult Resources.

4. Gang or Regional Faction: Typically, a local operation (limited to one or two geographical locations) dedicated to a specific purpose. This could be a street gang trying to carve out their own drug cartel in Miami, or a lesser faction that has not been recognized on the national scene, but has growing membership and influence in a particular city, like Detroit. In almost all cases, members are part of a large, family like gang who watch each other's backs, share common goals and are "in it" together. While these outfits are small to medium size (20-120 members), they often have many additional contacts within and outside their region of influence, and may have contacts within, or loose affiliation to, one of the larger factions. Regional Factions have a lot of potential for growth.

These factions are sometimes funded by wealthy patrons or private corporations. Of course the sponsor(s) may expect the members of the faction to give their agendas and needs priority consideration or withdraw their support. Although these groups can be quite formidable, they generally have little political power or broad recognition. **Faction Points:** 120 POINTS are available, plus add an additional 10 POINTS for Weapons and 20 POINTS for Criminal Activity if a crime gang or 10 POINTS for Budget and 10 POINTS for Offices, Hideouts and Distribution for groups not engaged in criminal operations.

5. Secret Club or Society: This faction has one large central office and local members, but also has members, associates, and supporters scattered throughout the country (occasionally international). These organizations are always secret and privately funded or bankrolled covertly by their own activities.

Such a faction will have a core group or founding members. These founders may all have similar abilities or be a mixed group who share similar ideals and goals. Some of these Secret Societies acquire a frightening amount of power and influence, although they aren't quite on the same level as the major factions, at least not just yet. **Faction Points:** 152 POINTS are available, plus 10 POINTS for Internal Security, 10 POINTS for External Infiltration (typically government and enforcement agencies) and 10 POINTS for the Budget category.

6. Major Faction: The Nocturnes, Seekers, Resistance, Spook Squad, the Underground Railroad, Lightbringers, and a few other factions all fall into this category. The Warlords and Golden Posse, both international gangs, also rate as Major Fac-

tions. A Major Faction is a large, secretive organization with a large amount of resources, thousands of members, thousands of non-member contacts and associates, and have members and regional groups scattered across their continent, and in many cases, the world. Major Factions ride a razor's edge. They must stay in the shadows or risk extermination by the Nightlords while often waging a covert war against those same malevolent beings, or in some cases, like the Vampire Intelligences, competing for control of the fate of the world. A Major Faction has agents, cells, and operatives throughout the country and scattered to a lesser degree across the globe.

It is difficult at times for these groups to stay hidden, but most have a network of safe houses, contacts and hidden political and financial influence that keeps them relatively safe from large-scale reprisals. They have millions of dollars in overall resources, though they tend to be sparse with their distribution to the lower echelon members. All key operatives are experienced human agents or powerful supernatural beings, Nightbane, mages, psychics, or very well connected men and women with political and/or financial clout. This is as large as a faction can get on Earth after Dark Day without either working for the Nightlords or being constantly under siege by them. Even then, all Major Factions are constantly threatened, challenged and attacked by the minions of the Nightlords, who seek their total annihilation. Faction Points: 230 POINTS are available, plus 20 POINTS for Offices, Hideouts and Distribution and 15 POINTS for Internal Security.

Step Two: Agency Features

A. Outfits

The standard clothing issued by the faction to its members. Replacement of any faction issued outfits is automatic. Factions seldom have an official uniform, but rather supply their agents with functional clothing that is nondescript and utilitarian. Wearing a uniform or even a patch that identifies your affiliation to a faction is like wearing a target on your back.

1. None. The characters are responsible for their own clothing. No replacements of any kind are available. Faction Cost: None.

2. Utility Outfits. The agency has a basic set of clothing or a standard uniform for all its employees. The latter is typically a one-piece coverall, with insignia patches and shoes provided free. The faction has plenty of replacements, in standard sizes, and also provides free laundry service. Faction Cost: 2 points.

3. Open Wardrobe. A complete range of civilian clothes, including disguises and foreign uniforms, are available to any agent of the organization. Quality is comparable to the stuff found in a discount department store or in a cheap mail-order catalog. Faction Cost: 5 points.

4. Specialty Clothing. Everything from Open Wardrobe, plus standard field gear includes a point-blank vest (A.R. 10, 70 S.D.C.) for added protection and a limited amount of more protective combat armors are available for special missions. Faction Cost: 10 points.

5. Gimmick Clothing. A full range of clothes, including basic body armor, plus up to \$10,000 per team member for various gimmicks and additions, such as spring-loaded holsters, dis-

guises, etc. The quality is high-fashion, with designer labels in the very latest styles. Faction Cost: 20 points.

6. Unlimited Clothing. The faction offers any and all clothing, armor and accessories. Any quality level is available, and the world's top designers are on call to specially make the appropriate outfits for anyone in the faction. Unless things are dramatically different in your campaign, this is generally restricted to Nightlord sponsored factions (whether its members know it or not). Faction Cost: 50 points.

B. Equipment

This describes all the equipment and supplies provided free of charge by the agency. Replacement of any lost or damaged faction-issued equipment is usually automatic, unless the faction is strapped for cash, which is often the case. **SPECIAL NOTE:** Unlike other categories, it is possible to pay points to combine several of the following featured equipment.

1. None. The characters are responsible for buying and replacing their own equipment. Faction Cost: None.

2. Cheap Gear. Each character has up to \$1,000 worth of equipment available for each mission. Note that replacement costs, at the completion of the mission, are subtracted from the amount available for the next mission. Faction Cost: 2 points.

3. The Basics. The faction provides its members with a basic package of gear, valued at about \$5,000. This usually includes a laptop with wireless Internet access and other 21st Century essentials for the person on the go. This gear is restricted to what's commonly available at retail stores, and is replaced if lost or damaged as long as supplies and budget allow. Faction Cost: 5 points.

4. Electronic Supplies. As above, but the character has access to up to \$12,000 worth of electronic equipment, including the current, hottest, MP3 player, phone, video camera, pocket computer combo, a top-of-the-line laptop, GPS locator, and has easy access to surveillance and sensory gear commonly reserved for the military or government espionage agencies. Faction Cost: 10 points.

5. Mystic Equipment. The faction has a well-stocked cache of equipment captured from the Nightlands and gear that is magically empowered. This will likely include magically created talismans, scrolls, low-level Cybermage devices (no higher than level 3 spells at most) and amulets loaned out on a case by case basis. There may be a few lesser artifacts loaned out for special missions as well. When the mission is over, the faction will want these items back. Faction Cost: 20 points.

6. Unlimited Equipment. Characters can take any equipment, with any gimmicks included, with a high budget ceiling. Note that this does not include clothing or weapons. Requests around half a million dollars or more may be subject to review and final approval. Faction Cost: 40 points.

C. Weapons

On Earth after Dark Day, weapons are much harder to come by than they are in our own world today. The Nightlords have gone to great pains to disarm the people and restrict access to firearms. No more rifles at Shop-Mart, no more shotguns in pawnshops. But there were a lot of firearms circulating long before the Nightlords came, and much of it is still out there. Fur-

thermore, there is a growing black market underground for weapons, and many crime rings now deal in the sale of weapons. Faction issued weapons come with an unlimited supply of ammunition. Any expended ammo or damaged weapons are replaced automatically.

1. None. The characters must buy or steal their own weapons and ammunition. No automatic replacement. Faction Cost: None.

2. Ammunition. The faction provides ammunition for weapons supplied by the character except in cases of exotic rounds or heavy ordnance, meaning the faction does not have depleted uranium rounds, spare Stinger missiles for your shoulder-fired launcher, or E-Clips for that nifty laser gun. However, standard ammo is in abundance. Faction Cost: 5 points.

3. Martial Weapons: Any and all types of melee or ancient weapons are provided. This includes knives, swords, maces, spears, bows and arrows, and the like. May include gimmick weapons and ammunition like explosive/trick arrows, slingshot pellets, and so forth. Faction Cost: 10 points. This feature CAN be combined with others in this category, but must be purchased separately.

4. Armed Agents. Each agent is issued two conventional weapons, with a maximum value of \$2,500 each. Additional ammunition is provided free. Faction Cost: 20 points.

5. Enchanted Weapons. As #3 & #4 above, except one favorite weapon of every character who is a member of the faction has been permanently enchanted. This is a highly personal weapon, often very stylized, and can be either melee or ranged. Treat the weapon as though it was under the effects of an *Enchant Weapon ritual*, meaning it, or ammunition fired from it, does double damage to all supernatural creatures and creatures of magic, but does normal damage to humans and other mundane creatures. This weapon is often presented as part of a rite of initiation or as a reward for outstanding service, and usually won't be available until the character has proven himself as loyal, capable and competent. An enchanted weapon that is lost or stolen is rarely replaced. Faction Cost: 40 points.

6. The Arsenal. Each agent is allowed to choose up to \$100,000 worth of conventional weapons, with all appropriate ammunition included, and future ammunition supplied as needed. This can include shoulder fired missile and rocket launchers, grenade launchers, heavy machine-guns, grenades, explosives, vehicle-mounted weaponry and the like. (**Note:** In other Palladium games, this also provides access to \$500,000 in gimmick or energy weapons, like laser guns, but weapons technology and advancement in general has been stunted with the Nightlord invasion, making such weaponry nearly non-existent in the *Nightbane® RPG*.) Faction Cost: 50 points.

D. Magical and Occult Resources

This section details access to occult and magical knowledge held by the faction and accessible to its agents. These resources can allow characters to research spells, magical effects, and hard-to-find ancient mystic knowledge, depending on how well the faction is stocked.

1. None. The faction has no occult or magical resources beyond what the character has to offer. Faction Cost: None.

2. Minor Occult Library. The faction has scraped together a small collection of books on magic, myth, monsters and mysticism that it deems to be fairly credible. While a couple books may be truly rare, most are available at many New Age shops through special order and used bookstores. None can enable the characters to learn new spells, but may be useful in identifying magical effects, creatures of magic, demons and monsters. Faction Cost: 5 points.

3. Good Occult Library. The faction has a secured location or two in which it keeps several rare, valuable texts on magic and the supernatural. While many are incomplete, crumbling or in hard-to-decipher lost languages, they provide valuable insight on magic, world history, occult history of the ancient world, and even other planes of existence. There is a small chance that a practitioner of magic can find books and tomes that teach basic magical knowledge and the occasional low level spell (10% chance of finding a level 1-3 spell for every 2D6+24 hours of research, with a maximum of 1D6+1 spells hidden in the dusty old tomes; G.M.s may determine what spells are found). The library provides a bonus of +5% to all *Lore* skill rolls when the characters have direct access to it, meaning they have to be physically present in the library. Faction Cost: 10 points.

4. Online Occult Library. Like above, except the faction has had every text scanned, catalogued and made available through direct Internet connections. The library is on its own secure server, and is accessible only through a direct link (it's not a web page someone can stumble across, more like an old BBS) that requires the right software and is highly encrypted and protected. This not only allows agents to access the library from virtually anywhere in the world, but it also allows them to more easily search through the voluminous records, adding a +10% bonus to all *Lore* and *Research* skill rolls. Faction Cost: 20 points.

5. Vast Magical Knowledge. This faction specializes in magic and has collected a treasure trove of magical knowledge, ancient spells, scrolls and lost texts. Some books may not have even been written in this dimension. All of the knowledge has been scanned into an online database. There are several massive hard drive copies of the entire library hidden in different parts of the world, in case the main server goes down or (God forbid) the primary library is raided by the Nightlords and destroyed. There are several permanently staffed librarians, often mages themselves, who know almost all there is to know about what the library contains. There is a 25% chance of a practitioner of magic finding any spell from levels 1-3, and a 10% chance of finding any spell from levels 4-5 somewhere within the library. The library provides a +15% bonus to all *Lore* skill rolls and *Research* skill rolls. Faction Cost: 40 points.

6. Bibliotheca Magus Maximus. This faction has a mind-boggling collection of mystic knowledge it has been collecting literally for centuries. Not all of the books and scrolls of the Great Library in Alexandria were destroyed, a few of them made their way into this collection! Many, many of the books are one-of-a-kind, and there are some which were written just for this collection. The main library is kept at an extremely secure location, such as an Astral Domain, and has numerous protections. Many of the more valuable books have been ensorcelled to be impervious to fire, water and the ravages of time. The faction not only has books, but also has a collection of rare

components for use in spells and rituals. There is a 25% chance of a mage finding any spell from levels 1-6. Those drawing on the vast knowledge contained in the library to research and create or design their own spells (as per the spell design rules in **Through the Glass Darkly**) enjoy a +10% bonus. Having access to the library provides a +20% bonus to all *Lore* skill rolls and +20% bonus to *Research* rolls. Even those without the appropriate *Lore* skill have the equivalent of level one proficiency when using the resources in the library. Many, but not all, and certainly *not* the rarest tomes, are available through special Internet access. The faction requires its members to view the rarest tomes only at the main library, only in person, and always under supervision. Sometimes what you know CAN kill you. Faction Cost: 60 points.

E. Vehicles

Transportation provided by the faction to its members. Also includes information on the agency's fleet of vehicles.

1. None. Can you run? Fly? Swim? We sure hope so, because you're not going to get any kind of ride from the faction. Faction Cost: None.

2. Public Transportation. The faction has no vehicles of its own and sends all agents out via commercial transit methods. In other words, its operatives must take the bus, use the subway, rent a car, and use regularly scheduled airlines, trains, ships and similar transportation. The faction tries to provide reimbursement for reasonable transportation expenses when it can, but that is never a sure thing. Furthermore, in the world after Dark Day, public transportation can be dangerous, particularly in large cities at night. Being on the subway in New York City or riding a late night bus in Detroit or Chicago is almost like playing Russian roulette. Faction Cost: 3 points.

3. Limited Fleet of Vehicles. The faction provides medium to high ranking members and independent cells with one or two vehicles for general use. This means that their regional leaders and Arbiters are provided with a car, and there's likely a large vehicle like a truck, mini-van, van or S.U.V. provided to each "cell." The vehicles will be repaired when damaged or replaced when destroyed, as long as superiors do not believe the vehicle was destroyed in a reckless manner. This faction also tries to reimburse its members for gasoline they might use in their own vehicles, provided they can show it was used for faction business. Faction Cost: 10 points.

4. Fleet Vehicles. The faction maintains a fleet of standard, unmodified vehicles. Small cars, minivans, small boats and small aircraft are available. All vehicles are the most common and cheapest kind available. In some cases, the faction may own or manage a car dealership or car rental business that it uses as a front, hiding the faction's use of the vehicles through computer hacking, as well as accounting and paperwork tricks. Fuel or a reasonable bank account to cover fuel expense is also provided. Faction Cost: 15 points.

5. Specialty Vehicles. The same as #4, above, except with a wider range of commercially available cars, trucks and work vehicles, including luxury sedans, humvees and sports cars. The vehicles of leaders and vehicles used for special missions often have some modifications, such as extra armor, nitrous oxide systems, hidden compartments, and the like. Faction Cost: 40 points.

6. Unlimited Specialty Vehicles. Every member of the faction is provided with a common "work" vehicle, as well as a high-end and expensive vehicle, along with a budget of \$50,000 for special modifications. Spook Squad (and the Nightlords) have this level of transportation resource, but few others. Nobody knows where Spook Squad gets this kind of funding, and it is rumored they may secretly own one of the world's major automobile manufacturers. Faction Cost: 60 points.

F. Communications

This is a measure of how good the communications network and devices are within the faction.

1. None. Members of the faction must use public phones, their own phones, or pay as you go phones, and pay for all calls and communications out of their own pockets. Faction Cost: None.

2. Basic Service. The faction has land line telephones at all safe houses and bases of operations, traditional walkie-talkies for field use (particularly in the Nightlands), uses regular mail, commercial delivery services and e-mail services. Faction Cost: 2 points.

3. Extensive Communications System. Each member is provided with an untraceable cell phone with unlimited minutes and video/camera capabilities, and an e-mail account. The faction can also provide "clean" disposable cell phones, online message boards and websites disguised as ordinary web pages, and a private computer bulletin board system that is password protected and monitored regularly. Furthermore, the faction can provide field operatives with Global Positioning devices, field radios, video-cameras, digital cameras, scrambler systems, and basic commercial surveillance equipment. Faction Cost: 10 points.

4. Secured Network. Same as #3, above, except all the faction's telephones and radios are equipped with scramblers, e-mail accounts are provided with data encryption keys, and the faction has a "hidden" Internet service run off of its own servers and only accessible through special software. They can also provide basic film, video, and surveillance equipment. Faction Cost: 20 points.

5. Satellite Network. Same as #3, above, plus instant communications anywhere in the world is provided through a system of ground-based, microwave transmitters and satellite relay stations. Each and every individual agent is wired with a scrambled, private signal channel. Note that these satellites and relays are "hijacked" by piggybacking illegal signals across legitimate systems. Additionally, the faction may use supernatural means, such as ley lines, spells, Entities and the Astral Plane or the Dreamstream when it needs to avoid technological means of communication. Faction Cost: 35 points.

6. Unlimited Communications. The faction has a private satellite network with 12 dedicated satellites covering the globe, its own private telephone network, and a private mail carrier system. Plus a worldwide data network serviced by a supercomputer at each main base of operations. Faction Cost: 55 points.

G. Offices, Hideouts & Distribution

Just how widespread are the offices and personnel of the faction? When designing the faction, keep in mind that anything

the size of a Coven or smaller is going to be limited to Urban at best.

1. None. All agency personnel, including the director, work out of their homes or a secret lair, or public places, like libraries, Internet cafes, restaurants, shopping malls, etc., where they are not likely to be noticed or their activities traced. There are no real offices or bases connected to the faction. 1D4 abandoned buildings are known and used as temporary hideouts, as well as the homes of friends and fellow agents. Faction Cost: None.

2. Urban. All the faction's facilities are crowded into one city, possibly even one building in one city. No remote bases. 2D6 abandoned buildings are known and used as temporary hideouts and meeting places. 2D4+1 special "safe houses" have been established as hideouts: most are in the city, but at least one is located in a suburb and one in the country. All are small, accommodating four to six individuals comfortably, and have all the common appliances and resources one would find in a home. Special items include \$2,000 in cash, first aid kit, two 9mm pistols and 12 clips of extra ammunition, a two week supply of food and bottled water for six, a desktop computer with internet access and an old, but reliable clunker of a car or pickup truck. Faction Cost: 5 points.

3. Regional. The faction has an elaborate base of operation in one large city (like New York, Chicago, Houston, or L.A.) plus 1D6+6 cities or suburbs around that city, or operates in a specific part of the country such as the Eastern Seaboard or Midwest of the United States or Canada. An office is located in *every major city* of that region, with field agents, 1D6+6 safe houses, weapon caches, and hideouts in every one of those cities where the faction has a presence, as well as agents and resources scattered at strategic locations in the countryside (a specific port/dock, vacation spot, farm, etc.). A regional "safe house" is basically the same as described in #2, except that there is \$6,000 worth of additional special items/supplies, whether it be plane tickets, wardrobe, metal security doors, alarm, weapons, or equipment. 1D6+10 abandoned buildings are also known and used in each city as temporary hideouts, meeting places and drop sites. Faction Cost: 20 points.

4. National. The faction has offices and field agents in one, entire country. A large country like the USA, Canada, Mexico, Russia, China or Australia, will see resources stretched thin with bases of operations only located in *key major cities* or strategic locations (e.g. a small or remote community not far from a major city, industrial complex, military base, seat of power, etc.). In smaller countries like England, France, Germany, and many others around the world, the faction will have an operation in every major city as well as some smaller strategic operations throughout that country and field agents in every medium-sized community. Each key site or major city also has 1D6+2 "safe houses" (same as described in #2, except that there can be \$10,000 worth of additional special items, whether it be plane tickets, wardrobe, metal security doors, alarms, weapons or equipment), 2D4 abandoned buildings used as temporary hideouts and meeting places wherever the faction has agents, and many contacts. Faction Cost: 35 points.

5. Multinational. The faction maintains a major office in all the large cities of its own country, and in all the major cities of 1D4 neighboring countries and 1D4 other countries it considers to be important or strategic (may have holdings there, exploits

certain laws, etc.). Members cover all strategic areas in the home country and in any other countries in which it has a presence. Each key city has 1D4 "safe houses" (same as described in #4), while secondary locations have only one. Also likely to have at least one small Astral Domain or a hidden base in the Nightlands. Faction Cost: 45 points.

6. Worldwide. The faction maintains a major base of operations in every major city in the world and has agents in every capital city, and numerous strategic locations. Each key city in which the faction has a presence there are 1D6+4 safe houses identical to #4 (with one having \$25,000 worth of additional special items/resources), 3D6+12 abandoned buildings and other sites it uses as temporary hideouts, meetings, drops, traps, ambushes and armed clashes. Furthermore, the faction operates a large Astral Domain, secured from most unwanted intruders as well as 1D4 bases in the Nightlands. Faction Cost: 60 points.

H. Sponsorship

Exactly who is controlling the faction, providing them with their leadership and the real source of their funds?

1. Secret. The player characters have no idea who is really behind the faction or what their hidden motives might be. Are they really an altruistic faction bent on saving the world, or are they secretly puppets of a Vampire Intelligence or the Nightlords? Faction Cost: None.

2. Former Military. The faction is run by former military or intelligence operatives who went underground after the Dark Day invasion. These individuals are probably not aligned with Spook Squad and might even be a military or intelligence operation from another country. For example, rumor has it that MI-5 went underground in Britain after receiving warnings from allies in the U.S. and now operates a Spook Squad-style faction throughout Europe.

A military sponsored faction has at least a loose, if not rigid, military structure and focus on military goals, operating like a spy network or military agency, and engaging in sabotage, undermining and harassment of the enemy, disrupting enemy communications, rescue missions, intelligence operations, seek and destroy missions (targeting minions and other enemies and rivals), and "sanctioning" the assassination of high-ranking enemy operatives when the chance presents itself. Faction Cost: 4 points.

3. Private Industry. One possibility is the faction is sponsored by a private company that expects the faction to show a profit. The leaders' goals are to gather massive financial (and political) power amongst the turmoil of the Nightlords invasion. They may or may not even know about the invasion, but they do know the world has been quietly enveloped in chaos and they see the pandemonium and the opportunity to get rich and powerful. Of course, they realize that no one will profit if all of humanity is enslaved or destroyed, so there is a point where they understand that preventing that dark destiny is the most profitable action of all. How bad things have to get before the capitalistic leaders of the faction realize that cold truth varies based on their individual morals. Another possibility is that the private sponsor is supporting the faction for philanthropic or altruistic reasons – like saving the world, destroying the Nightlords or even keeping parts of the country free of the Nightlords' corrupting influence. **Note:** If the secret private industry sponsor is

ever discovered by the Nightlords, their company will be attacked on many levels (legal, financial, political, etc.) and funds could dry up for the faction overnight. That's why most private industry sponsors keep their identity a secret. Faction Cost: 6 points.

4. Government. This faction is actually sponsored by a legitimate government that has either gone into exile with many of its resources or has somehow stood firm against the Nightlord invasion. The homeland is either occupied by the Nightlords, with the citizens unaware their true government has been driven into the shadows, or they are currently at war with a nation controlled by the Nightlords. There are several such countries in the world, many with strong supernatural traditions and backgrounds that they held on to for centuries, maybe even millennia, including several small countries in Africa and Asia. Agents of this faction are charged with undermining the Nightlords' plans of subjugating their home country, and ultimately, shaking the Nightlords' grip on the world. (And, hey, if the end result is the homeland being elevated to a superpower, all the better.) Faction Cost: 12 points.

