

# GADGET GUIDE: ARMOR

Along with weapons, armor and protective gear are some of the first tools and technologies. Heroes lacking invulnerability, intangibility, or superhuman speed may rely on armor and other protective gadgets to survive the dangers of their heroics, and some make armor their primary theme.

This Guide looks at all types of protective gadgets, from armor and shields to goggles and gas masks. For power armor as a full-fledged power theme, see **Power Profiles: Armor Powers**.



## DEFENSE EFFECTS

Protective gadgets rely on defensive power effects. In particular, they use what can be called the preventative defense effects: Deflect, Enhanced Defense (including Protection), and Immunity. These are differentiated from the curative defense effects like Immortality and Regeneration, which correct harmful conditions rather than preventing them.

### DEFLECT

This effect is primarily useful for shields and other gadgets used to actively block or turn aside attacks. Note that the default configuration of Deflect is Ranged; any character can “deflect” using the option to actively defend given in the **Action & Adventure** chapter of the *Hero's Handbook*. The only reason to have a Close Range Deflect is to apply power modifiers, such as Reflect and Redirect, to it.

Deflect is deliberately designed to require the standard action to actively defend, because its benefit “bends” power level limits, granting an opposed check for attacks against the defending character, which can result in up to a +10 bonus to active defense (if the player rolls a 20 on the character's defensive check). This is why an “automatic” Deflect requiring less than a standard action is prohibited; it would give the character a substantial power level bending advantage at no in-play cost (apart from the necessary power points).

**Example:** A player wants to create a “deflector field” that deflects attacks automatically, making Deflect a free action. At PL10, the player puts the Deflect rank at 10. That means a minimum defense of 21 at all times (since Deflect rolls add 10 to any roll of 10 or less) and a maximum defense of 30 without any effort on the character's part! The Gamemaster suggests the player consider one of the Enhanced Defense or Immunity options for the power.

### ENHANCED DEFENSE

The primary defense effect is simply increasing a character's defense ranks using power effects, rather than spending points on “innate” defenses. This is particularly relevant for Toughness, which can *only* be increased as a power, using the Protection effect (which is essentially the same as Enhanced Toughness).

**Protection** is by far the most common form of Enhanced Defense, granted by armor and other types of protective gear. Some advanced types of armor may provide ranks of Impervious Toughness, but more than 3–4 ranks tends to be the province of super-science or magical armor.

**Enhanced Dodge** effects usually represent protective equipment designed to make the wearer harder to spot (and therefore target) or intended to cause attacks to slide off or otherwise miss. It's a common effect of items like shields. Similarly, Enhanced Parry is for items used to block close attacks, and some defensive items provide both benefits.

**Enhanced Fortitude** is relatively rare for protective items, generally just those offering a bonus to Fortitude resistance checks for specific hazards, such as a filter mask for dealing with some breathing hazards. More often, protective equipment simply provides Immunity (following) to certain specific hazards, rather than a broad Fortitude bonus. Enhanced Fortitude that applies to only specific hazards has an appropriate Limit flaw (from –1 to –3).

**Enhanced Will** is the rarest effect from protective gadgets, with the exception of magical and super-science items aimed specifically at protecting against malignant influences (see **Exotic Defenses** later in this *Guide* for examples).

### DEFENSE EXTRAS

At the Gamemaster's option, the Reflect and Redirect extras of Deflect and Immunity can apply to Enhanced Defense effects as well, allowing characters to reflect or redirect unsuccessful attacks against those defenses as a reaction.

**Example:** Dragoneye has a spell that not only provides a “spirit shield” in the form of Impervious Enhanced Will, but also adds the Reflect extra, causing any Will-based attack that fails to overcome the defense to rebound back at the attacker! The power costs a total of 3 points per rank: 1 for Enhanced Will, +1 for Impervious, and +1 for Reflect.

## IMMUNITY

Immunity is the “last-ditch” effect option for defense, but is the most suitable effect for anything that grants a simple, flat immunity to some other effect or hazard—foregoing resistance checks, rather than enhancing resistance. It’s the primary effect for protective gear rather than armor (see the **Protective Gear** section), working against environmental hazards and specific attack effects rather than overall Damage most of the time.

