Paladin of Shadows

By John Ringo

Jumpchain CYOA
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Introduction

Welcome to Earth, Jumper. This is your basic 21st century world, at least by the looks of it. The same nations, the same relations between them, pretty familiar ground.

Except it's not. This is a world full of terrorists and special agents, secret government enhancement programs, grossly exaggerated sex slavery, strangely polarised people...and a little community living in a little Georgian valley which is much more interesting than may seem at first glance.

This is the world of John Ringo's series of novels called **Paladin of Shadows**, about a former Navy SEAL who gets caught up in a terrorist plot to...kidnap and murder american girls. Personally overseen by Osama Bin Laden and the President of Syria. Then he uses VX to kill them both and cuts off their heads.

And then he encounters a village of Nordic Varangian Guard descendants who become his own little army, doing the above and similar things over and over. And then there's the Droit du seigneur in the middle of all that.

Yeah. It's that kind of story. The Left is always wrong, the Right is always...hm, that one didn't work. No one without shining white skin knows right from wrong, or has a couple of brain cells to rub together. But it is what it is.

Take **1000 CP** before you go.

Time and Place

You arrive just as canon begins, a day before the 'snatch' intercepted by Mike Harmon.

1. **University of Georgia Campus:** Where the whole shitshow started. Girls are being abducted and smuggled from here, and an ex-Navy seal is currently trying to get a college degree, a challenging prospect considering how far up his own ass his head is.

2. **Washington D.C.:** The centre of politics and power in the US, and most of the western world, by extension. The Agencies controlling 'Special Agents' operate from here, and so does a president with...surprising amounts of free time.

3. **Aleppo:** The Syrian city of Aleppo has a Military Base quite close to it. Some pretty shady shit is going on at the base, you might be interested in taking a look.

4. **Keldara Valley:** A snow-covered, wind-beaten little valley, with a small village of people living and a great castle dominating it. The people here have some very interesting ancestry, not to mention their looks. Great beer.

5. **Free Pick:** Pick any of the above, completely for free!

Age and Gender

Your age is 1d20+25, or you may pick for 50 CP. Your gender remains as it is, or you may change for 50 CP.

Origin

Drop-in: You wander in out of nowhere, with little to your name except a packet containing various US IDs, about $500 and the clothes on your back.

Keldara: For your whole life, you've lived in a small Georgian village, farming, brewing beer and a few rather more exotic traditions. Things may be taking a more interesting tone in times to come, who knows?

US Govt: You're in Washington, a member of one of the many intelligence agencies that operate to protect the people of the United States. For most of your colleagues and bosses...and the president, this seems to take the form of fellating Mike Harmon, but who knows, you might be different.

Islamist: You were born somewhere in the Middle East, which in this world automatically makes you a terrorist, rapist, murdered and illiterate on top of all that. Well, it does so so for most of your fellows, it seems. You're special, of course.

Perks

Each origin gets their 100 CP perk for free, and the others at a discount.

Civilian Skills- Free/100 CP: You're a master of any one field of civilian expertise, a leading authority that ranks among the best in the world. You also have some considerable ability in using those skills to aid your operations, be it through contacts, peripheral skills, or something else.

Living Legend- 200 CP: It can be hard, going from one place where everyone knows and respects you, and then moving elsewhere and having to start fresh. Not for you, though. You have the curious ability to insert your 'status', if you will, from one place into another perfectly smoothly, all of it just appearing into the background like it was always there.

Stories of your exploits, including physical proof of them inasmuch it doesn't change things around too much, the just appears in the background of future jumps, rumors and hearsay, myths and urban legends that can be as good or macabre as your deeds, or even major things, like cities having different names or being in different locations, histories having some strange figures or time periods… it will never have any very game-changing effects on a setting, but it can be nice to have your works follow you instead of having to start afresh.

You can choose which of your stories are inserted and how, including bits you want to remove, or downplay, or adapt contextually, changing around names or locations. People who have cause to remember you likely will, in a distant sort of way. One thing you can't do, whatever, is invent stories or even embellish them. Downplaying or truth are your choices.

