

SHADOWLAND

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Artwork by Mark Nelson

SHADOWLAND

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Devoted to FASA's
Shadowrun Roleplaying
Game**

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Pardon the dust. This place is such a mess. If I knew you'd been coming over so soon, I would have cleaned up earlier.

If you're astute (and if you're reading this magazine, you obviously are), you've noticed that your beloved **Shadowland** is under new management.

Sort of.

Allow me to introduce myself and tell you what the drek is going on here. My name is Chris Hussey. Some of you may recognize my name, others may not. That's okay, I won't hold it against you.

I am the new Line Editor of **Shadowland** magazine, thanks to Kevin Knight, who called me up out of the blue a few months ago, and asked if I wanted the job. Of course, my answer was "*Why me?*" After some ego stroking (you certainly don't think it was the *money* do you?), I decided to take the job.

Just so you don't think I'm some hack, let me dazzle you with my credentials, to buy me some time to get clear.

I've written in the game industry since 1993, and primarily for the **Battletech** line. Another fine FASA product. I got into writing for **Shadowrun** a couple of years ago, mostly scenarios, though I've played since '91. Regular readers will recognize me from this mag as the *Headache* and *Hermetic Lodge* guy. And I could be considered a "gaming vet," having done it for 14+ years.

Anyway, so that's what I've done.

Now, that's great, Chris. So, how does this affect me and my love of **Shadowrun**. Well, thanks for asking. Let me tell you.

Those that read other game mags will notice that whenever new editors take over, they make all their claims about the sweeping changes coming. Well... that will sort of happen, on one condition.

You.

When Kevin and I were chatting about the mag, he made one real clear point. This is a fan magazine. It's all **Shadowrun**, all the time. Its content comes from **Shadowrun** fans for other fans to see. So, I figured it wouldn't be very nice of me to perform major surgery on *your* magazine, without clearing it through you first. Now that doesn't mean I can't go make some changes, which I will, but if enough of you really hate it, it'll go away.

All that said, however, let me explain some things...

I've got a growing pile of submissions, which is great. You can never have enough content. The problem is what we're getting. The majority of what crosses my Fuchi Class VII Cyber-Sights is fiction. Which is also cool, 'coz **Shadowrun** fiction is fun to read. But the

problem arises is that an issue may come around soon that contains *nothing but* fiction. I'd like to try and make a balanced magazine. One that has real player benefit. Some fiction, some new rules/gear/spells/cyberware/physad powers/edges or flaws/metahuman expressions/etc., a scenario or two, and maybe some optional rules. You get the idea. The **Shadowrun** universe is damn rich, and this magazine needs to add to that.

So, do you have those house rules for Subject A just sitting on your hard drive? Read 'em over, check out the new **Writer's Guidelines**, and send 'em out. Got a wiz scenario that really gave your players a scare? I'd like to see it. Got a run based on something from Dunk's Will? That's be pretty cool to check out.

There's some other things I'd like to see:

A column featuring cool **Shadowrun** websites. The Matrix is a big part of **Shadowrun** (duh!), so I think doing something about its predecessor is only right.

Profiles of real runner teams or NPCs. All **Shadowrun** GMs know what it's like when they have to "wing" a NPC, and are forced to pull an Archetype from the main rule book. Having a few more options to mess with you players would be nice.

Your opinions. I love getting feedback, both good and bad. Let's have some some constructive letters and e-mail. It'll see print (if the proper amount of nuyen is included, of course).

Well, you get the idea. Let's work together and make a killer magazine. Now, go grab that corner table in the bar, while your chummer covers your tail from the watch point. Johnson's due.

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Sword of the Knight
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Expect the Unexpected

By: Andrew Hamilton

The bullet ripped through his seal-skin duster, and he winced as it bounced off his dermal sheathing. *Not too smart, Tex.* He ducked behind a shrub that suddenly seemed too small. *Aw, drek!* The machine-gun chatter continued as Tex searched wildly for the rest of his posse. This wasn't how it was supposed to go down. The shrub that was protecting the bounty hunter exploded into fire and he landed a few feet away. He didn't move.

As his still figure laid on the ground, Tex's mind raced with the memories he held. The run was supposed to be easy. Hell, that's what they always say. A find and snatch. A bounty, dead or alive.

He was some sicko; Tex had never heard of the name, but the killer was infamous. Redbone Helicky. From what Tex could piece together, the man was a sociopath. He killed without any patterns, and without any mercy. The only signature Redbone left was the bodies. Authorities had found them literally torn apart. Many of the officers at the scenes couldn't handle the gore, and asked to be reassigned. Lone Star wanted Redbone, but he was as slippery as a greased watermelon on a hot day.

Lone Star wasn't the only one who wanted Redbone; it seems that Mister Helicky had slaughtered some of the megacorps suits and they were a little less then pleased. Fuchi and Saeder-Krupp both wanted the man. It looks bad on the PR sheets to have employees butchered without any retribution from the big, bad corps. Fuchi had hired Tex and his friend Sgt. Flynn Taggart. But not to be under-armed, Tex brought along his Storm Rider Posse.

Tex-Mex Holiday's eyes snapped open as his newly implanted trauma dampers distributed the pain. He jumped to his feet a little too quickly, and crashed back to the earth. *Damn equilibrium.* Tex proceeded to stand up again but this time he took a little more time. *Bad idea, man.* He moved down into a squat just as he realized where he was. From his crouched position he could barely make out the old house in front of him.

Redbone had picked the perfect place to hide. The old mansion sat on a large, grassy hill which sloped gently up to the house. The whole complex was surrounded by massive trees. The house itself was in bad need of repair, with peeling paint and a sagging roof. It had three stories with two cupolas and a wraparound porch out front. Redbone's squat looked as sadistic as the owner. The stone walkway was bathed in crimson blood.

The inky darkness was not a difficulty for Tex's thermographic cybereyes. He knelt on the damp ground, looking at the cheerful light leaking from the windows. *Well, Mister Helicky what are you up to?*

Suddenly Tex heard the harsh snap of a twig breaking; he didn't need cyberears to hear that. Holiday whirled around, Ruger Thunderbolt at the ready. Just as he was about to squeeze off a few rounds he realized that it was Hot Foot who stood before him. Tex was both stunned and pleased to find his Ruger out of rounds.

"Damnit, Hot Foot, you scared the drek outta me!" The massive troll grinned as his posse leader cursed.

"Sorry, Tex. We've been lookin' for youse. Where da 'ell have ya been?"

"I've been looking for you all. Get down will you, these guys aren't shooting to keep the flies away. What's the goods?"

"Well, I think youse better come with me."

Tex and Hot Foot quickly scrambled back into the woods. There, Tex found the rest of the Storm Riders, kneeling in their black long coats and Stetsons, huddled around the gang's mage, Astro. His short frame lay on the ground, arms crossed on his chest. Son-Of-Blood was squatting next to Astro, carefully looking around, his Amerindian features obscured by the shadow of his hat. Standing next to a tree, Phantasm stood like a sentinel, his long elven hands resting softly on his ancient katana.

Tex slowly turned to Hot Foot. "Where's Taggart?"

"He went lookin' for youse. It sounds like ya scoutin' mission went ah little louda then expected, huh?"

"I'll say. I think we underestimated Redbone's strength just a tad. That Taggart is gonna get himself killed one of these days, running off like a little boy." Tex paused, "Is Astro scouting in the astral?"

Blood spoke up. "Yes. He started about ten minutes ago. Wanna wake him up?"

"Good idea." Blood gently shook Astro. Seeing that was futile, he uped the force of his slaps, and aimed for the face. It only took five or six to force Astro back to his body with a start.

His eyes suddenly opened. "If you ever wake me like that again, I'll hit you with a fireball so hard, your mother will feel it. Waking up and seeing your putrid face is bad enough." Astro's nostrils flared and his eyes were filled with anger.

"Why you little—" Blood moved in on the mage.

"Cool it, Machine Gun," Tex cut in, "a spell slinger is always a little cranky after an astral search, cut him some slack. What did you find out Astro?" Holiday turned to the mage.

"Well, boss, it seems we guessed wrongly about the psycho's forces. There appears to be a fair number of armed men guarding Redbone's squat. I guess the man has more friends then we thought. Also, none of the guards are magically gifted, though a few are cybered. I would estimate the troops to number about ten, at least."

Tex's brow was furrowed; something was wrong, and he didn't like it. Taggart should never have run off by himself. "What about the Sergeant?" Tex shifted his weight from one foot to the other, nervously.

"Sorry, captain, I couldn't find him... But I didn't get into the house." Astro glared at Blood.

"It seems the honorable Sergeant is missing. I hypothesize our inferior prey has apprehended him. I do advise we act with the utmost haste." Phantasm seemed to flow from the shadows.

"He's right, boss." The troll muttered.

"Alright. Everyone knows what is going on. We'll assume Taggart is in trouble and we are his best friends."

Astro cut in, "His only friends."

Tex glared at the mage who seemed to shrink back. "Well anyway, we are sneaking to the house, and I emphasize sneak. Attack 'B' formation. No noise. Comprende?"

"Wait, captain, are you just gonna knock on his front door and ask to be let in?"

"Is there any other way, Machine Gun?" All of the posse member looked at each other, confused.

"Damn. I must of left the keys in my other pants." Tex smiled as the rest of the Storm Riders rolled their eyes. He jiggled the door knob. It was locked.

"Hold on, youse." Hot Foot stepped between the door and Tex. Gripping the knob in his massive hands, he twisted it to the right and gave it a quick jerk. He turned around showing everyone his prize. "Wez call it da ol' Troll skeleton key. Har, har."

"I do believe the correct term is 'show off', si?" Phantasm crowded into the creaking porch.

"Watch out guys, the fun is about to begin." With a banshee cry, Tex kicked down the door.

Tex and his posse had surprisingly made it to the porch drawing no fire. This unnerved Tex a bit, but he wasn't going to look a gift horse in its pie hole. He was sure a trap was coming, just not sure

where. The guards Astro spoke about were not around or least not seen. The team stormed into the squat, guns ready, wires primed. All that met them was an unnatural stillness. Tex found himself becoming more unnerved.

Son-Of-Blood was the first to speak. "Well, isn't this just pan-sies. With my luck, we probably have the wrong house."

Astro shook his silver-haired head. "No, this is exactly the right house. Look." Everyone turned their heads in the direction of the mage's finger. A large pool of blood soaked the stairs to the right of them.

"Oh." The gore surprised all of the cowboys except Tex. As he always says: ' Surprise kills.'

"Let's go." The leader whispered. Crowding behind him, the posse became one body. Tex reached the top of the stairs and turned the corner.

"What a lovely house," remarked Blood sarcastically, "I only wish our apartment was this beautiful."

As Tex turned back to quiet the Amerindian, he felt his knees buckle. "What the..." Everything went black as he fell to the floor.

To Holiday, the idea of passing out was a new one. He had been knocked out that time he met up with the business end of a Zen-ninja. Hell, that hurt. But blacking out was not a common occurrence for the seasoned veteran.

Retching, he regained consciousness. The first sensation he realized was the extreme drowsiness he felt. The second feeling he had was the repetitive kicking in his side. Without opening his eyes, he growled.

"Welcome back to the conscious world, sir." The voice seemed distant to Tex. It was husky and flat.

Opening his eyes, the cowboy looked up at his tormentor. "Who the Hell are you?" The man stopped kicking Tex.

"Oh, I think you know my name. My victims call me Redbone, with good reason. I think a more appropriate question is who the Hell are you, and what are you doing in my house?" The killer looked exactly like the pictures Tex had seen. He was a big boy. His hair looked as though he had cut it himself, and his eyes were blank, cold. Double chins hung off his face until they turned into a thick neck. He was wearing jeans without a shirt, and his gut hung over his belt. He stood a little taller than Tex, and he smiled.

The shadowrunner got to his knees, not daring to stand. Tex suspected he had run into some kind of sleeping gas, but none he had ever encountered had a hangover like this. "My name is Tex-Mex Holiday, and I'm here to take you in. Now you can come quietly or you can come loud, but the former is the most wise decision. Now how is it gonna be?"

"Ya gonna take me in? Ha, you can't even stand up, let alone see straight. I am the one in charge here."

Tex ignored the killer. "Cut the drek, Redbone. Don't make this hard on yourself." He tried slowly to stand up. Just as he was about to gain his balance, Redbone kicked the back of his knees sending Tex back to the floor. Redbone giggled.

"You think they would send professionals to bring in a famous killer like me. I've met six year-olds who could kick your butt. Well, who sent you, Lone Star, Mithuba?"

Tex got to his knees again, this time quicker. "Damnit, Redbone, you are as stupid as you look." Tex hesitantly stood up again. As he reached his full height he noticed three things: First of all, Redbone wasn't as short as the reports said. Even though Tex stood about six foot, Redbone must have been a good half foot taller. The second thing Tex noticed was the room he was in. It must have been a study long ago, but now the shelves were empty. The ceiling was high and the walls were wood paneled. The third thing he noticed was the large bulge on his hip. He briefly smiled as he recognized the lump to be his old friend, Mr. Ruger Thunderbolt Heavy Pistol.

"Now, I got a shiny pair of handcuffs on my belt, and I'm gonna put them on you one way or another. You can either let my put them, or I'll put them on your worthless corpse. Which way is it gonna be?" Tex's voice was becoming agitated.

"Hold on a second, Mr. Holiday. Before you do anything rash, I'd like you to see this." Redbone turned around, apparently shouting at the wall. "Bring 'em in, boys!"

Seeming to leak from the walls, six men came out carrying a large, ork-sized human. The man wore a partial heavy armor suit, and had many cuts on his face and arms. Tex grimaced.

"See, Mr. Holiday, things are not always what they appear. We found this man prowling around my property. And it seems that he is your friend."

"Taggart." Tex's face went pale, then turned red in rage. His voice became a controlled frenzy, "That's it Redbone! Messing with me is one thing, but messing with my friends is another." A sickening thought hit the cowboy. His eyes went wide and his heart stopped. He drew his pistol. "Where the Hell is my posse?"

"Ohh. Now you're more willing to talk. Put away that silly gun, you can't kill me."

Taggart cut in. "He's right there, Tex. I don't know what the devil he is, but he's not human"

"Shut up, little man. I wanted to tell him." The killer smiled. "Have you ever heard of the—" A startled look suddenly came across the man's face. "Kill me. Now! You don't understand. Kill me quick before I can control you." The voice came from his mouth but it was not Redbone's. The voice seemed distant and strangled.

"What the..." Tex was, for the first time in his life, truly baffled.

"I told you so. Kill him!" Taggart's voice became higher with fear.

"Wait a second, Taggart. What the Hell are you?" Tex turned his attention back to Redbone.

"I'm evil. KILL ME! I've tried to fight it off, but it's no use. The only way to win is to sacrifice my body. You must—" The voice turned back to Redbone's. "Dammit, men get this punk, Holiday."

Tex had taken all he could handle. He suddenly started firing at the advancing men. Taggart took advantage of the distraction, and broke free of his captors. With a swift strike to the neck, he dispatched the nearest of Redbone's men, then raised and locked the elbow joint of his left arm.

Taggart ran towards Tex, his cybershotgun daring the guards to shoot at him. Tex fired at the first guard. The burst fire hit the man square in the face and blood flew back, splattering on the men in back of him. Tex smiled grimly, knowing that his Smartlink II did not fail him. His next rounds were aimed at the guard who was looking blankly at the bloodied corpse in front of him. The fire caught him in the shoulder, and he spun around from the force, hitting the ground with a crunch.

Taggart reached Tex. Standing next to the cowboy, blasting shots into the line as the two pulled back. Another of Redbone's men sunk to the floor without so much as a grunt. Several rounds flew back toward Tex and Taggart in response, but, despite the close range, all went wide.

A strange thought hit Tex. These men were unbelievably cool under pressure. *What the... These men can't shoot worth squat, but they aren't scared of anything.*

Another shot rang out, but this one was different. Tex could always tell when he was hit. The shot always sounded different. He was used to the sting of the bullet. Without looking down he knew where it had hit. The blood flowed from his side.

"Aww.... geez. I hate when this happens." Tex grunted as he continued to fire. The guard that had done the damage was his target. He coaxed two more bursts from his pistol, both hitting in exactly the same spot. To Tex's surprise, the guard still stood. He looked at Tex with foreign eyes and raised his Manhunter, firing again. This shot went wide. Tex smiled, both at the missed shot and the bead he drew on the man. Tex gently squeezed the trigger coaxing a round out. At least he tried. The only sound Tex heard was the deafening click of an empty gun.

Tex's reflexes kicked in. His Smartlink popped out the clip, just as the guard returned fire. Tex bit his teeth against the sting as it grazed his arm. The cowboy kept moving though, slamming the fresh clip home by instinct. Tex saw the guard chuckle and his gun kicked back. The bullet shot off Tex's hat. That was it. Tex didn't mind getting shot. That had happened many times. But no one, not no one, shot off his hat. The shadowrunner grimly raised his Ruger and, running towards his prey, emptied the clip into the body.

Silence followed.

"Nice shooting Tex." Redbone stood in the corner, a sadistic smile on his face. The two men turned towards him. "Well, I guess I'm the only one left. Too bad." The killer charged Tex, a sickle in

his hand.

Tex drew his Dikoted katana, and held it at the ready. Taggart, much to the Cowboy's surprise, fainted. The killer lashed at Tex with incredible strength. He parried the blow and went on the defensive. The strange voice spoke again.

"If you don't kill me the parasite will get you. DO IT! You must win. I have fought long and hard against this virus, to give some one like you chance of defeating it. DO IT NOW! Before it is too late." Redbone's normal voice returned. "I will eat your soul!"

Tex answered back. "Too late, man, too late." With a loud shout, he slashed hard, and crimson spewed from Redbone's side.

"Holiday, you will die. And your life will be feast to fill me!" The sickle caught on Tex's longcoat and tore a giant gash in his clothing.

Tex returned the blow with a swipe at the killer's hand. The katana sunk into the bone but did not sever it. Redbone screamed and flailed at Tex.

The sickle tore another gash from his shoulder to the bottom of his ribs. Tex grunted and fell to one knee. "Now you will understand pain." Redbone stood over the cowboy, sickle held high.

Redbone slashed and a fire burned through Tex's veins. He stood up, still being hacked by the killer. Blood spurted out from his cuts, and he began to feel nauseous. Tex knew he had to act fast. Tightening his focus, and spiking his wires, Tex swung the katana over his head with blinding speed and shoved two and half feet of steel through the man's stomach.

The killer sunk to the ground with a scream that shattered the windows. Redbone's sickle clattered to the floor, adding to the cacophony. Tex withdrew the sword. The eerie voice that had urged him to kill the man returned. "Thank you. You have released the parasite from my body. I warn you though, it is now trying to gain passage into you. Be strong." The voice faded.

As Tex puzzled, he suddenly felt unbelievably scared. He moaned, as raw pain coursed through his veins, increasing in intensity.

Tex felt his body hit the floor, and begin to flop around uncontrollably. Blackness began to edge in on his eyes, but Tex pushed it back through force of will. Blood shot from his nose, as another surge of pain wracked his body. It seared straight through his body right to his soul. The cowboy screamed and his body began to go numb in mercy. Amid the chaos, Tex could feel his very essence of being tearing free of his body. Raw panic gripped the cowboy as he struggled to keep himself attached to himself. Panic gave way to determination and refusal. Refusal to surrender. Refusal to die. That refusal gave way to force of will, as Tex pushed back at the whatever was trying to tear him away. Feeling that was all he could do, Tex kept pushing, pushing, pushing.

Then it was gone.

Tex felt himself alone in his body. Everything still attached. The pain was still there, but already ebbing. The raw will that was with him moments ago, quickly turned to raw emotion, as Tex flopped on his back and cried.

"It was a what?" Tex was laying in a hospital bed, paid for with the bounty, surrounded by his posse and Taggart. The bounty was less than he had expected but that's what happens when you bring back damaged goods. Secretly, Tex was just glad to be alive. The posse had found him with Redbone's body, hysterical. He had been blubbering something about demons. They had suspected his memories were a result of the loss of blood, but Astro had been able to collaborate his story.

"A Nomad. It's a kind of Astral parasite. When you killed Redbone, you broke the spell on us and we woke up. I went astral trying to find you. I saw the whole battle. The nomad tried to enter you but you fought it off. It was a simple task after that for me to fight it in combat."

Phantasm spoke up, "Phenomenal, Sir Holiday. I have been conducting some research since our incident in regard to these despicable nomads, and I have discovered that a very minuscule percentage of people can fight off this beast. I, for one, congratulate you. You never cease to stupefy me."

"Thank you Phantasm. Oh, and by the way, Taggart, next time

you have to go off by yourself, take a walk in a minefield, it's safer."

"Ha, Ha. Next time you battle an astral bug, don't expect me to save your pitiful hide."

Tex grinned. "Hey, you're the one who fainted."

"Why you little..." Hot Foot quickly restrained Taggart while everyone else laughed.



Getting Physical

by Ken Sato

As he rounded the corner Toshiros blade was low and extended. A magical blade able to slice and wound the most powerful of creatures. All he had to do was get past the contemptible street samurai and he would be home free.

His last thought of how to sneak past the walking tech factory vanished as two controlled bursts entered his body blowing huge craters out of him as he flew back against the wall.

*From the distance the street sam blew the gun smoke from his barrel and chuckled,
"What kind of nimrod brings a knife to a gun fight?"*

Characters break down into two general types. Those who use magic and those whodon't. The rules and options for magic are quite extensive and have a large amount of space devoted to them in the main book as well as the Grimoire supplement. This makes spell casting archetypes both powerful and flexible.

Cyberware and bioware are options that benefit the non-magical archetypes. By giving bonuses and special abilities to archetypes that do not use magic, it is an option that gives the same amount of power and flexibility to the non-magical archetypes.

The physical adept does not have access to spells. Cyberware and bioware cost essence which in turn lowers the magical rating. A lower magic rating reduces the amount of points an adept has to purchase powers. Only fifteen powers are available in both the main book and the Grimoire. Another XX were added in the Awakenings sourcebook, but even this larger list is still inferior to the number of spells, cyberware, and bioware available to other archetypes.

The following list contain several new powers available to physical adepts, upon gamemaster approval.

Luck

Level	Dice	Cost
1	1	1
2	2	3
3	3	5

This power allows the adept to temporarily add additional dice to his Karma Pool. The number of dice added is equal to the Rating purchased. These additional dice should be kept separate from all other Karma Pool dice. Whenever the adept attempts to use these extra dice, he must make a Willpower Test with a Target Number of 10-Rating of the Luck power. No standard rerolls are allowed on this test. One shot only chummers. If the roll is successful, the adept may use the dice unhindered. If the roll fails, the adept has "run out of luck" and suffers a penalty to all Tests and dice rolls equal to the Rating of the power (-1, -2, etc.). This penalty lasts for a number of turns equal to the powers Rating.

Group Attack

Cost: 4

This ability throws the adept into a whirling mass of fists and feet, allowing her make melee attacks on all targets (friend and foe) within the diameter equal to her Magic rating. The adept makes a single attack roll, with the Target Number modified on an individual basis. Each attack against a target is treated as if it was a solo strike. Each target may defend as normal. Successes by the adept apply to each attacker and are not split up. The adept may still be subject to Knockback and Knockdown (p. 103 S2). The adept may also make Called Shots (p. 103, S2). Calculate the damage as normal.

Example: Nico is fighting three juvenile delinquents. Wanting to teach them an unforgettable lesson, he chooses to use his group attack power. Each punk has a different target number. Punk #1 is using a club (Target Number 5). Punk #2 has no such weapon (Target 4). Punk #3 is a club wielding Troll (Target 6). Nico makes his attack roll and gets a 1,2,2,4,5,5,7,9. Nico has earned 4 success against the first punk, 5 against the second, and only 2 against the third. Now each punk gets to make his Success Test to try and defend. Good luck guys...

Healing

Cost: 3

This ability allows the physical adept to heal wounds by manipulating the tissues of his body. This allows the adept to make a Body Test at 10-Essence/2+Wound Level (+1 for light, +2 for Moderate, etc.). Each success heals one box of physical damage. This power cannot be used to heal stun damage. The adept may only use this power once daily.

Increased Movement

Level	Increase	Cost
1	Magic Rating	1
2	MRx2	4
3	MRx3	6

Increased movement adds to all the types of movement on page 76 of Fields of Fire. This modification is added to the movement in meters after all other increases are calculated such as using the Athletics skill to increase quickness for movement.

Example: Barry is attempting to escape a group of gang members by jumping from one roof to another. Looking around he spots a distant roof top that is roughly ninemeters away. Barry's has a Quickness 4, Strength 5, Body 3 and a Magic 6. He also possess Increased Movement at a 2 Rating. A normal running jump is (Quickness 4 + Strength 5 - Body 3) / 2 which grants poor Barry a jump of 3 meters. With the Increased Movement power, Barry can jump his calculated 3 meters plus an additional 12 meters (2 x Magic Rating 6 = 12) which makes his final jumping movement fifteen meters! With a graceful somersault, and a hearty Yee-Ha! Barry lands on a distant roof.

Friendship and Honor

by Steven Warnock

The big Indian stepped off the suborbital and into an alien world. Born and raised in the Pacific Northwest, Heathrow Airport of London, England, was very different from what Walker was used to. He had flown out of Denver where old squaws hawked handmade blankets next to young bucks selling the latest chips and drugs. Here, he saw none of that.

Walker made his way out of the terminal and whistled up a black cab. The cabby blathered about the weather and local politics in a nearly unintelligible Cockney brogue. At the end of the ride Walker was only too happy to drop several pounds in the cabby's lap and leave. The hack had delivered him to a railway station.

The station's coffee shop provided a nice place to sit and drink soycaf while waiting for the train. He was eyeballed by a group of leather-clad orks. A foreigner in a tailored suit carrying a real leather suitcase and a laptop computer was the usual prime candidate for a gang mugging, but this chap seemed rather hard around the mouth. Walker slid off his Whitelaw sunglasses to reveal his solid white cibereyes and smiled. The orks moved on. Walker made a show of cleaning his glasses before returning them to his face.

The train ride to Wales was a pleasant one given the British rail system's poor rep for schedules and maintenance. At the station Walker saw an ork who was shorter and stockier than his metatype tended to be, dressed in a grey chaffer's uniform. The ork held a sign written in the new phonetic alphabet adopted in most of the Native American Nations. It held his Cheyenne name.

A genuine smile cracked his stoic countenance.

"Hoi, chummer, I'm the main you're waitin' for."

The ork almost dropped his sign in the rush to take Walker's bag.

"My name's Charlie, but you can call me 'Stubbs' 'cause ever'body 'cept Master Ambrose calls me 'Stubbs.' He calls me 'Charles.' I like that, it so formidable. How long ya stayin'? Ya like it here? I sure do," Charlie blabbered as he carried the bag to a waiting Rolls-Royce.

He was a cheerful blabberer as he put the bag away and opened the door for Walker. The ork discoursed on subjects as varied as the weather to why butterflies aren't really made of butter, to what he got for Christmas.

At the manor, a middle-aged human with red hair and beard waited as the Rolls stopped in front of him. He almost got to the door before Walker opened it for himself. He was grinning with most of his face.

"Marc, how the heck are you?"

The red-haired man shrugged. "Could be worse. I could still be living in Seattle."

Charlie had stopped behind Walker with his bag.

"Charles, take that to the guest suite, the blue one, and tell Cook there'll be two for dinner and we want burgers and chips."

"Blue room, two for dinner, and burgers and chips. Got it, Master Ambrose."

Charlie scurried off.

"Nice kid. What's his damage, though?" Walker asked.

"Born with Down Syndrome and goblinized at thirteen. I found him in an Atlanta slum living in a dumpster."

"And I thought I had a problem with picking up strays."

"Come, my friend, let me show you my house."

An hour of antiques and old rooms later Marcus Ambrose escorted his friend into an informal dining room. On the table sat plates with hamburgers, french fries, and all the condiments necessary for a perfect burger.

"I remembered you were a big eater," Marc chuckled.

"You must want a favor from me while I'm here. So, what can

this legitimate businessman do for you?"

Marc sat down and motioned Walker to the other chair. For his part the big Indian set about preparing a double-decker-chili-cheeseburger-no onions.

"How can you eat that?" Marc asked stunned.

"My tongue and nose are about all that's left of me. I enjoy treating them," Walker replied just before he inhaled the toxic concoction.

"That was disgusting. You can take the boy from the sprawl..."

"But you can't take the sprawl from the boy."

Walker munched on fries while Marc stared at his plate.

"You're stallin'," Walker stated.

"I have a friend, a lady, in trouble. I need the help from somebody I know I can trust."

"You love her?"

"Yes."

"Come hell, high water, or the Second Coming we'll help your lady. This is my word of honor."

Ambrose's lady friend was Ariana Casey, owner and chief operating officer of her own software design firm. She was a slim woman with long, dark hair, fine features, and bright green eyes. Bright and sparkling to Ambrose's quiet fortitude, they made the perfect couple to Walker's way of thinking.

The two men met Casey at a small pub in the village. Walker noticed the locals eyeing him. The citizens nodded to Ambrose and spoke a few words of Welsh to him. Since it was early evening most of the patrons had just gotten off work. Walker made note of some farm hands swilling stout like soda. Then, he chided himself. Old habits died hard. Looking for trouble only invited it.

Casey was explaining her situation, "My troubles started a month ago when I took a programming contract with ZetaImpChem. I installed new security monitoring algorithms and some custom IC for them. Then, my lab was broken into. All my files were pillaged. So, I went back and completely rebuilt the system I'd made for ZetaImpChem. Now, I'm being harassed by thugs, got white collar crooks trying to buy me out, and I'm almost certain that the 'free' fire elemental attacking that ruined my day, was not accident."

"Two options," Walker said holding up an equal amount of fingers. "One: just pack up and go. There's a little place in Richmond where you'd be comfortable staying."

"I don't think so," Casey responded.

"Two: let me track the scum down and tell 'em to hoop it on outta Dodge."

"What if they don't 'hoop it on outta Dodge'?"

"Then, Marc and me hit 'em where it hurts. Hard and often. So much so you'll never be bothered again."

A meaty hand landed on Walker's shoulder.

"Whazalldis, here?" demanded a ruddy farm hand.

"Business meeting. Buzz, chummer," Walker growled.

"No, ya bleedin' septic. I wanna buy the lady a pint," the farm-hand sputtered.

In the space of a couple of seconds the farm hand lost his footing, smashed his chin on the edge of the table, and crumpled to the floor unconscious.

"Him fall down. Go boom," Walker chuckled.

"Oi! That's me mate ya sucker-punched, 'cept," snarled another sodbuster.

Walker rose from his seat, smiling at Ambrose. "Nice pub. Good booze and free entertainment."

"Don't break anything important," Ambrose advised.

The farm hand closed quick, slamming first one, then the other, fist into Walker's stomach. The big Indian grinned as the blows thudded against him.

"Bet you wish I was the proverbial wet paper bag," Walker said in a conversational manner.

The farm hand grunted something in Welsh.

"He called you a bleedin' pansy," Marc supplied.

"He's delusional," Walker commented.

He rapped the farm had on the head. The ruddy man dropped on top of his friend in a heap. Walker dragged both forms over to the booth where the remainder of the hands wisely stayed put. As he dumped the two men off, Walker ordered up another round for the group.

"We'd better leave. Walker's going to drink them under the table," Ambrose suggested.

"He'll need help getting home, won't he?"

"No, he's got 'attachments' to keep him sober."

"What if things go violent again?"

"Walker is a human Swiss Army knife. Besides, he's working the room. In the morning he'll know this town better than we do."

Big George liked his job. He got paid good coin to smash stuff and scare breeders, his two favorite pastimes. The troll felt important being a boss, especially over breeders. Today they were to "engage in the Casey business," as the Johnson put it. Big George rode his hog right up into the breeder woman's yard. He revved the engine to make sure he was heard.

His crew circled the cozy cottage running over flower beds and tearing up the sod. They hooted and hollered. A couple even pulled out small caliber handguns to take shots at chickens and a stray dog.

Within moments, the two pairs of bikers riding with George stiffened and fell off their bikes. Suddenly, Big George realized that he was alone. As his mind raced to figure out what had happened to everybody, he spotted two breeders putting little black airguns away under long coats. They jandered right up to him seeming to ignore the fact he was a big, scary troll. That upset him.

"Hello, you must be Big George," said the dark-haired one.

"So what if I am? Ya just bought a whole lot o' trouble, yank," Big George replied.

He drew out his mace from a saddle sheath on his bike. Without warning, George swung the mace at dark-hair, but the breeder stepped inside his swing. With one clean motion the human flipped the troll off of his bike and onto his back. Before he could move, A booted foot landed on Big George's throat.

"So if you're Big George you can tell us who hired you to annoy Miss Casey."

"Go frag yerself!"

The human twisted his foot cutting Big George's air supply.

"Wrong answer, butthead. Talk or my mage buddy here rips your psyche out your ear."

Big George gurgled. "I don't know his name. He's just some breeder suit. Calls in the mornin' ta give me instructions."

"Got a contact number?"

"Yeah, in me left pocket. Bidness card."

Walker smiled. "Get outta town when you wake up."

He double-kicked the troll in the jaw. Then, he searched Big George's pockets to produce a business card.

"I suppose you're going to call that number," Ambrose said.

"Do you really think I'm that crazy as to just call some comm number I pulled outta some ganger's pocket?"

"You've done it before."

"Hmm, you're right. Got a phone on you?"

Ambrose rolled his eyes heavenward. "Don't you think we should check it first?"

"Yes, that's why I want the phone. To call a decker I know."

"Hey, when did you get so smart?"

"I learned it from you."

"Thank you very much."

"Oh, you're quite welcome. Shall we depart before breaking our arms patting ourselves on the back?"

"My goodness, yes. Let's do that."

As they started off Walker draped an arm over Ambrose's shoulders. "So? How does the local black market feel about heavy ordnance?"

Walker's decker contact lived in Denver, but he knew people in England and Scotland. The one in York came with a high recommendation. On top of that the cocky elven lad had a reasonable rate. Walker borrowed Charlie and the Rolls to make contact with the decker.

The meet was set for a location in one of London's poorer ethnic quarters. Walker felt half naked with only a borrowed Narcojet Lethe for protection. The cops in Great Britain frowned upon the loyal subjects of His Majesty packing heat much less visiting foreigners doing the same. A non-lethal dart gun would cause fewer headaches in the long run.

"Charlie, stay with the car. Don't talk to anyone. Don't let anyone in but me. Got it?"

"Uh-huh." Charlie nodded his head with great vigor.

"Good. Just drive around the block 'til I call you."

The bar was called Node 1. A classic decker hangout, the decor of Node 1 was dayglo colors combined with computer generated abstract art works. Half the patrons had datajacks and cyberdecks. The other half seemed to be either decker groupies or potential employers like himself. The elf waited for him at the bar. Walker was certain green was not the lad's natural hair color, but it jived with his decker handle, the Green Knight.

"Shall we take a booth, good sir?" The elf inquired.

Walker nodded.

The Green Knight chose a booth in the far back of the bar. He laid his deck on the table and slid a connection into the phone jack.

"Are you familiar with the Siberspace Club in Seattle?" Knight asked.

Walker nodded.

"We've a similar set-up here at Node 1."

Walker laid his laptop next to Knight's deck. From a concealed compartment he produced a cable that he inserted in the phone jack as well.

"I see you're prepared, good sir. Sally on."

With that the Green Knight jacket in.

In cyberspace the Green Knight's icon was a stylized version of his own appearance. He wore neon green Crusader's armor with a red lion crest on his tabard. A helmet, battle-axe, and lion crested shield, all in green, rested nearby.