Although Immunity is normally a permanent effect, some Immunity-granting gadgets may require active use to provide their benefits, applying the Sustained or even Concentration duration modifiers to the effect. This can be a useful way to balance an Immunity that can be disrupted or that limits what else the user can do while it is active.

Relatively low-ranked Immunities (rank 10 or less) may be equipment, ranging from gas masks to spacesuits, whereas higher-ranked Immunities are more likely to come from Removable devices than equipment.

## ARMOR

Armor, simply put, is a kind of protective clothing or outer layer worn over clothing. Primitive armor uses materials like leather or metal while modern armors are made from advanced synthetic materials. Far-future armor might not even use “material” at all, being made out of coherent fields of energy.

The primary effect of armor is Protection, increasing the wearer’s Toughness. Some advanced armors may be Impervious, although that term is relative; archaic armor proved almost completely ineffective against firearms when they were introduced, rendering the most “impervious” armor no more useful than cloth.

**Partial Armor:** Only rarely does armor cover the wearer’s entire body and, even then, there are typically joints, seals, or openings (including eye- and mouth-slits) where the armor is weaker. This can be represented in game terms in two ways. First is to apply the Unreliable flaw for armor that covers half or less of the wearer. Second is to consider the effects of a Power Attack maneuver against the wearer targeting the armor’s weak points, taking an attack penalty for a more specific target, but gaining in damage.

**Ablative Armor:** Attacks can chip away at worn armor, causing damage and even breaking parts of it. If you want to reflect this in game terms, apply the Fades flaw to the armor; each successful attack reduces its rank by 1 until the armor no longer provides any protection. Damaged armor must be repaired like a moderate item (see the **Building Items** section of the Technology skill in **Chapter 4, Hero’s Handbook**).

## ARCHAIC ARMOR

Characters from a pre-industrial culture or setting may wear simple armor made of materials like leather and

metal, like that used throughout the ancient world until the development of firearms made such armor largely obsolete. Although realistically, archaic armor should be limited to non-ballistic and non-energy attacks, it’s generally easier to assume its Protection is across the board, unless you specifically choose to Limit it.

Likewise, archaic armor often had difficulties associated with it, notably bulk and encumbering the wearer. The game traits (and the source material) largely ignore these unless the player or GM wants to bring them into play as complications or appropriate Quirk flaws.

**Leather** protects Protection 1, with an additional rank for studded leather (set with close-spaced metal studs) or heavy hide armor.

**Chain-mail** (suits of interlocking metal rings) or scale mail (leather with overlapping metal scales sew to it) offer Protection 3. The addition of a full metal breastplate increases this to rank 4. Layered armors of laminate and padding, like ancient samurai armor, are at the same rank.

**Plate-mail**, a suit of metal plates buckled over chain mail, provides Protection 5.

**Full plate armor**, a jointed and articulated suit of solid metal plates, grants Protection 6, the peak of archaic armor.

## MAGICAL ARMOR

Archaic armor encountered in **MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS** settings is often magical in nature, one of the reasons to wear it rather than modern armor. Magical armor is nearly always a Removable power rather than an item of equipment. The armor can have any Protection rank up to the wearer’s power level limit, and is generally no more cumbersome or difficult than any other superhero costume. Magical armor may also be Impervious, even if it is only leather or metal chain, due to its enchantments.

