

Danger at Black Rock Outpost

An adventure module for Palladium Rifts

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Scenario Outline

Major Creede was nursing an imminent migraine. It had only been two months since he had been shipped to this backwater fort hardly anyone had ever heard of. Hundreds of miles from the nearest city, if you could call them cities, in the heart of Ontario. Constant attacks on all sides had made him incredibly edgy.

Now, a young soldier was reporting the latest casualties and raids and attacks from the last week. The words blended together. It was always the same now. The Xiticix were pushing hard from the south and west, D-Bees from all directions, the roads were lined with bandits and Juicers and Crazies and everything else between.

"And we lost another ten to an unidentified demon last night. They had neglected to properly secure the blast gates, and the guards did not see it until it was too late. Unfortunately, the demon managed to escape. We assume there is a Rift nearby, but we honestly wouldn't even know where to begin to look. Nor do we have the resources to send a scouting party regardless."

Why here? That's what Creede couldn't figure out. Not his appointment, he was well aware this was punishment for his last mistake. Why this particular location? It had no strategic value. It was too far away from anything to act as a strong point. Holding it was pointless. He could only conclude, then, that it was where men like him were sent when their use was up.

"A cyber-knight came through a few days ago. We did try to dissuade him from stopping but the men were excited and we felt it was a good morale boost for them. Also, I doubt our troops would have been of much use against him. Unfortunately, a number of them have gone AWOL after listening to him preach his 'code'. We considered sending the Dogboys to go fetch them but..."

"Don't bother..." the migraine had taken hold now. He was losing men left and right. This was a disaster. He had known about the demon, of course, and had sent the pack after it. They'd have been able to find it easily. As easily as it had shredded them to pieces, in fact. "We only have two left and if we lose them, we're screwed. We'll send another request to Haim for reinforcements."

"Respectfully, Major, even if whomever we sent were to survive, and even if Major Haim even agreed

to send anyone back *including* our messenger, it would likely be a full year before we even know."

Creede sighed. The man was right, but it hurt him to his core to admit it.

"Then we'll just have to hold out until the next idiot is sent here with his escort of worthless soldiers! Continue!"

"We..." the man stated unperturbed. He had become used to Creede's outbursts. "...have not heard from Black Rock in approximately two weeks. Their last two shipments of timber and minerals have not arrived. The third is due today, but all things considered... Normally we would just chalk it up to a bandit attack, or even the bugs, but the road north has been oddly quiet. And the same Cyber-Knight had come roughly from that directly and not made mention of meeting anyone."

"D-Bee loving scum probably killed them and took what he could..." Creede said under his breath. Of course, he knew that to be false. A Cyber-Knight was honorable and assisted everyone. Too bad he wasn't still around or Creede would have asked him to investigate. More loudly he said, "See if we can dispatch anyone. Five or ten men with supplies enough to make the trip."

"Respect again, Major, we don't have the manpower. We are struggling just to keep our own Fort defended. And we are running out of resources as is."

Creede sighed again. It was a boy. With what looked like a laser rifle. How was he supposed to know it was a toy? It could have been a trained assassin for all anyone knew! And it was in the middle of Chi-Town in a heavily populated area. No amount of Coalition propaganda would cover that up. Not that the Coalition would have expended resources for him.

"Do we have any options?"

"Mercenaries have been known to come through from time to time. If a group came through, we could try to hire them. And if any happen to be D-Bees or wizards all the better. We send them out, they either die or succeed, and we take care of them if they return."

Creede pondered for a moment. The throbbing intensified. He leaned forward, hands cupping his head, squeezing hard.

"We'll be court martialed if it ever comes to light. A Coalition fort hiring freaks and demons to do their work for them? We'd be worse than court martialed."

"Final respect, sir...how is that possibly worse than our current situation?"

Creede remained silent for a long time. "Alright. Inform our guards and soldiers to not fire upon anyone claiming to be friendly regardless of what is with them. Let them in, keep them under guard and observation, and inform me. Dismissed." The man saluted and left.

Creede pulled a bottle from a locked drawer. The burning liquid went down hard. A few moments later his aching head dulled. He downed more. He was going to commit a grave sin, one that disgusted him, but he saw no other way out.

Getting started

This adventure is for a group of beginner players, to help introduce them to the game system and set up a low-stakes goal. It is designed to allow any combination of teams, but it is suggested to have at least one practitioner of magic or psionic. This adventure is meant to have a good blend of combat and problem solving. Players should be no more than second level. All gear they have is per standard O.C.C./R.C.C., with some GM discretion should players want something else.

It is highly recommended the GM read through this module twice: once to prepare for the story and once to understand the logistics behind the encounters. Print off the enemy stats found at the end of this document. Review MDC combat prior to the first session. This module is designed to be able to be completed in one or two sessions, but consider a “zero” session to introduce new players to their characters and some of the more basic mechanics of the Palladium system.

More than one Glitterboy will make any encounters trivial unless the GM heavily increases enemy stats to the danger of other players. It is recommended that a Glitterboy player be handicapped in some way, due to their destructive power being a bit more than this campaign is meant for. The Boom Gun being disabled evens out encounters while keeping play of the O.C.C. interesting. Yes, it is a shame that the Glitterboy does not get to use their primary weapon. Explain to the player that they are still the most tanky character in the campaign and even without the Boom Gun will likely be doing more damage than all other characters. If they insist, it is the GM's decision to allow it. Just a small reminder to the GM: all of the encounters here are well within the damaging range of the Boom Gun's sonic boom shockwave. If the player uses it, it WILL cause damage to the surroundings and other players. Reread the section in the sourcebook concerning this carefully.

Creede is desperate, as shown by his willingness to hire anyone despite his Coalition loyalties. His initial offer of 10,000 credits per person could be increased by the right smooth-talking individual. The unnamed fort is located somewhere in central Ontario a good distance from any of the major cities. It is understaffed and suffering from Xiticix looking to expand their territory. The group can come up with any number of reasons for being so far out of the way, but a classic "looking for adventure" is fine as well.

Locations

This adventure is somewhat linear, but as we all know players can surprise even the most prepared GM. It is recommended for GMs to read through each location description and become familiar with NPCs and areas prior to starting the campaign. The following is listed roughly in the order players would normally encounter each location.

The "Fort"

The fort is made up mostly of low rank Coalition soldiers and their families, as well as a number of civilian farmers and craftsmen who gave up fending for themselves and came to the fort looking for protection. There are two dogboys...their pack was decimated in a recent attack...and a grunt for each squad of soldiers. The fort is hurting for resources, men, and is nearly on the brink of collapse, but anything short of a Glitterboy is looking at a suicide mission trying to take it over.

It is a standard Coalition outpost with high walls and blast door gates on the south and west walls. The square area coverage is enough to allow for light farming and crafting workshops. Barracks are along the east wall with dogboy kennels nearby and the CO buildings are located to the north. Training grounds are spotty wherever there is room.

The surrounding areas have been clear cut back 100 yards in each direction. There is a small unpaved road leading north towards Black Rock Outpost, and another leading to the east which branches south and east after a few miles. The fields are marred with multiple battles and skirmishes that seem to be relentless.

While there are no inns or similar for travelers to stay, Creede is willing to let humans stay in the barracks and eat at the mess hall. But any others would be too much for even the most open-minded soldier. A small tent in a staging area far from everyone is all that will be allowed.

There is a minimal number of wares available. Food and other provisions can be bought from civilians...no member of the Coalition will sell to the party.

Meeting with Creede / Entering the Fort

Players will note the Coalition flags flying and the danger it presents to any D-Bees and/or magic users. If they turn to leave, a guard will call down to them requesting they wait a moment and no harm will come to them. The Fort is in a sorry state. The surrounding area is scorched and marred with laser

blasts and explosions. The walls have large raking gashes taken out of them. The men look haggard and worn out. The chance of someone here actually trying to start trouble is minimal at best.

The gates will open and a small group of armed soldiers will greet the players and ask them to follow. Should they, they will be led directly to Creede's office. The inside of the Fort doesn't look like it is in much better shape. All the soldiers present will be tense. Players who look around on their way will note much of the above description.