Knight looked around for Mr. Johnson. His virtual location of a medieval tavern held only himself. Johnson was taking his time jacking in. Then, a new icon flickered into existence. Knight expected a standard chromed corporate salary man icon. What he didn't expect was a red Indian warrior with some kind of animal skin head-dress, a bow in one hand and a big knife in the other.

"I want an LTG number traced all the way down the line. I will pay you two thousand nuyen. The money is in a Swiss account. I get the paydata; you get the account code. Is this acceptable?"

"Quite, good sir. Release your data, please."

The Indian flipped the knife and handed it to the Green Knight butt first.

"I tied the data packet to this. I apologize for the sloppy workmanship, but I'm not very good at programming yet."

Knight's jaw dropped. "This is a code breaker made by Toonmeister."

"Get my paydata now, you can keep it."

"Back in a flash, good sir."

The Green Knight grabbed his gear and ran out the door.

Walker jacked out and ordered a beer. When the beer was done he jacked back in. The tavern room was still empty. While he was admiring the imagery the Green Knight returned.

"I'm keeping the ice cutter, term. Saved my life. I earned it."

Knight tossed Walker a green clover.

"Your LTG number hits several back switches and blind drops, but eventually it ends at the address I gave you. Bad news for you, though. I got a glimpse of the number owner. It's a rather ruthless shadowrunner called Ravage. Runs a crew called the Wild Bunch. They're bad news, term."

"Good job, sir knight. The account code is 'Gawain.'" Walker jacked out. He saw the elf smiling. At least the kid got the reference.

Ambrose, Walker, and Casey had dinner together that evening. Over the main course Walker began to tell the story of the information he had collected.

"First, I checked the address the decker dug up. Nada. Just an office with an answering machine and a coffee machine. Then, I started asking around about Ravage and the Wild bunch."

"And?" Casey asked.

"Ravage is a shadowrunner, alright, but he's the property of a firm called Harker Chemcorp. They use him for assassinations, extortions, and data theft. The Wild Bunch is his support team.

"The muscle is provided by a street samurai called Knee-Capper. He's a dwarf with a thing for breaking legs and shooting people in the knee. He's backed up by a human merc called Wolfman. He's the demolitions and heavy weapons expert.

"On the brainier side of things is their decker, Miss Priss. Apparently, she's so perfectionist that she had herself cosmetically altered to match her icon persona, a Lady Godiva lookalike.

"Then, Ravage covers himself magically with a hermetic druid called Thane. The rest of the Wild Bunch changes from time to time, but ravage and Thane always remain the same."

"What about Ravage?" Ambrose asked.

"Well, one guy said he's a street sam. Another swears he's a shaman while his buddy's positive he's a mage. Ravage builds a mystery around himself with a new cover story every week. I figure he's mundane, a physical adept at most."

"What does he want with me?" Casey demanded.

"That's simple," Ambrose replied. "Your access to ZetaImpChem. Knocking over your little business is easier for him than raiding ZetaImpChem head-on. He gets the code keys from you. Then, his decker walks in like she belongs there."

Casey sighed. "So what do I do now that I know shadowrunners want me?"

"Walker smiled. "Fight fire with fire."

"I can't afford shadowrunners."

"We can," Ambrose chimed in with a smile.

"No, I've imposed on your graciousness enough. I can't ask you to deal with scum to fight more scum."

"Do you think I'm scum?" Walker asked smiling.

"Of course not! You're a terribly nice man."

"But I'm a shadowrunner, or used to be."

"So was I," Ambrose added.

"Marc, I had no idea..."

"Most folks don't," Walker said. "Some runners are lucky like us and retire in style. Others just take a bullet to the brain, and a few sell out for long, prosperous careers as professional lap dogs."

"I suppose you used code names like 'Wizard' and 'the Red Warrior'?" Casey asked with a small grin.

"Uh, no, Marc was Ambrosius, and I was Dog Boy, through no fault of my own, I might add."

Ambrose laughed. "People called you that because of that dog skin head-dress and that monster hound that followed us everywhere."

"Can you handle this Wild Bunch by yourselves?" Casey asked. Walker grinned. "Do dragons have bad breath?"

Walker called the number on Big George's card. He got the answering machine. A flat, mechanical voice told him to talk after the beep. It beeped.

"Pick up the phone, Ravage, you silly motherfragger."

It beeped again and the connection was cut. Walker punched the redial. Once again the automated voice told him to wait for the beep. It beeped.

"Either pick up the phone or you'll be picking coffee machine fragments from off your ceiling."

Once again the machine beeped and cut him off. Walker redialed.

"You were warned."

He hung up before the second beep. Pressing the small, red button on the palm-sized black box in his left hand, Walker detonated the shaped charge attached to the coffee maker, sending thousands of fragments drilling into the ceiling.

The next day Walker called again. The answering machine picked up and began its routine.

At the beep Walker said, "Ravage, you silly fragger, pick up the phone. You really don't want to see what I do next."

The phone clicked to a live voice.

"Who is this?" demanded a deep male voice.

"Call me an angel with the word of the Lord, Ravage. Leave Ariana Casey alone or the wrath of God shall fall upon thee like unto a plague of old."

"You listen to me joker..."

"The angels have spoken," Walker interrupted and hung up.

"Think you got him angry enough to do something stupid?" Ambrose asked.

"I 'dunno. I was pretty obnoxious."

The two men looked across the street to the front door of the office building that Ravage was using for his phone drop. The door burst open under the force of a kick by a human in a business suit. Ravage. He was followed by a dwarf in streetwear and a tall, pale human. The pale man carried a cane with a crystal headpiece. Arcane symbols were sewn into the lapels of his suit coat. Thane.

A three inch tall eyeball with little arms and legs appeared in a foot from Ambrose's nose. Its visage was hazy and translucent, being unable to fully manifest into the physical plane, confined to astral space. Gaining the tiny spirit's attention, he pointed toward Ravage.

"See that man?"

The eye blinked twice.

"Follow him. When he stops at the place strongest with his aura, come fetch me or this man. Then, lead us there. Go."

The eye sparked and disappeared on its mission. An hour later the watcher spirit returned. The path it took them on twisted around half of London and twice past Trafalgar Square. Finally, it stopped in front of a row of townhouses looking down on the Thames. The watcher pointed one out.

"Thank you," Marc said. "You are free."

The tiny spirit flashed and popped out of existence.

"Wait here, old boy. I'm checking the place out. Guard my body," Marc said before slumping down in his seat.

Ambrose's astral form drifted away from his body until he stood next to himself outside the car. He perceived Walker behind the steering wheel as a body criss-crossed with extensive patches of darkness. The only brightness in his aura came from his heart and mind.

Ambrose strode across the street, through a wall and into the house. A human and a dwarf sat on a couch staring at the trid. A third human, a female, whose aura also showed only faintly of cyberware reclined near the telecom. What appeared to the mage to be a slender serpent kissing her temple was a data cord running to the phone jack. Ambrose had accounted for the Wild Bunch, but where was Ravage and Thane?

At the speed of thought he went through every room in the house until he butted heads with a ward. Since this was just a recon mission he chose not to deal with the astral threat. *Thane's ward*. Ambrose could guess this was Ravage's sanctum. Knowing he could do no more Ambrose returned to his body.

"The Wild Bunch is in residence," Ambrose said.

"How 'bout Ravage?"

"There's a warded room I think he and Thane are in."

"While you were 'out' I called my decker. I'm having him check the matrix."

"Better warn him Priss is decking. I saw her lost in her own head."

Walker picked up the phone and dialed the Green Knight to warn him. He talked for a couple of minutes before hanging up.

"Knight's just leaving. His instructions are to intercept and eavesdrop all outbound communications."

They waited in silence for several minutes.

Walker asked, "Is it just me or would trashing that place feel real good right about now?"

"It's just you... For now."

When the car phone buzzed they both jumped. Walker snatched up the receiver with a growled command to talk. He listened for a couple of minutes. Then, he hung up.

"Knight's got something for us. He wants to meet at Node 1."

The elf's green hair was plastered to his skull from sweat. An empty shot glass sat in front of him, and he was draining a beer as Walker and Ambrose sat across from him. The elf waved to the bartender, pointed at the empties, and motioned for a refill. He didn't speak until the bartender had disappeared with the empty glasses.

With a shot of whiskey under his belt, he said, "You're gonna love this, good sir. MissPriss has been overseeing a bid to do a stock buy-out of Casey Enterprises. It's a weeprogramming firm in Wales. Guess who's frontin' the yen? Yank company called Harker chemcorp, but that ain't the hottest data, terms. My phone tap got Ravage reporting to his Johnson that he's eliminating Miss Casey's opposition to the buy-out."

"You got that on chip?" Ambrose asked leaning forward.

The Green Knight patted his deck.

"Oh, yes, good sir, for a reasonable price."

Walker jacked his laptop into the phone connection. He tapped some keys.

"Access the Gawain account, sir knight. Fealty is its own reward."

Knight's eyes widened just a little. He popped a memory chip from its slot on the back of the deck and placed it in Ambrose's hand.

"Struth, good sir, that fealty is rewarded. I am ever at your disposal. You will excuse me while I pay my outrageous bar tab."

"Were we ever that cocky?" Ambrose mused.

"Yes," Walker replied. "We've got to go. Ariana's in danger."

Ravage's attack came at midnight against Ambrose's manor house. The first wave consisted of Knee-Capper and Wolfman. The burly merc fired a grenade into the front door vaporizing the ancient timber. Knee-Capper rolled through the door coming up in a combat crouch, his Uzi stuttering into an empty room. An AK-98 preceded Wolfman through the door.

Knee-Capper stood up when the first arrow pierced his left knee. A second pierced his other knee. Ambrose's invisibility spell faded revealing himself and Walker. The mage wore a worn duster and clutched a golden-yellow dagger in one hand. The big Indian was similarly garbed, but the top half of his face was painted black and bottom red. A dog skin and head rested on his head and shoulders.

Wolfman swung his grenade launcher toward this new threat squeezing the trigger as he went. A shimmer in the air in front of the merc was followed by a roaring flame, as Ambrose's fire elemental scooped

Wolfman from the room, warming the clip to his assault rifle and the grenade launcher magazine as they left the house. The house shook slightly as Wolman exploded in fiery ball on Ambrose's front lawn.

"Knees hurtin', Capper?" Walker asked.

The dwarf snarled a curse and swung his Uzi in line with Walker, but The Indian had moved in a blur. A stream of lead tore up the wallpaper. A single arrow pierced Knee-Capper's neck.

"Oh, Ravage, you silly fragger, you're next," Walker yodeled.

"Quit taunting him! He'll nuke my house," Ambrose scolded.

The two ex-shadowrunners dashed out into the night. From somewhere on a hill abovethem, a machine gun raked their path. Then, they were under cover. Walker took his time to look back up the hill, his optics zooming in on Ravage, Thane, and Miss Priss.

"They're next to the cupid fountain," he reported.

Ambrose ducked from behind cover. He screamed an incantation in Old Gaelic. A blinding flash of light and heat erupted next to the fountain covering the three attackers. Miss Priss's fancy face lift now resembled an overcooked kabob.

However, Thane had succeeded in protecting himself and Ravage from the effects of the hell blast. He unleashed a bolt of energy. The energy in a loud crackle as it dissipated against Ambrose's protective barrier.

Still incanting in Gaelic Ambrose gestured toward a stone the size of a loaf of bread in the walk. It levitated up and raced toward Thane. The pale man ducked just under the stone and out of the way. His counter spell sent pebble and dirt swirling toward Ambrose. The mage somersaulted past the dust devil.

Walker took advantage of the mage duel to scurry around the flank. As he approached his targets from the rear he saw Ravage drawing a bead on Ambrose with a handgun. Walker jammed an arrow into the frame of the gun from four meters. Ravage whirled.

"Naughty, naughty, silly fragger," Walker said with a feral grin.

"Who the frag are you?" Ravage spat.

"The dogs of war."

Walker yanked the big combat knife from his boot.

"Shall we dance, pale face?"

Ravage double-cocked his wrists releasing cyberspurs.

"Call the tune, red man."

Nearby, Ambrose's dodges and attacks had brought him right up to Thane. With a flick of the wrist

Ambrose's orichalcum dagger cut the head off of Thane's cane. Ambrose then clamped his right hand down Thane's throat. All the fight fled Thane's being. A final incantation fired a power bolt through Thane's head. The pale mage dropped dead.

Ravage didn't notice the death of his friend. The big Indian kept him fully occupied. Every slash, stab, and feint was countered by a flashy combination from the Indian. Each scratch and cut inflicted by the red man angered Ravage to greater levels of fury.

"This dance is over," Ravage snarled.



He attacked with blind aggression forcing the Indian to give ground. Ravage was rewarded by a long, bloody cut across the Indian's stomach. He laughed. The laugh died short as Ravage realized his mistake. The Indian had allowed himself to be wounded. Ravage felt a big arm wrap around him in a bear hug. Walker snapped Ravage's arm at the elbow. He spun Ravage to face him. Their eyes met.

"I am Dog Boy, warrior of the Cheyenne. I am your death." Walker swung his blade and severed Ravage's head.

The police came to remove the bodies at first light. They wanted to arrest Walker and Ambrose until a Welsh official, a friend of Marc's, showed up in person to send them scurrying on. Several copies of the recording Ravage's phone call were sent to Harker Chemcorp board members. A lone copy somehow found itself on the Shadowland Hub. Ariana Casey was covered eight ways to Sunday.

Walker spent a week in Wales before returning to Denver. He flew home knowing friendship and honor had been satisfied.

What do you
mean
you don't have
a
Shadowland
subscription ?

F / e e

Trent squirmed through the cellar window, pushing himself hard. *Out! Out! Out!* He could feel every tight sensation as he body forced through the too small opening. He heard his clothes tear on the loose nails and glass shards which jutted from the frame.

It didn't matter. He had to get out. Had to get out. Had to get out.

Stumbled to his feet, circles in circles as Trent looked to where he needed to go. Where he was. Finding no answers, he raced down the alley, arms pumping. Chest heaving harder than it should. Trent was afraid. Not just scared. Not this time. Trent's been scared before. Hard to think of a run when he wasn't just a bit scared. It's natural. Not human if you don't get scared just a bit.

Not this time.

Trent was afraid.

He ran. Ran. Alleys twisted and turned. A dead end.

Tick tick tick.

He was panting like a dog.

A leap to a dumpster gave him the height he needed to reach the high wall, and over to keep running.

Then he heard it. It was still coming. Behind him. It was close now. Trent leaped for the wall. Freedom.

Slip.

Trent scratched desperately at the wall with his free hand, trying to find some grip, something, anything, to save him.

It clattered around the corner.

It had found him. It could smell him. It wanted him, and there was nothing Trent could do about it.

At least that's what it thought.

Terror gripped Trent. Presence of God or the devil terror. Trent heaved himself up the wall. Somehow, somehow, he was up. He brought his legs up over the edge.

A vice clamped on Trent's ankle.

Trent opened his mouth to scream, yelp, cry out.

Nothing came.

Its weight was incredible. It didn't have to pull. It just hung. Trent couldn't free himself. He tried to shake his ankle, but couldn't. He wanted to strike it, but fear of touching it, and fear of losing grip held Trent helpless.

The weight dragged him back. Back over the wall.

No no no no no no!

Trent clung to the wall with his fingertips till they bled. The true, honest, genuine, fear of death squeezed Trent's heart as his grip failed, and he slid down.

I'm not a runner anymore.

Gen Con Wrap Up

With the summer convention season safely behind us for this year at least, I suppose it's best if we do a little write up of the granddaddy of all the summer conventions: Gen Con.

Gen Con, lovable Gen Con. As it has been in the past years, thousands of gamers and sci-fi fans converged on Milwaukee for the big event, and yours truly was no exception. Of course, I hit the convention floor eager to check out all the FASA seminars, to find out what was up with them, and their games.

Amongst all the other duties I undertook at Gen Con, I made sure to hit the "What's Going on with Shadowrun *This Year?*" seminar. Now, I have to be honest and tell you I missed all the action last year when the Big 'D' bit the Big One, but from everything I heard, it went off quite well. That was last year, though. This year, I wondered, just a little bit, what else might happen this time around. Who would die now? What big Threat would crawl out of the plastiwood-work?

I took my seat with the other weary runners, as Mike Mulvilhill came in and sat down. He immediately plopped down a huge ream of paper, and informed us it was the Rigger 2 sourcebook. He then proceeded to taunt us with it, explaining all the cool things contained inside. Choruses of "ooohhhhs and ahhhhs" were heard throughout. For some reason, Mike didn't *show* anyone the manuscript, which further added to the taunting. Of course, by this writing, you should have a copy of **Rigger 2** in your hands right now. If not, why?

The big topic this year though was the **Shadowrun TCG**. FASA was pushing the game real hard, and with good reason. It's just that good. Demos of the game were going on nearly all the time, and always seemed full, every time I passed by. And according to the big cheese himself, all the decks FASA brought with them, sold out. The game is pretty darn nice, even if you just buy it for the art alone, which is well done. I think the most memorable comment in regards to the card game, was when asked why the starter decks contained seventy cards, Mike replied, "Hey, if you have an ad that says 'Size Matters' then say there's 69 cards, you're just asking for trouble."

The rest of the seminar was a rundown of all the cool products coming out for 1998, and hints as to what's going to be the big shakeup for the coming year. And let me tell you, it sure will be big. What is going to be? Sorry, can't tell you everything.

Well, okay, just a little hint. It involves the meagcorps, and boy is it going to be nasty. The Shadowrun universe is alive and well,

and is not pulling any punches when it comes to surprises and shakeups.

The product list for the coming year looks pretty strong, one product in particular I'm looking forward to is **Cyberpirates**, which may be out not long after this magazine is in your hot little hands. Be sure to read the Introduction portion from the book right here in Shadowland. I don't know, the idea of a big troll, parrot-drone on his shoulder, mono-cutlass at his side just gets the juices flowing.

Back to Gen Con. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to attend the big Shadowrun event this year, but if one of you was involved, either as a Gamemaster or participant, we'd like to hear about it.

As a closing comment, Gen Con isn't the only convention where Shadowrun receives some play. Other, local conventions have events as well. We'd like to hear some reports from them. If you attend, take some notes about what's going on elsewhere in the world of Shadowrun. It's an international game, so global reports are always welcome.

Share your experiences with those who couldn't make it. Tell us what went down, and what kind of scenarios were being run. Spread the word chummers...

Novel Preview:

Technobable

by Steve Kenson

1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

--Genesis 1:1

Think back. What is the first thing you remember?

My life begins in an alley-a dark, hidden place in shadows of the city. I awaken there like being born: weak, blind, and helpless, new to the world and all of its strange sounds, smells, and experiences. And alone, but not for very long. The first thing I become aware of is the darkness and the noise. I cannot see, but I can feel and smell and hear.

I can feel the ground beneath me. It is hard and cool. The roughness of it is not unpleasant-like someone scratching your back-and I lie there for I don't know how long, just enjoying the sensation of being supported by the ground, feeling its cool and strong embrace. I can feel the air stir around me, a gentle breeze brushing across the bare skin of my face and hands and ruffling my hair. The breeze brings smells and sounds to me as I lie there.

I smell the harsh smell of the city: a smell of burning. Burning fuel, burning trash, burning wood, and people burning with hope, despair, misery, and joy make up the smell, mixed in with the slow decaying scent of the city as metal, mortar, and stone slowly crumble to rust and dust, ground down beneath the force of the elements. I smell my own sweat, cooling on my skin.

I hear the distant sounds of the city, the constant rumble of noise that most city-dwellers ignore almost completely in their daily lives. I hear the voices of cars, from the bass rumble of diesel engines to the high whine of electric motors powering small commuter cars. From time to time a horn blares out its distant cry of anger or warning. The voices of the city whisper and speak to me, and I know there is danger.

Then I hear another voice, much closer, which is speaking to someone else.

"There he is," the voice says and I know he is talking about me.

Then another voice, deep and gravelly. "Just like Crawley said h would be. I'll give him that, Weizack, that freak may be weird, but his

information is right on the money."

Weizack laughs, more like a humorless bark. "You should talk, chummer. You ain't winning no beauty prizes yourself."

Weizack's partner growls, a low, throaty sound. "Watch it, chummer. I may look like something outta somebody's nightmare, but at least I ain't no fragging ghoul. Let's just do this job and get the frag out of here. This place gives me the creeps."

A rough hand grabs my jaw, and I feel a jolt of fear and surprise shoot through my nerves. I want to push away the hand touching me and filling my nostrils with the stench of overripe sweat and the smell of decay, but my body refuses to obey me. My muscles remain limp and I lie like a dead fish on the cool, hard ground as the hands turn my head to the side and blunt fingers brush against the side of my neck.

"Hey," I hear Weizack's comrade say, his hot, rank breath blowing past my face. "He's still jacked in."

"So unplug him. What's the big deal?"

The fingertips brush my neck again. I hear a faint metallic click and feel an immediate and yawning sense of loss open up within me. He has taken something from me. Something very important, my connection to something larger and greater than I am. I am truly alone now, and helpless against these strangers. I try to move, or even open my eyes, but I can't. It feels like my brain is detached from the rest of my body. Like I have forgotten how to use it somehow. The part of me that is awake and aware floats somewhere, detached, unable to make the connection to make a move or a sound.

"Fragging chipheads," the deep voice grumbles. "Why they wanna burn out their brains beats the drek outta me. Feedin' stuff straight into your brain is totally fragged up. All of that techno-trash, just for the sake of gettin' high."

"You ever try slottin' sims, Riley?" Weizack asks his partner.

"No way. Those things'll frag you up for good. Not even the beetles, just the soft-core drek. My cousin was a simchipper, and all he did was spend the whole day sitting around slotting chips and living in a fraggin' fantasy world. Couldn't hold down a job or nothin'. Finally cooked his brain slotting something he shouldn't of. Cheap Hong Kong trash. You wanna get trashed, I say do it the old fashioned way-with a bottle or something. These brain-burners frag you up but good."

"What about all of this stuff?" Weizack says, his voice coming from close by and above where I lie. He must be standing near my head, looking down at me.

"Leave it," the one called Riley says. "Said you don't wanna mess with this drek. It's bad biz."

"Why not? As long as we're here..."

"No." Riley's tone flat and cold. "Bad enough we're comin' here for him, but I ain't messin' with some of the weird-ass mojo that goes down around here. Beetles are bad enough, but this place gets used for some real magic. Once we're done with him we're out of it, but if we mess with this place we could end up cursed or worse."

"You really believe in that hoodoo curse drek?" Weizack asked.

"Take another look at my face, drekhead, and tell me there's no truth to curses. Ever since the magic came back, it's been nothing but trouble for the whole world." Riley's voice was heavy with bitterness. "It mighta made some of the elves and their wannabes happy, but it's just another way to slot over the rest of us. Proof that mother nature is a slitch with a sense of humor. Now shut the frag up and give me a hand here. We need to move this guy before somebody finds us here."

A strong pair of hands grips my ankles and, a moment later, another pair slides under my shoulders and grips me under the armpits. They lift me off the ground like a limp rag, all of my muscles still stubbornly refusing to respond to my mind's demands to move. Just a little movement, a twitch or a blink, to show these two I'm awake and aware. That's all it would take. But I can't seem to figure out how to do it.

I feel vaguely sick and dizzy as I'm carried a short distance, swaying gently between my two porters. They set me down again on a surface that is slick and soft over the hardness of the ground.

"All set?" Weizack asks, and for a moment I think he's talking to me. Riley grunts in response and Weizack says, "O.K., let's get going. Crawley doesn't like to be kept waiting."

"Frag him," Riley says. "I don't take drek from any fraggin' ghoul."

I hear the sound of a zipper and feel the slick vinyl-coated cloth close around me like an embrace. The zipper passes up over my head and I'm completely sealed in...oh no. They don't think I'm unconscious. They think I'm dead! But I'm not!

I feel panic grip my heart like a cold hand as my mind frantically screams at my body to obey. I just need to move, to make a sound, something to tell these men I'm really alive, that they've got the wrong guy. Dammit, move! I feel my breathing begin to quicken and I hope the sound will penetrate the heavy vinyl, but there is no response from outside it.

Two pairs of hands lift me off the ground and swing me like a sack a couple times before releasing me. There is a moment of cold, stark terror as I fly through the air with no sense of balance and no idea where I will fall. Then I drop onto something firm but yielding, and roll just a bit before coming to rest on my side.

There is a clunk of metal on metal and the retreating footsteps of the two men. Then the sound of doors opening and muffled talk from somewhere ahead of me. That's when I realize I'm lying on top of a

stack of bodies, all of them wrapped up for delivery just like me. But delivery to where? And are they dead or like me, trying desperately to gather the strength to cry out, to yell "I'm alive!" in hopes someone will hear them?

The thought hits me: is this what death is like? Maybe I really a dead and just don't know it. Maybe when you die all you really do is become a helpless prisoner in your slowly decaying body, aware of the world around you but unable to move or communicate in any way. Maybe your mind hangs around until your body rots away in the ground or you get the quick and merciful release of cremation. The thought of this paralysis as the afterlife nearly makes me scream and collapse in terror, but another thought bubbles up into my mind from somewhere. I know I'm not dead. I just *know* it somewhere deep down inside. I know I've been dead before and this isn't what it was like. I'm alive, reborn, and I have to figure out how I'm going to stay that way. Be a shame to start my new life only to end up dead again.

An engine rumbles to life and we start to drive. The meat-wagon slowly pulls away from the place of my awakening and heads out into the city.

Liked this preview? Next issue, we'll have a preview from one of the big hoops of the Battletech world. Mike Stackpole graces our fair mag, with a look at

Wolf and the Raven: Shadowrun Tales

More Previews:

Cyberpirates

A straight cut from the book itself

INTRODUCTION

Once brought to mind, the images stay with you forever. Trolls swinging out and over another boat on ropes, emptying their SMGs into the poor saps below. A rigger racing his boat toward his quarry, while an ork on the boat he is chasing aims a harpoon gun straight at him. An underwater fight with spear-guns and exploding air tanks that attracts the attention of sharks and megalodons—the survivors get to pillage the sunken vessel, which is full of gold doubloons. Locations that many have only dreamed of, each as different as it is deadly. That's the life of a pirate and a smuggler—a life of daring and danger and big hauls, fully described in **Cyberpirates**.

Cyberpirates exposes a previously neglected side of the **Shadowrun** universe: the smugglers and pirates who are the shadowrunners of the high seas. These are the people who live by bold raids and smuggled goods, and who sometimes even fight the good fight.

This sourcebook introduces players and gamemasters to piracy and smuggling in **A World of Piracy**, which shows the differences between pirates and shadowrunners and reveals the who, how and why of piracy from the pirate's point of view. This section offers a comprehensive overview of a piracy/smuggling operation, from hitting ships on the sea to negotiating a good price for your stolen wares on the dock.

From there it's off on a grand tour of hot spots for piracy, beginning with the Caribbean League. **The Swashbucklers of the Caribbean** introduces pirates who live as much on reputation and bravado as on nuyen. These ruthless braggarts can make nuyen off of anything, including making and selling vids of their own raids. Many are nothing more than glorified gangs, but some are powerful enough to rule islands as pirate kings. **The Swashbucklers of the Caribbean** also displays the Caribbean League in all its sordid glory, from the British island of Bermuda to the Mafia-controlled docks of Havana and Miami. Get the latest scoop on the voodoo war, metahuman experiments in Haiti, and how the UCAS, Ares, the CAS and Aztlan respond to pirate activity in Caribbean waters.

The next stop is the Philippines, where piracy and freedom-fighting go hand in hand. In the Philippines, pirates either work for the yakuza or belong to the Huk, a band of freedom-fighters/terrorists/revolutionaries sponsored by the great dragon Masaru and bent on ridding their homeland of the oppressive Imperial Japanese government. **The Rebel Pirates of the Philippines** show piracy in a different vein, including the harsh realities of life under Imperial Japanese control and the methods by which the yakuza, corp patrols and the Huk attack each other.

Africa, always a continent rich in natural resources, is one big fat target for the corps in 2059. **The Smugglers of the Gold and Ivory Coasts** shows the virtually unrestrained corporate pillaging of West Africa, through the eyes of the pirates they use to do their dirty work. More like classic shadowrunners than the flamboyant pirates of the Caribbean League or the Philippines revolutionaries, West African pirates are usu-

ally corp backed. And because there is no law in Africa save what the corps claim is law, the actions of these pirates are frequently big, bold and brutal. The enemy in Africa is not Lone Star or some government, but the place itself—from the mysterious ghoul kingdom of Asamando to the tribal city-states that change leaders more often than the pirates change clips in their guns, to the hazards of an Awakened world almost wholly untamed.

Finally, **Long Haul Piracy and the Pirate Island** gives an overview of piracy all over the world: which ports are the places to go to sell, trade and smuggle everything, from sugar runs in the Arctic Circle to selling contraband telems in Tir Tairngire. The section ends with an open forum on Madagascar, also known as the Pirate Island, that describes the rough-and-tumble pirate havens on the coasts and includes a host of speculations on who (or what) really lives in the island's wild, mysterious interior.

The several sections of **Game Information** give players and gamemasters all the information they need to play pirates in any of the locations described. **Using the Book** suggests ways that the gamemaster can create adventures based on the themes highlighted in the fiction, and offers new rules for creating pirate player characters, including new skills and Edges and Flaws. The section also covers the workings of magic, paranormal animals and totems specific to each region, as well as rules for local oddities such as ancestor spirits and the Bermuda Triangle.

Underwater Adventuring covers rules for swimming, diving, underwater combat and using magic underwater. **Ship Rules** applies the rules from the **Rigger 2** rulebook to ship-to-ship combat. Finally, **Equipment** is a smorgasbord of new toys, from peg legs and hook hands to spear guns, torpedoes and hunter-killer submarines.

Though they are not necessary to use this book, **Rigger 2** and the **Shadowrun Companion** will aid players and gamemasters in fully exploring the themes and ideas presented in **Cyberpirates**.

THE DEVELOPER'S SAY

The book you hold in your hand is not a typical **Shadowrun** "place" book.

I know what you're thinking: "Come on, FASA, of course it's a place book. It's got places in it - that makes it a place book. You may have killed a dragon and created a Mafia war in Seattle but you aren't going to make us believe this isn't a place book. No way, no how."

The statement stands: **Cyberpirates** is not a place book. It is a theme book.

It's not about the Caribbean League or the Philippines or West Africa. In fact, it's not about any place at all.

This book is about stretching the borders of what you can do with the game and world of **Shadowrun**.

Cyberpirates takes what gamemasters and players normally do in a whole new direction. The places covered in this book serve to illustrate by example what types of piracy exist

in the Sixth World and offer ideas on how to play them, or run adventures dealing with them. Each place has been rendered in glowing detail and includes enough concepts and ideas to allow gamemasters to base hundreds of hours of game play in each region (if not on each island and port or city). But the focus of this book is the theme of piracy and smuggling in the world of **Shadowrun**.

The settings described in **Cyberpirates** work because they illustrate the theme so well, but you can play pirates and smugglers anywhere that there's a body of water and/or a need to get some kind of goods in or out illegally. You prefer piracy on the Great Lakes to piracy on the open seas? The rules are the same - read the material on the Caribbean and apply it with a few twists to the St. Lawrence Seaway or Lake Superior. You want to play Tir Na nOg freedom fighters based in Boston? Read about how the Huk works in the Philippines and use that group as a model for terrorists and smugglers in Beantown. If you want to play a fierce, proud, independent pirate who plies the North and Baltic seas, you'll find the basic information on playing an independent operator in **Cyberpirates**. From California's Big Sur to the coasts of Alaska and Aztlan, to the ports of New York, the Mediterranean, England and the Far East, the information provided in this book lets you play pirate adventures anywhere you want. That's the goal of a theme book: to give players and gamemasters ideas that they can use in multiple areas. You can use this book to set your pirate/smuggling campaign anywhere on the globe.

So the next question is, why piracy? Why smuggling? We created this book for three main reasons.

First, **Shadowrun** is a game in which deniable assets are hired by one group to perform clandestine, illegal operations against a rival or enemy group. In other words, shadowrunners are hired to commit crimes. Though the groups in question can be anyone from policlubs to crackpot religions to toxic shamans with a grudge, most shadowruns center around operations against corporations. We've expanded the possibilities to include personal rivalries and feuds, political factions, governments versus other governments and various secret organizations, but no matter who's doing the hiring or who's the target, the fact remains that shadowrunners are hired to commit crimes.

So, as always when deciding what products to publish, we looked at ways to offer you fresh ideas for adventures involving criminal/secret activities, to keep your choice of operations (shadowruns) interesting and new. Smuggling seemed like a natural for shadowrunning; we've mentioned it in multiple sourcebooks, all the way back to the **Seattle Sourcebook**. Lately, we've made smuggling operations a minor focal point in multiple books (**California Free State**, **Bug City**, **Target: UCAS**, **Underworld Sourcebook** and **Mob War!** to name just a few).

Smuggling operations make excellent shadowruns because they involve small groups doing all their own legwork, controlling the set-up and situation, and then trying to outwit those they stole from as well as the cops. Tailor-made for shadow ops. But smuggling also adds something of a new twist to the game of getting away with the goods; it tends not to depend so much on a Mr. Johnson, which gives the gamemaster and players more freedom to act. Smugglers must usually get something from one place to another, giving gamemasters the perfect opportunity to throw everything-including the kitchen sink-at the players to stop them. Finally, a smuggling operation means going into someplace blind to make the delivery. Because the recipients are also doing something illegal, the gamemaster can really throw wrenches into things-sting operations, undercover agents or other uncomfy discoveries about

who the players are really dealing with. The gamemaster can use all these opportunities to improvise (and be creative).

We decided smuggling was a theme worth investigating.

Second, we have an ongoing interest in expanding the **Shadowrun** world and making things more interesting, fun and unique. Smuggling is interesting and fun-but not very unique. It still pretty much relies on the basic Mr. Johnson-hires-you-to-perform-[blank operation] formula, without necessarily exploring new ground. Like all roleplaying games, **Shadowrun** works best when players and gamemasters create a story together. And a consistent complaint about **Shadowrun** is that the Mr. Johnson element keeps the players from co-creating the story. Players have no say in what jobs to take: only in how to perform them. So we asked ourselves, if the nature of smuggling means that the team controls their own destiny to a much greater extent, is there any way we can expand smuggling operations to make them unique and to drop Mr. Johnson out of the picture?

To help answer this question, we started asking where smuggled goods come from, which we needed to figure out for game-universe continuity and realism. Smuggled goods are stolen, but we're not talking the cat-burglar type of theft. We're talking much bigger hauls than that-say, hijacked shipments of valuables. Then it hit us: piracy. Good old-fashioned, avast-there-matey, we're-taking-your-ship-and-everything-in-it piracy. Smuggled goods come from pirated shipments and shadowrunners can be pirates, stealing goods and then smuggling them wherever they can make the most profit. The best part is, pirates aren't hired by a Johnson to do what they do. Piracy is their life, their means of survival. They don't need a Johnson to set up their operations-they do that themselves. Centering the theme of this book on piracy allowed us to combine smuggling, mentioned but not extensively covered in previous products, with unique elements that opened up a whole different way to approach **Shadowrun**.

The third reason (which may be the most important, depending on your point of view) is simply visceral. It's just so damn cool... cool images, cool ideas, cool things for you to do and even cooler options for the gamemaster to play with.

Oh, yeah ... and we managed to cover three places in one book.

Have fun!

Play games!

And remember the old sailor's rhyme:

Red sun at night, sailor's delight;

Red sun at morning, sailor take warning;

Red dragon over the hull ... get the drek out of there.