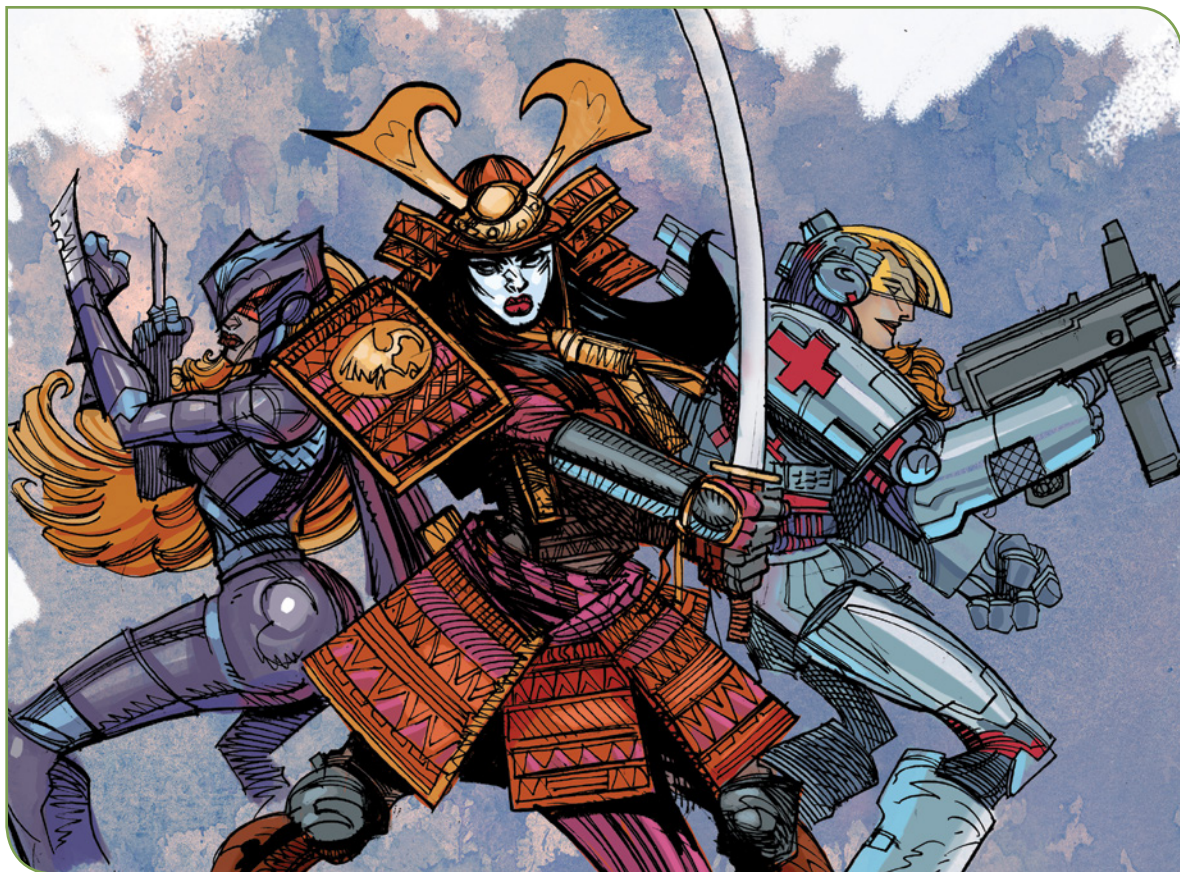
Magical armor may grant its wearer a wide range of other powers, from Immunity to some effects to special movement, enhanced abilities, or more, much like a suit of power armor with a magical rather than a technological descriptor. See **Power Profiles: Armor Powers** for details on collections of powers like these.

## MODERN ARMOR

Modern body armor tends to focus on protection against ballistic weapons like bullets, reducing penetration and kinetic impact, although it often also provides incidental protection against other forms of Damage. Modern armor vests and similar body armor concentrated on the torso may be considered partial armor (previously).

**Leathers** can include things like heavy leather “biker jackets” and other protective motorcycle or sports gear, designed primarily to absorb impacts, but also useful in combat. They typically provide 1–2 ranks of Protection, like archaic leather armor.





**Undercover vest:** A torso-covering of ballistic cloth thin enough to be worn under loose fitting street clothes. Provides Protection 2 with the Subtle modifier.

**Bulletproof Vest:** A thicker vest or even suit of ballistic cloth, with impact absorbing pads covering much of the torso, provides Protection 4. Usually worn as an outer layer of clothing, a bulletproof vest may also have pockets for metallic or ceramic inserts to provide more rigid protection, adding up to 4 ranks of Impervious to the effect.

**Riot Armor:** A full suit of ballistic cloth armor with additional armor panels, heavy boots, gloves, and visored helmet, offering Protection 6. May also include a riot shield (see **Shields**) and a gas mask (see **Protective Gear**) for protection against gases deployed as crowd control agents. These items are not included in the armor's cost and are considered separate. A lighter version of riot armor is a ballistic jumpsuit: a form-fitting uniform of armored cloth, typically worn for government agents in the field, providing Protection 4–6 using more advanced (and less bulky) materials.

## SUPER-SCIENCE ARMOR

This armor uses technology beyond that of modern world science. It may be considered equipment in some far-future or science-fiction settings, or for characters with access to cutting-edge or experimental gear (such as agents of secret government agencies) but should otherwise be treated as Removable powers.