5. International Organization. A multinational group of power players pull the strings of this faction (and probably many others our heroes know nothing about). They could be world leaders in hiding, business magnates, a cadre of powerful magic users, a group of generals from armies across the world, or other men and women of power. Their goals could be to save the world, or grab power for themselves or their corporation, or even to secretly help the Nightlords in hopes of being granted incredible power over their fellow humans. Their goal could also be to take control of the world for themselves. Thus, the player characters and their faction could be working toward the same goals as their sponsor, or their sponsors may have their own agenda, and the faction is one of their pawns in a larger game. Faction Cost: 20 points.

6. Agent Sponsored. The agents (and player characters) control and finance the faction themselves (by whatever means they can muster), and can set policy and choose whatever goals they like. Faction Cost: 25 points, unless the faction size is Coven or smaller, in which case the cost is 5.

J. Special Budget

This feature is the money available, not for regular operating costs, but for any kind of special projects. In other words, how much money is available to "front" an operation. For example, if the members of the faction are ready to bring down a Night Prince, this would determine just how much cash the faction can afford to spend on special weapons and equipment, magic, hiring extra muscle and so on.

1. None. No money available for any special projects. Faction Cost: None.

2. Nickels and Dimes. Up to 2D6x\$1,000 is available for any one operation, but it had better be a success! Faction Cost: 5 points.

3. Small Potatoes. Faction can dig up 2D4x\$10,000. Faction Cost: 15 points.

4. Large Loans. Faction has up to 3D6x\$50,000 to kick into any important mission. Faction Cost: 20 points.

5. Big Bucks. Faction can get up to 1D6x10 million dollars per special project. Faction Cost: 35 points.

6. Mega-Bucks. Faction has up to 2D6x\$100 million available. Faction Cost: 50 points.

J. General Alignment of Agents

The majority (80%) of the faction's personnel falls into this category. Player characters and specific NPCs may be the exception.

1. Evil: Miscreant and Diabolic. Faction Cost: None.

2. Evil: Aberrant. Faction Cost: None.

3. Anarchist. Faction Cost: 2 points.

4. Anarchist and Unprincipled. Faction Cost: 4 points.

5. Unprincipled and Scrupulous. Faction Cost: 7 points.

6. Scrupulous and Principled. Faction Cost: 10 points.

K. Criminal Activity

Since most factions are considered illegal by the Nightlord controlled governments already, many are willing to participate in criminal activity both to fund their operations and to help undermine Nightlord rule. Some, additionally, have such criminal enterprises as their goal. For example, the Warlords and Golden Posse engage in both drug dealing and prostitution not to fund a war against the Nightlords, but to line their pockets. The number and distribution of the following criminal enterprises should correspond with the distribution of the faction, as detailed in G. Unlike in other sections, multiple selections can be made from this list as long as the points are available.

1. Con Artists. The faction specializes in fast-talking confidence artists who fool people into financing wild schemes, handing over cash on hand, buying fake goods, buying junk, taking bad loans, turning over information, or otherwise parting with their hard-earned money or data in any number of get-rich-quick schemes where only the faction (or the con artist) gets rich. May also deal in buying and selling substandard equipment or faulty intelligence and information. Has one or two at each major faction base of operations. If good guys, Nightlord operations, Nightlord henchmen, sympathizers and allies, the corrupt government and law enforcement are the main targets, perhaps small time criminal operations as well. If the faction is predominantly bad guys, anybody is a potential "mark" – though they probably try to steer clear of the Nightlords and their associates. Faction Cost: 10 points.

2. Sex Trade. This faction makes its money via the sex trade, from selling pornography to operating strip clubs, escort services and even ladies of the night who sell sexual favors. Good guys may use their female members and associates to gather intelligence from clients who have gotten loose lips and talk too much with every drink they swallow and every sexual advance directed their way. Even operations where the females do not actually sleep with their customers can get volumes of information this way. Add a few psychics to plumb deeper into the recesses of the mind, and the possibilities are incredible. The practice may be morally questionable (and dangerous) but surprisingly effective. Bad guy factions will have their members and associates engage in prostitution, probably drugs and other dirty dealings, and very possibly white slavery and even the "acquisition" and sale of women for blood sacrifices in magic ritu-

als. Agents/dancers/prostitutes are likely to include humans, Nightbane and other females who are supernatural in nature. Faction Cost: 10 points.

3. Computer Hacker/Information Broker. Knowledge is power, especially since Dark Day, after which nothing is as it seems. A faction that deals in the acquisition, sale and distribution of information is in a position of considerable power – and risk. Everybody wants to know something. And in a world of dark conspiracies, deceit, lies and secret invasions, there are a wealth of secrets waiting to be plumbed and exploited. The members of this faction will include those with skills in undercover operations, espionage, surveillance, communications, computers and computer hacking. The good guys use this information to help themselves, the innocent, other heroes and other factions, as well as to undermine the Nightlords, their minions, henchmen and human sympathizers. Bad guys use the information to blackmail and extort money, gain political and financial influence, to force favors, and sell information to whoever is willing to pay them the most. Opportunists may sell data to both sides of the Hidden War, or since their loyalty can be bought, work for whoever pays the best, and that is likely to be the Nightlords. Good or evil, the faction employs at least one master computer hacker who is involved in a plethora of cyber crimes which can range from elaborate money laundering operations and breaking into secured NSB computer networks to simple identity theft and “spam” e-mail schemes. Faction Cost: 20 Points.

4. Robbers. The faction engages in mugging, breaking and entry, home invasion, knocking over jewelry stores and armored cars, and armed robbery, perhaps even bank robbery! This is more than just cracking some hapless person upside the head and taking his wallet. This group considers itself a cadre of highly-trained, professional burglars. Good guys, Nightlord operations, Nightlord henchmen, sympathizers and allies, the corrupt government and law enforcement are the main targets of their robberies, perhaps small time criminal operations as well. If bad guys, anybody is a potential “mark” – though they probably try to steer clear of the Nightlords and their associates. Robbers, good and bad, may also steal information, though that is more the domain of Hackers. Faction Cost: 10 points.

5. Smugglers and Dealers in Contraband. The faction engages in operations that involve the acquisition and transportation (i.e. smuggling) of illegal goods and contraband. Adept at moving contraband across borders undetected, these criminals buy, sell, and transport scarce, illegal, or dangerous goods. They will also protect, hide and deliver secret packages, contraband and information for outside clients. If good guys, that means stealing from the holdings of Nightlords and their human sympathizers and henchmen, and giving it or selling at a fair price to those in need, such as other factions, Nightbane refugees, those who oppose the Nightlords, and so on. Likewise, contraband is likely to be medicine, food, clothing, other supplies, weapons, and information rather than illegal drugs and other things that hurt people. Bad guys will deal in drugs, human slave trafficking, guns, etc., and work for anyone and sell to anyone who can afford them.

Most smugglers, well intentioned or evil, will have good contacts with the criminal underworld, organized crime and other factions. Can be useful when the faction needs to find some ille-

gal, rare or “hot” (stolen) commodity. In many cases, the smugglers have no idea who they are working for or what they are smuggling. Everyone and everything is fair game in the secret, supernatural Cold War currently being fought on Earth and in the Nightlands. Some smugglers even use the Nightlands and the Astral Plane as means to smuggle goods. Faction Cost: 15 points.

6. Gun For Hire – Bodyguards and Assassins. This faction offers the service of armed protection/bodyguards and murder for hire. If heroes, the faction only targets the minions, henchmen, associates and sympathizers of the Nightbane (targeting Nightlords and Night Princes beyond their capabilities). Likewise, they predominantly guard good guys who oppose the Nightlords at a fair price, and charge unsavory clients an arm and a leg. If bad guys, they cater to criminal clients, are willing to work for (and kill) anybody, don’t ask questions as long as the price is right, and may even contract out to other factions, the NSB and the Nightlords! Faction Cost: 10 points.

7. Protection Racket. The faction and its members strong arm certain local businesses into paying “protection” money to the faction. If good guys, the faction targets businesses that need protection from the Nightlords, their law enforcement henchmen or the criminal element. Although heroes with good intentions, they can not afford to provide this service for free. In some cases, they may target businesses (even criminal operations) with ties to the Nightlords, using the logic that their protection racket gets Nightlord money used to battle the Nightlords. If criminals or opportunists, the faction runs the classic protection racket in which business owners pay to protect them from the faction! If the payments are not made on time, something “bad” could happen to the establishment and/or its owners or employees. Faction Cost: 15 points.

8. Car Thieves and Chop Shop. The faction operates an extensive automotive larceny operation and chop shop. Expert car thieves go out and steal specific makes and models of car and the chop shop cuts them up for parts, makes them unrecognizable to their original owners and in some cases, adds extras such as bullet-proof windows and armor for special faction needs. This type of operation can generate a large amount of revenue. If good guys, the vehicles they target for theft belong to businesses, henchmen and known associates of the Nightlords, and may include criminal organizations, law enforcement, the NSB, government agencies and employees, and minions pretending to be human. If bad guys, they steal from anyone and probably shy away from those associated with the Nightlords. Faction Cost: 10 points.

9. Shady Business. The faction runs an operation on the shady side of the law, such as pawnshops, strip clubs, bookie operations, unlicensed gambling club/casino, blind pig, unlicensed nightclub/bar, raves/dance parties, and similar “businesses.” If good guys, the business may be a place where Nightbane and supernatural beings are welcomed (like Club Freak), or a front for an operation that helps Nightbane and others who oppose the Nightlords. Or it might be exactly what it seems to be, but the faction that runs it turns a blind eye to the goings-on of its patrons, particularly Nightbane and other supernatural beings and enemies of the Nightlords. (“No, officer, I don’t remember seeing anyone like that.”) If bad guys, the faction is in it for the money, but may still cater to Nightbane, su-

pernatural beings, or the criminal element, and may sell or allow drugs, guns, or prostitutes on it premises. Faction Cost: 12 points.

10. Document Forger. The faction specializes in the creation, sale or trade of false I.D. and documents including false driver's licenses, passports, birth certificates, social security cards, citizenship papers, identity cards, credit cards, invoices and other documents. This occupation includes a familiarity with photographic fakery, Photoshop and other graphic design and image manipulation using computers. If good guys, the faction sells such fake I.D.s and documents to Nightbane and allies who need new identities to fight or hide from the Nightlords. Such items are sold at a fair price, and a certain amount are given away to those truly in need. Likewise, the faction creates I.D.s that enable their operatives to access and undermine, sabotage or attack Nightbane operations and sympathizers. If bad guys, the faction sells to anyone and gouges their customers – the more needy the individual, the higher the price. Faction Cost: 25 points.

11. Gun Runner. This faction makes its money by arms dealing, and buys, sells and trades all sorts of weapons, ammunition, explosives, and gun accessories (holsters, gun sights, etc.). If the group is composed of heroes, they primarily supply, at fair prices, other Nightbane, heroes and resistance fighters who oppose the Nightlords. If they are criminals or opportunists out to make a buck, they sell to *anyone*, at high prices, no questions asked. Faction Cost: 20 points.

12. Relocation Specialists. With the NSB, Nightlord controlled law enforcement, and Nightlord minions actively hunting Nightbane, mages, psychics, and anyone who opposes the Ba'al, a lot of people (good and bad) who cross the Nightlords find it necessary to get out of town or die (or worse). Hired muscle is not enough, they need someone with street-smarts and connections to smuggle people out of town or out of the country safely. That's what this faction does. These "escape and evasion teams" get you out of a dangerous place in a hurry, and accompany and escort the fugitives to safety for a price. Usually a steep price due to the high risk involved. If the faction is composed of good guys, they welcome the chance to a) make money for the faction, b) save lives, and c) thwart and even battle and kill minions of the Nightlords. Heroes will also perform a certain number of pro bono missions, or help innocent people at rock bottom prices. Bad guys, they do it for the money and will help anyone who can afford their steep prices. Pay cash in full, up front, or suffer the consequences. Faction Cost: 15 points.

L. Internal Security

How vulnerable is the faction to internal infiltration? This feature determines exactly that. This is the only thing that prevents spies from already having been placed in the organization and varies according to the faction's security measures. Nightlord minions, enemy faction members, "turncoats" and unreliable "associates" and contacts can only be prevented with high levels of internal security.

1. None. Anyone can walk in or out of faction bases and safe houses. New faction members are not screened and there is a 25% chance of any member being an enemy spy or infiltrator. The faction is extremely vulnerable to outside forces, manipulation, raids and attacks. (Of course, it is possible the faction

leaves itself open on purpose to lure the enemy into some truly Machiavellian scheme.) Faction Cost: None.

2. Lax. A security guard at each entrance to every major faction base and meeting; he checks visitors in and out. Identification is simply printed and signed (no pictures or fingerprints), or one member vouching for an associate, contact, friend or potential new member. Safe houses are secured by the old "key under the welcome mat" routine or something similar. 15% chance of each member being an infiltrator. Faction Cost: 5 points.

3. Tight. Alert, likely supernatural or psychic guards watch every entrance to every faction-run building. Electronic alarms and electronic picture I.D. pass cards are all part of the faction's security system, both at bases, meeting places and safe houses. At highly secure locations, practitioners of magic, psychics or Nightbane are used to read everyone's aura to assure there are no Ashmedai or other shape changers sneaking in. New faction members are questioned heavily and their backgrounds thoroughly checked out, reducing the chance of infiltrators to 10%. Faction Cost: 10 points.

4. Iron-Clad. Same as #3, above, plus every entrance and exit is under constant video surveillance. Even the safe houses have hidden cameras over the doors that are routed to a *security depot* in the same neighborhood, with one or two faction members whose job it is to keep an eye on the safe house. Everyone entering a faction facility is checked using biometrics (retina scanners, fingerprint readers, voice identification software, etc.) and/or magical or psychic means, subjected to a metal detector and must be personally recognized by one or more trusted members (not the "new guy"). Only a 5% chance of having a mole at any faction facility. Faction Cost: 20 points.

5. Paranoid. Same as #4, above, plus everybody entering must pass through multiple biometric tests, is strip searched, subjected to a telepathic probe and/or Words of Truth spell, and no one can so much as enter a bathroom without being noticed. Multiple checkpoints and constant personnel checking reduce infiltrations to a 3% chance at any faction facility. Faction Cost: 30 points.

6. Impregnable. An insanely tight version of #5, above, involving high security, surveillance and a complicated barrage of tests, signs and countersigns, searches, psychic and magical probes, heavy biometric security for each and every person entering any faction-run building. Even the doorknobs on safe houses take a blood sample to check DNA before they will allow entry! Only a 1% chance of an infiltrator being found anywhere in the faction (and you can be sure he or she is a dangerous professional). Faction Cost: 50 points.

M. External Infiltration

A measure of how well the faction has infiltrated and corrupted *enemy* and *rival* factions. There may even be attempts at infiltrating friendly or allied factions (just in case). An important side benefit for external infiltration is that captured characters may be provided with an "accidental" opportunity to escape by a "friend" within the faction.

1. None. The faction has no infiltrators. Faction Cost: None.

2. Occasional. The faction occasionally manages to infiltrate or pay off some low ranking person in another faction. These are usually new and/or unimportant members who rarely have

any idea of what is really happening in their faction. At best, they can provide rumors and clues. 2% chance of having a spy or stool pigeon placed inside other *local* factions. Faction Cost: 5 points.

3. A Source of Information. The faction has managed to infiltrate 1D4 enemy or rival factions. This spy poses as a member of the enemy group and is privy to most things known to all members of the enemy faction. High level information and communications are NOT known. Faction Cost: 10 points.

4. General Infiltration. The faction has managed to place 1D4 infiltrators in all of the enemy's *local* factions and in 1D6 of their regional facilities! Infiltrators provide reasonably good intelligence on basic operations, procedures, personnel, schedules, plans and all data known to the average member of each faction infiltrated. Not privy to top secret or high levels of information, but may (38% chance) be aware of rumors about operations and internal operations and conflicts. Faction Cost: 25 points.

5. Significant Infiltration. The faction has managed to place infiltrators *throughout* the enemy faction's regional structure and at 2D4 of their national facilities (roughly equivalent to #4, above, but on a much larger scale). 1D6 infiltrators hold high positions within the enemy camp, making them aware of delicate and time sensitive information such as the location of prisoners, secret detention and interrogation centers, the identities of agents in the field, pending targets for attack, the attack plan and schedule, level of force, strategies and tactics, and other vital information. Faction Cost: 40 points.

6. Blanket Infiltration. Fundamentally the same as #5, above, except infiltration is throughout the entire enemy network on a global scale, but the most comprehensive infiltration is regional. There are numerous faction members holding low level positions throughout the enemy faction's entire network, several high level infiltrators at every major local and regional base of enemy operations, and 1D4 infiltrators at a high position in every major enemy base of operation around the world. There may even be 1D4 who hold positions of leadership at the top ranks of the enemy faction. However, if a leader is discovered to be an enemy spy/traitor, it will cause a shake out of the entire organization and the infiltrating faction will lose 2D4x10% of its spies as a result. Unmasked infiltrators will be executed after a long, torturous interrogation and period of captivity, and the faction responsible will become a target of serious retribution. Faction Cost: 60 points.

N. Reputation

What is the reputation of the faction? The credentials determine how much notoriety, respect or fear the faction commands. The greater the reputation, the more determined the Nightlords (and/or other enemies) are to destroy them.

1. Reviled. Not only are they at the top of the Nightlords' *Most Wanted List*, but for some reason, every major faction (and most minor ones) wouldn't mind if the Nightlords succeeded in wiping them off the face of the Earth. All members of this faction are viewed with great suspicion by anyone who is aware of the supernatural struggle occurring on Earth. Most independents and small factions avoid being associated with this faction, and

it's probably best if members hide their faction affiliation more than usual. Faction Cost: None.

2. Scoundrels. The faction is highly persecuted by the Nightlords and generally viewed with disdain by the other factions. The only thing keeping the other factions from turning on this group is the fact that it would take energy from more important struggles, and they do not see the group as worth the effort. This makes it very difficult to get information or work with the other factions. Faction Cost: 5 points.

3. Unknown. For good or ill, this faction has kept its head down and profile low, thus most people and factions do not know they exist. They have also managed to stay off the radar of the Nightlords. If the Ba'al or their minions are aware of them at all, the faction is not considered to be an immediate threat or a serious concern. Members of this faction are viewed with suspicion by other factions because so little is known about them and they could even be a Nightlord front. ("Funny, I think I have heard of you people, but . . . keep your hands where I can see them.") Or they may be disregarded as wannabes or newbies who have yet to prove themselves to be worth any real consideration, but who are treated well when their actions merit it and generally given as fair a shake by the other factions as an unknown could expect. Faction Cost: 10 points.

4. Respected. This faction is reasonably well-known and respected by Nightbane and in the underground supernatural community. Its members are considered to be fairly effective at what they do, and members of other factions are likely to be reluctant to betray members of this organization for fear of retribution or damaging their own reputation. The Nightlords have just begun to pay this faction attention, but don't know what to make of them yet. Faction Cost: 20 points.

5. Well-Known. The reputation of top league professionals, this faction is renowned and highly respected (or feared) in the supernatural community. They are considered to be heavy-hitters capable of holding their own with any group they tangle with. Most members of other factions want to be on good standing with this faction and may want to work with or help them whenever possible. The Nightlords are well aware of this faction and while they'd like to see the group destroyed, unless the faction becomes a real headache for them, it is midway on their enemies' list; giving the faction a little breathing room. Faction Cost: 30 points.

6. Feared and Infamous. The faction has a reputation for being a hardcore group of consummate professionals. The Nightlords' minions have more than a little bit of fear regarding this faction and their Ba'al masters want the head of its members on a pike. Now! The Nightlords and their minions want to see the faction obliterated, but they are, a) hesitant to make any major moves against it for fear of their own losses, b) enhancing the faction's reputation with every victory it can claim, and c) in no real hurry to cross this group unless directly ordered to do so. Members of other factions whisper the name of this group with reverence (or fear) for its exploits, and are happy to work with and assist in any way they can. Some may even want to join the infamous faction. Just being a member can loosen the tongues of those who fear them or would like to stay on their good side. Faction Cost: 50 points.

Some Notable Factions

The DuBois Family

Size and Organization: Secret Society

A. Outfits: Specialty Clothing. 10 POINTS

B. Equipment: Electronic Supplies. 10 POINTS

C. Weapons: Armed Agents. 20 POINTS

D. Magical and Occult Resources: Vast Magical Knowledge. 40 POINTS

E. Vehicles: Fleet Vehicles. 15 POINTS

F. Communications: Extensive System. 10 POINTS

G. Offices, Hideouts and Distribution: Regional (Midwest, with key agents in D.C.). 20 POINTS

H. Sponsorship: Private Industry (the family: but in this case, the family seeks magical power instead of financial power). 6 POINTS

I. Special Budget: Large Loans. 20 POINTS.

J. General Alignment: Evil: Miscreant and Diabolic. 0 POINTS

K. Criminal Activity: Expert Assassins. 10 POINTS

L. Internal Security: Tight. 10 POINTS

M. External Infiltration: Information Source. 10 POINTS

N. Reputation: Reviled (but not hunted by the Nightlords). 0 POINTS.

The DuBois Family is one of the most notorious, magic inclined families in the world. Cunning, powerful and cold-blooded, this family made a reputation for itself *before* Dark Day due to their obsession with taboo magic such as Necromancy, Fleshsculpting and human sacrifice. They are one of the pillars of the **Cults of Night** and were instrumental in assisting *King Moloch* with his invasion of Earth through dark rituals and political maneuvering.

No one is sure how this family got started, but other occult groups first noticed them in the early 1870s. This could be because the DuBois family are descendants of slaves, and when slavery was abolished in the South the slaves had no last names and had to take the last names of their previous owners. It could be that before then, the DuBois family had no name (at least not one known to westerners). There is a DuBois Plantation in Mississippi, but the plantation was bought by the family from its original owners shortly after the emancipation. No one has been able to find any descendants of the original DuBois family that owned the plantation before the slaves who inherited it.

The DuBois family quickly spread throughout the South and gained an amazing amount of political power for a family of former slaves. The family survived by being incredibly tight-knit, with no tolerance for betrayal or moving against the greater family interests. But it wasn't until *Dark Day* that the DuBois family truly became a powerhouse. King Moloch has rewarded the family well for their assistance, and continues to do so as long as they remain loyal, utterly evil and depraved.

There are an estimated 100 core members of the family who can trace their bloodline, unbroken, back to the original plantation. Most female members have kept their last name when getting married, making the lines more easily traceable. The

DuBois family is intensely proud of its heritage, and *the family* must approve all marriages, and even decide whether a female member can be allowed to carry a pregnancy to term. There is some inbreeding between close cousins, but never enough to cripple the family, and children born with defects are "disposed of" through usually unexplained crib deaths.

Pure-blooded DuBois descendants are inherently drawn toward the arcane arts. Most (75%) are simply acolytes with a good knowledge of the arcane, but there are several sorcerers, mystics and priests of the *Cult of Night*, and even a few Fleshsculptors and Channellers. There are numerous other people who work for the family that are in just as deep, but are not actually members of the DuBois family. These individuals usually take roles as bodyguards, attorneys, chauffeurs and even mercenaries. Rarely is someone who is not a blood relative allowed to take part in any of the family's mystical activities, and they are never 100% trusted.

The titular head of the family is *Victor DuBois*, Assistant Deputy Director of the NSB (detailed later). He is the most visible member of the family, and most outsiders who know of the family's existence believe him to be its true head. However, rumors persist that the true head of the family is *Old Lady DuBois*, who is kept in seclusion.