The Knight Shift

by Unknown

There are Prime Runners, then there are Prime Runners. Some last long enough in the biz to get that good. Good enough to be called best of the best.

What we got ourselves here crew is a team known as the Knight Shift. From all appearances, they're the dreck, but hell, they might not even be real. Your the judge...

Membership:

Blitzkrieg, Hex, Jihad, Maelstrom, and Whisp. The Knight Shift will work with other runners if the situation requires it.

Background: The Knight Shift formed several years ago when Blitzkrieg, Hex, and Jihad realized that a team would make them more effective runners. Shortly after, they were joined by Maelstrom and Whisp.

While the team managed to successfully complete most of their runs, they were plagued with many problems: there was no clearly defined leader and each member was prone to going off on their own. Eventually, this lack in teamwork and planning led to disastrous runs in which one or more members sustained serious injuries.

The Knight Shift's fortune finally began to change when they were hired to do a run against a Universal Brotherhood (UB) chapter in the Seattle sprawl. Although caught unprepared, the team miraculously managed to eliminate the Queen Spirit, effectively neutralizing the rest of the Hive.

Of course, the UB did not take kindly to this transgression, and began hunting down each member one by one. The UB would have eventually succeeded in systematically capturing and eliminating the runners if not for the Cobalt Corporation's intervention.

Somehow, Cobalt discovered the Knight Shift's involvement with the UB and offered the team a deal they couldn't refuse: resettlement in Los Angeles if they agreed to help Cobalt exterminate another Hive located in a remote Caribbean island. Cobalt's motives for wanting the island remains a mystery to this day.

Project: Island Getaway was even more dangerous than the raid on the UB, but the team was now prepared for a confrontation with insect spirits. With the successful completion of the mission, Cobalt kept their end of their bargain and relocated the Knight Shift to LA.

In Los Angeles, the Knight Shift finally started improving on their teamwork. Maelstrom, who was becoming more distant from the rest of the team, left the Knight Shift when he was offered a lucrative salary as an agent for Ares Macrotechnology. Once a company man, always a company man.

The four remaining members of the Knight Shift became more comfortable as a group, learned each other's strengths and weaknesses and worked with them to make a stronger whole. Unlike most other teams, no one has assumed the role of leader. Rather, each team member lends his or her expertise to the situation. A mission leader is appointed if the situation warrants it.

This strategy has proven effective over the last two years, and has enabled the Knight Shift to be ranked as a first-tier runner team. With the group's resources and contacts, they have begun to take assignments in Seattle again. Even though the UB no longer exists, they remain on guard as a survival instinct. Recently, Maelstrom rejoined the ranks of the team.

Presently, Hex and Jihad prefer to reside in Los Angeles for personal reasons, while Blitzkrieg and Whisp have moved back to Seattle. Maelstrom travels too often to leave his mark in one territory. The Knight Shift often commutes between the two cities for assignments. Their reputation has risen to the point that Mr. Johnsons

from other countries have begun to seek their services.

Goals: Each member of the Knight Shift has their own reasons for remaining in the group.

Blitzkrieg's main goal is to be alive tomorrow. Fate gave Blitzkrieg the shadows as his only option. He has never known any other life; he wouldn't know what else to do. Eventually, he hopes to marry someone who would make a good mother for his adopted daughter. He does not consider retirement as an option.

Hex's primary goal right now is to control her dark side. At one point, she had hoped to marry Blitzkrieg and settle down with him. However, past developments and personal differences led to their separation. Hex has secretly began several ventures, including a home for runaways and abused children. Her main goal in life is the destruction of all megacorporations. She realizes that attempting such a feat is well beyond her means, but she's intent on giving it her best shot.

Jihad, like Blitzkrieg, is concerned with surviving from day to day. As far as grandiose, finite goals are concerned, a free hand in experimental manufacture and testing with Ingram would be heavily. It would also be nice to settle with his human girlfriend, Julie (who resides in LA), and peacefully raise a family somewhere. He is not holding his breath on either account.

Maelstrom has one known future goal at this point--to develop the security firm he has organized. Whether this is just a step in some future plan, or if it is an end in itself remains to be seen. Maelstrom has been running the shadows long and enjoys the niceties of life, and so could be planning for his retirement. Don't count on it though.

It has always been his goal to become the perfect tool (whatever the job). He is constantly working on this goal, by perfecting his skills and body.

Whisp, with the patience of one who plans on living many generations, has detailed plans outlining every phase of his life. His current primary focus, however, is on expanding and protecting his corporation, Gauntt Enterprises. He runs this corporation under an alias of Jonathan Markham Gauntt; Jon Gauntt is the CEO and primary stockholder. His company focuses on processor chip development for cyberdecks, vehicle control rigs, and other high end electronic devices.

Tactics: The Knight Shift relies on good strategy and excellent teamwork to pull off a run. The team will try to avoid direct confrontations whenever possible, because fights can become deadly. Each member takes the lead when their sphere of influence is required.

Blitzkrieg is in charge of stealth and general urban survival. Hex's duty is astral and magical reconnaissance: she is responsible for shielding her teammates from magical attacks. Jihad takes command when military and mercenary elements are required. Maelstrom usually functions as the "catch man". He serves to catch anything that falls through the cracks where each other team member is a specialist. Whisp takes the lead when matters involve the Matrix and information needs to be extracted in a delicate manner.

In combat each member of the Knight Shift is capable of holding their own. When they coordinate their efforts, they become a nearly unstoppable force. Despite their recent successes and fame, the Knight Shift is not blind to its weaknesses. No matter how good they may be, they realize that there will always be someone better than them (though Whisp might disagree with the latter statement).

While the Knight Shift is more familiar with "light" combat, they have the necessary equipment to participate in heavy combat. The members coordinate their actions via Micro-Transceiver.

Each member has other gear and vehicles in safehouses throughout LA and Seattle not listed in their individual character profiles.

Group Relations: Hex and Jihad are annoyed by Blitzkrieg's silliness, lack of social graces, and yo-yo tricks. Maelstrom seems to share an unspoken respect and friendship with the razor. Perhaps it is due to Blitzkrieg's surgical accident, but of all the team members, Blitzkrieg is the one that the Company Man would most consider a trusted friend. Whisp admires Blitzkrieg's seemingly dull personality, because it hides a truly amazing detective/razor.

Blitzkrieg and Jihad disapprove of Hex's fondness for torture. Blitzkrieg is also concerned by Hex's lack of mercy. Maelstrom treats Hex as a valued professional bordering on a very good friendship. Whisp is simply amused by Hex's cold-hearted and callous mannerisms because they make her the professional she is.

Blitzkrieg and Hex are irritated by Jihad's insistence on using big guns and his repulsion of non-lethal combat. Dead enemies can't be interrogated. There is a healthy respect between the Amerind (Maelstrom) and the mercenary. At times they have been very close, though since Maelstrom's recent corporate attachment, that closeness has faded into cool professionalism. Although Whisp will never admit it, he sees Jihad as a competent individual who is even fun to go out with. He is the closest thing to a real friend that Whisp has.

Blitzkrieg has a profound respect for the company man. the professional control of emotions and focus on completion of a job is something the PI envies. Blitzkrieg suspects Maelstrom would try to kill him if the run required it, somehow that just strengthens the German's appreciation of the Amerindian. Whisp regards Maelstrom with respect; no fear, no awe. The reasoning behind this is pretty simple. Maelstrom operates with a very clear set of principles and guidelines. In other words, Maelstrom is very machine-like. It is easy to predict what he will do. This makes Whisp happy, as it is very unlikely that some unknown factor (such as morals) will affect Maelstrom's decision making process. As far as personal interactions, there are not many. Maelstrom isn't the most chummy of Knight Shift members, at least from Whisp's perspective.

Jihad doesn't consider Maelstrom to be a member of the Knight Shift any longer. He stepped out a while ago with no explanation. The merc thought that was a pretty dreky way to say "Good-bye, you're on your own now until I return." Jihad doesn't let the opinion interfere with the times that they do work together. Hex values the Amerindian's talents and skills, but is wary of him because of his corporate background. She is aware that his loyalty is to The Job first and foremost and suspects that he could be hired to turn against the Knight Shift - if he wasn't already.

All the four other members of the Knight Shift agree that Whisp is an arrogant slot. Blitzkrieg is awed by the decker's accomplishments and views Whisp as an anti-hero. Hex simply sees the elf as a necessary evil. If Maelstrom were to allow his emotions to affect his relationships, he would probably find the arrogant decker to be irritating enough to kill out of spite. As it is, he greatly respects the elf's skills both in the Matrix and out, though he does not always trust the elf's judgment outside the Matrix. Despite Whisp's obnoxious personality, Jihad sees him as one of his most valuable friends.

Reputation: The Knight Shift is slowly but surely being recognized as one of the more efficient and successful teams in the shadow world. In addition, each member is also gaining individual recognition for their past actions. It remains to be seen if the Knight Shift will continue to prosper in this mercurial business.

>Could these be same group that were wasted by the Red Card Gang a few years ago in Seattle? I thought no one survived that massacre.
>Findler-Man

>As with most rumors, the results of that encounter were exaggerated. Most of them did survive and soon got involved in some ventures that were beyond their capabilities at the time. This forced them to drop out off the Seattle shadows for a while and start over in Los Angeles. After a remarkable period of honing their teamwork and rebuilding their reputation, they began taking on "Big League" contracts with a notable success rate.

>Argent

>This notable success rate has caught the attention of quite a few local and overseas Johnsons. In the past two years, the Knight Shift have performed successful missions in London, Tokyo, Istanbul, Chicago, and Hong Kong. Last I heard, they were visiting Tenochtitlan.

>Matador

>I heard they specialize in bug exterminations. How can I acquire their services?

>Mr. J

>I on the other hand will pay handsomely for anyone willing to deal with them for me in a permanent way.

>McFly

>You can try contacting their primary fixer based in Seattle. Her name's Catalogue. Be forewarned though, Cat thoroughly screens her potential clients. You had better make sure you have a solid list of references and an excellent credit rating before attempting to approach her.

>The Smiling Bandit

>What the Bandit relates is authentic, but never diminish her name to merely "Cat." She vastly prefers "Catalogue."

>Fleet

>If you happen to befriend one or more of the Knight Shift members, cherish the relationship(s) dearly because it just might mean that you have five friends you can count on - for a fee of course. On the other hand, if you even cross just one of them, expect to make five enemies. The choice is yours. Personally, I'd choose the friendship option.

>Captain Chaos

Hooks: The Knight Shift can be introduced to a campaign setting in many ways. First of all, they can be competing runners who have been hired by another Mr. Johnson to accomplish the same task that your team was hired to do. Naturally, something will have to give. The GM should know his/her players and how will they react and what they need to do to create the right reaction. If your team plays smart, they will try to negotiate with the Knight Shift and try to make a deal in which both parties will benefit.

Another possibility could be having the individual members of the Knight Shift become Mr. Johnsons themselves. Hex could hire the runners to locate and eliminate a magical threat. Whisp could hire them to further his own schemes.

A third option might be to have the Knight Shift members become Contacts for the team. Blitzkrieg can show them the finer points of urban survival. Hex could teach the team's magicians a spell or two. Jihad could act as an arms dealer for your runners. Whisp could become a Fixer in a different alias. If your team lacks a decker, Whisp could extract the information for a price.

Whatever you decide in how you want to present the Knight Shift to your campaign, remember that they are an experienced and professional group. They are not prone to senseless acts of stupidity. The Knight Shift is a highly skilled and well-informed team. What's more, just like your runners, the Knight Shift's abilities and skills improve over time. As an optional rule, the GM can increase the Combat Threat Ratings of the Knight Shift members by one, when they work as a team.

BLITZKRIEG

Birthname: Karscul Vajrun

Aliases: Jake Slug, Garm, Gristle, Shrike

Sex: Male

Metaspecies/Ethnicity: Caucasian Human

Residence: Seattle, UCAS

Distinguishing Features: Appears six years older than actual age.

Birthdate: April 1, 2030

Birthplace: Berlin, Germany

Psychological Profile: Curious, friendly, absent-minded.

Known Allergies: None
Lifestyle: Middle

Background: Karscul's parents were recruiters for a neo-Nazi German street gang called the White Skins and far too busy soliciting new members to raise a child. Consequently, he was mostly ignored and left to survive, or perish, on the streets of Berlin. The boy did learn important lessons from his parents and other gang members. Most of his schooling was urban survival and how to be unobtrusive.

When the Night of Rage swept through Germany in 2039, the White Skins were very active. After viewing those activities, Karscul found he had nothing but contempt for his parents and extended family. He even helped to hide a metahuman child from the gang's hunting party. The boy shared what little food he had scraped up (his most prized possession) with the young refugee.

Karscul found that generosity and helping another person felt better than anything he had ever experienced. From that night on, he continued to secretly help 'non-Aryan' children escape from the White Skins' raids. His ability to be overlooked became a running joke on the street, earning him the nickname "helle Rattchen" (little blond rat).

In 2042, the faction of White Skins, that Karscul and his parents belonged to, were cleaned out by an Aztechnology strike force. He and the other children were captured, exported, and used for experiments as human lab rats. Unlike most of the other prisoners, Karscul survived his time in the laboratories and was eventually shipped to a "training" institute in North America. There he was brain washed, taught combat skills, and received cyberware.

Karscul would have become the deadly puppet Aztechnology intended him to be. However, one of his test assignments was to dispose of a child. The mental conditioning collapsed under the ordeal, allowing Karscul to escape his masters. With the urban survival skills of his past and Aztechnology cyberware, Karscul was able to start a new life in the shadows. He secured a fake SIN in Denver and used it to attend a community college. He enrolled and completed courses designed for a private investigator training program. His career in Denver was cut short by Aztechnology agents following his trail. Under various street names he ran the shadows of Boston, Chicago and Pittsburgh, before finally settling in Seattle. Within a year, he had become a founding member of the Knight Shift. Currently, he uses the handles Blitzkrieg or Slug.

A clumsy attempt to install a cerebral booster has caused a selective amnesia in Blitzkrieg. His personal memories up until the summer of 2053 have been lost to him. He only recalls his past through flashbacks and dreams.

Quote: "Wow! What's that?"

Personality: Blitzkrieg's behavior is one of oblivious friendliness, often overwhelmed by curiosity. He seldom recognizes when people are angry at him. His social graces are lacking, but his good intentions are obvious. Blitzkrieg's cold professional side only manifests when his friends are in immediate danger.

Talents: Blitzkrieg prefers to use stealth over combat. He will use non-lethal weapons whenever possible, but will kill if necessary. His preferred weapon is the Ares Predator. He uses it to eliminate enemies as quickly and cleanly as possible. If range allows, Blitzkrieg will first use his taser.

In melee combat, Blitzkrieg will use his Dikote treated steel yo-yo (12M Stun, +2 Reach) to subdue his enemies. Most people think yo-yo's are toys, not realizing that they were originally used for hunting. For this reason, he is often able to get surprise on the first attack. In dire situations, Blitzkrieg will unsheathe his spurs, using the two weapon armed combat style.

Appearance: Blitzkrieg is 1.88 M and 90 Kg. He has blond hair and pale blue eyes. Blitzkrieg wears clothes that look like they've seen better days. His suits need cleaning, mending, pressing and would fit better on a larger man. In contrast, Blitzkrieg is always clean shaven and bathed.

Blitzkrieg walks tall and confident, but is prone to rubber-necking at oddities. Subsequently, he is often peering at the sidewalk with an intense curiosity, or slouching in deep retrospection.

The samurai is a handsome man with an honest, sincere though slightly maniacal face. He is unthreatening and attractive, until he speaks. His questions often reveal that the thoughtful look of his face is actually a manifestation of befuddlement.

>This slot is a real loon! I was at a McD's the other day when a troop of Eye Fivers attacked a rival gang chowing down in the parking lot. I saw Blitzkrieg walk through the fire fight, go to the cashier's counter and order his Troll-size Happy Meal.

>Hoagie

>I don't buy the crazy act. I was on a run with him when we were confronted by some mafia goons. Blitzkrieg pulls out his yo-yo and starts acting simple-minded. They let him walk right up to them, joking and laughing all the way. The IBMs never saw it coming. He must be faking it. No one is that stupid.

>Shi

>I heard he's got a soft spot for children. Any confirmation?

>Shriek

Hooks: Blitzkrieg would be most likely to meet other runners in noncombat situations. He may serve as a middle man for one of his clients needing to hire shadowrunners. He may also serve as a contact for a street oriented player character. Blitzkrieg could be a competitor, in search for a secret. He is unlikely to seek combat with any other runners with the following exceptions: he believes the runners are aiding insect spirits, he believes they have harmed children, or they try to take his chili dog.

Attributes

Body: 6 (8)
Quickness: 6 (10)
Strength: 6 (10)
Charisma: 5
Intelligence: 6
Willpower: 6
Essence: .03
Reaction: 6 (15)

Skills

Armed Combat: 8	Language: Cantonese: 5
Athletics: 6	Cityspeak: 6
Bike: 3	English: 7
Two-wheeler: 6	German: 8
Biology: 3 (5)	Japanese: 5
Biotech: 3 (5)	Spanish: 5
Car: 3	Ute: 3
Computer: 3 (5)	Vietnamese: 3
Demolitions: 3	Negotiation: General: 3
Electronics: 3 (5)	Bribe: 5
Electronics (B/R): 3 (5)	Stealth: 11
Etiquette: Corporate: 6	Throwing: 4
Street: 8	Unarmed Combat: General: 8
Firearms: 10	Retractable Spurs: 12
Ares Predator: 14	Special Skills
Ground Vehicle (B/R): 4(6)	Disguise: 3
Gunnery: 4	Harmonica (Blues): 4
	2 Weapon Melee: 6

Initiative: 6 (15) + 4D6
Professional Rating: 4
Threat Ratings
Combat: 9

Bioware (Body Index 5.88)
Enhanced Articulation (cultured)

Muscle Augmentation: 4 (cultured)
Nephritic Screen (cultured)
Orthoskin Level 3 (cultured)
Reflex Recorder: Athletics, Firearms, Stealth, Unarmed Combat
Toxin Extractor level 4 (cultured)

Cyberware (all cyberware is Beta)
Cybereyes with electronic magnification x 2, flare compensation, low-light, Rangefinder, Thermographic vision
Cyderears with hearing amplification
Datajack Level 3
Math SPU Level 4
Olfactory Booster: 6
Retractable Spurs in each arm (Dikote treated)
Smartlink Level 1 in each arm
Titanium Bone Lacing
Wired Reflexes Level 3

Gear

Ares Predator
Ceska vz/120
Defiance Super Shock Taser
Steel Yo-yo (Dikote treated) [+2 reach, 12M]
Armor Jacket
Form Fitting Body Armor: 3
Secure Long Coat
Gloves: regular and driver's style
Gold Credstick (Rating 8: Jake Raider Private Investigator)
Wristphone
Microtransceiver
Pocket Secretary
Lighter
Fujicorp Remote Ignition
BMW Blitzen
Corporate Script (about 500¥)
Certified Credstick (500¥)
Licenses for weapons

Notes: Blitzkrieg has small offices in Los Angeles and Seattle. Sometimes there will be a secretary filing her nails and clacking bubble gum in the outer room. He can be hired as a private investigator through these offices. His rate is 5000 ¥ per day, plus expenses. His fee is substantially increased for bodyguard and other less subtle work. The german is known for accepting charity cases from squatters, street urchins and shadow chummers.

The investigator is very good at what he does, but one bullet short of a clip. He is easily distracted by minor curiosities and role-playing him should reflect that. If a character interacting with Blitzkrieg is patient and good humored, the two will get along fine. If someone is impatient and forceful, interacting with Blitzkrieg will just be confusing.

Extra dice from Enhanced Articulation not included in list of skill ratings.

HEX

Birthname: Emiko Morisue

Aliases: Malice, Miranda

Sex: Female

Metaspecies/Ethnicity: Japanese Human

Residence: Santa Monica, CFS

Distinguishing Features: See Appearance

Birthdate: December 22, 2031

Birthplace: San Francisco, CFS

Psychological Profile: Determined, vigilant, well-mannered, loyal, and wicked.

Known Allergies: Nuisance to soy based food products

Lifestyle: High

Background: Born to yakuza "royalty", she was named Emiko Morisue. Her stepfather, Junzo Morisue was the regional oyabun of San Francisco. Her mother, Akemi Yamaguchi, was the daughter of the High Oyabun of Chiba and a skilled mage in her own right. At the very young age of 7, Emiko's magical capability manifested it-

self. The Morisue-gumi clan would have had a glorious and prosperous future, if not for severely strained family relations.

Junzo was always power hungry and an extremely cruel individual. While these traits initially helped him gain a prominent rank in the yakuza hierarchy, they would eventually lead to his downfall. Akemi was forced to marry Junzo to establish familial ties with the ruling Yamaguchi-gumi clan in Japan and the Morisue-gumi clan in San Francisco.

Dissatisfied with her marriage, Akemi was seduced by a mysterious figure while visiting her relatives in Chiba. The result of this brief affair was the birth of Emiko. Akemi managed to keep her liaison a secret, knowing the dangerous consequences that would result if the truth was revealed.

Akemi hated Junzo, and tried her best to undermine her husband's power when the opportunity presented itself. For several years, a power struggle between the couple ensued. Enraged at his wife's insubordination, Junzo discreetly arranged for Akemi to be killed by poison. The poison did not kill Akemi as planned, but left her in a feverish, bed-ridden state. Junzo knew that a second attempt would be too suspicious, so he vented his frustrations towards Emiko instead.

After several years of living in hell, Emiko managed to secretly flee to her "Uncle" Hanzo Shotozumi, the regional oyabun of Seattle. Hanzo, quickly realizing Emiko's potential, had her properly trained in the ways of the Art and shielded her from Junzo's wrath. In return, Emiko, who now called herself Hex, became one of Hanzo's magician enforcers for several years.

Although Hex served the Seattle yakuza faithfully, she was finding it more and more difficult to justify her actions as time passed. Eventually, she convinced Hanzo to let her take "independent" jobs, explaining to him that it would further hone her skills. Soon after, Hex met Blitzkrieg and Jihad and later became a founding member of the Knight Shift.

Hex was finally able to sever most of her obligations to the yakuza when she exposed the threat of the Universal Brotherhood to them. After "fogging the house", Hanzo was convinced that Hex served the yakuza best by being a full-time runner.

Two years ago, Junzo somehow discovered Akemi's affair. Enraged, he had her killed in a fit of anger. Realizing that he severed his only tie to the High Oyabun, he set out to retrieve his stepdaughter in order to reestablish familial ties. This action resulted in a catastrophic disaster which led to his downfall as the regional oyabun in San Francisco.

Despite the collapse of his empire, Junzo survived and once again attempted his mad quest for power. This led to a direct confrontation with Hex, who pursued him to Japan intent on avenging her mother and restoring honor to the family's name. The result of the family reunion ended in Junzo's power base being further crippled. Unfortunately for Hex, Junzo was able to flee the scene before she could settle things permanently.

Presently, Hex is pursuing several business ventures to establish her own power base. She has given up on the idea of hunting for Junzo, and has decided to await his return prepared instead. She is also trying to come to terms with the revelation of her biological father and their ramifications on her outlook on life.

Rumors have begun to spread that Hex's real father is in fact a horrific entity. When confronted with this rumor, Hex merely replies with a devilish grin.

Quote: "A bitch is simply a woman who does not take drek from anyone. Guess what I am?"

Personality: Hex has a rebellious and nonconforming streak which she tries to keep suppressed when on a run. Although she is a hermetic mage, her views on magic are more shamanic. Despite being free spirited, she has learned to be more dependable and responsible in a mission.

Hex is not moralistic, but she behaves ethically in her own way. She is constantly struggling to curb her predilection for torture and violence in order to preserve her humanity.

Talents/Tactics: Hex rarely lets her guard down, even in ordinary, day-to-day situations. She always masks her aura and foci. Hex constantly shields herself and extends this defense to her teammates



whenever possible. She only activates her foci when they are needed and makes sure to mask and protect them from astral attacks.

If a fight is unavoidable, Hex prefers to subdue her opponents through stealth and invisibility. In ranged combat, she likes to use Sleep or Stun Bolt to knock out her non-magician target(s) because the drain from these spells is easier to resist. Also, she can later Mind Probe them for answers. Against magicians, she prefers to use her Yamaha Pulsar or Ares Squirt II.

In melee combat, Hex will use her katana "Spirit Slayer" with devastating precision.

Hex always has 6 bound Force 5 Great Form Elementals on call. She has two of Water, two of Air, and one of Fire and Earth. Because she believes that binding spirits is slavery, she attempts to justify it by only using them in desperate situations. If she is forced to summon them, she tries her best to avoid giving them suicidal orders. Because of these self-imposed restrictions, Hex prefers to have Watchers do her bidding, even if they are less reliable. Hex has no compunctions about summoning Watchers because she believes they are simply a manifestation of her being.

If the situation presents itself, Hex will play her Bamboo Flute (her Centering skill) to help her resist drain from Sorcery and Conjuring.

Appearance: Hex is 1.9 m tall and 78 kg. Hex has three distinctive features: Her elven height and build, her drop-dead gorgeous looks, and her black eyes. Hex is an extremely beautiful human in her early twenties. Her face is delicate and fey, but retains an earthly beauty. She is often mistaken for an elf. Her eyes are like miniature black holes - they take in everything.

Hex is often seen dressed in a black silk body suit and a dark green velvet mini-jacket. While on a run, she will conceal her features by using a Physical Mask spell, or using a real mask, to avoid being identified.

In astral space, Hex appears as a 2.2 m tall samurai, clad in emerald and amethyst armor. Her Watchers manifest themselves as hatchling eastern dragons.

>This yak witch has a very colorful history. I heard she used to date one of the Tigers of the Neon Jungle, before he was geeked by the

Black Dragons. A few years later, she and the rest of the Knight Shift were paying back the BD's in Mt. Fuji with interest.

The ensuing riot involved quite a few high ranking yaks, including the Oyabun of Chiba himself. Hex even managed to slay a Great wizworm with her killer katana. It must have been an internal power struggle in the yak hierarchy because the BD's are supposed to be the elite assassins of the yaks.

>Sidewinder

>I can assure you that no dragons were killed in the chaos. Nor was a Great ever involved. The lady is good, but not that good.

>Crissonal

>Rumors have been circulating that her biological father is in fact a free spirit of some sort. Is this possible?

>Slater

>Anything's possible with magic.

>Ambrose

>I can't confirm her true Sire, but an associate of mine has had the opportunity to observe her in action. Each magician's spell signature is unique, but he noted that Hex's is very distinctive when casting combat spells.

Her visible non-combat spells are often accompanied by an eldritch emerald green aura, but when she casts a combat spell, it looks as though her head took the place of the moon in a total solar eclipse. It spooked out my colleague, giving him goose bumps and raising the hair on the back of his neck. Then again, he always experiences these symptoms when he meets a beautiful woman.

>Talon

>Beware of this one. She is a nightmare cloaked in a daydream. Prolonged association with the darkchylde will only bring one suffering and death.

>Man-of-Many-Names

Hooks: Hex can be introduced to your players in several ways. If the players require assistance from the yakuza, they can ask Hex to introduce them to a few helpful people. Conversely, if the players are proving to be a nuisance to the yakuza, they might send her to them as a warning.

Hex's talents makes her a natural for player's looking for a magical contact or back-up. She could teach a hermetic mage a spell or two for a hefty price. Shamans and adepts could also seek her out if they are trying to join a magical group. This will prove difficult, however, because the Twilight Society is secretive.

Finally, if the PC's run up against a magical threat they can't handle alone, the GM could have Hex step in to turn the tide in their favor.

Attributes

Body: 4 (8)
Quickness: 6 (10)
Strength: 4
Charisma: 6
Intelligence: 6 (10)
Willpower: 6
Essence: 6
Magic: 12 (18)
Reaction: 6 (13)

Skills

Armed Combat: 2
Edged Weapons: 6
Katana: 9 (15) [16]
Bike: 1
Two-wheeler: 3
Biology: 3
Conjuring: 5
Enchantment: 3
Etiquette (Magical): 3
Etiquette (Street): 5
Firearms: 3

Language: Cityspeak: 4
English: 4
German: 4
Japanese: 6
Spanish: 5
Turkish: 1

Special Skills
 Bamboo Flute: 6
 Cooking: 4
 Initiative: 13 (+4d6)
 Grade of Initiation: 6
 (of the Twilight Society)
 Professional Rating: 4
Threat Ratings
 Combat: 6
 Magical: 9

Spells

Combat

Hellblast: 4 (6)
 Power Bolt: 6
 Sleep: 6
 Sterilize: 2 (4)
 Stun Bolt: 6

Detection

Clairvoyance (Ext.): 1 (3)
 Detect Individual: 5
 Mindlink (Jake): 2
 Mind Probe: 4 (6)

Health

Heal: 4 (6)
 Inc. Body +4: 1 (3)
 Inc. Intelligence +4: 1 (3)

Gear

Bamboo Flute
 Concealable Holster
 Forearm Guards
 Form Fitting 3
 Gold Credstick [Rating 8 ID: KatsukoKawaguchi - Professional Escort]
 Jade Bracelet [Mindlink (Jake) Spell Lock -165m range]
 Maglock Paskey 5
 Mask [Black Silk ninja]
 Micro-Camcorder
 Micro-Transceiver
 Mirrored shades [Smart Goggles Level II: *20 magnification, Flare Compensation, Thermographic, Low-light]
 Platinum Anarchy Brooch (Health Focus 3)
 Platinum Lighter
 Platinum Wolf's Head Locket on a Blk. Leather Choker
 Pocket Secretary
 Scabbard [Quicken Imp. Invisibility spell (F 5 w/ 7 successes)]
 Secure Jacket
 L. Silver upside-down Cross Earring (Inc. Int. +4 Spell Lock)
 R. Silver upside-down Cross Earring (Inc. Qck. +4 Spell Lock)
 Silver Bracelet (Inc. Body +4 Spell Lock)
 Silver Necklace (Increase Reaction +3 Spell Lock)
 Platinum Eastern Dragon Ring (Inc. Rfx. +3 Spell Lock)
 Slap Patches [rating 8 Antidote, Rating 8 Block-all, Rating 6 Stimulant, Rating 10 Tranq, Trauma (2 of each)]
 Spirit Slayer [see Notes]
 Swiss Army Knife
 Wristphone
 Yamaha Pulsar with external Smartlink Level II and 2 mags.

Notes: Attribute and Skill ratings within () denote when the appropriate focus is activated. [] indicates when parrying with a Dikote-treated weapon for defensive purposes only. Spell ratings within () indicate an Exclusive Spell.

Spirit Slayer is a Dikote-treated katana that serves as a stacked Rating 6 Power and Weapon Focus. Hex has 6 bound Force 5 Great Form Elementals.

Magical Theory: 4
 Negotiation: 3
 Sorcery: 9
 Stealth: 6

JIHAD

Birthname: Alex Dresden

Aliases: Curare, Waffen

Sex: Male

Metaspecies/Ethnicity: Arabic Human

Residence: Redmond, UCAS

Distinguishing Features: None

Birthdate: July 1, 2023

Birthplace: Seattle, UCAS

Psychological Profile: Occasional fits of violent behavior and temperament. Shows bizarre pattern of socializing with his weapons.

Known Allergies: None

Lifestyle: Varies

Background: Alex grew up in one of the few "decent" areas of the Redmond Barrens in Seattle. His parents raised him in a boot camp manner in the belief that Alex would one day grow up and become a disciplined Ingram representative (mercenary).

His sarariman dad had pulled every corp string that he could just to get Alex on the Desert Wars V and VI campaigns. It was of little surprise then, that his father was outraged that his only son (his pride and joy), broke some commanding officer's jaw in a fight.

Whether or not his father understood that the commander was willing to let three badly injured soldiers go without medical care for 2 days was irrelevant. His father (and mother) have refused any type of communication with Alex since his dismissal in '99 except for a note sent the following Christmas eve that read, "you're a worthless fragger---Dad."

As the story goes, Jihad's only real family is presently the Knight Shift. He feels a special sense of gratitude to the vat job (Blitzkrieg) that took him in and gave him a job washing dishes for a now destroyed restaurant. It was this act of kindness and hospitality that helped him back on his feet again and made him become a founding member of the Knight Shift. The mage in the group (Hex) has saved his little butt more than he would care to admit. He hasn't forgotten that.

Lastly, Jihad feels a special camaraderie with the elven decker (Whisp) in the group. Although the dandelion-eater has hosed his share of decking jobs, Jihad has a special sense of obligation and allegiance towards Whisp and would do almost anything for him. Hex suspects brain-washing, but has kept silent on the matter.

Quote: "Praise Allah if you want to, but pass that ammunition," and "May all your targets be soft, numerous, and surprised."

Personality: Jihad's personality can be divided into two categories: when he is with his guns and when he is not. In the latter situation (which, if he can help, is not frequently) he is a pretty normal guy with a monofilament whip in his fingertip.

When Jihad is with his guns, he becomes possessive and unwilling to allow people, especially strangers, to touch them. He is attentive to his weapons needs, to the point of being psychotic. He has been known to coo to them while he is touching or cleaning them. He has named all of his weapons, and "Irene" (his one true love) has her name painted on her side. There has been some friction of late between Irene and Connie, but Jihad has managed to keep them separated to prevent any significant problems.

Although he doesn't go berserk per se, Jihad does get a little bloody, especially when the targets are disorganized. Most of the time though, Jihad acts with a level head and steady temperament.

Talents/Tactics: Jihad fills a needed niche in the Knight Shift with his knowledge of the military, both in terms of arms and tactics. While not the best in his field, he is quite competent in many skills and brings this into line for himself and the Knight Shift.

Jihad's weapon of choice in ranged combat is either Connie or Irene. In melee combat, he relies on Mona to pull him through.

Jihad is morally opposed to using blanks, stun rounds, warning shots, or single shots where many will do. He doesn't believe in the concept of giving up one's weapons (as in surrendering), especially if the weapon in question is Connie or Irene.

Appearance: Jihad is approximately 1.9 m and 91 kg. He appears to

be in his late twenties and has dark brown eyes and has dark brown eyes and black, curly crew-cut hair. He has a strong, reasonable mass of musculature in his chest, and his legs are firm and designed to carry a 41 kg field pack throughout the day and still be ready to mercilessly charge the enemy in the night.

Jihad rarely changes out of his jungle camo BDU bottoms. These are well-worn and comfortable, the only two important requirements for clothing. He is slightly more stylish with regards to his choice of shirts (assuming that this one of those times that he is actually wearing one) and will don any number of sweatshirts or O.D. T-shirts. Jungle combat boots complete his utilitarian outfits.

When going anywhere, Jihad always wears some form of armor. This procedure is ritual, and he feels naked in any place where he is not permitted to wear at least armored clothing.

When it won't compromise his night vision or blow his cover, Jihad loves to have a good stogie in his mouth, lit or not. Jihad doesn't care very much about shaving daily, and is frequently seen one or two day's growth on his face.

>I worked with the merc a couple of months ago. We were busy "liberating" a small weapons cache. Of course, things went down twisted and we were hosed. That's what I thought. While I've seen guys move faster--you know the type: they can walk through a hail-storm and not get tagged--I've never seen anyone as fluid with a weapon. I've had some time in the military too. His motions with that LMG were simple dynamic efficiency. Never seen so many beautiful 10-ring shot groupings in that type of situation before. We got out of there OK like though. I almost felt sorry for the opposition. If you are looking for someone who's good in a firefight, I think you'll be hard pressed to find someone better suited to the challenge.