Creede is a 7th level CS Military Specialist, with several mid-level Grunts acting as his guard. If the party has obvious magic users or D-Bees, it will be obvious everyone is on edge and ready to fire upon them at the first hint of an order from Creede.

Creede will relate the request curtly: Go north to Black Rock, discover what has become of it, and return with a report. Solving the issue, if one exists, is not required. Only information on the lost caravans and what has become of the outpost. The offer is 10,000 credits per player, with a bonus of 5,000 to split among them if they bring a caravan back with them. If the players probe further:

There is little to no information on what happened. The last caravan came two weeks prior and no other news has been heard. Three further shipments have been missed. Further questions can be answered with the following list, assuming related:

- There is a ley line that travels from south to north and ends about fifty miles from the outpost, but the nearest point of contact is about two days' travel to the west through heavily infested Xiticix forests.
- The battle marks are from skirmishes with the Xiticix. They are becoming bolder, realizing the tenuous grasp the Fort has on the area. It is possible to get to the ley line, but it is likely the party will encounter at least one small scouting party.
- The road north is the most direct route but is known to have bandit attacks. It is also untamed wilderness with all manners of creatures that could potentially appear.
- Yes, those are Dogboy kennels. They lost most in a recent demon attack. They've only the two left. No, you cannot pet them.
- If the party has any of the Coalition's hated members, and it is asked why they weren't fired upon, Creede will sour and freely admit he would prefer just to kill them now but as they are the first group to come through that he can hire he has little other option. He will make it clear he does not trust the group whatsoever and any attempts to cause trouble will end in execution.
- Some of the civilians may be willing to trade but expect nothing from the Coalition. Their resources are limited and/or they'd not be willing to do business with the players' "kind."

- Creede will state that although they are well outfitted and could investigate the matter themselves, they need every able-bodied soldier available to repel the Xiticix if, and when, they attack. This is a lie; he does not have the manpower to spare.

Creede will demand an answer. It will become increasingly clear if they do not agree they aren't walking out of the Fort alive. The players can try to bargain for a better deal. Roll against an appropriate skill to convince Creede to increase the pay. Success and he will agree to an additional 5k per member, not 5k to split. Failure and he won't budge on his offer. Players can also try to get Creede to pay upfront, but the most he is willing to pay in advance will be half the agreed-upon amount.

Beyond that, the players can stay in the Fort and try to trade. Some civilians may be convinced to spare food, but no one will offer any weapons, armor, or recharging. If they ask to stay the night within the walls, they will be shown to a small muddy area where tents can be pitched. It is abundantly obvious, regardless of the party composition, that the longer the stay the less the residents are comfortable with them around.

The Western Expanse

West of the Fort is a mix of forest, open plains, and swampland. Xiticix scouts are seen frequently here. They normally ignore small groups unless they are provoked. About two days' travel on foot in this direction is a small but long ley line that extends quite a way north. The northern terminus of the line end about fifty miles from Black Rock, but in the middle of dense woodland.

Players will have to go slowly. There are no roads, the trees are thick, and it is too dangerous to travel quickly on vehicles.

The GM can roll percentiles to see if the group encounters anything for each six hours of travel. Likewise, the players should be rolling for perception at the same time.

0-60: Nothing but some small game. Players can spend a few hours hunting. If they do, roll against Hunting. Small game includes pheasant, squirrel, porcupine, etc. Someone will need to know how to field dress their prize or it will be messy for them.

61-70: A Xiticix scouting party! They attack on sight! The scouting party will be made up of at least one Hunter/Scout (World Book 23, or one Warrior at a slightly higher level than the rest) and 3-5 Warriors (base Rifts) depending on player party size (GM discretion, adjust up or down as required). If all players fail their perception checks, the party is surprised and all players lose initiative for the first round.

71-99: A mutated minor MDC animal attacks! This could be a bear or a moose or any large northern animal. GM can use the Mutant Mega-Damage Bear from World Book 20 Canada or just the

stats below. The animal should be large, but it's a mutant! It could be a giant mutant squirrel!
This is a very low-stakes encounter meant to introduce players to combat.

Mutant MDC Animal

AR: 6

HP: $2D4 \times 5 + 10$

MDC: $5D6 + 10$

Attacks per Melee: 1 on round 1, 2 on subsequent rounds

Mega-damage: Claws do $3D6$ MD, Bite does $2D6$ MD.

Bonus: +1 initiative, +2 to strike

Horror Factor 10. It's a wild mutated animal!

It is trying to ambush the players, and so will move slowly on the first round.

Each night players can either continue at a slower pace, resulting in fatigue and a chance for more encounters, or make camp to rest and do whatever they need to.

The Xiticix scouting party will only be encountered once, but lore savvy characters will be on edge knowing they usually come in groups. +2 to their perception and initiative rolls until they reach the ley line. The above roll chart is a barebones guideline: GM can and should add to it.

Note: Vehicles will ultimately make the journey faster, but it will still be very slow going. This is untamed wilderness with no roads or paths through the forests. Players can expect to still be spending a single night on the road but will reach the ley line early the next day.

The ley line is not a strong one, the standard $1d4 \times 1000$ feet wide, but it does stretch nearly all the way to Black Rock. Players do not need to justify why they chose to come to the ley line, but they *did* just spend two days walking in the wrong direction, surely, they have a rational reason for it.

The Northern Road

On foot, following the road, it is a week's travel from the Fort to Black Rock. It is a dirt road a little more than twenty feet wide, just enough to allow vehicles to pass one another. Speeders will make the trip shorter. The northern area beyond the Fort is relatively quiet. Mostly bandits and raiders who attempt to attack the caravan that comes from Black Rock, though it is usually heavily guarded, making its absence even more troublesome. Wildlife includes some smaller D-Bees (GM discretion if friendly or not, but if not make sure low enough level to provide challenge but not outright kill the party) and typical Canadian fauna. Flora is boreal forest, mostly, with some patches of swamp land the further north one goes.

There is a ley line that ends approx. fifty miles from Black Rock, but the nearest point of the line to the Fort is west towards Xiticix scouting parties. Chances are good that the players will end up fighting to get to it. This is information they will be able to glean from various residents of the Fort. They could potentially travel north for a few days and then cut west, trying to go above the Xiticix area, but at this point it would be faster to continue traveling north.

GMs can use the following chart for encounters:

0-50: Nothing but trees. Trees everywhere.

51-75: Some oddity the players note if passing perception (Roll 1d6)

1. The flora is oddly mutated. Some of the plant life looks interesting. (If a player collects some, have them make note of it. It will need to be ID'd and see if it can be used, that would be for later.)
2. Evidence of a campsite or a battle. But it's old...much older than the two weeks since the last Black Rock caravan.
3. Makeshift graves. Likely caravan members. A reminder of the danger the remoteness of this area presents.
4. A broken wagon wheel or discarded parts. Nothing salvageable.
5. Small game. Players can spend some time hunting.
6. A small trail leading off the main road.

76-85: Encounter! (Roll 1d6)

1. Oh, it's just a small critter. Standard SDC Canadian game animal.
2. A Dogboy! It's injured, obviously a survivor of that demon attack (if the players asked), but it sees the players and, in a panic, attacks without warning. Its training is higher than the players', but it's heavily injured. Its HP should be a few points above passing out, it's SDC nearly depleted, and any MDC armor it has almost useless. It will have lost all its weapons, relying on their claws and teeth.

Stats that can be used, if the GM does not want to randomly generate:

HP: 2-3. It's hurt badly and it's a miracle it can still fight.

SDC: 10. It's had a few days to rest, but it won't last much longer

MDC: 5. It's wearing a beaten and battered light DPM armor that's been nearly shredded and offers almost the barest of minimum of protection. There are wide gaps exposed that could be targeted.

Attacks per turn: 1. It's exhausted and can barely move. Pure adrenaline is fueling it right now.

Claws: 1d4 SDC

Bite: 2d6 SDC

The challenge here is not how to beat it...the Dogboy is near death already...but what to do about it. This only happens once. If the GM rolls this again, then just say nothing is there.