Genius- 300 CP: You are a genius extraordinaire. You're a polymath with near-perfect memory, and your thoughts run far faster than anyone has a right to. In addition, you're really good with the technical stuff, like coming up with nifty gadgets or devices, being up-to-date with all the latest sciences at the absolute cutting-edge level.

You know how to make useful gadgets out of ordinary things, like a bluetooth antenna out of a pringles can, a blowtorch with spaghetti and and oxygen tanks, and other things like that. There's no bomb, including nukes and their like, that you can't build or defuse, given the right tools.

One field you truly shine in however is computer hacking, where you're close to the best in the world, if not already there. You can move through computer networks like a hot knife through butter, penetrating firewalls and proxies in seconds, modifying, creating or deleting records, steal money from digital accounts, write incredibly advanced viruses and worms to do all that for you, take over whole infrastructural systems, and a whole lot of other stuff. No matter how advanced a system or how elaborate it's protections, for you it's only a matter if time before you own it.

One Man Army- 400 CP : You're one of the best fighters in the world, no questions asked. You have beyond-excellent reflexes, able to act and react in less time than it takes most people to realize anything is happening at all, and similar situational awareness, letting you flawlessly keep track of everything in even the most chaotic gunfight or battle.

Your body is a wonder, capable of lasting through the kind of strain that would destroy most people. Your skills at armed and unarmed fighting both are just ridiculous. Guns, knives, sniper rifles, swords, your skills with every weapon are phenomenal, bordering on supernatural, especially the guns. Your aim is flawless at all times, no matter what. You do not miss. Period.

As soon as you pick up a weapon you get a workmanlike understanding of how to best use it, and it continues to improve at a ridiculous pace until it's all but perfect. You could take on a small army single-handedly and come out without a scratch.

Drop-in

A Strange Charisma- 100 CP: You're smooth, Jumper. Smooth as silk. Your skills at social interactions are through the roof, you always have a witty line or a quip at hand, always remember people's names and birthdays and faces. People tend to defer to you, preferring to see you in leadership position and being oddly accepting of your authority, even if they normally reject it.

But where this truly shines is in the matters of romance, where your skills leave all sense and reason behind. Your skills at flirting and seduction are utterly ridiculous, to the point it looks practically like mind control to an outsider. A few minutes spent talking, a wind and a smile, that's all it would take for you to get complete strangers into bed, and it doesn't even stop there, letting you play them like a fiddle even beyond that. You could charm them into thinking it's okay to invite others to your bed, into acts they'd never have considered before… pretty much anything.

Certified Instructor- 200 CP: You're good at teaching things to people. Be it teaching college coeds how to fish properly, or educating ignorant villagers in the latest 21st century technology, you find all your efforts take far, far less time and effort than they should.

Just about any skill or knowledge you have can be imparted to people in ways they clearly understand, and you can do it to any number of people you want, directly or through videos or manuals or whatever. You could turn farmers stuck in the 15th century into the sharpest internet experts of the 21st in months, if not weeks.

Hard Man- 400 CP: You're one, with a lot of experiences that would have left anyone else broken. To you, they just left you changed. Your willpower, pain tolerance and stamina are all unlimited and unbreakable, no matter what you end up facing.

You could be tortured, need to fight for days on end, or have to awkwardly hang on to the outside of a plane for a cross-continental flight, but you're always fine through it all, with minor issues at worst. You can work through any amount of pain and emerge okay, and while you do get tired, it's never enough to actually force you to stop doing whatever it is you're doing, and you recover from even the worst mental or physical exertions in minutes.

Keldara

Nordic Heritage- 100 CP: *Damn,* You look *good*. Seriously, you're really, absurdly, stupidly good looking, the kind that gets people to rethink their sexual preferences with just a look, or leave people ruined for other people because they saw the wonder that is you.

And this beauty of yours is even more special in that it can never really be tarnished. You could crawl out of mud with tattered clothes and leave the best model in the world, dressed in the finest clothes and with the best makeup work possible, looking like the ugly one in the equation.

