

RIFTS *Sentinel*

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Unit Alpha Bloodied in First Battle

Super-soldiers fall as ley storm turns the tide in the Barrens

By Kurian Randall. *Sentinel Staff Writer. Information provided by Voice of Rights.*

The Tolkeen Front- Coalition State News is calling it a victory. The soldiers who were there are calling it something else.

Unit Alpha, the “Augmented Humans” unveiled to cheering crowds in Chi-Town last month, saw its first action on the 9th of this month when Major Jacob Kincaid led three platoons into the Barrens to retake a supply depot lost to Warlord Scarrd’s forces in December.

For the first hour, the operation went by the book. Eyewitnesses say the augmented troopers moved faster than any Juicer, tore through a picket of Tolkeen Brodkil with their bare hands, and took the depot without losing a man.

Then the ley line storm hit.

“The sky lit up blue and every one of them just dropped,” said a mercenary scout who asked not to be named. “Seizures, nosebleeds, screaming. The Tolkeenites didn’t even have to aim.”

According to Voice of Rights sources inside the CS medical corps, the augmentation process Colonel Prosek called “Simple Technology” reacts badly to raw ley energy. Of the ninety troopers who marched into the Barrens, sixty-one were carried out. Nineteen were not carried out at all.

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Quarantine Lifted, Titan Stands Empty

By Sydney Scape, *Freelance Reporter*

Titan- The Coalition has lifted its quarantine on the village of Titan, where a mysterious lung disease struck down 158 men, women, and children last fall.

There was nobody left to celebrate.

Traders who reached the village last week found the houses standing, the fields burned black and the well capped with permacrete. No bodies were found. A row of fresh markers along the north road carried numbers instead of names.

“There were cattle in the pens, alive and fed,” said Jenna Cole, a Kingsdale wagon trader. “Somebody had been feeding them. But there wasn’t a single person in that town.”

CS officials said the disease had been “fully contained” and that surviving villagers had been “relocated for their own safety.” They would not say where.

Families of Titan residents living in Kingsdale and Whykin are asking anyone with information to come forward. The Sentinel will print any letters we receive.

Leviathan Watch

Lake Michigan- Fishermen near Manistique report Northern Gun barges anchored over the crash site of the CS Stratocarrier *CAF-1 Flying Leviathan* since the first week of the new year. Nobody has seen anything come up yet. Several fishermen report seeing lights going *down*. See our Oddities page if you know how to swim.

Alpha

Major Kincaid himself was reported wounded but returned to Chi-Town under his own power. He has made no public statement.

Coalition State News made no mention of losses. In a broadcast the following night, Colonel Prosek praised Unit Alpha for “holding the depot against overwhelming sorcerous attack” and announced that a second Alpha company is already in training at Lonestar.

Tolkeen, for its part, has not been shy. Leaflets dropped over CS lines near the Mississippi the following week showed a cartoon of a muscle-bound trooper tripping over a ley line, under the words *Simple Technology*.

Military observers in Ishpeming say the lesson is a hard one for both sides. “The CS can build a better soldier,” one Northern Gun analyst told us. “But they’re fighting a war in a country made of ley lines. That’s a problem no amount of muscle fixes.”

Lazlo/Tolkeen-Roundup

Dark Law Protests Turn Ugly

Lazlo- The civil unrest many predicted after the Council of Learning outlawed “Dark Magic” arrived on the night of the Winter Solstice.

What began as a candlelight march to the Council Hall ended with three city blocks of the Anima Section in flames. Lazlo Security Force officers say a group of masked protesters summoned a fire elemental on the steps of the Hall. Protest organizers say the elemental was summoned by agents of the Council to discredit them.

Eleven were injured. Forty-two were arrested, including shop owner Janis Torsion, a familiar name to readers of our Oddities page.

Plato, Head of the Council, has refused to repeal the law. “Lazlo will not become Tolkeen,” he told a crowd the following morning. “Not tonight. Not ever.”

Balaam Search Party Returns Empty-Handed

New Lazlo- The search party sent by the Council of Learning to recover Dr. Jonas Himes and the *Journal of Balaam* returned last month after eleven weeks in the field.