>Pike

>While he may be well suited to the fighting stuff, this guy's receiver is "jammed open". Following our meet with a Johnson, Jihad gave me a lift to a diner to further discuss the run with the others. Along the way, he kept cooing to something and whispering lovey-dovey things. I thought he was making a play on me, until I saw the SMG near his leg. It was a tricked out-thing, a barrel as long as I've ever seen on an SMG. He called it "Diane". I called it weird.

>Black Mamba

Hooks

Jihad could serve as an instructor for individuals wanting to learn military tactics and skills. He could easily serve in a Drill Sergeant roll. If a team needs additional firepower, and can afford the price, they could hire Jihad, perhaps especially if the team needs an extraction--the merc could serve as team coordinator.

Need someone to create a diversion? Provided its not suicidal, Jihad is profoundly capable of attracting attention when he desires to. And, just as capable of utilizing his planned route of evacuation when the diversion isn't needed anymore.

Always seeking more toys, Jihad could hire runners to help him liberate any hard to acquire military equipment that he feels that he needs (which covers just about everything).

Attributes

Body: 7
Quickness: 6 (7) [8]*
Strength: 6 (7) [8]*
Charisma: 3
Intelligence: 6
Willpower: 6 [7]*
Essence: 1.7
Reaction: 6 (11) [13]*

* When Adrenal Pump is activated.

Skills

Armed Combat: 4 (5)
Whips/Flails: 6 (7)

Monofilament Whip: 8 (9)

Athletics: 2 (3)
Car: 3 (4)
Truck: 5 (6)
Demolition: 6 (7)
Etiquette: Street: 3
Firearms: 13 (15)
Gunnery: 5 (6)
Machine Guns: 7 (8)
Military Theory: 2
Land Tactics: 4

Rotor Craft: 3
Stealth: 3 (4)
Ambush: 6 (7)
Urban: 6 (7)
Throwing Weapons: 2 (3)
Non-Aerodynamic: 4 (5)
Unarmed Combat: 6 (7)
City Speak: 3
English: 6
Japanese: 1
Arabic: 2

Initiative: 11 [13]* + 3D6
Professional Rating: 4
Threat Ratings
Combat: 9

Bioware

Adrenal Pump 1
Enhanced Articulation
Muscle Augmentation 2
Orthoskin 2
Reflex Recorder (Firearms)

Cyberware

Cybereyes with Flare-Compensation, Low-Light, Thermographic, and Vision Magnification x2
Fingertip Compartment with Monofilament "Mona" Whip
Radio Receiver
Smartlink 1
Wired Reflexes 2

Gear

Pocket Secretary
Shaving gear with "I love Libya but kill for Ingram" decals
Wristphone
Multi-Missile "The Molly Quadruplets" Launcher with 4 AVM
Ingram "Sammy II" Smartgun with Gas Vent IV and 4 clips
Ingram "Irene II" Valiant with internal Smartlink, Imp. Gas Vent
IV, Imaging Scope Magnification 2, a belt of 100 rounds, and a
belt of 100 explosive rounds
Ares "Poly" Predator II with internal Smartlink, 2 standard clips, 1
clip of APDS ammo
Cobalt "Connie" 520XM LMG with Imp. Gas IV, Shock Pads, Laser
Sight, and Ultrasound Sight.
Explosives "Gail" (various and lots of them)
Ingram "Diane" Debator SMG with internal Smartlink and Imp.
Gas Vent V
Ingram "Sammy" Smartgun with Imp. Gas Vent IV, Magnification 2,
a belt of 100 rounds, and a belt of 100 explosive rounds
Large Net Gun with internal Smartlink and 3 shots
Ingram "Irene I" Valiant with internal Smartlink, Mag. 2, Gas Vent
IV, belt of 100 rounds, and belt of 100 explosive rounds
MGL "Maggie" 6 Grenade Launcher with internal Smartlink
Ascent/Descent Harness (x 5)
Cigars that cause 6M damage. They fire a single round 30 seconds
after being lit.
Rappelling Gloves
Rope (50 m) (x 5)
Slap Patches (Rating 8 Antidote, Rating 10 Antidote, MAO x 2
Rating 6 Stimulant x 4, Rating 6 Tranq x 6, Rating 10 Tranq,
and Trauma x 4)
Survival Kit (x 5)
Heavy Security Armor
Partial Suit Heavy Armor
Secure Long Coat
Secure Jacket
Security Helmet with Micro-Transceiver
Armored Military Clothing (x 4)
Secure Jacket

Notes: Additional dice from Bioware already figured into Skills.
Jihad has licenses for all Ingram weapons in UCAS.

MAELSTROM

Birthname: William Crow Dog

Aliases: Travels on many passports using many ID's

Sex: Male

Metaspecies/Ethnicity: Amerindian Human (Salish)

Residence: Seattle, UCAS (maintains apartments in LA, CFS, and Erfurt, Thuringia, AGS)

Height: 1.79 m

Weight: 84.2 kg

Eyes: Brown with slight yellow flecks (frequently tinted with coral filters)

Hair: Dark brown (frequently dyed)

Distinguishing Features: Currently sports a Eurostyle goatee and mustache

Birthdate: April 30, 2021

Birthplace: Salish tribal lands west of Seattle

Psychological Profile: Distant, slightly conservative, obsessed.

Known Allergies: None

Lifestyle: High to Luxury

Background: The individual now known as Maelstrom was probably born and spent the early part of his life on the Salish tribal lands around Seattle. His father, a respected member of the tribe, was violently opposed to the corporations and their 'poisons'. According to his father, William's mother was dead--tainted by the corporations' ideas and corrupted by their machinery. The natural exuberance, energy, and life in a child allowed to grow free in a wilderness was drastically altered in 2030.

Ares Macrotechnology came to the village to recruit young boys and girls for their Corporate Growth Program. Most parents were happy for their children to have a chance to get in good with the corporation and those parents who sent their children off were well compensated. Some parents, however, refused the corporate offer. In a fit of childish curiosity inspired by Coyote, William snuck onto the Ares transport without his father's knowledge.

Once at the Ares compound, steel and plastic replaced earth and trees, discipline and structure replaced unrestrained growth and play, and machine supplanted life. William was forged into a highly useful tool by the megacorp. Trained to function in a variety of tasks, he became what is commonly referred to as a Company Man. While under the tutelage of Ares, virtually all of William's natural exuberance for life was suppressed, and as a survival mechanism he became an emotionless zombie. Interestingly though, it appears William was one of the first test subjects for what has become known as tailored pheromones. Reports indicate that these early pheromones are very potent, but they also appear to affect William's own hormone levels, often directing him to engage in vigorous masculine pursuits.

Maelstrom tries to avoid combat whenever possible. When forced to engage in combat actions however, he is focused and efficient. After identifying what he considers the greatest threat, he determines what would be the most effective way to deal with the threat and does so. His current weapon of choice is his Guardian, though he is also fond of using a Remington Roomsweper with stun ammo. He is usually only armed with small arms and so often needs to be creative in his combat tactics. When, he is expecting the possibility of higher threats that would need larger weapons, he will have them nearby. Preferring to attack from a distance, he uses his close combat skills only defensively.

>"Vigorous masculine pursuits" you dog you.

>Crusher

>Emotionless zombie is way off-base, but I can see where that report comes from. I've had the opportunity to work with Maelstrom on a few occasions now. During the job, he is professional to a terrifying degree. The job becomes his life and you can bet that either the job will be completed or he won't survive it. At those times he is rather emotionless. When he's not on a job however, he is quite a charming, feeling individual.

>Tiger Lilly

>Like I said.

>Crusher

Evidence points to the possibility that William, a competent and loyal employee, was intentionally dropped into the shadows by Ares, originally operating under the street name Tempest. Quickly establishing a connection to a small group of shadowrunners, Tempest became a part of the Knight Shift.

As a result of the job Knight Shift did for the Cobalt Corporation, Tempest was forced to develop a new identity. It is at this point that he adopted the name Maelstrom. Content to run the shadows, he continued in this line of work until he was offered a particularly attractive deal by Ares. Out of the shadows and back to the corporate world, Maelstrom left the Knight Shift for a period of approximately two years.

After this period, he disappeared for two months with no known leads as to his activities during this time. When he reappeared, he rejoined the Knight Shift.

His current participation is uncertain though, as he is apparently the CEO of the security firm, StormWatch Security Inc. (SSI), the main security provider for the Gaunt Corporation and other smaller businesses.

Quote: "Don't take this personally, but your life is secondary to the task at hand."

>I hear that the job he took for Ares recently had something to do with the death of Niles Thompson, the former head of magical research at the Azzie San Francisco branch and Karen King's rise to power at Ares.

>Spud

>I'd take all this "history" with a grain of salt as it were. It was "leaked" from an Ares datastore, and while parts of it are easily verifiable, there are others that just don't add up.

>Curious George

Hooks

There are a number of ways that Maelstrom could be incorporated into an adventure. As a wealthy individual in charge of a small corporation, Maelstrom could easily serve as a Mr. Johnson hiring runners to do a run against a competing company or foiling the attempts of someone else plotting against his company. SSI is known on the streets as commonly using "extended security assets" more frequently referred to as shadowrunners. Bad experiences with insect spirits could also lead to Maelstrom hiring runners to make a strike against a remnant of the UB or other bug infested organization.

Maelstrom is also a fully capable gunsmith and could be hired by the runners to modify or create a specific weapon that they are interested in. He particularly enjoys creating weapons that are obvious, yet undetectable (think of secret agent weapons like cigar pistols, exploding belts, etc.). His knowledge of security systems make his designs very likely to defeat most detectors. Most of these devices should be one use, or otherwise limited in some way unless you want your runners going around regularly armed with undetectable weapons (most should be functionally equivalent to hold-out pistols, or possibly light pistols). Maelstrom also serves as an ideal contact for a group that wishes to acquire security equipment.

Maelstrom is constantly pushing himself to grow in knowledge and skill and as such could also serve as backup on a mission where he can practice whatever skill he is trying to improve or that offers new information to expand his knowledge base.

Maelstrom is still hired by various corporations (most often Ares, Cobalt, Gaunt, Saeder-Krupp, and Renraku) to perform solo espionage actions.

Lastly, Aztechnology might decide that Maelstrom was the individual who iced Niles (he did do it, but they have no proof other than rumors) and send a strike team to abduct him for questioning, or simply kill him. The runners could serve as either hunters, protectors, or rescuers in this scenario.

Attributes

Body: 6

Quickness: 6

Strength: 6
Charisma: 3 (7)
Intelligence: 5
Willpower: 6
Essence: 0.05
Reaction: 5 (13)

Skills

Athletics: 4 (5)
B/R: Aircraft: 1 (3)
B/R: Biotech: 1 (3)
B/R: Boats: 1 (3)
B/R: Demolitions: 1 (3)
B/R: Electronics: 3 (5)
B/R: Firearms: 3 (5)
B/R: Ground Vehicles: 1 (3)
B/R: Gunnery: 2 (4)
Biotech: 1 (3)
Car: 7
Computer: 3 (5)
Decking: 6 (8)
Software: 4 (6)
Computer Theory: 2 (7)
Demolitions: 4 (5)
Disguise: 2
Electronics: 2 (4)
Etiquette (Corp): 6 (10)
Etiquette (Org. Crime): 1 (5)
Etiquette (Political): 1 (5)
Etiquette (Street): 2 (6)
Etiquette (Tribal): 2 (6)

Initiative: 5 + 1D6 (13 + 4D6)
Professional Rating: 4
Threat Ratings
Combat: 8
Decking: 4

Firearms: 9 (11)
Gunnery: 2 (3)
History: 1 (4)
Interrogation: 1 (5)
Language:
Sign: 2 (5)
Aztec: 1 (4)
Cityspeak: 3 (6)
Germanic Group: 3 (6)
Japanese: 1 (4)
Salish: 3 (6)
Spanish 2 (5)
Ute: 2 (5)
Leadership: 1 (5)
Military Theory: 1 (6)
Negotiations: 2 (6)
Security Systems Design: 1 (6)
Security Systems: 3 (6)
Stealth: 6 (7)
Unarmed Combat: 5 (6)
Aikido: 7 (8)
Winged Plane: 2
Gliders: 3

Cyberware

Wired Reflexes: 3
Program Carrier
Smartlink I beta
Datajack 1
Math SPU Level 4
Cybereyes with Thermographic Vision, Flare Compensation, Rangefinder, and Electronic magnification 3
Cyberears with Amplification and Damper

Bioware (Body Index 5.2)

Cultured Tailored Pheromones Level 2
Reflex Recorder: Firearms
Enhanced Articulation
Trauma Damper
Nephritic Screen
Orthoskin level 2
Mnemonic Enhancement Level 6
Extended Volume Level 1
Synthcardium Level 2
Tracheal Filter level 2

Gear

Vashon Island Suits
Mortimer Great Coat
Body Armor Level 1
Shoe Escape Kit
Bugscanner (10)
Jammer (6)
White Noise Generator (6)
Ares Viper [flechette ammo, internal smartlink, conc. holster: ankle]
Walther PB120 [silencer, internal smartlink I, conc. holster: back]
Walther Palm pistol [internal smartlink, conc. holster: wrist]
Savalette Guardian [silencer, conc. holster: underarm]
Roomsweeper [stun rounds, sound suppresser, internal smartlink II,

conc. holster: hip]
Earplug phone w/ booster
Modified Sony CTY-360 (MPCP 6, Hardening 3, Memory 100, Storage 2000, Load 20, I/O 20, Response Increase 2, Armored Case 5/3)

programs as needed up to rating 6 (especially smart frames)

Medkit

Trauma Patch
Stim patch (6): 3
Swiss Army Knife
pen-light
Letherman pocket Tool
Pocket Secretary
DocWagon Contract (gold)

Notes

Though an efficient killer, Maelstrom prefers to avoid killing if possible (it is usually unnecessary and needlessly complicates the job). The successful completion of a job, however, always takes precedence over anything else (killing someone or even losing his own life). Stealth and subterfuge are Maelstrom's preferred weapons. His vast range of skills and knowledge open to him options and solutions that are not apparent or possible for most others.

Add other items to Maelstrom's equipment listing as he needs them. He has kits and shops for all his B/R skills and can usually get the facilities if he doesn't have them himself. He also has a number of vehicles of his own, as well as SSI vehicles that he can use. The list represents what he typically has on hand.

Maelstrom often changes his appearance considerably. He employs cosmetic surgery (including full skin grafts) as well as simpler disguise techniques.

Modifiers for cyberware and bioware already figured into attributes and skills. The weapons that he regularly carries are customized (Field of Fire, p. 78) to Maelstrom. This has not been figured into the numbers presented.

WHISP

Birthname: Jonathan Mark Pierce

Aliases: Heat Miser

Sex: Male

Metaspecies/Ethnicity: Caucasian Elf

Residence: Seattle (Bellevue), UCAS; San Francisco, CFS; Tokyo, Japan; Ontario, UCAS; Berlin, German; Other estates and holdings: St. John, Caribbean League, Paris, France; Wheaton (Illinois) UCAS; Sydney, Australia

Distinguishing Features: None

Birthdate: Unknown. Believed to be last century.

Birthplace: Unknown.

Psychological Profile: Arrogant, confident and patient. Disregard for things that cannot be explained in a scientific manner. Anger at the world of magic for not being one of the chosen.

Known Allergies: None

Lifestyle: Luxury

Background: The elven decker known as Whisp knows nothing of his first few years of life. His memories begin at around the age of three with a car crash and the death-filled vacant stare of a youthful, and probably once beautiful, lady. She carried no identification, the car had no registration, and with her death in the crash she passed into complete obscurity. The boy was left completely alone.

His memories faded again after this crash; (later it is confirmed that he spent over fourteen months in a hospital). On a Friday the 13th in October (year unconfirmed), his coma broke.

He can still name every member of every foster family he has ever lived with since that day. Each of their birthdays, each aspect of their appearances, each of their lovers, each child, are all pieces of data to be easily accessed at any time. He, however, is completely unknown to any of them.

At an estimated age of 14 he, Jonathan Mark Pierce, left his last foster home. He left silently with no good-byes and no regrets. With virtually no records to establish his existence, the future decker vanished from the face of the earth.

A couple of years passed in a mixture of faked identities, quick

moves, and rapidly changing appearances, stealing when necessary to survive. He spent his time studying the burgeoning computer industry, fascinated with the rapid spread of integrated circuit technology. Within a year of study, he realized it was becoming more and more difficult to find information he hadn't already read or discovered on his own.

To further his education, the young man under an assumed identity of Jonathan Stevens, he moved to Boca Raton, Florida, where he stayed for the next several years under the tutelage of Lewis Eggebrecht, the chief designer for a fledgling company known as International Business Designs. Lewis unofficially "adopted" Jon Stevens, calling him a child prodigy.

It was from this start that the young man began his entry into the electronic world that would eventually consume him.

Years of youthfulness, gave way to a drastic change in the early years of the 21st century. The Awakewning brought about drastic changes in Jonathan, as he found himself transformed into an elf. A shocking event given his advanced age.

Jonathan Frost Ph.D., as he was now known, spent the next thirty years doing research for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Magic. These were good years, negatively marked only with the increasing metahuman prejudice that accompanied the goblinization of 2011. Still, even that could have been overcome if not for the crash of 2029.

The crash initiated a dangerous depression in Frost. On February 9th, 2029, Jon Frost walked away from MIT&M, never to return. His mind was painted in shadows.

The depression wasn't restricted to the Jonathan however. Global economies had fallen. A worldwide global economic depression had dropped like a dark cover over the planet. With the economic struggles faced globally, the world's population was filled with fear, depression, and hostility.

This hostility manifested in ugly ways. The formation of poli-clubs returned a grave period of a long-dead history. The elf once known as Jonathan Frost found himself disillusioned with the ignorance and intolerance of the non-meta population. Towards the end of the 2039, he vanished once more, this time to find his second passion: the world of shadows.

It was in this world, the shadow world, that Whisp was born.

Quote: "It's a good day to die."

Personality: Whisp is arrogant, and seemingly self-serving. He tries to give the appearance of a calm, happy-go-lucky attitude. The calmness is entirely acted.

Whisp has noticed that his aging has slowed considerably since his transformation over forty years ago. While not sure of the exact reasons for this, he doesn't look a gift horse in the mouth.

Talents/Tactics: Whisp is brilliant corporate in-fighter, with the complete understanding of who to talk to, where to go, and what to do to get things done, whether by negotiation, bribery, blackmail or worse. He searches the matrix flawlessly, to create the necessary background for any endeavor.

Appearance: Whisp stands at 1.9 meters and weighs 72 kilograms. He is thin and has an alabaster complexion. His appearance often changes, but currently his eyes are gray with just a touch of blue, his hair is white with silver highlights, kept long and usually pony-tailed.

He dresses for the occasion, always armored, whether it be street leathers or Armani suits.

In the matrix, Whisp has the appearance of an elf constructed out of sharp angles, similar to a figure folded out of glossy, reflective Origami paper. As he moves, the angles blur and colors abound, shimmering in random patterns like a mirror ball in a dance studio.

As he moves about in the matrix, the electronic world about him shifts into a laser show of lights and mirrors.

>As I was saying, here we was, banging against a maglocked security door, pinned down by automated LMG's, reeling from Neurostun, the corp's chemsuited guards hot on our tail. I was thinking over my last rites chummers. Our mage was just about swimming in his own blood. It looked seriously bad. But just then the maglock popped, and a fluid electronic voice told us not to worry. Next thing

I knew the LMG's were retargeted on our pursuers. The screams of the guards accompanied our hasty exit. We had our "snatch" and I for one was happy we had Whisp running cover in the matrix.

>Lightning Jack

>Yes I know him, and have hired him on more than one occasion. He is arrogant beyond belief, but his methods are professional and he gets the job done. He was worth every nuyen of the one hundred thousand his latest run paid; in retrospect, I received a bargain.

>Laughing Man

>He hired my team once, though at the time I didn't realize it was him. He accompanied us on the run and had us secure him a jack-point in the heart of a mega-corp complex (which for my safety shall remain nameless). Let's just say we were somewhere we shouldn't be. He jacks in and about thirty seconds later all hell breaks loose. I began dancing with bullets, while stitching a few corp guards with my own return fire. Then the corp's magical support arrives. I started to worry, thinking maybe I better pull the plug on the elf. Just about then, I heard a small chuckle and realized that the elf had jacked back out, a sick grin on his face. Suddenly he is right in the heart of it, trading bullet for bullet. Our merc began calling the shots, and this elf obeyed strategic commands like a pro. We pulled out of the corp with no fatalities and the elf paid us a bonus of twenty thousand each. Whatever he found made him real happy. It was a nice change finding a decker who wasn't useless once the dreck starts flyin

>Nightfire

Hooks: Involve him in runs in one of two ways. The first and easiest way is to have him fix or sponsor the run. A lot of Whisp's time is spent stealing current technology to make sure his programs and decks stay with SOTA. In this vein, he often brokers runs to steal technology from R&D facilities within corporations, universities, or private laboratories. Whisp will also participate in the run if necessary.

The second way to involve Whisp is to hire him through a fixer. His skills make him an invaluable part of any run, whether it be for datasteal or matrix cover. He won't take a run just for the sheer challenge however; expect to pay him exorbitantly and provide proper protection, (i.e. razors or mercs to watch his body). His first actions will be to investigate the level of challenge, and if he thinks he is being sent on mission impossible, then he will request additional support.

Once on a run, Whisp will do his best, even at the expense of his personal take on the run to complete his mission objectives in a thorough and professional manner. For the most part, his curiosities will not take him beyond the objectives of the mission. In other words, he will just look for the requested paydata rather than try to skim every bit of dirt out of the infiltrated system. If a random piece of paydata is too good to be true however...

His reputation is crucial. As a result, he will always do everything possible to keep the run professional, leaving no traces that can tie his name or that of his employer(s) to the run. Since his success rate is greater than 95%, he tends to be contacted for more jobs than he can handle. Let him be choosy. If someone is trying to hire him for a bogus run, chances are he will figure it out.

Attributes

Body: 5
Quickness: 6
Strength: 5
Charisma: 4 (6.8)
Intelligence: 6 (10)
Willpower: 6
Essence: 0.70
Reaction: 6 (13)

Skills

Athletics: 3 (5)
Bike: 1
Two-wheeler: 3 (4)
Yamaha Rapier: 5 (6)
Computer: 8 (11)

Computer Theory: 7 (9)
Etiquette (Corp.): 7 (9,11)
Etiquette (Matrix): 6
Etiquette (Street): 5 (7,11)
Firearms: 5 (6)

Initiative: 13 (16)* + 3D6
(+5D6)*

*Applies only in the Matrix.
Professional Rating: 4
Threat Ratings:
Combat: 3
Decking: 8

Bioware
Cerebral Booster 2
Enhanced Articulation
Mnemonic Enhancer 4
Reflex Recorder (Athletics)
Platelet Factory
Tailored Pheromones 2 (Cultured)

Cyberware
Datajack (Level 4, Beta)
Encephalon 4
Headware Memory (100 Mp)
Skillwire Plus (Level 6, Beta)
Skillsofts**
Smartlink (Beta)
Softlink (Level 4, Beta)
SPU (Math, Level 4)
Wired Reflexes (Level 2, Beta)

**You name it, Whisp's got it. Skillsofts range from Rating 3 to Rating 8. Bioware and Cyberware will add additional dice to the Skillsoft Rating.

Gear
Concealable Holster (x2)
Data Codebreaker 10
Dataline Tap 10 (x3)
Electronics Toolkit (Miniaturized)
Laser Microphone 10
Maglock Passkey 10
Medkit
Micro-transceiver
Restraints (Plastic, x2)
Signal Locator 10
Slap Patches (all types)
Tracking Signal 10 (x5)
Ultrasound Goggles
Voice Identifier 10
Deck Case (Level 3)
Forearm Guards
Secure Jacket
Secure Longcoat
Ingram Smartgun w/ Improved GV IV
Monofilament whip (Skillsoft Level 6)
Remington Roomsweper (Smartlink, GV II)
Stun Baton (Skillsoft Level 6)

Deck, Gaunt Stormbringer
12 (13)* MPCP
6 Hardening
1500 Mps Active Memory
1500 Mps Storage
1080 MePs I/O Speed
3 Response Increase
9 Bod
9 Evasion
9 Masking
9 Sensors

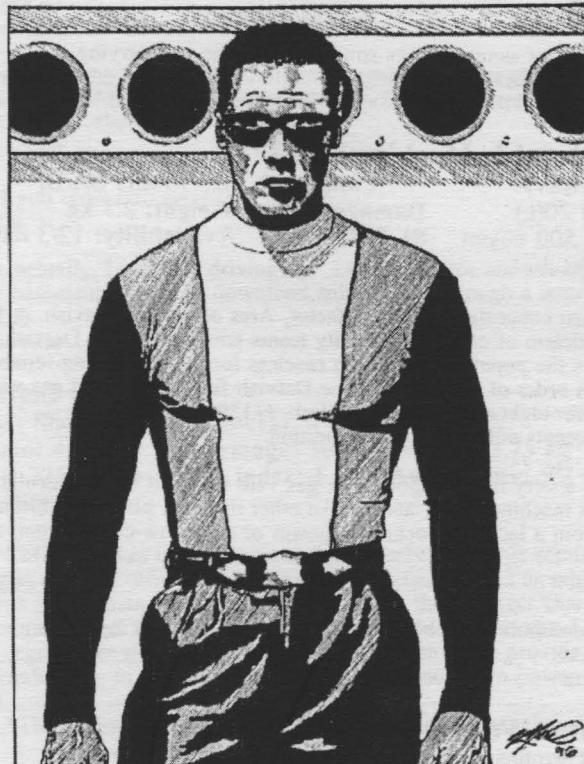
Language: City Speak: 7 (9)
English: 3 (5)
Japanese: 4 (6)
Spanish: 2 (4)
Negotiation: 7 (9,11)
Psychology: 2 (4)
Stealth: 6 (7)
Guitar: 3 (4)
Singing: 4 (6,8)

*Rating of MPCP is 13, however, due to the Reality Filter the effective rating is 12.

Additions
Hitcher Jacks (x6)
Reality Filter
SatLink Interface
Hot ASIST Interface
Vidscreen
ICCM Filter
10K Mps Offline Storage
Programs

A large assortment ranging from Rating 6 to Rating 10, including several one-shots, and programs with varied staging and area of effect.

Notes: Gaunt Enterprises, headed by one of Whisp's alter-egos, Jonathan Markham Gauntt, created the Gaunt Stormbringer to add some additional competition to the cyberdeck market.



The New Tools of Anti-Social Behavior

by Brian Downes

Looking for the newest toys for the up-and-coming Street Samurai? Well look no further. Take a gander at some of these boomsticks, but check your armor at the door. No, don't take it off, check it out to make sure it's fitting properly. You may need it...

Ares MonsterHammer

Type: Ultraheavy Conceal: 3 Mode: SA
Ammo: 9(c) Damage: 13M Weight: 3 kg
Cost: 1,525 nuyen St. Index: 2 Availability: 12/1
week Legality: 4E

In the tradition of the Ares Predator I&II, Ares now brings you the MonsterHammer--the sidearm of choice when one shot drops count! Chambered in a staggering 12.50 mm, the MonsterHammer comes with either an integral smartlink or laser sight, and a built-in gas vent: 1 recoil system.

The Ares MonsterHammer: when your opponent outweighs you by 50 kilos.

*Note: The MonsterHammer suffers from a second-shot recoil penalty of +2.

>I see a lot of sammy punks straight out of the vat carrying MonsterHammers.

>Jackrabbit

Ares Dervish Machine Pistol

Type: Heavy Conceal: 3 Mode: SA/BF
Ammo: 20(c) Damage: 9M Weight: 2.3 kg
Cost: 1,500 nuyen St. Index: 2.5 Availability: 12/3 days
Legality: 4G

When concealability isn't a factor, Ares offers the Dervish. A favorite sidearm of entry and security teams world wide, the Dervish chambers the popular 10 mm in a caseless format, improving reliability by an order of magnitude! The Dervish features integral gas vent: 2 and laser sight or optional smartlink (+150 nuyen).

*Accepts only caseless ammunition.

>This is a very nice weapon. The gas vent makes it very controllable for a machine pistol, and, unlike other machine pistols, it doesn't suffer from a lack of knockdown power or a shallow clip. Thumbs up.

>Jackrabbit

>Too damn bulky and hard to conceal. Why give up my Ingram Smartgun?

>Flashfire

Smith & Wesson .44 Magnum 2054

Type: Ultraheavy Conceal: 3 Mode: SS
Ammo: 6(cy) Damage: 9S Weight: 1.8 kg
Cost: 600 nuyen St. Index: 0.8 Availability: 5/24
hours Legality: 5E

Smith & Wesson revamps an old favorite for the modern era! The .44 Magnum, still with unmatched penetration power in its class, now includes gas vent: 1 ports along the barrel, polymer nonslip combat grips, and nonslip hammer and trigger. Rugged reliability

and power--the Smith & Wesson .44 Magnum.

Note: the .44 Magnum 2054 counts as a shotgun for purposes of detecting the noise.

>Just the thing to punch straight through the fragger.
>Slaughterhouse Five

>A little hyperactive in the sidearm department, it does make a nice trunk gun--especially if you think you might need to go anti-vehicular in a pinch.

>Crosby

Colt Centurion

Type: Heavy Conceal: 4 Mode: SA
Ammo: 12(c) Damage: 10M Weight: 1.45 kg
Cost: 550 nuyen St. Index: 0.75 Availability: 5/24
hours Legality: 5E

Colt is proud to bring you this big brother to the massively successful Colt Manhunter. The Centurion features the same integral laser sight, but chambers the heavier 11.25mm!

>The classic more bullets vs. bigger bullets debate....
>Jackrabbit

>Better to have to shoot any target once. Saves time, and in our line of work every millisecond counts.
>Flashfire

Fichetti Arms Spider

Type: Light Conceal: 6 Mode: SS
Ammo: 6(cy) Damage: 6M Weight: .9 kg
Cost: 350 nuyen St. Index: 1.2 Availability: 5/2 days
Legality: 4E

Designed to fire exclusively flechette ammunition, this revolver from Fichetti is the ideal backup gun on the street or in the boardroom! Utilizing Fichetti's patented Speed Cylinders, the Spider cuts reload time down to almost none!

*The Fichetti Spider uses removable cylinders that may be loaded in advance and exchanged at the speed of a clip--the difference being that smartlinked Spiders may not eject empty cylinders as a free action.

>Oh boy. Flechette ammunition. I'll take my Spider to the nudist colony.

>Flashfire

Fichetti Arms Basilisk

Type: Heavy* Conceal: 6 Mode: SS
Ammo: 5 (cy) Damage: 9M Weight: .65 kg
Cost: 450 nuyen St. Index: 0.8 Availability: 4/2 days
Legality: 4E

When your weapon needs to be small but your need for fire-power isn't, Fichetti Arms offers the Basilisk! When combined with explosive or armor piercing ammo in a law enforcement or military capacity, the Basilisk offers the takedown rate of a much larger weapon on an unbelievably small frame!

*The Basilisk is a heavy pistol but uses light pistol ranges.

>Finally! A belly gun that's worth a damn! I'd prefer a semiauto-

matic, though. . .

>Slaughterhouse Five

Ingram Saracen

Type: SMG	Conceal: 3	Mode: SA/BF/FA
Ammo: 25/25(c)	Damage: 6M	Weight: 2.5 kg
Cost: 2,200 nuyen	St. Index: 3	Availability: 7/4 days
Legality: 3G		

The Ingram Saracen is an SMG for all seasons! Featuring a patented dual-clip system, the Saracen switches from either clip A, housed in the grip, to clip B, which projects from the right side of the weapon, with the flip of a switch! Never try to chew through a door with armor piercing ammo again, or be forced to engage heavily armored opponents with tracers! Mix and match your ammunition to best suit your tactical needs!

The Saracen also features an integral laser sight.

>This one has too many moving parts. If you absolutely must carry two types of ammunition, just carry an extra clip.

>Matador

Griswold Gravedigger

Type: Shotgun	Conceal: NA	Mode: SA/BF
Ammo: 20(c)	Damage: 8S	Weight: 4 kg
Cost: 1200 nuyen	St. Index: 4	Availability: 14/2 weeks
Legality: 3G		

From Griswold Arms of South Africa comes the Gravedigger, the premiere roombroom! The Gravedigger is literally two assault shotguns mounted coaxially, but activated by a single trigger! One chamber ejects spent casings to the left, one to the right.

*The Gravedigger has an SA recoil modifier of +3, and a BF recoil modifier of +6 on the first burst, +12 on the second. SA fire is treated as a short burst, burst fire as a burst of six for purposes of calculating the damage and ammunition consumption. To represent the Gravedigger's increased mechanical complexity, it jams if all the to-hit dice come up ones and/or twos. The Gravedigger does not accept underbarrel or barrel-mounted accessories.

When walking the fire, two rounds are automatically fired into each meter intervening between targets. If walking burst fire from A to B across a one meter gap, A would take 9S (two rounds), two rounds would be fired into the gap, and B would take 9S.

>Blamblamblamblamblamblam!

>Senorita Arma

>Thy Kingdom Come.

>Slaughterhouse Five

>Oh, please. . .

>Snow Crash

Griswold Wombat

Type: AR/Shotgun	Conceal: NA	Mode: BF/FA/SA
Ammo: 25(c)/5(m)	Damage: 7M/8S	Weight: 2.8 kg
Cost: 975 nuyen	St. Index: 2	Availability: 6/4 days
Legality: 3G		

Another entry from Griswold Arms, the Wombat features a modified mode switch that allows the user to change over from the 5.56 assault rifle to the underbarrel shotgun, depending on his tactical needs! The Wombat is perfect for shoot/no shoot environments, allowing the soldier to pack lethal ordinance above and nonlethal gel rounds below! The assault rifle features integral gas vent: 1 and a Mag 1 imaging scope.

*Changing weapons on the Wombat requires a Change Fire Mode action. The Wombat does not accept underbarrel accessories.

>When I first saw this weapon, which borrows heavily from the Colt M22A2, I thought it was cute but no superior to any other AR. Turns out that the underbarrel shotgun, loaded with shot or explosive slugs, is real handy for opening doors in a hurry.

>Jackrabbit

SKS Mk. VII Carbine

Type: Carbine	Conceal: 2	Mode: SA
Ammo: 25(c)	Damage: 7S	Weight: 2.5 kg
Cost: 650 nuyen	St. Index: 0.6	Availability: 4/2 days
Legality: 6F		

The latest weapon in the venerable SKS series, the Mk. VII is a reliable semiautomatic carbine with integral folding stock, offering 1 point of recoil reduction. A hard-hitting, affordable weapon.

*Does not accept under barrel accessories. Uses SMG range table.

>I see these damn things everywhere on the streets. . .

>Jackrabbit (03:21:36/02-06-57)

>Streets, hell! That there is the Georgia state bird.

>The Devil in Georgia

Muller P-410

Type: Shotgun	Conceal: 3	Mode: SS
Ammo: 6 (cy)	Damage: 9M	Weight: 1.13 kg
Cost: 525 nuyen	St. Index: 1.2	Availability: 7/1 week
Legality: 4E		

A small-bore shotgun pistol. Imported from Germany.

>That's it?

>Room-a-Zoom-Boom

>Hurray for the Ugly Little Shotgun category. I saw a chipdealer waving one of these oversized revolvers around on a street corner in Oakland the other day.

>Manowar

>Did you blow him away??

>Gabe

>No, actually, I was just driving by. Do me a favor and never leave your basement. You can download splattersims through a matrix hookup.