Some Seekers believe Old Lady DuBois to be *Marilyn DuBois*, born in 1890 as the seventh daughter of the seventh son of the first true leader of the DuBois family, *Cornelius DuBois*. Marilyn was considered a disappointment because she could never control her magic, and was prone to "fits" of uncontrolled mystic power as a child. However, she had a quick wit and sharp intelligence, and was crucial to the family in other ways. Her power, which seemed to come from "elsewhere," disturbed the more learned members of the family. It was not until the late 20th Century, when all her other siblings were dead, that Marilyn seized control of the family. She prepared them for Dark Day and turned members, like Victor, who had shown no aptitude for magic, into Priests of the Cult of Night. Not only did she prepare the family for Dark Day, but some say she was instrumental in making it happen by organizing rituals across the world. *The Seekers* believe that Old Lady DuBois receives her magical powers directly from the Nightlords, or perhaps even from *The Dark*, itself.

Some, like *the Nocturnes*, scoff at this theory and point out that Old Lady DuBois would have to be 116 years old (in 2006) and still running the family. If she lives, they say, she is a figurehead only.

Other key family members include Vernon DuBois, a 9th level sorcerer, who is Assistant Governor of Mississippi and a rising star in the Preserver Party; Janine DuBois, a 7th level Fleshsculptor, is the family's chief financial officer; and Terry DuBois, a 7th level Astral Mage known as the *Keeper of the Word*, is in charge of the family's Astral-based storehouse of mystic knowledge.

Today, the DuBois family's power is concentrated in the Midwest, but they have tendrils in most major cities in the East and South. They are primarily focused on attaining more and more magical power, securing their place as royalty in what they believe to be the "New Order" born under King Moloch, and eliminating sorcerous orders that they see as competition.

There is no magic so foul that the DuBois family will not meddle with it. Some of their more secretive activities, such as summoning demons, are even banned by King Moloch. The DuBois family has worked with vampires, demonic entities, even evil Nightbane and rogue Ashmedai, but have, thus far, successfully kept hidden or downplayed such incidents enough to stay in Moloch's good graces.

Both the Nocturnes and the Seekers would like to see the DuBois Family fall, but both organizations would also like to get their hands on the family's library of mystic knowledge almost as much.



The New Wanderers

Size and Orientation: Coven

- A. Outfits: Utility Outfits (ritual robes). 2 POINTS
- B. Equipment: Mystic Equipment. 20 POINTS
- C. Weapons: None. 0 POINTS
- D. Magical and Occult Resources: Online Occult Library. 20 POINTS
- E. Vehicles: None. 0 POINTS
- F. Communications: None. 0 POINTS
- G. Offices, Hideouts and Distribution: Urban (Paris, France). 5 POINTS
- H. Sponsorship: Agent Sponsored. 0 POINTS
- I. Special budget: Small Potatoes. 15 POINTS
- J. General Alignment: Anarchist. 2 POINTS
- K. Criminal Activity: None. 0 POINTS

L. Internal Security: Tight. 10 POINTS

M. External Infiltration: Information Source. 10 POINTS

N. Reputation: Respected. 20 POINTS

The New Wanderers is a secretive coven, restricted entirely to Nightbane sorcerers dedicated to collecting every scrap of information possible regarding the origin of their species. These Nightbane believe that unlocking the secrets of the Nightbane's past is key to their survival and the defeat of the Nightlords.

Known to be rather fanatical, this group stops at almost nothing to obtain any knowledge or artifacts regarding the Nightbane and their origins. They have traveled extensively to the corners of the Earth and to the Nightlands, and have even made deep forays into Astral Space to find the secrets of their race. The only thing that has kept them on the good side of other factions, particularly the Seekers, is the fact that they only require complete *copies* of any information that is discovered. They do not steal mystical artifacts and scrolls from other groups as long as they can get a complete and accurate copy of the information the object contains.

It is believed the New Wanderers have existed since the 1950s. They are based out of Paris, France, because it seems that most of the fragments from the Wanderer Diaries and other books pertaining to Nightbane history have been found in Europe, specifically the former territories of the old Holy Roman Empire.

Originally founded by a group of Nightbane sorcerers who were curious about their species, the group's goal took on new urgency after Dark Day, and they now believe that whoever unlocks the secret origin of the Nightbane could wield tremendous power, and influence the outcome of the War between Light and Dark on Earth. The New Wanderers are determined to make sure such an outcome ensures the survival of the Nightbane species.

Membership in the coven is secret, and kept to less than two dozen members at any one time. It is believed that many of those within the coven are members of other factions at the same time, always keeping an ear out for any tantalizing discoveries regarding the Nightbane's past.

In their efforts to obtain any fragments of information on their history, they often have come across items and artifacts of arcane knowledge and mystic power. Much of this they keep for themselves, particularly knowledge regarding the use of magic, to increase the power of their members and thus increase their chances for success. They actively trade with the Seekers, Nocturnes and the Resistance in return for items they believe to be keys to the origin of the Nightbane species. Their efforts have earned the New Wanderers the largest collection of information on Nightbane lore in the world. They also have quite a collection of minor mystical items and an impressive knowledge of supernatural ancient history.

The New Wanderers, like the Underground Railroad, have a high interest in the survival of the Nightbane species, and take a special interest in up-and-coming young Nightbane Sorcerers (read: player characters). Those individuals who prove the most promising are likely to be approached to work with the New Wanderers as contacts or information sources before being invited to become members when they are more experienced.

The Yue Crime Syndicate

Size and Orientation: Crime Gang

A. Outfits: None. 0 POINTS

B. Equipment: Cheap Gear. 2 POINTS

C. Weapons: Armed Agents: 20 POINTS

D. Magical and Occult resources. None (Mrs. Yue won't share her private collection even with other members of the syndicate). 0 POINTS

E. Vehicles: Limited Fleet Vehicles. 10 POINTS

F. Communications: None. 0 POINTS

G. Offices, Hideouts and Distribution: Regional. 20 POINTS

H. Sponsorship: Private Industry. 6 POINTS

I. Special Budget: Large Loans. 20 POINTS

J. Alignment: Anarchist. 2 POINTS

K. Criminal Activity: Sex trade, gang of robbers, smugglers, and protection racket. 50 POINTS

L. Internal Security: Lax. 5 POINTS

M. External Infiltration: None. 0 POINTS

N. Reputation: Unknown. 10 POINTS

The Yue Crime Syndicate is one of the leading organized crime organizations on the Eastern Seaboard. Founded by "Mama Yue" and her late husband, the Yue Crime Syndicate is based out of New York City's Chinatown and focuses on non-violent (but often still deplorable) criminal operations. The syndicate runs illegal gambling houses, prostitution rings, chop shops and protection rackets, organizes the stealing and smuggling of fine arts and antiques, and the smuggling of illegal immigrants. The syndicate has avoided serious notice from law enforcement due to its lack of violence, and its insular nature. Almost all members of the syndicate are Chinese, and its activities are limited mostly to the Chinese community.

Normally, such a mundane organization would have little bearing on the supernatural Cold War raging across the Earth after Dark Day. However, the syndicate is becoming more and more tied to the Seekers organization due to the efforts of its founder, the so-called "Mama Yue." This old sorceress is both head of the syndicate and an Arbiter for the Seekers. After Dark Day, she has begun to very discreetly use the Yue Syndicate as muscle for the Seekers. While this makes the syndicate more vulnerable to attention from the Nightlords, it has strengthened the Seekers, a group not known for its physical prowess.

There is another benefit for the syndicate as well. The Seekers are generally only interested in mystical knowledge, items and artifacts, but Mama Yue quickly realized that people who held such artifacts often also possessed non-magical artifacts of great value. There's a much higher chance that someone possessing a few actual pages from the original Wanderer's Diaries might also have a Monet or Van Gogh in storage. She insures that such treasures, unwanted by the Seekers, fall into the hands of her syndicate agents.

It should be noted that the Yue Syndicate is not aligned with the Mystic Tongs run by the Geo-Immortals. Quite the opposite, in fact. The Tongs and the syndicate have run afoul of each other on several occasions, sometimes forcing Mama Yue to get personally involved (though this happens less and less as she gets older). The Immortals have great respect for the woman,

and actively seek to woo her and her organization into the fold of the *Mystic Tongs*. They know she is too old to learn the ways of the Geo-Immortals, so they have begun targeting her protégés with offers of mystic power and immortality. Interestingly enough, Yue knows this and doesn't try to stop it, telling her students they must choose their own path.

Zero Tolerance

Size and Orientation: Night Crew

A. Outfits: None. 0 POINTS

B. Equipment: Electronic Supplies. 10 POINTS

C. Weapons: Ammunition. 5 POINTS

D. Magical and Occult Resources: Minor Occult Library. 5 POINTS

E. Vehicles: Limited Fleet Vehicles. 10 POINTS

F. Communications: Basic Service. 2 Points

G. Offices, Hideouts and Distribution. None. 0 POINTS

H. Sponsorship: Agent Sponsored. 0 POINTS

I. Special Budget: Nickels and Dimes. 5 POINTS

J. General Alignment: Unprincipled and Scrupulous. 7 POINTS

K. Criminal Activity: Computer Hacker. 20 POINTS

L. Internal Security: Lax. 5 POINTS

M. External Infiltration: None. 0 POINTS

N. Reputation: Unknown. 10 POINTS

Zero Tolerance is a small group dedicated to the complete destruction of *Zero, the No-Cal Food Company*. Zero is a company backed by the Nightlords that is slowly poisoning millions of people by preventing their bodies from absorbing nutrition (see **Nightbane® World Book Two: Nightlands™**, page 24, for more details). With no financing, little support from the major factions, and no true grasp of what they are up against, Zero Tolerance has made amazing strikes against this insidious company, destroying a number of shipments and even a distribution plant in the last year.

Zero Tolerance was founded by *Sean Coopersmith* and *Raul Martinez*, who both stumbled upon the company's dark plans at roughly the same time. Coopersmith was a dabbler in the mystic arts who made a living testifying as a forensics expert in civil suits. He discovered the true nature of Zero after the deaths of a couple of college students who, as a stunt, tried living off nothing but Zero and dietary supplements for a year. His investigation led him to Martinez, an ex-DEA agent who had gone underground shortly after the company was founded. Martinez had wild conspiracy theories about monsters from other worlds that had him labeled as a quack and marginalized before he disappeared from the public entirely.

Martinez knew there was something wrong both within the government and at Zero, and fled the agency in fear of his life. The annoying part was that he could never prove anything. That changed when he met Coopersmith. For the first time, someone listened to his wild theories and explained what it all could mean. After the pair were attacked by two Namtar NSB agents, they realized how deep the plot ran and disappeared from public life. That was two years ago. While on the lam they put together a team of people who have the knowledge and abilities to fight Zero. Their hope is to expose the company's plans and its con-

nection to the dark elements of the U.S. government. While both have heard of the Nightlords, neither realizes yet how big the Dark Day invasion was. At most, they currently assume that some elements of their government have been usurped by magic and evil men. But they do not suspect that most of the world has fallen under the sway of the Nightlords, nor how powerful they truly are. They still hope to reveal their findings to someone high up enough in the government that action can be taken. Unfortunately, their good intentions may doom them if they do not discover the true nature of their enemies soon.

The one advantage they have is that their activities have been noticed by the *Lightbringers*. The Lightbringers appreciate the courage and conviction of this small group of heroes and are slowly tutoring them along as well as protecting them from afar. One day, Zero Tolerance is likely to wake up and find it has been incorporated into the Lightbringer faction without realizing it.

Currently, Zero Tolerance consists of six members, all based out of the New York and Washington D.C. area (they do not have a specific headquarters). They are:

Sean Coopersmith, a 7th level Arcane Detective. Coopersmith is one of the founders of the group and has the most mystical knowledge. He also has a good grasp of the law, forensics and investigative techniques. He is a very competent leader, but it is a position he is not yet comfortable with, and the loss of Paige (see below), has nearly undermined his belief in himself. Still, the things that make him a good leader will not allow him to collapse under stress or step aside.

Raul Martinez, 6th level ex-government agent. Martinez is one of the few humans who were incorporated into the NSB after Dark Day. This was due, in part, to his field office position in Boston, away from the D.C. scene, and partly due to his relatively mundane job of investigating the use of controlled substances in food products. Additionally, there was another Raul Martinez stationed at the same office where he worked, only he died mysteriously after Dark Day. It is possible the Nightlords missed Raul due to a *clerical error*. Raul almost snapped the first time he discovered that something inhuman was working at a Zero distribution center, and was almost killed when he brought his "crazy" theories to his superiors. A smart man, Raul saw that he was in over his head and went underground. Coopersmith found him just days before Spook Squad, otherwise he would be a member of that organization.

Ivy Taylor, 8th level Nightbane. Ivy Taylor was, as far as Coopersmith knew, a chemist that he went to from time to time to help him identify unusual substances, and do advanced toxicology work. When he took a sample of Zero to her and tried to explain how he could detect there was something "otherworldly" about it, he was shocked when he accidentally looked at her using a See Aura spell. Ivy revealed her Nightbane origins, but she had never had contact with the factions, so she could tell him very little about what she was. Not only has she turned out to be valuable in the lab, but in her Morpheus she appears to be a humanoid brick wall covered with ivy growth and a skeleton made of rebar. She is tough, a physical powerhouse, and has several special abilities (her Talents) that have gotten the group out of many a tight spot.

Lillian Tsu, 5th level Dream Dancer. Lillian contacted Sean because her brother was one of the college victims he was inves-

tigating. After meeting him, she spied on his dreams to see what he really knew. For a long time she would only appear in his dreams, offering advice and counsel, but eventually she joined the group on a permanent basis. She has been able to get into the dreams of some of the human employees of Zero and steal valuable information.

Richard Voskowski, 4th level ex-government agent. Rick was unfortunate enough to inherit Raul's old desk at the office. Told that Raul went inexplicably insane, he investigated on his private time to find out what had happened to the agent to make him snap. Using his impressive computer hacking skills, he came to suspect foul play, and in the process of trying to find Raul's murderers, he found Zero Tolerance. Once the gravity of the situation was explained to him, he quickly joined up. He and Raul are close, and his efforts to avenge an agent he had never met have convinced Raul that there are others still inside the NSB who do not know what's happened around them and who are in terrible danger.

Lastly, there is **Phaige**, a living 8th level Spoil Food/Water spell. Phaige was "born" only about six months ago. She appears, physically, to have the likeness of Paige Daniels, a Mystic who Coopersmith had connections with and began dating. Paige had uncovered much of what Zero was doing on her own while working in a production plant. She had covertly been using her magic to ruin large batches of the food product, until the Nightlords' minions tracked down the source of the problem to her department. She ran for it and found Zero Tolerance. She and Coopersmith had a short, but passionate, love affair before she was killed while casting a spoil spell during a botched raid on a Zero Pizza processing plant. To everyone's surprise, a month later Phaige showed up, looking exactly like her, but with no memory of her past. Many in the group believe Paige somehow survived and lost her memories, as they had left her body behind. Coopersmith suspects Phaige is not human (her aura tells him as much) but is not sure why this being would think it was Paige. He has kept this information to himself for the time being, and Phaige has become a key, trustworthy part of the team.

Nightbane Arbitration

Sometimes, the factions seem to be fighting among themselves as much as they are fighting the Nightlords. Between some particular factions, such as the Nocturnes and the Lightbringers, conflicts can quickly spiral out of control and turn deadly. Nowhere is this more likely to happen than when it comes to aggressive recruiting, or what's known as "headhunting" among the factions.

When two or more members of different factions have a disagreement that has the potential to explode into a wider conflict that could threaten the factions and/or do collateral damage to smaller groups or the war effort, the Arbiters call for the Rites of Arbitration to be performed.

During the Rites of Arbitration, all the local Arbiters are called together to hear the circumstances of the case. Quite often, their spies and contacts have already gleaned much of the information for them (some of which is never revealed openly during the Rites of Arbitration). The Arbiters then confer and at-

tempt to decide a reasonable, peaceful means of settling the conflict. It should be noted that it is NOT required that the Arbiters even tell the people involved that they are meeting! More than once, conflicting parties have just been approached by their faction's local Arbiter and told to stop whatever they are doing immediately.

There is no set system for deciding means of Arbitration in conflicts. It can be anything the Arbiters agree on, as long as a simple majority of the local Arbiters agree to the solution. In cases of recruiting, for example, the desired person may be brought before Arbiters and simply asked to make a decision on which faction he would like to join, right then and there. That decision (even if it is not to join any faction) *must* be respected by all. In other matters of recruitment, if the Nightbane can't make a choice, the Arbiters decide which faction they think best fits the new recruit.

Arbiters wield a lot of power. But they are also saddled with a massive amount of responsibility and pressure to be fair, and just do what is best for the community at large. Thus, Arbiters only get involved in conflicts that truly threaten to erupt into a war between the factions.

Born out of the *1973 Paris Conference*, the Rites of Arbitration required that each participating faction keep an Arbiter on hand in every major city or region of factional influence. In sparsely populated areas, one Arbiter could cover a region of several hundred miles, but in heavily populated metropolitan areas, an Arbiter's influence generally ends at the city border. In New York City, for example, most factions have an Arbiter just for Manhattan Island and one or two for the surrounding Burroughs. **Note:** Currently, only the Spook Squad and the Warlords refuse to accept or acknowledge the Rites of Arbitration.

The Arbiters' position also makes them prominent targets of the Nightlords' minions. If the minions can topple all or most of a city's Arbiters, it is then a simple matter to foment chaos and conflict between rival factions without a way to find peaceful resolve.

Faction Arbiters

Arbiters are not the leaders of the local factions, but an advanced rank among select members of the various factions. (**Note:** Non-Player Characters only!) There are several requirements for someone being named an Arbiter. First, they must have the power to enforce their decisions. That power can be physical, political, or both, but as a result, no one under 6th level can be named an Arbiter; most are level eight and higher. Even then, they often have skills, abilities or a reputation that sets them above their peers. An Arbiter must also be considered fair-minded by members of his own faction and, ideally, by members of other factions as well. In general, alignments are Principled, Scrupulous or Aberrant. They must be known to keep their word and be able to see the big picture beyond the goals of their own faction. After Dark Day, almost all Arbiters are dedicated foes of the Nightlords, but even if they are not, they must be sworn to keep the secrets of the factions from falling into the hands of the Nightlords, even the secrets of factions they don't like.

A candidate to become an Arbiter is chosen by the local faction leader, but the other, existing Arbiters put the candidate

through three rigorous, sometimes dangerous, tests. The candidate must pass the tests to be accepted.

The first test is known as being put to "The Question." The candidate is grilled by the Arbiters regarding beliefs, previous actions that have come to their attention, and sometimes even very personal information. There is often a psychic or mage involved to ensure the subject is being honest at all times. If the Arbiters are satisfied with the results, the candidate moves on to the second test.

The second test is "The Finding." A friend, ally or even a loved one of the candidate is kidnaped and secreted away. A very few people in the local supernatural community are made aware of the person's location, and they know why the person was kidnaped. No harm comes to the victim, however, the candidate has 24 hours to use either his own abilities, or his influence among others, to find the victim or he is disqualified. No one must be killed or seriously injured during The Finding.

The third test is the "Last Ordeal," in which the candidate must fight one-on-one with one of the local Arbiters. This is NOT a fight to the death, but it can be brutal and debilitating. The fight usually ends when one of the combatants loses all S.D.C. points, but the candidate has the option of fighting as long as he can stand on his own two feet. The other Arbiters are on hand to make sure things do not get out of control. The candidate being able to beat or incapacitate the existing Arbiter guarantees acceptance by the other Arbiters, but even a candidate who loses but puts up a phenomenal fight may be accepted by vote.

The decision of the other Arbiters is final. There is no appeal and no second attempt, and the candidate must pass all three tests. Once accepted, Arbiters are trained in the basics by the other local Arbiters. Oftentimes, strong bonds of friendship form between the Arbiters and, when united, they are a force to be reckoned with.

The power that comes with the position of Arbiter is impressive and some would say even dangerous.

First Arbiter Level: Upon being accepted, an Arbiter gains the local leaders of every faction active in the area as *contacts* (with the exception of the Warlords and the Spook Squad). The leaders also gain every Arbiter as a contact and are able to participate in the Rites of Arbitration.

Second Arbiter Level: The Arbiter's eyes have begun to open as to how much is going on around him; +2 to Perception Rolls and either gains the Streetwise skill with a +10% skill bonus, or gets a +20% bonus if he already has the Streetwise skill.

Third Arbiter Level: The Arbiter has begun to learn darker secrets kept quiet by the upper echelons of the various factions, gaining a +10% bonus to all Lore skills known to the character. He is also tapped into the rumor mill and information grapevine on the street, and is usually allowed to make use of the available resources of his faction without restriction.

Fourth Arbiter Level: The new knowledge is paying off for the Arbiter on a personal level. Somehow, a powerful artifact, item of power or spell has fallen into his possession, sometimes as a gift from someone seeking his favor or from his local faction leader. Often, the item belonged to the last Arbiter and was held back until the new Arbiter could be trusted by whoever held it. This is likely a lesser or greater artifact (if lesser, it has

two special abilities), a permanently enchanted weapon, or if the Arbiter is a spell caster it could be a powerful spell (any spell from level eight through ten, as the G.M. deems appropriate). Very often this becomes a trademark item or spell that others associate with that particular Arbiter; a sort of badge of office.

Fifth Arbiter Level: The Arbiter who has reached this level has gained two devoted *Adherents*. These are both protégés who may one day take over if the Arbiter is killed or retires. Until then they serve as loyal assistants and bodyguards. They, of course, are of the same faction and are fairly competent in their job. While these two may still do their own thing and have their own goals, they see attending to the Arbiter's needs as their primary job. These are independent NPCs who won't take well to abuse or petty commands. If the Arbiter is foolish in his use of them, they could become his worst enemies.

Sixth Arbiter Level: The Arbiter is so well known at this point that he has quite the reputation. If someone knows who they are dealing with, treat the Arbiter as having a Horror Factor or Awe Factor of 14. If the Arbiter already has a Horror Factor (as all Nightbane will), add +2 to his current Horror Factor, with a minimum Horror Factor of 12 and a maximum of 18.

Seventh Arbiter Level: This Arbiter has been around the block more than a few times. He is used to dealing with all sorts of personalities and little surprises him. It's best just to be honest with him and straightforward; unless you're a genius or lucky, he's already got your number. The Arbiter gains another +2 to all Perception Rolls, +2 to initiative and an additional attack per melee.

Eighth Arbiter Level: Few Arbiters are this experienced, just a handful in the world per faction. The Arbiter who makes it this far may be asked to get involved with arbitration on a worldwide scale, though his jurisdiction is still his primary concern. The scope of influence is so widespread that there are few who will not defer to his wisdom; +1D4 to M.A. and +2 to Horror Factor/Awe Factor. The Arbiter is also likely to have made the NSB's Most Wanted list.

Ninth Arbiter Level: High Arbiter who speaks for the entire faction and settles disputes on a worldwide level. His word is almost law within his own faction and highly regarded among all others. Several Arbiters can fill this slot for each faction, though it is rare to have more than one or two. Horror Factor is 18, regardless of what it was previously, the Arbiter has full access to the faction's resources, has a cadre of staff and bodyguards, and is the primary adjudicator in internal faction disputes.

Game Master Note: Roll 2D4+1 to determine the Arbiter Level for NPCs, or the G.M. may decide the appropriate level for an NPC Arbiter. Note that the Arbiter Level is not the same as the Arbiter's experience level, most in this position are 4th to 7th level Arbiters, but 9th to 12th level Nightbane. It is not recommended that a player character be allowed to become an Arbiter, but if one should, the character reaches a new Arbiter Level of power and respect for every 30,000 experience points acquired after the appointment.

A Dangerous Life

First Encounters of the Supernatural Kind

Excerpts from the Nightbane Survival Guide

By now, you've at least seen the special brand of weird that looks back at you from the mirror. However, there's a lot scarier things running around out there than you. I couldn't tell you how many of us there are, us Nightbane, nor how many other supernatural beings are roaming the streets and alleys of our world. It's not like there is a "paranormal freak" check box in the census survey. But between us Nightbane, vampires, their inbred cousins, the Wampyrs, the minions of the Nightlords, demons, and a whole buffet of other nasties, there's a lot of bad things in the world you cannot imagine. This is especially the case after Dark Day. Everybody seems to like to lurk in the same shadows we hide in, and they don't typically take too kindly to new neighbors.