They did not bring back Dr. Jonas. They did not bring back the Journal. They did bring back his spectacles, found resting neatly on a stone in a ruined pre-rifts library outside old Grand Rapids. The lenses, scholars say, show the reflection of a room no one in the party had ever seen.

The Council has not announced a second expedition. Rumors that *Lord Balgazar* has offered a reward for the spectacles could not be confirmed.

North America-Out & About

Gilead Opens Its Doors

Colorado Baronies- As promised, Gilead’s City Hall opened for business on the first day of the new year. Baron Midgard cut the ribbon himself, then spent the afternoon hearing land claims from the settlers who have poured into the new barony since the fall.

Fatale’s Radio Rangers report that the first tele-pole line between Gilead and the Barony of Hope is up and talking. The 1st Apocalyptic Cavalry fired a twenty-one gun salute in honor of the occasion. Two of the guns, we are told, were loaded.

Sabre Arms the Settlers

Pecos Empire- Emperor Sabre has made good on his promise to help the settlers burned out by the Coalition’s campaign around the Lonestar complex. Raider caravans have been seen handing out rifles, ammunition and horses to homesteaders along the old Red River.

The CS has answered with more burn teams and a bounty of 50,000 credits on the Emperor’s head. Sabre answered the bounty with a bounty of his own: 50,001 credits for the head of whoever tries to collect it.

“They can burn the farms,” one homesteader told our correspondent, a new rifle across her knees. “They can’t burn all of us.”



Tales From the Wastes: *The Lantern of Split Rock*

By Old Payne, Sentinel Scholar

Welcome to the next installment of Tales From the Wastes. I hope you will enjoy listening to this month's story. I hope that you will also learn something of the great, yet terrifying, world we have been handed as well.

This month I will tell you of the *Lantern of Split Rock*. The trappers of the north shore tell of a lighthouse that stands on a cliff above Lake Superior, in what was once the Old American Empire's State of Minnesota. This is now just east of the Kingdom of Tolkeen and south of the Xiticix hivelands.

The lighthouse is older than the Coming of the Rifts. Its walls are yellow brick and its tower is no taller than a good oak, but the trappers say its light has never once gone out. Not in the Great Cataclysm, when the lake rose and swallowed the shore towns. Not in the Dark Age. Not now, three hundred years on, with no fuel, no wires and no keeper anyone has ever seen.

Boatmen who cross the lake at night swear by it. Follow the Lantern, they say, and you will find safe water every time. Ignore it and the lake will take you. Many a smuggler's hull lies at the bottom of Superior to prove them right.

Those few who have climbed the cliff tell of a cold, clean keeper's house, a kettle still warm on the stove, and a logbook on the table with an entry for every night since 1910. The last entry is always for the night before. The handwriting never changes.

The light itself, they say, does not come from a lamp. At the top of the tower sits the great glass lens of the old lighthouse, and inside the lens floats a single mote of blue fire, turning slowly, never touching the glass. The Psi-Stalkers who guide caravans along the shore say the mote is a living thing, that it is hungry, and that it keeps the light burning by feeding on something. What it feeds on, they will not say.

Some tell of travelers who climbed the tower to steal the lens and were found at dawn sitting on the rocks below, alive and unhurt, staring out at the water. They never spoke again. Others tell of a woman in an old-fashioned keeper's coat who meets lost travelers on the shore road and walks them to the nearest town. She leaves no footprints in the snow.

Is the Lantern a ghost, a guardian, or something that came through a Rift and liked the view? All this is just trapper talk of course, but who can say what keeps that light burning?

That is our story for this month. Until next time, remember, if you feel the need to find the truth of this story, please exercise caution. You never know what awaits you out in the Wastes.

(Notes for the Lantern: The mote is a minor Entity bound to the lens (treat as a Haunting Entity with 60 M.D.C. and a Horror Factor of 12). The lens itself is a ley line focus: anyone holding it casts spells at +10% range and duration while within sight of Lake Superior. Anyone who tries to carry the lens out of the tower must save vs. magic of 16 or better, or be held in place until dawn. The Keeper is never hostile, but she will not allow the lens to leave.)