Manipulation- 200 CP: You are an unmatched ace when it comes to manipulating people. You always know the right thing to say to anyone, the right actions to take or gestures to make. You can read people like an open book, seeing what they're hiding even from themselves in just a glance.

This makes your abilities at charming and convincing people all but godlike, as you can talk anyone into and out of pretty much anything, given the chance. You can also treat entire groups this way, bending them to your will with surprisingly little effort.

Big Man- 400 CP: You're a big man, one of the biggest out there. Tall, broad shoulders, barrel chest, the works. Your body is so damn fit that you could outmatch Olympic athletes several times over...in every sport. Even if you're female you have similar strength, despite really not looking like it. You also learn all sort of skills absurdly quickly, almost thrice as fast as any other person. You're easily fast enough that

you could go from being an uneducated peasant farmer to ranking among the finest commando operatives in the world in months, if not weeks.

In future worlds too, you're among the very finest specimen of whatever species you belong to. Not the absolute top, mind you, not any more than you're a demigod in this world, but a top-tier example of whatever race or species you belong to.

US Govt

Indistinct- 100 CP: Between the guns and the bombs, people can ever so often forget that part of spycraft is to stay *hidden*. You don't, though. You have the ability to, at will, simply fade into the background. With a bit of work, some minor posture adjustment and disguise, you could pass for anyone just about anywhere.

You also have a flawless poker face, never showing any emotion you don't want to. Even the greatest experts at the art find it next to impossible to tell what's going on in your head.

Special Operations- 200 CP: You're a trained spy, one of the very best operatives in the world, skilled in assassination, infiltration, and the other usuals. You know all the tricks, how to tail someone without being spotted, how to skip tails placed on you, setting up safe houses and dead drops, how to covertly surveil someone, torture and interrogation, making and defusing bombs, and so much more.

You can figure out a man's temperament and fighting skills with a look, know the entrances and exits of a building just as you step into it, know how to wheedle information out of people, how to trick and seduce them, the whole nine yards.

Not just this, but you're a consummate actor and infiltrator as well, being able to be anyone with just a bit of makeup, all the tricks to hide things on you or in places properly, the whole nine yards.

Enhanced- 400 CP: You signed some pretty wide open forms for these, didn't you? Anyway, you spent a while on a cold table somewhere in the US, and walked away with some pretty nifty stuff. You have a slew of enhancements on you, which make you one of the most dangerous people on the planet.

First of all, there are the camera eyes. There's a lot of fancy terminology involved, but what they do is to feed the input of your optic nerve into a signal transmitter, which tracelessly beams it to any computer of your choosing. Good for recording things and looking them over later. Secondly, you have three subcutaneous pockets, pouch shaped spaces under your skin that can't be detected except with supernatural means. These are each about the size of a shirt pocket, and can hold anything that will fit. You do need to worry about the weight, but no infection.

Finally...you get poison fingernails. Not much to say about these, just remember the cavity for the poison is in your palm and can be triggered with a specific motion. Only use poisons you're immune to, kay?

Islamist

Terror-inspiring- 100 CP: These yellow-bellied servants of the Great Satan America have never known true terror. You will show them! You have the power to, at will, exude a terrifying aura, which channels you own ill-feelings and hate and imposes it on people around you.

Conspirator- 200 CP: It isn't easy to execute an attack, not with everything they're doing to try and stop it nowadays. Good thing you're around, then, isn't it? You are a planner and schemer beyond peer. You have a flawless grasp of how people are going to react to any given situation, and know just how to tailor your plans accordingly.

You plans always have a drastically higher chance of success than they ought to, even plans that really don't make sense. You know how to setup plans within plans, to build whole schemes while keeping practically everyone involved other than you in the dark, and do it all without so much as a whiff getting out where you don't want it.

