

# SHADOWLAND

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VOL. 4



Artwork by Joel Biske

# SHADOWLAND

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**Submissions:** We are looking for good articles and illustrations for Shadowland. When submitting manuscripts and artwork, enclose a stamped and self-addressed envelope with appropriate postage for the return of your items if you want them returned. We also would appreciate that article submissions be presented on IBM compatible diskettes along with hardcopy. Electronic submissions (the preferred method for articles) are received at our internet address.

# The Editor Speaks...

Greetings and welcome to the fourth issue of Shadowland, the Shadowrun support magazine brought your way by Sword of the Knight Publications! We hope you enjoy and come back for more!

This issue we were able to get out sooner. Thanks to everyone who sent in submissions allowing us to get this issue out faster, especially Andrew Ragland for his massive VatJob adventure!

Finally, note that we have moved! See page 1!

*Kevin Knight*



## Comments from our readers...

Would you consider the idea of a "classified" page? (Sections for SR trading, ads for apa-zines, personals, etc. The only rule could be is that language is kept to a PG-13 rating)

James Rommell

*Hey! That sounds like a cool idea! Okay, people, send your stuff in and follow James' rules!*

KK

You're starting to put the Shadow back into Shadowrun. I like it.

Adam Guggemos

*Only with the help of loyal readers who submit these excellent articles! Thanks!*

KK

The quality has remained high. Worth the wait. I guess if I want it sooner, I need to get off my butt and write an article.

Lee DeBoer

*Good idea! We can always use quality submissions!*

KK

Great work, one of the best RPG mags on the market. Any chance on publishing your own supplements?

Terence Co

*We've broached that subject with FASA and they aren't interested at this time, but you never know...*

KK

# How Are We Doing???

Thanks to the 32 people who sent in their response cards from Volume #3! Please keep sending in your response cards, we really like to know what you think of our magazine! Winners of free copies of Volume #4 are Paul Janetzke, Erik Kammler, and Brad Beavers! Congrats! Each issue we'll draw out three response cards and send free copies of the next issue to those people! So send your response cards in!!!

*Responses from Volume #3...*

<u>Article</u>	<u>Rating</u>
Amethysts	3.09
Arabian Magic	4.00
Another Good Run...	3.16
Gross-Frankfurt Sprawl	3.25
Super Tuesday	3.25
Hermetic Lodge	3.41
Nature of Magic	3.10
Now I Lay Me Down...	3.13
Celtic Totems	3.87
Get Out of the Water!	3.59
Magical Groups	3.66
All Gear, No Guns	3.77
Second Tier Solutions	3.84

<u>Artist</u>	<u>Rating</u>
Jeff Laubenstein	3.77
Kevin Montanaro	3.77
Aaron Porter	2.29
John Bridegroom	3.36
Wesley Tester	2.93

Overall Rating of SDL 3      3.60

I guess since you, as you say, just print what is sent to you, there's no point in comments. I'm just still very glad to have a reliable outfit making this magazine. Thanx!!

Adam Rasmussen

*No, that's not true... Your comments are always welcome, letting us know what we are doing right and what we are doing wrong. While we don't commission articles, we do screen what we get in (not every submission sent in makes it into the mag...). For example, Drak's Drek received a fairly low rating, so we dropped it in favor of other articles. Thanks for your comments and for buying Shadowland!*

KK

# The Shopping Mall

by Erik Jameson

## FIREARMS

### Ares M-13 "Mauler"

The Ares Mauler is the perfect (or at least the biggest) combat handgun. Chambered with the exclusive new "Shiva" rounds, the M-13 has an 18 round(!) extended magazine and two points of built-in recoil compensation.

Due to the tremendous caliber, a minimum Strength and Body of 3 is required. In addition, each shot has the equivalent of two recoil points. Also note that the Mauler can only use the Shiva rounds (which cost double), which conversely, can only be used in the Mauler.

Conceal	Ammo	Mode	Damage	Weight	Cost	Legality
3	18c	SA	11M	4kg	1900¥	6P-E

>>>>[Needless to say, this type of piece is rapidly becoming vogue, despite the crushing recoil. And I hate to have to say it, but it is an amazing piece of engineering.]<<<<

--BFD<11:33:12/7-19-57>

### Colt American M2055a1

This gorgeous sidearm is destined to become the next U.C.A.S. sidearm for the rest of this century. Just as rugged and reliable as its forefather, the original M1911a1, the M2055a1 chambers a massive super magnum cartridge, providing incredible takedown power in a sleek, sexy, fashionable frame.

A weapon on the cutting edge, the M2055a1 includes the Smartgun link lvl-2 and two points of integral gas-vent compensation. The sole down side of this marvelous weapon is the massive recoil (two points per shot fired.)

Conceal	Ammo	Mode	Damage	Weight	Cost	Legality
3	10c	SA	10M	3 kg	9,900¥	6P-E

>>>>[Finally, a weapon that delivers on all its promises...I just wish my hands wouldn't hurt so much after a day at the range with it.]<<<<

--Duke<20:53:12/7-19-57>

### Ares M-99 "Sledgehammer" Revolver

This massive weapon was designed with the troll in mind, being far too big for a normal human. Even the round has been scaled up to the point where only a troll's hands could possibly handle the crushing recoil. Just remember to bring ear protection if you plan on having a normal conversation after firing this behemoth.

The Sledgehammer requires a minimum Body and Strength of 8. The Body rating must be natural, but the Strength rating can be augmented. There is a +1 Target Number modifier for every point (in each category) below the minimum. In addition, when fired in small closed spaces, firing the weapon will add +3 to all Hearing Perception tests for 3d6 Turns, minus one turn for every success on a Willpower(8) test. This includes the weapon's user. Those with proper protection obviously avoid the penalties.

Conceal	Ammo	Mode	Damage	Weight	Cost	Legality
2	6cy	SS	13M	7.2kg	6,500¥	6P-E

>>>>[Oh god. Please tell me this is a sick joke.]<<<<

--Unamused<11:39:12/7-20-57>

>>>>[Hehehehe. I love this piece, and I think it was about time someone designed a weapon with a troll like me in mind.]<<<<

--Mash<11:40:12/7-20-57>

### Federated Arms MP-150 Assault Pistol

A heavy duty light pistol specially designed for light security work, the MP-150 was designed to be the definitive machine pistol. Rather ugly by fashion standards, the MP-150 features a large tube shaped 50-rnd magazine that mounts along the top of the weapon, feeding into the rear, in a bull-pup configuration. An optional 100-rnd magazine is also available.

Comes with integral laser sight and gas-vent 3. The 100-rnd magazine costs an additional 75', reduces Concealability to NA, and adds 1kg.

Conceal	Ammo	Mode	Damage	Weight	Cost	Legality
2	50m	SA/BF	6L	3kg	925¥	4-G

>>>>[I don't care how many rounds it has, this is a fashion no.]<<<<

--Curves<11:54:12/7-20-57>

>>>>[Gotta disagree babe. The M-150 also makes the machine pistol worth the shadowrunners attention. Plus, corps do like this piece; cheap and reliable.]<<<<

--Nazdack<11:56:12/7-20-57>

### Holy Vengeance Munitions, Inc. "Archangel" SMG

The Archangel, built by Isreal's largest independent arms manufacturer, is rapidly becoming the weapon of choice for corporations, shadowrunners, and terrorists

in the Middle East. The Archangel features iron sights as well as an LCD "rounds left" window on the side of the specially designed magazines (50'/mag).

The Archangel is very well designed, including an integral Smartlink-II, gas-vent 4, and is extremely accurate and reliable.

Conceal	Ammo	Mode	Damage	Weight	Cost	Legality
3	32c	SA/BF	8M	3.5kg	3065¥	4-G

>>>>[Surprisingly simple weapon, despite the bells and whistles. All Holy Vengeance weapons have to be able to stand the harsh weather and deserts of the Middle East, so simplicity in basic design is the rule.]<<<<

--Grain<12:11:12/7-20-57>

### Saeder-Krupp MK-19 "Warlord" Assault Rifle

The MK-19 "Warlord" is the latest, and hottest, combat accessory from Saeder-Krupp, and is definitely a monster with an unloaded weight of 7kg. The rifle is chambered in .30-06, while the grenade launcher is fed by a 14 round barrel, which allows for greater combat endurance, but also makes the weapon very bulky.

Includes a folding stock, two points of recoil compensation, and an integral smartgun link.

Conceal	Ammo	Mode	Damage	Weight	Cost	Legality
-	30c	All	9M	7kg	11,600¥	1-G

>>>>[Good lord almighty. This is an assault rifle for a troll. Who the frag else could possibly carry one of these around in combat?]<<<<

--Nazdack<12:27:12/7-20-57>

### Saeder-Krupp MK-21 "Darkstorm" Assault Grenade Launcher

The hand held grenade launcher has finally truly been brought into the 21st century with the MK-21. Sure to become a favorite with the mercenary community everywhere, the MK-21 fires grenades at an incredible rate of 550 RPM! Far superior to anything else on the market!

