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The Second in a Trilogy

Adam Chilson

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Rifts[®] Trilogy:

Book One: Sonic Boom[™]

Book Two: Deception's Web[™]

Book Three: Treacherous Awakenings[™]

Based on the worlds, characters, text, game rules, concepts and Mega-verse[®] of the Rifts[®] Role-Playing Game series created by Kevin Siembieda.

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The cover is by Patrick Ho, and depicts a Glitter Boy who is part of a rogue group of rebels.

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**For my wife, Dawn
I couldn't have done it without you.**

Special thanks to:

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My friends at the North gate for your unique perspectives

And to all of you whose good advice I probably didn't listen to.

Chapter 1

Sorry, road closed

The strip mine had been started just before the great cataclysm by one of the few North American mining conglomerates that still operated at the end of the 21st century. They had found a good limestone area to the south of Youngstown and had mined it very efficiently for a number of years, cutting deep into the earth. Once the cataclysm happened, the miners had abandoned their operation pretty quickly, leaving behind equipment that could be repaired or used as templates for whoever would come along later.

In the years since Youngstown was re-founded, a stone master had identified the value a mine would offer the growing town and helped them begin to revitalize it. As they cleared the area and got back into operation, the main road through the mine had become preferred by travelers for its general shelter from the elements and protection from predators in the wilderness. The road from Youngstown to the mine was clear of trees, wildlife, and boulders, something which couldn't really be said for the surrounding area. The benefits for travelers were hard to pass up compared to what they usually had to endure in the eastern half of North America.

Winding along the western wall, halfway below the upper lip, the mine road curved along the middle of the mine wall, 100 meters above the water, and overlooked the lake that had formed in the middle of the mining operations. It was wide enough for two vehicles to cross paths if they both gave each other as much room as they could manage. Above them, the top half of the mine wall rose another 100 meters and was topped with an old berm covered in trees, grass, and boulders that would eventually give up their fight with gravity by falling onto the road below.

The day had been peaceful for the most part. As the sun set, the mine awaited the workers that would begin blasting and carving its rock again the following day. Birds nested and watched as a column of mercenaries, their vehicles, and their robots passed along the road heading south and away from Youngstown. Then, as if with an uncanny intuition, the animals all became very quiet as they watched a huge yellow ore hauler launch itself into the air from the top of the cliff above the mercenary group.

Precariously-situated boulders joined the torrential avalanche as the ore hauler plummeted over the edge of the cliff wall and down near the lead of the mercenary column. Spotlights from the mercenaries' convoy jerked up from the path before them up to search the mine walls for what was causing the sounds of colliding stones and rending metal. Those unfortunate enough to be nearest the descending avalanche were crushed and buried beneath thousands of kilos of earth before they could react. Momentum carried the 200+ ton ore truck over a fleeing All-Terrain Transport Vehicle and slammed it into a 2.5 ton Ulti-Max power armor unit. Emerging from dust and flying