Survival- 400 CP: Your is a hunted breed, targeted by some of the best funded and equipped enemies there are. But even they would find hunting you down to be an impossible task, were you to put your mind to it. You are excellent, utterly peerless when it comes to survival in any and all environments. You know how to hunt and track in forests, can hold your breath for ridiculously long times in water, and know just how to lose a tail in cities.

From hiding to living off the really unproductive land, when it comes to surviving and continuing your mission you're almost entirely unmatched in the world.

Items

Each origin gets their 100 CP item for free, and the others at a discount.

Drop-in

Bounty- 100 CP: Not much to say here. Ten million dollars every year, which convert to an equivalent amount in whatever is the highest denomination of any and all future worlds you visit.

Arsenal- 200 CP: Guns are good. You like guns. You have them, now. A room holding one of every weapon in the world is attached to your warehouse, and there is always at least one of every weapon here, no matter how many you take out.

Also, you can extend this property to new weapons simply by placing them here. Doesn't work on WMDs or the like. Does work on magical or sci-fi weapons, but only ones that aren't unique.

Phone Numbers- 400 CP: So you have some unique resources, and as it turns out, you haven't just been sitting on them! You have favors owed, a truly ridiculous number of them and really, really major ones. Like you killed the biggest terrorist enemy of a nation, or saved them from multiple attacks, that sort of thing.

This takes, in the immediate term, the form of a collection of phone numbers, with the other ends being a litany of key, extremely high placed people in governments, corporations and other organizations, capable of many, many ends meet with just a phone call. This also gives you an impeccable instinct for earning *more* of these favors, and do so quickly and lastingly.

In future jumps you start with similar contacts across the world, and can, again, get more.

Keldara

Beer- 100 CP: Really, really good beer. A full barrel of the finest beer Mother Lenka can make, which doesn't ever actually grow empty, no matter how much you take out.

Castle- 200 CP: Your very own european style castle. Tall battlements, many, many rooms, and located on an easily defensible location. Despite it's looks it's completely up-to-date with all the latest comforts, and can house over a thousand people easily. Generates food for them all by itself, comes with NPC staff to fill any role required.

Village- 400 CP: A village of warrior-farmers, full of tall, strong people. These are about a thousand families, arranged in some pretty interesting clan structures. While a lot of people are elders and leaders, there's several thousand warriors here, each with the body of an olympian athlete and the looks and intellect to match, all deathly loyal to you at all costs as their Kildar.

While they aren't yet trained up, they're prime recruits, needing only some good training and equipment to be among the finest special forces in the world. They aren't companions, but new ones in every jump have equivalent skills and abilities in every world, and they somehow have the skills you taught their predecessors.

The village also retains any upgrades you make to it, besides gaining a basic level of defensibility as relevant to each world you take it to.

US Govt

Shades- 100 CP: A set of black shades, really cool. More interesting than how they look, however, is the fact that they tell you the commonly known name of whoever you look at with them on. Never be caught flat-footed again!

Also, apart from telling you other people's names, they also obscure your own identity. Unless you tell them who you are or otherwise want to be known, you're always replaced by someone generic in their memories.

ID- 200 CP: A single piece of ID, this is a very interesting thing. It allows you to become a part of any government agency in future jumps, and have a full history there, complete with a past record, history, and the whole nine yards. This can be any number of agencies, and in every case you're on the books as a 'special' agent, an elite operative on long-term missions, a deep-cover infiltrator, or some other option with a good reason for being out of the way.

You have top-level clearance, the highest it can go, in both accessing information and requisitioning items wherever possible, and pay and privileges to match, including a License to Kill. If you want, your name can be moved to the 'active' registries, which would mean you start getting missions and operations, always curiously in the vicinity of what you want to do in the jump anyway. Or you could just enjoy the privileges of being a top-level agent with none of the duties.

Agency- 400 CP: Your very own three letter agency, this is a huge group of spies, infiltrators and special forces, that reports directly to you. Easily comparable to any governmental agency like the CIA or the KGB, they have access to a vast pool of talent for covert operations, generous funding comparable to anything the two above can boast of, the latest technologies and all the rest.