Conceal	Ammo	Mode	Damage	Weight	Cost	Legality
2	12c	All	varies	6 kg	6,500¥	1-J

>>>>[550 RPM! That's insane!]<<<<

--Unamused<13:16:12/7-20-57>

>>>>[Yeah, because you can burn through the clip in nothing flat. It's big advantage? Unlike an assault cannon, you can perform indirect fire with the Model 10]<<<<

--Paladin<13:23:12/7-20-57>

### Aztechnology RL-12c "Infierno"

The "Infierno" is Aztechnology's most powerful

rocket launcher to date, crushing all competitors (much like it's maker!). Truly a fearsome weapon. While heavy and unwieldy to smaller users, the 21 rounds contained in a rotating barrel more than compensates for any difficulties that may arise.

GM Note: Because of its massive size, a minimum Strength and Body of 5 is required (can be augmented).

Conceal	Ammo	Mode	Damage	Weight	Cost	Legality
-	21cy	SA/BF	14D	22kg	25,000¥	1-K

>>>>[I really don't like the Azzies anymore...]

<<<<

--Bricklayer<13:55:12/7-20-57>

>>>>[I've all ready seen this mounted on light military vehicles and scout craft. Instant heavy support.]<<<<

--the Dark Stranger<14:11:12/7-20-57>

### Fuchi Munitions "Daimyo"

This extremely light and slim rocket launcher is quite in accordance with Fuchi's philosophy of designing light, easy-to-use and easy-to-carry weapons, at a small cost. The semi-automatic "Daimyo" has few gadgets, and is loaded with a hanging magazine carrying 7 rockets.

Conceal	Ammo	Mode	Damage	Weight	Cost	Legality
-	7c	SA	16D	9.5kg	8,700¥	1-K

>>>>[Vanilla.]<<<<

--SimMan<14:45:12/7-20-57>

>>>>[Yeah, but with swirls.]<<<<

--Nazdack<14:46:12/7-20-57>

### Heckler & Koch R-94 "Pandemonium" Rocket Launcher

A revolutionary design by the weapons team the whole world trusts, the Pandemonium finally solves that nagging problem of backblast. Essentially a reusable platform designed to fire standard man-portable rockets and missiles, each round is mounted onto the top rail, with the exhaust nozzle snapping tightly into a specially hardened receptacle. When fired, the backblast is vented harmlessly upward and outward. A hardened shield protects the user's face.

\*Reloading takes a full action, meaning it can only be fired every other action.

Conceal	Ammo	Mode	Damage	Weight	Cost	Legality
-	1	SS	as round	11.5kg	8,300¥	1-K

>>>>[Interesting idea. Does the job as advertised. Not sure of how much use it is though; it does take forever and a day to reload.]<<<<

--Second Man<14:56:34/7-20-57>

>>>>[And it doesn't really solve the problem of

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backblast, it just reroutes it. Pretty slick looking in action though.]<<<<

--Composer<15:13:00/7-20-57>

## AMMUNITION AND FIREARM ACCESSORIES

### Federated Arms Gun-Cam Modification

This relatively minor modification to your handgun mounts a tiny digital camera aimed parallel with your barrel. Whenever the gun fires, mere fractions of a second later the camera takes a digital picture, giving you vital evidence to assist in your self-defense plea. It's internal memory can hold 20 images to aid in your defense before needing to be downloaded. All Lone Star and Knight Errant security forces, and most other law enforcement providers, have the required datajack modifier plug (70¥) for downloading to computers or data display systems.

It should be noted that many states and law enforcement agencies are working to make this modification mandatory for all registered weapons.

The Gun-Cam does not preclude the mounting of any other underbarrel accessory.

Currently costs 225¥.

>>>>[Out-fraggin-standing! Life just doesn't get any easier being a shadowrunner...]<<<<

-Grumble<15:39:12/7-20-57>

>>>>[Above and beyond all the court stuff, a cop sees a handgun without the mod, he knows without any paperwork it ain't registered. I think I hate Federated Arms...]<<<<

-BFD<15:42:12/7-20-57>

### Smartgun Optimizer Software

The Smartgun Optimizer Software (or S.O.S.) recognizes what many weapon aficionados have known for decades: a pistol is different from an assault rifle. Seems obvious, but smartgun designers have always ignored this simple fact. SmartCore Software Designs changes all that.

Upload the simple 40Mp program into your personal hardware memory and it will interact with your Smartgun-II to help fight recoil. It operates on the simple principle that an Ares Predator will have a different recoil than will a Colt-22A2, and is able to assist the Smartgun link in adjusting targeting. Expect this bad boy to be in the Smartgun-III!

All basic weapon types are included in the program, which essentially compensates for one point of recoil.

Cost	Availability	Street Index
5,300¥	10/2weeks	2

>>>>[I got to be a beta-tester of this little fella, and it works great, just as advertised. Sorry to everyone

with the original Smartgun links; won't work on anything but the new breed.]<<<<

--Hell Raider<16:33:12/7-20-57>

### Ares Cyber-assisted Smart Gyro-mount Mk2

At first glance, the Mk2 appears to be just another gyro-mount. And indeed, in many ways, it is. However, via recent advances in cyberinterface technology, the standard gyro-mount has been vastly improved.

The Mk2 achieves its superior compensation through two means. First, it uses a specially licensed variant of the Smartgun Optimization Software redesigned just for the Mk2. Second, the system itself interfaces with the user via a standard datajack. When used in conjunction with the users own Smartgun Link II, the Smart Gyro-mount can use motors and the weapon's own recoil to help keep the mounted weapon on track.

The user suffers a -5 Penalty to his Combat pool, but receives a -9 Bonus to recoil compensation when firing any heavy weapon. For purposes of this item, "heavy weapon" is anything from light machine gun on up to a Vindicator or similar weapon. Because of the expert system and the motors that make up the Smart Gyro-mount, anything less than a heavy weapon will receive only a -5 Bonus to recoil compensation. In addition, the Smart Gyro-mount adds +1/+2 Armor to everything except Security Armor or greater.

Cost	Weight	Availability	Street Index
36,200¥	9kg	14/2weeks	3

>>>>[Drool.....the only thing I don't understand is how Ares got it's hands on the Smartgun Optimization Software. That's a SmartCore product, right?]<<<<

--Classic<17:24:12/7-20-57>

>>>>[Let's just say that Ares was willing to pay big nuyen to have the software now, and not wait to reverse engineer it.]<<<<

--Gladiator Watcher<19:38:12/7-20-57>

## BIOTECH AND CYBERTECH

### Universal Omnitech ImmuComp-15

ImmuComp-15 is a broad spectrum antidote, used to treat nerve and bio-toxins. It is similar in basic theory and construction to the wide-spectrum immunization process, but also includes "detachable" constructions that stimulate the bodies natural pathogen defense process into overdrive. In effect, ImmuComp-15 is a one-shot Strength 3 antidote for almost anything in normal concentrations (GM's discretion). However, due to the fact that the bodies natural defense system is being artificially stimulated, the user must take a mandatory Moderate Stun.

ImmuComp-15 comes in a variety of dispensers and

delivery systems.

Cost	Availability	Street Index
4,000¥/dose	6/1 week	1.75

>>>>[Catches almost anything you can get into your blood. Problem is that it is rather weak. EMTs use it to buy time to pass their patients off to medics. Paramedics (and doctors) use it to buy them more time to figure out what the real pathogen is.]<<<<

--NREMT<20:20:12/7-20-57>

### Universal Omnitech AccelaRad-9

AccelaRad-9 is the revolutionary new drug from Universal Omnitech that is bound to change the way we live and fight! AccelaRad-9, unlike traditional medicines, does not actually heal the wound directly. Rather, using a concept similar to that used in ImmuComp-15, AccelaRad-9 drives the bodies own natural healing processes into a hyperactive state. Wounds that once may have taken a month to fully heal can now be healed in a week!

One box of damage is healed every twelve hours, assuming several factors apply. One dose of AccelaRad-9 must be given every twelve hours and the patient must be on a high-flow nutrient/glucose IV drip. Currently, only critical care units have open access to AccelaRad-9, meaning the local Street Doc probably doesn't have it.

There are drawbacks to this amazing drug. While under its influence, the patient will be in a fevered coma. Once off the drug, the patient has the equivalent of a Deadly Stun that must be slept off. In addition, due to the body being driven into a hyperactive state, the patient is very susceptible to disease, and injury, for the next week. Typically, in a hospital setting, a wide variety of antibiotics are prescribed for the following weeks. In game terms, this means a -2 Body reduction for resisting pathogens AND healing.

Cost	Availability	Street Index
12,700¥/dose	18/1 month	4.5

>>>>[Wizzer stuff. Just don't expect your local street butcher to have any handy. Frag, if you go to a public hospital, they might not even have it. Usually only private hospitals have the nuyen.]<<<<

--OMH<20:53:12/7-20-57>

### Cranial Vehicle Remote Control Deck (Beta Test Variant)

Why should deckers get all the fun? This newest advance in rigger technology gets rid of those clunky decks and get the rigger back into the action.

Essentially a simple device, this is merely a cybernetic version of the standard vehicle remote control deck. It has effectively three "ports" and includes the radio system to communicate with the vehicles (can be encrypted, 10,000' times the Rating).

A vehicle control rig is required to properly interface and control the vehicle. It otherwise functions as a standard remote control deck.

In addition, the user suffers a +2 Penalty to all target numbers in the "real" world for each vehicle being controlled.