3. MDC animal! Use the same stats as shown under the ley line branch or come up with your own!
4. A CS Soldier! Level 2 Grunt. If the players do not immediately attack, he will surrender and claim to be a deserter trying to reach Black Rock. He will refuse to join the party if it has any D-Bees or magic users...he might be a deserter, but he is still very much Coalition minded. Otherwise, the CS Soldier is an NPC with standard stats and gear and will follow along if the players allow. GM controlled, will always attack the nearest target and will run the first chance he gets if the battle goes poorly.
5. Signs of a struggle. There's a good chunk of forest off the trail that looks like something barreled through it recently. If players check, they find one of the caravan wagons, still loaded with timber or ore, and dried old blood covering everything. If this happens multiple times, change it up. Maybe it's down a cliff, or even just in the middle of the road.
6. A random D-Bee/bandit party! Now would be a great time to crack open World Book 30 – D-Bees of North America! Or come up with your own. Or use one of those pesky Xiticix. While they would likely not be north of The Fort, there is a chance one or two went further than normal.

86-95: A ley line! It's small, barely noticeable. It's only a few hundred feet wide, which is tiny for a ley line, and runs only about 100 yards long. Good time to meditate and recharge.

96-99: Something...odd. Roll 1d6 or come up with something random but harmless.

1. Something in the surrounding area is inexplicable: On fire, frozen, burned, electrified, etc.
2. The weather changes quickly. Sunshine becomes rain, or hail, or snow, then changes back again just as quickly. Lore savvy players will remember an old saying from before the Great Cataclysm: "If you don't like the weather, wait five minutes."
3. A weird smell that doesn't belong
4. Weird noises that can't be sourced
5. Strange animal behavior
6. Did...did we already come this way? Players begin to question their reality and memory. Things look the same as they did an hour ago.

At least once the party should come across a broken caravan wagon with signs of battle, claw marks, and no signs of bodies. Players who inspect the surrounding area can roll for Track Animals. Success shows paw prints that don't belong in the area. Players with Lore: Demons & Monsters get a +10% to ID the prints.

Success IDs the prints as Shadow Lynx. See Jason's bestiary entry at the end. This is the extent of player knowledge (who succeed their check).

Successfully searching the surrounding area will come up with a fully depleted laser pistol and a small number of vibro-blades.

South and East

There is no reason to head south or east but if the player decides to head in either direction, south is closer to Xiticix with higher encounter rate and east heads back towards the road leading to Iron Heart and Lazlo areas. Both are heading away from the goal of the adventure and would necessitate a reason to turn the party around or a new adventure.

Black Rock Outpost

An all-in-one station and camp. It started as just a logging camp and grew as more people migrated towards it. A pocket of rare minerals was located nearby, and a mining operation began. They trade with the Fort as it is the closest point of trade, but goods are also sent to Lazlo behind the Coalition's back. As the Coalition only has the Fort in the nearby area, Black Rock is easily able to sidestep them.

Despite having started as a small logging camp, it has grown into a bustling village with a decent population. Its remoteness has kept it off the various factions' radars. The Fort is of no concern to them; the people of Black Rock recognized early the Fort was set up as a place to send undesirables without needing excuses to execute them. Its closer proximity to the Xiticix has kept the insectoids from coming closer to Black Rock, as well. They are also well aware the Fort is purposefully kept understaffed and is not much of a threat to them.

The following is a brief list of points of interests in and around Black Rock as well as major NPCs associated with them. Important NPC stats can be found later. More detailed information concerning major points of interest can be found later.

1. The Road

The main road through the outpost that leads from the South gate to the North gate. Most of the major landmarks can be found along this path, with several smaller branches leading to residential areas or towards the smaller vegetable gardens within the walls.

2. The Mill

The very first building ever built. The sawmill can process hundreds of logs a day when fully operational. Clara Vance is the foreman. She's been missing for some time. The workers will say she left the town one morning and never returned. It is assumed she is one of the Lynx first victims. Without their foreman, the workers tend to slack off and are working at a much slower pace.

3. The Timberfall Lodge

The inn and communal gathering space. In the very rare event that a visitor arrives, or if someone shows up looking for residency, rooms are available to rent. The dining space is large with a massive stone fireplace set into the far wall. It is used as a meeting room during meetings and gatherings. The owner is Gerrol "Redcap" Marn, a man in his late middle years with a sharp wit but sharper temper.

4. The Logging Yard

Clear open area where the timber is dropped off before being processed through the mill. One of the only places that has heavy equipment. Marta Skell is the head operator and the only person within a thousand miles with a working loader exosuit.

5. The Green

A clearing used for outdoor events. A few small stalls are set up for the rare vendor to use when visiting from Lazlo.

6. Pinewatch Tower

Up past the wooden wall, through the north gate, on a hill stands the lookout tower. From the top one can see the entire outpost and much of the surrounding forest, but most importantly several miles down the only road leading in. The current watch is Jessa Torrel and her father John Torrel.

7. The Tradehouse

This is where the caravans bound for The Fort, or Lazlo, or wherever an order is from is packed and logged. Aro Penrick is the head trader and keeps meticulous logs of all goods heading out.

Aro will not actually be at the Tradehouse but is at the Lodge drunk.

8. The Chapel of the Northern Flame

Every town has someone who claims religious obligations and Black Rock is no exception. Sister Vaela Corrin, as she calls herself, is kind but secretive. She normally preaches to an empty congregation or can be found ogling Redcap (much to his chagrin). The chapel is small, with barely a dozen pews and a small pulpit. The structure is primarily made of wood. There are old tapestries adorning the walls and a large rug leading down the center aisle.

If they try to sense it, magic can be felt underneath though it is dampened as if shielded. Psychics can get very creative in trying to discern what is below. If players investigate further, see the entry under The Rift section below labeled the Chapel.

9. Mayor's House

While it IS just an outpost, Black Rock has grown to be a small bustling village, and they agreed someone should be in charge to make decisions the others didn't want to but could blame someone else for. Ronet Davin ended up with the job, despite not having run in the election or even knowing it was being discussed. He just happened to be the one man everyone agreed could be trusted. He still heads to the fields to farm every morning, but he and his wife enjoy the comforts of the private house.

10. The Mine

Up the dirt road leading into the hills to the east is the Mine. Somehow, despite all geological understanding, this mine produces a plethora of various minerals that normally would never be found together. The locals just blame the nearby ley line. Dagan Price is the foreman and is in the mines as much as his workers. The mine is not without its folklore. Much like coblynau and tommyknockers, the miners claim there are spirits that help them find the ore and keep danger at bay. As the Lynx seem to stay away from the Mines, there may be something to it.

11. The South Gate

The South Gate is flanked by two small towers. It is a large double blast door that has seen better years. Long narrow gouges of metal have been taken out of it. About fifty yards in front of the gate is a checkpoint of sorts with a small shack, used to check in and out people and caravans.

12. The North Gate

This gate is in much better condition than the South Gate. It leads towards the mining and logging roads to the North and East.

13. The Wall

The wall encircling Black Rock is primarily a double wood palisade with some sections slowly being replaced by reinforced steel walls. It looks out of place aside the blast door gate.

14. The Fields

There are large farming fields on the east side of the wall which produces most of the food Black Rock eats.

Arrival at Black Rock Outpost

The players will eventually reach Black Rock just as dusk is falling. They may note the sky is unusually bright ahead of them. Rounding a corner, they will see why. Black Rock itself is lit up like a beacon. Every light possible is on full, from what the players can tell. As they approach the last stretch, they discover why. An ambush!

The gates are approximately 500 yards away. There is dense coniferous forest on either side of the now stone road (it would have turn from dirt to stone on approach). The road itself is about now about forty feet wide, enough to accommodate two wagons side by side and staging areas along the tree lines. The road funnels to 20 feet wide at a checkpoint, allowing two wagons to pass at any given time, approximately 50 yards from the main gate. The party can see the outpost is surrounded by a steel reinforced wooden palisade with a large heavy steel blast gate that is closed. Two tall towers flank the gate but it does not appear anyone is in them at the moment.

A large number of Shadow Lynx have seemingly appeared from the shadows in front and behind the party. Roll on Lore: Monsters. Success IDs the creatures, otherwise the players will have little idea what they are. GM discretion on how much information to feed a successful roll. Note, even if they successfully ID'd the paw prints, that doesn't mean they know what the Lynx actually look like.