You're going to need to know about what goes bump in the night out there, if you want to survive, because half of those supernatural creepy crawlers are out to kill you. Who better to educate you than someone who's seen most of it first-hand? So, sit back and strap in, because there ain't no red pill/blue pill crap on this adventure. You are already down the rabbit-hole, kid, and Kansas got nuked when you weren't looking.

The Nightlords are big baddy, numero uno. Don't ever take them lightly, never underestimate them and be advised, their unholy minions are the first paranormal forces a new Nightbane like you is likely to encounter. Sometimes even before your first Becoming. That's because the Nightlords want you dead. All of you. All of us, 'Bane of the Night. Rumor has it, we have the power to destroy the Nightlords. Even our name, the *Nightbane*, tells us we are the enemies – the destroyers – of the night and the demons who rule the night. That's the Nightlords.

So here's the Cliff's note explanation: The Nightlords are powerful demons from a hellish dimension known as the Nightlands. They and their millions of lackeys, henchmen and minions secretly invaded the Earth during Dark Day. And nobody knows it, that's how insidious and cunning these demonic bastards are. Nightlord minions are all kinds of bad, including Doppelgangers who can take the place of your sweet haired mommy, Hounds who can sniff you out when you are in Morpheus, Hunters to prowl the rooftops and take wing at night like demonic gargoyles, and a whole lot worse. The NSB (National Security Bureau) is half Doppelgangers and other shape shifting monsters, and half humans who have thrown in with the Nightlords. Be warned, you'll find plenty of human scum bags who serve the Nightlords. It's one of those, 'better to rule in Hell than serve in Heaven,' things. Starting to get the picture? Good, because all of these forces are out to kill you.

Why? Pay attention, you are the Nightbane – the destroyer of the night. We possess the courage and abilities to destroy these demons, too bad we don't know exactly how to do that. Point is, the Nightlords don't want nobody figuring out the how, so they kill us all. Welcome to genocide, my friends, now try to stay alive.



Nightbane don't necessarily have a supernatural sense that detects and identifies the Nightlords or their minions as foes, though many of us report a general sense of danger when we encounter them for the first time. Many have equated it to the instinctual combat knowledge that every Nightbane possesses, with some going so far as to label the effect as a kind of "racial memory." Such theorists compare our ability to sense evil to many animals' ability to recognize predatory animals even though they have never seen one before. That said, many Nightbane detest the idea that we are the Nightlords' natural enemy, like we don't got no choice in the matter. Thing is, they want us dead, so it is kill or be killed, hide or die on the streets as long as the Nightlords rule.

Sometimes, this feeling of apprehension either ceases to function or is ignored by a new Nightbane. If the minions are intelligent and perceptive enough to realize this fact, it can be turned into an opportunity to try and recruit *you* to their side. Yeah, that's right, the Nightlords and their lackeys love turning us against each other, so wise up right now and don't become a pawn of the Ba'al. The Ba'al, that's their other name – some type of night demon.

Nightbane who side with the Ba'al are almost always dumb kids who don't know no better, or disillusioned jerks who have given up on humanity and their own kind. Nightbane recruited by the Nightlords are indoctrinated and brainwashed to believe others of their kind are the evil masterminds of Dark Day and that the Nightlords have come to liberate the Earth from us. If you have any sense or been a Nightbane for more than 5 minutes, you know exactly what a load of horse manure that is, but

you'd be surprised at how many people fall for that line of hooley. It ain't all their fault. Did I mention the Nightlords are masters of deception and lies. No? Then I'm telling you now, they can convince a blind man he can see. So their crap may sound like a bold-faced lie to anyone with the slightest knowledge about the Ba'al and their invasion of Earth, but to a sixteen year old who has just become an honest to darkness monster, it sounds convincing enough. And if the kid doesn't buy their line and declines their invitation to join the Nightlords, he is attacked and slaughtered.

Nightbane who serve as pawns of the Nightlords are sent out to either sense fellow Nightbane and kill us one at a time, or to infiltrate local factions to spy on fellow Nightbane and do what they can to disrupt our efforts against their evil masters.

The Factions. Luckily for most new Nightbane, the factions do a pretty decent job getting to newbies before the Ba'al, or before they hurt themselves or anyone else.

The frontrunner in this daily race is the *Underground Railroad*. They have the most well-established and entrenched system in terms of identifying and contacting new Nightbane shortly after, and sometimes right before, their Becoming. When a *potential 'Bane* is encountered that is of age for the Becoming, a Railroad member is assigned to keep an eye on the person. These 'Guardian Angels' are rotated out on a regular basis to keep the target from getting suspicious, unless of course the angel can get close to the potential Nightbane, in which case they may be assigned to them on a permanent or semi-permanent basis. The Underground Railroad can afford to do this because their primary goal is the rescuing, newly turned Nightbane.

Other factions also recruit new 'Bane, each targeting those they think can help them best in the Hidden War against the Nightlords. The Seekers and Nocturnes tend to compete for the Nightbane with magic or psychic abilities, whereas the Resistance and Warlords typically go after the strongest, most imposing, and most skilled in the area of combat and strategy (especially those with military and paramilitary backgrounds).

Mentors and Nightbane. In the millennia before Dark Day, independent Nightbane would seek out those who had just undergone the Becoming, befriend them, mentor them, and teach them what they were, how to use their abilities, and most importantly, how to avoid detection by humans. These rescued Nightbane would return the favor by becoming mentors to others, themselves. Such mentors could be ancient or relatively new to the world, be rich or poor. What was important was that the newborn Nightbane could count on the tutelage of an older and more experienced member of our race, giving him much greater odds of survival.

Since Dark Day and the Nightbane population explosion, that ain't possible. There are way too many new 'Bane for us 'Old Bloods' to handle. That's one reason I created this Survival Guide you're reading right now. However, that doesn't mean that they have just given up. Many ancients and Old Bloods still keep an eye out for new 'Bane, taking them under our wing and showing them what it means to be a Nightbane, at least from our perspective.

Becoming the ward of an independent Nightbane, especially an ancient, has several advantages. First of all, the ancient serves as a sort of protector. Most mentors come to feel a certain responsibility for the 'Bane under their charge. Independent and ancient Nightbane tend to possess considerable knowledge, experience and power, if not outright wisdom and intelligence. Hate to say, but I ain't met too many wise people, human, 'Bane or otherwise, and I ain't no spring chicken.

Point is, it takes more than brawn, power and guts to survive in this world, especially since Dark Day. On your own, without a mentor or dedicated organization watching your back, you're just meat waiting to get dropped into the frying pan. With one you have the benefit of their knowledge, experience, strength and cunning, to help you learn to survive in a world that wants you dead. A faction gives you information and resources like a family environment, a place to lay low, and maybe even financial assistance, but you won't get all the benefits they have to offer until you join up as a full-fledged member. That's got its good points and bad, though 9 out of 10 times the good outweighs the bad, so join up, especially if it feels right. A mentor, if you are lucky enough to have one, gives you all of that, plus one on one attention and centuries of personal insight, but his resources will be limited unless he's part of a faction himself. Most of us are. A mentor versed in the mystic arts might also be willing to teach them to you. That having been said, such mages almost never pass down *all* of what they know, keeping their most powerful or personal spells to themselves.

Faction or independent mentor, Nightbane or other race, you need to know that EVERYONE has an agenda, and you are likely to be a means to an end, or worse, a pawn in their much larger games. Independent mentors and factions are rarely altruistic in their intentions. When they take a new Nightbane under their wing, they almost always expect something back in return.

While this can be as simple as a debt of loyalty, the price can be as high as a period of servitude, or a life and death challenge. Likewise, you will be influenced by the guidance of your master, be it a mentor or a faction, and their goals and interests usually become the goals and interests of their pupil or new recruit. That also means you inherit the allies, enemies, rivals, and agenda of your benefactor along with everything else they supply.

The Shadowleague and the Shadowboard. While the infamous Shadowboards are typically reserved for the discussion of the occult, they are used by some individuals to discuss related matters dealing with the paranormal. One such topic is the existence of supernatural creatures, among which the *mysterious Nightbane* are included. Indeed, a handful of Nightbane Mystics and Sorcerers can be counted amongst the registered board members. Such individuals tend to discuss arcane matters with other practitioners as well as speculate and weigh in on matters that involve their kind.

One topic that is NOT discussed on the Shadowboards is the Nightlords or their connection to the **Preserver Party**. At the request of Samuel Steward, all such information is redirected to him rather than being posted on the boards. At this point in time, Steward suspects that these Nightlords are some kind of cabal style group and the real power behind the Preserver Party. He does not, however, realize that they are actually supernatural invaders from another dimension. That the Preserver Party is the puppet of the Nightlords.

Despite this censorship, the **Shadowboards** can still be a valuable communication tool due to its relative security and the, as of yet, untraceable nature of its communication system. Almost anyone can get their hands on the access software for the Shadowboards, so it stands to reason that sooner or later you'll find your way to it. Nightbane can access these boards to debate their origins and share their experiences with others of their kind. This means new 'Bane can gather basic information and get a better picture of the true state of the world. Unfortunately, many Nightbane do not utilize this valuable tool due to the fact that they don't trust its security. As good as the Shadowboards are, remember that for every valid piece of information or advice, there are at least five pieces of misinformation or stupid opinion, making it difficult to tell fact from fiction, good advice from bad. Discussion about the Nightbane also has to relate directly to *occult matters* or it is not considered relevant posts and will be shut down and/or deleted.

Practitioners of Magic. On rare occasions, a mortal mage is the first member of the supernatural community a new Nightbane encounters. For the practitioner of magic, the Nightbane may be a curiosity, especially if he has not encountered such beings before. Any true student of the paranormal would be remiss to pass up such an opportunity to chat-up a "real live monster" and learn as much as he can about him.

Whether the mage is part of a society, brotherhood, faction, or independent, he may be useful in helping you find some of the answers you are looking for, or point you toward a Nightbane faction. However, like any encounter, the situation and the parties involved will determine if you become friends, allies, rivals or mortal enemies. Dealing with mages can be dangerous as they wield magic that can manipulate, control, help, hurt or kill you. Like everybody else, they have their view of the

world, your and their place in it, and their own agenda. Also do not assume a mage fights on the side of the angels the Nightlords employ their share of sorcerers.

Other Supernatural Beings. Becoming a Nightbane will open your eyes to a world you never knew existed. You are a supernatural being, but you are not alone. There are vampires, Wampyrs, demons, ghosts, were-beasts, Geo-Immortals, monsters from the Dreamstream, monsters from the Astral Plane, and that's in addition to the Nightlords and their evil minions. There are hundreds of supernatural creatures that aren't necessarily on any particular "side" in the conflict between us Nightbane and the Ba'al. Many of these creatures were on Earth long before Dark Day, and don't like the idea of the Nightlords muscling in on "their" territory, but this does not automatically make them your ally. There are many who, for now, function as de-facto resistance fighters who pit themselves against the Ba'al and their minions, but there remain plenty of others who want no part of the Hidden War and do as they please. That means they prey upon whoever they please, from humans and minions of the Nightlords to Nightbane. So watch your back.

Remember, many supernatural beings have been around a lot longer than you. Hell, some have walked the Earth for hundreds, even thousands of years. They have much more experience than you, and have probably fought Nightbane before. Additionally, *you* probably have little to no clue what abilities they have and no inkling of how to fight them. And don't forget, most of these supernatural creatures are at the very least mischievous and spiteful, and many are treacherous, deceitful, and masters of temptation and manipulation. Such cunning adversaries may trick you, use you as a pawn or diversion in their own schemes, and dupe you in any number of ways you'll regret later.

It ain't like these other beings are fighting to liberate the Earth from the clutches of the Nightlords because they love humankind. Quite the opposite, humans, and Nightbane, are their *prey* and *playthings*. They are not nice people! They just don't want to see their home and hunting grounds (yes, they consider Earth their home too), conquered, dominated or destroyed by demon lords and upstart wizards from another dimension. Indeed, many of them had a good thing going before Dark Day. Sure, they had to hide from human society, but people had stopped believing that they existed. That meant they could go about their business with relative impunity, safe from the fear that villagers might hunt them down with pitchforks, wooden stakes and fiery torches.

Monster hunters. Since Dark Day, the study of magic and the occult is on the rise. More and more people find themselves open to the idea that the paranormal and the supernatural exist. Makes sense if you think about it, because there is event after event that can't seem to be rightfully explained by the rigid facts of science. This is not to say there is a psychic on every block and neighborhood vampire hunters, but the numbers of those who believe the supernatural and monsters are real since Dark Day is at an all-time high. Humans with the knowledge and intent to seek out, reveal, and otherwise harm supernatural beings are on the rise. That is causing people to question their leaders and demand the government to investigate. That, in turn, causes the Nightlords to step up their campaigns to exterminate us Nightbane in particular, and other supernatural beings and mages, in general. And the news gets worse.



Official government agencies from the NSB to your local police force are heavily infiltrated with Doppelgangers, minions and sympathizers of the Nightlords who control those agencies. That means they ain't on your side and ain't going to help you. These agencies tell the public that monsters aren't real and concoct all kinds of crazy stories to explain supernatural events, but their primary mission is to find YOU and destroy you, before you cause them more trouble. And remember, as the Bane of Night, we are Enemy Number One. Have no doubt about it. That means, not only do the Nightlords and their minions want you dead, but so does the NSB, FBI, CIA, MI-5, Interpol, and law enforcement everywhere. Just about every one of them governmental agencies is infested with minions, human and inhuman, who answer to the Nightlords and control that agency now. I bet belonging to a faction that can help hide, train and protect you is sounding a whole lot more interesting now, ain't it?

When you inexperienced Nightbane encounter even one of the more powerful or cunning supernatural creatures, you may quickly find yourselves in hot water that just keeps rising. As strong and capable as any individual or even group of Nightbane can be, you are up against more than random monster encounters. You face a campaign of genocide. Get entangled in a brawl with a vampire or other supernatural being, you might be okay, and can handle one or two with no problem. But how much of a commotion did your little scuffle make? Did someone call the police? Are they on the way? Did they contact the NSB? If so, you and your 'Bane buddies may soon find yourselves jumping from a scuffle to a shootout with the police, the NSB, minions of the Nightlords, or all of the above. And that ain't going to be pretty or easy to survive.

Here are some ground rules I suggest you follow.

One, keep your mouth shut. Don't talk about yourself, your powers, the Nightbane, the Nightlords, conspiracy theories, or about what you know. Especially don't tell your family or anybody you care about, because if you do, you make them a target for interrogation or worse.

Two, don't blab on the Internet either. a) You don't know who you're talking to, b) you are not as anonymous or safe as you might think, c) the Nightlords are watching, so don't use some retarded name like *Nightbanerawks69* for your Instant Messenger. In fact, the Nightlords are always watching. And they know what to look for. d) You don't know who else is watching . . . trying to track you down.

Three, don't be seen in your Morphus. You don't want to go into the Quickie-Mart for a pack of smokes looking like a Twilight Zone reject. It scares people, they talk, and talk leads to trouble you don't want.

Four, always try to be discreet, and that means avoid using those nifty new abilities in full sight of people. The locals tend to freak out when you shoot a beam of black energy from your hands, or you turn into flock of ravens. Hell, it freaks me out sometimes and I've been doing this a long time.

The most important thing is to remember that a slip-up can get you killed, and more importantly, get the people you love killed. Yeah, that's a lot of responsibility. Learn to live with it or you'll suffer consequences you may not be able to live with.

Now, let's be clear. If there's a Hollow Man with a gun to your dome, I expect you to morph out, rip his head off and feed it to him. I don't care if it's in a back alley or Times Square. I don't expect you to die to preserve your secret life as a Nightbane. Just remember that for every action there is an equal and more screwed up reaction. So, yeah, you escaped that Ashmedai by sprouting wings and flying, but you may be in more trouble now than you thought. On the other hand, maybe you caught the attention of a faction that can help you, or you made some new friends who appreciated seeing a Hollow Man die. It's all a matter of luck, timing and karma.

Just remember, the lower you keep your head, the more likely it is to stay attached to your shoulders.

Nightlord Anti-Nightbane Operations

The biggest drawback to being a Nightbane, besides being a walking freak show, is that the world is currently controlled by demons from another dimension. Yep, the Nightlords, and they control everything these days. Everything. The police, the press, the government, the military, portions of big business, portions of the criminal underworld, just about everything. And these are some seriously bad mama-jammas.

Near as we can tell, the Nightlords started out as Babylonian-era jerks who wanted to rule the world. They lost, got sent to a place called the Nightlands, and spent the next several thousand years learning how to be even bigger jerks. They have become the equivalent of demons and demon lords, and they still hunger to rule the world. Our world. And they are well on their way to succeeding.

The Nightlords, also known as the Ba'al, took over most governments and other positions of power, heck, everything

they could get their greedy little hands on during Dark Day, and have held on tight ever since and continue to gobble up more.

Why should you care?

Because they want you dead, remember? Besides, it's a good idea to kick any monstrous invaders back to the Hell they came from.

Conspiracy or no conspiracy, us Earthlings – humans and Nightbane – ain't going to take being invaded without fighting back. Right?

What we know about the Nightlords

Since the history of us Nightbane is lost, we don't know why the Ba'al fear us so much, but they do. Just accept that. For some reason the Nightlords think we can destroy them, so they're out to kill every last one of us first. Now, I know what you're thinking, you can bend bars of steel with your butt cheeks so you ain't afraid of anybody. You should be.

The Nightlords commit a large amount of resources toward the hunting down and destruction of Nightbane. It is clear that, whatever their plans for Earth, one of the key aspects of those plans involves our annihilation. No Nightlord is more devoted to this than King Moloch and he runs the whole shooting gallery.

At any given time, the Nightlords have numerous *Anti-Nightbane Operations* running, from simple Internet baiting schemes to complex undercover ops aimed at ferreting us out, capturing and killing us, finding the headquarters and safe houses of the factions, destroying the leadership of entire factions, and total genocide of our species.

If anyone knows what drives the effort to exterminate the Nightbane, it's King Moloch. The other Nightlords assume King Moloch has been given some vital bit of insight from The Dark, but nobody can say for sure. King Moloch allows the Nightlords and Princes under his thumb a lot of leeway, but he will not stand for any of them allowing Nightbane to flourish. As a result, all Nightlords and Princes must actively seek out and destroy the Nightbane. Thankfully, King Moloch is too busy to micro-manage his subordinates, so the effectiveness of the campaign of genocide varies greatly from city to city. To keep their King happy, they target 'Bane who fall into their laps – so don't be stupid or careless – the most visible, and those of us who make the most noise, grab their attention. That means of all the factions, the *Resistance* and the *Warlords* tend to catch the most heat and bear the brunt of the Nightlords' efforts. But you cause them too much grief or start to get a strong reputation, you'll find yourself at the top of the list, somewhere close behind them. I ain't saying not to oppose the Nightlords, we all need to take them down, I'm just saying it will bring minions on you like a ton of bricks, and you need to be prepared for that.

– *The Nightbane Survival Guide*

Sauce for the Goose

In the Midwest, Lord Magog hopes to one day play the Nightbane against his rival Nightlords. In particular, he is currently having one of his avatars, **Killroy Dietz**, infiltrate the *Nightbane Resistance* and lead them to find evidence **Lady Lilith** is consorting with demons. If successful, Lord Magog hopes the Resistance overreacts and directly confronts Lady Lilith and her demons in Los Angeles. The resulting blow up



should be very hard for Lilith to cover up, and is likely to cause severe losses on both sides. The only barrier to Magog's plan is that he actually doesn't have any evidence Lilith has cut a deal with demons (it's true, he just doesn't have any proof).

Lady Lilith, on the other hand, is intelligent enough to realize that if King Moloch is making such a big noise about the Nightbane being a threat, there's probably something to it. Still, she does not want to waste her own resources hunting them down, so she's turned over responsibility to the **Mystic Tongs** who rule the West Coast underworld. These *Asian sorcerers* eagerly do her dirty work. In return, they are left to do as they please in the world of crime. The handful of personal agents Lilith does have investigating the Nightbane are focused on determining their origins and the nature of their threat. She also has several spies in Moloch's organization whose job it is to determine exactly what the King knows about the Nightbane.

Only King Moloch expends a large amount of his personal time devoted to the destruction of the Nightbane. He has assigned a sort of *task force* who are specifically charged with their annihilation and the disruption of all Nightbane aligned factions. For the most part, operations against the Nightbane are handled by his forces within the *NSB*. **Night Prince Balashi**, King Moloch's Grand Inquisitor, is head of anti-Nightbane operations, going under the name *Richard Gridley*, *Deputy Director of the NSB*.

Prince Balashi believes that the key to destroying the Nightbane is to take the long approach. While he often fields operations against Resistance cells and against groups of Nightbane working with the Resistance, Nocturnes and other

factions, he is primarily interested in infiltrating and dismantling the *Underground Railroad*, and then using the faction to bait and trap as many new Nightbane as possible. Balashi believes if you dry up the source of new Nightbane entering the War between Light and Dark, the species will wither and die.

This strategy has only been in place for about a year and a half, but already Prince Balashi/Richard Gridley has helped destroy more than a dozen safe houses filled with young Nightbane. What's more, he's got agents in two others, who are allowing the safe houses to continue operating in order to gather as much information about the *Underground Railroad's* intricate network as possible.

He has also placed a few agents in schools that he knows the *Underground Railroad* is watching. The plan is to endanger the young Nightbane being watched by agents of the *Underground Railroad* and force the recruiters and mentors to expose themselves. Once exposed, Balashi's minions can destroy the elder 'Bane along with the young ones.

Meanwhile, Prince Balashi hopes to crush the spirit of Nightbane everywhere by eventually destroying, or at least devastating, the Resistance faction with a show of sheer force. If successful, Balashi hopes the decimation of the Resistance will generate a sense of hopelessness and terror among the Nightbane. It is, however, a plan that is much easier said than done. Balashi is only beginning to discover just how massive and well organized the Resistance has become over the years. It is very good at covering its agents' tracks, uncovering infiltrators, and escaping attacks. The cell style of the organization goes a long way in isolating and containing Nightlord advances,

making it difficult to catch more than a handful of Resistance members at any one time.

The Nocturnes are Balashi's other big concern, as he has always hated vampires and Wampyrs. He justifies his efforts to undermine the faction via their connection to the Underground Railroad. In fact, Balashi got lucky, and one of his spies was recruited from the Underground Railroad into the Nocturnes on the West Coast. Balashi has left the agent in place and is feeding the information he's gathering to the Lightbringers, hoping to bring the two factions to blows; which should not be too difficult a task.

In an interesting move, Prince Balashi has decided to leave the Warlords alone. In fact, he hopes to leave the Warlords as the only "safe" alternative to the other factions. Once the other factions have been crushed, and young Nightbane have nowhere else to turn, the Night Prince believes they will join the Warlords in droves. The Warlords are already easy to find and identify, and should allow the minions of the Nightlords to destroy them whenever they choose to do so. Balashi's henchmen are also trying to infiltrate the *Club Freaks* scattered across the world, but so far his efforts have met with dismal failure.

Common Nightlord Traps

There are several standard methods and plans used to target Nightbane. Some are quite simple, others complex.

Bait and Smash: The tactic of using an innocent human, known associate or family member of a suspected Nightbane or resistance fighter as bait to lure the enemy into the open. Law enforcement or other agents of the Nightlords allow vital infor-

mation to leak that the individual is going to be picked up or his home or workplace raided, with the hope that one or more Nightbane will try to warn or rescue their associate. Other times, innocent people are used to force heroic Nightbane into action. In either case, the 'Bane are attacked as soon as they make an appearance. Such ambushes can be very effective.