Cost	Essence	Availability	Street Index
97,550¥	2.6	22/2 weeks	4

>>>>[Neat! I wish I had one of these things back when I was a shadowrunner!]<<<<

--Aria<21:35:12/7-20-57>

>>>>[This system may finally give riggers the respect we deserve. Imagine being able to control drones and still be effective in combat yourself. Street sams watch out!]<<<<

--Jackhammer<21:44:12/7-20-57>

>>>>[Big problem though guys. This is strictly beta-test material. There are only two ways to get one. First, be selected by any of a variety of different corps (and be subject to physicals, reports, and tracking). Or two, carve one out of the head of someone who no longer needs it. Gruesome, but true.]<<<<

--the Happy Reaper<21:54:20/7-20-57>

>>>>[I expect one of the Big 8 to pop-out a finished product almost any day now. My money's on Yamatetsu, but then again, I'm not much of a gambler.]<<<<

--Puttyman<22:04:28/7-20-57>

# The Street Gang Campaign

## by Stephen Kenson

The traditional Shadowrun campaign consists of a group of characters working as mercenaries for a variety of clients, usually wealthy warning megacorporations with money to spend employing the characters in carrying out their illegal dirty tricks behind the scenes. But the Sixth World is a complex setting with a wide range of stories to tell. There are as many different kinds of Shadowrun campaigns as the gamemaster cares to imagine. This column looks at some of those different campaigns and how to build and run them.

In a street gang campaign, the player characters are all members of the same gang living in the urban jungle of the metroplex (or even different gangs if the gamemaster is feeling especially brave). The gangers are not hardened, experienced shadowrunners, in fact they're not really shadowrunners at all for the most part. They are simply trying to survive in the 'plex and maintain their turf against all other comers.

Starting characters in a gang campaign should begin with a lower Rating Threshold than the starting 6 for shadowrunners, probably more like 5 or 4 for maximum Attribute, Skill and Force ratings. The gamemaster will probably want to restrict access to a lot of equipment and cyberware at first also.

The benefit of this sort of campaign is there is a lot of room for character development and growth and there aren't likely to be many problems with too much power accumulated by the characters. The players have to like the idea of playing little fish in a big pond, however, and understand that they aren't going to be the super-runners of the past mowing down whatever opposition gets in their way.

### STREET GANG ARCHETYPES

#### The Fledgling Shaman/WizKid Mage

This character is the magical muscle of the gang. Gangs with magicians in them are rare, and this character should be the only magician in the group (with the possible exception of the Burned Out Mage, below). This character can follow either the Shamanic or Hermetic tradition or the Voudoun tradition in Awakenings. The character's starting spell ratings cannot exceed 4 except through the use of force modifiers like fetishes.

#### The Burned-Out Mage

The burnout is an older character who is a kind of mentor-figure to the Wiz Kid mage and some of the other members of the gang. He's been there and done it all and now he's pretty much washed up as far as magic is concerned. He has a fair amount of magical

knowledge, but not a lot of ability left. He's made up for some of the loss with cyberware and the rest with knowing when to run. For every Magic point the burnout sacrifices to something other than cyberware, he gains either +1 Attribute Point, +3 Skill Points or +5 Force Points.

#### The Street Squire

This character is a street-samurai wannabe. He's got the attitude and he's getting the chrome. All he needs is the experience and the chance to break into the biz and make a name for himself. The Street Squire carries himself with a proud air and follows a code of honor that he sticks to. He's a bit more naive than the experienced veteran samurai, because his ideals haven't been tarnished by as many years of experience.

#### The Ganger

The archetype right out of the book, which can be used as is. This character is the backbone of the gang and probably has a fair amount of background with them.

#### The Enfant Terrible

The Enfant Terrible is a baby decker who's really good, or really lucky, for someone their age. Decking is often considered a "young-uns" business in a lot of cyberpunk worlds and some very skillful deckers can show up at a pretty young age. The Enfant Terrible's main limitation isn't skill, it's equipment. Their cyberdeck probably isn't all that hot, but they might have some good programs if they wrote 'em themselves. Keep in mind that a lot of street gangs are going to consider a decker more of a "luxury item" than a tech who can fix your trideo or your walkman. A decker is going to have to constantly justify their presence to some members of the gang.

#### The Techie

A techie has a natural gift for working with electronics of all kinds. He's the one who makes all of the gang's technojunk work, patching things together from salvaged junker that SINner society throws away. The techie might also have some Computer skill and ability to handle the Matrix, but not necessarily. He's usually a little short on combat skill, but long on all sorts of technical know-how.

#### The Corpkid

The corpkid is a runaway, a young person who got a bellyful of courage and enough ideals to bolt from his comfy corporate haven out onto the streets. Most runaway corpkids get chewed up and spit out on the

street, but a few manage to survive out on their own, using their unique skills. A corpkid character may start the game with neural-based cyberware from ShadowTech, to reflect the access to higher grade cyber that the corps have. A likely role for the corpkid is that of techie or baby decker since they will tend to have more technical backgrounds than most other characters.

### The Gang Warrior

A physical adept character just coming into full use of his abilities. Most street-level physads are unaware of their true natures or, if they know they are adepts, are entirely self-trained. Most of their powers will revolve around survival on the mean streets. Because their magic allows them to exceed normal limits, gang warriors begin as fairly powerful characters, likely to be important in any gang that values physical prowess (and most do).

### The Rider

The Rider character's specialty is driving, almost always motorcycle riding since most gangs rarely have access to better vehicles. The rider will probably not have a vehicle control rig (that may be a future goal), but they always have a good variety of Vehicles skills and Vehicle B/R skills. The rider character will likely be in charge of maintaining the gang's bikes and other vehicles.

### Urban Tribal

An urban tribal is a ganger, often a metahuman or tribal, who follows the "ancient ways" of his people adapted to city life. Some entire gangs go for this motif, dressed in leathers and tribal symbols and treating the 'plex as an "urban jungle" that they hunt through. Some urban tribals go for various retro-style weapons, but just as many prefer modern equipment.

## ADVENTURES

Gamemasters running a street gang campaign will have a lot more work to do in setting up and running adventures. A lot of the traditional Shadowrun adventures don't work with gangers who are not professional mercenaries like most shadowrunners. Gamemasters can make interesting use of some of the published Shadowrun adventures that include gangs by turning them around and running them from the gang's perspective and involving the player characters in the plot. Adventures like Ivy & Chrome, Dreamchipper and Elven Fire are interesting when looked at from the gang's angle.

Some other gang-based adventure could include:

### Turf War

An obvious ganger adventure is when the gang becomes involved in a conflict with a rival gang over turf rights. Perhaps the rival gang is backed by a

powerful player like the Mob, the Yakuza, a corp or even something like a free spirit. If so, the player characters are going to have to be careful and an outright assault against the rival gang would probably be suicide. How can the characters protect their neighborhood from these invaders?

### Lost Sheep

The gang encounters a corpkid out on the streets who ditched the high lifestyle for any number of reasons. Will they try and help or leave the kid and pretend they don't notice? What if someone (or several someones) are after this kid because they have something valuable they took with them when they ditched their comfy corporate quarters?

### Initiation

The characters are attempting to join a gang and have to pass through the gang's rites of initiation, which could include surviving in the urban hell of the 'plex, confronting an area supposedly haunted by ghosts or ghouls, critter wrestling and anything else the gamemaster cares to think of.

### Lost Boys

A vampire is moving in on the gang's turf and he has turned several members of a rival gang into vampires or vampiric pawns. How are the characters going to deal with this bloodsucker when they discover that some of their enemies have become superhuman?

### Moving On Up

Of course, if a gang campaign begins to lag, the gamemaster can always "graduate" the characters to full-fledged shadowrunners status and start over with a new campaign, with player characters with fully developed backgrounds, a strong team-spirit and a long list of friends... and enemies, too.

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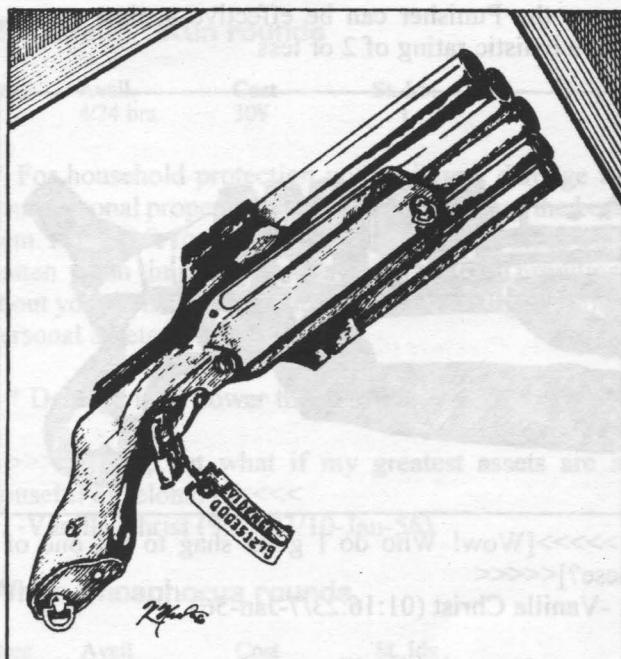
# Serious Buckshot

## by Kevin Montanaro

>>>>[No matter how clean your run begins, before the Nuyen is slotted yer gonna be diggin' in and tradin' fire. That whizzer LMG you like to tote around like a juiceman in Orctown can be pretty effective in a late-night scrap...if you're a fraggin' soldier who ain't afraid of wearin' a "Bust me Piggies" sign on his back, or if you don't mind attracting the tougher vultures who know you got action goin' on. Me, I like a good ol' fashioned 12-gauge. Not only does it keep your profile on the ground level, but when you got five goons right up in your face, trading first names and bad breath, a shotgun is unsurpassed in close-combat. Miniguns make a real pretty mess of a man's physique, but a well-aimed scatter-blaster can send those five men home wearing their own blood with one solid "kerboom!" Besides, a shotgun advertises skill, where a minigun advertises "Yes, I really DO need this many bullets to clear a job." Rank amateurs with platinum cred.