Check out the Sentinel's Official Website
<http://www.angelfire.com/games3/riftssentinelbase/>

Oddities

Compiled by Sentinel Resources

PA Merc Pilots

We are in need of Power Armor Pilots experienced in Anti-Robot tactics. We provide maintenance, ammo & refurbishment. Pay is high & regular. Please contact Arakk Chrome of Robot Control at Ishpeming.

Salvage Divers Wanted

Experienced divers, underwater Power Armor pilots & Operators needed for a cold water recovery job in Lake Michigan. Danger pay. No Tolkeen sympathizers. See the harbor master at Manistique.

Solstice Night Bail Fund

Friends of the Anima Section are raising credits for those arrested on Solstice Night. Donations accepted at the Blue Lantern tea house, Lazlo.

Kingsdale

To the owner of the three-headed dragonsaur: please collect your pet. It ate the collar. And the kennel. And most of the barn. See Basalt, and bring a wagon.

Snow Treads

Heavy duty snow treads for hover and wheeled vehicles, fitted while you wait. Winter rates. Ft. Towson, 100 Windsor Road.

TW Ley Line Detector for Sale

Slightly singed. Works fine, mostly. Asking 12,000 credits but will discuss Trade terms. See Adam Graven at Stormspire.

Elemental Handler Wanted

Experienced with fire. No questions about last month, please. Good pay. See Moses at Kingsdale Magic Guild.

Wanted, Dead or Alive

Emperor Sabre, by order of the Coalition States. 50,000 credits. Inquire at any CS outpost.

Wanted, Dead or Alive

Whoever tries to collect the ad above. 50,001 credits. Inquire at any Pecos campfire.

The Rave: A View of the City-Rats: Gangs Part Two

By Zeitgeist, Sentinel Hacker

Heads Up All, Zeitgeist again. Last month I took you down into the sewers with the Morlocks. This month we're going the other way, up the stacks to the Living Levels where the lights are always on. Or at least, they're on because somebody is stealing the power. Meet the *Lamplighters*.

The Lamplighters

Breakdown: 260 Total Members: 70% Normal Humans, 15% Operators & Hackers, 10% Mutated Humans, 5% Other.

Known Location: Chi-Town, Living Levels 18 through 30. Small cells in Iron Heart and the 'Burbs.

General Alignment: Anarchist

Standard Weapons: Whatever they can lift from the armories. Usually Wilks lasers and CS surplus. Every member carries a pair of insulated cutters.

Body Armor: Plastic Man or Urban Warrior, painted over in their colors.

Bionics/Cybernetics: More than most gangs. Hand jacks, clock calendars and amplified hearing are popular. Leaders favor a Universal Head Jack.

Special: The Lamplighters know the Chi-Town power grid better than the engineers who maintain it. They can black out a block, splice a line or bleed power off a transformer in 1D4 melees. Operators in the gang get +10% to Electrical skills inside the fortress city.

Colors: Gold & White. A hand-drawn lamp is their mark, usually chalked on the wall of a block they've tapped.

Gang Leaders: Nobody has seen the boss. The orders come over a tapped CS comm line in a woman's voice, and the gang calls her Mother Volt. Her right hand is a former NETSET tech called Fuse, who knows exactly how the CS tracks power theft, because he used to do it.

Criminal Activity: Power theft is their bread and butter. They sell stolen juice to Downside clinics, black-market chop shops and families who can't pay the CS rate. They also run a sideline in blackouts: pay the Lamplighters, and the lights on a certain corridor go out at a certain time. What happens in the dark is your business.

The Lamplighters have a code, too. They never cut the power to a hospital ward and they never sell to slavers. Break those rules and you'll find out how dark the Downside can get.

Next month, Gangs Part Three. Till then Long Live Freedom of Choice!

Spoons Views: Diaries of the Siege

By Spoon, Voice of Rights activist

This month I received a letter from a Tolkeen refugee who asked me to stop printing the Black Razor's journal. She said it shames the dead. I thought about that for a long time.