Blame Game: One of the more insidious tactics employed by Nightlord minions, this technique is specifically reserved for times when two or more factions are working together. The Nightlords, having learned of the joint operation through spies, turncoats, or sheer luck, will only focus their efforts on one of the factions. Often, they will even see to it that the untouched faction benefits from all the carnage. So if they discover the Seekers are working with the Resistance, only the Resistance members involved would be targeted, and the Seekers would somehow luckily acquire a rare (but probably harmless to the Nightlords) magic item from the deal. This fosters incredible mistrust and enmity between the factions, and keeps the Arbiters hard at work to keep the peace.

Call the Cops (or the NSB): The Nightlords are very big on using human pawns, henchmen and real law enforcement to do their dirty work for them. That means they are happy to let the local police, FBI, or the NSB (National Security Bureau) identify, track down, capture and kill Nightbane and their human allies. The authorities also enforce the Nightlords' will on the average citizen and cover up the truth about the Nightlords' existence.

Average Response Times for Non-Emergency Situations:
This includes reports of suspicious activity, domestic squabbles,



and other situations where people and property are not in immediate danger.

Fire & Rescue: Urban: 2D6+3 minutes, Suburban: 1D6+4 minutes, Rural: 3D6+10 minutes (if available).

Paramedics: Urban: 2D6+6 minutes, Suburban: 1D6+2 minutes, Rural: 3D6+10 minutes (if available).

Local Police: Urban: 6D6+16 minutes, Suburban: 2D4+1 minutes, Rural: 3D6+8 minutes.

NSB: Urban: 5D6+12 minutes, Suburban: 3D6+4 minutes, Rural: 6D6+20 minutes (if available).

Average Response Times for Emergency Situations: Shots have been fired, officer down, armed assailant, crime in progress, hostage situation, bomb threat, fire, people are injured, a monster has been sighted, and similar situations where people and property are in immediate danger.

Fire & Rescue: Urban: 2D4+2 minutes, Suburban: 1D4+1 minutes, Rural: 3D4+6 minutes (if available).

Paramedics: Urban: 2D6+2 minutes, Suburban: 1D6 minutes, Rural: 2D6+6 minutes (if available).

Local Police: Urban: 2D4+6 minutes, Suburban: 1D4+1 minutes, Rural: 2D6+6 minutes.

NSB: Urban: 2D4+2 minutes, Suburban: 1D4+1 minutes, Rural: 2D6+12 minutes (if available). **Note:** The NSB only respond to incidents involving “monsters” (Nightbane, other supernatural menaces, or Nightlord minions), or when an NSB agent (or minions) is in danger or under attack, or they have been requested by local law enforcement or other agency (or a Nightlord). Under these circumstances the NSB (and Nightlord minions) arrive on the scene fast.

Other contributing factors in response time may involve traffic levels, an accident that blocks part or all of the road, distance of the closest unit or station from the call, the severity of the situation, and whether or not a unit is even available. It may take twice as long as listed to get to some rural areas. G.M. discretion.

Cybersnare: The Nightlords are well aware that the Nightbane and other “dissidents” use the Internet to communicate. So far, they’ve been unable to shut them down and keep them off-line, so instead, Nightlord henchmen have set up several fake websites, forums and bulletin boards aimed at snaring new, unsuspecting Nightbane who are looking to connect to the Shadowboards, other Nightbane, factions, and groups who work against the Ba’al. These fake forums and message boards are used to lure Nightbane and dissidents into revealing their true identity, location, information, and locations of factions, or to arrange a meeting, feed the user false information, use them as a pawn or bait, lead them into traps, and all sorts of nefarious situations. Alternately, the NSB has extremely sophisticated computer programs that allow them to easily pinpoint the user’s computer. So if, after a while, the suspect does not come to them, they trace his location and go after him directly. The Resistance and Underground Railroad have been fighting back against this trap, often flooding fake message boards with posts in all caps and glaring red letters, declaring the forum as a fake and a trap.

Hound Patrols: Quite simply, a Hound Master, three Hounds and two Hollow Men get into a black van and drive down streets, keeping senses attuned for the supernatural. If they

get a hit, the Hound Master disguises them as federal agents and they raid the house, capturing or (usually) killing all inside. These operations are usually done at night, when few people are awake, and two airborne Hunters are likely to be held back for additional support and aerial reconnaissance. Also, in case things go wrong (like the Hound Master being killed), NSB can claim that sightings of armored monsters were just misidentifications of human agents in black body armor late at night. The drawback to this, of course, is that it’s a turkey shoot. There’s little chance of random sweeps like this being successful for the minions. So, as a rule, these sweeps are only done in an area where there is already evidence of supernatural activity or in response to Neighborhood Watch reports. Any group of heroes who have been indiscreet with their abilities should watch for black vans at night or day.

Lure and Smash: This tactic involves leaking a target or an opportunity that is too juicy to pass up in an attempt to lure Nightbane and other resistance fighters to their doom. The lure may have a financial incentive (e.g. steal a pile of cash from a Nightlord stooge), a rescue mission (save a Nightbane, leader, friend, etc. from the clutches of the Nightlords), a chance to get vital information, hit a major player in the Nightlords’ operations, and any number of other attractive targets. However, it is all a trap or ambush to capture or kill any Nightbane who try to exploit the lure.

Neighborhood Watch: One of the simplest means of spotting Nightbane and other supernatural beings is to use the Neighborhood Watch to report any suspicious activity, particularly alleged “monster sightings.” The Watch is composed of concerned citizens who try to stay alert to crime and trouble (Nightbane fall into the latter category) and call the police or NSB in the case of “monster sightings” to report the trouble. Some Neighborhood Watches also have 1D4 individuals who patrol their neighborhood in one or more cars, and all such neighborhoods have signs posted warning that a Neighborhood Watch protects the area. When a monster sighting comes in, 1D6+1 NSB agents, a Hound Patrol or Sky Watch responds.

Sky Watch: A patrol of 1D4+1 Hunters take wing at night to patrol a particular corner of the city, and there may be a dozen to several dozen such Sky Watch Patrols. The emphasis is on locations where Nightbane are likely to gather or meet. That includes downtown areas, the club district, the seamy side of town, back alleys, abandoned buildings, warehouse districts, and troubled neighborhoods, as well as the general area where Nightbane activity has already been reported or monsters sighted. They also respond to Neighborhood Watch sightings and NSB calls for assistance.

Balashi, Grand Inquisitor

Cold, patient, dedicated and inventive are all words that accurately describe Night Prince Balashi, hand-picked by King Moloch to oversee anti-Nightbane operations in the USA. Prince Balashi is old, dating back to ancient Mesopotamia, but apparently did not master the powers of *The Dark* well enough to be elevated to Nightlord. Balashi seeks to become a full Nightlord and unlock the vast powers at their command. After thousands of years of never getting recognition, he believes this assignment may be his last hope. Thus, he intends to prove himself,

once and for all, and has sworn to eradicate the Nightbane or die trying.

Prince Balashi has long been one of King Moloch's most trusted servants and is often referred to as *Moloch's Huntsman*. In the past, Balashi's job was to root out sedition, treason and plots involving other Nightlords working against King Moloch in any way. This has earned him the enmity of most current day Nightlords, who have seen this lapdog of the King disembowel plans that may have been decades in development. Many are relieved this bloodhound has been set on the trail of the Nightbane, because it gives them more latitude with their own schemes and dirty deals.

Prince Balashi is very good at what he does, and has become the boogeyman to all Nightbane, particularly to members of the Underground Railroad and Nocturnes, where he has focused his efforts. Prince Balashi has some rare qualities for a Nightlord minion: He is patient and comparatively humble, meaning that he never assumes he knows everything. If a minion of his expresses doubt about a plan that's backed up with reason, there's a good chance Balashi will alter his plans accordingly. Nor does the Night Prince take foolish gambles unless they have real potential for a high payoff. He has no fear of calling for a tactical withdrawal when he and his minions are obviously over-matched, and tries not to underestimate his opponents.

As evil, wicked, treacherous, deceitful and twisted as any Nightlord, Prince Balashi uses whatever means necessary to get the job done. This includes torture, lies, threats, maiming, murder, payoffs, blackmail, and the corruption and manipulation of anyone he needs to accomplish the task at hand. One of his favorite pastimes is to torture victims for information that he already knows until they break, because it's fun and interesting. He has several theories as to what makes someone give truthful information, as compared to what types of torture will result in someone lying just to make the pain stop.

A clever strategist and tactician, Prince Balashi has forgone conventional wisdom when it comes to the Nightbane, and has developed a plot that he believes will tear out the heart of Nightbane opposition by destroying the Underground Railroad. He believes that if he can bring down the Railroad, it will send shock waves and terror throughout all resistance fighters, cut off the life's blood to the Resistance, and send other Nightbane organizations into hiding as they ponder their own fate. In short, it would send the message that if the Underground Railroad can fall, none of them are safe. This, in turn should curtail many Resistance operations, make some Nightbane careless, lure others out into the open in attempts to extract retribution, and generally undermine the entire Nightbane and resistance community. With that community in a state of fear and disarray, he will increase his efforts with the NSB (and minions) to crush them like the frightened, scurrying bugs that they are. An alternative plan is to secretly seize control of the Underground Railroad and use the existing infrastructure to identify, locate, and observe Nightbane across the entire continent and other parts of the world. He would use them to lead him to other factions, secret places, unknown enemies and then target them all for systematic destruction, followed by the mass extermination of hundreds of thousands of Nightbane. Though he is leaning toward this latter scenario, he doesn't know which plan he actually loves more.

Balashi personally oversees all operations and is confident his plans will work out one way or the other. Meanwhile, he and his forces (NSB and minions) deal with immediate threats and annoyances (the player characters?) as they come to his attention.

Successful in eradicating most of the Nightbane or not, he's likely to stay a Night Prince forever. King Moloch is very fond of his lapdog and likes having Balashi on a short leash. Thus, he has no plans of promoting and potentially losing his best advocate. What's more, Moloch believes Balashi would make a cunning and dangerous adversary as a Nightlord and could develop into a rival for power. If Balashi ever discovers this (unlikely, King Moloch keeps his own counsel), it could drive him to betray King Moloch. Given all the dirt Balashi's collected over the years, he could do some real damage to Moloch's empire.



Balashi, Night Prince

Head of Anti-Nightbane Operations

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 21, M.E. 18, M.A. 20, P.S. 21, P.P. 17, P.E. 26, P.B. 14, Spd 20.

Hit Points: 132. **S.D.C.:** 190. **P.P.E.:** 450.

Horror Factor: 10, but can create illusions with an H.F. of up to 18.

R.C.C.: Night Prince. **Level of Experience:** 10th

Natural Abilities: All standard Night Prince powers and abilities (see **Nightbane Role-Playing Game**, page 176).

1. Supernatural Abilities: Regenerates 1D4x10 S.D.C./Hit Points every minute, see the invisible, recognize all illusions (including those created by other Night Princes), imper-

vious to mind control of any kind, nightvision (range: 500 feet/152 m), and does not need to eat, drink or breathe air.

2. Life Force Vampirism: Must absorb at least 5 P.P.E./Hit Points a day. This process takes one minute (4 melee rounds) and can absorb up to 50 Hit Points/P.P.E. at a time.

3. Illusionary Powers: Can create very convincing illusions that appear extremely real and terrifying.

Disposition: Balashi is intelligent, cold-blooded, calculating and patient. His loyalty to King Moloch is based primarily on the fact that he believes King Moloch to be the most powerful being in the Nightlands. Until he himself is crowned a Nightlord or discovers he's being played for a fool, he'll stay loyal to his current boss. Balashi does not have a merciful bone in his body, nor does he have an ounce of goodness in his heart. If he seems to be showing kindness, compassion or mercy, you are being "played" and it is part of some nefarious scheme that will only cause widespread sorrow and suffering later. Prince Balashi is obsessed with torture and probably has a penchant to savor torture and keeps dangerous prisoners around longer than he should. He strives to one day "perfect" torture to the point where he can guarantee an honest confession every time. Balashi is bitter toward the other Night Princes under King Moloch, as they see him as a shameless bootlicker.

In hunting down the Nightbane, he operates like a spider sitting in the center of his web. He casts out lines in all directions and then keeps a claw on each one, waiting for an unfortunate victim to become entangled in one of his plots.

Psionic Powers: None.

Magical Knowledge: None, other than lore, although he sometimes pretends to use magic through his illusions.

Combat Abilities: Hand to Hand: Assassin.

Attacks per Melee Round: Seven.

Damage: Inflicts 2D4 S.D.C. on a restrained punch, 3D6 S.D.C. on a full strength punch, and 6D6 S.D.C. on a power punch (counts as two attacks), plus P.S. damage bonus.

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +4 to parry, +5 to dodge, +5 to roll, +8 to pull punch, +10 to damage, knock out/stun on an unmodified 17-20, critical strike on an unmodified 19 or 20, +10 to save vs magic, +5 to save vs psychic attacks, +2 to save vs insanity, +10 to Perception Rolls, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, +6 to save vs poison, +22% save vs coma/death, 60% chance to invoke trust and intimidate.

Vulnerabilities/Penalties: Takes double damage from the attacks and Talents of the Nightbane and the energy powers of the Guardians.

O.C.C. Skills of Note: Lore: Geomancy 98%, speaks English, Hebrew, Arabic, Ancient Egyptian, Greek, Aramaic, Farsi, Latin, and Demongogian at 98%, Lore: Nightlands 97%, Lore: Nightbane 92%, Research 98%, Interrogation Techniques 98%, Intelligence 85%, Combat Tactics: Basic 92%, Undercover Ops 95%, Literacy: English 92%, Literacy: Greek 92%, Anthropology 82%, Mathematics: Basic 97%, Lore: Religion 82%, Prowl 77%, Swimming 98%, Radio: Basic 97%, Detect Concealment 77%, Horsemanship: General 76/56%, Climbing 92%, W.P. Sword, W.P. Knife, W.P. Polearm, W.P. Automatic Pistol.

Allies of Note: Balashi often works with a human sorcerer named *Vincent DuBois*. The two are friends and Balashi has considered looking into ways to get the resourceful human elevated to Night Prince. A 5th level Hound Master named Rynn is his personal bodyguard.

Minions of Note: Balashi maintains the human persona of *Richard Gridley*, a Deputy Director of the NSB. As such, he can call upon the resources of that powerful law enforcement agency in the USA. His favorite minions are Hollow Men, Doppelgangers and the Cults of Night. He only uses Hounds and Hunters for the coup de grace, and does not trust the far too independent Ashmedai.

Weapons and Equipment of Note: He has access to anything in the NSB arsenal (really, the U.S. government) and has taken a special interest in rare, exotic, advanced weaponry.

Prince Balashi carries an ornate armband, fastened with a gold scarab, with him at all times. It is a lesser artifact that generates an *aura of protection*, providing him with an invisible, magic force field with an A.R. of 15 and 50 S.D.C. When all S.D.C. is used up, the protection is temporarily lost, but will reappear and automatically engage 24 hours later. He also has a *Living Chariot* under his command that takes the form of a black S.U.V. with government plates.

Money: Surprisingly, Balashi has little himself in the way of monetary goods. He has access to millions at any time due to his position with King Moloch and his post in the NSB, but has less than a million in personal assets. His personal residence is a stately home in Bethesda, Maryland. It is guarded by six Hounds, two Hunters and Miss Valerie, a 4th level Doppelganger Mystic who acts as his personal assistant.

Victor DuBois

Perhaps one of the most despicable aspects of the Nightlords' invasion of Earth is that it could not have been accomplished without the help of many humans knowledgeable in the dark arts of magic.

Millennia ago, the Nightlords were banished from the Earth, and sealed within the Nightlands via powerful magic that drained much of the magic from the planet. The seals put in place upon their dimensional exile were such that they could not be broken without help from sorcerers on Earth. For centuries, the Nightlords leaked bits of information to Earth on ways to break down those barriers; through dreams, portents, and foolish humans who traveled to the Nightlands looking for power. It took thousands of years, but finally, members of the *Cult of Night* and other groups focused on black magic, got all of the pieces together and worked with King Moloch to break the barriers between Earth and the Nightlands.

Most of the humans involved in bringing about **Dark Day** had no idea what they were unleashing upon humanity. All they knew was their help would bring something evil that would grant them tremendous power and influence. Only a few humans knew exactly what they were doing, and Victor Dubois and his family were some of them. The DuBois family knew they were helping orchestrate the fall of human civilization. They knew their hands would be stained with the blood of perhaps millions, and they eagerly, almost gleefully, did everything

they could to bring about this unthinkable fate. Despite the knowledge that their handiwork would bring unfathomable suffering upon the world, they did it anyway.

Nobody knows why the DuBois family, notorious among magic circles, would be so willing and fanatical servants of the Nightlords. It is one thing to deal with the devil to gain power and wealth, but something else seems to be driving the DuBois family. It is as if their genetic line is somehow tainted with pure evil.

One of the most evil members of the DuBois family is **Victor DuBois**, a priest of the Cult of Night, instrumental in Moloch's war against the Nightbane. Victor works side by side with Night Prince Balashi at the NSB, and has shown him that he is so ruthless, evil and depraved that Prince Balashi wants to invite the man into the ranks of the Night Princes.

Victor helps bridge the gap between the sometimes alien thinking of Balashi and his master King Moloch, and the thought processes of humanity (and, by default, the Nightbane). Victor knows people. He knows what makes them tick, what motivates them and what breaks their spirit. He knows how to make a calm person act in haste, and how to calm or manipulate the irrational. He has kept Balashi and Moloch from making numerous mistakes due to their natural instinct to underestimate the human spirit and stubborn human determination.

In return, Victor gets nearly limitless power for him and his vile family. Money, influence, fresh victims for their experiments with dark magic; the DuBois get it all, as long as they are willing to sell their fellow humans into misery and death. It's a bloody bargain the DuBois family, and Victor in particular, seem to accept without batting an eye.

Victor DuBois

**A leader of the Cult of Night
& Assistant NSB Deputy Director**

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 14, M.A. 22, P.S. 17, P.P. 15, P.E. 17, P.B. 21, Spd 10.

Hit Points: 62. **S.D.C.:** 55. **P.P.E.:** 138

Horror Factor: None.

O.C.C.: Priest of Night. **Level of Experience:** 9th

Natural Abilities: As a priest of the Cult of Night, Victor's powers are the result of a magical boon. Had it not been for him being chosen by the family for this role, Victor would have never developed magical abilities on his own, and would have been nothing more than an acolyte. As a *Priest of Night*, he is endowed with increased Mental Affinity and Physical Beauty, in addition to access to powerful spell magic. Victor can spend 2 P.P.E. per minute to make his P.S. Supernatural.

Disposition: A ruthless, excessively cruel man who derives pleasure from attaining power and using that power to break his enemies. He is quick to feel "wronged" by someone, and even quicker to seek revenge for those perceived wrongs. Victor is a skilled manipulator and can easily make himself appear to be charming and likable, thus hiding his character flaws. He is still a bit insecure about his powers being a gift from the Nightlords, because he rightfully assumes what has been given can be taken away. He places no value in human life or emotions. He uses people, particularly women, and

discards them when he is done. More than one woman who thought he cared for her was surprised to find herself on a DuBois family sacrificial altar. He does not hesitate to torture, maim and kill innocent men, women and children.

Description: A broad-shouldered man of African-American descent in his early 40s, with long braids usually kept in a ponytail. He wears expensive tailored suits and a family signet ring that gives him an additional +2 to save vs magic.

O.C.C. Skills of Note: Language: English 98%, Lore: Nightlands 90%, Dancing 90%, W.P. Knife, Cryptography 70%, Lore: Nightbane 80%, Computer Operation 90%, Interrogation Techniques 85%, Undercover Ops 85%, Lore: Geomancy 80%, Streetwise 61%, Prowl 70%, Palming 65%, Body Building, Literacy: English 75%, W.P. Submachine-gun, First Aid 90%, Mathematics: Basic 90%, and Radio: Basic 90%.

Combat Abilities: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Attacks per Melee Round: Six physical attacks or two by magic.

Bonuses: +1 to strike, +2 to parry, +2 to dodge, +2 to roll/pull punch, +4 to damage, critical strike on an unmodified 19 or 20, +1 save vs magic, +5% save vs coma/death, +4 to Perception Rolls, 70% chance to invoke trust or intimidate, 55% chance to charm or impress.

Vulnerabilities/Penalties: None per se.

Psionic Powers: None.

Magical Knowledge: Spell Strength: 12 (Priests of Night do not get Spell Strength increases). Spells: See Aura, Sense Nightbane, Heavy Breathing, Mystic Alarm, Magic Armor, Ritual: Call Nightlands Denizen, Traitorous Hand, Shadow Meld, Trance, Domination, Circle of Flame, Telekinesis, Escape, Ritual: Call Nightlord, Ritual: Summon Nightlands Denizen, Control Nightlands Denizen, Summon Nightlords Avatar, Summon Nightlord, Call Lightning, Agony, Nightland Portal, Create Zombie.

Allies of Note: Victor DuBois is a man of many resources. In addition to magic, wealth and power, he can call on many of the resources of the NSB, the Cult of Night and the DuBois family. He always has an entourage of 3D6 NSB agents (mostly Doppelgangers) and human cultists around him at all times. Two cousins from the DuBois family (4th level acolytes) act as personal bodyguards when he is on *unofficial* business and he generally keeps one or two zombies inside his secured mansion in Alexandria, Virginia.

Minions: Numerous, they make him feel important.

Weapons & Equipment: If Victor is in the field on a dangerous mission (virtually never, he lets flunkies do the dangerous stuff), he will have an MP5 Heckler & Koch with a laser targeting sight. Otherwise, he keeps a 9mm Mini Uzi in whatever overpriced car he is currently fond of, and most members of his entourage have pistols or submachine guns.

Money: Victor DuBois loves to throw his money around. Since it has no real value to the Nightlords, Balashi basically gives Victor a blank check. As long as DuBois is good at what he does and doesn't cause more trouble than he's worth, Balashi could care less. Victor can easily get his hands on \$10 million in 24 hours, and that's without touching the family's resources. He always has at least \$10,000 on him, usually in big wads of money that he occasionally flashes when out on the town.



Dark Adventures

The following is a series of adventures that puts the player group face-to-face with one of the Nightlords' insidious plots to sow dissension and distrust among the various factions arrayed against them. It can be played as a continuous story line with players going straight from one adventure to the other, or it can be a sub-plot or several chapters in an ongoing campaign, stretched out over numerous gaming sessions. It also introduces several NPCs which could make excellent recurring characters.

Part 1: Dead Ringer

Some enemy force has been taking out safe houses in the player characters' home city. Both the *Spook Squad* and the *Underground Railroad* have had places they were certain were secure raided by the NSB, burned down or otherwise destroyed by mysterious circumstances. This information can be dropped to the players through contacts or allies in previous adventures, or at the beginning of a gaming session dealing directly with this story line. However, dropping hints and clues that "safe" houses throughout the city are being hit with startling regularity can add a bit of tension and help build suspense.

If any of the players are aligned with Spook Squad or the Underground Railroad, it will be easy to get them involved. Both factions are more than anxious to find out how their safe houses are being compromised and targeted for destruction. Was it a leak or some new means of espionage being used by the Nightlords?

If the player characters are not members of either of those factions, then the factions they do work with want to know what happened before they are the next target. If they are totally independent, then it is likely that the *Underground Railroad* hires them to investigate the incidents and determine whether or not they have a spy or traitor in their midst. In the alternative, the player characters may be drawn into the adventure by word on the street or sheer happenstance. If nothing else, there is always the danger that their base of operations could be next.