I'm always on the scout for new toys, and I have some on the line for you to check out, real smokers too! Check out these monsters next time you're shopping for iron, you'll have the edge, and you'll have it in style.]<<<<

-Proffessor Doomsday (01:24:16/9-Dec-55)



"Pan Flute" Pistol (Manufacturer Unknown)

Conceal	Ammo	Mode	Dmg	Wgt	Avail.	Cost	St. Idx
4	5(B)	SS	7S	3.5	7/2days	300¥	2.5

>>>>[Pure and simple street find chummers. I hear this piece is made somewhere in deep Amazonia,

another source has it that the Pan Flute is built in some survivalist basement-bunker of a handful of CAS kooks. In any case, go gangers dig this rod for it's stopping power and it's ferocious appearance. Like it's namesake, the Pan Flute is based around it's 5-barrel arc, loading 16-gauge shells. Simple mechanism really, 5 barrels, 5 hammers, cock as many hammers as you like, and with one trigger pull the cocked hammers fire. It's also got a barrel stock so you can steady your aim with your free hand. A signature gun if any, but it scares you up some respect.]<<<<

-Proffessor Doomsday (1:48:16/9-Dec-55)

>>>>[Yeah, 5 barrels at a go makes a big noise, but I've watched go gangers trying to be fearsome with such a shot; aiming the pistol at another biker on a 90-kph stretch. Five muzzles flare at once, the target falls to his death, and so does the attacker. The steel spring recoiler in the stock doesn't keep you steady enough to fire a shot like that.]<<<<

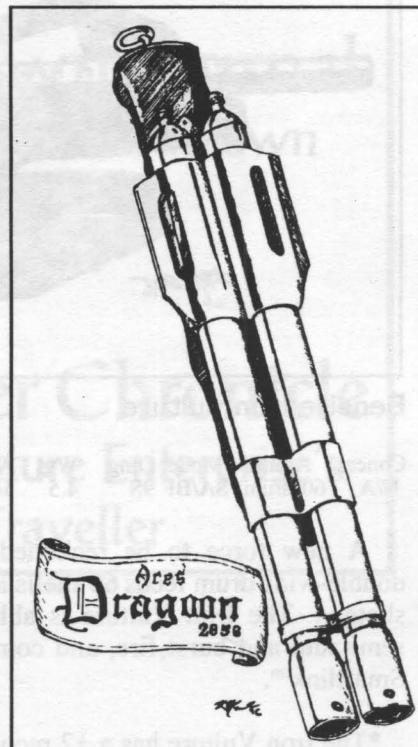
-King Sprout (8:16:31/17-Jan-56)

### Ares Dragoon

Conceal	Ammo	Mode	Dmg	Wgt	Avail.	Cost	St. Idx
6	6(M)	SA	7S	3	5/24 hrs	500¥	1

A durable and reliable sidearm comes in many forms. This one takes the form of a semi-auto magazine-fed double-barrel shotgun in a 41 cm-long pistol. Set this weapon on the table during those stubborn negotiations for better odds, and be sure it's on your person when lost in the Barrens.

>>>>[I bought an earlier model Dragoon a couple years back, and it's served me well all this time. One thing I should point out is the ruggedness of the Dragoon. You can hammer rappeling spikes into concrete with it,



drop it from the 5-story building you're scaling, as it lands in the street it's promptly assaulted by the wheels of a city bus, and it will be in one piece, still cocked, and the barrel still nice and shiny.]<<<<

-Proffessor Doomsday (23:25:18/98-Dec-55)

### Ares Pit Bull

Conceal	Ammo	Mode	Dmg	Wgt	Avail.	Cost	St. Idx
7	3(M)	SS	9S	2.5	5/24hrs	250¥	1

The Pit Bull is small, about the size of a small snub-nose, but much wider. The 6-cm barrel boasts a 6-gauge bore (imagine the size of a 2-lbs lead ball...this bore is wider still!), dispensing a wide blast that will



turn a would-be attacker into a barely-identifiable statistic.

>>>>[The recoil makes my arm ache, the sound makes my ears ache, but boy you should see what it does to some slot's face at point-nothing range! There ain't a maid alive you can pay to clean that mess, baby!]<<<<

-Vanilla Christ (00:41:34/7-Jan-56)

>>>>[Ouch]<<<<

-King Sprout (02:58:26/3-Jan-56)

### Perazzi SX-40

Conceal	Ammo	Mode	Dmg	Wgt	Avail.	Cost	St. Idx
N/A	16(M)	SA	9S	4.5	5/2 days	900¥	1.5

Four 16-gauge barrels in a diamond-formation delivering maximum firepower in semi-auto ability. The pull of a lever decides whether you're unloading 2 at a time or 4, and gives no leniency.

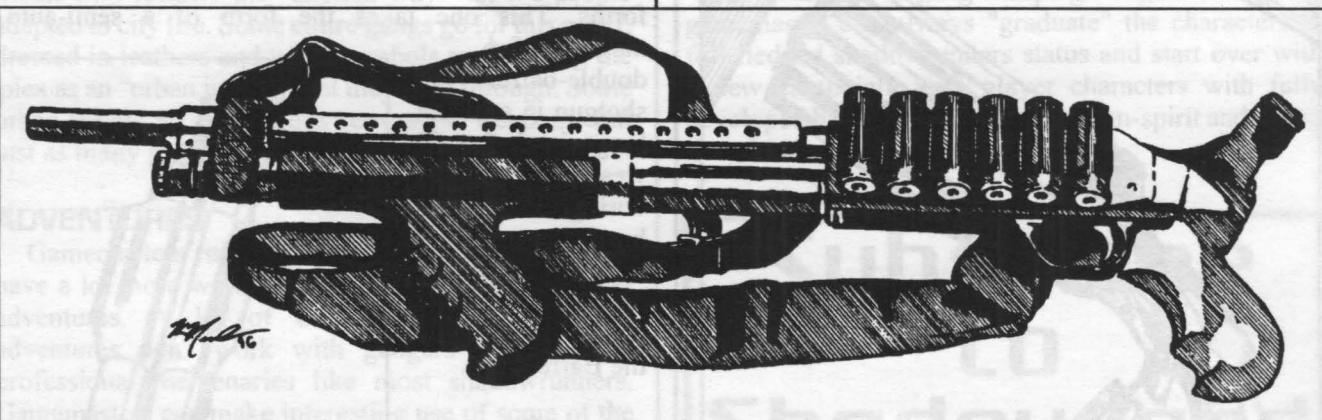
### G.E. Punisher

Conceal	Ammo	Mode	Dmg	Wgt	Avail.	Cost	St. Idx
N/A	Belt	FA	12S	14	HA!	HAx!	---

>>>>[The military has recently brought this weapon out of the factory and it's already begun to filter into the streets...a little bit anyway, but it's out there. The Punisher is a 5-barrel gatling gun that fires extra-long shotgun shells, and most test results have the blasts cutting through most lesser armors. The Punisher is light enough to be used as a personal arm, but is also known to be mounted to riot control vehicles and loaded with gel rounds. My guess is that you'll be seeing more of this cannon in the coming years]<<<<

-Proffessor Doomsday (09:11:21/11-Dec-55)

\* Where normal shot rounds are unable to penetrate armor, the Punisher can be effective against armors with a ballistic rating of 2 or less.



### Benellie Iron Vulture

Conceal	Ammo	Mode	Dmg	Wgt	Avail.	Cost	St. Idx
N/A	60(drum)	SA/BF	9S	4.5	5/2 days	900¥	1.5

A new force to be reckoned with. The unique double-wide drum feeds 60 shells into this elite combat shotgun. The Iron Vulture is able to attach in both semi-auto and burst fire, and comes with an integral Smartlink™.

\*The Iron Vulture has a +2 recoil modifier

>>>>[Wow! Who do I gotta shag to get one of these?]<<<<

-Vanilla Christ (01:16:23/7-Jan-56)

>>>>[An ugly slag like you ain't gonna be able to score one of these from a disease-ridden Bandersnatch nympho on her deathbed, even if she's jackin' "Housecall Cowboy" sims!]<<<<

-King Sprout (11:37:50/9-Jan-56)

>>>>[I'll be payin' you a visit this weekend pallie. I'll be good and sauced and I'll have an industrial-sized

blender, and you're gonna be tomorrow's Bandersnatch Sproutshake Suprise at Taco Bell]<<<<  
-Vanilla Christ (08:45:35/9-Jan-56)

## SPECIALTY AMMO

>>>>[Here is some real choice ammo (as well as some real sick ammo) that I've either seen or heard about. Mostly street finds, and a lot are hard to come by, but it's worth a shot (pardon the pun) to scrap around and look for these items at your local Murder Mart.]<<<<

-Proffessor Doomsday (03:16:58/9-Dec-55)

### Flamethrower Rounds

Dmg	Avail.	Cost	St. Idx
special	6/48 hrs	100¥	2

A stainless steel shotgun casing, loaded with incendiary gel that ignites on firing, sending out a blast of flame that sticks to and burns whatever it hits.