There will be $1d6 + 2$ Shadow Lynx at the party's rear roughly 50 yards back and $1d4 + 2$ Lynx Stalkers 100 yards in front, followed by another 2 Shadow Lynx. The Stalkers' group will only pace back and forth for the first turn, waiting for the others to try and drive the party to them. The Lynx at the rear will harry the party, darting in and trying to force them towards the others.

If the party met and recruited the Grunt defector, he will have his standard issue C-18 Laser Pistol that does 2d4 MD, with two clips in reserve. He is a GM controlled NPC. He will only target the smaller Lynx, vaporizing them with every shot due to their SDC only nature. He only has two attacks per round. This works against the party, per below, but he will not listen to instruction and only target the small fry.

This is a losing battle. Any time one lynx is put down, two more appear to melt out from the trees to join in the attack. Stalkers are only replaced by a single Stalker. Unless the players try to escape, they'll be overwhelmed simply by sheer numbers. At the start of round five before initiative is rolled, a single laser blast will hit one of the Stalkers for 3d6 MD damage. There is no dodge roll and it goes through AR for full damage.

“Move your asses, you idiots!” a woman will shout at them from a now occupied tower. “We’ll cover you!” The gates will screech open, giving the players an opportunity to reach safety. From here forward, five NPCs will be able to fire at random targets with 3d6 MD laser rifles. Each gets two attacks per turn and can hit any target within 500 yards. Targets will have a -4 to dodge from this point forward.

Players will need to reach the town. If they have the Dogboy with them and it is not on a vehicle, the one carrying it will be slowed to half speed as they struggle to carry it...assuming normal strength and no mech suit, augments, power armor, etc. If the Grunt is with them, he will stop defending and instantly attempt to reach the gate, probably being targeted and mauled to death. Play it straight, if he makes it he does, if not, oh well. The engagement ends when all players are through the gate.

Note to GM: The following script has sections dependent on if the Grunt and/or Dogboy is with the party. Make sure to read through to know which parts to omit.

The gate slams closed behind the group, and Lysa Milt climbs down from the tower to greet them.

“Sad sorry time for travelers right now,” Lysa shakes her head. “Good thing you folks know how to handle yourselves. Well come on, we’ll get you patched up at the Lodge. Don’t know what the hell you’re doing this far north, but we’re not so disrespectful that we won’t help strangers who need it.”

(If the Dogboy is still with the party and alive)

Lysa side eyes the Dogboy. “Your pet’s in bad shape. Not sure he’ll make it. I didn’t peg the Fort to be sending anyone up to us.”

(If the Grunt was with the party, alive or not now)

“And I wasn’t expecting them to send actual soldiers if they did.”

Lysa leads the party down a stone paved road towards a large building near the center of the Outpost. The streets are brightly lit, every lamp is on, and more lanterns are burning as well. The homes are an odd patchwork of wood, stone, and metal. Scraped together with whatever materials came their way. Small fields can be seen off to the east, a small chapel to the north and a large brick building near that. The wooden palisade seems to ring the entire village. There is a startling lack of people.

“Welcome to Black Rock Outpost. Not quite what you were expecting? I knew it was only a matter of time before you Coalition bastards decided to pay us a right visit...find out we're more than just a bunch of lumberjacks and miners digging out a hole....”

The group can try to interject, but she will continue right on complaining about the Coalition. The party will reach the Lodge shortly. It's a sort of inn with a large common room. A man in his late middle years will be leaning against the bar, wearing a crisp white apron, and eyeing the party suspiciously.

“Redcap! These folks here met our guests on the road outside. Figured we should get em something to eat and patch 'em up. I'm going to tell the Mayor that all is clear and everyone can go back to business.” She leaves, and Redcap will motion the group to sit at a nearby table.

(If the Dogboy is with party)

Redcap will look at the Dogboy and shake his head, then call out back to a woman who came with a suturing kit, salves, and other assorted healing equipment. Redcap will drop a few bowls of a thin broth on the table, one for each player.

“We'll do what we can, but your Dogboy is probably on his way out. Shame. Beasts, but loyal to the end.”

(Continuing)

“Alright. What are a bunch of Coalition doing so far from the Fort. You assholes know the rules. We give you lumber and minerals, you leave us be. No questions. That was the agreement. Don't think we don't know you're hurting. We could clean you out of that cesspit in a day or two if we felt like it. Out with it!”

Redcap will listen and answer players based on what is said or asked.

(Players explain they were hired by the Coalition to investigate where the missing shipments went.)

“Creede hired *you*!?! He must be desperate. He'll likely kill you once you get back just to save face. Then again, he might finally be coming around like Haim. Well, we sent three out, but none came back so we figured Creede killed em. Man has an itchy trigger finger, from what I've heard. In any case we aren't sending anything else out until we can take care of our Lynx problem.”

(Players mention the loaded carriage)

“Fuck. FUCK. I knew sending two guards for the full caravan was a mistake! Lynx then. Never made it to the Fort. God damnit.” He pours a shot of whiskey and raises it towards the ceiling. “Matt, Tom, Brandy, Jess, Bob, and Sam. Sorry no one ever listens to me!” He downs it.

(Players ask about the Lynx)

“Started showing up around a month ago. Just one or two. Nothing serious. Never seen em before. Spooked the animals. Put one down easily enough and it just kinda evaporated. We got a copy of Garret’s bestiary and found something that matched close enough. Shadow Lynx.” He’ll proceed to explain Jason’s entry on Shadow Lynx. The party can stop him if they already know or don’t care to know. He’ll snap at them but stop reciting.

“Well whatever...more showed up. Then the bigger ones. Twenty at a time. Then the big one. That one can...shift...between the shadows. You saw the lights? We’ve been burning them for a week straight. No shadows big enough for it to get inside. Learned that the hard way. You go out back and see the fresh graves. Twenty men and women and kids it killed before we managed to scare it away. Things don’t like bright lights, so we’ve been keeping it bright day and night.”

(Players ask about Black Rock)

“Bigger than you thought, eh? Well, we did start as a mudscrape just cutting down timber. Built a little wall, a few huts. Locals came by. We built more. Mine opened. We built more. A hundredish folk now. More than that little brigade down south. Better armed, too. So don’t you start thinking about how cozy it looks compared to that!”

(Players ask about Lysa)

“That is a hell of a fine woman who won’t give any man, or woman for that matter, any time of day. She’s married to that rifle of hers. Best marksman I’ve ever seen, and I’ve seen a few. She mans the gates mostly, not that there’s much to look out for. Can put a bolt between your eyes at five hundred yards as if you were standing right in front of her.”

(Players ask about Redcap)

“Mind your own fucking business. Ah fuck...sorry. I just run the tavern. That’s my life now and nothing before matters.”

(Players ask about other townsfolk)

“Well, there’s Marta. She’s got that old exosuit loader of hers. Does most the heavy lifting. The Torrels are usually up in the lookout tower. Likely they’re the ones who spotted you first. If you’ve got a god to pray to, Vaela’s up at the Chapel. Various other foreman about...go ask them. And there’s old Ronet Davin, the mayor...”

(Players are finished)

When the players are satisfied, he’ll shrug and say “Mayor’s on his way. Look around if you want. Lysa will put a bolt in your brain if you try anything stupid, though.”

The door opens and Lysa enters followed by a reedy but strong looking old man.

“Speak of the devil...” Redcap relates the actual reason the party is here to the mayor, based on what was discussed. Regardless, the Mayor is ecstatic.

“Saviors!” Davin says. “Well, I hope as much. Davin has about the same information as Redcap, should the players try to question him, but he will try to wave them off to get straight to the issue.

“So. You see our predicament. Those beasts who greeted you are quite dangerous. We don’t have the manpower to hunt them down, you see. We’re barely able to force them away when they do decide to attack. I doubted the Fort would have done anything. I’m as surprised as anyone they even considered us worth looking into. Oh, right, the beasts. We know they hole up someplace west. That’s about it. Not sure where they came from. A Rift maybe, though I’ve never heard of a Rift staying open this long on its own. Too many of them to have bred in the wild. It must be a Rift.”