**Force Fields** are protective energy barriers, which typically surround the wearer like a second skin. They're normally visible as a glowing aura, but a Subtle force field may be invisible to the naked eye. They can provide Protection greater than any material armor, limited only by their power source, field strength, and the power level of the series.

Some force fields are porous to gases, allowing wearers to continue to breathe, but leaving them vulnerable to airborne gases and toxins. Others may be airtight and come with their own oxygen supply or air-recycling system. Indeed, this type of force field may serve as a kind of environment suit (see the **Life Support** section).

**Nano-armor** is made from "smart" adaptive nano-material, a mass of microscopic, interlocking machines able to reorganize into a variety of forms. At the most basic level, nano-armor offers Protection with the Variable Descriptor modifier, allowing it to "morph" and shift to the most advantageous armor descriptors for the situation. More advanced nano-armor may be able to adapt to almost any threat, like the Adaptive Immunity power (see **Power Profile: Meta-Powers**). An "experienced" suit of nano-armor makes its wearer virtually invulnerable!

**Power Armor** is a general term of highly advanced collections of wearable technology, including armor, weapons, sensors, life support systems, and computers (amongst other things), an entire suite of powers built into a single Removable gadget. Power Armor is described in more detail in **Power Profile: Armor Powers**.

## MITIGATING GADGETS

Some “protective” items are intended to mitigate the effects of a complication, like a Disability or Vulnerability, rather than guard against a more general type of harm. These items are plot devices that do not cost power points unless they grant effects or benefits other than those associated with the complication. The item is a part of the complication, and its loss or failure may trigger it. Examples of mitigating gadgets may include:

- A “containment suit” that allows a noncorporeal being made of energy or gas to have a physical form. If the suit is ruptured or destroyed, the wearer is unable to take any actions affecting the physical world and may suffer additional effects.
- A skullcap, headband, or amulet that prevents a hostile psychic entity from taking control of the character. This might be another personality or a true case of possession by a demon or ghost. If the item is disabled, the character is Controlled by the entity.
- Special gloves that prevent the character’s touch from having a dangerous effect, anything from blocking a Permanent Reaction effect based on touch to mitigating another complication, such as an empath who suffers painful overload when in direct physical contact with another person.
- A suit or other worn item that immunizes the character against the harmful effects of his or her own powers, such as an electrical controller who will “short circuit” without a special “breaker belt” to regulate his overloading neuro-electricity.

## SHIELDS

Shields are handheld barriers wielders can interpose between them and attacks to provide additional protection. In M&M game terms, shields generally provide a bonus to active defenses (Dodge and Parry), serving to deflect attacks, rather than adding a Toughness bonus. The shield’s bonus ranges from +1 for a small shield or buckler to +2 to +3 for a broad “kite” shield, perhaps as much as +5 for a “tower” shield that covers almost the entire body of the wielder (similar to total cover).

**Bracers** are arm guards usable as shields. At the most basic, a set of bracers might provide the Improved Defense advantage (see **Chapter Five**, *Hero’s Handbook*): a +2 circumstance bonus to defense checks when taking the defend action. Bracers may also function like a regular shield, offering a bonus to active defenses, or provide Protection or Immunity requiring some action on the wearer’s part, making its duration Sustained or Concentration.

**Force Shields** are solidified energy fields shaped and used like ordinary shields, often protected from a glove or wrist-bracer. They may have any of the effects of ordinary shields or bracers, but with a different descriptor, and may also provide the ability to expand the shield to protect others (applying the Affects Others and Area modifiers, possibly as an Alternate Effect).

## SHIELDS AS WEAPONS

A shield can serve as a close combat weapon in a pinch. A basic “shield bash” attack simply uses the wielder’s Strength Damage, applying a different descriptor, and the GM may wish to consider it a free application of the shield’s descriptors. If the shield adds to the wielder’s Strength Damage, give it an Strength-based Damage Alternate Effect.