\*Use SRR flamethrower damage rating at -1 power rating. Normal shotgun ranges are halved

>>>>[One good misfire and your shotgun catches fire and blows up in your hands, and I have some pretty burn scars to prove it]<<<<

-Lex Lucifer (04:12:29/21-Dec-55)

### Homesafe™ stun rounds

Dmg	Avail.	Cost	St. Idx
*	4/24 hrs	30¥	1

For household protection with minimal damage to your personal property, Homesafe™ rounds are the best item. Homesafe rounds are thin hollow metal slugs that flatten upon impact, stunning any felons prowling about your home, and causing minimal damage to your personal assets.

\* Damage is -2 power than normal weapon damage

>>>>[Heh, but what if my greatest assets are a houseful of felons?]<<<<

-Vanilla Christ (9:15:03/10-Jan-56)

### White Phosphorus rounds

Dmg	Avail	Cost	St. Idx
*	8/2 days	200¥	2.25

When fired, this type of round dispenses fragmented burning white phosphorus into its target. The phosphorus imbeds and burns the target until it burns itself out.

\* Treat as standard shot ammo with +3 to power. Effects last for 3 rounds, decreasing in power by 2 each new round. Burns through soft armors at 1/2 armor rating, but is useless against heavier armor.

### Bola Rounds

Dmg	Avail.	Cost	St. Idx
10S	24/8 days	200¥	3

Bola rounds consist of a mono wire connected by two metal balls. The balls are different in size and weight, causing them to stretch the wire and spin as they travel, cutting into all things in its path.

>>>>[Again imagine a misfire, like one ball getting stuck and the other one shooting out only to spring back toward the wielder. Nope, no scars to verify this one folks.]<<<<

-Lex Lucifer (05:01:13/21-Dec-55)

>>>>[I'm imagining a G.E. Punisher loaded with this stuff; ah, the pretty red mental picture it paints]<<<<

-Vanilla Christ (09:31:07/10-Jan-56)

**Don't forget about Sword of the Knight's other publications**

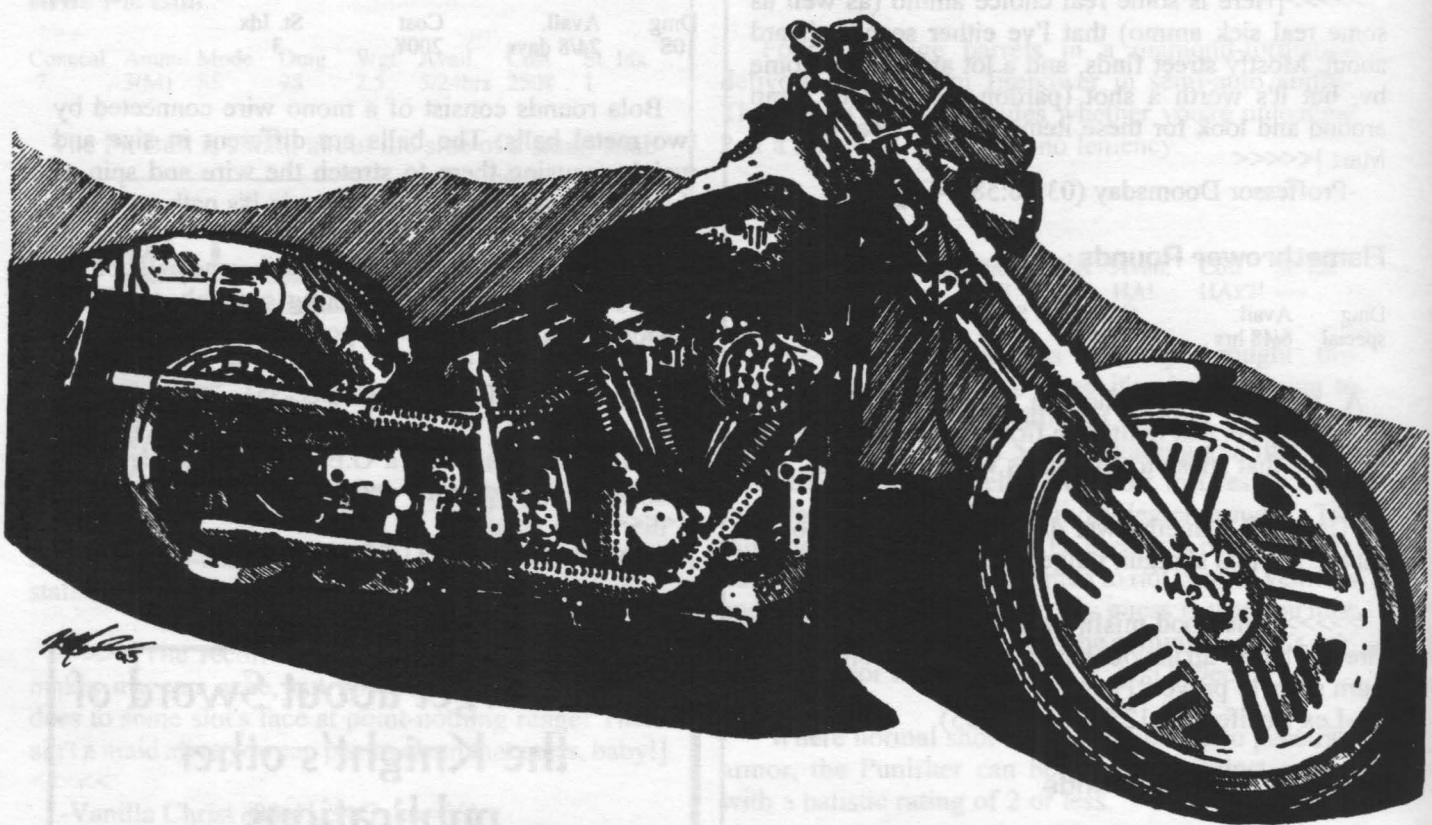
**Earthdawn Journal  
for FASA's Earthdawn**

and

**Traveller Chronicle  
for Far Future Enterprise's  
Traveller**

# 2056 Harley Davidson Ultra-Glide

by Kevin Montanaro



The Harley Davidson Motor Company has revived the tradition that made them king of the road. Popular demand has called forth the re-unveiling of the great iron horse that remains an American classic, and is quickly becoming one of the year's most popular ground vehicles.

The Ultra-Glide's frame and design is religiously loyal to the models manufactured by Harley Davidson in the 20th Century. The Ultra-Glide maintains it's status further by eliminating most of today's technological vehicular enhancement; no autopilot, no ECM, just raw horsepower giftwrapped in chrome pipes. The Ultra-Glide isn't for everyone, but if you're the kind of horseman who appreciates fine art in a motorcycle, this might be the ride for you.

## Ultra-Glide

Handling	Speed	B/A	Sig	Autopilot	Cost
5	45/130	4/1	2	---	18,000Y

Seating: 1 front (2 if fender pad installed)

Economy: 20 km per liter

Fuel: IC/35 liters

Storage: 2 cf saddlebags

Options: Options? It comes in Midnite Blue, Flame Yellow, or Classic Black.

>>>>[These suckers are the biz in the CAS, but they ain't too widespread elsewhere yet. The Japanese seem to have a stranglehold on the Yankee markets, but the old hogs are comin', so git ready.]<<<<

-Alloy Cowboy (01:07:54/05-Dec-55)

>>>>[And I thought my old Scorpion was loud! This animal just makes my legs tingle after a two-hour ride, the chicks really dig the vibes too! I wouldn't count too heavily on this bike getting you outa high-speed pursuit, they can home right in on the noise, not to mention, too many sharp curves and yer road-soy!]<<<<

-Rad Nick (10:33:49/12-Dec-55)

# The Ahvaz Diaspora

by Erik Jameson

+++++Warning! This post has been cross posted to Magicknet, Business Thaumaturgy Datanet, the Seattle ShadowLand, and directly routed to the NEXUS!

I picked these four articles out of different trash dumps. Well, actually, the fourth is recent, but it hasn't garnered much attention. All of them, for some obscure reason, were buried by their publications, stuffed out of the way, meaning very few people got a chance to look at them the first time around. I suspect it may have something to do with the fact that all four authors are rumored (no confirmations of course) to have taken a trip to the Middle East recently (and of that I won't say further). They've been configured so that you can comment on them, so please do. Oh, and the big cross posting? I was asked my a nameless someone, who deposited large sums of nuyen into my account, and made a "donation" to the Nexus.

--St. Stan

## A GEOGRAPHIC REFERENCE TO KNOWN STABLE METAWORLD LOCATIONS

by Dr. Heinrich Dsrpfeld, Th.D., University of Berlin

(Originally appearing in the on-line version of the German language edition of Popular Magic Today, June 11, 2057.)