I am printing it anyway. Not because it is pretty, but because it is true, and because whoever decides what happens after this war should know what was done in it. On both sides.

-October 14th 106 PA. *Rain for three days. The Shadow Beasts hate it, and so do the men. Stygian says we move north at the new moon. Nobody asks where. Brother Kell went out on patrol yesterday and came back without his shadow. I mean that as I write it. He walks in the sun and nothing follows him. He laughs about it, but he will not sleep near the fire anymore. I divined for him last night and the stones came up blank. I have never seen the stones come up blank. I told him they said he would live a long life. I am not proud of that.*

Return Next month for more of the Diaries of the Siege.

Sports Dome

By: Ajax Slam

Holt Magnum: Fastest Man in the JFL

As promised, the exploits of Holt Magnum! Since joining the Fort Stewart Rhinos last summer the Mega-Juicer has broken every rushing record the JFL keeps, and a few it didn't know it had. Against the Whykin Gunners he ran the length of the field four times in one quarter. Against the Newtown Devastators he outran the Big Stick, which nobody has ever done and lived to brag about.

Then came the Maulers. Fresh off their suspension, the Maulers put three Titans on Holt from the opening whistle. The Titans never laid a glove on him. Afterwards Maulers manager Michael Junes demanded the JFL test Holt for magic. The JFL did. He came back clean, and nobody can explain how a second level Mega-Juicer moves the way he does.

Holt himself isn't talking. Asked where he came from, he grinned and said, "Somewhere slower." Keep your eyes on this one, sports fans. Peace!

[**Notes on Holt Magnum:** 2nd level Mega-Juicer with the Extraordinary Speed power from Hu2. Unknown to everyone, Holt included, he ages at half the rate of other Juicers. Why is up to the G.M.]

The Profiler

There is no creature the Coalition trusts more than a Dog Boy. Bred in the labs of Lonestar, raised in the kennels, loyal to their handlers to the last breath. That is what the posters say.

Our profile this month walked away from all of it.

He goes by Tag. He is a German Shepherd Dog Boy, about eight years old, which he tells me is middle-aged for his kind. He deserted the Coalition Army two years ago and now lives in Lazlo, where he works as a bodyguard for traveling scholars. He agreed to talk to me on the condition that I not reveal who he works for.

The Profiler: Thanks for sitting down with me. Let's start at the beginning. Where were you born?

Tag: Lonestar. Kennel Block Nine. I don't remember my mother. We weren't supposed to.

TP: What was it like growing up in the kennels?

Tag: Clean. Loud. Everybody had a job, and the job was always the same. Smell the magic, find the mutant, point at the D-Bee. They tell you it's what you were made for. When you're three years old you believe them.

TP: When did you stop believing them?

Tag: Missouri. We were hunting a "nest" of psychics in a farm town. My nose found them hiding in a root cellar. A family. Two kids. The little one was scared, and when you're scared you smell like copper. I'd smelled that on a hundred people. I never thought about it before. That day I thought about it.

TP: What did you do?

Tag: I told my handler the cellar was clean. He believed me. He always believed me. That was the first lie I ever told.

TP: That doesn't sound like desertion yet.

Tag: No. Desertion took another year. You don't stop being what they made you all at once. You just notice more. You notice the handler who kicks the pup that's slow. You notice what happens to a Dog Boy who gets hurt too bad to work. Nobody comes back from the vet's in Lonestar.

TP: So you ran.

Tag: I walked. Middle of a patrol near the Michigan border, I took off my collar and I walked into the woods. Nobody chased me. I think my squad thought I was tracking something. In a way I was.

TP: How did you end up in Lazlo?

Tag: Starving, mostly. A Cyber-Knight found me eating out of a trash pit outside Northern Gun. He didn't shoot me, which surprised both of us. He brought me east. Lazlo took me in. Most of it, anyway. You'd be amazed how many people in a free city still cross the street when they see a Dog Boy.

TP: Have you heard about the new registration law? Mutant humans can stay CS citizens now, if they serve.

Tag: (laughs) I heard. They're not offering it to us. We were never citizens. We're equipment.

TP: Do you ever think about going back?