Some characters even use shields as throwing weapons. Per the guidelines in **Gadget Guide: Archaic Weapons**, if this is a one-shot use that deprives the wielder of the

shield, it can be considered a 0-point descriptor. If the character can recover the shield after each attack to use it again (as a weapon or defense) then apply the Ranged modifier to the shield’s Damage, which should be an Alternate Effect of its defensive bonuses. The Ricochet extra (see **Extras in Chapter Six**, *Hero’s Handbook*) is a common one for thrown shields, and may help explain how the shield “bounces back” to its wielder after an attack.

## PROTECTIVE GEAR

The human body is vulnerable to many forms of damage or injury other than outright physical harm. Protective gear safeguards against these hazards, protecting vulnerable areas like the eyes and ears, breathing passages, the lungs, and—in exotic cases—even the mind and spirit.

## SENSORY PROTECTION

**Glasses** cover the eyes to protect against visual effects.

**Goggles** also seal against the skin in addition to covering the eyes, providing protection against liquids and gases that might otherwise work around glasses.

Both types of vision protection can provide benefits ranging from a bonus to resistance checks against visual attacks (1 point for +5) to the Second Chance advantage against such attacks (1 point) or Immunity to Visual Attacks (5 points).

**Earplugs** fit into the ears to protect against loud noises and similar auditory effects.

**Earmuffs** fit over the ears, typically worn with a connecting band around the head.

Like visual protection, these gadgets offer resistance to auditory attacks ranging from a resistance bonus to Second Chance or Immunity.

**Nose-plugs** provide protection from olfactory effects, with a +5 bonus to resistance checks for 1 point.

## ARMOR & PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

ITEM	EFFECT	COST
<b>ARCHAIC ARMOR</b>		
Leather armor	Protection 1	1
Chain-mail armor	Protection 3	3
Laminate armor	Protection 3	3
Plate-mail armor	Protection 5	5
Full-plate armor	Protection 6	6
<b>MODERN ARMOR</b>		
Leathers	Protection 1	1
Undercover vest	Protection 2, Limited to Ballistic, Subtle	2
Bulletproof vest	Protection 4, Limited to Ballistic	2
Bulletproof vest with plates	Protection 4	4
Riot armor	Protection 6	6
<b>SUPER-SCIENCE ARMOR</b>		
Force field	Protection	1/rank
Force field, sealed	Immunity 8 (life support except for eating and sleeping, Protection	8 + 1/rank
Nano-armor	Protection, Variable Descriptor 2	2 + 1/rank
Adaptive nano-armor	Immunity 140 (Fortitude, Toughness, and Will Effects), Limited to effects the armor has experienced at least once	70
<b>SHIELDS</b>		
Small shield	+1 Dodge and Parry	2
Medium shield	+2 Dodge and Parry	4
Large shield	+3 Dodge and Parry	6
Tower shield	+5 Dodge and Parry, -1 speed	9
Bracers	Enhanced Advantage (Improved Defense)	1
<b>PROTECTIVE GEAR</b>		
Glasses/Goggles	+5 bonus to resist visual attacks	1
Earmuffs	+5 bonus to resist auditory attacks	1
Earplugs	+5 bonus to resist auditory attacks, Subtle	2
Nose-plugs	+ bonus to resist olfactory attacks, Subtle	2
<b>BREATHING PROTECTION</b>		
Rebreather	Immunity 2 (suffocation), Limited to 20 rounds	1
Gas mask	Immunity 1 (eye and throat irritants)	1
Oxygen mask	Immunity 2 (suffocation)	2
<b>LIFE SUPPORT</b>		
Scuba gear	Immunity 2 (suffocation)	2
Diving suit	Immunity 3 (pressure, suffocation)	3
Space suit	Immunity 5 (pressure, radiation, suffocation, vacuum)	5
Life support field	Immunity 8 (life support, except for eating and sleeping), add Subtle for an invisible field	8
<b>EXOTIC DEFENSES</b>		
Amulet	Enhanced Advantage (Second Chance) or Immunity (see description)	1+
Psi-shield	Enhanced Will (Limited to Mental Powers) or Immunity 10 (mental powers)	1/2 ranks or 10



## BREATHING PROTECTION

Characters can only hold their breath for so long, and airborne gases and other agents can affect anyone who breathes, regardless of Toughness.