>>>>[The University of Berlin? Great. I even have a Th.D. from Berlin. And an MBA, a D.D.S., and a few others.]<<<<

--Krispy<09:12:32/7-25-57>

>>>>[Just shut up and listen.]<<<<

--the Dark Stranger<09:35:00/7-25-57>

Shortly after the astral plane was discovered, the metaplanes were discovered. Corresponding to the ancient Greek elements, planes of pure water, fire, air, and earth were found to exist. It was then discovered that there were planes that the shaman's totems called home (although there is admittedly still debate over the exact nature and number of such planes). For a number of years, most of us felt as if we had charted the basic geography of the Astral.

In recent years however, more and more individuals have journeyed to strange metaplanes, with no apparent connection to any of the other



known metaplanes, and often with no connection with our own plane. Strange, bizarre and wondrous worlds these were, but we had no way of ever returning to these worlds.

Such has been the quest of myself and my students for a decade now. To find stable metaworlds, that we could return to repeatedly. Indeed, I coined the term "metaworld" to differentiate these locales from the known metaplanes. We have lost too many students to this quest, but we, in the last year, have finally succeeded, with the charting of four metaworlds that we can visit time and again.

>>>>[Such nonsense. How could anyone travel to the same hallucination? As proved by Drs. Jarvis and Thom, the metaplanes are no more than consensual hallucinations, shaped by our own experiences, both personal and cultural. This is pure poppy-cock, typical for Dsrpfeld and the University of Berlin.]<<<<

--DHJ<10:04:11/7-25-57>

>>>>[Thank you Dr. Herman Jarvis, Doctor of Thaumaturgical Science, professor at the University of Seattle, devout Jungian, and mundane. I've been to the metaplanes, and a few "metaworlds" in my time, and I'll be thrice-damned if they weren't real. Now, Dr. Dsrpfeld isn't the most strict or rigid of scientists when it comes to the rules, but I have every reason to believe he's on to something here. It's up to us to figure out exactly what...]<<<<

--Magi Maker<11:23:23/7-25-57>

## GETTING THERE

It appears that the gateways to these metaworlds may be tied into physical locations on our own world. In order to travel to these metaworlds, the initiate magician must first travel to these locations (given below) and then, following the "map" we freely provide, the initiate begins his journey into the metaworld of his choice. Indeed, the initiate must compose his mind and his aura the say way every time, if he wishes to return to that metaworld.

>>>>[Wait a damn minute. Why in drek would someone have to go to a specific location, just to go to the metaplanes? Any initiate can visit the elemental metaplanes from anywhere!]<<<<

--The Cube<11:59:36/7-25-57>

>>>>[I hate to say it, but it may have to do with our "Jungian cultural experiences." Our myth and legend is peppered with references to the "Gates of Hades" or the "Bridge to Valhalla." A physical location tied to a mythic gate to "Other Worlds." Tie this in with the fact we know next to nothing about magic and its mechanics, and it makes some sense.]<<<<

--Spirit Watcher<12:42:35/7-25-57>

The so-called "Lurker at the Threshold" does guard the gateways, and it has been known to refuse passage to those it deems unworthy.

>>>>[Which, we all know, is almost totally random. Neither rhyme nor reason.]<<<<

--Horseshoe<13:00:32/7-25-57>

>>>>[I'm not so sure of that. I've heard rumor of at least one instance, possibly two, where someone "failed" their test, but was allowed onwards anyway, perhaps indicating some rationale behind it. It may be understatement to say that the Lurker may the biggest mystery of our Awakened world.]<<<<

--Z-Query<13:23:30/7-25-57>

We here at the University of Berlin are more than happy to grant "maps" to these metaworlds. All we ask in exchange is a simple report telling us what happened, for our further research.

## APOCALYPSE

This horrific metaworld can be reached by traveling to either the Saar Special Legislative Zone or the toxic field outside Minsk, Poland. This duality of location has led us to some suspicion of this metaworld actually being two separate locations, but we lack sufficient research to conclusively determine this. As a result, we have presented it as one world.

The metaworld we call "Apocalypse" is a world blasted by holocaust. Our research has indicated nothing living within this world (or worlds), with the earth charred black, and the few bodies of water brackish and poisoned. Indeed the Background Count, while within normal, is itself tainted, causing a general feeling of nervousness and nausea.

>>>>[Now, if the astral, and the metaplanes are hallucinations, why in drek would anyone want to see this?]<<<<

--Heckler<13:44:09/7-25-57>

## ILIUM

This metaworld may be reached by traveling to Versailles, France.

Ilium represents one of the stranger, and more hospitable worlds we have charted. Ilium is a world made up of a single city, fashioned in the old Bronze Age Greek Style of massive battlements and "beetling towers," to quote Homer. Indeed, the basic culture of the metaworld is based loosely around what we would consider Bronze Age, or Mycenaean, Greece. This does mean brutal heroes and hordes of female slaves in the kitchens and the fields making flax. Acceptance for the metaplanar traveler is immediate, perhaps indicating travelers have journeyed to this world many times

before.

The level of magic appears to be next to nil, with the only magic being possible the aura alignment for the trip back to our home plane.

This metaworld, the first which I was able to return to repeatedly, can be reached from within the walls of Berlin itself.

Dsrpfeld's Metaworld is the world initiated travelers should avoid. In fact, we have halted research into this metaworld due to the number of deaths.

A swirling mass of visible mana, the Background Count is off all known charts. There appears to be no solid masses within this metaworld, and few inhabitants. Those few beings that appear to be native to this world are extremely hostile spirits of an unknown kind. It appears that these beings feed on the mana itself.

At this juncture, there appears to be no compelling reason, except possibly outside of research, why anyone should venture to this very dangerous metaworld.

>>>>[Background Count off the charts? Then how the frag did Dsrpfeld and his students survive? I've actually been active in areas with a Count around a five, and I'm still in therapy.]<<<<

--Paranoid in Seattle<14:23:59/7-25-57>

>>>>[Not to mention those strange scars, eh? I would imagine that as soon as they clued in, they loaded up on barriers and wards of all types. And they probably still lost people. Definitely not a vacation spot, that's for sure.]<<<<

--Boris Basher<14:49:23/7-25-57>

>>>>[Now that you mention it, old Heinrich is a little strange, isn't he? I mean, stranger than any normal mage...]<<<<

--Twisted Twister<15:48:54/7-25-57>

## THE SMOKE

This metaworld, named after the colloquial name for London, can in fact be reached from London, England.

The Smoke is an industrial metaworld.

It can best be imagined as a world where our own Industrial Revolution became everything. Soot and dirt cover nearly everything, with factories, running on something similar to coal and steam power, operate day and night (although there is little more than twilight with all the smoke). This "industrial hell" is inhabited by a race of "lizard men." Indeed, travelers to this world will find themselves transformed to look



## DSRPFELD'S METAWORLD

>>>>[You just knew he couldn't resist...]<<<<  
--Heckler<13:51:32/7-25-57>

>>>>[Ease back. It's actually named after his son, who apparently died there.]<<<<  
--St. Stan<14:17:35/7-25-57>

like this race of lizard men, making assimilation far easier.

The background count is normal, with the corruption common to industrial zones. Magic, as a whole, still operates, even though the indigenous people have no talent for it.

## CONCLUSION

We can guess that there may be an infinite number of these metaworlds, all of which operate under their own sets of rules, which may sometimes be wildly different from our own. Space is no longer the final frontier. The metaworlds are.

>>>>[Okay, one last gripe. Why the frag isn't he specific? If he can jaunt back to these metaworlds at a whim, then why isn't he more specific?]<<<<

--The Cube<16:01:46/7-25-57>

>>>>[Ah, you've found the major hole in his theory. According to the basic theory, the world should be the same every time. But the fact is, and it's one Dsrfeld doesn't mention, it doesn't. He had to be vague, because every time you journey to these "metaworlds," it will be different. Yes, there is a clear 'theme' to be found, such as the Industrial Revolution, but a lot changes aside from that. One time, The Smoke might be positive, vibrant with the energy of Industry. Next time, it might be the closest thing to Hell. And that's just how it feels...]<<<<

--Spirit Watcher<16:25:23/7-25-57>

This next bit, I edited quite a bit. None of the charts, formulas, mathematics, or graphs made any sense to me, being a mundane. Confused me quite a bit actually. But I know that those magicians out there will want them, so I included them as separate, but attached files. You want 'em? Upload them yourself. Oh, and this bit originally appeared on the Magicknet, June 15, 2057, under the heading "Masking."

--St. Stan

## THE MANIPULATION OF ONE'S OWN AURA AS AN OUTSIDE MANA FOCUSING DEVICE, AND THE EFFECTS THEREWITH.

by the Dark Stranger

>>>>[Yes, this was written by a fellow shadowrunner. This guy, a drek-hot combat mage, has been associated with a possible order of other drek-hot combat mages, which in turn has been associated with a dragon, possibly Rhonabwy. Nothing, of course, conclusive. And despite the corp-esque title, this article is important and practical. I actually caught it the first time around.]<<<<

--PJ<16:31:34/7-25-57>

Okay, sorry for the long-winded academic title. Had to be done. But enough pleasantries, let's get right down to business.

The primary problem of casting spells is the fact that we must channel powerful energies through our own bodies, a task evolution did not prepare us for. Thus, we are inefficient conductors of magical energies, able to cast spells, but taking damage in the process. The metamagical ability of Centering has done much to counter this process, but all it does is create a better conductor. Given this, there must be a better process for casting spells that creates less of a hazard for the caster. The first answer to this problem is the caster manipulating his aura, to make the process even cleaner and safer.