The first thing the characters are likely to do is connect with any contacts they have in the Underground Railroad or the Spook Squad to find out what they know about how the houses were targeted and hit; i.e. who knew what, when and how were the safe houses eliminated? Whoever their sources are, they will refer them to people who were familiar with the safe houses. For the Underground Railroad, that's **Lisa Torrance**, a Nightbane who works as a "conductor" for the Railroad, ferrying young Nightbane from one safe house to the next in an effort to keep them away from the Nightlords' minions.

Lisa insists on meeting with the players in person, however. If there are Nightbane in the group, she will ask them to meet her at the local *Club Freak*, which only allows Nightbane and is always considered *neutral ground* among the various factions that employ Nightbane. If there are no Nightbane in the group, or none willing to meet her, she will suggest an abandoned building, late at night, in the warehouse district.



At the Club Freak, she recognizes the players on sight due to her connections with the Underground Railroad. Her Morphus is covered in tree bark and she has no face, making it impossible to identify her Facade. Even in the Club Freak she acts nervous and anxious, and doubly so if she has to meet the player characters in a warehouse.

A look at her aura will indicate that she is a Nightbane, healthy, mid-level, and not under the effects of any supernatural or magical possession. *Impression* provides the same information and indicates that she is of a good alignment. Lisa is definitely NOT looking for a fight. And if, for some reason, she is attacked by the player characters, she will immediately use the *Doorway Talent* and escape.

She nervously introduces herself and, when asked what happened at the safe house, relates the following story:

"Look, I've been a Conductor for quite a while, longer than you can imagine. I've seen safe houses get raided, and I've seen them betrayed by insiders. I've never seen anything like this.

"I got there before the police did, doing my usual check up. We had three new Nightbane in there. Just kids, really. Sometimes they can do some really stupid stuff, you know? Like give their old girlfriend the address or whatever. We usually do a

good job of scaring them into not giving out vital information, but it's better to be safe than sorry. There were two agents over-seeing them. Both were experienced.

"When I got to the door, I knew something was wrong. It was unlocked. The smell of blood hit me as soon as I stepped inside. I morphed out as soon as I walked in.

"This place . . . it was a slaughterhouse. It looked like every-one there had been put through the meat grinder, you know? There was blood everywhere. Some was even dripping off the ceiling. What's more, I couldn't sense a single Nightbane in the house.

"So I go in, and in the den there's one of the kids, he had been sleeping on the couch in front of the T.V. Sweet kid, really polite and friendly. Whatever had happened there must have happened fast, because he was still in his Facade, or at least what was left of it. Someone had more or less emptied out his entire chest cavity in maybe one or two strokes. I doubt he even had the chance to wake up. He was the lucky one I think.

"Two other kids were in their rooms upstairs, one girl and one boy. The girl had been decapitated. Whoever had done it had needed to take a few whacks to get it off, and they didn't get any points for neatness. The boy must have woken up by the time they got to him, because he put up a fight. He lost though, and it must have been his blood all over the floor that had leaked through the ceiling below. There was no body and I figure he died in Morphus, which would have just turned into a pool of black light.

"By this time, I'm freaked. I'm thinking that it has to be Hounds to be this vicious, right? So where are the Under-ground's protectors? Both of them were experienced. One was a sorcerer and the other was an ex-Warlord who turned into a giant wasp with a shotgun for a hand. Not two Nightbane that are going to go down easy.

"Well, I find them in the basement, near the furnace room. The place was a wreck. It looked like a serious battle royale had gone down. I expected to find a Hound or dead Ashmedai or something. Instead, I find just the two men. They had killed each other in their Facade. It looked like the ex-Warlord had shoved his gun down the sorcerer's throat and emptied the clip. But that was not before the sorcerer had doused him with a Molotov cocktail. Neither had a chance.

"That's pretty much it. Near as I can tell, they died fighting each other. The sorcerer had a Darkblade, and I think it was the weapon used on the other kids. The sorcerer also had a cell phone on him. No biggie there, but it was odd that he apparently had the earpiece on the whole time. The batteries were drained when I found him. I don't have the skills to investigate this stuff, but I hear you can . . . or you've got connections that can.

"Please let me know what you find out. I mean, I think the sorcerer did it all. But why? He's been a trusted member for years. It doesn't make any sense, unless he was possessed or something. None of our safe houses can be considered secure until we find out what the hell happened there. Did he just snap? Something tells me there's more to it. Especially since this isn't the only incident like this. I just don't know the details about the others."

The tree woman then hands over a bloody Darkblade scimitar and a small cell phone and earpiece.

She will answer any questions, but she doesn't know much beyond the above. The safe house had been used by the *Underground Railroad* for three years. The sorcerer had been with the Underground Railroad for 10 years, and the ex-Warlord for three years. If asked what she thinks, she'll tell the player characters that she thinks the magic user killed the kids and then went down to the basement to use the furnace to start a fire, but was caught by the other Underground Railroad agent. The two fought and killed each other, and things happened so fast that there was no time for either of them to go Morphus.

The Darkblade scimitar is a normal Darkblade weapon. A psionic Object Read reveals the last owner was of selfish alignment (Unprincipled), but there is no general emotional state as the last owner is dead. It is a weapon and contains a slight hint of magic from the arcane processes used to make Darkblade weapons. Mental images gleaned from the Object Read show scenes of the sword in the hands of a Hunter, slashing down soldiers in a forest. Then images of a Nightbane wrapped in chain mail like a mummy with antlers striking the Hunter down with fire bolts and lightning. After that there are bloody flashes of the sword being used to strike down the young Nightbane of the safe house in the hands of a dark haired, studious-looking man. The present cannot be glimpsed, as the owner is now dead.

The cell phone can be studied various ways. First, the batteries are dead and it must be recharged. The last call in was actually from "LT" at 4 p.m., the day of the attack. Lisa will confirm she made that call as a routine check up call and all was well. The last call out was to a Chinese restaurant hours before the murders. *Hacking* into the cell phone company's database, or other means of getting phone information, reveals that while the phone may have been on at the time of the murders, there is no record of an actual call being made.

Object Read of the cell phone shows the same things about the owner as the sword. Additionally, it indicates that the phone has indeed been recently affected by supernatural forces. Images show the phone in use, except for a few final images that show the same man who wielded the sword on the phone, his eyes glazed over. A Perception Roll of 16 or better reveals that, during the final visions, the display has no number typed in, which could indicate that the user was just listening to the dial tone for some strange reason. Again, there are flashes of the murders, but clearly showing the face of the dark-haired man, whom Lisa or others in the Underground Railroad identify as the sorcerer who stayed at the house.

Visiting the Murder Scene

If the player characters decide to visit the Underground Railroad safe house where the murders took place, they discover that the house is cordoned off with police tape. Two *NSB agents* are obviously parked across the street in a black sedan. Checking their auras and other sensing abilities reveal that they are *Doppelgangers*. There are "investigators" all throughout the house, making the prospect of going inside a foolish one.

Returning later, at night, reveals that the entire house has been sanitized. Floors and walls have been stripped, and everything smells heavily of chemical cleaners. No evidence remains.

The Spook Squad House

The Spook Squad is in a much more disadvantageous position than the Underground Railroad. They were unable to get to the house before the authorities. They are desperate for information about what happened, but are somewhat distrustful of anyone who is not a member of Spook Squad. If none of the player characters are aligned with Spook Squad, it is best if the *most human* among them make contact.

Contact will be through **Mr. Jones**, an *Epsilon agent* who refuses to meet with the group face-to-face. He will contact them by phone or e-mail. Quick and to the point, Mr. Jones offers the group \$100,000 in cash if they can discover what, exactly, happened at the Safe House. All that Spook Squad knows is that neighbors heard a horrific crash in the middle of the night from inside the home. There was dust, more crashes and then silence. That's all he's got. He will be reluctant to go into detail about the people at the house, but successful trust or charm rolls at -10% (since it is not being done face-to-face) will get him to reveal that the house was used as a *way point* for Spook Squad members who were being *relocated* due to blown cover. He will give the group a cell number which he says is good for only one phone call, so don't waste it.

Once at the Spook Squad safe house, which is in a very rough neighborhood, a casual search of the area reveals a suspicious unmarked van parked a couple houses down. There are two NSB agents inside. One is checking out the area with binoculars, the other is in the back, lying prone (visible if viewed through the van via thermal vision or other enhanced means of sight). Both are *basic NSB Doppelgangers* (see the **Nightbane® Role-Playing Game**, page 201). Fortunately, there appears to be no one in the house, but the Doppelgangers will have to be dealt with before the heroes can investigate. If undetected and left alone, the NSB agents are likely to notice any entrance into, and activity inside, the house, and call for back up which includes an entire NSB "strike team," all with heavy weapons and body armor, and led by an *Ashmedai*.

The trickiest part incapacitating (or killing) the NSB agents is approaching the van without being seen, but it can be done. The guy in the back of the van is asleep, so if the group can take the first agent out quietly and quickly, he doesn't stand a chance. If there is noise, he wakes, but does not have initiative in the first melee round, as he's groggy. But the first thing he does is reach for a two-way radio hand set at his side with one hand and his gun with the other.

The NSB agent in the front seat has his gun in his lap and his radio and a box of cold pizza on the seat next to him. He is in the driver's seat. He will pop off a couple rounds at an attacker, but if it is obvious they are Nightbane, Guardians or Wampyrs, he will attempt to drive off.

Killing both NSB agents is effective, but not very informative. They have typical NSB badges and the van doesn't have any info or evidence about the safe house except for an Internet map service's directions to the address from the local Federal Building that houses the local NSB office.

Capturing the NSB agents alive is far more productive. A successful Interrogation skill roll (better do it out of sight of the neighbors, however) gets one of them talking, but only if the player characters promise to spare his life. He explains that he

and the other agent were assigned to watch the house with an eye out for anyone trying to enter it. They do not know what happened inside, but have been advised *not to use telephones* anywhere in the area. They do not know why.

A successful *Words of Truth* spell or telepathic mental probe indicates they know more than they are saying. If pushed, the one NSB agent reveals that they know the area is being subject to a *secret experiment* having something to do with phones that is very important to their bosses at the *National Security Bureau (NSB)*. They have heard the word "Echelon" used, and were previously assigned to security at a new *telecommunications building* in the center of town that is meant to be a hub for all the city's land lines, and also has a large, new, radio tower with transmitters from all the major cellular companies.

Any character with the skills Streetwise, Intelligence or Cryptography will recognize the name *Echelon*. Echelon, before Dark Day, was a computer system that could allegedly monitor ALL land lines and cell phone frequencies. Using key words, like "terrorist" and "bomb," the system would "flag" telephone calls that contained details of possible threats to the United States. The U.S. government has never acknowledged the system's existence and no one seems to know what happened to Echelon after the Nightlords took control of the government. It is also unclear where, exactly, Echelon is located. Rumors have placed it in the *Washington, D.C.* area to as far away as Australia.

Note that if the player characters do not go to the Spook Squad house, the evidence from the Underground Railroad Safe House should still give them an indication that the telephones are somehow a part of what is going on. Any investigation regarding the area's cell phone or telephone system will also result in them learning about the new telecommunications building. Additionally, any character familiar with the local *ley line network* should realize that the building is sitting right on a ley line nexus.

Inside the Spook Squad safe house. Once the NSB agents are dealt with, the way is clear to go inside and investigate the Spook Squad safe house. If anyone looks through a window as they approach, it is immediately obvious that something is very wrong. The inside of the house is completely trashed, as if the floors inside collapsed in on themselves.

A simple *Pick Locks* skill roll can get the player characters through the front door quietly, but a forced entry works too, and in this neighborhood, nobody investigates the sound of barking dogs, pounding or breaking glass. Just beyond the front door the floor is completely gone. The entire inside of the house has collapsed into a huge pile of debris in what appears to be an open area below the basement. With all the debris, it is an easy climb down to the pile. Searching through the rubble reveals a blood trail that leads down, below the basement, into an old (ancient?) tunnel system in the very bedrock on which the city rests. Depending on the city, the origin of these tunnels could vary greatly. In New York, it could be the original, abandoned subway system. In Detroit, it could be the old salt mine tunnels, elsewhere they might be part of a natural cave network or mines, whatever works for where the player group is located.

The blood trail should be fairly easy to follow. There is nothing to disturb the evidence down here, though it is pitch black. Only Nightvision that allows the player characters to see in ab-

solute darkness, but modern starlight scopes also do the trick, as do flashlights, though the latter announces their presence.

The Lair of an Ashmedai

After about an hour of moving through the dark tunnel, if the player group decides to venture on, following the blood trail leads to the lair of *two Ashmedai*. The group will hear them before they see them, as they are a bit indolent after having fed on the unfortunate victims of the Spook Squad safe house.

A Perception Roll of 10 or better detects a source of light around a bend in the tunnel about 100 feet (30.5 m) before the heroes come to the lair itself. A successful Prowl skill roll can get one or two player characters close enough to eavesdrop on the Ashmedai's conversation.

The two monsters are **Yassur-adu** and **Nabi-sin**. If they detect the player characters (a failed Prowl roll or a lack of an attempt to Prowl cause the creatures to notice our heroes' approach), they will immediately attack. If not, the character(s) who successfully approaches undetected hear the following snatches of conversation:

Nabi-sin: "Didn't I tell you it would be easy? It was like grocery shopping!"

Yassur-adu: "Yes, except without having to pay for it. (Laughter.) I do not understand why you think the (unintelligible alien word) will not miss them, though."

Nabi-sin: "I told you, I don't think they know what 'it' is doing. I don't think they have control of 'it'."

Yassur-adu: "Well, if 'it' keeps acting like this and leaving us tasty little morsels, I don't care if they can't control the thing."

Nabi-sin: "Just be careful when you listen in on the calls. If 'it' realizes we are listening in 'it' may try to influence our minds too. And I don't relish the thought of waking up one day to you trying to eat me alive."

Yassur-adu: "Our minds are not as pliable as the humans so . . . wait. Do you feel that? It is at it again!"

At this point there will be some rustling and the two Ashmedai go silent. If the player characters are brave enough to try to sneak forward they are treated to the sight of two Ashmedai in their full monstrous forms in a large cavern. The two beasts are hunched over some sophisticated-looking electronic and computer equipment. The use of the *Detect Psionics* psychic ability indicates they are both actively using psionic abilities at the moment. All of the equipment has bundles of wires going up into the ceiling. There are also several pick-axes and shovels nearby, as well as the bodies of five men handcuffed together side-by-side lying on the floor. They do not appear to be moving. The light comes from a couple bare lightbulbs strung from the ceiling of the 40 foot (12.2 m) tall, 200 foot (61 m) circumference cavern. Everything is hooked up to an electrical generator the size of an office desk. There is a 5 gallon (19 liter) gasoline tank attached to it.

Covertly igniting the gas tank will destroy the generator, severely damage all the electrical equipment, and likely destroy the five men on the ground. (Remember, our heroes don't know if they are dead or alive.) However, the sabotage inflicts 2D6x10 damage to the two Ashmedai and gives the player char-

acters initiative for the first melee round if they choose to immediately attack. **Note:** If the generator's fuel is blown, there will be no light in the cavern except a few, flickering, burning bits of debris, meaning characters without an ability to see in the dark will be fighting blind or need flashlights.

Yassur-adu and Nabi-sin, NPC Rogue Ashmedai

These two vicious monsters are arrogant and cocky, particularly if not severely wounded by the exploding gas tank. The monsters attack intruders by trying to entangle, restrain, and bash them to death with their Supernatural strength. They work well together and intelligently choose their targets. Anyone who seems to be a particular threat will be focused on first, and dangerous combatants are wrapped up in their tentacles as quickly as possible and bashed against the walls or hurled across the room. Such victims suffer standard tentacle strike damage plus damage from the slam or being tossed, which does 3D6 damage and the loss of initiative and two melee attacks. This maneuver will cost the Ashmedai two attacks, however.

When S.D.C. is reduced to zero and damage start to affect Hit Points, the Ashmedai attempt to shape shift into mice and run up the wiring into the ceiling (they are arrogant, not stupid). If they succeed they are *gone*, unless someone can follow them into small areas (such as by using the Swarm Self Talent). A difficult Perception Roll will be required to see them, with a +2 bonus for any characters with nightvision or thermal-optic vision.

Note: The two Ashmedai are twins and have the same stats and skills.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 20, M.E. 18, M.A. 17, P.S. 25, P.P. 19, P.E. 27, P.B. 2, Spd 30. Attributes are considered to be Supernatural.

Hit Point: 80

S.D.C.: 290 in their natural form. They have less S.D.C. in smaller forms, but these two Ashmedai will not try to change shape until they are down to Hit Points anyway.

Horror Factor: 14

Weight: 700 lbs. (315 kg). **Height:** 12 feet (3.6 m) from head to tail. The tentacles have a reach of six feet (1.8 m).

P.P.E.: 4. **I.S.P.:** 70.

Experience Level: Fourth.

Natural Abilities: Supernatural Vision: Although the Ashmedai have no eyes in their true form, they can see via supernatural senses. They can see the invisible and in total darkness (up to 2,000 feet/610 m). This works in any and all forms it may select. Bio-regenerates 1D6x10 S.D.C./Hit Points every minute (4 melee rounds).

Shape shifting: The Ashmedai can shape shift at will into the form of any living creature, from a mouse to an elephant. It is believed that mouse-size is the size limit, and they cannot transform themselves into insects. While wearing an animal form, the Ashmedai can use all the abilities of that form (such as flight, running, swimming, etc.). The Ashmedai can even create monstrous shapes for themselves, with claws, sharp teeth, etc. (refer to the Nightbane Creation Tables in



the **Nightbane® Role-Playing Game** for some available appearances and abilities). Bio-mechanicals and other inorganic modifications are beyond their ability, however. Changing into small creatures temporarily reduces the Ashmedai's S.D.C. but not its Hit Points. Changing from one form to the next counts as one melee attack/action.

Skills of Note: The two Ashmedai are obviously well versed in communications skills, but the player characters will be able to infer that from the equipment left around once they are destroyed or driven off. The only skills that will likely factor into the encounter are their combat skills. Both have W.P. Handguns and W.P. Whip. The W.P. Whip bonuses can be applied to tentacle attacks. They also have Prowl at 56%, which they will use to attempt to escape if necessary.

Combat: Supernatural, in addition to Weapon Proficiencies. Five attacks per melee.

Damage: In true form, tentacles do a total of 4D6+16 damage. Though Ashmedai have frighteningly huge maws, they rarely bite in combat (see it as quite uncivilized, and are as likely to bite you during a fight as another person would). If they do bite, it inflicts 3D6 damage.

Bonuses: +5 to strike, parry and dodge, +5 to roll with fall or impact, +5 to pull punch, +9 to save vs magic, +7 to save vs psionics, +8 to save vs Horror Factor, +10 to damage (already included in tentacle damage), +6 to save vs poison, +2 to save vs insanity, +24% to save vs coma/death, +4 to all perception rolls, and has a 45% chance to invoke trust or intimidate.

Magic Powers: None.

Psionic Powers: Knows the following psychic abilities: Alter Aura, Empathy, Mind Block, See Aura and Telepathy.

Weapons: The Ashmedai are unlikely to use any weapons in their natural forms. There are two Heckler & Koch MP5's (2D6 damage, 660 feet (201 m) range, with three 30 round magazines each) near the five handcuffed figures. On a successful Intelligence or Undercover Ops skill roll, a player character recognizes these weapons as ones commonly used by U.S. Special Forces and Spook Squad.

When the Ashmedai are gone

Once the Ashmedai are defeated or driven away, the cavern can provide a wealth of information. If the generator was NOT destroyed, the equipment is still on and working, unless it was damaged in the battle. A state-of-the-art computer is connected to a large blue box that is connected directly into a telephone hub directly over the cavern. It is monitoring all the telephone calls going through the hub. Any character who uses *Presence Sense* or *Detect Psionics* will detect psionic power running THROUGH the phone lines. Additionally, there is a cell phone signal de-scrambler attached to the computer as well. The computer itself is running sophisticated sound analysis gear and there are several sound files that the Ashmedai have clipped, sampled and tagged.

Successful Surveillance System, Cryptography, or Computer Programming skill rolls indicate that the Ashmedai were interested in isolating voices and sounds within phone calls that would normally be inaudible to the conscious mind. Playing the

sound files reveals a very chilling, inhuman voice giving listeners horrible instructions and suggestions such as:

"They are plotting against you. Kill them all when they are asleep."

"Everyone you love lies to you."

"They are obviously not your children. Kill her and kill them!"

"Turn on the gas and handcuff yourself in the basement tonight. Then go to sleep, but hand the phone to someone else in the house before you do." This last message seems to have been repeated five different times. The Ashmedai have it flagged and marked.

On the floor nearby is a segment of natural gas piping and a wrench. Player characters, especially anyone skilled in forensics, might be able to figure out that the Ashmedai tapped in on this last set of calls to the *Spook Squad safe house*, and decided to take the unfortunate victims as a free lunch instead of allowing them to get blown to smithereens.

If the players destroyed the generator the computer is trashed, but the hard drive can be recovered easily (basic electronics or computer repair) and the information can be ferreted out. Of course, the group will have to leave the caves to do this.

Examining the bodies reveal they are the missing Spook Squad safe house residents. All are dead, strangled, but were tortured before death. All are handcuffed to one another. The keys are nowhere in sight.

A further inspection of the cave reveals a natural chimney in a small side room that leads up to a small access panel. This leads the group into a large storm water runoff pipe. The climb is fairly easy and short, requiring one Climbing skill roll. A few yards down the pipe (which is about 4 feet/1.2 m tall, requiring them to crouch), is a brick wall and a hole covered by some hastily placed plywood.

Part 2: The Hub

If the player group spends any significant amount of time between first being contacted and getting to this point in the adventure (several days or more later) they will notice news reports of increasing violence in the city. What's most unusual is that the crime is mostly domestic: husband against wife, mother against child, brother against brother. Both police and fire departments are taxed to their limits (that's assuming, under Nightlord control, that they are even trying to quell the violence). The violence seems to be spiraling out of control.

The longer our heroes wait, the more violent the situation gets, until there's rioting in the streets and something pretty close to anarchy (things are unlikely to get that far, but it could happen).

Before things get that bad, however, the player characters should have determined that the unusual deaths in the Spook Squad and the Underground Railroad safe houses are tied to the **Honeycutt Telecommunications Building**, located in the center of the city. It is a five-story office building topped with a tall communications tower used by the local telephone service and all the major cell phone companies.

The tunnel from the lair of the Ashmedai leads to the basement of the building. The player group can either push on immediately or go back to their base of operations, rest, get more information on the building and talk to contacts.

What is known about the Honeycutt Telecommunications Building: The building is five stories tall and has only been open a few weeks. All of the city's telecommunications are being run through this building as a central hub. Allegedly, this is to maximize cell coverage and create a more efficient telephone and cell phone system. However, one city planning official who had a background in communications, has disappeared after disputing the efficiency of the building, which was built with a healthy amount of city funds.

The building has contracted with a security firm that has a history of "overreacting" to security threats with *lethal force*. However, its leaders have close ties to the *Preserver Party* and it has never faced serious consequences for its actions. Additionally, the only floor that is open to the public is the main floor, which has a bill payment center.

There is a parking lot on both sides of the building, so there is no option to sneak from one roof to the other. Unless the characters can fly (which is a possibility), the only entrances are the front door, a loading dock in the back, and the entrance from underground.

Any character with an ability to sense the supernatural will detect several presences in the building, but it's hard to tell the number and location. Also, the building sits on a *ley line nexus*, something players and the Game Master should remember when using magic and psychic abilities.

The Basement of the Honeycutt Telecommunications Building

The basement is typical for an office building, with cinder block walls and a poured cement floor.