>Manowar

Enfield Enforcer

Type: Shotgun	Conceal: 4	Mode: SA
Ammo: 4(m)	Damage: 10S	Weight: 2.75 kg
Cost: 725 nuyen	St. Index: 1	Availability: 5/2 days
Legality: 4F		

Enfield shakes up the home defense market with this semiauto shotgun. Specifically designed to give the unaugmented an edge against metahuman and augmented assailants, the Enforcer chambers the largest round feasible for its frame and includes gas vent: 1 and an integral laser sight. The short barrel and pistol grip provide terrific handability in confined spaces, with the knockdown power you need!

*The Enforcer suffers from a second shot recoil penalty of +2.

>Small, light, brutal. Making a home for itself on the gangbanger scene next to the T-250.

>Crosby

>Crosby, you own two.

>Flashfire

>Hey, I didn't say I didn't like it. (Looks good in my trunk with my .44 Magnum <grin>.)
>Crosby

Firestar Tactical Assault Weapon

Type: Cannon	Conceal: NA	Mode: SA/BF
Ammo: 20(c)	Damage: 14D	Weight: 10 kg
Cost: 6,600 nuyen days	St. Index: 4	Availability: 16/20

Firestar Munitions Inc. turns the squad support market on its ear with the Firestar TAW! When a machine gun is too imprecise and an assault cannon too bulky, fireteams everywhere turn to the TAW. Effective against both hard and soft targets, the TAW comes with integral shock pads (1 point recoil reduction), laser sight and magnification 3.

*Takes cannon ammunition. Does not accept barrel accessories. Uses heavy weapon recoil rules.

>An HMG will fill the same role with significantly reduced ammo costs.

>Jackrabbit

>This one is a real camel, but I like it. The problem with most cannons is that they don't cycle fast enough to engage personnel. The Firestar has got a high enough rollover rate to do that. Kicks like a cast iron mule, though.

>Flashfire

>How about sneaking in instead?

>Crosby

BOOM!

BOOM!

BOOM!

Nothing Business, Just Personal, from page 45

Stumbling out of the sewer onto the beach, I could hear the whine of the Air Force's Eagles fading into the distance, while the drone of helicopters rose slowly in volume to take their place. Apparently finished "softening up" the target, the Eagles had taken out Riptide's antiair defenses, so the ground-pounders could rappel in and take the island.

Searching for my duffel bag in the underbrush, I came upon a misshapen package hidden in the bushes. What luck! It looked like I had stumbled upon one of the leftover Zodiac rafts left behind from my last mission here. What an amazing coincidence it was near to where I had tossed my duffel bag.

Dragging the package onto the beach, I punched the red inflator button, which punctured a cartridge of compressed nitrogen inside, as the air escaped to inflate the raft. Pushing the rubber raft into the water, I fired up the miniature motor on the stern and steered the Zodiac out towards the Sound. While the raft was running, I withdrew a total-body flotation lifesuit from one of the compartments. Submarine crewmen used to use these emergency suits to escape from a scuttled sub, as they were warm enough to keep the sailor alive as he floated with the waves, waiting for help to home in on the radio beacon attached to the suit.

Eventually the Zodiac's motor would run out of fuel. When it did so, I would sink the raft and float on the waves for a bit, while the zoomies had fun taking McNeil Island apart. Once the coast was clear, I could then activate my head radio to signal Angelfire to come pick me up.

Sitting on the steps of the trailer, I basked in the warmth of the setting sun as it sank over the valley overlooking Tenino. I sipped from a mug of soycaf, holding the cup in my left hand. It would be several weeks before the cast would come off the other one; fortunately, rigging doesn't use the hands much, and I can shoot just as well with my left anyway.

Hearing the tap-tapping sound of a cane against the trailer walls, I saw Jerry coming around one corner. Taking his hand, I guided him to the chair sitting next to the steps. "So how much longer are you going to mooch on my hospitality, Josie?" the blind Indian asked.

"It's only been two weeks before the Air Force raided McNeil Island," I replied between sips. "I say give the intel boys another week to pin all the blame on Holt and call it quits."

"Well, they may forget about it sooner than that," Jerry replied as he gazed straight at the sun. "One of their spy planes crashed outside of Bremerton. The Salish have stepped up their air patrols, and the diplomatic scene is a little cagey. Hope you ain't making more runs out to the ocean in the near future."

"No, I don't think I will for a while." I gazed northwards towards the Sound. "Did the Air Force ever find Riptide?"

Jerry shook his head. "After they found all the data Holt ripped off from them, they lost interest in searching the rest of McNeil Island. But there was no way he could have gotten off before they raided the island. You were lucky your wetsuit hid you from the zoomies' thermal sensors."

I shook my head. "Yeah, but still, I'd breathe a whole lot easier if they had found a body."

Jerry rapped his cane against my leg. "IF he had somehow managed to elude the patrols, the only way he could have gotten off the island was to swim off, since the Air Force never found a second boat."

"Whatever you say," I smiled back.

"One other thing, TacFire called earlier this afternoon. Did you make a contract to do a run for Fuchi in Vancouver?"

"Maybe, what's it to him?"

"Well, he's a little slotted at you not closing the loop and cutting him out of the deal."

"It was an opportunity shot. I may be staying out of the Sprawl for a while, but that doesn't mean I'm gonna be unemployed," I smiled. "Tell him, 'Nothing personal, chummer, it's just business.'"

Gotcha!

Hit Location Rules for Shadowrun

by Ben Zitterkopf & Jason Shockley

In the world of Shadowrun, combat situations will make or break the best of teams. Woe betide any over-confident team who shove their proverbial sticks into a hornets' nest and get the snot kicked out of them. But what can a GM do when the player characters routinely clean house in battle? How do you cope with characters who are combat munchkins?

The natural response would be to up the opposition, but it becomes difficult to believe that every attacker a player character fights is going to be packing APDS or military grade hardware. More often than not, the players wear armor that shrugs off standard assault rifle bursts. Combat firefights do little more to annoy the player characters more often than not.

As it stands, we have seen few combat situations last longer than one initiative turn (3-5 seconds game time). When the PCs are moving with average initiatives anywhere between 19 and 29, there won't be much opposition moving unless you're fighting a mob of twenty or more. But it seems unlikely that anyone would be able to draw and fire a gun, even allowing for wired reflexes, and routinely kill an opponent every time they pull the trigger. Even if it is just an RPG, that can be rather hard to fathom. The best way of putting it would be that the characters are firing from the hip--snapping off shots in a general direction. If it wasn't for smartlinks, you'd be lucky to hit anything to all.

So after a little research and construction, we came up with a hit location table.

There are other reasons for a hit table besides the speed factor. Hit locations suddenly drive home the geas from spell-casting. If a spellcaster uses a style of gesturing or dancing, but he's been hit in the arm or leg, he couldn't make the incantation. But unless the opponents specifically call the shots to those locations, the GM can't arbitrarily say "you've been shot in the wrist; no you can't cast it."

Also, the table will make descriptions of battle more engrossing (in more ways than one). More often than not, a GM will tire of thinking of new ways to describe how the bullet dispatches its victim, so he might mumble something along the lines of "he's Elvis."

With the hit table, each shot takes on a life of its own, and if enough successes are rolled, they take a life for their own. So, if you're willing to do a little more bookkeeping than normal, and if you want to turn those gunfights into adventures in their own right, consider using the following rules. They have been worked on to streamline whenever possible, without sacrificing detail.

Introduction

The following rules are proposals for hit locations tables and damage for Shadowrun. It assumes that a shot fired at a man was intended to hit somewhere between the throat and the knees.

This table should only be used for ranged combat (e.g. guns, bows and arrows). Any damage taken from means other than ranged combat will be recorded as per normal rules.

General Rules

When determining the location of the hit, role two different colored dice. The first is the 'tens' dice, while the second is the 'ones.' If the first came up a '2' and the second came up a '6,' the result would be a 26.

Taking the result, consult the hit chart and determine from the chart where the bullet impacted. Depending now upon where the bullet hit, resist the damage, as per normal rules. If any armor covers the location in question, the player will be allowed the use the maximum allowable armor rating for resisting. The maximum allowable armor rating is the combination of all pieces of armor which could conceivably cover that part of the body. Generally, parts of body unprotected will be the head, hands, and everything from the knees down to the feet.

Damage Rules

Continue to use the condition monitor given with character sheets. When resolving ranged combat, the physical condition monitor refers only to hits to the torso. Notekeeping will have to be conducted to keep track of hits to other portions of the body. (think of them as additional condition monitors) In the interests of playability, ignore the penalty modifiers to target numbers listed in the original condition monitor, using those listed below instead.

When determining effects of damage to the arms or legs, consider the leg or arm in question to be one complete entity. If two hits have caused damage to different portions of the same arm, and that combined damage is Deadly or more, then the arm is useless without medical attention. If two hits have been inflicted on the same leg which cause a deadly wound or more, then it can't be used to support the PC. Rolls must be made for each limb that takes a deadly wound to determine if the limb in question is lost.

Hits taken to a limb that do not cause deadly damage will incur standard penalties. For example, if a character is hit in the elbow of one arm, yet they wish to use the same arm to continue shooting, they suffer either a +1, +2, or +3 to their target numbers, depending on the damage incurred. Hits to a leg, will reduce the target's quickness (for the purposes of moving) by the same increments, as well as causing target modifiers to athletic related tests, depending on the level of damage.

If GMs are feeling particularly mean, they should use the Cyberware damage rules. Use the standard rules as given in the Shadowrun sourcebooks with one twist--the cyberware that takes damage should be located in the region of the body which was hit by the ranged attack. So, if a PC is hit by a deerslug in the forearm, any cyberware that might be located in that region is subject to the chance of being damaged (random selection).

At the GM's discretion, hits to the head, groin, or knee can invoke target number penalties in addition to those already suffered. The additional penalties reflects the increased difficulty in concentrating from all of the pain of these sensi-

tive areas.

When a character takes a hit to the head and already has taken damage to the head, all damage must be resisted. Any overdamage to the head generates an instant kill.

Special Rules

For the sake of clarification, characters must declare which hand their smartlinks are mounted in. Treat shoulders as part of a respective arm, even though the PC may have more armor covering that portion of the body than they do covering the arm.

Weapons which have adjustable chokes and are firing scatter rounds use normal rules and waive those rules listed in this article.

Using the full auto mode on a weapon is a little different. Count up the number of bullets that are being fired at a single target. Divide this value by three (rounding down all fractions). The result is the number of bursts which are to be rolled on the hit table for impact location. However, the power of each of these bursts is equal to the total number of bullets which were fired at that target. Players may not treat solitary bullets as one 'burst,' nor may they resolve bullet locations on an individual basis (e.g. rolling for a location for each bullet in a 10 bullet lead hose).

If suppression fire is used (*Fields of Fire*, p. 78), resolve as normal, but role for the location of each hit for each bullet. If a result calls for a hit to a portion of the body which is not exposed due to the target crouching behind cover, first determine if the bullet would penetrate the cover, then resolve the damage as normal.

Ranged combat against manifested magical creatures reverts to standard rules. Against non-humanoid targets, the GM will have to modify the results of the table, but should otherwise be able to use it without hitches.

Magical healing is resolved in the same manner as before, but with some differences. Rather than forcing characters to make separate rolls for each body part, each success from magical healing will heal up one box of damage from each damaged portion of the body. This reflects the magic flowing through the body.

Healing conducted outside of magic also requires only one roll. However, characters must make separate roles to determine if any limb which had max damage was lost.

Conclusion

Any time a situation arises when the hit table rules simply don't seem to be able to work, revert to standard rules.

Body Hit Location Table (2D6)

Roll	Result	Roll	Result
11	Head	41	Right Shin
12	Rt. Hand	42	Groin
13	Right Shoulder	43	Chest
14	Right Shin	44	Left Thigh
15	Stomach	45	Left Thigh
16	Spine	46	Left Shoulder
21	Left Hand	51	Heart
22	Left Forearm	52	Chest
23	Right Thigh	53	Stomach
24	Stomach	54	Left Kneecap
25	Chest	55	Right Forearm
26	Spine	56	Right Foot
31	Right Shoulder	61	Heart
32	Right Kneecap	62	Stomach
33	Right Thigh	63	Left Shin
34	Chest	64	Left Shoulder
35	Groin	65	Left Foot
36	Left Shin	66	Head

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Nature's Shadows

by Anonymous

The following article describes a new angle for players to take when making spellslingers. While Shadowrun concentrates primarily on animal-based totems, the other portion of nature, that of the plant world, is often ignored. Plant shamans do indeed exist, and even more so than their animal cousins, have taken up the nature-saving movement.

Following is a description of how these "plant-shamans" known as Drads, work, and several totems for use in the game. For simplicity sake the term enviro-runners will be used when dealing with Drads and Dradic adepts, environmental scientists, physical adepts of the Dradic peoples sworn to protect the environment.

Motivations

It must be remembered when dealing with enviro-runners that these people feel far more protective about the environment as a whole than regular persons. They hate those who threaten the ecosystem of the Sixth World. This hatred motivates them to actively campaign against those elements of society which are destroying the ecosystem. These campaigns are usually political and can extend into economic boycotts, including prohibition of specific company's goods and services on their lands. However, if the severity of the pollution warrants it, enviro-runners are also capable of covert actions against the offending company or person. The extent of these covert actions depends on the individual or organization conducting them. A brief synopsis of a few of the more powerful organizations is included later in this article.

The gamemaster and players should be aware that the opposing factions in this struggle are not the same as one might imagine looking forward from the late twentieth century. Everyone, even Greenwar, recognizes the fact that not all corporations are out there dumping tons of deadly goop into the local water supply or developing toxins which will defoliate the planet.

Despite the horribly weakened state of U. S. government regulations during the beginning of the twenty-first century, the vast majority of corporations are ecologically responsible by 2050 (especially when compared with their counterparts in the 1980s and 1990s). Most companies involved in harvesting trees, for instance, have become far sighted ecologists themselves. Native peoples often have approached these companies to look upon their "tree herds" as their ancestors once looked upon the buffalo.

The days of a company pollution policy based on endless raping the Earth of its resources without fear of reprisals or repercussion are decades gone. Most execs finally realize that no matter how much nuyen they have, they still must live in the same world as the toxic waste they create. Therefore company policy is usually to safely discard or process toxic waste for their own sake, as well as that of their customers.

Unfortunately, the days of personal ambition and recklessness have not passed away so easily. Trouble does not normally arise from a corporate or government policy on waste and pollution, but with an individual who starts cutting corners to advance himself, often at the expense of the world around him. This is the basis of the Shadowrun adventure, *MERCURIAL*, and it is a great example of the domino effect that brings different elements into conflict. Too often one of these ladder-climbers does something that is not company policy (like burying toxic waste in an illegal, population threatening manner) to help advance his career. By the time a company discovers an environmentally threatening occurrence by one of their own branches they either may be looking at a hefty fine from the local government, be faced with a major public relations catastrophe, or be unable to reverse the damage done. Thus, they resort to cover-up tactics hoping

the fiasco will not be laid at their feet. While this action may be despicable, it cannot often be said that corporate policy initiated the pollution. Of course, this hardly matters to environmentalists who desire that someone or some organization be held responsible for the sake of justice, reparations, and as a warning for anyone else thinking about dangerously polluting.

Therefore punitive or proof-finding runs are usually aimed at a specific segment or executive in the corporate or governmental structure, not at a massive organizational entity in general (the exception to this being Greenwar, which always targets corporations as a single entity). Of course, these organizational entities take a dim view towards anyone decking into their files or making them look bad in the public eye, no matter the cause, so they feel retaliatory measures may be appropriate. Thus the conflict escalates from an ecological issue into an economic/public relations war so the organization can save face and let others know they are not to be messed with, no matter the reason.

Enviro-runner Aims

Enviro-runners exist to conduct operations against individuals and organizations that endanger the ecosystem. The most successful operations:

"Surgical Strikes." Taking out only the offending site, program, individual, or product.

Are not only punitive, but also acquire proof which can be secretly used to force the company into acquiescence WITHOUT being publicly humiliated or weakened (unless absolutely necessary).

Are carried out in the utmost secrecy. The exception to this are operations against "entrenched" corporations or governments that deny any wrongdoing and are not solving the problems. Then the enviro-runners wish to gather facts and bring it to the public attention. Allow the company or government a way to change their policy and publicly look like the good guy while doing it...

"We admit to the fact that our Redmond Barrens Facility has been violating the pollution laws, without the consent of upper management. We are now in the process of removing the waste and have replaced the management at the site. No, the executives who were in charge are not available for comment. We want to remind the media and the public that it was our own...uh, operatives... who discovered the violations and we immediately moved to rectify the situation as we were notifying the proper authorities. Remember, one rotten soyball doesn't spoil the entire case if it is caught in time. And we assure you that as a result of this matter, we here at DonicTech are stepping up our own internal inspections to make sure all disposal methods, etc., etc., etc."

Never, ever, worsen the pollution situation as a result of the run. If this results it may shift the blame onto the enviro-runners instead ("Terrorists blew up a harmless chemical factory last night, creating an unprecedented new lethal chemical which is spilling into the Barrens"). Or it may force the corporation or government into a full blown cover-up, including eliminating the enviro-runners at any cost. This will force the enviro-runners or supporting organization to start defending themselves (probably through another, more dangerous run), instead of concentrating efforts on the violators themselves.

Relations

Toxic Shaman. (p. 100, GRII) Drads and enviro-runners take a much darker view towards Toxic Shamans than do other shamanic folk. They prefer not to deal with an Avenger unless it is absolutely necessary. Though Avengers are also anti-pollution in intent, they are far too soulless in their activities for most environmentalists. They

are considered fanatical, even by the fringe group Greenwar. Only when dealing with the vilest and most determined of polluters will cooperation with an Avenger be considered. Even though their intents may be similar, Avengers are still using toxins towards their ends, a fact that cannot be overlooked by most enviro-runners.

Toxic Poisoners are considered the ultimate enemy. When not keeping an eye on corporate or governmental polluters, enviro-runners are seeking out and destroying Toxic Poisoners. A corporation run by a Toxic Poisoner definitely zooms to the top of any enviro-runner's "must do" list.

Insect Shaman. (p. 101, GRII) The relationship between Drads and insect shaman has always been a contentious one. In the natural world, insects both help and destroy plants. Drads see insect Spirits as being too powerful for the health of botanical life on Earth and an affront to the natural balance of things. Therefore, Drads and associated enviro-runners have been in the forefront of those trying to destroy insect shaman and their Spirits.

Druids. (p. 28, GRII) Most Celtic druids are treated by enviro-runners as kinsman, as they are closer to Dradic interests than normal shaman. The exception is a Celtic Shaman with a totem of Oak, who is considered to be an Oak Drad for all intents and purposes.

Drad, The Plant Shaman

With the emergence of shamanism and (meta)humankind's heightened awareness of the environment, specific tribes and shamans have sprung up which focus mainly on botanical life. These plant shamans, called Drads, are nearly identical to their animal-focused brethren. Their respect for life and nature is the same, as is most of their way of life. Drads differ in that they find the focal point of their power through the gentle swaying of the willow, the strength of the mighty oak, or the amazing persistence of the common weed.

Other differences between Drads and animal-based shaman or druids are found in their totems.

Totems

A Drad's ideal which she strives for is represented by a plant totem instead of an animal or a force of nature. Drads use their totems as normal shaman do (p. 120-122, SRII). Some typical examples exist below.

Cactus

Characteristics: Cactus is a loner, uncommunicative, with a prickly nature. He prefers to live where others will not or cannot and is proud of his ability to survive. But those who can tolerate being close to him know that he protects the small and defenseless who come to him for shelter from predators. Therefore, his spines and needles can be used for defense or offense. And they may have seen his beautiful flowers, which he seldom shows, and so know of his inner beauty.

Favored Environments: Desolate areas, wastelands (either in the wild or urban sprawls), such as huge, abandoned parking lots. Even the vast, expansive roof of an abandoned mega-factory or warehouse.

Advantages: +2 dice for combat spells (no fire or acid spells allowed); +2 dice to Magic Pool when dealing with metaplants that have spines or needles (non-cumulative with aforementioned combat spell bonus); +2 dice for conjuring desert or city-wasteland spirits.

Disadvantages: Cactus is contrary in most things, the ultimate non-team player. He has a +2 penalty Target Number modifier in all of his Negotiations and Etiquette Skill Tests. He will grumble and complain constantly, much to other characters' disgust, and may be so contrary as to not assist a team member unless specifically requested. But if an NPC is apparently weak and defenseless, like a squatter child, and seeks his aid, he will never ignore them. If danger exists in providing this help and Cactus does not wish to become involved, he must make a Willpower 8 Test vs. the pleading character's Etiquette Skill Test. The most successes wins, but even if Cactus has more successes and turns down the dangerous request, it will still be a sore point that he did not aid the helpless.

Grass

Characteristics: Grass grows everywhere, persistently fighting against all odds to push up through every nook and cranny available. She is optimistic and always pushing towards the sun (her favorite druid, by the way). Grass has no preferential location, and takes up very little room. She lives in harmony with almost every other type of plant and animal, even those who graze on her. For Grass knows that they will then deposit rich manure which helps her grow elsewhere. Grass is content to be... grass!

Favored Environments: Any

Advantages: +2 dice for plant spells; +2 dice for conjuring city-park, field, or prairie spirits.

Disadvantages: Grass Drads are perky, bouncy, and annoyingly happy at all times and in all seasons... as long as they are above-ground. Grass is extremely uncomfortable being underground, to the point where Grass Drads add a +1 penalty modifier to all Target Numbers when they are underground (even in a well-lit basement). Grass is not wild about fighting (or mowed-over), preferring for everyone to get along instead.

Hedgerow

Characteristics: Hedgerow is an example of a Bush totem. Hedgerow is actually a cluster totem, that is, a totem comprised of many plants (like a hedgerow) rather than just one image (like a single oak). Hedgerow is cantankerously stubborn, refusing to allow anyone to pass through it. Instead it forces people to go around it, or boxes them into a location. He can resist an amazing amount of force and has his roots deeply and widely spread.

Favored Environment: Urban- parks, estates, corporate landscapes, anywhere a hedge might be tended. Wild-roadsides, windbreaks, field edges, stream banks, and so on.

Advantages: +2 dice to manipulation spells; +2 dice for conjuring city spirit (Urban) or land spirits (Wild).

Disadvantages: Hedgerow Drads like to have their way and can be dangerously stubborn once a plan is laid down. Once a run is underway a Hedgerow Drad must make a Willpower 5 Test to waiver from the established plan. He does not like going on a run without a plan and absolutely refuses to "play it by ear". The Hedgerow Drad vastly prefers ambush to any other type of conflict. "Box 'em in, and mow 'em down" is the extent of his diplomatic skills, unless he's the one facing the mower.

Ivy

Characteristics: Ivy is Vine's pretty sister. Her tendrils are more manipulative than Vine's, and so she can climb up buildings and cling to brickwork, presenting her lovely green facade and hiding the weathered, cracked stone underneath. Unfortunately Ivy is a "climber" in more ways than one, always wanting to be higher than other plants and hiding little "goodies" beneath her foliage.

Favored Environments: Urban- older, brick buildings and walls she can easily climb. Wild- normal woodlands where she can climb trees.

Advantages: +2 dice for all illusion and manipulation spells; +2 dice for city- corporate site spirits; -1 bonus modifier to all Target Numbers for Tests utilizing meta, or Awakened vines.

Disadvantages: Ivy Drads tend to be like Ivy herself, social climbers who wish to elevate themselves above the crowd. This is one of the reasons they run, to gain more money for their social soirees. At least 20% of all nuyen earned by an Ivy Drad must go to high lifestyle. Attending benefits, concerts, and other elitist functions is how Ivy spends her free time. If the character misses two straight months

of these affairs (because of adventuring, hospitalization, and so forth) she begins to lose her self-confidence. When this happens she must make a Willpower 5 test every day to retain her advantages. Attendance of a public "hoity-toity" function, especially one environmentally related, will immediately recover her confidence and her advantages.

Oak

Characteristics: Oak is the father of trees, strong, patient, and noble. He protects others, shielding smaller plants from the harsh elements. Strong shields, buildings, and ships are made from this beautiful wood.

Favored Environments: Urban- structures built from its timbers, well kept stands of trees in parks or estates. Wild- deep forests, sacred groves.

Advantages: +2 dice for health spells; +2 dice to conjure forest spirits and Spirits of Man in any structure constructed partly or wholly of Oak.

Disadvantages: Since Oak is strong, so must be its Drad. A minimum final rating of 4 must be assigned to his or her Body and Strength Attributes during character creation. Oak is patient and does not rush into things without thorough consideration. He will steadfastly defend anyone he has sworn to protect, even to the point of his own destruction.

Rose

Characteristics: Rose is the most beautiful plant in the floral kingdom. At least that is what most people, and she, believes. Her rich colors, beautiful texture, and enticing fragrance are enhanced, rather than diminished, by her thorny stem. She sees herself as the undisputed queen of all plants. Its a pity her reign is so brief and the blush on her petals fades so quickly.

Favored Environments: Urban- pampered flower beds, greenhouses, gardens. Wild- an idyllic dale or glen in a forest.

Advantages: +2 dice for all combat spells; +2 dice to the Drad's Magic Pool when dealing with any metaplant that uses visual or olfactory stimulus or lures, or uses thorns.

Disadvantages: Rose is floral vanity personified, and so must her Drads be, whether male or female. The final Charisma rating after character generation must be a minimum of 5. It is no wonder, then, that so many Rose Drads are elves. Rose's biggest fear is that something will mar her beauty. Any dealings with acid, fire, or Toxic Shamans or Spirits will send her cowering in fear unless a Willpower 4 Test be made (for each turn she faces these perils). She must also spend at least 10% of her income on pampering treatments to help her stay beautiful and unblemished.

A scarred Rose Drad (one whose Charisma drops to 2 or below) is a terrifying thing to behold, for her anger and hatred for that which deformed her is unceasing and all-consuming. Her advantages increase to +3 dice for all combat spells vs. this hated enemy and she will relentlessly pursue runs to pay for a cyber-skin job to replenish her beauty (even a chrome job).

Spice (use specific name)

Characteristics: Spice is the group name for any particular herb or spice totem. The totem would be listed as Basil, Oregano, Pepper, and so on. The characteristic would be the exotic nature of the land from where the spice or herb comes from and how the spice or herb affects one. An example might be Curry, an exotic East Indian nature with a spicy wit and a lively fashion sense. Or Chili (pepper), a fiery South or Central American spitfire with a hair trigger temper and unquenchable lust for life.

Favored Environment: It would depend on the spice, pick one whose temperament would match the taste, such as Sugar liking sunny fields or Chili loving hot, arid areas.

Advantages: -2 bonus modifier to all Target Numbers in any tests dealing with spices and herbs, even meta-varieties; +2 dice for illusion spells; +2 dice for conjuring hearth spirits.

Disadvantages: Depends on the Spice, e.g., a typical disadvantage for a "hotter" spice is a short temper and impatience (Willpower 5 Test to NOT lose his temper in bars, meetings, or at the slightest provocation). A disadvantage for one of the subtler spices might be the inability to attack or deal with a problem head on if ANY deceitful route presented itself (again, a Willpower 5 Test to force oneself into the head on action). All spices are -1 dice for Detection spells.

Venus Flytrap

Characteristics: Venus Flytrap is an example of a rare and exotic totem, probably used by either the very rich or a foreigner from some far-off land. Flytrap is the ultimate in patience, waiting for her prey to land on her obviously harmless petals. She can stay set for a long, long time, but when she detects his presence, SNAP, the trap is closed and he has no way out. She is a planner who knows what she wants and will wait until it comes along.

Favorite Environment: Urban- hothouses or other sheltered, humid places. Wild- rainforests or other tropical areas.

Advantages: +2 dice to detection and illusion spells; -2 bonus modifier to all Target Numbers for any Stealth or Quickness Tests.

Disadvantages: -1 dice for combat and health skills. Venus will only act when she feels the time is absolutely right. This sometimes will make her overly cautious. If the gamemaster feels that the situation does not obviously warrant her interference or action, then he should make her perform a Willpower 4 Test, otherwise she will just sit there and study the situation.

Vine

Characteristics: Vine is Ivy's no-nonsense big brother. He is the common man among the plants, the everyday Joe who is happy with his lot in life. He has none of Ivy's social aspirations, but climbs up structures, trees and poles just so he can gaze upon the world. Whereas Oak is the father of the plant world, Vine is the protecting brother, probing into areas to make sure no dangers exist, climbing up walls and ensnaring those that would trample his brethren.

Favored Environments: Wildly grown over areas that have been abandoned or left alone by (meta)humankind.

Advantages: +2 dice for all detection and plant spells; -2 bonus modifiers to all Target Numbers in metavine using Power Tests.

Disadvantages: Vine has few disadvantages for he asks for little out of life. He does have -1 die for all illusion and manipulation spells, because he has seen how Ivy has become unhappy through her consuming aspirations. Vine also has a +2 penalty Target Number modifier for any Negotiation, Interrogation, or Etiquette Skill Tests when dealing with anyone who is vain, pretentious, a socialite, or otherwise not down-to-earth in their attitudes. Vine is the most common totem for Dradic physical adepts.

Weed

Characteristics: Weed is quite unique in the plant world. He is hale and hearty, can survive nearly anywhere, and probably can outlive all other plants. Despite this, or maybe because of it, Weed has no

friends. Indeed, most people do not want Weed around. He is uncouth, crude, and generally a lout, though certainly none of this is intentional.

Favored Environments: Absolutely anywhere.

Advantages: +2 dice to all plant spells; +2 to proper attribute for resisting any toxin or disease; +2 dice for conjuring any two spirits of choice (must declare when character is generated).

Disadvantages: Weed Drads may not have a Charisma Rating over 2, so they are as homely as their totem. Because of this, and their loutish behavior, Weeds suffer a +2 penalty modifier to all Target Numbers when attempting to use their Negotiation, Etiquette, or Leadership Skills. Weed Drads belch in the finest restaurants (if they can bribe their way in), pass wind in churches during the one moment of complete silence, and pick their bodily orifices without consideration of other people's queasy stomachs. When creating a character, they receive NO Contacts. The cost to buy Contacts is 10,000 nuyen. They can never have any buddies or tribe outside of enviro-runners or a Drad tribe. They will never have any Followers in any case.

Willow

Characteristics: Willow is one of the healers of the plant world. She provides refreshing shade from the intense heat of the daily sun. Her gently swaying movements are relaxing for anyone lying beneath her. And her numerous branches offer safe haven for many a creature to snooze the day away. Willow loves to grow by water, and so even her roots offer shelter and protection for the smaller fish as they knot and gnarl in the water. She is peace personified.

Favored Environments: Urban- water runoffs (like concrete culverts). Wild- near streams, rivers, ponds, or lakes.

Advantages: +2 dice to all health spells; +2 dice for conjuring sky and water spirits (not including sea spirits). All Willow Drad contacts are considered at least Buddies, she is so well-liked. The cost of a tribe is as a normal buddy, a follower costs as a normal tribe.

Disadvantages: Willow dislikes conflict intensely and so her Drads have a -2 to all combat spells. She can never leave a wounded companion, preferring to die trying to heal him than let him live in agony. This sometimes may carry over to NPCs who are considered neutral (are not attacking or knowingly plotting against the runners). If a neutral NPC whom she knows is injured she will do what she can to help the person heal or get them to a clinic. If under fire, she must make a Willpower 3 test (with successes surpassing the NPCs Charisma Attribute) to NOT risk tending to the person, even though she will probably be targeted.

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Nothing Business – Just Personal

by Jonathan Szeto

A rainbow of color washed around me as I sped Fast Forward roaring down the desolate night stretches of Intercity 5. Through the Eurocar Westwind-T's visual sensors, sodium yellow lamps flittered by overhead, while blinking neon billboards flashed by in my peripheral view. To my left, the industrial sector of Seattle south glowed red on the Westwind's thermosensors, while flashes of chlorine green lit the upper sector of the car's microwave radar, visualizing the solar flare eruptions that raised havoc on everyone's E-M profile.

Save for the occasional cold wreck, the highway was empty, and not a heat sig could I register for several klicks. Which was good for me. At oh-dark-hundred hours, any sane Seattlite would know better than to venture out onto the highways, lest a roving go-gang decide to have some fun with the unsuspecting driver. Of course, a lot of people have told me to my face that I wasn't sane. Besides, tonight the Spike Wheels, who rumbled on this side of the I-5, were too busy licking their wounds from last night's rumble with the Eye-Fivers, to come out and play with ole' Josie Cruise.

As I turned off at Milton, I killed the lights and keyed Fast Forward into stealth mode. Outside the ruthenium fibers which composed the car's electric blue exterior faded to clear, revealing the radarbane paint job underneath. The area around the Tacoma docks isn't as bad as either of the Barrens, but that only means that at this time of the night, you only run the risk of facing SMALL ordnance. In any case, the few Lone Star patrols out and about tend to ask too many unwanted questions at anyone they find out this late.

Ultimately my sojourn terminated at a decrepit looking warehouse by a desolate section of the piers. As I pulled into the perimeter, a yellow warning light flashed on the virtual dashboard of the rig, warning me of the presence of unknown chemical aerosols. One of Ian's more innovative defense measures releases a pharmaceutical which induces irrational fear and apprehension in a would-be intruder. Of course, since I'm a regular, I've got the counteragent loaded into an autosprayer inside the cabin.

A compressed microwave code squawk flung out from Fast Forward's transmitter, signaling the gates to open. They soon closed after I passed through, and the darkness engulfed me for a brief second before the interior lights in the building flared to life.

A white-haired figure in a greased long apron and synthweed trousers shuffled up from one of the many littered work tables as I unjacked. "There you are, Josephine," he scolded in his distinctive London accent. "Do you realize how long you've kept us waiting?"

Ian Bidmead is a living contradiction. He's caught up in the cutting edge of technology, but sometimes he seems to forget that the

year is 2054. I was quite surprised to see him not long ago fiddling with the magnetic tape player in his office; hell, it didn't even have stereo sound capability. Ian has never mentioned what he did before becoming a shadow mechanic, but judging from the citations I saw hidden in his closet, I guess that he must have been one of His Majesty's best crew chiefs during the Eurowars.

"Gimme a break, Ian, it's only been half an hour," I retorted. "Besides, if you heard Genesis Nova up at the Penumbra, you'd lose track of time too."

Ian shook his head. "You're hopeless, Josephine. Flippant, irresponsible, never performing proper maintenance of your equipment. You'll never--"

--survive a week in the Seattle metroplex, yes, like you've said a thousand times before." We've been through this routine before.

Before I could come back with another smart remark, a third voice made itself known by coughing impatiently.

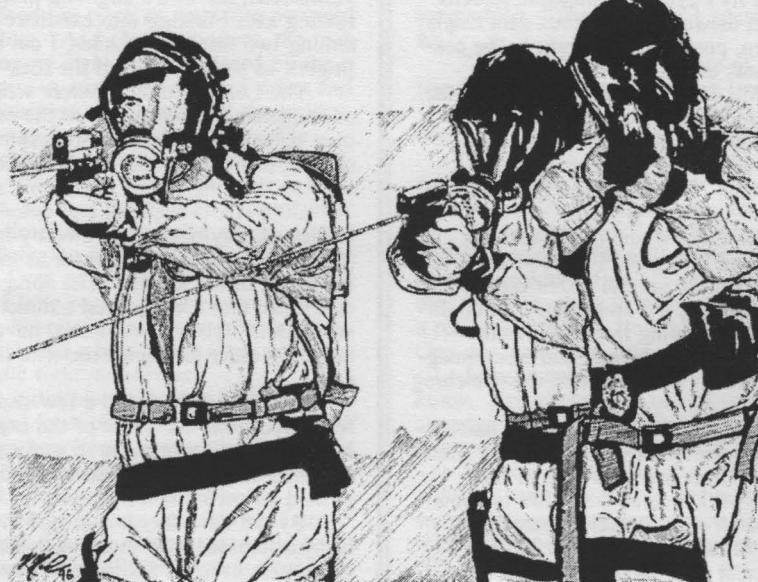
Standing in the doorway to the warehouse's main floor was a figure in a sharp suit underneath a grimy raincoat. His real name I'd heard was Holt, though he was more commonly known as Johnson. Mister, that is.