“Look. We’re a bit desperate here. I’m willing to hire you and at twice whatever that idiot Creede says he was willing to pay. Only...we don’t have it all here. We’ve an account at Lazlo. If you’re willing to go there once this is over I can pass along a missive to withdraw the rest from there.”

“Find out where the beasts are hiding, cull them all, figure out where they’re coming from and if more are coming, and you’ll get double...no triple!...what Creede is paying. We can’t send shipments anywhere right now with them roaming about. We send to more than just the Fort, you know, and we’re not getting the supplies back we need. Please....”

If the players try to determine Davin’s honesty: he is 100% honest.

If the Grunt is present, he will decline verbosely and leave the building. He can be found wandering the outpost and will refuse to assist the players. He's done with the Coalition and he's done with violence in general. He wants a quiet life away from battle.

Give players time to discuss what to do and come to a unanimous agreement. If there is a Cyber-Knight in the group who is not immediately arguing to help, gently remind them that as a Cyber-Knight they would be arguing heavily in favor of assisting. These people are in need, and it is their duty to extend aid.

Davin only has 5k total credits on hand and will adamantly refuse to provide any more credits up front...it's all they have on hand as an emergency fund. He can be convinced to add another 2k credits to the final total, but it will require an extremely high success roll.

GM eyes only:

Two outcomes:

- *The players do not accept and leave. They were paid by the Coalition to find out what the issue was and that was all. The players can return to the Fort to collect their payment. Creede will betray them and they will be forced to fight the entire garrison of well-trained high-level soldiers. Assume around fifty level 6 grunts with full MDC armor, laser pistols and rifles, at least two SAMAS pilots, and multiple lower ranking officers of various specialties. The party will die or potentially escape through some miracle of dice rolls.*
- *The players accept. At this point Davin will sigh in relief and let them know they can, to Redcap's annoyance, use the inn rooms for free, get free meals, and use their rechargers if required. The party is free to explore Black Rock and speak to residents. Most will be curious; some will excuse themselves and leave in a hurry. See NPC interactions below for responses from the named NPCs. The party can investigate any part of the town save resident's homes and ultimately they will be directed towards a small animal trail leading into the western woods.*

Black Rock NPCs

Below are NPC responses to questioning by the players.

Redcap

Redcap has nothing further to say to the players. He will grunt his responses before losing his temper and throwing them out, telling them to do their jobs and he'll tend to his.

Aro Penrick

Aro Penrick is at the Lodge, drunk. His responses will be slurred and make little sense. Mostly about numbers and records. Redcap will motion players away and explain "Been out of work since we stopped shipments. He's the one who kept records of everything going in and out. We tried to get him to do something else but the man has no head for anything but numbers. Spends all day drinking until someone drags him home. Leave him be."

Marta

Marta will be in her exo-suit lifting logs to be sent through the mill. She doesn't pause in her work, but will talk, nonetheless. She is incredibly skilled and does not need to pause or even pay much attention to get the job done. She'll explain she doesn't know much more than what the Mayor has told everyone. If a warning goes out, everyone heads inside and turns on every light they can until the all-clear is given. She assumes it's some kind of D-Bee causing trouble. If questioned on why she doesn't join in the defense with her exosuit she'll curtly explain it is not set up for combat and would be about as useless as sending the children out to fight. Beyond that, she doesn't have much more information.

John and Jessa

John is in his late fifties. He has leathery tanned skin with a full white beard. He'll be wearing what can only be described as clothing straight from an old survival novel. Daniel Boone or Davy Crockett. His daughter is pretty in her twenties but worn and drawn, wearing clothing much the same as her father. She's seen what the wilderness can do to an unprepared person. They'll greet the players but stay up in the Tower. One positioned on either side of the tower allows for a full 360 view.

They saw early signs of the Lynx but couldn't tell what they were. Because they blend in and even appear to become a part of the shadows it's hard to see them until it's almost too late. They could see where they moved through the trees and brush towards the west, but not the creatures themselves. At night, there's a blue glow near the horizon in that direction, suggesting a ley line, potentially a Rift.

Besides that, they see wild game and a few random mutated animals. Very rarely they'll see a Xiticix scouting party, but the insects are only flying by and pay them no mind. The players are the first humanoids they've seen in months. They usually only spend a few hours in the Tower, but since the Lynx showed up, they've been there nearly nonstop in order to sound the alarms as soon as they can. They do not have much information beyond that and are more intent on keeping watch.

Vaela

The self-appointed chaplain of Black Rock. She is nice enough but appears to be a bit of a loon. She is fanatical about her religion and can be seen preaching from her pulpit despite there being no one in the small chapel. She seems to not really have any information beyond "this is the will of the Gods", though she also doesn't really say who her god is. Mentioning Redcap will cause her to flush up and stammer, and she will start making various excuses as to why she is always hanging around the Lodge.

The Rift

For the GM, a summary of all hints pointing players towards the source of the problem afflicting Black Rock is below:

- The Shadow Lynx always appear to be coming from a primarily western direction, sometimes southwest, sometimes northwest. It would seem their hunting range encompasses the wooded area in that general direction.
- Clara was last seen heading in the direction of the small river to the south by southwest, located about a mile into the woods.
- There is the visible glow of a ley line to the west at night. It is possible it is the tail end of the ley line The Fort mentioned, but more likely is a different one.
- The creatures are recent. They've not been seen in the area around Black Rock as far as anyone can remember. There is potential they came through a Rift.
- Vaela is the most recent arrival to Black Rock, having been there less than six months. She proclaims to follow a religion that no one seems to have ever heard of. She demanded a small church be built at the exact spot she requested. She will preach to the 'congregation' every day, regardless if anyone is present.

The Chapel

If they want to investigate the church, they'll need to figure out how to get Vaela away long enough to be uninterrupted. Players can be creative. See her NPC stats below depending on the route they take. She can also be tricked into leaving by someone claiming Redcap really wants to talk to her, though

this will result in both NPCs refusing to talk to the players any longer. They will have approximately one half hour to conduct their investigation once she has left.

Successfully searching the church will reveal a hidden hatch leading into a basement filled with various tech and magic tools, revealing Vaela to likely be a Techno-Wizard. Any magic users will recognize simple magic devices listed under Vaela's NPC section. A Techno-Wizard in the party will better be able to ID what the various devices are, otherwise have anyone trying to determine what a device does roll 30% with +10% if they are magic users.

There is a hidden room that is concealed with magic. A Ley Line Walker/Rifter will be able to see it if they use See Magic Energy. Other normal attempts to locate it will require a skill check with -10%, GM's discretion. The room is not sealed or locked, just hidden.

Within the room are books and charts scattered across tables with various engine-looking devices in various states of assembly. A Ley Line Rifter will instantly recognize these as being devices having some relation to rifts but will be unable to discern what they are for.

The players could confront her now. There is no evidence of any wrongdoing here, just deception. She will freely admit to being a Techno-Wizard, hiding from the Coalition. Her research, she will claim, is to develop a device that will detect when a rift is about to open nearby and hopefully prevent it. The players are the outsiders here and will be the ones under suspicion. If they press the issue, they will be told to leave. The mayor will not demand pay back. The players will have to decide what to do at that point.

The Forest

The obvious direction to go is West into the forest. The forest is a dense boreal woodland. There is a small trail leading to a river a few miles away (Blackrock has wells dug thus do not depend on the river for water, and the river leads away from civilization removing it as an option for transport). Across the river the land turns somewhat swampy.

The Ley Line can be seen clearly at night. It will take the party approximately two days' travel to reach it. Roll a chance to encounter a small pack of SDC Shadow Lynx every so often. GM's discretion on timing and percentage. 1d6+2 Lynx will be in this pack. There should be no issue for the party and are there simply to harass them (so don't overdo it). They will follow the behavior listed below.

Xiticix scouts can be seen flying overhead. They will not engage the party unless the party attacks first. 1d4 scouts if that is the case.

Otherwise, the trip will be relatively uneventful. Perception players will note the sounds of the forest are subdued. The wildlife is almost nonexistent. Any trackers will note the stark absence of trails or tracks. They SHOULD be able to find Lynx tracks that they can start to follow.