Storage room: Boxes of ceiling panels, spare light bulbs, notepads and other office supplies are stored here. Most are stacked near the back of the room, hiding the plywood board covering the hole into the sewer made by the two Ashmedai. If the player characters come in from the Ashmedai lair they will enter the building from this room. The boxes provide a good hiding space for someone coming through the hole, especially if you are a shape-changing Ashmedai. One metal fire door leads into a small hallway that wraps around a central elevator shaft. The storage room is "behind" the elevators, so the player characters need to walk *around* the hallway to get to the basement entrance to the elevators. The storage room is on the eastern side of the building.

Mechanical room: The mechanical room is a large area through a metal door on the northern side of the basement. There are low-hanging pipes that lead to a large boiler. The boiler is enclosed in a fenced-in area that is padlocked shut. The mechanical *controls* to the elevators are located here as well, and can be used to shut the elevators down or cut power to them. Additionally, a Perception Roll of 12 or better allows one of the player characters to spot a small key on top of a nearby pipe. It is the *emergency key* for the elevator, but it is unmarked

and there is no way for the player characters to know that, short of using *Object Read*.

The room also contains the building's *air conditioning system* and *water controls*.

Electrical Room: On the southern side of the wrap-around hallway surrounding the elevator shaft is the electrical room. Inside are the electric power controls to the building. The door is locked, however, and there is a small *card swipe machine* to the side of the door. The door has 300 S.D.C. and an A.R. of 14. However, someone with *Lightning Rider*, or an ability to fit through small cracks (such as turning into a mass of insects) could get into the room and open the door from the inside. Otherwise, our heroes need to get a security card from one of the building security guards or staff.

If the player characters are able to get into the room they find that it takes up a large portion of the bottom of the building.

To the right of the doorway is a *small hall* that leads to a large electrical box that controls the central power to the building. Off to the right of the box is a large *backup generator*. If power is cut to the building, the generator will automatically kick on. If the player characters attempt to mess with the box without any electrical skills there is a 30% chance of someone receiving a powerful electrical jolt that does 6D6 damage and stuns him for 1D4 melee rounds. It will also cause the lights to flicker in the building and bring down a mechanic to see if there is a problem.

On a far wall there is a telephone box. It has been broken into (possibly by the Ashmedai). Examination by any character with the *Surveillance Systems* or *Electrical Engineering* skill reveals this is a highly advanced system requiring a massive amount of power. It has a fiber optic line with many times the capacity of the highest speed broadband internet lines currently in civilian use. Any character who can *Detect Psionics* in use can feel psychic energy radiating from the line. There is also the slightest sense of an *evil supernatural presence*. Even without using psychic abilities, those with psychic sensitive powers feel uneasy as they approach the telephone system. Anyone with the psychic ability *Sixth Sense* immediately senses danger from the system.

Destroying or shutting down this system immediately sets the entire building on alert and lock down. All the doors will lock and two fully equipped *NSB squads* arrive in the basement within 2D4 minutes. In the meantime, building security will be alerted that there is a problem in the basement and come down to investigate, expecting trouble.

Trying to eavesdrop on any conversations or listening in on any calls currently going in or out of the system exposes that character to the *Echelon Entity*, requiring a save vs psychic attack. Failure to save means the character is filled with *Hypnotic Suggestions* to protect the communication system and to attack anyone (friends included) who does not belong in the room. The suggestion lasts for 4D4 melee rounds before the character can regain control of himself. Even Nightbane are susceptible to this Hypnotic Suggestion.

To the left of the entrance is a small area for building maintenance and security staff. There is a 50% chance of there being *two security guards* present. The guards are human and have the same stats as *Corrupted Police* (**Nightbane® RPG**, page 199).

There are several lockers in this area, but all are locked with padlocks or simple combination locks that one can find at any hardware store. A simple Pick Locks skill roll opens the lock, as does a twist by any character with a Supernatural P.S. of 25 or better. Four of the lockers have building security uniforms. Obviously, this could be a big advantage to the player group who can use them as a disguise. Other building security officers, however, are likely (60% chance) to notice that the faces do not match the name tags, so it would be best if the player characters steer clear of them. A small break room is also located here. It has soda and candy vending machines, a kitchenette, sofa, card table and small television mounted on the wall. There is no security gear – no guns or portable radios – because they are stored elsewhere.

The elevators: All but one are standard office building elevators. The one exception requires the swipe of a security card to get the elevator to open and go anywhere but the first floor. The emergency fire box can override the security system, if one has the key (this is the key from the mechanical room).

The First Floor

This is the most normal part of the building. There is a large central lobby with a security desk, where two security guards are stationed to question all visitors from the street and have “official” visitors sign a log book.

There is also a **security room** with monitor screens for security cameras throughout the building. There is one security guard inside. If the player characters enter the first floor security room (they would have to subdue or distract the guards at the desk first), they will be surprised to see that every camera from the second floor on up is showing nothing but static. If the guard is questioned about this he looks at the player characters like they are crazy and tells them that the cameras are working just fine and he can see everything clearly. Any character who can read, however, will see that the computer is clearly indicating the cameras are *offline* in big, blinking red letters that the security guard insists he does not see (he can even describe what’s on each monitor).

The security room also contains four security belts complete with a 9 mm pistol and one spare ammo clip, a handheld digital radio tuned into the building’s security frequency, a nightstick (does 1D8 damage) and a pair of handcuffs. The other security guards have the exact same equipment on them, plus they have building security swipe cards.

Between the first floor and basement, there are six security guards in all. Once the player group has dealt with them all, they do not need to worry about them anymore. **Note:** If the group enters the building at night there are only three guards: One at the desk, one in the monitor room and one wandering the halls.

If any of the guards are questioned, they tell the player characters the following: 1. The building is the base for a *secret government communications project*. 2. No one has used the elevators in the last two days. They seem far too nonchalant about this, and checking their auras indicates they are currently under the effect of some kind of psychic ability. They don’t know anything else.

The bill payment center is just an empty room with only the drywall in place. It is not slated to open to the public for some time.

There are also **rest rooms** and a **janitorial closet** on this floor.

Note: Odd as it may seem, there is no evidence of an emergency stairwell, just the elevators.

The Second Floor

Stepping off the elevator onto the second floor, our heroes immediately realize something has gone horribly wrong in this building. (If they did not figure it out already.) The elevator opens onto a “cubicle farm” containing several dozen cubical work stations for administrative staffers that is in a state of total disarray. Papers are strewn everywhere, and a few of the cubicle walls have been knocked over.

Right at the foot of the elevator is the body of a young office worker. Presumably she was running for the elevator when she was stabbed in the back by another co-worker with a pair of scissors. There are bullet holes in the wall and at least seven dead bodies strewn throughout the area. All appear to have been killed by co-workers, who also suffered a grisly fate. There are two executive offices in the back. The window of one is covered in blood from floor to ceiling. Inside is the body of the office manager who appears to have had his brains smashed out with his computer monitor and then eviscerated!

There is only one person alive on this floor, and she is in the second executive office. The woman is an office administrator who is sitting at her desk. She wears a hands free, telephone answering head set, and is busy answering a steady stream of phone calls. She is polite, professional, and exuberant, telling each caller that the manager will return their call as soon as possible, or answering callers’ questions efficiently, in the name of the manager. Her hair is in disarray, she is missing a couple of teeth, her clothing is splattered in blood, she has a dozen other small wounds and bruises, and one of her arms is visibly broken. She seems not to notice any of this.

She ignores any “visitors” until anyone comes within 10 feet (3 m) of her, at which point she picks up the Colt .45 (4D6 damage per bullet) on her desk and begins firing it at the closest person. Thankfully, every blast is a wild shot with no bonuses. There are four bullets left in the gun, but once it is empty she continues to pull the trigger, even though nothing is happening. The woman does not dodge or parry any incoming attacks and any attack that does more than 10 points of damage kills her.

If subdued, the woman working the telephone can be saved, provided she gets medical attention in the next few hours. She is also willing to answer questions, but does not have much information to share. She cannot seem to remember anything from beyond the day before yesterday, and even then her memory is spotty at best. For example, she doesn’t remember shooting at the player characters just a moment before, and insists she doesn’t even own a gun. Once her headphones are removed, she starts to behave like a very confused, but normal, person.

She can report the following: The staff was told they are working on a secret government project whose aim was to be



able to monitor all telephone and cell phone calls in an effort to screen for terrorist activity. The administrative staff on this floor processed all the paperwork and managed all the office requirements. The third floor has the analysis laboratories where collected data is sifted through for important information gathered by a *supercomputer* known as *Echelon*. The fourth floor has the control network that manages *Echelon*'s access to the telephone system and receives and records the raw data. The fifth floor is top secret, but is believed to house the *Echelon* computer system, server and other computer hardware.

She is horrified to realize that all the other workers are dead, or missing, and has no idea what happened. Nor does she know why she was answering the telephone in that manner, or how she received her injuries. **Note:** Any character who listens in on the headphones without the protection of a *Mind Block* must make a save vs psychic attack or immediately take her place at the desk, answering calls and behaving exactly the same way. Removing the headphones snaps the person out of it, but he has no memory of taking over the job of answering calls.

Examining the paperwork strewn around the office is a slow and haphazard process. The only way to find anything worthwhile is to make a successful Research roll at -15%. The computers are all worthless, as the entire system is *locked up*. Further, they do not contain any sensitive information. Papers in the manager's office do, however, confirm that this is *The Echelon Two Pilot Project*, and indicate the community as the "test city." There are detailed records of the city's telephone system, contracts with all the major cell phone operators, and other evi-

dence showing that this is a government project that involves every telephone system in the city. What's more, the project is clearly run by the *National Security Bureau (the NSB)*.

Third Floor

No matter what button is pushed, the elevator will not go any higher than this floor. If the fourth or fifth floors are pressed, the elevator stops at the third floor and the doors open.

Any character with *Sixth Sense* will sense danger before the elevator doors open. Any character using *Sense Evil* or *Presence Sense* feel several supernatural presences beyond the door.

Upon the elevator opening, the player group immediately notice the smashed bodies of two *Hollow Men* in the hall just outside the elevator. They appear to have been cut to pieces and no *Namtar* seem to be present.

The entire floor is a series of glass-enclosed, sound-proofed listening studios, where analysts would sift through hours and hours of recorded conversations flagged by *Echelon* as being of potential interest.

Like the previous floor, it appears the staff went crazy and killed each other in an orgy of violence. The big difference is that most of the workers on this floor were supernatural beings, including *Doppelgangers*, *Hollow Men*, a couple *Hounds*, and others. Since these beings have supernatural strength, desks and furniture have been thrown around like paperweights. Bodies lie smashed under large banks of sound analysis computers, and at least two humans who worked here, hung themselves.

The immediate threat, however, is located in one sound analysis room directly ahead. *Four Hounds* seem to have something cornered in an air vent and are stabbing at it with their spears. When the elevator doors open, the *Hounds* immediately sense the presence of the player characters, stop what they are doing and rush to attack them. All four *Hounds* fight viciously and make no effort to defend themselves. All fight to the death.

If the combat lasts more than two melee rounds, two dark shapes scurry out from the air vent and attempt to get by the fighting and into the elevator. The two creatures are the *Namtar* in their true, bug, form. If successful, the bugs take the elevator to the first floor and escape, calling for immediate backup from the NSB. In 10 minutes a huge force of no less than *four NSB assault squads* arrive and storm the building, securing the area and eliminating EVERYONE they find inside

It will take the *Namtar* 1D4+1 melee rounds to sprint from the vent to their human bodies, grab the passcards out of the pants with their mandibles, open the doors to the elevators and get inside. More about them in a couple paragraphs.

Once the Hounds have been defeated, a search of the area reveals that one of the *Hollow Men*'s bodies is lying on top of a briefcase. The briefcase is locked, but can be forced or picked open. It contains orders to immediately begin *shutting down* the pilot project and "unanchoring the *Echelon* Entity from the ley line nexus." The orders come from NSB Command and are dated two days ago.

If the Namtar are captured, the creatures are willing to talk, provided the heroes promise to release them. Actually, threats to kill the damned things on the spot if they do not talk, gets one of them spilling its guts in an effort to save its own

skin. Whatever the situation, the Namtar try to tell the player characters as *little as possible*.

The Namtar tell the player characters they did NOT work at this facility, but came here when the NSB began to worry something had gone wrong and may be losing control of the facility. They reveal that there is *a creature of pure psychic energy* anchored in a device on the top floor. This Entity monitors all telephone and cell phone calls in the city and is capable of implanting Hypnotic Suggestions and emotions (Empathic Transmission) to manipulate and bend hapless users to its will. The Nightlords had intended to use this to sow dissension and wreak havoc in governments and communities that have resisted Nightlord rule. They know the Entity is sentient, powerful and malicious, and that they needed to destroy the machinery anchoring the Entity to this plane of existence before things spun out of control. They were too late. Still, if they can destroy the machine that is the Entity's link to Earth, it would be flung back into the Astral Plane.

The Namtar do not know the full capabilities of the monster beyond that it has powerful psychic powers. They have not been able to report back to their NSB masters, so the Nightlords do not know what is occurring in their little project.

If the player characters release the Namtar, the creatures immediately flee the building to bring back 1D4+2 NSB squads. It is best if the player characters secure the creatures somewhere where they cannot escape until they are ready to leave, assuming they don't kill them.

If the player group takes time to scrounge around carefully, successful Research and Surveillance skill rolls help them find copies of calls regarding the *Underground Railroad* and *Spook Squad safe houses*. Just listening to the CD copies of the various conversations shows nothing unusual beyond the fact that the NSB knew enough about the safe houses to have them monitored. If the player characters run the discs through the analysis programs on the Ashmedai computer, or make a successful Computer Programming roll on their own computer, they are able to filter out a sub-vocal voice hypnotically inspiring those in the houses to hate one another and commit violence. The voice is intent on planting thoughts of jealousy, paranoia, malice and murder into the minds of telephone and cell phone users. In the case of the Underground Railroad safe house, the voice inspired one member to get up at night and kill everyone in the house while they slept. In the Spook Squad House, the voice commanded them to turn on the gas stove, close all the windows and doors and handcuff themselves in the basement. **Game Master Note:** This is a good place to drop other plot points and useful bits of information that could lead the player characters onto other adventures. Maybe they overhear orders to track down and apprehend a young Nightbane that the Underground Railroad is unaware of. Maybe *Echelon* recorded cell phone calls between members of the Warlords who have discovered a hidden cache of Spook Squad weapons and plan to rob it. Or even communications between NSB agents, minions and a Night Prince with the time and date of an upcoming attack on a faction or some special operation. The possibilities are endless.

The only way to get off this level and continue upwards is an *emergency fire stairwell* at the end of the main corridor. The

door is blocked by a large recording system that weighs half a ton (1,000 lbs.). It looks like it was deliberately moved to block access to the stairs, but at least unlike the lower levels, the door can be found and accessed. (**Note:** The woman and the Namtar know about this door and will tell the characters, if asked, how they can get to the 4th and 5th floors.) The area below, and access to the lower part of the building via the stairs, is blocked off by huge amounts of office equipment that have been placed in front of the doors, concealing them, as well as by equipment that was crammed into the stairwell at the second floor landing.

The only way to go is up.

Fourth Floor

Arriving at the door to the fourth floor emergency stairwell entrance, the player characters see that the window has been blocked by something metal. Anyone who can detect magic will sense magic coming from the door itself, as if it is under the effects of a spell. From this side, however, it is impossible to determine what the spell could be.

In truth, the door is protected by a Cybermage security box placed above it on the inside. The box is a small birdcage with a blue jay pinned with copper wire and bound, wings spread, to the cage's bars. If the door is opened, a mystic alarm screeches throughout the entire floor, letting anyone present know there are enemies about. Since the alarm does not endanger the group, Sixth Sense does not detect any danger.

There are numerous ways to detect the box and disable the alarm without setting it off, provided the player characters think on their feet and have the correct abilities handy. The *Shadow Slide Talent* will get a Nightbane or Shadow Warlock *under* the door. *Lightning Rider* will enable a character to travel *through* the doorknob or the frame. *Astral Projection* will allow someone to fly through the door and peek on the other side. A Secondary Vampire character can turn to mist and any Nightbane with *Swarm Self* of something small enough to slip under a one-inch door crack will be able to get *under* the door.

Once on the other side of the door, the box is fairly obvious (Perception Roll of 8) and can be dismantled without setting off the alarm; the door is alarmed, the box is not. Furthermore, a successful Understanding Principles of Magic skill roll enables a player character to know that the box can just be smashed or unplugged safely to disarm it.

The room just beyond the stairwell door is almost like an airlock. This is a "clean room" with signs that entrants should take all magnetic devices, cell phones, and electronic equipment out of their pockets and store them here until their return.

To the side of the door is a wall of what appear to be *safety deposit boxes*, each one with a little key. Three of the boxes are missing their keys. One is bent open and bloody.

The bloody box seems to have been peeled open by someone who started out using a tool of some kind, but then resorted to using bare hands, cutting and scraping themselves raw to get at what was inside. Whatever it was, they got it, and the box is empty.

The second box with no key: If forced open (50 S.D.C. to do so, or a successful Pick Locks skill roll) contains the following note:

To whomever finds this note,

I do not have a lot of time, so I'm going to be quick as I can. I'm pretty sure that by writing this, I'm forfeiting my life. But that doesn't matter at this point.

This facility needs to be shut down, and if possible, destroyed. Look, I've always known our bosses were into some dark crap ever since they hired me for the NSB, but I never suspected anything like this. The stuff I've seen in the last few weeks would convince anybody that the Internet isn't far off the mark when it comes to monsters and government conspiracy theories.

I'm no saint, and they knew that when they hired me. Now I'm starting to think that's why they hired me.

We are working on both scanning and being able to send hypnotic suggestions through telephone and cell phone lines. Don't ask me how, because I don't know the details, but somehow they're doing it. Then, they lost control of the computer. Heck, I don't even think it's a computer anymore. They talk about it like it's alive. I think it is some kind of artificial intelligence, like in the science fiction movies. But they've lost control of it, and I think it's the boss's fault.

My boss is **Dr. Winslow Heron**, and he's crazy. Always bragging about his damn dogs, promising to bring them in one day and then laughing. Well, two days ago, I found weird things in his office. Mutilated animals and machine parts. I think the Doctor has been doing experiments on live animals, blending them with machinery and somehow keeping them alive. Don't know if it's experiments in bionics or nano-technology or something else, but it was gruesome. Some serious Dr. Frankenstein stuff.

Why is this guy in charge when he is obviously not stable? I knew the answer to that question after meeting the guy for five minutes. He's some kind of warped, evil genius. He's got his weird bio-tech experiments scattered everywhere throughout the offices. One day, I swear I heard fluttering from the alarm system over the stairwell door. It was like a bird or something was alive in there. I tried prying the cover off, but one of the Doctor's assistants warned me to go away, or lose my job.

I was told to just do my job, which is keeping the cell tower functioning at peak efficiency. Not easy with all the traffic they are running through it.

I was on the roof working on the antenna today when it all started. First, there was the screaming, then the killing. I've been hiding on the roof until now, waiting for things to blow over, but I don't think it's going to blow over. I think the computer has gone haywire and is brainwashing or controlling the entire staff. It may have been controlling them all along. Don't know how I escaped it. Dumb luck, I'm sure, or overlooked, maybe? I hid for a while in the stairwell, but it occurred to me that the phone system is still connected to the main grid. This sentient computer seems to be driving people crazy and making them kill one another. It has to be shut down.

I've done a lot of questionable stuff in my life, so maybe I'm just trying to bribe my way into heaven, but I'm going to go inside and try to shut off access to the phone grid. I'm writing this crap down, because if I don't succeed, somebody has to shut this building off from the outside world. Or better yet, destroy that damned computer!!! It shouldn't be too hard.

Oh, and I pried the cover off the alarm system over the door before I wrote this, and found a live blue jay pinned with wiring to its cage. There's another from this room into the main telecommunications control room with a bird in it too. What the hell is going on? What are these things?

If you run into Doctor Frankenstein Junior, don't worry, he's a lightweight nerd-type and easy enough to deal with. I thought I heard dogs barking from his office earlier, so he might have brought his pooches in today. I'm not worried, I can handle a couple dogs if I have to.

The letter is unsigned.

The third keyless box contains a pager and a keyless entry card key for a Mercedes. The pager number is unfamiliar to the player characters, but the prefix is the same one used throughout the building, which by this point, they would have seen on numerous telephones at their location.

What to do next?

If the group has opened the storage boxes and found the letter, then they should know that there is another alarm system on the other side of the door leading into the *telecommunications room*. The door is locked from the inside, and there is no apparent way to open it from this side. There is an intercom button to the side of the door.

Pressing the *call button* gets the player characters nothing but static.

This door is much more secure than the previous one from the stairwell (A.R. 14, 300 S.D.C.). It is almost airtight and only someone who could turn into a shadow, mist or similar can get through the door without opening it and setting off the alarm. Furthermore, the door is designed to ground any electrical current that hits it, so anyone entering the room beyond is free from static electricity that could damage sensitive electrical equipment. This means that Lightning Riders who try to go through the door will find themselves jolted back to the floor, and stunned for 1D4 melee rounds. Swarm Self will not work on this door, because there is not enough space for anything but the tiniest of ants.

The alarm is set to go off if the door is opened, which means it must be moved on its hinges to set the alarm off. If the player characters blow or cut a hole in the door without moving it, then they can get through the door without setting off the alarm; an unlikely scenario, but one worth mentioning.

If they can get through the door without opening it, the alarm can be disabled just like the previous one. There's a good chance, however, that they may have to force the door open and set off the alarm.

The noise on the other side of the door is deafening, as every phone line in the city seems to be being transmitted through the room's speaker system at maximum volume (the door was soundproof so there was no indication until the player characters get into the room). Everyone must make a save vs pain (15 or better, P.E. bonuses apply), or the extreme noise will cause them significant discomfort. Besides not being able to hear each other, they are -4 on initiative, -4 on Perception Rolls, -1 attack per melee and -15% on all skills. A successful roll using any applicable computer or communications skill helps the player

characters find the switch on the dizzying array of computer equipment and terminals to shut the noise off or turn it down to a manageable level.

On the other side of the door is a high-tech telecommunications laboratory that is one large, circular room lined with terminals, switchboards, and computer displays. Two bodies are on the floor in the center of the room. One is wearing a white lab coat and has been strangled with a power cord. The other is wearing technician's coveralls, has on a tool belt, and looks like he has been killed by a wild animal. The bite marks have severe burn marks around the edges as well, *suggesting* it might have been some type of Nightbane or previously unknown supernatural creature. A successful First Aid or Basic Electronics or Electrical Engineering skill roll enables the characters examining the chewed up body to determine that the wounds bear a similarity to electrical burns.

The other body that appears to be a strangled lab tech has a high-level security access card in his front pocket.

The Alarm

If the player characters set off either alarm on their way to this room, they are met by a pack of four huge mastiffs (attack dogs) and *Doctor Heron*. The poor beasts appear to have been tortured, and have what looks like power packs fused to their backs and their teeth are capped with metal tips. Energy can be seen arcing back and forth between their teeth.

The mastiffs immediately attack, while Heron (detailed later) stands back and tries to incapacitate any player characters who come toward him. If the group has obvious Nightbane or other supernatural creatures who are identifiable on sight, Doctor Heron will flee from the room through a door on the far end and lock the door behind him, hoping the dogs finish the intruders off for him.

Heron's Attack Mastiffs

The cruel Doctor Heron has taken these dogs, abused them and turned them into killing machines. Additionally, every time these dogs bite, the victim suffers the effects of an energy bolt. This is particularly nasty, since this building is on a ley line nexus.