"Could you save this conversation for sometime else? My time is limited, Miss Cruise," he asked petulantly. Holt was what a paratrooper friend of mine liked to call a "tree PLF" -- that is, someone who had a stick shoved up his butt. When I met him several days ago for this job, I took an immediate disliking to him, but his rep was clean enough. More importantly, he had work, or else I wouldn't be putting up with him again tonight.

"Well, if you insist, Mr. JOHNSON," I replied sarcastically. "You have the information I need for this run?" At our last meet Holt had contracted me to run some contraband from a freighter sitting in international waters outside the Sprawl. Nothing particularly out of the ordinary, just the usual forbidden goods that keep Seattle's shadows in business. He didn't give me anymore specifics, such as coordinates, link-up times, callsigns and codes, but that's normal. Things like those can change in a matter of hours.

His wrist jerked momentarily, and I caught the optical chip he had flicked toward me. "You'll find the location of the ship on that, as well as the callsigns and frequencies they're using. I was also able to capture the Air Force's radar plan for tonight. The challenge and password will be DIRT and PIE. Now as for the linkup procedures, you'll need to read the file--"

"Yes, well, I'll kind of improvise from there." Whining little micromanager snot. I walked out onto the main floor of the building. In contrast to the outside facade, the inside was a state-of-the-art lab and workshop that the best engineers of Federated Boeing and Ares would kill to spend two minutes in. Right now the floor was



empty, save for the craft I was going to use for tonight's job: a customized Hughes Stallion WK-2 I'd "acquired" from the CAS Army, modified by my own and Ian's hand.

"Now pay close attention, Josephine," Ian began to instruct, "with these new modifications I've installed, you'll need to--"

"I'll need to discover how they work when the time comes." I flashed Ian's frowning face a grin as I climbed into the cockpit. "Don't look at me like that. Since when have I misused one of your products?"

"Frequently!" huffed Ian as he slammed shut the door. Inserting the chip into Angelfire's computer, I jacked in.

Angelfire's rig is not the same as Fast Forward's. The Westwind's rig, a typical civilian model, works by superimposing vehicle data over my field of view, a virtual heads-up display mode. Controlling the vehicle operates through manipulation of virtual controls, not unlike a normal car. Except in a normal car, there wouldn't be enough room in real space for all the displays, buttons, and other controls I can execute through the rig.

With the helicopter's rig, I AM Angelfire. Flying becomes as natural and instinctive to me as it is for birds or butterflies; in fact, the rig's ASIST program mimics many of the characteristics of numerous flying creatures. What I would give to meet Angelfire's designer....

As I jacked in, I experienced temporary vertigo as my bodysense shifted, from being strapped securely into the sea, to standing up semi-weightlessly. My vision exploded as a plethora of sights blossomed before my eyes. As I blinked to accommodate myself to the rig, I saw the various viewscreens arrayed in a multifaceted pattern before me, in a pattern not unlike a fly's eye. The multiple screens showed my views from every angle, as well as numerous data display screens. Currently the largest screen, positioned squarely in the center, reviewed Angelfire's system status as it was warming up.

Summoning the helicopter to life, I could feel the rumble of the Pratt & Whitney turbojet engines in the depths of my chest. The blood in my limbs pulsed in sync with the rhythm of the rotating blades. As I shifted back into forward visual mode, a message blinked before my eyes, telling me that Ian had opened the roof for takeoff.

As I pulled my legs into a crouch, the whine of the rotating blades rose in a crescendo of pitch and intensity. I leapt upward, and the helicopter rose off the ground, rising to several dozen meters above the roof of the warehouse. Looking left and right, all I could see was the dull red and green glow emanating from the Seattle sprawl, indicating only background levels of thermal and electromagnetic radiation. No active sources, which meant no one was watching right now.

I commanded to the fore the navigational screen, which had downloaded and processed the data from Holt's chip. The ship's location flared into existence as a red dot over the deep blue of the Pacific Ocean. At a flicker of thought, I ordered Angelfire to show me the location of known sensor watch posts, which appeared as white waves emanating from icons of radar transmitters.

Plotting a course that eluded most of the lookout points, I stretched out my arms over my head and twisted in the direction of Puget Sound. As I swept my arms down to my sides, Angelfire turned and proceeded to fly out towards the moonlight glinting off the Sound.

Just before dawn I spotted them. I could hear the warning klaxons scream behind my head, warning me of aircraft moving to intercept me. I strained my neck muscles to look behind, but with the way this rig works, instead of my head, the viewscreens rotated, until the rearview screen occupied my central window.

I could barely make out the two dark flecks from the pink and gray aurora of the pre-dawn sky, but Angelfire's IFF transponders had already done the work of ID'ing them. Two UCAS Air Force F-B Eagle interceptors, from the 5th Air Wing out of McChord. Angelfire had even listed the pilots' names, though I didn't know any of them.

Suddenly without warning, flashes of thermographic orange blossomed from under the wings of both interceptors. The shriek of the targeting alarm and the flashing message before my eyes confirmed what I had guessed: they had both locked onto me and fired their air-to-air missiles. Drek!

There were only moments to react. Arcing my body towards the coastline, jet fuel blood pounded through the arteries of my head, as the helicopter turned and surged towards land, picking up speed as I kicked my legs furiously like an Olympic swimmer. As long as I was over the ocean, I was an open target. Nevertheless, the two missiles turned and dove, as their targeting sensors compensated for my own evasive actions.

At the last moment I hit a giant red button marked "PANIC" which suddenly materialized before my hands, one of the modifications I had Ian put in before the run. As I twisted into a swan dive, several things happened simultaneously in the outside world. First, explosive charges planted at strategic points along Angelfire's hull detonated, destroying the brackets holding the outer hull in place. As the shells fell away, they revealed the second, main hull, coated in radarcane.

The second thing that happened was that Angelfire ejected five parachuted bundles as it plunged into its power dive. Two of them were thermite flares, while the other three were bunched strips of aluminum chaff. The last was a small rocket, hardly large enough to dent a paper airplane, but containing a transponder and flare which imitated Angelfire's thermal and electromagnetic signature. With the chopper cloaked by its radarcane hull, the chaff and flares would temporarily confuse the two missiles, which would then wrongly lock onto the decoy rocket.

My virtual body convulsed slightly as twin blast waves of force and heat from above rocked the helicopter. Off in the distance I could feel the restraining straps bite into the wrists and shoulders of my real body. I twisted around, bringing Angelfire face-to-face with my two attackers. As the two fighters came into the main viewscreen, my bird's targeting program came on line, the direction-finding axes blinking into existence before my eyes. Selecting and arming two Silencer missiles, I cut them loose with the snap of my fingers, as soon as I heard the lock-on chirp twice.

The Loral-Vought Silencer series of advanced anti-radiation missiles operate by locking on to the emissions of enemy targets, be they sensors or jammers. So despite the fact that the Eagle's ECM made it difficult for me to get a clear reading, the AARMs ignored the data, hearing clearly the strong signals of the flyboys' jammers.

Both AARMs struck and detonated squarely on the nose of the Eagles slightly below and directly in front of the cockpit. Both planes wavered in their course as the pilots struggled to overcome the shock of the impact. The abrupt silencing of the lock-on alarm confirmed that I had scored a direct hit on both planes' targeting sensors. Both flyboys would now have to close the distance to short range, in order to engage me with their miniguns, if they still wanted me.

Which they both did a few seconds later, after both pilots had recovered from the shock of the explosions below their feet. But I had taken the opportunity to make a run for the shoreline. My skin twitched as Angelfire's hull buckled, straining under the stress as I pushed its performance beyond the limits.

By the time they had closed in range to try again, the flyboys had just crossed over into Salish-Shidhe waters. I felt a wave of green pass over, as Salish radar blanketed the sky. I could imagine hearing the curses of those two zoomies as they broke off pursuit to head back to international waters. When I didn't hear Salish air traffic control attempt to contact or warn me, I knew they hadn't detected me.

I swung lower to the ground, flying at the nape of the earth, so as to avoid any other future encounters. Flying NOE takes a lot of concentration, but that couldn't dispel the nagging questions taking form in the back of my mind.

Why did those two zoomies try to shoot me down with no warning? Sure, I had some run-ins with both the Salish and UCAS Air Forces in past smuggling runs, but they'd never shot without issuing some kind of warning or threat. There wasn't any of that here, just geek first and warn later.

The glowing orange ball in front of me shed light upon the land below, but it offered no enlightenment to my questions. I had eluded the Air Force for now, but I couldn't run forever. Sooner or later, I had to go to ground, and that would be when they'd find me.

The more I thought about it, the more I had a very bad feeling I'd stepped into something way over my head....

As Angelfire rose over the crest of the hill, the blinding rays of the morning sun seared through the bird's optical sensors, causing my vision to dissolve into white-hot nuclear brightness. Even as the flare compensators kicked in microseconds later, I still could not eliminate the orange-red spots swimming across my retinas. Looks as if I'll have to re-calibrate the compensator's processor chips, once I have the time and opportunity.

Having time and opportunity, though, was the problem. Not too long ago the UCAS had decided for some reason to use me for target practice. With a little bit of skill and radarbane, I had managed to dodge their attack and run for refuge inside Salish airspace. However, I was running low on fuel, so I had to come down, one way or the other. I myself prefer the soft way over the hard.

Eventually the spots in my eyes faded away, allowing me to scan the horizon. Coming in from the Pacific by a flanking turn to the right, I was facing north with the Sound just beyond my view. Hovering over this range of mountains, I could view both the Fort Lewis main post, as well as the rural town of Tenino, formerly part of the state of Washington, USA, now settled by the Nisqually, a sub-tribe under Salish influence.

As the crest of the hills dropped way, I pulled my legs into a crouch and extended them downward into a feetfirst dive. The bodysense processors in Angelfire's rig interpreted this gymnastic twist as a command to descend straight down. As the field of vision dipped below the military crest of the ridgelines, both the Seattle and Salish cities vanished from my view. Within these highlands lay a lot of low ground to hide from prying eyes. In addition, below me was an abandoned dry quarry, and the iron ore tailings provided enough passive obscurants to muddle airborne radar.

As my virtual body dropped into a crouch on all fours, the whine of the engine turbines deepened in pitch as Angelfire powered down upon touching the quarry floor. As I closed my eyes, the multifaceted sensor display faded from my sight, to be replaced by the familiar view of Angelfire's cockpit. A surge of repressed aches and bruises spiked through my consciousness as I unstrapped the wrist harnesses to pull the datacords out of from behind my ears. My body protested vigorously at my demand to unstrap and stumble out the cockpit door.

Reaching underneath the seat, I pulled out a spray hypo of beta-endorphins and injected a double dose into my carotid artery. One of the more unglamorous parts of rigging is that "morning after" feeling that comes after jacking out. Even on a relatively uneventful run, the body sits motionless for a long period of time, resulting in stiff muscles, blood pooled in the lower extremities, and other things that make jacking out one real bitch and a half. And when you've been in combat and executing really tight maneuvers...

The pain didn't go away, but it did blunt the edge a good bit. Getting out of the craft, I scrambled for a pile of apparently "unused" mining tools and pulled out a large box from underneath. Producing the camouflage netting held inside the box I worked as hastily as I could to set up the net on poles & spanners, as well as hooks pre-anchored on the quarry wall, meanwhile cursing up a storm of profanities every time I became entangled in the netting. It would be several hours before any patrol aircraft would start passing over, but I wanted to get Angelfire under overhead cover as soon as possible.

It took a good hour and a voice made hoarse from swearing before I finished the job and began to climb out of the quarry. As you've undoubtedly guessed, this "abandoned" quarry is a safehouse of mine. I have no idea when it first opened up, but it was closed shortly before the Awakening, after all the useful ore had dried up. As I said before, being nestled between several hilltops, it gave me a good view of the lowlands on three sides and another hill on the fourth, keeping me from being framed against the sky for all the world to see. The highlands were a bitch for the spotters to patrol, and there was still enough metal ore tailings to conceal a vehicle inside the pit.

The climb to the top was a good hundred meters, where there was a trailer-house, presumably a former office for the company that operated this mine in the past. As I made my way towards it, I noticed that the dusty ground had been recently disturbed. The ground had been swept about by some leafed stick or branch, but I could still barely make out the nearly-imperceptible set of singular footprints. Someone had recently entered the perimeter and had gone

into the shack. Dropping quickly into a crouch behind a rusted oil drum, I pulled out my Predator and began leapfrogging from cover to cover towards the trailer. Pressing my back against the wall next to the door, I swung around quickly, using the momentum to kick in the door while aiming the smartgun at the intruder.

"Took you long enough. I was beginning to wonder if you'd been bagged by a border patrol. Y'know they've been augmenting the regular patrol with hunter-choppers, so ka?" He was an Amerindian, one of the few remaining Nisqually in the area. The lines worn into his face showed both the cares of age, having seen the Awakening through boy's eyes, as well as the windburned weathering of the outdoors. His face, masked behind the jet-black sunglasses he wore, turned in my direction as he spoke, yet it did not look at me.

I shrugged as I put the gun away. "Hello, neighbor. Though it's not exactly a beautiful day in the neighborhood." Old Jerry lives as caretaker of these woods and co-owns the quarry, with me as his silent partner. I guess he's what most people would call a hermit.

I walked past him over to the kitchenette area and reached up into a high cupboard to pull out a dirty bottle of Wild Turkey. After taking a long swig, I poured Jerry a shot. "So you know?"

"Chica, I ain't in the business anymore, but I still got my ways of finding out." The first time I had met Jerry happened years before I had moved to Seattle, back during the time when I was still in the service. My unit had a mission on McNeil Island, and Jerry was our guide and inside man. Seems he used to be one of the Salish's best intelligence agents and one of the top spies during the Amerind wars, but something soured him, and he offered his services for hire, after dropping out of NAN records. "So what you gonna do?"

I took a good pull on the bottle and contemplated it for a good long while. "The three Rs, I guess, Jerry. Refuel, reload, and rab-bit."

"You don't sound too sure of yourself." I could feel the ebony lenses of Jerry's glasses boring into me.

"I don't know," I averted my eyes and drained the remainder of the bottle. "I don't know if I want to run anymore."

"You know they'll find you," Jerry replied without feeling or emotion. "You can't go back to the city, and it'll only be a matter of time before Uncle Sugar gets their hunting permit from the Salish."

"Don't you think I don't know that!" I shot back, hurling the bottle against the far wall, punctuating my outburst with the scintillation of breaking glass. "Time-it's always a matter of time before they find me. I go to Tokyo, I go to Portland--drek, I could become a real null and be a Buddhist monk in Tibet--and they'll still find me. One day, one year, fifty years--BLAM! Head shot at 300 meters."

Jerry remained silent. "It's not easy to live on the lam, you know. I've already got one government and one corp after my hide already. My days are already numbered, and I can't afford to start living yet another woman's life. I can't run anymore, I--"

By now the alcohol was burning full force inside my system and kept me from talking anymore. The tears I was holding back were flowing with a vengeance, and I was too busy choking down sobs to form a sentence. Jerry reached out and touched my knee. "C'mon, let's see what we can do."

I gave him a sad smile as I struggled to wrest back my emotions from the alcohol. "So what ARE we gonna do?"

Jerry grinned as he unfolded his white cane (yes, he IS blind; it's a sore point with him, so I never asked). "First things first. YOU are going to sober up. Can't have you running from flyboys in your current state of mind."

Jerry took me outside, shoving my head into a barrel filled with rain water as he explained what had happened, as HE knew it. It seems as if somebodies had broken into McChord AFB and stolen at least one chip with sensitive information on it (naturally he couldn't elaborate on that point). It also seems as if several of the stiffs the MPs had taken down just happened to be militant members of the separatist policlub known as the Seattle Free Frontier. AND, it just also seems as if the securicams had identified someone who just happened to look like me. Of course, anyone who saw the downloads Jerry showed me could tell that the footage was more doctored than a corporate tax return, but that's beside the point. In any case, I am now a card-carrying member of a terrorist separatist policlub. Amazing the things you learn about yourself. And I hadn't even

heard of the Seattle Free Frontier until about five minutes ago.

Well anyway, that's the buzz that Jerry heard, and Jerry's sources usually come from inside the intel-military circles. Of course, there's other buzz as well, namely street buzz. Of course, I'm not saying the word on the street is any more or any less accurate than the dirt Jerry hears, but it always pays for a check from an independent source.

When I had convinced Jerry that I had my wits about me again, I went around the shack to check on the tele-cable links connecting to the trailer. Several hills over to the north is a fire tower, nowadays manned by thermal imagers and smoke cameras instead of park rangers. Of course, Jerry and I had taken the liberty of mounting a satlink amongst the complex array of sensors mounted on, in, and around the tower. I ran a simple self-test to make sure that the link was still up. Should be, since Jerry is, by the books, also the fire warden for this sector.

When I went back into the trailer, Jerry had pulled out the floorboards from the office end of the shelter, producing a Radio Shack Allegiance cyberdeck from underneath. Seating myself in a lotus position on the carpet, I placed the deckboard on my lap, powered it on and inserted the jack behind my ear.

Now I'm no decker, and I don't pretend to be one. But the data-jack in my neck opens the doors to places most people can't go to, and the open Matrix just happens to be one of them. Besides, there is this one person I need to see, and the only way I can get an audience is through a virtual Matrix-conference.

Crossing the RTG, I entered a quasi-legit passcode Jerry had punched in with my utilities. As I passed through the spheroid of the Seattle city LTG, the downtown electronscape unfolded like a flag below me. Bearing left away from the Fuchi Star, I made for a black cube obscured in the shadow of the Fuchi construct. The construct was a speakeasy, a virtual hangout where the shadowy elements of the Matrix can hang out and exchange information, insults, news and potential job listings.

As I closed to observation range, I could see a knot of UCASAF griffin icons buzzing around the construct like flies over a three-day sunbaked roadkill. Trouble, with a capital T. I tried to compile a utility to confuse them long enough for me to get out of that node. Unfortunately, a reflexive thought prematurely executed the program, causing it to run sloppily.

Sure enough, as I was turning to run, one of the griffins recognized me and came barreling down in my direction. In a flash it had knocked my persona down and grappled me in its talons. In a word, I was in deep drek.

Just as I was about to abandon all hope, I sensed something strike the griffin persona and wrench me free from its grip. Wriggling free, I looked up to see a giant Indian chief armored in Coyote skin wrestling with the griffin and hacking it to pieces with his tomahawk. "Don't just stand there with your mouth gaping like an idiot, Josie," it spoke with Jerry's voice. "Get out of here. I'll take care of the zoomies."

Refocusing on the Matrix, I made a roundabout route to another speakeasy. This was my contact's backup locale, in the events of things like the last five minutes, and it would not have come online until just after the troubles all began. Nearing the construct of a door, I approached the door and knocked below the sliding peep hatch. The peep window slid open, revealing only the two eyes staring intently out of a sea of darkness. "It's me, JC," I spoke to the access IC, which faded into the blackness as it processed the acoustic harmonics in my voice. As the window slid shut, the door slowly opened, beckoning entrance.

As I entered the construct, the surroundings faded to black, changing into what appeared to be a common business conference room. Other than myself, there was only one other persona icon in this "room." Like myself, the other construct was a literal image, depicting a stunted hirsute character in his early forties. "Hoi TacFire. Glad you could find the time in your 'busy' schedule to see me."

TacFire was deadpan as he down in that chair that just appeared at the far end of the table. "You sure have a way of attracting attention."

I shrugged. "You know how it is. You try to make yourself feel wanted, and look what happens." I relayed the dwarf what Jerry had told me, which TacFire confirmed. "I think Holt set you up."

He's a rising star who's been muscling in on a lot of people's territory. He's established his power base in the Fort Lewis area and takes a potentially unhealthy interest in mil/intel affairs. And since I have a lot of dealings in that area, I seem to be lately the target of his attention."

I nodded. "Then he'd have known I'm one of your regulars. This job was probably set up to kill two birds with one stone: get the Air Force security force off of his back, and take you out by having the heat follow me."

"Convenient, isn't it?" replied TacFire sarcastically with one arched eyebrow. "I've got leads looking into what sort of drek Holt's stirred up. I think him and I need to have a heart-to-gun chat about this rivalry of his. Of course it would be a lot easier if I actually knew where he was."

An idea popped into my head. "I think I know how to get to him. Just give me 72 hours to get into the 'Plex."

Just after sunset I pulled out a crate I had stowed in the shed inside the quarry. I ripped off the top with a crowbar, revealing the contents, a box of old weather balloons and decoy transmitters. Normally the air stability changes during the hours of dusk, so by releasing them all, I would create a whole lot of dummy signals to hide Angelfire in, already shielded to an extent by its radarcane hull.

After releasing the flock to the wind, I unlocked the shed adjacent to the trailer that was my safehouse. Inside the shed was Rough Rider, a Leyland-Rover offroad van. Opening the side door revealed that a good part of its space had been converted into an electronic control center most newsnets and a few CEWI chiefs would envy. Sliding into one of the seats, I pulled off the dust cover protecting the remote control deck and jacked in.

Entering into the deck's master control mode, or "captain's chair," as it's known in the trade, I felt as if I was sitting inside one of those old-time fun houses, as the "room" appeared like a swirling multicolored chamber. Raising my arms like a conductor beginning a symphony, I commanded the deck to bring Angelfire, Rough Rider, and several drones to life. A two-dimensional black window zoomed into being before me, scrolling green text as the remote deck contacted each station in sequence, beeping and buzzing in the familiar herald call of its modem. The random swirls of color began to take form, transforming into a box surrounding me, in which all sides displayed the points of view of all the remote links on-line. In addition the muted hum of static came to life into a conglomerate of babbling voices, as Angelfire, Rough Rider, and the others began communicating with the deck, each other, and myself.

Inserting several datachips into the drive, I uploaded preprogrammed orders to the three drones accompanying me tonight. The first, Aerodesign Systems' Condor floatchart, I ordered to rise high into the night sky. The Condor has the best sensor arrays one could buy, while its transparent plastic helium body would be undetectable, even by military arrays. Because it's virtually invisible, I rely on the high-flying Condor to inform me on the lay of the land, as well as provide long-range intel on vehicle movements. Between the Condor and Angelfire's own sensors, I should be able to detect and avoid any patrols, ground or air, well in advance.

The other two drones were Wandjina RPVs, the long-range combat drones which put Commonwealth Aerospace on the Matrix. Normally loaded for bear with ammo, I had stripped the armaments out of these miniature airplanes and replaced them with decoy transponders imitating Angelfire's electronic signature.

Though they would contribute to the electronic scouting the Condor and Angelfire were conducting, the primary mission of the Wandjinjas was deception. One would fly towards the Sound, following the route I had downloaded from Holt's chip, while the other would sneak through a back door into Seattle, one that was weeks old and no doubt watched by the zoomies. Even with all those weather balloons floating over southwest Seattle towards the Sound, there was still the odd chance the Air Force would still be able to make out something in the confusion.

Once the drones were underway, I ordered Angelfire to move out. I planned on using Angelfire to scout the terrain in the short range, and if the flyboys happened to find me, the chopper's extra firepower wouldn't hurt (wouldn't help a whole lot either, but it's the thought that counts).

Once the others were underway, my virtual body stood up, and I leapt through the wall displaying Rough Rider's POV, linking directly to its vehicle rig, hardwired in the remote control deck. It took me a nanosecond to adjust to Rough Rider's body imagery of a feral beast, before I sprinted out the shed and disappeared into the night-shrouded highlands of southwest Washington.

As I padded upwards over the dirt road carved through a deep and boulder-filled pass, the chattering voices of my appointed scouts began to feed me information. The view of the Condor showed a dizzying panorama of the Seattle electro-radiative nightline. Besides the bright constellations of the Seattle metroplex, I could see the UCASF sensor arrays raking across the land, a sparkling green thunderbolt searing across the sky at a regular tempo. A swarm of fireflies drifted below my left, where the weather balloons were floating through the translucent dome of the sensor umbrella, making their way towards the city of lights.

The ruse was working well so far. The Wandjina flying towards Holt's ship (if it was still there) had attracted several Salish and UCAS interceptors, while the telemetry readings from the other UAV reported anti-aircraft gunfire bursting through its airspace.

As Rough Rider passed over the last ridge, I paused in my tracks and crouched in silence as I let my eyes/sensors scout the land below. The road ended here, but I could see in the light-amplified darkness the bottom of the slope leading into the plains, bisected neatly by a high wire fence, demarcating the boundaries of the Fort Lewis district.

Although most of the corporate community had overrun and suborned the main post, here along the southwest boundary of the former military reservation the wooded areas had remained largely unchanged. Just as Jerry had informed me prior to departure, a recent rockfall had torn through one section of the fence, leaving a rocky and capricious path through which I could sneak back into Seattle. Good thing the post engineers hadn't found this yet.

Preparing to make the difficult descent downwards, I commanded Angelfire to fly ahead as lookout. According to the data TacFire had scrounged up for me, one of the Metroplex Guard's battalions was conducting a field exercise in a nearby training area. They would probably be too busy to notice me, but it paid not to take any chances.

Slowly I leaned forward and cautiously slinked down towards the left. In the real world, Rough Rider's transmission slipped into very-low gear as the van turned away from the steep drop directly in front, in favor of the flatter, albeit rockier, path to the left. This composed most of the remaining descent, as I probed with my forequarters the ground in front of me, and Rough Rider resonated by sweeping ultrasonic terrain mappers in the locale my virtual body probed. As I reached the bottom, Rough Rider's wheels splashed through a small creek which fed into the Nisqually River further west. Feeling the ASIST-generated wetness against my forearms, I leaped forward like a cat, and Rough Rider responded with a tire-squealing jolt up the bank and through the hole in the fence.

As I stalked upwards onto the graveled road ahead, an electronic chirp notified me of Angelfire's alert. Looking through the bird's eyes, I could make out the wavering dual line of dimmed blackout lights, accompanied by the rumble of tracks on dirt road. Second-generation Devil Rats, judging by the barely discernible outlines. Looks as if the Guard decided to pack in their exercise early and head home (how typical). Because they were convoying in single file, instead of spread out in a tactical formation, I could assume that they hadn't been alerted to my presence.

Time to make tracks. Turning away from the convoy, I raced up the road, putting as much distance between myself and the Guard. Several kilometers later I passed a white sign notifying drivers to turn on their headlights, indicating the end of the training areas. Within another few klicks the road would become paved concrete and merge with the main post road, and I could hide out amongst the commercial traffic running into and out of Fort Lewis.

Then the world exploded in a brilliance of pain and a burst of static.

It was unexpected and undescribable. One moment I was sprinting down the road like a mountain lion after a fleeing antelope;

the next I was sprawled on my back on the floor of the van, which had skidded off the road and lying at an angle in the ditch. For a moment I could not move, paralyzed by the shock yet quivering uncontrollably, eyes transfixed on the roof, pulse pumping liquid torture through my veins, mouth too busy gulping like a landed fish to scream.

The only thing which made sense at the moment was that something exploded in front of me, sending Rough Rider careening into the ditch. The crash must have hurled me out of the chair and torn the datajack out from the remote control deck. Pulling myself up shakily, I flopped bonelessly back into the seat and jacked in again.

I was wrong. There was a crash, but it wasn't from outside, but rather from within. As the ASIST took over, I felt my body being ripped apart, limb by limb, molecule by molecule, to be reformed deformed and re-torn again.

Entering into Angelfire's rig, the normal ASIST imagery of swimming through an ocean of air felt like swimming through an ocean of acid-coated razors. The chatter of the other drones through the remote control sounded more like the din of demonic curses, intermingled with the screams of the damned.

I clasped my ears to shut out the cacophony, yet it served only to make it louder. Curling into a fetal position, it felt as if my body could not bear the strain of moving, as muscles tore from joints and bones splintered and pierced outward through my flesh.

Shutting out the voices by my own scream of pain, I grabbed a fistful of hair and pulled. Hard.

Ripping the datajack out of my head, I hit the power switch on the remote deck. Without the yoke of the rig to rein them in, Angelfire, Rough Rider and the drones would kick into autopilot, following their last instructions. Glancing at the visual display screens, I saw white snow where the status displays for the two Wandjinias would have been. All control abandoned, the Condor was adrift on the night breeze, floating aimlessly above the city. Angelfire's autopilot had placed the helicopter in a holding position.

Radioing Angelfire's dog brain, I gave vocal instructions to fly directly for Ian's hideout. This done, I made my way forward into the van's driver seat. Fortunately, none of Rough Rider's systems were seriously damaged in the "crash," and I managed to drive the van back onto the road and onward into the familiar embrace of the Seattle cityscape.

It wasn't until I was well underway that I felt the thin stream of blood trickling down my neck from the datajack.

"Go on." As Ian finished cleaning up the blood staining the back of my neck, he applied a STA/ISE probe into the datajack to determine the integrity of the connections.

I flinched at the small ASIST spikes induced by the probe. "It was unreal. The ASIST imagery had been twisted and-hellish. It was as if every pain receptor in my body was cranking on steroids."

Withdrawing the probe, Ian straightened up. "It looks like the bleeding came from the datajack being ripped out twice. You've got a minor contusion in your lower skull, and you may want some surgery done to re-set the jack, but there doesn't appear to be any physical brain damage."

"Great--I think," I leaned forward against the back of the chair I was straddling and stared at the streams of blood in the wash bowl. "It still doesn't explain what happened."

"Hold still for a moment, please," Ian carefully inserted into my jack a datacord connected to a diagnostic reader. I tensed unconsciously, memories of what happened the last time I was jacked still painfully fresh. "If I didn't know any better, I'd say you had just survived a Black IC brainburn. Barely."

I couldn't help but stare. "You're kidding--?!"

"Biofeedback," the flourish with which Ian switched off the diagnostic indicated that he was getting into his "professor" mode. "One of the hazards of ASIST technology. As you've learned in basic physiology, ASIST uses electrical impulses to induce biochemical signals into the cerebral cortex, overriding the stimuli fed from the spinal cord."

"One side effect of ASIST is that it influences, directly and indirectly, the workings of your autonomous nervous system. You ought to be quite familiar with this. When you are flying on remote, and the drone becomes destroyed, the destruction creates a random elec-

trical signal which induces a disruption of your normal biorhythmic pattern. Heart fibrillation, temporary epileptic seizure, et cetera."

Ian continued to elaborate as he turned away to work on one of the many terminals in his office. "Black IC works in a similar, though more deliberate manner. Instead of a random signal, it causes a decker's cyberdeck to generate a disruptive signal which creates a rip in the biorhythm. The earliest forms of Black IC were little more than simsense playbacks of hospital patients dying from a major stroke or cerebral hemorrhage."

"Whoa, wait a second here," I interrupted. "I know some decker chummers who've had some nasty run-ins with various sorts of Black IC, and what I felt was nothing like what they've ever described."

"That's because your decker friends were never wired with a vehicle control rig," Ian answered without looking up. "What your vehicle control rig does is to integrate and augment your central nervous system with the datajack connection. Rigging is nothing like decking. Decking uses virtual reality to visually interpret complex computational and mathematical problems into a simulated model which makes it easier for the brain to solve."

"Rigging, on the other hand, is less brain-intensive than decking. You're not relying on the higher functions of your brain; you're relying more on the swift reflex response provided by the cerebellum and thalamus."

"You must understand this about the vehicle control rig: what it does is take advantage of the data regulating signals of the middle brain. The brain receives millions of sensory stimuli and issues just as many motor responses. The middle brain coordinates all these disjointed signals together, resulting in smooth operation of the human body."

"What the vehicle control rig does is take that data-routing ability and apply it to regulating a complex machine or system-like a vehicle or a remote control network. And the more sophisticated the rig, the more it is able to exploit the middle brain's signal-coordinating capability."

"So when whatever hit you-maybe IC-psychotropes, more likely not-it didn't just tell your autonomous system to go crazy, but also it fragged with every neuron in your middle brain. That's why it felt like you were being atomized."

"Okay, but still, where did the IC, for lack of a better term, come from?" I asked. "Are you saying the Metroplex Guard or someone fed me a coded signal that fragged the remote control deck like Black IC?"

"No, that's not what I'm saying. And you're completely wrong. For one reason, the bandwidth of a radio, or even a microwave transmitter, isn't wide enough to handle something that sophisticated. Even if it were so, it would have caused some sort of physical damage to the remote control deck, which I didn't see. The so-called Black IC attack originated out of your software."

"Of course!" I slammed my fist on the table so hard that I almost spilled the wash-basin. "Holt must've encoded it as a virus on my datachip!"

A chilling thought entered my head. "But that means Holt wasn't trying to use the military to take out TacFire through me. I was the target. Not biz, just personal.... But I don't even know him that much."

"Personal, maybe, but I'd hold out on the final verdict." Ian looked up from the workstation. "Take a look at what I recovered from Holt's datachip. These hidden files here contain mostly garbage, with some fragmentary bits of technical data-enough to attract attention, but nothing substantive. Whoever snatched these files from the military couldn't break the Scrambler encryption codes."

"You mean my run with Holt was only a red herring?"

"Without a doubt. Whatever operation Holt was running, he was afraid of attracting the wrong sort of attention, so he commissioned your run to take away the attention onto yourself."

"Now this," Ian commented, pointing to an extra-large block of data, "is our little Black friend. Take a look at the archival information. As you can tell by the original date, the bug was encoded onto the chip well before Holt put his misleading data."

"Great," I muttered, "just when I thought everything was about to make sense, something twists it around to make it even more confusing. Sounds like a really bad sci-fi writer making up the plot as he goes along."

Ian gave me an oddball look, as if I was talking to someone else who wasn't there. "Anyway," I hastily recovered, "has TacFire called yet?"

"Of course I did, Josephine," TacFire's voice came through the telecom speakers as his image sprang into existence on the viewscreen. "Now will you tell me what this brilliant plan of yours to find Holt is?"

"It just occurred to me, that if Holt or whomever wanted me blown out of the sky, he'd have some kind of backup out at the ship, just in case." I turned from the telecom and called up the mission instructions from Holt's datachip.

I continued as I scanned through the linkup instructions. "Now according to the coordinating instructions, I was supposed to issue the challenge and password when I was about three minutes out from the ship."

"So you think the key's in the challenge and password?" Ian asked.

"Maybe," I frowned as I looked at the challenge and password again. "DIRT and PIE. That mean anything to you?"

All I got in return were blank shrugs. "Guess not. Just something I kind of thought of just now. That whoever is behind this scheme would add some sort of personal touch. Oh well."

"Look, do you have an idea, or don't you?" TacFire asked impatiently.

"Okay, okay, I was just getting to it, lemme think," I didn't see anything else in the coordinating instructions that hinted a suggestion, so I clicked on the signal menu.

Ian bent up to look as the callsigns and frequencies appeared onscreen. "These frequencies here aren't normal commercial transmissions. What are they?"

"Old US Navy digital computer frequencies," TacFire surprised me as he cut in. "Don't tell me you think Holt's operating out of the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard?"

"Too far. He wouldn't have been able to leave Seattle without being noticed." I thought for a moment. "Didn't the US Navy have at one time a reserve center somewhere in the metroplex?"

"Now that you mention it, they did have one on one of the islands in the Sound. Can't remember which one."

An uneasy thought sparked in the back of my head. "I do now. McNeil Island." I grabbed my jacket. "Ian, get the roof open, I've got to get Angelfire airborne ASAP."