When the players reach the river by the path, anyone succeeding in perception will see the mostly decomposed remains of a woman. This would most likely be Clara.

The Ley Line

It is not the same line as the one near the Fort. Any line walker will be able to tell that. They should also be able to feel a constant surge of energy coming from the northern terminus of the line. Something is feeding off the line.

The Lynx

This will be a good time to remind players they may want to rest, depending on how brutal the GM wants to be. They can determine when they want to set out, and the time of day will alter how difficult the next fight will be. As the players follow the ley line towards the energy surge, they'll climb a rise into a large clearing dotted with a few large trees.

The clearing is a large field, probably a very old, cleared farm, with tall grass, boulders, and a few large trees that grew in various spots. It covers approximately 200 yards in radius. Near the opposite side will be a Lynx pack.

NPC note: this is meant to be a tough fight. If the players are breezing through it, feel free to up the difficulty either by adjusting enemy stats or adding more.

Start with $2d6 + 4$ SDC lynx, $1d3 + 1$ Lynx Stalkers, and 1 Alpha Lynx.

Behavior:

The Alpha will not engage until Round 3, until most of the Stalkers are down, or if it is attacked first.

So long as the Alpha remains, the rest will not fall back. SDC Lynx will act as distractions so the Lynx Stalkers can flank and ambush players. The Alpha Lynx will prefer to stay back observing until there is a decent clear method of attack.

Lynx will always prefer staying in the darkest areas if possible. Middle of day will cause them to be far less dangerous. They will seek the shade of the tree or the tree line but will not run away from the fight unless the Alpha(s) is dead.

The Rift

The Rift is beyond the clearing. It is a large Rift that shows no signs of closing, which should be odd even to the non-magically inclined. A Rift should not be able to stay open very long on its own. This oddity should be reported somehow. Perhaps closing the rift in some way? It is up to the players to decide how to handle the situation.

Note to GM:

There is a techno-magic device hidden nearby. It is pulling energy from the ley line to power itself with enough PPE to forcibly keep the Rift open. The device is too large and heavy to be easily carried, even for a Glitterboy. It looks like a large rectangular box with various knobs and wiring coming from the sides at odd angles. It is situated on a flat area of land.

Destroying it will cause the Rift to close almost instantly. It also must be rather close to the ley line to remain powered. Moving it even twenty yards away will cause it to lose power. Players can inspect the device, try and take it apart, etc. Bad idea if still powered as there is shielding that keeps the power cycling inside like a capacitor. GM's decision about what sort of shenanigans allowing that much power to erupt out all at once will cause. If the players do inspect it safely and if they have found the secret room under the Chapel, they'll recognize the construction to look very similar to the parts and pieces found there.

Back to Blackrock

GM's decision on what events occur on the way back to the town. Reminder that if the Rift is still open, more creatures can get through.

Upon arriving back, they will be treated to a meal and have any wounds that need looking at taken care of. The next set of events unfold based on how the players handled the rift at all.

(Nothing. Came back without doing anything, either they didn't find anything or gave up)

Davin will sigh and true to his word hand over what little credits they have on hand. He will not give a writ for the bank, though, stating he was expecting more help than just a romp through the forest. The players can stay in town for the night, but will politely be asked to leave in the morning.

(Players lie and say everything is taken care of)

Davin looks relieved and everyone in the room starts cheering. They will demand the story. Players get to roll for deception and try and make up a story. Roll five times. Failing three or more times reveals their lies and the folk there will show irritation. Davin, trying to maintain decorum, will suggest maybe the party should leave now. Liars and deceivers are not welcome in Black Rock.

(The Lynx are destroyed)

Davin looks relieved and everyone in the room starts cheering. They demand the story. They will ask if the players figured out where they came from. Davin will be preparing pay and the writ to the bank at Lazlo for the rest. Players can decide if they want to return to the Fort and get even more money or continue on their way. If present, the Dogboy will be upright by this point, and eager to get back to its masters. See "Returning to the Fort" should the players choose that direction.

(There was a Rift but they were unable to figure out why it's not closing)

Davin looks both relieved and distressed. A rift that isn't closing on its own is a problem. But the players did do as they were requested, and it plays out much as the prior entry.

(They found a TW device powering the Rift and forcing it to remain open, but were unable to disable it)

"A....device? That is not encouraging..." Davin will be puzzled. "I suppose we will need to see if the Fort can send a team out. I do not blame you for not messing with something like that." The rest is similar to the above entry.

(They found a TW device powering the Rift and disabled it, closing the rift)

"Ah thank heavens! A rift that close and forced open? Who would do such a thing? We'll have to let the Fort know!" The rest is similar to the above entry.

(The device is very similar to the devices found in Vaela's workshop. Oh and by the way, she's a Techno-Wizard. Who likely constructed the device keeping the rift open)

"Vaela? You have proof of this? I do not approve of any accusations against our folk here! You had best be able to prove your claims!" At this point, players can take Davin and company to the chapel. A

perceptive player will note Vaela ducking between an alleyway. They can show the group the workshop and the device remains.

The chapel above will explode into shards and splinters. Rushing up, players will see Vaela, a device pointed at them, anger in her eyes.

“Do you have ANY idea how long it took to make that!?” She screams. “Months of work GONE because you assholes had to poke your noses where they don’t belong!” It’s obvious she isn’t letting the players off for this...

This encounter takes place inside Black Rock. Vaela’s stats and tactics are listed in the NPC section. Vaela doesn’t care about civilian casualties, but she will not go out of her way to take hostages as they will slow her down. She prefers ducking behind cover, such as buildings, walls, trees, etc.

Players will hear Davin and Redcap begging for the fight to stop and to take the fight away from the buildings and the residents, respectively.

Aftermath

Vaela's Death

The town has taken damage. It was unavoidable once Vaela decided to end the player's lives. Davin will thank the group, but also will request they leave immediately, handing them the agreement for funds from the bank in Lazlo. Assuming the players were unable to lure her into an open area or outside of the walls, there will be screaming and wailing in the background as the extent of the death that occurred becomes apparent. Redcap and others will be seen running to various destroyed homes in the background looking for survivors. It's a devastating scene.

"I know it is not your fault." Davin will press. "But they do not. All they see is outsiders appearing and this happening. It's safer for all of us if you leave now. Please."

Vaela's Capture

The taste of victory does not wash out the devastation of the town. All around are screams and wails as the dead and injured are counted.

"She will be dead before nightfall," Davin says. "We're not a violent group, but they will want her hung at the least." He pushes the paper to withdraw the pay into one of the player's hands. "It would be best for you to leave. Now. I know it's not your fault, but they only see outsiders." He looks sadly at Vaela. "I would ask you take her with you and give her over to someone who might give her a fair trial, but I do not expect it. To be honest, Lazlo would be the only place you might even be able to take her, and that's quite a ways off. I doubt her, or you for that matter, will make it out of The Fort alive. Creede has an incredible hate towards magic users. We can handle her now..."

Return to The Fort

The players will be allowed into the Fort and greeted by Creede. After listening to the story, he will grimace and only say "Good." Then turn and walk back inside. The entire garrison has all weapons trained on the players.

GM's Eyes Only:

This is a bit mean so you can play it how you want. The Fort and Creede have no intention of letting magic users or non-humans leave. If the players return to the Fort, they will be attacked. It is an

extremely one sided battle. The players WILL die. Bringing Vaela with them will only further solidify Creede's belief that the players need to be eliminated.

Unless they have the Dogboy with them. The soldiers will be so overjoyed that one of their Dogboys survived that they will let the players leave, warning them to not return and leave quickly.

Post Adventure

Hopefully the players enjoyed themselves. There should be enough here to allow any character type to flex various skills and abilities. Assuming the players made it out of the Fort (if they returned) they can continue the campaign in a new direction or start a new one. They can head to Lazlo to pick up pay, for example, which could introduce a new adventure on the way or when they arrive.

GM should distribute XP based on each player's performance. Fully up to their discretion. Congratulate each player regardless. Ask the players how they can improve. This is an introduction for everyone, after all.