Vast networks of highly trained agents, infiltrators, spies and assassins fall under this agency's umbrella, all ready to do what you say, no questions asked. They have the access, the will and the fanaticism to your cause to do anything and everything you ask them to, just waiting for your commands.

Islamist

Numbered Accounts- 100 CP

A collection of secret bank account somewhere out there, this is the perfect way to move immense amounts of money absolutely tracelessly for whatever purposes you might intend to achieve. These

accounts are all perfectly untraceable, meaning no one can know the details of transactions conducted via these unless you tell them yourself.

In addition, you can deposit any amount of money into them at will, in any form, from cash, to bonds, or metals, from any location that can be said to be under your control at the time, or is in your proximity. Moving all the gold in Fort Knox while you're in Monaco is not possible, doing it while you're standing in the vaults is.

You can withdraw money under the same rules, and any money in these accounts receives the same protections. You can withdraw the balance in any and all currencies, no matter how exotic.

WMD- 200 CP: An honest to god Weapon of Mass Destruction. Now the Great Satan will truly learn terror! This is a dirty bomb or a small-scale bio/chemical weapon, enough to kill millions of people. You get one per year.

Videotapes- 400 CP: Not necessarily videotapes, what you have is a vast collection of information about some of the richest, most powerful and influential people in the world. Specifically, it's information of a seriously, catastrophically damaging nature, the kind that gets people locked up or hung, and sees regimes fall and laws change.

Used well it can allow you virtually unbridled in some very high places, even simply through being the one keeping it away from any one of the factions to use against the rest. In future worlds too you get information of the same level on multiple figures in just about every faction in play. While this is never enough by itself to, say, stop a war cold, it allows you to get a *lot* done.

Companions

Import- 50 CP: Import one of your existing companions. They get 600 CP to spend and an origin for free.

Canon Companion- 100 CP: If you want to take someone along from here. God knows why.

Harem- 100 CP : Your own collection of beauties. Of your preferred gender(s), you have about half a dozen of these, all of personalities, tastes and traits in exquisite match with your own. They each get 400 CP to spend.

Drawbacks

You may take up to 600 CP's worth of drawbacks.

Silly Leftist +100 CP: Huh? Why on Earth would you think your opinion matters? No matter what you have to say, how valid, relevant or important it may be, everyone but your companions dismisses it summarily, laughing at your face and humiliating you more often than not.

Joint Problems +100 CP: You have significant problems with your joints, enough to get a medical discharge from the military and disability pay too. Waking up in the morning is a torment.

Danger-prone +300 CP: There's something about you that attracts the creeps and maniacs of this world. You're always the one getting shot at, or getting abducted to be sold into sexual slavery, or in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Harmonious +300 CP: There's no simple way to put this. You're an asshole. You're a turd that walks like a man. You have the instincts of a rapist in your heart and are proud for resisting it. Your first concern, when seeing women who have been stripped naked, taken thousands of miles away from everything and everyone they know and have just seen one of them raped, tortured and murdered, is to ensure that they won't become lesbians out of it. I hope you die, Jumper.

Damn Islamics +600 CP: They're everywhere! You have been declared Satan's Emissary #1 by the collected Islamic Terrorists of the world, because apparently they do things like that. You will be hunted by them everywhere you go, and they will hold back nothing in their constant mission to torture and murder you on live TV.

This includes behind-the-doors support from legitimate governments in the middle east.

You dirty Ayrab! +600 CP: Or maybe it's the West that hates your guts. You're number 1 on the wanted list, and this is a much less restrained world. Forget airports, every nation, every government in the world not in bed with the terrorists wants you dead, and they will do anything short of inciting a war for it.

The Fuck? +400 CP: Yeah, that drawback that combines them both. They set their enmities aside, apart from some minor sabotage, and join forces to hunt you down together. One good thing about this is that once you're dead they'll destroy each other fighting over who gets to mount your corpse in a public square.

Choices

Stay: Yeah...no. Not unless you're insane.

Go Home: Maybe it got to you and you desperately need to see a normal world again.

Go On: The next mission calls.