"Where are you going now?" Ian shouted after me. "This is too risky business for you to run off like this!"

"Nothing business about this deal, Ian," I shouted over my shoulder as I dashed out the room, "just personal!"

Flying on manual is a lot different than flying jacked. Instead of the red and green glow of Seattle's electro-thermal background, the only illumination came from the dim haze of the waning moon, the blinking firefly swarm that is the SeaTac skyline, and the luminescent glow of Angelfire's display panel. Instead of cruising like a virtual shark in an ASIST-induced ocean, I was squirming in my seat to relieve the stiffness in my lower back.

Nevertheless the discomfort of such an alien surrounding was blunted by the sense of urgency pumping through my veins. Almost 24 hours ago I accepted a mission which someone set up solely for the purpose of geeking me. The events of the past day and night had been a convolution of plots which tried to use the UCAS Air Force and my own vehicle to take me down permanently. Now I was beginning to sense the invisible hand moving behind the curtains of this little drama of mine.

Judging by the amount of planning that went into this conspiracy, I shouldn't have flown out so impetuously from Ian's place like I did. I should have sat down for a minute and thought through some things before rushing out to confront my hidden adversary. Too late now. Judging from the electronic umbrella covering Seattle like a dome, it would not be long before the flyboys would be on my tail again. Better now to handle whatever surprises to come as they would.

Ahead to my left I saw the swarm of lights come to an end, as Angelfire approached the Seattle-Salish border. Pushing the stick to the right, I felt the cabin floor tilt under my left, as I veered the helicopter straight over the water. Now with the only source of light being the dim haze of the moon, I could only barely make out the

horizon of the Sound.

Closing my eyes, I ran through my head the mental algorithm which would activate the LowLight enhancers in my cybereyes. My eyelids opened to a monochrome view of Puget Sound, tinted in pale green NVG. Without looking down I switched off the monitor illuminating the instrument panel; In LowLight, it would blind me like a magnesium flare, and even if I didn't look directly at it, the bleed would still be enough to mess with my night vision.

I flew out a few kilometers before veering off to the left and heading back in. I was hoping to drop in on my foe's backside, instead of gunning straight against the front.

Just before approaching the main coast of Seattle, an island rose up beneath me. Hoi, McNeil Isle, long time no see. Many years ago, this island was the site of my first visit to the Seattle metroplex. Back before when, prior to the breakup of the United States, McNeil Island used to be a US Navy reserve training center, and then a state penitentiary as the reserve center fell casualty to the drawdown. After the white men moved out of greater Washington State, the Salish converted the facility into a geothermal power plant. That went bust when the company went belly-up in '29, and since then the island had been mostly abandoned.

Until about six years ago, the time of my first mission in Seattle. Back then, we had come to the area to bring in a wanted terrorist, known in the CAS under his handle as Riptide. According to our sources, he had hidden out in McNeil Island, working at the time for a cell of the Free Seattle Movement, the forerunner of the Free Seattle Frontier.

Boy, was that a fraged-up mission....

"You have... SIX MINUTES!" I heard the jumpmaster shout. As we made the final approach over our objective, the Specter 8000 airplane required steady flying instead of tight rigger turns. Especially when you're unloading a chalk of special forces by HALO, tight maneuvers can get especially messy.

As the other paratroopers made final checks on their equipment, I walked up to the cockpit to make final check with the pilot. "How we looking, chief?" I asked as the pilot pulled the jack out of his head. "We gonna have fun on this jump?"

"We're always having fun when I'm at the helm, you know that," Reese shouted back. I grinned as Reese made a non-chalant gesture with the controls.

"FIRST STICK STAND UP!" the jumpmaster shouted from the rear. As I was also going to be going out on this mission, that was my cue to head back and get ready to jump.

Suddenly a shrieking alarm filled the cabin, so loud that even the paras could hear it through the sealed walls and over the whine of the engines. "DAMN! Missile lock!" Reese shouted as he jacked in. "GET EVERYONE OUT RIGHT FRAGGING NOW!" were his last words as his eyes glazed over.

"What the hell...?" Looking back I saw mass confusion, as the second stick leader, Major Streeter, unbuckle and shoved his way past the first stick onto the jump ramp.

"Streeter, what the HELL do you think you're doing?" I shouted at the top of my voice to be heard over the wind. "We've got a SAM lock, and you're putting us ALL at risk!"

"This mission must be completed, captain. With the drek hitting the fan, the critical people must get out first." Even though he was also yelling over the wind, Major Streeter still could maintain that icy, detached, emotional calm in his voice. "I must go first if this mission is to succeed."

"That's a load of barghest drek!" I hotly screamed back into his face. We've got to get the first stick out first! You're holding everyone up!"

"NO! I am the team mage. I MUST go first!" Streeter's voice rose in anger as he tried to push me out of the way.

Our argument was cut short just then as the surface-to-air missile pierced into the cabin, filling the body with a bright orange fireball. The last thing I saw was the pilot's cabin engulfed with flame, when the wind got knocked out of me, and my vision went flying. Next thing I knew, I was plummeting in freefall, accompanied by chunks of hot metal and burning plastic. Pulling the ripcord, I discovered to my horror that part of the chute had caught fire.

Trying to ignore the flashes of my life passing before my eyes, I pulled on the risers as I slipped the chute to the right, aiming for the

island that was our objective below. Glancing up, I guessed that I didn't have much time before the flames burned through the canopy.

At the last moment I pulled hard on the rear risers, and the chute responded by floating me past the sandy beach and out over the water. Hitting the harness release buckles, I dove feetfirst into the water as the flames consumed the last scraps of the canopy.

The water was four feet deep, and I had touched bottom before I was able to struggle out of the harness and drop my equipment which bogged me down. Swimming to shore, I saw that one other person had beaten me to the ground. Streeter was lying facedown on the beach, the silken canopy of his chute entangling itself as it floated in the water. Crawling up to examine him, I saw that he had been knocked unconscious from the blast. Fortunately for him, HALO chutes nowadays are wire into the altimeter, so that they open at the right altitude even if the jumper was out of sorts. Pity he broke his legs, though; lucky he's unconscious right now.

Untangling Streeter out of his harness, I gathered the chute together with some sticks to construct a makeshift litter for Streeter to lie on, as well as a crude splint to treat his fracture. While I was doing this, I heard several splashes, as a few paratroopers landed in the water and sloshed up towards the beach. Apparently those small few were granted the same Streeter and I were, knocked out of the deathtrap by the force of the blast.

"You soldier! What's your name?" I shouted at the first man to crawl onto the beach.

"Sergeant Northwood, ma'am," he replied as he signaled the four others that the beach was clear.

"Okay, Northwood, detail one man to look after the major here," I pulled out Streeter's submachinegun, plus as many extra clips as I could stuff into my cargo pockets. "He said this mission had to be completed, so we're going to complete it."

It was just about then that the sensor alarm screamed bloody murder, bringing me out of my reverie. A scanner, most likely one attached to a surface-to-air missile, had acquired my signature. DREK! Deja vu all over again.

Think quick! Breathing slowly so as not to panic, I closed my eyes to drop the Low-Light as I keyed up the display console in a desperate search for options. Yes! One chance, I hope. Calling up the weapons display, I selected and armed my last remaining missile, luckily enough a sensor-seeker. If I could hit the sensor before it launched the missile, then my butt would be safe.

Just then the alarm changed its tune, from the rapidly shifting wail of the warning siren, to the sharp staccato of shrieks that indicated a SAM launch. Without thinking I flipped the safety cover and fired my own missile, pulling the stick into a sharp dive with my other hand. Randomly I jiggled the stick, hoping that the resulting weave would confuse the hell out of the missile and shake it off.

Looking on the radar screen, I saw the red dot that was the SAM make smooth turns in compensation for my own sudden jerks. Behind the red dot was a yellow dot that was my own missile, homing in steadily on the SAM's guidance signal. Crossing my fingers, I prayed silently that the seeker would catch up to the SAM before the SAM caught up to me.

My heart sunk when I heard the proximity alarm sound. Normally used to warn me to jack out before I suffered the ASIST backlash, this time the alarm told me I only had a few seconds left to prepare for eternity. Then, as suddenly as the shrill alarm had sounded, it was cut off, leaving me only with dead silence. Glancing down at the radar screen, I saw neither red nor yellow dot.

I don't care what the magicians say, there is a God.

As I finished programming the routine into Angelfire's autopilot, the helicopter had closed within a klick of the island again. For the past half hour I had skirted the island to see what other nasty surprises lay in wait, before I made my plan. As I loaded the duffle bag into the chaff tube, I opened the side cargo door and hung out over the right skid, watching the water skid by, not more than five meters below me.

As the timer alarm went off, I pushed off from the skid and dived feetfirst into the water. As I bobbed back to the surface, I saw Angelfire eject my bundle onto the sandy beach of the island, less than a hundred meters away. While I would be swimming to shore, Angelfire's autopilot would carry it low over the rising land, too low

for any antiaircraft weapon to lock on and engage.

As I hit the beach, I unzipped the duffle bag and dumped the contents out onto the ground. Tearing off my wet shirt, I wrapped on my dry flight jacket and scarf and slammed a clip into the Ingram smartgun I brought along. Scrambling under cover, I mentally keyed my cybereyes to activate their LowLight and Thermographic sensors. Through my cybereyes I could make out the reddish-green glow of the SAM that had fired on me before. It was an old system, reminiscent of the old US Hawk missile launcher. Could have been one too; nowadays, with a lot of corporate and merc forces running around, it wasn't uncommon to see some outdated systems on the market to keep up with the demand (if it works, use it).

Seeing no other activity, physical or electrothermal, on the beach, I slipped into a storm sewer as I made my way into the compound on the hill above.

This is not fun. Don't get me wrong. If YOU think stumbling around, shivering in wet clothes, in a dark sewer of rotdrek is your idea of fun, you can stay here. Me, I hope there's supposed to be a manhole cover overhead like I kind of remembered from before.

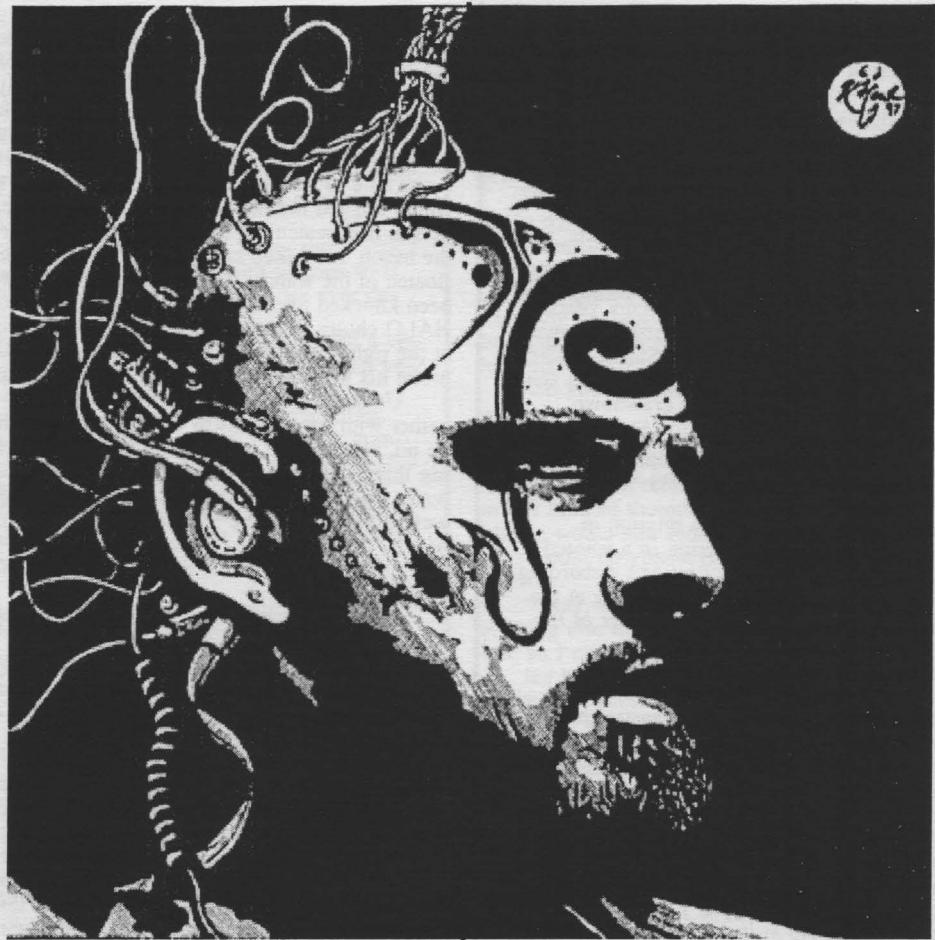
Lifting up the manhole cover and pushing it to one side, I pulled myself up out of the sewer ducts, struggling to fit through the narrow aperture while cursing under my breath all the while. I twisted my head around to get a good look in the dim light, squatting on the damp concrete floor, as the grating over my head wouldn't let me stand up fully.

From the looks of it, I was squatting in a maintenance trench underneath the ground floor of the building. Looking side to side, I could see the outlines of power cables and plumbing pipes, now smelling of the telltale odors of rust and rot. Above me in the back I could see a large area, with several giant shadows hulking overhead. Large turbines, which put me somewhere in the plant's power room.

I was reaching up to lift open the grating, when I heard a faint grinding noise. I froze in place as I listened intently. Crouched in an uncomfortable position, I could hear the telltale whine of a laboring combustion engine, growing gradually louder as it came my way. Twisting my head over my shoulder, I saw a dark shadow rumble over the grating overhead. I withdrew my fingers from the grating as the thing rolled to a stop directly above me.

The thing was actually a patrol drone, by the looks of it, one of FMC's Sentinel models. Only slightly larger than a kid's wagon, it was equipped with tank treads to cover rough terrain, as well as enough firepower and armament to ruin a shadowrunner's day. If it knew I was directly below, it would certainly ruin my day.

Soundlessly I unlatched the magazine in my Ingram and reached into my cargo pockets. Running my thumb along the top bullet of



the clip, I confirmed by touch that I had the right clip in hand: yup, 30 rounds of APDS, armor-piercing, discarding teflon coated, depleted uranium sabot.

Again, making as little noise as possible, I loaded the clip and poked the barrel between the chinks in the grating, flipping the selector switch to "AUTO" in the process.

This probably wouldn't have worked if I was firing from the thing's topside, but the Sentinel is designed for security work and perimeter details, so the underbelly doesn't receive as much attention as the rest of the body. After all, no one expects a security drone to run into unexpected antitank mines.

As I cut loose with the Ingram, sparks flew as the depleted uranium rounds made contact with the Sentinel's steel body, creating spontaneous combustion in the process.

More rounds penetrated through the underbelly, the fire was carried inside the drone, as it sputtered and popped uncontrollably from raging electrical fires within. Then without warning, a loud explosion knocked me back as a stray round burst through the fuel tank. I scurried away quickly away as burning fuel began raining down into the trench.

They just don't make 'em like they used to anymore.

After that little run-in in the power chamber, the place was now crawling with drones. I had to expend the rest of my APDS and one thermite grenade before I found a ventilation duct which I could hide in.

It was several hours later when I kicked out the ventilation cover on the top floor of the complex. Squirming my way out of the narrow shaft, I landed ungraciously in a hallway, about midway between the ground and top floor. To my right was a security door, with an electronic keypad directly above the knob.

Locking and loading another magazine, I emptied the Ingram into the lock and kicked the door open. Reloading, I cautiously surveyed the room. This was the main security office of the complex, and one could hardly see the walls, as computer processors and terminals spanned the perimeter. Most of the lighting came from the wall on my left, as monitors lined it from floor to ceiling and side to side, showing various views of the compound, the Sound, and the Metroplex.

Ahead of me a figure sat in a high-backed chair facing away from me, its form outlined by the ghostly aurora of another monitor. Approaching it slowly, I swiveled the chair around so its occupant could face me.

I bit back a gasp of shock as Holt's empty eyes met my own. His hands had clawed through the fabric on the armrests, as stuffing seeped out between white twisted fingers. Sagging to one side, his face had twisted into the most hideous death mask anyone could

imagine. Rivulets of blood bubbled out his nose and seeped from behind his eyes, merging into a stream which dripped down over his shirt.

"Just think, Josie dear, that could've been you," cut the thickly accented voice through the silence like a knife through flesh. I pushed Holt's chair to one side to view the monitor he had been watching.

"Riptide," I replied flatly, still numb from the shock of seeing Holt like this. Turning my attention towards the screen, I faced the man who had caused the death of my co-pilot and several dozen soldiers six years ago. The twisted smile reveled in the hundreds of lives blown into oblivion by his firebombs, or snuffed out by the barrel of his gun.

"So you ARE behind this. I should have known." As I recovered my lips twisted into a snarl. "Any scheme that convoluted should have been a dead giveaway. By the way, nice touch with the challenge and password."

"DIRT, PIE-RIP TIDE," smiled the terrorist in a wicked manner. "I quite liked it myself."

"Enough playing around, Riptide," I snarled back. "What's all this about? A mysterious e-mail message and a bullet at three hundred meters should have done the trick."

"You know what this is about." His voice dropped low suddenly, twisted glee turning into venomous hatred. "This is about a raid you led on the island six years ago. This is about six years of hell I spent in Deep Six because of you.

"I'd still be rotting there, too, if it wasn't for Holt. You know what he runs, don't you? He wanted to export my brand of anarchy here to increase tensions. Boost his profits on the shadow markets."

"And, being the grateful soul that you are, you killed him in return." I answered back with sarcasm.

"He was careless and stupid, and he ruined my well-planned revenge. One of his dataraids went sour and alerted Air Force intelligence. To throw them off his trail, he put the garbled data from the hosejob and gave it to you."

"But it didn't work did it?" I figured out the result in my head. "The local CI cell isn't so easily deceived. They kept hounding him and risked uncovering you."

"I told him to jack into the stronghold's defense system, but I inserted one of those pain chips into the program instead."

"It still doesn't change the fact that the flyboys will be here any minute to take you down, thanks to Holt and me," I pointed out.

"Yes. But by the time they arrive, I'll be gone and you'll be no more." I spun around when I heard Riptide's voice coming from behind. Standing in the doorway, Riptide leveled his Manhunter straight at my center of mass.

"Take a good look, Josephine, before I put your lights out for good. See this masterpiece of pain the guards at Deep Six left on me, thanks to you." Riptide turned his chin with his right hand, showing the melted contours of burn scars criss-crossing his cheek and running down his neck.

That was not the only change I noticed. His right forearm which held onto his chin was no longer flesh and blood, but instead a cybernetic replacement. Instead of contoured to features similar to a natural arm, his was a stark skeletal frame that maximized performance with the minimum of aesthetics.

"Don't you like my new arm? I lost the old one trying to get out of the ghostforsaken place. They don't feed the sharks outside that often, you know." Riptide picked up a piece of lead piping and crushed it in the grip of his artificial hand. "When I had this arm designed, I had you in mind. Had in mind how I would crush your throat in its grip."

Before I knew it, I was lying on the ground as Riptide charged into me. Kneeling over my prone form, he pinned me down with his weight. With only one free hand, I tried to claw his eyes, but his cyberarm grabbed my wrist before I could reach his face. As he clamped down, I heard the crunching grind of my wrist bones intermix with my own scream of pain.

I continued to moan as he tossed my broken hand to the floor. "Why not a bullet at three hundred meters, you asked? I'll tell you why, it would have been too quick and painless." Madness burned in Riptide's eyes as his cyberarm closed around my throat. "I want to see you suffer in your last moments.

"That program I had burned on the chip Holt gave you? It acti-

vates and overloads the pain center in your cortex." His words seemed to float in a haze as I struggled in futility to breathe. "Eventually the signal will induce a cerebral hemorrhage, as the body pumps blood in buckets to put out the fire in your head." His voice faded away as darkness smothered across my field of vision.

Suddenly the blare of klaxons flooded the room as an explosion rocked the floor, knocking Riptide off. "Guess the-guess the flyboys came a little early." I coughed weakly as I got up on my good hand.

"Frag them! Frag them all!" Riptide cursed as he picked himself up and ran out the room. Tucking my broken wrist inside my jacket, I ran out after him. Turning right, I had to duck back behind a doorway as Riptide peeled off a shot with his Manhunter.

A second explosion from the room forced me to reconsider pursuing Riptide, in favor of getting the hell out of here. Turning the opposite way, I ran out the corridor towards the main turbines and the sewer entrance I had come in through. Running down several catwalks, I straddled the railing and slid down a pipe to the main floor of the chamber.

Once on the main floor, my pace slowed down as I had to pick my way around the pipes, large and small, that skewed across my path. The small ones skittered over the ground in front, while I had to keep an eye out for the big ones ahead which could smack my noggin if I wasn't too careful. Is that side corridor coming up the one I came in through? Yes! Clear of the pipes, I turned the corner and was rewarded with the sight of the turbines where I came in.

Just then I felt something slam into my right shoulder, knocking me to the ground before I heard the sharp crack of a pistol. Fortunately the armor plates sewn in my jacket kept the slug from boring straight through my shoulder. Landing on my bad hand, I bit back the pain as I turned around. Looking back, I could make out Riptide's form as it filled the corridor. Steadying his Manhunter with both hands, the terrorist raised his gun to aim for my head. "Now I have you!"

"I don't think so." With my broken wrist I drew my own Predator out and let out a rapid fire burst of ammo. Pulling high, my shots zinged over Riptide's head and pierced the steampipes above. I heard Riptide's screams mingle with the hiss of escaping steam, as his form vanished in a cloud of scalding hot mist. The unholy melody was cut off a second later, as an explosion brought crashing down the corridor Riptide was in.

After firing I dropped the Predator instantly, my broken hand now on fire after the beating it had taken from the recoil. Slipping into the maintenance trench, I had less trouble getting into the sewer than I had getting out.

continued on page 30

Hi there, Editor here. In case you haven't noticed, there are a couple of pieces in this fine magazine that have no author's names attached to them.

Both these pieces have their merits, which the author should be proud of. Problem is, even I don't know who the author is!

So, what I'd like to do here, is make an appeal to the Authors of Knight Shift (p. 17), and Nature's Shadows (p. 33) to identify yourselves. Once you do that, we can pay you.

Sounds pretty cool, huh?

And let this be a lesson to the rest of your prospective Shadowland authors. Always make sure your name is everywhere, so we know who you are. Thanks. Now back to the mag...

Shadowrun CCG Complete Card List

Much thanks to Prime Runner Mike Mulvihill, and the FASA crew for the list!

CARD	Type	Rarity
Ajax	Runner	Common
Cannibal	Runner	Common
Dante	Runner	Common
D-day	Runner	Common
Glitz	Runner	Common
Gore Tusk	Runner	Common
Grandfather		
Bones	Runner	Common
Hatchetman	Runner	Common
Hollywood	Runner	Common
Jack Hammer	Runner	Common
Jackyl	Runner	Common
Kromagnus	Runner	Common
Nightshade	Runner	Common
Orion	Runner	Common
Rediine	Runner	Common
Roadrash	Runner	Common
Shade	Runner	Common
Shasta	Runner	Common
Shellshock	Runner	Common
Stomper	Runner	Common
Syn	Runner	Common
Thrash	Runner	Common
Turbo	Runner	Common
Cherry Bomb	Runner	Uncommon
Domino	Runner	Uncommon
Hawkwind	Runner	Uncommon
Knuckles	Runner	Uncommon
Kraker Jack	Runner	Uncommon
Macaore	Runner	Uncommon
Razorback	Runner	Uncommon
Reaper	Runner	Uncommon
Red Widow	Runner	Uncommon
Sam the Slueth	Runner	Uncommon
Scarecrow	Runner	Uncommon
Skidz	Runner	Uncommon
Static	Runner	Uncommon
Stiletto	Runner	Uncommon
The Mole	Runner	Uncommon
The Preacher	Runner	Uncommon
Tinkerbell	Runner	Uncommon
Uncle Joe	Runner	Uncommon
Viper	Runner	Uncommon
Wishbone	Runner	Uncommon
Archie		
McDeven	Runner	Rare
Bam Bam	Runner	Rare
Caeser	Runner	Rare
Clutch	Runner	Rare
Da' Profazzur	Runner	Rare
Dirk		
Montgomery	Runner	Rare
Dodger	Runner	Rare
Dr. Apocalypse	Runner	Rare

CARD	Type	Rarity	CARD	Type	Rarity
■ Drake	Runner	Uncommon	■ Skillsoft:	Gear	Rare
■ Nature Spirit	Gear	Uncommon	■ Demolitions	Gear	Rare
■ Ranger X	Gear	Uncommon	■ Skillsoft:	Gear	Rare
■ Ruger Super	Gear	Uncommon	■ Piloting	Gear	Rare
■ Warhawk	Gear	Uncommon	■ Skillsoft:	Gear	Rare
■ Skillsoft:	Gear	Uncommon	■ Stealth	Gear	Rare
■ Gunnery	Gear	Uncommon	■ Smartgun	Gear	Rare
■ Skillsoft:	Gear	Uncommon	■ Link	Gear	Rare
■ Social	Gear	Uncommon	■ Sticky	Gear	Rare
■ Skillsoft:	Gear	Uncommon	■ Fingers	Gear	Rare
■ Technical	Gear	Uncommon	■ Stun Gloves	Gear	Rare
■ Sleaze	Gear	Uncommon	■ Wired		
■ Sleep	Gear	Uncommon	■ Reflexes	Gear	Rare
■ Microskimmer	Gear	Uncommon	■ Maglock Key	Gear	Rare
■ Steamroller	Gear	Uncommon	(Promo Card)		
■ Walther Palm	Gear	Uncommon	■ Bounty		
■ Pistol	Gear	Uncommon	■ Hunter	Contact	Common
■ Armor-Piercing			■ Corporate		
■ Ammo	Gear	Rare	■ Secretary	Contact	Common
■ Bullet Barrier	Gear	Rare	■ Elven Hitman	Contact	Common
■ Camc	Gear	Rare	■ Media Chick	Contact	Common
■ Chipjack 3	Gear	Rare	■ Mr. Johnson	Contact	Common
■ Cortex Bomb	Gear	Rare	■ Fringe		
■ Crash	Gear	Rare	■ Surgeon	Contact	Uncommon
■ Defiance			■ Ganger		
■ Taser	Gear	Rare	■ Leader	Contact	Uncommon
■ Doberman			■ Mr. Black	Contact	Uncommon
■ Patrol Vehicle	Gear	Rare	■ Shopping		
■ Doc Wagon	(Platinum)	Gear	■ Cart Lady	Contact	Uncommon
■ Fairlight			■ Talismonger	Contact	Uncommon
■ Excalibur	Gear	Rare	■ Troll Bouncer	Contact	Uncommon
■ Greater			■ Humanis		
■ Elemental	Gear	Rare	■ Policlub		
■ Gyro			■ Ganger	Contact	Rare
■ Stabilizer	Gear	Rare	■ Squatter	Contact	Rare
■ Heavy Armor	(Full)	Gear	■ The Fat Man	Contact	Rare
■ Heavy Armor	(Partial)	Gear	■ Yoshimo		
■ Hellblast	Gear	Rare	■ Chang	Contact	Rare
■ Lucky			■ Caves		
■ Wabbit's Foot	Gear	Rare	of Halverville	Location	Common
■ Monofilament			■ The Iron		
■ Whip	Gear	Rare	Lung	Location	Common
■ Panther			The		
■ Assault			■ Warehouse	Location	Common
■ Cannon	Gear	Rare	■ Tir Tairngire	Location	Common
■ PRC-44b			■ Chop Shop	Location	Uncommon
■ Yellowjacket	Gear	Rare	■ Club Vortex	Location	Uncommon
■ Ranger Arms	Gear	Rare	■ Decker		
■ Redirect			■ Coffeehouse	Location	Uncommon
■ Datarail	Gear	Rare	■ Hermetic		
■ Remington			■ Library	Location	Uncommon
■ 750	Gear	Rare	■ The Ork		
■ Skillsoft:			■ Underground	Location	Uncommon
■ Athletics	Gear	Rare	■ Ares		
■ Macrotech-			■ Macrotech-		
■ nology			■ Aztechnology	Location	Rare
■ Renraku			■ Saeder-Krupp	Location	Rare
■ Shadowland			■ Shadowland	Location	Rare

CARD	Type	Rarity	CARD	Type	Rarity	CARD	Type	Rarity
■ Sniper Roost	Location	Rare	■ Lone Star	Challenge	Common	■ Crawler	Patrol Drone	Gear
■ The Festering	Location	Rare	■ Patrol	Challenge	Common	■ Patrol Drone	Gear	Common
Tusk	Location	Rare	■ Maglocks	Challenge	Common	■ Cyberarm	Gear	Common
■ The Hideaway	Location	Rare	■ Mine Field	Challenge	Common	■ Detect Enemy	Gear	Common
■ The Z-Zone	Location	Rare	■ Nets	Challenge	Common	■ Elemental	Gear	Common
Fuchi	Location	Rare	■ Retinal	Challenge	Common	■ Evaluate	Gear	Common
Industries	Location	Rare	■ Scanner	Challenge	Common	■ Explosive		
(Promo)			■ Security	Challenge	Common	■ Rounds	Gear	Common
Assassination	Objective	Common	■ Camera	Challenge	Common	■ Hand Razors	Gear	Common
Cermak Blast	Objective	Common	■ Security	Challenge	Common	■ Hog	Gear	Common
Courier Run	Objective	Common	■ Drone	Challenge	Common	■ Hunter Drone	Gear	Common
Critter Hunt	Objective	Common	■ Security	Challenge	Common	■ Invisibility	Gear	Common
Extraction	Objective	Common	■ Guards	Challenge	Common	■ Katana	Gear	Common
Fort Knocks	Objective	Common	■ Sentry Gun	Challenge	Common	■ Roto-drone	Gear	Common
Gang War	Objective	Common	■ Street Scum	Challenge	Common	■ Silencer	Gear	Common
Harlequin's	Game	Objective	■ Voiceprint	I.D.	Challenge	■ Skillsoft:	Firearms	Gear
Haunted	Objective	Common	■ Yak Attack	Challenge	Common	■ Skillsoft:	Melee	Gear
Highrise	Objective	Common	■ Ambush	Challenge	Uncommon	■ Sony	CTY-360	Gear
Milk Run	Objective	Common	■ Ancients	Turf	Challenge	■ Stim Patch	Gear	Common
Mob War!	Objective	Common	■ Chomps-2000	Guard Dog	Challenge	■ Streetline	Special	Gear
Operation	Objective	Common	■ Doubleeer	Challenge	Uncommon	■ Uzi III	Gear	Common
Cottonmouth	Objective	Common	■ Fastjack	Runner	Rare	■ Vindicator	Minigun	Gear
Protect and	Objective	Common	■ Ghost-Who-	Walks	Runner	■ Watcher	Spirit	Common
Defend	Objective	Common	■ Robo-plant	Guard Dog	Challenge	■ Yamaha	Rapier	Common
■ Revolt	Objective	Common	■ Revolt	Challenge	Uncommon	■ Iron Mike	Armor Spell	Gear
■ Shadowplay	Objective	Common	■ Shadow	Runner	Rare	■ Jack Skater	Armor Skin	Gear
■ Site of Power	Objective	Common	■ Cake Walk	Runner	Rare	■ Kham	Automated	Uncommon
■ Steal Wiz	Objective	Common	■ Crossfire	Runner	Rare	■ Lord Torgo	Patrol Vehicle	Gear
■ Softs	Objective	Common	■ Desert Hit	Runner	Rare	■ Marek	Beretta	Gear
■ Sucker Run	Objective	Common	■ Eco-war!	Runner	Rare	■ Bulldog Van	Gear	Uncommon
Tiki Head	Objective	Common	■ Fugitive Run	Runner	Rare	■ Chipjack 2	Gear	Uncommon
Enigma	Objective	Common	■ Fusion Run	Runner	Rare	■ City Spirit	Gear	Uncommon
Wetwork	Objective	Common	■ Operation Up	Challenge	Uncommon	■ Defiance	Defiance	Gear
Amazonian			■ and Over	Challenge	Uncommon	■ Shotgung	Gear	Uncommon
Hunt	Objective	Uncommon	■ Ragnarock	Challenge	Uncommon	■ Dermal	Plating	Gear
Cake Walk	Objective	Uncommon	■ Urban Brawl	Challenge	Uncommon	■ Tempest	Doc Wagon	Gear
Crossfire	Objective	Uncommon	■ Cleanse the	Challenge	Uncommon	■ Skwaaaark	(Gold)	Gear
Desert Hit	Objective	Uncommon	Hive	Challenge	Rare	■ Extended	Clip	Gear
Eco-war!	Objective	Uncommon	Dragon Hunt	Challenge	Rare	■ Titan	Fireball	Gear
Fugitive Run	Objective	Uncommon	Dunkelzahn's	Challenge	Rare	■ Wheeler	Flechette	Gear
Fusion Run	Objective	Uncommon	Black Book	Challenge	Rare	■ Hatchetman	Rounds	Gear
■ Operation Up	Challenge	Uncommon	■ Impossible	Challenge	Rare	■ 2057	FN Mag-5	Gear
■ and Over	Challenge	Rare	Mission	Challenge	Rare	(Promo)	FNHAR	Gear
Ragnarock	Challenge	Rare	Kamikaze	Challenge	Rare	■ Flatline	Foretelling	Gear
Urban Brawl	Challenge	Uncommon	Run	Challenge	Rare	(Promo)	Fuchi	Gear
Cleanse the	Challenge	Uncommon	Room 5b78	Challenge	Rare	■ Foxy Roxy	Cyber-6	Gear
Hive	Challenge	Rare	Ambushed	Challenge	Rare	(Promo)	Harley	Uncommon
Dragon Hunt	Challenge	Rare	■ En Route	Challenge	Common	■ Hatchetman	Scorpion	Gear
Dunkelzahn's	Challenge	Rare	Basilisk	Challenge	Common	■ Wheeler	Heal	Uncommon
Black Book	Challenge	Rare	Booby Trap	Challenge	Common	■ Adam Bomb	HK227	Gear
■ Impossible	Challenge	Rare	Corpselight	Challenge	Common	(Promo)	Ingram	Uncommon
Mission	Challenge	Rare	Electrified	Challenge	Common	■ Astral Sense	Valiant	Gear
Kamikaze	Challenge	Rare	Fence	Challenge	Common	■ Ally Spirit	Laser Scope	Uncommon
Run	Challenge	Rare	Feeding	Challenge	Common	■ Ares Predator	Lined Coat	Uncommon
Room 5b78	Challenge	Rare	Ghouls	Challenge	Common	■ Booby Trap	Muscle	Uncommon
Ambushed	Challenge	Challenge	Gut Check	Challenge	Common	■ Hammer	Replacement	Gear
■ En Route	Challenge	Common	Hellish	Challenge	Common	■ Bolt of	Jeopardy	Challenge
Basilisk	Challenge	Common	Traffic	Challenge	Common	■ Power	Elite Security	Uncommon
Booby Trap	Challenge	Common	■ Hit and Run	Challenge	Common	■ Browse	Guards	Challenge
Corpselight	Challenge	Common	■ Electrified	Challenge	Common	■ Ceska vz/120	Eyekiller	Challenge
Electrified	Challenge	Common	Fence	Challenge	Common	■ Hammer	Free Spirit	Challenge
Fence	Challenge	Common	Feeding	Challenge	Common	■ Ghouls	Fusion Gate	Challenge
Feeding	Challenge	Common	Ghouls	Challenge	Common	■ Gut Check		Uncommon
Ghouls	Challenge	Common	Gut Check	Challenge	Common	Hellish		
Gut Check	Challenge	Common	Hellish	Challenge	Common	Traffic		
Hellish	Challenge	Common	Traffic	Challenge	Common	■ Hit and Run		
Traffic	Challenge	Common	■ Hit and Run	Challenge	Common	■ Hit and Run		

CARD	Type	Rarity	CARD	Type	Rarity	CARD	Type	Rarity
Halloweener	Challenge	Uncommon	Luck o' the	Special	Common	Matrix Crash	Special	Rare
Hell	Challenge	Uncommon	Irish (Stinger)	Special	Common	Red Alert	Special	Rare
Hunting Gargoyles	Challenge	Uncommon	Moonlighting (Stinger)	Special	Common	Rush Job	Special	Rare
Integrated Control Center	Challenge	Uncommon	Bad Reputation	Special	Uncommon	Nerps! (Promo)	Special	Rare
Knight Errant Guards	Challenge	Uncommon	Blazing Guns (Stinger)	Special	Uncommon			
Mafia Goons	Challenge	Uncommon	Ricochet (Stinger)	Special	Uncommon			
Mage Strike Force	Challenge	Uncommon	Change of Plans (Stinger)	Special	Uncommon			
Manticore	Challenge	Uncommon	No Way Out (Stinger)	Special	Uncommon			
Poison Gas Trap	Challenge	Uncommon	Reinforcements (Stinger)	Special	Uncommon			
Razorhead Turf	Challenge	Uncommon	Rough Nigh: Scatter (Stinger)	Special	Uncommon			
Sabotage	Challenge	Uncommon	Whoops! (Stinger)	Special	Uncommon			
Control's Security Consultant	Challenge	Uncommon	Wild Goose Chase (Stinger)	Special	Uncommon			
Sim-sensation Swarm of Drones	Challenge	Uncommon	All or Nothing (Stinger)	Special	Rare			
The Funhouse Toxic Spirit	Challenge	Uncommon	Blindsided (Stinger)	Special	Rare			
Astral Sentry Anti-Astral Barrier	Challenge	Uncommon	Brain Freeze (Stinger)	Special	Rare			
Barney Phyffe Custom System	Challenge	Rare	Converge (Stinger)	Special	Rare			
Elite Security Mage	Challenge	Rare	Cowards (Stinger)	Special	Rare			
Flock of Geese Guardian	Challenge	Rare	Distraction (Stinger)	Special	Rare			
Dracoform Guardian Earth	Challenge	Rare	False Mentor (Stinger)	Special	Rare			
Elemental Elemental	Challenge	Rare	Just a Rumor (Stinger)	Special	Rare			
Heavy Sentry Gun Hellhound	Challenge	Rare	Lofwy'r's Schemes (Stinger)	Special	Rare			
Highway Showdown Incubus	Challenge	Rare	Major Drain (Stinger)	Special	Rare			
Killer Drone Motion Detectors	Challenge	Rare	Sudden Goblinization (Stinger)	Special	Rare			
Runners on Retainer Security Decker	Challenge	Rare	Suicide Run (Stinger)	Special	Rare			
Time-Delayed Bomb Deja' Vu	Challenge	Rare	Bad Lunch	Special	Common			
	Special	Common	Bar Fight	Special	Uncommon			
Green Apple Quicksteps	Special	Common	Block Party	Special	Uncommon			
Loaded Dice (Stinger)	Special	Common	Bugged Deck	Special	Uncommon			
			Cover Up	Special	Uncommon			
			Drive-by	Special	Uncommon			
			Even Steven	Special	Uncommon			
			Infected Chrome	Special	Uncommon			
			Rampaging Mutant	Special	Uncommon			
			Riots	Special	Uncommon			
			Wanted	Special	Uncommon			
			Abducted!	Special	Rare			
			Ambidextrous	Special	Rare			
			Cyber-psychosis	Special	Rare			
			Knock-Knock	Special	Rare			

High Noon

by Jay Fugiel

The two biggest kids on the playground, you just know they're gonna tussle. That's why I tear my attention away from Long Tall Sally's legs when I see J.D. ghosting around the Zed for action. What the frag's he doing here in the Colorado badlands, so far away from the L.A. DethRok scene? He's looking for it. His nostrils flare like a dog's as he picks his way through the crowd and I know he's hot on the trail. He's not leaving until he's had his game.