Appendix A – NPCs & Enemies

Gerrol "Redcap" Marn

The town's inn proprietor. He's an ex-soldier who does not talk about his past. No one knows what faction he fought for and as long as he keeps good food and better ale available no one cares. He is quick witted but has a temper if you cross him. His fighting days are over, the stats here are shown only as he is the only NPC in Black Rock with any obvious combat experience, but he will not join a fight unless absolutely necessary.

O.C.C & Level of Experience: equivalent of a 4th level Coalition Grunt

Attributes: IQ 16, ME 12, MA 12, PS 17, PP 17, PE 20, PB 12, Spd 12

Combat: Hand to hand: Expert

Skills of Note: W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, W.P. Knife

Equipment: A run of the mill laser pistol he always keeps on his person and a laser rifle kept under the bar

Vaela Corrin Exposed

Vaela reveals herself as a high level Techno-Wizard. She uses a mix of magic and gadgets to control the battlefield, relying on positioning and disruption over raw damage output.

Vaela's true motives are not revealed to the players unless they try to question her during combat or post combat assuming she is alive.

She was lying about the device. It was meant to maintain a Rift indefinitely by siphoning P.P.E. from a nearby ley line. She was in the middle of trying to determine how to miniaturize the box and extend its range when the Lynx came through the Rift she had opened. She was forced to retreat, not being prepared to fight so many at once. Safely within Black Rock, she had decided to make best use of the situation: The Fort would not investigate and the folk at Black Rock would be too busy defending against the Lynx to look too closely at her own activities.

Her ultimate goal was to set up hundreds of these devices outside Coalition cities across the country in an attempt to bring creatures through that could decimate them. Notes and design documents found in her workshop can be puzzled out by a similar level Techno-Wizard, though most of the information on how to actually make the device are not within said documents.

OOO & Level: Level Six Techno-Wizard

Attributes: IQ: 14, ME: 12, MA: 10, PS: 12, PP: 15, PE: 13, SPD: 18

SDC: 62

HP: 46

PPE: 92

Attacks per round: 4

Bonuses: +3 initiative, +4 to strike, +5 to parry, +5 to dodge, +3 to roll with punch, +4 to roll with impact

Weapon Proficiencies:

W.P. Energy Rifle (+2 to strike)

W.P. Knife (+1 to strike/parry)

Equipment:

PPE Batteries with 60 stored PPE

Light Combat Armor

MDC 50

Energy Carbine

An energy rifle powered by PPE

Damage: 2d6 MD per shot

Rate: Single or burst

Range: 800 ft

Ammo: Unlimited with PPE feed

PPE Cost: 1 per shot

Repulsion Pulse Projector

Fires a cone of energy that causes a small amount of MD and causes a knockback/down

Damage: 1d4 MD

Range: 30 ft cone

PPE Cost: 6

Counts as a single attack

Effect: Target must roll to dodge or be knocked back 10-20 ft and lose initiative next action (knocked prone and must take an action to stand back up). Will devastate any non MD building it is pointed at.

Flash Obscura Projector

Emits an area of distortion making it difficult to see inside the area affected

Damage: None

Range: 60 ft radius around the device

Duration: 1d4 melee rounds

PPE Cost: 8

Counts as 1 attack to use

Effects: -2 to strike while inside the area, Vision is obscured making aimed shots into, out of, or through impossible

Grapple Line (Enchanted)

An enchanted grapple hook Vaela can use to reposition herself.

Range: 60 ft

Effect: Instant repositioning to wherever she sends the line.

PPE Cost: 2

Counts as 1 action

Combat Support Drone

A small basic hover drone powered by PPE

MDC: 25

Speed: 40 (flying)

Attacks per Melee: 2

Initiative: +2

Dodge: +4

Size: Small (difficult to target. It is roughly 2 feet in diameter. -2 to strike on aimed shots)

Weapon: Light Energy Pulse

Damage: 1d6 MD

Range: 500 ft

Rate: 1 shot per attack

Special Ability: Targeting Interference Field (Passive Aura)

Range: 20 ft radius around the drone

Effect: Enemies attacking Vaela suffer -1 to strike

Vibro-Knife

Damage: 1d6 SDC

Used as her spell casting device, but otherwise a backup weapon only.

Spells:

She knows the basic O.C.C. starter spells but will favor the following during a fight as the situation requires. GM's discretion on how she uses other spells. As a Techno-Wizard, she relies on her casting device to use fully powered spells.

Armor of Ithan

Range: Self or up to 60 feet

Duration: 4 rounds per level of experience

PPE Cost: 10

Effect: Creates a barrier of protection that equals 60 MDC, 120 near a ley line, and 180 at a ley line nexus

Blinding Flash

Range: 10 foot radius centered up to 60 feet away

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: Standard; -1 if 3 PPE points are used

PPE Cost: 1 or 3

Effect: A blinding flash of light that causes any who fail a save to be blinded for 1d4 melee rounds, with -10 to strike, parry, and dodge. Only affects organic eyes.

Multiple Image

Range: Self

Duration: 4 rounds per level of experience

Saving Throw: -4 to save vs magic. Those who save can tell which is the real person, otherwise the images are indistinguishable from one another

PPE Cost: 7

Effect: Creates three identical images of the mage. Provides bonus of +2 to initiative, +2 to dodge, and +1 to strike against any who fail their saves. Piercing the image with iron will disrupt it.

House of Glass

Range: Up to 100 feet

Damage: Special

Duration: 4 rounds per level of experience

Saving Throw: Standard

PPE Cost: 12

Effect: See entry in the Rifts Ultimate Edition or Book of Magic.

Combat Behavior (GM's Eyes Only)

Vaela

Vaela is a battlefield controller. She will use the surrounding terrain as cover as much as possible, only being fully exposed for one round at most. She will drain her PPE batteries before resorting to her own PPE. Her combat drone will already be active and floating roughly ten feet in front and above her.

Vaela will open the encounter by using Flash Obscura as soon as possible, cast Armor of Ithan on herself, and then fire from cover.

Her typical rotation from here is to attack twice with her rifle, use her repulsion pulse device when players close in, and then grapple to a new position. If players are already close, she will either grapple away or use the repulsion device first. If the players are still far enough away, she will attempt to use Blinding Flash on any who aren't already blinded.

If she starts running low on PPE (under 50) and/or MDC, she will use Multiple Image to try and confuse the enemy.

When she really starts being stressed, as a last resort she will use House of Glass on a target (GM choice). This is a bit of a double-edged sword for her as it would require her to take intentional hits for the spell to have any effect and she tries to stay under cover.

If she is near defeat, she will abandon any attempts to 'win' and try to escape using a combination of the Repulsion, Obscura and her grapple, assuming she has any PPE left for either.

Drone Combat Behavior

The drone is meant as primarily a distraction and harasser. It will attempt to remain within 20-30 ft of Vaela at all times. It is programmed with the following priorities in order of most to least important:

1. Stay alive at all cost. It will dodge frequently until there are no attacks left to do so
2. Maintain Interference Aura around Vaela
3. Harass whoever is targeting Vaela

It does not pursue targets.

It follows the above programming rigidly.

Shadow Lynx

Field Notes from Jason Garret, explorer and writer of the Great Northern Bestiary

"These beings that local population have taken to calling Shadow Lynx are not of this world, from what I can tell. Descriptions vary, but the commonality is they appear to be massive forest cats, similar but many times larger than the now extinct Canadian Lynx, but that is where the similarities end.

According to the various settlements that dot this most uninhabited landscape, it is massively large, the size of a large pony or small horse. Its name comes from how its fur seemingly absorbs the light

around it, leaving shadow in its wake. Its eyes faintly glow yellow in the darkness, not with reflected light but a burning something deep within itself.

They hunt in packs, which is unusual for cats of this area. They are organized and coordinated, leading some to believe they aren't feline at all but some new breed of wolf. The smaller younger cats serve as a distraction, harassing the flanks of their prey, harrying it away from groups and isolating it before going in for the kill. This behavior aligns with what I know of wolf packs, but all sketches and drawings I've seen of the creatures show a very lynx like appearance.

Reports are they can shrug off anything less than a laser rifle, with only the younger ones being seriously injured by common rifles. A farmer I spoke with claimed to have killed one, which sent the rest scattering. Its body melted away like mist, so he said. Loud noises and bright lights also seemed to chase them away. One village reported seeing one that was far larger than the rest, standing apart and just watching as the pack went after cattle.