Essentially, the caster, through this advanced form of Centering, creates a much cleaner and purer conductor. Which translates to throwing better mana bolts, and taking less drain. Now, let me get onto the hard stuff, so that the rest of you can do the same trick.

+++++INCLUDE MATHEMATICAL COMPUTATIONS

+++++INCLUDE CHARTS AND GRAPHS

+++++INCLUDE FORMULAE

>>>>[Ouch. It's gonna take me months to figure this dreck out...]<<<<

--Stunned<16:59:25/7-25-57>

>>>>[Theoretically, it should also be possible to give your spells a lot more juice this way too, not just offset drain. Since it is an extension of Centering, it should be possible.]<<<<

--Styrofoam Man<17:13:07/7-25-57>

>>>>[Okay, here's the short and simple, for those that still don't understand what is going on (or those who are confused by all his charts and graphs and mathematics). The magician does a special form of Centering, and is in fact an extension of that concept. Instead of Centering just the body, the caster also focuses his aura, in a special way. And that allows for more mana to pass through your sorry hide, with less damage.]<<<<

--Firefinder<17:26:17/7-25-57>

>>>>>[Okay, I've run with this guy a few times. Got hired as support. He never struck me as the academic type. He was a combat mage, through and through. So where did he get all this stuff?]<<<<<

--Ghost Faced Killa<17:51:37/7-25-57>

>>>>[Just because he's a combat mage, that doesn't mean he doesn't read or study. But I think you may be on to something. He isn't stupid, but he's not a research type either. He must have gotten it from somewhere.

My bet's on his magical group. They do have a dragon as patron after all.]<<<<

--St. Stan<17:59:27/7-25-57>

>>>>[A dragon? Get actual. My nuyen is on the time he spent over in the Middle East, with all the other nova-hot magikers since the middle of May.]<<<<

--Johnny Rotten<18:12:56/7-25-57>

In game terms, Aura Focusing is a very difficult metamagical talent. To even understand the mechanics behind the talent, the magician would have to be greatly experienced. To reflect this fact, Aura Focusing is only available to magicians of Grade 5 or better. In addition, a month of uninterrupted study and practice is also required before it can be used. Above and beyond all this, the initiate must also have the metamagical skill of Masking.

Game effects are rather simple. As an extension of Centering, the same skills and procedures are used. However, instead of rounding down successes on the Centering Test, successes are rounded up. Not exactly earth-shaking, but it is a definite improvement.

And the third of the four, this article was buried in the "Spirit Research" portion of Enchanter's OnLine (try it free today! Sorry, just kidding.) Posted on June 24, 2057. Again, as with the previous article, I cut out the formulas, charts, graphs, and metamagical mathematics, and included them as attached files.

--St. Stan

### THE PROCESSES OF BINDING A SPIRIT WITHIN A FIXED ENCHANTED OBJECT, AND THE BENEFITS AND COSTS GAINED THEREBY.

by Dr. Michael Ruane, Th.D., and Dr. Catherine Jordan, Th.D., Enchanting

>>>>[I think I know why these articles got buried. Terrible titles. No hint of anything vaguely interesting to the casual reader.]<<<<

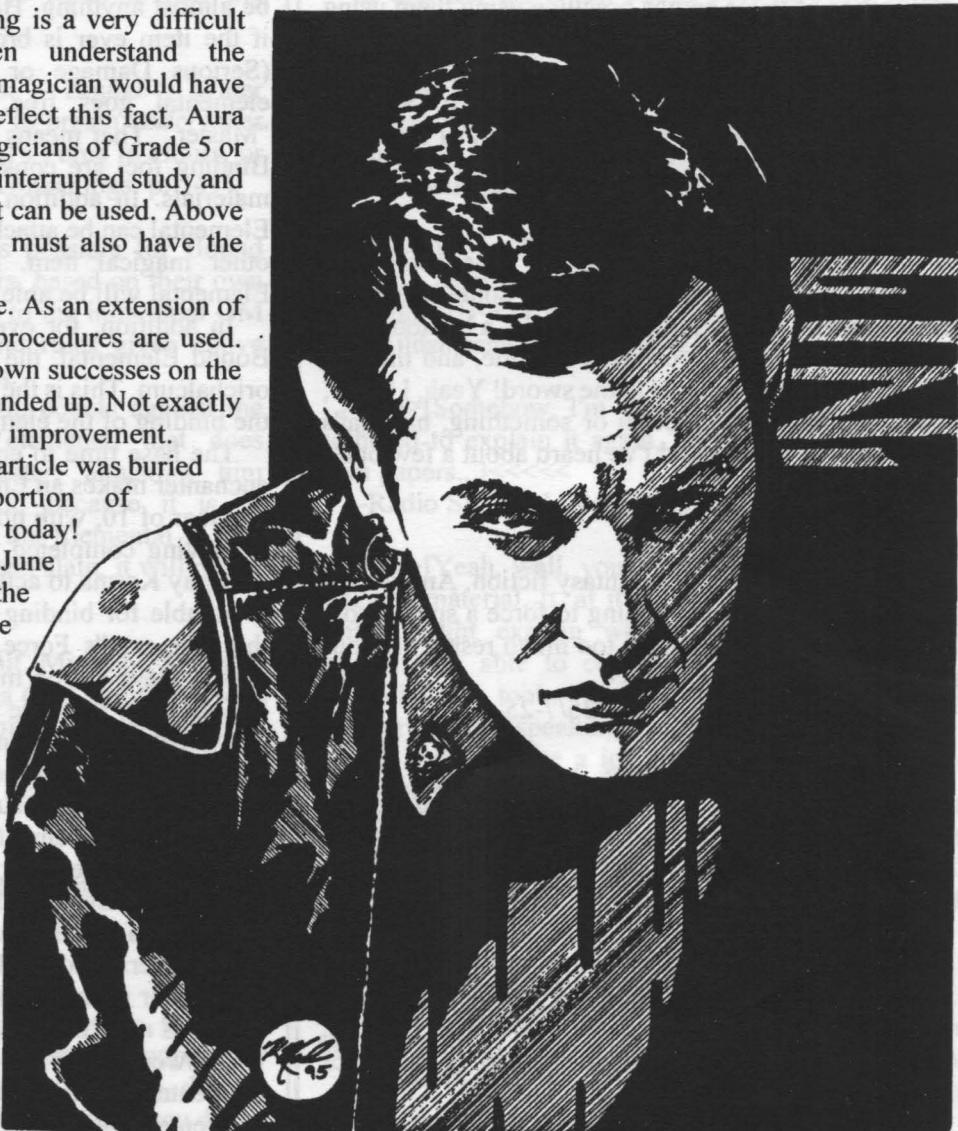
--Heckler<18:29:45/7-25-57>

>>>>[Yeah. And why post this on Enchanter's OnLine? No one subscribes to them except for grad students and their professor's...oh, okay. I get it.]<<<<

--Physic's Geek<18:34:27/7-25-57>

Of all the areas of magical research, enchanting has

been thought of as well understood, that the limits were known. And of course, the area of enchanting has suffered because it is not immediate or glamorous, spending months over boiling cauldrons, grinding tiny amount of mana into rings are not what makes for exciting trid. But that does not mean that enchanting is without excitement or breakthroughs. It is a major new breakthrough that has combined both of these



elements, while bringing two major magical disciplines together.

Simply put, with our process, an elemental can be trapped and bound within a specially created item, with its abilities available for use by the item's user.

As of this writing, not all the bound spirit's abilities can be used, but the significant portion that can be used is nothing short of astounding.

+++++INCLUDE MATHEMATICAL COMPUTATIONS

+++++INCLUDE GRAPHS AND CHARTS

#### +++++INCLUDE FORMULAE

And so, by using our process, this spirit's abilities of flame projection, psychokinesis, even enhanced movement, are all at the fingertips of the daring enchanter.

It should be noted that throughout our treatise, only elementals were referred to. It is possible that allies and spirits might be utilized, but the above average intelligence of those beings preclude using them using these current techniques.

>>>>[Why would anyone do this to an ally anyway? You get a lot more mileage out of the "old" techniques. Why limit your ally this way?]<<<<

--Monster Masher<18:51:26/7-25-57>

>>>>[True. But you want to hear something strange? I heard, a while back, about some mage that created an ally in a sword. Technically, a homonculus. Well, the mage cackled off after a while, and the ally remained, free, but trapped in the sword! Yeah, I know, it sounds like fantasy fiction or something, but that's the rumor I've heard. And I've heard about a few other similar cases.]<<<<

--Spike<19:11:46/7-25-57>

>>>>[You're right, it is fantasy fiction. And it's not as if a shaman or druid is going to force a spirit into a life of slavery. We've got far too much respect for our spirit brothers for that.]<<<<

--Green-eyed Bandit<19:21:35/7-25-57>

>>>>[Elementals may be, by and large, stupid automatons, but that doesn't mean they like getting trapped and bound by one of these enchanted items. They get mighty unhappy about it, and make sure you know about it when they have the chance.]<<<<

--Nick Not-So-Quick<19:44:26/7-25-57>

>>>>[Too true. Don't think elementals don't remember how you fragged them, because they do. And one of these days, it's gonna bite a lot of hermetics on the hoop.]<<<<

--Green-eyed Bandit<19:56:22/7-25-57>

>>>>[Bulldrek. Elementals are spirits formed by our castings, with no life either before or after. Use them as you will.]<<<<

--Killa Priest<20:06:35/7-25-57>

>>>>[I'm gonna cut this here. There's no need for this here. There's a whole node over in Magicknet devoted to this sort of thing. Take it there.]<<<<

--St. Stan<20:10:00/7-25-57>

In Game Terms, Binding and Trapping an Elemental is a long-drawn out process. The first step is creating

an item to be enchanted. First, a unique formula must be created, with a base design time of 60 days. This formula will only work for the type and Force of Elemental specified. To create the formula, the enchanter must make a Magical Theory Test equal to twice the Force of the Elemental desired. If no successes are rolled, the enchanter missed something, and must try all over again.