Tag: Every day. Not to the Army. To the kennels. There are pups in Block Nine right now who believe everything I believed. Somebody ought to tell them there's a choice.

TP: Is that a plan?

Tag: It's a thought. Thoughts are free. Even for a dog.

Check us out next month for a different profile.

If you would like to use Tag as an NPC, check out the NPC section at WorldofRifts.com

[**Notes on Tag:** Dog Boy, 6th level Wilderness Scout, Anarchist alignment. Keeps all of his Dog Boy senses and psionics. Carries a Northern Gun ion pistol and a vibro-knife. Has a 10,000 credit CS bounty on his head for desertion, which he has never told anyone about.]



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TOBIAS MAGICKAL AIDS & PREDICTIONS

Mysteries and Magicians of the Shadow; Part 4

Well-Met Brothers! Two months ago I promised you the Spellcraft of Shadow Magic, and last month I gave you the Shadow Mage instead. Forgive an old man his wanderings. This month I keep my word.

The Shadowcaster does not command the Dark, any more than a sailor commands the sea. He asks, he bargains, and he learns where the currents run. Every spell below is cast best between sunset and sunrise. Cast by day, each one costs half again its normal P.P.E., and the Dark is slow to answer.

Shroud of the Dark Dragon (Level Three)

Range: Self or one other by touch. **Duration:** One minute per level of experience. **Saving Throw:** None. **P.P.E.:** Ten

The caster draws the Dark around the recipient like a cloak of wings. While the shroud lasts the recipient is +4 to Prowl and Hide in Shadows (if they have the skill), invisible to thermal and night vision optics, and +1 to dodge. In full sunlight the shroud burns away instantly.

Eyes of the Unlit (Level Two)

Range: Self. **Duration:** Ten minutes per level of experience. **Saving Throw:** None. **P.P.E.:** Six

The caster sees through any darkness, natural or magical, as if it were noon, and can see the outline of anyone standing in shadow within 100 feet (30.5 m), invisible or not.

Nightfall Lash (Level Four)

Range: 30 feet (9 m). **Damage:** 2D6 S.D.C., or 1D6 M.D. when cast on a ley line. **Duration:** Instant. **Saving Throw:** Dodge. **P.P.E.:** Twelve

A whip of living shadow lashes out from the caster's hand. A victim struck must save vs. magic of 12 or better or lose initiative and one melee attack, as the cold of the Dark seeps into their bones.

Umbral Chains (Level Six)

Range: 60 feet (18.3 m). **Duration:** One melee round per level of experience. **Saving Throw:** Standard. **P.P.E.:** Twenty-Five

The victim's own shadow rises up and binds them. Bound victims cannot move from where they stand and are -4 to strike, parry and dodge. Bright light cast directly on the victim (a flare, a Globe of Daylight) breaks the chains at once.

Step Between (Level Eight)

Range: 300 feet (91.5 m), shadow to shadow. **Duration:** Instant. **Saving Throw:** None. **P.P.E.:** Forty

The caster steps into one shadow and out of another within range. Both shadows must be large enough to hide a man. The caster arrives cold, silent, and +2 to strike on his first attack that melee.

Use these with care, Brothers. The Dark is patient, but it keeps count. Next month we turn from the spells to the *Osso Legione* itself, and the price its members pay to belong. Till then Pleasant Paths!

Letters to the Sentinel

Dear Sentinel, I have read Tales From the Wastes since your very first issue. Old Payne, are the Rifters real? My grandfather swore he met a man with gold skin in the Dark Age. – *Curious in Kingsdale*

Old Payne replies: I am merely the storyteller. But if your grandfather kept a journal, I would very much like to read it.

Dear Sentinel, Has Arakk Chrome of Robot Control ever found his Power Armor pilots? That ad has run in every issue. – *A Concerned Reader, Ishpeming*

Editor replies: Arakk tells us he is getting close. Pay is still high & regular.

Dear Sentinel, My sister and her two boys lived in Titan. If anyone has seen them, please write to the Sentinel. Her name is Mara Dunn. – *R.D., Whykin*

Editor replies: We will pass along any word we receive.

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