Sometimes you hear about some big-name ballplayer stepping down out of the 'vid screen and hitting the backstreet courts of a fast-flown youth. He's looking for the Edge, the Abyss, for the point where you can look down and down and down and not see anything, only maybe feel something looking back up at you. Those backstreet courts are where it lives.

That's where all the slick young talent that might be something, someday, is still cutting its teeth. Lone wolves who don't give a dreck about fame or social status, who look on a celebrity as a sell-out. Then they dance, man. Could be riggers racing up and down those long California canyons. Could be street samurai answering their eternal, only, question: who's faster? Could be a lot of things. Always ends the same.

Somebody eats dirt and there's a new sheriff in town. Or else there isn't.

So, anyway, our man J.D. in Babylon Zed... he spots Taliesin.

Now, you know Jagged Dante. Born and bred underground and that's where he's going to stay. The DeSades, baby. Too intense for baby-bushi in chic suits who push buttons at mainstream media icons. That alone lends him a ragged saintliness, only I don't know if that's a halo or just the sheen of his electromagnetic hair. Any bigger and they make you climb out of the pool, any smaller and well, that's just the point, isn't it?

Then here's our boy Taliesin. Big and bad and beautiful and cool, man, so cool you wouldn't ever guess that his band been chopped out from under him.

And I do mean chopped out.

Taliesin's got his back turned, talking to a samurai goes by the handle Jereboa. Does not see J.D. Jerry does, though. That's because Jereboa's got so much Edge he's got corners. You can't cover that much Edge with expensive sunglasses and nicely tailored suits from exclusive La Jolla boutiques. Don't climb the high dive at the end of the world if you're not ready to hang your feet over into the Big Empty.

Anyway...

Taliesin spins and half draws his gun, which is pretty much a stupid Irish thing to do. Dante doesn't fall back a step... beat... takes a long drag off his cigarette.

"Can you rock?"

Doesn't wait for the reply, just parts the crowd and wades in. Dante doesn't need to worry about his head being in the game. Even before he reaches the stage he's already up there.

Yeah, way up there. Won't see Dante at Trenton's or sucking on a Burrito at Fresno Bob's. No photo op.'s, so sorry, except for Fast Jack Lazarus, 'cause his heads always in the game, too. Jereboa doesn't seem to like the pop of flashbulbs, either, and shoots a cold look my way. Maybe he has a delicate complexion. I don't worry about it. That's what I pay Sally for.

Dante slides through the crowd like oil over water. Slick black Dante slides on up to the stage that he never really leaves. Taliesin has to throw a little weight around.

The crowd knows something's up, though not what. They're rolling in like the big breakers at Almeda, crashing up high against the stage, then pulling back to crash in again. It's the age-old ritual, the crowd working themselves up until they need a release, any re-

lease from the carnal agony/ecstasy that is the penultimate expression of Rock and Roll.

They see Dante and sink into a frenzy... long thin hair shimmers down over his dog-thin features... he reaches into the rack and comes up with an antique-looking Fender Stratocaster. It's a dirty white and just the same precise shade as Jagged Dante's cigarette stained fingers. One of those digits, narrow and long, long, long - he just bends at the hip and they scrape the floor - slides across the rusted grating. He snaps off a piece to use as a pick. Starts to play.

Taliesin's up there now, slipping the wide strap of a bass guitar around his neck, and the only thing those axes are jacked into are the huge Hawley Stack amplifiers that reach to the zigzag ceiling like wrought iron columns. He stands, head nodding, eyes squeezed shut like he was in a wind tunnel, picking up the beat.

People are dancing up above us, the dance-floor a massive rusted grate suspended from the roof by enormous anchor chains. The beat is fast and rough, the way they like it, tempered and sweetened by the vocals that Taliesin intones without needing a mike. The floor starts to sway back and forth, the chains humming with the bass line and the movements of hundreds of dancers. Above my head.

I ask Sally the name of the song. That kind of info you can get on a chip only I don't chip. It's a bad habit, always expensive and sometimes addictive. Just ask Ripper. He's got about as much flesh on him as a '57 Chevy. Nineteen, that is. Anyway, I like her to know. Seasons of Wither, she tells me, a very deep cut. She looks bored. That's a samurai thing. Looking bored.

Dante lets the song die away into subsonics that rattle my teeth. Then he does something even I don't expect. He hands Taliesin the guitar. The crowd goes instantly, absolutely insane, reaching a new manic stage. I'm sitting in the middle of a bunch of very dangerous people who are being intentionally whipped into a violent frenzy.

So what else is new?

I finally recognize one other guy on stage, the drummer. His name is Diablo and he used to run with Taliesin back in the day. He is, in fact, one of the few Dead Warlocks who isn't. Dead, that is. Taliesin flashes him some hand signals. Flashy percussion rakes the crowd like machine-gun fire. Taliesin embraces the crowd. He has that crazy-beautiful smile that you can only get by being born Irish - the one that says "I'll kiss you or kill you and it's your choice, boyo." He shoots that smile right at Sally.

"They say Lazarus rose once... what I would call a poor night's work. If his pretty lady wants a backstage pass, I'll shake her all night long."

Jesus, I don't get paid enough for this.

That song and then another. I'm too busy working my way through the crowd to give much of a listen, heading toward the stage. Nobody gets this close to Dante and Taliesin is starting to look like he might be worth some ink. Anyway, I've got some questions for them both.

Dante's gone by the time I reach the stage. No real surprise there. No parting words of wisdom, for the working press or aspiring juke-box heroes. Taliesin doesn't seem too crushed. After tonight's performance I'm sure he'll be able to find better company than Jagged Dante. Be tough to find worse.

Don't worry about our boy Taliesin. Although he travels in well-armed circles these days, I think he'll be all right.

'Cause he can rock.

Way of the Hunter

by Jonathan Szeto

The history of the warrior class traces its roots back in time to the age before recorded history, to the hunter-gatherer societies of the Neo-Lithic Era. During that time, when man's role as predator was essential for his survival, hunting became elevated as human society underwent the process of birth.

As individuals and families coalesced into clans and tribes, the role of the hunter became mystified, and elaborate pre-hunt ceremonies arose. Ostensibly, they acted as a blessing for the human predators, but they also served as a recognition of the mystery of the life-death cycle. Early humanity quickly became aware of the irony that was hunting, that to sustain their own lives they had to take the life of another creature.

As time progressed and humanity developed, the need to hunt for one's food diminished, but hunting still remained, evolving into a sport and pastime. While hunting was no longer necessary physically, the spiritual mysticism discovered in the primitive pre-hunt ceremonies still remained. Furthermore, the physical and mental challenges offered by playing the role of predator attracted many individuals.

This cut-and-dried anthropological answer also has an identification in the Awakened world. Several anthropological magicians have speculated that the physical adept traces its ancestry back to the pre-civilization hunter, who used his crude Gift to gain an edge over Nature's other predators. Additionally, some have theorized that the pre-hunt ceremonies of primitive tribes and societies were a unique form of ritual magic, tailored for the budding physical adept.

LAW OF THE JUNGLE

The Way of the Hunter is, in a way, a combination of several different Ways, namely the Ways of the Warrior, of Invisibility, or of the Animals (some more controversial scholars would suggest that, conversely, these different Ways derived from the Way of the Hunter). Followers of the Predator's Way borrow traits from other Ways: the aggression of the Warrior, the stealth of the Unseen, or the animal instincts of the Beasts.

However, hunting is not a matter of brute strength, sharp senses, or agile quickness, though such traits are helpful. The human predator who relies too much on his own abilities all too quickly becomes prey to his own quarry. Instead, two primary factors give the hunter the real advantage: his quick intellect and the ability to make use of tools. At a significant physical disadvantage (as compared to other para/animal species), the hunter learns how to maximize his own capabilities, as well as how to take advantage of the environment in his own favor.

On the metaphysical level, the typical hunter physical adept possesses as his main powers Improved Abilities, primarily in Stealth. Specifically, hunters focus on the tracking aspects of stealth to find and follow their prey. Other common Improved Abilities include those in combat skills, namely Armed Combat or Projectile Weapons (or its modern day "grandchild," Firearms). Improved ability in Unarmed Combat is very rare, though not unheard of. Other notable but less significant powers include Improved Ability in Athletics or Sensory Improvements. Physical-improvement powers, such as Increased Strength, Quickness, or Reflexes, are also common in hunter adepts, but they are the least important ones in his repertoire.

NEW SKILLS

Area Analysis: Area analysis enables a runner to "stake out" a limited territory and gain useful information on not only its tactical terrain value, but also insight on the behavior of its local populace,

patterns of movements, well-trafficked routes, and other interesting observations. Armed with this information, a runner can blend in more easily within the area he has staked out and use the local environment to his advantage, either on the hunt for "prey" or for getting the drop on would-be predators.

To use this skill, the runner has to spend at least 48 hours of continual observation in the area he wishes to analyze. Upon completion of observation, the runner then makes a Skill Test against a target number based on the size of the area involved. The exact target number is a subjective GM call, though the following suggested examples may help:

1 square kilometer of wilderness	4
10 square kilometers of wilderness	6
Small town or village	5
1 block of a large city	3
Large commercial facility (shopping mall, airport, etc)	4
1 square kilometer of a large city	5
City District (i.e., a neighborhood)	6
Corporate Arcology	8
Additional 24 hours spent observing (one time bonus only)	-1
An obvious "foreigner" (human in an ork ghetto, etc.)	+2
Heavy police/security presence	+2
Locals suspicious of "outsiders"	+3

Depending on the number of successes generated, the character may gain the following bonuses:

- +1 die per success to any Stealth tests made within the area.
- +1 die per every two successes to any Etiquette tests within the area.
- +1 die per every two successes to Surprise tests within the area.
- +1 die per success to any knowledge test regarding a local resident or establishment in the area observed.

Astral Tracking: Astral tracking is a Special Skill available only to characters who are capable of astral perception. Some physical adepts possess this skill, notably "ghost hunter" types. It also represents the unusual ability of some legendary hunters able to track their prey, despite the complete lack of any signs or evidence.

Astral tracking allows the character to track and trace another living or supernatural being by the residual remains of its astral aura left on the Astral Plane, mystic residual which all such beings imprint on their environment. These "astral footprints" only allow the character to trace his/her target; the signature is way too faint to establish any sort of mystical link for any other purposes.

To use astral tracking, the character must first assense the target, an object the target has handled, or a place the target has visited. If performing one of the latter two, the character must assense the object/place for a minimum of one hour. The base Target Number is 12 minus either the target's Essence attribute, rounded down, or Magic Rating, whichever is higher (the mana being channeled through a magically active aura makes it more conspicuous than the passive life sign of a mundane aura). Additionally, apply the following modifiers below. Success gives the character a trail of astral footprints to follow the target and locate him/her/it in the material world.

Affected by the target's magic Aura masking	-1 +Grade
--	--------------

Background count	+Rating
Concealed by Nature Spirit	+1/spirit's Force
Magical ability	-2
Potency	-(Potency/3)
Sympathetic links	
Favored object/place	0
Often handled/visited	+2
Recently handled/visited	+4

Notes

Affected by the target's magic: If the target is magically active, any place or object which has been the subject of the target's spells or powers will have its aura tainted by the aural signature imprinted on the target's magic. An assensing character receives a -1 modifier to the test, as the active use of magic makes the traces stand out better against the environment.

Aura masking: If the target is an Initiate or Free Spirit with the aura masking power, increase the modifier by the Initiate's Grade or the Spirit's Force.

Concealed by Nature Spirit: If a nature spirit is using its Concealment power to hide the target or an object handled by the target, add a modifier equal to the spirit's Force to the target number.

Magical ability: If the target is a magician, adept, spirit, or critter with magical ability (either active or innate), apply a -2 modifier. This modifier only applies when assensing the target directly.

Potency: Toxic and insect shamans and spirits do not fit in well with the natural world, and as such, the dark spoor of their auras are even more distinctive. Subtract a third of its Potency (or Magical Threat Rating), rounded up, from the target number.

Sympathetic links: See page 35 of the **Grimoire II** for the definitions of the various categories of sympathetic links.

Astral tracking may also be used in lieu of an Intelligence test to track astrally threads left by ritual sendings and foci (see Astral Tracking in **SRII**, page 149).

NEW POWERS

Ambush

Magic Cost: 1.5/level

Ambush increases the shock value of a surprise attack, thus making it more effective. For every levels of Ambush the adept possesses, he gains a -1 modifier to all Target Numbers while attacking a surprised character. Likewise, surprised characters receives a +1 modifier to any tests against the adept.

Blood Mark

Cost: 1.5

An adept with this power is able to track anyone or anything which she has wounded (i.e., inflicted Physical damage). The power works by establishing an unconscious astral thread from the adept to the target upon a successful attack by the adept.

To use this power, the player first declares prior to making an attack that she intends to make a Blood Mark. If she succeeds with the melee attack in doing damage, the adept then makes an Intelligence test, using her target's Willpower as a Target Number. Success means that the adept will be able to track the target successfully, unless the target knocks out or kills the adept.

An adept can only Mark one target at a time. Marking does not count against the number of actions performed, but the player must declare that she intends to Mark prior to rolling any dice.

Since Blood Mark works by making an astral link between the adept and the target, anyone capable of astral perception can track the link (as per the Astral Tracking rules in **SRII**, page 149) and can channel a spell on the adept through the link.

An Initiate, spirit, or any other being capable of projecting onto the metaplanes can break the link by making a successful Astral Quest (see the **Grimoire II**, pages 93-96), as physical adepts are incapable of projecting onto the metaplanes (so far as anyone knows right

now). The rating of the Astral Quest is equal to the adept's Magic attribute and lasts (Rating)D6 hours in duration.

Flaw Detection

Magic Cost: 2

With the aid of this power, an adept can observe an opponent for flaws and weaknesses in armor or tactics which the adept can exploit later in combat. To use this power, the adept must spend at least a full combat turn observing his opponent. The character can take no other actions during this time, not even any other Free Actions. Upon completion of observation, the character then makes an Intelligence test against the Intelligence of his quarry. If the adept succeeds in the test, he gains a +2 modifier to the Power of any attack against that opponent.

An adept may use this power against more than one separate opponent; however, observations against second and subsequent opponents gain a cumulative +2 modifier to the Intelligence test. The adept may only observe one opponent at any one time.

Hide in Plain Sight

Magic Cost: 1

This power allows an adept the ability to hide anywhere, despite any apparent lack of cover or concealment. A Hidden adept cannot be detected by any physical means whatsoever: normal or enhanced sight, thermographic imaging, radar, rain/water splashing off of the adept, etc. Additionally, if the adept is also an Initiate, he can mask his/her astral aura, so as to be hidden from astral observation as well (though other Initiates can attempt to break through the mask normally, if they're suspicious). For all intents and purposes, he's virtually not there at all.

This power remains in effect, so long as the adept remains motionless; once the adept moves, the power is broken. However, a Concealed adept can attack with surprise, using the normal surprise rules (see **SRII**, page 86). An adept cannot perform this power while under any form of observation WHATSOEVER, to include remote cameras and astral observation (after all, what good is hiding something, if someone watches you while you hide it?). This limitation remains in effect even if the adept is unaware he's being watched.

Vital Blow

Cost: 0.5/level

With this power an adept can land a vital blow, which the target is unable to heal or regenerate. On a successful hit which does Physical damage, whether in ranged or melee combat, the player rolls a number of dice equal to the adept's level in this power, against a Target Number equal to the victim's Body. For every success the adept generates, one box of damage inflicted in the attack will not heal, until the adept is knocked unconscious or drops the power.

An adept can only "tag" one victim at a time. If the adept chooses to use this power against another opponent, the power ceases working on any previous victim, allowing damage to heal normally again. Note that the amount of critical damage cannot exceed the physical damage caused by the attack. The player must declare prior to making the attack that she intends to mark her target with the Vital Blow power.

Example: Sonya, who has the Vital Blow power at level 5, decides to inflict a Vital Blow on a street samurai (Body 4). Striking the gillette with her Killing Hands, she inflicts Moderate damage (3 boxes). Sonya's player then rolls five dice for the Vital Blow effect, against a Target Number of 4. Scoring a 2, 4, 4, 5, and 8, Sonya gets four successes; however, since she only inflicted Moderate physical damage, only three boxes on the razorguy's Physical Condition monitor are affected. The gillette will never recover beyond Moderately wounded, unless he knocks out or kills Sonya, or Sonya decides to drop the power against him.

Had Sonya inflicted Serious damage with her attack, the four of the six points of damage inflicted would not heal. The other two would be able to heal under normal means.

THE HERMETIC LODGE

The area for all that's magic, both of a Shamanic and Hermetic nature.
by Chris Hussey

>Time for a new post don'cha think? Well, we got our regular assortment of new spells here for all use. Take a look, see what ya like, and use your Karma wisely.

>Henning's Boy

>>You have chosen Only New Spells. Do you wish to proceed? Y/N

>>Y

>>Spells logged in last __ days? (enter days)

>>7

>>Read on, oh great and powerful magician!!!

DETECTION SPELLS

Recount

This spell allows the caster recall the previous moments of the target's memory. The images come across as sights, sounds and smells. The caster can recount 2 minutes of time for each net success, but must remain in contact with the target for a number of Turns equal to the number of successes to get that information. If the magician is casting the spell on a voluntary target, he may lower his Target Number to 2.

Type: Mana Range: Touch Target: Willpower (R)
Duration: Sustained Drain: [(F/2+1)]M

>This spell kills for coming to a scene late. Hell, it works great even if you're on time.

>Sullivan

>If you're late, then you got more problems then worrying about some silly spell.

>Derangel

>Lone Star mages just love this spell.

>Skips

MANIPULATION SPELLS

Telekinetic Manipulations

Accident

This spell duplicates the Critter Power of the same name. The spell causes minor, non-damage causing accidents to occur. Having a target trip, hit in the body with a small object and so on. The Accident itself may not be fatal, but it's effects may. An example would be making a target trip and fall. While that is not fatal, the forty story drop off the ledge the target was on is. Either way, the Accident forces the target to lose one Simple or Complex action.

The target may avoid the accident by generating more successes than the caster in his Resistance Test. The target uses his Quickness or Intelligence Attribute based on the na-

ture of the accident. The target number is the Force of the spell.

Type: Physical Range: LOS Target: 4
Duration: Instant Drain: [(F/2)+1]S

>Hey cool! Now I can be my own Spirit!

>Ground Pounder

>Good! You can't cut it in the shadows anyway.

>I have mana questions

>Frag you! I could smoke your hoop before you even knew what happened.

>Ground Pounder

>Don't even worry about this guy. He's nothing but a small time Sorcery adept, with a poor spell arsenal

>Gossip

>You're next, you stupid mother-fragger!

>Ground Pounder

Gills

This spell allows the target to breathe underwater. The target breathes normally, but does not actually sprout gills. The target can still only breathe what oxygen is available in the water. Many toxic lakes and rivers have little to spare.

Type: Physical Range: LOS Target: Body
Duration: Sustained Drain: [(F/2)+2]M

>Don't even try using this spell in Puget Sound.

>Night Speaker

>I once used this spell with a Physical Mask to make me look like a dolphin. It was slick.

>Taylor

Enlarge

This spell allows the target to increase his size by a number of points equal to half his Body score, rounded down. Thus a character with a 6 Body, could appear to be the size of someone with a 9 Body ($6/2=3$). This spell does not change the racial appearance of the target, nor does it grant them extra dice for Body Resistance Tests.

The spell does grants the target an extra die for every 2 successes to use in Interrogation or Intimidation Tests for the duration of the spell.

Type: Physical Range: Touch Target: Body
Duration: Sustained Drain: (F/2)D

>I can think of all kinds of fun uses for this spell
>Kilt-wearing Hoop-Fragger

>It's the only way you can get a date!
>I have mana questions

>At least I can get one.
>Kilt-wearing Hoop-Fragger

>But the drain would put you to sleep before anything happens, not after.
>Skips

ILLUSION SPELLS

Blindness

This is the Illusionary version of the same Health spell. The spell renders the target blind for its duration. Because it is a physical spell, this spell will affect cybereyes.

Type: Physical Range: LOS Target: Intelligence (R)
Duration: Sustained Drain: [(F/2)+3]L

>Great spell in a pinch. And the drain is a breeze.
>Angel

>You really want to mess someone up, use this spell on 'em. Nothing frags with a person more than when they can't see.
>Night Speaker

>Unless they don't need their sight.
>Batboy

Deafness

Like the Blind spell, this spell renders the target deaf for its duration. This spell will affect cyberears, as it is of a physical nature.

Type: Physical Range: LOS Target: Intelligence (R)
Duration: Sustained Drain: [(F/2)+3]L

>Stack this one with Blindness, and your target is neutralized.
>Angel

>Unless their part dog.
>Posh

>Or a ghoul.
>Jose

HEALTH SPELLS

Speed

This spell increases a target's moving modifier for running, allowing them to run at incredible speeds. In effect, the spell doubles the Quickness modifier for running, based on race. This spell will not double the Quickness Attribute.

After the target has finished running, he must make a Resistance Test or suffer Stun damage. The damage increase for every two rounds of running, rounded up (2 rounds equals Light Stun, four rounds equals Moderate Stun and so on). The target number for the test is equal to the Force of the Spell.

Type: Physical Range: Touch Target: 2 x Quickness
Duration: Sustained Drain: [(F/2)+1]D

>You can go like a fraggin' bat outta hell with this spell. Wipes you when you're done though.
>Sirman

>Yeah, but it's worth it. Out ran the Ancients in the Barrens, thanks to this baby.
>Posh

Editor's Note:

When I was just a contributor, this was one of my favorite things to do. Well, now that makes it a bit rough, being Editor-Man and all. My time has been shortened, and I would rather fill the magazine with contributions from you, rather than myself (Besides, it makes my head bigger, and that is tough in small doorways).

So, point being that I'd like to see some spell contributions to the magazine. They've generally been well received in the past, so I'd like that to continue in the future.

TODAY'S HEADLINES

International

ALBANIA - Tensions continue to rise once again in the beleaguered third world country, as revolutionaries, led by the charismatic elf known as Tsnari Grummov held another rally against the government and the megacorporation, Saeder-Krupp. Grummov stated once again, that if aid programs recently cut off by the government, were not reinstated, and Saeder-Krupp did not start hiring locally for it's new industrial factory complex, there would be dire repercussions. "We will not wait much longer," Grummov announced. "The government and megacorps must know that it is still the people that are in control."

Government officials could not be reached for comment on why the aid programs, which service the poor of Algeria, were halted in the first place.

Sader-Krupp officials said that local hiring for it's new industrial complex would begin once the current non-local force, which includes managers and some workers was better acclimated to the local conditions.

MORROCO - Gregory DeChevilier has been named the first winner in the Draco Foundation's Knowledge Frontiers competition. Mr. DeChevilier won in the category of Astral Exploration, by locating a supposedly yet undiscovered metaplane. Though the details of the contents of this meatplane were not revealed, the members of the Draco Foundation's judges board were quite impressed by DeChevilier's findings. Winning the competition entitles Mr. DeChevilier to a grant from the Draco Foundation, and a patent for his discovery. Mr. DeChevilier was not available for comment.

National

ST. LOUIS - The Metahuman Empowerment Coalition staged a massive rally in support of that city's ghoul population. Nearly two hundred marchers came out in support of ghouls, with cries of discrimination and lack of proper protection in wake of what locals are terming "The Hunts." These hunts began after a small enclave of over thirty ghouls was discovered living in an condemned apartment complex on the west side of the city.

Since the discovery of the enclave, the buidling has been torn down, forcing the ghouls into hiding. Not long after, bands of vigilantes sought out the ghouls, which brought about numerous, and deadly confrontations. In the past two weeks alone, over thirteen lives have been claimed on both sides.

The members of the MEC claim that the local authorities did nothing to stop the merciless hunting of ghouls and may have even aided citizen groups in tracking down the fleeing ghouls.

BOSTON - In a related story, Biomeans Inc., of Massachusetts released a statement to the media today that they are approximately eight to twelve months away from a final prototype for synthetic flesh which may be edible by ghouls. Citing breakthroughs in biochemical and magical research, developers at Biomeans hope to have a prototype by mid 2060, with a final product by the end of the year.

Biomeans is the first corporation to announce a breakthrough in the race for such a product, which was spurred on by the bequest in the will of assassinated President Dunklezahn. If Biomeans' product proves successful, it could earn them two million nuyen from the President's will.

CLEVELAND - The search continues for the missing daughter of Ohio's reputed snack king, Daren Varras. Stephanie Varras was reported missing on the 27th of October, and has not been seen since. A lack of evidence, including a ransom note has hindered the search for Stephanie Varras, though authorities are convinced she still remains in the area.

Varras is best known for his line of "Varras Vittles" snack cakes and other sweet treats. Varras is also regarded as one of the most successful dwarfs in the state of Ohio. Authorities have not ruled out involvement by Cleveland's active anti-metahuman groups.

SEATTLE - Vowing not to give up without a fight, Graham Overhauss said he will see his campaign through to the end, in his bid for the Governorship of the city-state.

Though recent polls show that incumbent Governor Marilyn Schultz with a resounding lead, Overhauss said that the polls are stilted, and placed his trust in the voters of Seattle. Overhauss was recently hounded by the press over a scandal within his organization where three underage aids were found naked and high on BTL chips at Overhauss' suite.

Responding to these charges, Overhauss stated that quote, "I'm not the only one with dirt." Candidate Overhauss declined to elaborate on that statement.

Got a news item to report on? We'd loved to see it. E-mail off to hussfolk@discover-net.net. Or you can use the tried and true post office and send it to: Shadowland Newsitems 1326 99th Ave W. Duluth, MN 55808

Writer's Guidelines

Contained on the following pages are the new fangled Writers' Guidelines for Shadowland Magazine. Read them, know them, be them. Use these guidelines when preparing to submit an article or any type of piece to the magazine. Doing so, not only helps the beleaguered editor, it also helps make the magazine come out on time. Believe it or not.

What to Submit

Shadowland is a magazine devoted solely to the Shadowrun RPG, published by the fine folks at FASA. While, we're sure it's good, we won't accept submissions for other games to publish in the magazine.

Shadowland generally publishes short fiction (5000 words max), optional or variant rule articles, articles dealing with new items such as weapons, cyberware or spells. Shadowland also publishes short scenarios, though longer runs are possible.

What NOT To Submit

There are a few things that we're not really looking for, so keep this in mind when writing.

While Shadowrun is a gritty game in a bleak future, we don't need any articles or stories that contain acts of a violent sexual nature or excessive vulgarity (unless using the Shadowrun swear words of course).

Also, when composing a piece keep game balance in mind. A squad of shadowrunners that are all Grade 8 Physical Adepts, backed up by two cyberzombies and a magician that makes Harlequin nervous, is a bit much. In other words, don't overdo it.

How to Submit

If at all possible, try and submit your piece using the following guides:

We like articles in MS Word 7.0 (which can translate many other file types), but will accept other, common file formats. If you are submitting something in a more exotic, less common format, please check with us first. In this format, please include all special formatting (bold, italics, etc.).

In addition to this style, we would like to have an ASCII text backup of the file. It helps in translation from file to layout.

All submissions, regardless of media (see below) must have the

author's name, address, and phone number on at least the first page of the file document. We can't pay you, if we don't know who you are.

Please include a brief cover letter in your document, regardless of media, explaining what your piece is about. Don't forget your address.

And most importantly, please include a copy of the **Disclosure Agreement** with your submission. This is vital.

Media

While a hardcopy, with accompanying 3.5" IBM Compatible floppy is preferred (including all file types), e-mail submissions are acceptable.

Handwritten pieces are unacceptable, and will be promptly ignored, and teased.

Where to Submit

All submissions may be sent by postal (snail mail) to:

Shadowland Submissions

1326 99th Ave W

Duluth, MN 55808

E-mail submissions may be sent hussfolk@discover-net.net

Subject Guidelines

A few particular guidelines need to be followed when submitting a piece.

When quoting a rule, please include the manual used, and the page number (i.e. "His weapon is Customized (Fields of Fire, p. 78)").

When detailing any major characters with exotic or uncommon equipment (alpha-delta grade cyberware primarily) please include notes on the math involved so we can easily double-check your work. Characters with all delta grade chrome and cultured bioware can cause calculator meltdown.

When writing something that might be seen in a Shadowrun sourcebook, think about the presentation. The magazine attempts to emulate the source and scenario books, and would like the authors to do the same. A good example is the "Shadowtalk" in various sourcebooks. Notice how it has changed from older publications. Please stay current.

Please use .25" tabs, and single spaces between sentences.

Please, please, please. I will love you forever.

How to Act

Once a submission is received, it goes through an approval process, that may require the author to perform some rewrites. Don't take this the wrong way. The piece was liked, it just needs a little work. When possible, rewrites will be asked for with enough lead time to be completed by the author. Other times, this may not happen. You have been warned. And very important, If you have any questions, at any time, about the guidelines, or a potential article, please ask. It will save both of us time.

What to Expect

Don't expect instant turnaround of your submission. Shadowland is a quarterly magazine. You may submit something that may not see print for several months to possibly even a year. Only so much material can be placed in one issue.

Shadowland Disclosure Form

Please include a copy of this form for each piece submitted

Title of Piece: _____

I submit this piece and all accompanying materials to Shadowland on a non-confidential basis. I understand that this submission, and its review by Shadowland does not establish, in any way shape or form, a relationship with Shadowland, except as stated in this form. I also understand that Shadowland magazine may reject this idea upon review, and I may have my piece returned to me, only if Shadowland is supplied with a Self Addressed Stamped Envelope. If my piece is returned, Shadowland is not responsible for lost or damaged articles.

I agree that Shadowland will have a reasonable time for review of the piece, and its submission to the Approval Process, and will do its best to inform me of an article's acceptance or rejection. I also understand that my submission does not create any recognition or acknowledgement of originality or novelty.

I understand that I will be compensated once my piece reaches publication

I understand the theory of relativity and what it means to be a real human being (sorry, I just couldn't resist)

I also warrant that this piece has never been published and that it is original and does not violate the rights of any third party. I also am the sole owner of this piece and I'm of legal age, or am the legal guardian of the submitter.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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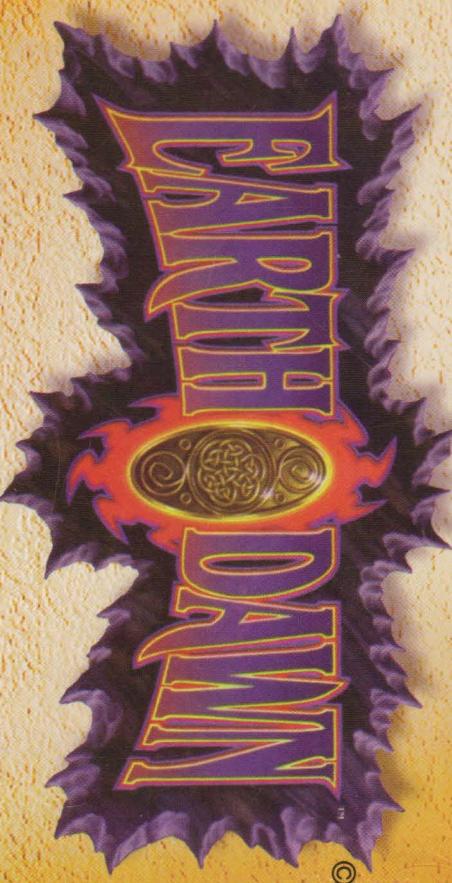
Please submit form, with submission to the following address. Please keep a copy for your own records.

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