Size: Body: about 5 feet (1.5 m); tails have been cut down to just nubs.

Weight: 100 lbs (45 kg).

A.R.: Not applicable.

Hit Points: 20

S.D.C.: 25

P.P.E.: 1D6 (lowered because some of it is powering the P.P.E. for Heron's magical alterations).

Attacks per Melee: Three.

Damage: Bite does 2D6+2 damage, plus an additional 4D6 in magical energy damage from the spell *Energy Bolt*. This is what the power packs fused into their backs and the caps on their teeth are for!

Bonuses: +3 for initiative, +4 to strike, +2 to dodge, and impervious to Horror Factor. The animals fight to the death.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 30 feet (9 m), Prowl 45% (but won't really try), Track (by smell) 80%, Swimming 65%, can



leap 4 feet (1.2 m) high and 6 feet (1.8 m) long, and like most canines, can perform a leaping pounce.

Speed: 50 (35 mph/56 km).

Behavior: These were once well-trained guard dogs that have been turned into vicious, savage monsters. From their training they recognize weapons and bite hands wielding obvious weapons first. They also attempt to take victims down and go for the neck. The animals attack "supernatural" targets (that means Nightbane) before going for human targets, due to natural dog instincts and their ability to sense the supernatural and magic. They are crazed killers that fight until they are killed or otherwise incapacitated.

If the player characters were able to enter the room without setting off the alarms, neither the dogs nor Doctor Heron are yet aware of their presence. That happens the minute anyone turns down the sound in the room. Once they do that they have 1D4 melee rounds (15-60 seconds) before the dogs and the doctor arrive.

Everything in the room is a clear indication that *Echelon* is still active and linked to the city's telephone network. Smashing and destroying the equipment in the room severs Echelon's connection to the telephones and cell phones throughout the community, but it will also bring Doctor Heron and his dogs, if they were not engaged before.

If the communications room is destroyed and the link severed, the player characters have achieved a significant victory. The Nightlords will never willingly connect Echelon again, realizing that they cannot control it (for now). However, if the

player group leaves at this point and Doctor Heron is alive, he will unanchor the Echelon Entity (he is its slave at this point) from the nexus and attempt to rebuild the Echelon System elsewhere on his own. He and Echelon will also seek revenge against those responsible for severing its access to the city communications system.

The T-shaped corridor

Our heroes can leave this room through a door on the far end. It leads to a T-shaped intersection, and Heron's Mastiffs, if the group has not faced them before, are in the hallway waiting to attack.

Going to the right leads to several trashed offices. The equipment in these rooms has been destroyed and their occupants slain. There is plenty of material here, if the player characters take the time to sift through the mess, to detail the true nature of the *Echelon Project*, though odds are, time is of the essence.

According to the papers, which are steeped in the quasimagic technobabble of Cybermages (requires a successful Understanding Principles of Magic or Lore: Geomancy to really have a basic understanding unless one of the character is a Cybermage), the NSB took the basic design of the Echelon system and had a Cybermage create a massive device on the fifth floor that merges the system with a Greater Astral Entity that calls itself Echelon. The being/device must be placed on a ley line or nexus, and be able to tap into as many telephone and cell phone lines as possible. The NSB intended to use the machine Entity to eavesdrop on telephone calls, identify enemies (such as Nightbane, Guardians and vampires) and then, if possible, convince them to fight among themselves, turn themselves in, or lead the NSB to more of their kind. This city was a test program for what would eventually be a nationwide, and then worldwide, initiative! What the NSB and the Cybermage did not anticipate is that the ley line has made the creature and its powers of suggestion even stronger than usual, enabling it to implant powerful suggestions bordering on complete mind control!

Going to the left after leaving the telecommunications room leads to *Doctor Heron's office*. If the player group has not faced him before, they will face him now. He will not allow himself to be taken prisoner, because Echelon will not allow him to surrender. If forcibly subdued, the doctor will not willingly talk or reveal anything, saying only that the heroes do not know what they are dealing with and will soon die.

If Telepathy is used to probe his mind or he is induced to talk by magic like Words of Truth, Doctor Heron tells the player characters about the true nature of Echelon (if they have not learned it themselves already), and if asked how to destroy Echelon, he tells them that destroying the *Housing Chamber* dislodges the Entity from the nexus, weakening it, but that they must quickly destroy the creature before it escapes to the Astral Plane. Fighting it on the Astral Plane would be akin to suicide.

Fifth Floor

To get to the fifth floor, the player characters must have procured a security card from either Heron or the dead acolyte from the telecommunications center and go back to the stairwell. The

entrance to the floor is protected by a high security door (A.R. 17, 850 S.D.C.) that is like a vault door. The only way to open it without bashing the door down is to use one of the cards.

Echelon, of course, is waiting for them.

This entire floor is one large room filled with strange mechanical devices. Bundles of wires snake across the floor, ceiling and walls. Various odd and somewhat arcane-looking mechanical devices are crammed into every corner, giving the room a cluttered, almost claustrophobic, if high-tech, atmosphere. Everything in the room seems to lead to a central black metal column that stretches from floor to ceiling. This is the Echelon containment device, and the evil Entity inside knows they are here to kill it.

If the group attempts to talk to Echelon, it is more than happy to converse with them, but it will make several attempts to implant Hypnotic Suggestions to induce the members of the party to give up and surrender, feel helpless and go away, or protect it from anyone trying to harm it, including other members of their own group.

If a captured Doctor Heron was taken along with the group, he'll do everything he can to help Echelon and stop them from destroying the creature or his work.

If these efforts fail and the player characters get aggressive or the Entity uses up its store of I.S.P., Echelon attacks.

Echelon's first attack will be directed toward the most powerful psychic in the group, or barring that, the character with the most P.P.E. The attack is an attempt to drain I.S.P. or P.P.E. to fuel its own psychic abilities.

Echelon then erects a Telekinetic Force Field around the housing chamber and attempts to kill or break the will of the attackers with Empathic Transmission, Bio-Manipulation, Telekinesis and Psychic Mirage psionic attacks.

If the Echelon housing chamber (the black column) is destroyed, the Entity is ripped free from the ley line nexus, but for one melee round (15 seconds), Echelon is stunned and helpless. However, it is in its Astral form, so only magic, energy attacks and psychic attacks (like Spirit Attack, Shadow Bolt and Empathic Transmission) will affect it. Furthermore, the Entity is invisible to all but psychics and young children, unless someone can see the invisible.

Once the Entity has recovered, if it is severely wounded, the creature flees into the Astral Plane to plot its revenge, thus it is best if the player characters destroy it while it is disoriented.

If the Entity is unharmed, it is overconfident and arrogant, and stays around to fight for 1D4+2 more melee rounds before fleeing.

Whether the group destroys the thing or it flees, it is time to get out of here. Any character who was under the effects of Echelon is now free, but the Nightlord controlled police are well on their way. So is an NSB squad of investigators. The basement entrance is still a secure route out of the building, but the group still has to use the elevators to get to the first floor and back to the secret tunnel. If the heroes did not use that entrance, or want to leave another way, there is a Mercedes S.U.V. in the parking lot that matches the keys found in the storage box on the fourth floor. The group can, of course, hurry and try to leave via the front door, or they can leave by the roof.

The Roof

It is possible that one or more of the player characters have the ability to fly and see the rooftop as a viable means of exit. There is little up there except an air conditioning unit, the large cellular broadcast tower and a door leading from the emergency stairwell.

If the heroes entering the building from the roof, they enter via the stairwell, but they would have to have gone to the fourth floor before they get the key to Echelon's chamber. The same key cards will work for the elevator as well if they wish to leave by the lower levels.

A character who can make himself small, a gas, mist or nearly insubstantial can get into Echelon's chamber via the air conditioning system. But this is dangerous, as it means the character must face Echelon alone. However, he could open the security door from the inside and let the other characters in. However, if this adventure started with a rooftop entrance, the heroes will have no knowledge of what Echelon is or how to beat it. Furthermore, Doctor Heron and his hounds can be summoned by Echelon to help dispatch them, and any mind controlled henchmen or guards could be summoned to attack those on the roof or in the stairwell.

Exiting by the Roof is simple. The door to the roof opens from the inside, they exit, and they can fly away, or scale the wall of the back of the building and get away. Of course, a rooftop escape is only viable if the characters can fly or climb down. Remember, there are no other tall buildings nearby, only the two, shorter, parking structures.

Adventure Aftermath

If the characters were fairly cautious, there should be no pursuit from the NSB, the authorities or any other Nightlord minions. The NSB will have its hands full explaining the "accident" at the telecommunications building as the work of a disgruntled telephone technician. They will, of course, cover up any connection between the telecommunications building and the string of violent crimes that have rocked the city. That is easy, because nobody will make the connection. Nor will anyone believe magic, an Entity or government conspiracy played any part in the murder spree or increase in crime or violence.

If the player characters were able to destroy the Entity, then it is extremely unlikely that the Nightlords will try this experiment again. Not only did they lose control of the situation, but they know there are Nightbane out there someplace who knows about Project Echelon and know how to destroy it.

If the player characters did not destroy the Echelon Entity and/or Doctor Heron escaped, the Nightlords will pursue the Entity and the Doctor to discover what happened, what went wrong, and whether they can salvage anything from the project or even try again with better safeguards in place. The Nightlords would also like to find out who the player characters are and capture them for interrogation, but these "mystery men" are the least of their concern. More likely than not, the Nightlords will consider the Echelon Project a total failure and seek to destroy the Entity and the doctor simply to clean up their mess, and to

make sure no one else can ever try to resurrect the Echelon Project.

If the characters discovered the nature of the Echelon program and determined what happened to the people in the Underground Railroad safe house, then they can count *Lisa Torrence* as one of their permanent contacts and ally. Lisa Torrence is a seventh level Nightbane, and a Conductor for the Underground Railroad. She is an excellent Underground Railroad contact and works directly with the local Arbiter.

Her three contact skills are Undercover Ops (85%), Streetwise (54%) and Forgery (60%). She can help characters disappear via the Underground Railroad in case of an emergency, and she can also help witnesses, journalists, contacts and other people valuable to the player characters to disappear or lay low for awhile, as necessary.

While there is no contact opportunity with the *Spook Squad*, they will pay the \$100,000 they promised as long as the player characters are able to piece together how their men died (they were under hypnotic control by Echelon who compelled them to kill themselves, but the two rogue Ashmedai eavesdropped on the calls and decided to make their agents a meal instead). If the characters give the Spook Squad the details of the Echelon Project, above and beyond what happened to their safe house, Spook Squad will call on the characters again in the future for more investigative or wetworks operations, and will award the characters with a small measure of trust seldom given to outsiders who are not actual card-carrying members of Spook Squad.

Crime in the city will return to normal levels (which is probably still pretty bad) and any claims that there was a surge in violence will be dismissed by the media and the authorities as "a statistical blip."

The fate of the Honeycutt Telecommunications Building: The massacre inside the building will be described as a "disgruntled" telephone employee gone mad. The building will be later designated as an NSB field office (can't let a good nexus go to waste), and the basement entrance will be sealed up and the section of tunnel that led to it will be filled in. The security will be changed as well, making the captured security clearance cards useless.

If the player characters stole the Mercedes from the parking lot they will need to ditch it in a few days, as the NSB and local police will be on the lookout for the vehicle.

If Echelon escaped, the player characters can count on the Entity looking to spread its misery elsewhere. If the Doctor and Echelon both escaped, they will likely be gunning for the player characters, since the player group know about Echelon's abilities and weaknesses. Echelon's reappearance elsewhere in the country should be marked by a gradual surge in domestic violence, employees going "postal" on co-workers, small isolated rioting, and other random acts of senseless violence perpetrated by usually non-violent people against friends and loved ones. But the player characters should be aware that if they notice, then the Nightlords will notice too. The only difference being that they know how to stop Echelon, while the Nightlords do not.

The Echelon Entity

Echelon, as the creature calls itself, was once a normal Greater Astral Entity living on the Inner Plane. It was oblivious to the war of light and dark until, through Doctor Heron and sorcerers serving the Nightlords, Echelon was summoned to Earth and bound to the Echelon Project Housing Chamber.

At first, the Entity was bent to the will of the Nightlords, and made to use its own psychic powers through the city's telephone and cell phone lines to spy on enemies and cause others to go crazy. But either through sheer negligence or just malice, the Housing Chamber's design inflicted unending agony upon the Echelon Entity which has slowly, but surely driven the monster insane.

The Entity now sees itself as Echelon the Great, and resents the pain and enslavement inflicted on it by the Nightlords. What's more, putting it in touch with the minds of a large population center unleashed a flood of unfamiliar emotions. Hate, fear, agony, love, affection, greed and violence all came flooding into Echelon's psyche. The Entity lost itself in the cacophony of emotions and came to thrive on them. Thus, it no longer seeks relief from the unending "mind noise of the corporeals," as it calls humans and other beings that live on the physical plane, but enjoys, cherishes and craves them.

The Entity expresses its own misery or twisted, masochistic delight the only way that it can, through psychic means. All of the carnage, hatred and anger it is flooding into the minds of innocent victims are just a reflection of its own tortured emotional state.

Unfortunately, Echelon has found joy by inflicting its misery upon others and making other people suffer and die. The powerful emotions it incites are like a drug to the fiend, and it has become addicted to the rush that human emotions provide it. The rush of sorrow, fear, agony and other emotions, brings the monster relief from its own disturbed mind and suffering.

Unless Echelon itself is destroyed, it is likely to try to find another nexus to anchor itself to and wreak whatever havoc it can. Additionally, due to its forced linkage with machinery through Cybermagic, Echelon is now able to slowly infest and infect any communications network it can link itself to.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 18, M.E. 20, M.A. 14, P.S. 16, P.P. 20, P.E. 21, P.B. varies with shape, Spd 30.

Hit Points: 250 (no S.D.C.).

Housing Chamber: A.R. 13, 300 S.D.C. (when destroyed, the body of an unfortunate Nightbane that was used to power the device will be seen briefly before it dissipates in a pool of black light.)

Size: Varies with shape.

Horror Factor: 12 for non-psychics, 16 for anyone with ANY Psychic Sensitive abilities, unless they use a Mind Block, which lowers the Horror Factor back to 12.

P.P.E.: 14

I.S.P.: See psychic vampirism below. The Entity is likely to have some (1D6x10+32) I.S.P. stored up and available to it whenever encountered.

Level: 8th level Greater Astral Entity.

Natural Abilities: Echelon is invisible in the physical plane except to psychics, young children and some animals. When not anchored to the Echelon system, the Entity can fly up to 100 mph (160 kph) and can pass through walls. In the Astral Plane, Echelon's form is constantly shifting as it uses Telepathy to read the surface thoughts of living beings nearby, and then takes a shape that plays off of their fears. If it is prevented from doing this (by a Group Mind Block, for example), it is generally shaped as an amorphous blob topped with a mass of ectoplasmic tentacles. In both the physical world and the Astral Plane, the Entity can understand and speak all languages. Also see psionic powers.

Psionic Vampirism: All Astral Entities can draw on the I.S.P. or P.P.E. of other creatures to fuel their psionic powers. Drawing energy from unwilling victims aware of their attack is resisted by a save versus psionic attack. Most Astral Travelers will be aware and unwilling, but most normal people on Earth (and even supernatural beings not familiar with Astral Entities) will not be aware and are vulnerable. Up to 10 points per level of the monster's experience can be drained every melee round. P.P.E. can be converted into usable I.S.P. by the Entity at the conversion rate of four P.P.E. equals one I.S.P. point.

Combat: In the physical world, the Entity can only attack using psionic powers; five per melee round. In the Astral Plane, where the creature has physical form, it can attack with psionics and/or physical hand to hand, but still only has five attacks per melee round.

Damage: Supernatural P.S. damage in the Astral Plane or by psionics.

Bonuses: +6 to strike, +6 to parry, +6 to dodge, +2 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +1 to pull punch, +5 to save vs magic, +6 to save vs psychic attack, +15 to save vs Horror Factor, and +4 to Perception Rolls.

Magic Powers: None.

Psionic Powers: Block Breaker, Psychic Mirage, Mind Block Auto-Defense, Telekinetic Force Field, Bio-Manipulation, Empathic Transmission, Telekinesis, See Aura, Alter Aura, Presence Sense, Suggestion, Astral Bolts, Telepathy and Empathy.

Note that all abilities have triple the range, duration and damage when the Entity is anchored to a ley line nexus point. Once the housing chamber is destroyed, Echelon's powers drop to normal levels, despite the fact that, usually, a psychic would still benefit by being near the nexus. Echelon will not be able to benefit ever again from any nexus it was once anchored to after that anchor has been destroyed.

Vulnerabilities/Penalties: P.P.E. dependency: The Entity must feed on at least two P.P.E. or I.S.P. per level of experience once a month, or it loses one point from its P.P.E. base. If Echelon's P.P.E. is reduced to zero in this manner, the creature dissipates and is destroyed. Also, if Echelon is anchored to a nexus and that anchor is destroyed, the Entity can never again benefit from that particular nexus.

Allies and enemies: No matter what happens, Doctor Heron is Echelon's slave and, if he can escape, will follow Echelon and try to help rebuild the housing chamber on another nexus point. The Nightlords want to capture and re-enslave the En-

tity or, if that is not possible, destroy it. The Entity can also use its psychic powers to force others to act as bodyguards and assassins.

Weapons & Equipment of Note: None.



Doctor Winslow Heron

Alignment: Diabolic (was Aberrant).

Attributes: I.Q. 20, M.E. 11, M.A. 9, P.S. 11, P.P. 14, P.E. 15, P.B. 8, Spd 10.

Hit Points: 41

S.D.C.: 11

P.P.E.: 78 (normally 120, but has 42 points tied up in Cybermagic creations).

Level of Experience: 8th.

Disposition: Doctor Heron is an egotistical sadist that cares little for the welfare of others. He is in love with his own genius and cannot even consider the possibility that he has failed or miscalculated something, which has made him vulnerable to the Echelon Entity. At this point the Entity has had the doctor so deeply under its influence that it has had a permanent effect, making the doctor a life-long loyal slave to the Entity. Only the destruction of the Entity will shake the doctor out of his mental slavery to the thing.

Description: Tall, gaunt, and of Mediterranean descent with thinning hair and a definitely unstable look to his eyes.

O.C.C. Skills of Note: Read/Write/Speak English 98%, Principles of Magic 90%, Basic Electronics 91%, Basic Mechanics 91%, Mathematics: Basic 98%, Computer Operation 98%, Computer Programming 86%, Radio: Basic 98%, T.V./Video 74%, Surveillance 91%, Computer Repair 81%, Mechanical Engineering 81%, Weapons Engineer 81%, Lore: Astral 56%, Computer Hacking 76%, Sensory Equipment 61%, Prowl 51%, W.P. Handguns, and W.P. Knife.

Special Skills and Abilities: Create Cybermagic and bionic-grotesque cybernetics. He also has the following bionic-grotesque cybernetic attachments:

Fingertip Snap Pads: On his left hand, the pads of the thumb and middle finger have been replaced with what appears to be rough, flint-like surfaces. Inside the fingertips are small watch batteries. When the doctor snaps these two fingers they create a *Blinding Flash*, as per the spell.

Levitation Soles: The Doctor has (quite painfully) peeled off the soles of his own feet and replaced them with superconducting fiber mesh that allows him to *levitate*, as per the second level spell of the same name.

Sub-Dermal Mystical Protective Framework: The mad doctor has placed a fiber optic framework of wiring throughout his body (visible under the skin from the neck down as raised tubes, like giant veins) that allows him to generate magic armor (A.R. 14, 180 S.D.C.) once every 24 hours.

Combat Abilities: Hand to Hand: Expert

Attacks per Melee Round: Five physical attacks or two by spell (note that using cybermagic devices count as physical attacks).

Damage: 1D4 S.D.C. punch and kick does 1D6. Paired Weapons.

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +3 to parry, +3 to dodge, +2 to roll/pull punch, critical strike on unmodified 18-20, +4 to save vs magic, +2 to save vs possession, +2 to save vs mind control (for all the good it did him), +3 to save vs Horror Factor, and +4 to Perception Rolls.

Vulnerabilities/penalties: Egotistical and overconfident.

Psionic Powers: Object Read (limited only to the purpose and function of an object), Mind Block, Speed Reading and Telemechanics.

I.S.P.: 27

Magic Knowledge: Knows the spells Fuse Bones, Preserve Living Flesh, Replace Flesh, Blinding Flash, See Aura, Sense P.P.E., Befuddle, Fear, Levitation, Energy Bolt, Magic Armor, Negate Poisons/Toxins, Astral Projection, Energy Field, Trance, Fire Ball, Mystic Alarm, Telekinesis, Nightvision, Calling, Memory Bank, Agony, and Wind Rush. He also knows, but can only cast as part of a Cybermagic creation, the spells Control/Enslave Entity, Bind Nightbane, Summon and Control Astral Being, and Machinmerge (a special spell that allows a psychic Entity of any kind to temporarily merge with a machine, granting it the ability to access all of that machine's capabilities as if they were extensions of its own psychic essence. The spell is level 9 and costs 200 P.P.E. with a duration of four hours per level of experience. Heron did not make this spell, so it must be presumed that at least a couple of very powerful Cybermages also possess it.)

Allies and Alliances: After this fiasco, Doctor Heron has few allies left except for some Cybermages scattered across the country who are just as twisted as he is. The Echelon Entity sees him as a means of inflicting misery and will not hesitate to ditch him or kill him if it becomes necessary.

Minions: None, unless you count the dogs. The dead lab tech on the fourth floor with the security card was his acolyte.

Weapons & Equipment of Note: Carries a 9mm Wz 63 Machine Pistol loaded with hollow point rounds (4D6+4 damage, fully automatic). Has 2 clips with 40 rounds each. Also carries a scalpel that does 1D4 damage. And, of course, there are his mastiffs.

Money: Doctor Heron has one million dollars squirreled away here and there, so to recreate the Housing Chamber he is going to need a large infusion of cash (at least \$10 million) and a victim with 250 P.P.E. or more to put into the chamber, and, of course, a ley line nexus.



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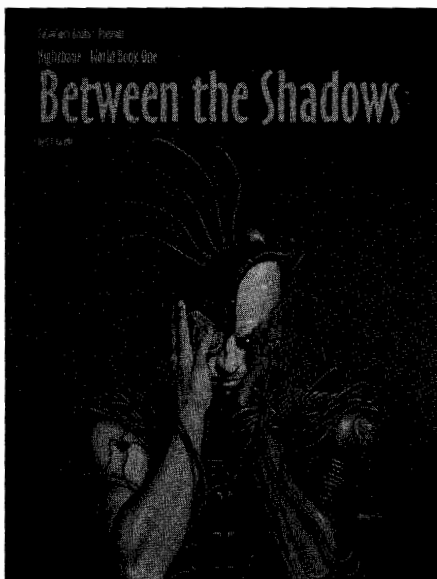
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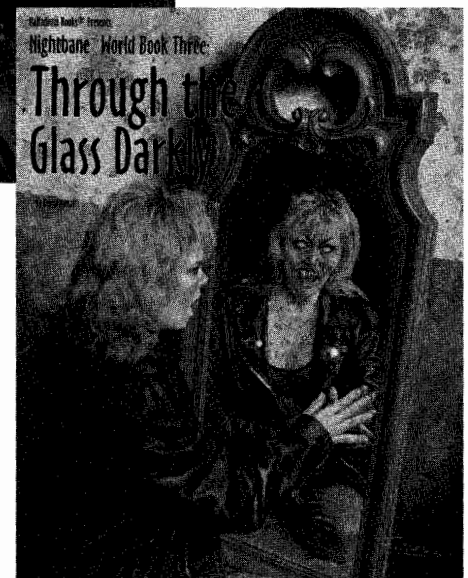
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