**Rebreather:** A small cylinder that fits into the mouth and contains enough oxygen for two minutes (20 rounds) during which time the wearer does not need to make suffocation checks. *1 point.*

**Gas mask:** A face-covering mask with integral goggles and air-scrubbing filters to remove hazardous gases. A gas mask provides Immunity to Gas Attacks (1 rank), provided the gas affects the eyes or respiratory system. *1 point.*

**Oxygen mask:** Like a gas mask, but with an independent oxygen supply, adding Immunity to Suffocation for up to an hour. *2 points.*

## HELMETS

Armored helmets protect the head against injury, any suit of armor is assumed to include a helmet, those that do not may be Unreliable, at the GM's discretion, although some armored characters manage just fine without a helmet. Helmets may also incorporate sensory and breathing protection (previously) along with things like Senses effects. Other helmets are more Removable power sources than armor *per se* (see the **Power Gadgets** guide for details).

## GLOVES & GAUNTLETS

Gloves provide some protection for the wearer's hands from both the environment and minor forms of damage. Any suit of armor is assumed to include suitable gloves, and they're a minor enough benefit to be considered a descriptor of the character's Protection and costume rather than a Feature.

Gauntlets are heavier and often armored in their own right. In some cases, gauntlets can function like bracers (see **Shields**) particularly if they are the only armor the character has available. Some gauntlets may also provide the wearer a +1 Strength-based damage bonus in unarmed combat.

## LIFE SUPPORT

**Scuba Gear** has oxygen tanks and a face mask for operating underwater, providing Immunity to Suffocation for several hours. While more effective than a rebreather, scuba gear is also bulkier and less portable. *1 point.*

**Diving Suit:** Adds pressure support to the scuba benefits, allowing for deeper dives. *2 points.*

**Space Suit:** A fully self-contained suit designed to function in the vacuum of space or airless (or toxic) planetary surfaces. A space suit provides Immunity to suffocation, vacuum, cold, and radiation. Its protection against heat is limited, although super-science versions may protect against those environments as well. *5 points.*

**Life Support Field:** A super-science force field that surrounds the wearer in a protective aura, granting full life support (Immunity 10) while the field is active, even photosynthesizing oxygen from light and the wearer's waste gases. The field has the Quirk of not providing nourishment or eliminating the need to sleep (–2 points). These gadgets may be common equipment for advanced alien civilizations or other space-faring species (including humanity in the future). *8 points.*

## EXOTIC DEFENSES

In a superhero setting, there are many more unusual attacks and hazards to defend against. Naturally, people will develop gadgets to protect against these as well, and use them where and when they can.

**Amulets** are magic items intended to protect against particular hazards or forms of harm. They range from "lucky charms" that grant Enhanced Advantage (Second Chance) to Enhanced Defenses (typically Limited to a particular hazard) to items providing full Immunity. For example, the legendary "ghost shirt" worn by Native American warriors is supposed to provide Immunity to Projectiles in spite of being simple woven cloth or soft buckskin decorated with beads.

Some amulets take the form of mitigators (see the **Mitigating Gadgets** sidebar) such as a ring or necklace giving a vampire the ability to walk unharmed in the daylight, or preventing a lycanthrope from changing uncontrollably during a full moon.

**Guardian Nano** is made up of microscopic nano-machines in the subject's body, most often traveling the bloodstream like immune system cells. It is designed to protect bodily integrity, providing Enhanced Fortitude, possibly Limited to diseases and toxins, although guardian nano can also broadly help with almost anything requiring a Fortitude resistance check. It may also protect against hostile forms of attack nano, either offering an Enhanced Fortitude check or providing Immunity. Because it's internal to the subject's body, guardian nano is a power with a technological descriptor rather than a Removable device or equipment.

**Psi-shields** protect against outside mental influence or mind reading. Their form can be anything from a helmet, headband, hat, or other headwear (including the infamous "tinfoil hat") to a small item of jewelry, circuitry worked into clothing or armor, or a pocket-sized gadget like a remote control, to name a few. Psi-shields tend to be technological, but can just as easily be magical amulets as well (see their description previously).

A psi-shield's effect is typically ranks of Enhanced Will, Limited to Mental Powers, and possibly Impervious (offering total protection against low-ranked powers) but advanced psi-shields may simply offer Immunity to Mental Powers (10 ranks, 20 if mental powers are a very common descriptor in the setting).

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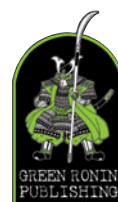
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