The common agreement is this is some kind of creature pulled through a rift or multiple rifts. It seems localized to the Ontario region of old Canada. I have plans to set out and see if I cannot find one myself to verify its existence. It would be troubling if other creatures like it came through to our world. An animal that can meld into the shadows to strike from any direction is not welcome, in my opinion..."

Shadow Lynx come in three varieties: Lynx, Stalkers, and Alphas

Shadow Lynx

Attributes: I.Q. 3, M.E. 6, M.A. 3, P.S. 14, P.P. 16, P.E. 10, Spd 30

S.D.C.: 30

HP: 12

A.R.: 8

Attacks per Melee: 2

Initiative: +2

Strike: +3

Parry/Dodge: +4

Damage:

Bite: 1d6 + P.S.

Claws: 2d4

Abilities:

+2 Dodge in low light conditions (Dusk or dimmer)

+1 Strike from ambush

Prowl 55%

Pack Bonus: +1 Strike if 2+ Lynx of any type attack the same targeted

Shadow Lynx are younger and weaker. They still shift and meld with the darkness, but they have yet to develop the MDC capabilities their counterparts have. As a result, these will act as distractions, flanking and harassing to draw attention away from the true threats. If half the pack is put down, they will break and run away. Bright lights can dazzle them, stunning them for a few moments and causing them to take penalties to dodge, strike, and/or initiative for a full turn

Lynx Stalker

Attributes: I.Q. 4, M.E. 8, M.A. 4, P.S. 20, P.P. 15, P.E. 14, Spd 32

M.D.C.: 35

HP: 15

A.R.: 9

Attacks per Melee: 3

Initiative: +2

Strike: +4

Parry/Dodge: +4

Damage:

Bite: 2d6 M.D.

Claws: 2d4 M.D.

Leap Strike: 3d6 M.D. (Counts as 2 attacks, 40% chance for knockdown)

Abilities:

Nightvision 200 ft

+2 Dodge in low light conditions (Dusk or dimmer)

+3 Dodge in shadows

+1 Strike from ambush

Prowl 45%

Pack Bonus: +1 Strike if 2+ Lynx of any type attack the same targeted

The main bruisers of the pack. While the younger Lynx are distracting the target, isolating the weakest, the Stalker is preparing to strike. They will expend a full round to leap on an isolated target in an attempt to ground it, rend at it with claws and teeth, then retreat to set up another attack. Bright lights still bother them, causing the same penalties, but they recover within a single attack per melee instead of the full turn. At half their M.D.C. they will retreat and only continue the attack if the Alpha forces it.

Alpha Lynx

Attributes: I.Q. 5, M.E. 10, M.A. 5, P.S. 24, P.P. 17, P.E. 15, Spd 40

M.D.C.: 60

HP: 20

A.R.: 10

Attacks per Melee: 4

Initiative: +4

Strike: +6

Parry/Dodge: +6

Damage:

Bite: 3d6 M.D.

Claws: 2d6 M.D.

Power Pounce: 5d6 M.D. (2 attacks with 60% knockdown)

Abilities:

Shadow blink: Teleport to any shadow within 10ft, 1 x per melee

Rift Pulse: 10 ft Radius, 1d6 M.D., Knockback 45%, Takes 2 full turns to "recharge" and uses 2 melees.

Horror Factor: 12

+4 Dodge when in shadows

Pack Bonus: +1 Strike so long as any pack member is within 30 ft

The leader of the pack. It is huge, larger than a horse. It only engages if there is a valid threat, such as a power armor user or a Glitter Boy, or large numbers of enemies. Blink is used to reposition itself for a pounce but is not spammed. Expect it used once a round at most, or as an emergency escape. Rift Pulse is a blast of faint purple violet dimensional energy localized to the area around it. Whereas Blink is used as an escape mechanism, Pulse is crowd control for when escape is unavailable and the Alpha is surrounded. When it hits about 15% its M.D.C. it will attempt to escape.

Appendix B – Author’s Thoughts

On Glitterboys

I fundamentally disagree with Kevin’s comments on page 73 of the Rifts Ultimate Edition. I do not believe anyone has ever said “all characters must be equal” in TTRPGs. A Paladin is not the equal of a Warlock, for example. However, Glitterboys are fundamentally broken in Rifts. Being slow does not counter the incredible powerhouse they are, especially when their range is such that they don’t have to be fast to begin with. And Kevin’s excuse of “they’re slow” doesn’t hold water. They’re some of the fastest O.C.C.s in the game to play, with an automatic 4 attacks at level one (2 to start and +2 for the H2H: Glitter Boy that is automatic to the O.C.C.), plus another if they are from a lineage of Glitterboys. No other O.C.C. gets 5 attacks at level one just for being the O.C.C. without taking more ranks in a Hand-to-Hand skill at the expense of other skills or going ham with cybernetics or drugs. Plus, they have a run speed of 60 mph. They are NOT “slow.”

I’ve got an issue with how Kevin defends this vast difference in power. Notably, Kevin says “That’s like expecting every opponent in a videogame to offer the same level of difficulty.” What he ignores is difficulty *progression*. The player character shouldn’t be so overwhelmingly powerful right from the start else it’s also boring to play. Likewise, it becomes boring for the other players if the Glitterboy can lay waste to anything they encounter. Note I am not saying that a Glitterboy in the party cannot be fun. Nor am I saying every encounter must be a challenge. But there should be *some* balance when playing with other O.C.C.s that are not quite as strong. If one player wants to be a City Rat, for example, the power difference is just too vast. The very fact he felt the need to include a section explaining his reasoning for this O.C.C. being overpowered, and only this O.C.C., should be self-explanatory as to *why* the O.C.C. really could use reworking.

It’s ultimately up to the GM to dissuade one or the other or try to come to a compromise, which is why I recommend disabling the only weapon that could end every encounter in this (and most) adventure with one shot. Or the GM can ignore the recommendation and go with everything as is. It is totally up to you on how to proceed, so long as *EVERYONE* is having fun.

On Random Encounters

Random encounter stats come from the original Rifts sourcebook release, not the Ultimate Edition, and are heavily summarized. The original Rifts sourcebook had several pages of example encounters available at the end of the book for GMs to use. Sadly, it would appear Kevin felt twelve pages of advertisements were a more valuable use of space in the Ultimate Edition. He even comments “I struggled with including this section, because I don’t want people to see this as little more than advertising. That is not my intent.” Then proceeds to list literally every other Palladium Book available

at the time before capping the end off with several advertisements for Robotech, scaled models, and other assorted nonsense. So...you failed Kev, you failed. You'll forgive me for including the material you should have, and did previously, as it's kinda useful for GMs trying to run a campaign using your system without needing to purchase several other world books just for random mobs.

Afterward and Credits

Despite some misgivings, I did enjoy writing this module. I had forgotten a number of important concepts in Rifts and writing this allowed me to reintroduce myself to them. As an example, I had forgotten that Free Quebec is just as racist and supremacist as the Coalition. I had originally listed that city as the location of Black Rock's bank holdings. Imagine my shock and horror when I realized Lazlo was what I was thinking of.

I'd also like to state my thoughts on Kevin and how he runs Palladium are my own opinions, informed by about thirty years of interacting with them. But they are opinions, nonetheless. Kevin is (was?) a nice guy and fun to chat with, who really does love TTRPGs in general. If you like how he handles the day to day business, that's fine.

I have a bitterness over my own and several friend's fan sites being shut down via official C&Ds, simply because we had the audacity to host custom O.C.C.s on them rather than submit them to The Rifter for publication. The last time I met Kevin in person, some twenty years ago, I asked directly why he insisted on such rash actions. "To protect my property" was all he would respond with. Which makes no sense. I could understand if someone was hosting the entire library of world books. However, *custom* O.C.C.s? Still need a source book to use them, Kevin.

The ultimate end goal is to have fun and introduce new players to a vast and interesting TTRPG system and setting. Palladium Rifts has *a lot* of content and it would be a shame to see it just sit there languishing with no new players to come along and pick it up.

Random Encounter Table based on one by Glistam on the official Palladium forums.

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