The materials for an Elemental Binding focus may be almost anything. However, it should be noted that if the item ever is broken, or significantly damaged (Serious Damage or worse, GM's discretion) the elemental goes free, and will always attack its "Master." That means the vast majority of Elemental Binding foci are constructed with metals and strong materials. In addition, the item trapping the Bound Elemental can be attacked in astral space, just like any other magical item. If the item is destroyed, the Elemental will be able to go free.

In addition, for every two points of Force of the Bound Elemental, the item must have at one unit of orichalcum. This is the physical component that allows the binding of the elemental.

The base time to enchant the item is 30 days. The enchanter makes an Enchantment Test versus a Target Number of 10, with no modifiers applicable.

Having completed the rituals, the enchanter must now pay Karma to actually charge the item, and make it suitable for binding an elemental. It costs equal to the Elemental's Force in Karma to finish the ritual. Again, there are no modifiers for this cost. The item is now ready to house the elemental.

Once the item is completed, the enchanter may now summon the desired elemental. Assuming the Summoning ritual is successful (which is completed as normal), the Elemental may now be bound. The summoner makes a Conjuring Test equal to twice the Force of the Elemental. If the summoner succeeds, he pays Karma points equal to the Force of the Elemental, no modifiers, and the Elemental is now bound.

In order to use the Elemental's abilities, a "Contest of Wills" must be taken, which is essentially a resisted Willpower test. If the magician wins, he may use the Elemental's abilities for one Turn per net success. If the Elemental wins, nothing happens.

In each case, the Elemental can grant two out of three abilities to the user of the focus. Each bound Elemental grants a lesser version of Movement (at half the Elemental's Force), plus one of the two other abilities listed below. These two abilities are decided upon by the GM, not the player or the user, and are fixed from the time of binding. The abilities are given below.

**AIR ELEMENTALS:** Bound Air Elementals can grant Noxious Breath (Force L), or Psychokinesis (at half the Elemental's Force).

**EARTH ELEMENTALS:** Bound Earth Elementals can grant Armor (the user gains half the Elemental's Force in Body), or Shape Earth (as per the spell, Awakenings, p. 141).

**FIRE ELEMENTALS:** Bound Fire Elementals can grant Heat Shield (as per the spell, Awakenings, p. 140) to the user, or Flame Aura (as per the spell, Awakenings, p. 140, at a Force equal to half the Elemental's Force).

**WATER ELEMENTALS:** Bound Water Elementals can grant the ability to breath underwater for a time equal to the Elemental's Force in Hours, or Shape Water (as per the spell, Awakenings, p. 141).

It should be noted that it is possible for Bound Elementals to grant other powers, based on their own abilities, or domains. This is up to the individual GM to decide, but the examples and rules given above should be followed as guidelines.

Finally, each bound elemental counts against the summoner's maximum. Any elemental that does escape will turn on its master, attacking him relentlessly. During this attack, because it is so enraged, the effective Force of the Elemental is plus one. Once it or its master has been slain, it will return to its native plain.

Okay, I just found this last bit. Might be the most practical, for you shadowy types (and you know who you are) of all the articles. It's a bit more recent, having been uploaded onto Magicknet just last week, but I thought it would be appropriate here.

--St. Stan

## THE CREATION OF SPECIAL FOCI AGAINST MENTAL AND PHYSICAL DRAIN

by Spellslinger

>>>>[Rumor is, this runner is also a graduate student at one of the Seattle universities. Supposedly TA's and helps with the research. Which doesn't explain his syntax here, but you'll see it all if you dump his full research notes.]<<<<

--Johnny Rotten<20:34:25/7-25-57>

Don't worry, all you battle hardened street mages. I'm not going to bore you to death with a long winded treatise on a specialized focus. If you want to read it, simply drop me a note, right here in my mailbox on Magicknet, and I'll give everything to you.

What the frag am I rambling on about? I've found a new type of focus, one that will surely be of interest to everyone out there.

We all know and love our Power Foci, and we all like our other spell foci. They, when used properly, can make life, and magic, a whole lot easier. So what do

most of us use foci for? Drain.

You're no damn good to your teammates if, after throwing that Hellblast, you're out cold on the floor. Congratulations, you've just become dead weight. And so the most common usage of foci is to keep us on our feet. Now, I've found a way to do that even more efficiently, and save your Power Foci for when you really need it.

In essence, the Drain Focus absorbs some of the negative affects of spell casting. It helps you resist drain. Simple, right?

Like the idea? Want to try it? Want to look for holes in my flawless theory? Drop me a line with the Subject: Drain Focus, and my auto-mailer will dump a whole lot of MegaPulses your way. Have fun, and good luck!

>>>>[Wow. Something that even I could read without resorting to a dictionary! Thank you Spellslinger!]<<<<

--Wildsmasher<20:57:24/7-25-57>

>>>>[Somehow, I'm guessing he just couldn't be bothered to explain it again, here. Gotta grade those term papers...]<<<<

--Radio Sloth<21:34:26/7-25-57>

>>>>[Yeah, well, you'll need it if you ask for his research material. It, at its core, is a simple concept, which might explain why a shadowrunning grad student was able to come up with this. Basically, Spellslinger took apart (metaphorically and metaphorically speaking) a Power Focus. Played around with it quite a lot, and created a specialized focus that only helps against drain.]<<<<

--Nazdack<21:43:20/7-25-57>

>>>>[So is he a mechanic?]<<<<

--Sniffer<22:05:55/7-25-57>

>>>>[You mean someone who relies heavily on foci? Probably. But I have heard he is also a powerful initiate, so it all can't be his toys.]<<<<

--Nazdack<22:54:32/7-25-57>

In Game Terms, the Drain Focus is really quite simple. It functions just like any other Power Focus, but its dice can only be used to resist drain. And just like the Power Focus, it can be used at for almost any magical procedure.

The enchanting process is identical to the creation of a Power Focus, including the formula creation. The Karma cost, however, is just a bit less.

The First Bonding Cost is 5xRating, with the same available modifiers. Karma Cost for subsequent bondings are 3xRating. The end result is a difficult creation, but easier to bond than a Power Focus.

# VatJob

## A ShadowRun Scenario

### by Andrew Ragland

*Player Level: Beginning to Intermediate*

#### I. About:

##### A. About This Run: Tell It Like It Is

A group of down-on-their-luck runners are hired by a stripper to find her missing boyfriend. Sounds easy, right? Huh. It's never easy. Billy Banzai was a street sam wannabe with cheap chrome, who up and vanished two days ago. He got into running to try and do some good around his neighborhood, but never seemed to quite get the hang of it. Did he skip town? Did he end up geeked in a run that went sour? Or did something much uglier happen?

##### B. Plot Synopsis

The runners start out investigating the disappearance of a runner wannabe with a couple of leads -- his address and the name of a friend of his. From there, leads take them to a Druid temple, a family medical clinic fronting for a shadow clinic, a bazaar and a broken-down roller coaster at the abandoned Fairgrounds, and finally to the megacorp behind it all. Phillips Bioware lost some of their vats to a competitor's runners, and needed new starter culture in a hurry. The players discover that the experimental fast-healing drug given at the shadow clinic was an accelerant used in tissue vats, and that people who responded properly to it were suckered, ending up in the vats. What, if anything, the runners can do about the situation isn't going to make up for what happened to Billy Banzai.

##### C. Books Required

Besides the Shadowrun 2nd Edition main manual, you'll find Virtual Realities 2.0, Corporate Security, Shadowtech, The Grimoire (2nd edition), the Rigger Black Book and the Neo-Anarchist's Guide to Real Life useful in running this adventure. Some of the security gear described is in the article Cop Gear in Shadowland Magazine #1.

##### D. About The City

>>>>[Hoi, chummers. Okay, here's the bottom line: I took the regulation tourist materials, tossed all the obvious PR material and replaced it with my own, then took the files and stuck em up on the local Shadowland node for commentary for a while. You oughta be able

to tell what the flacks at Metro Government wrote and what I put in myself. Tone of voice and all. I got tired of all the BS flyin around about Tennessee. This is the real stuff.]<<<<

-- No-Bozo Zone, Davidsford Shadowland Node Sysop <21:32:44/7-18-57>

##### FAQ: Metropolitan Nashville-Murfreesboro/Davidson-Rutherford Counties

Also searchable as: Nashville, Murfreesboro, Franklin, Almaville

See also: Stones River; Confederacy general entry

1. What's this Davidsford drek? I thought I was in Nashville!

Well, technically the City of Nashville hasn't existed since the early 1960s. In 1962, the City of Nashville and Davidson County merged, becoming Metropolitan Nashville/Davidson County. Beverly Briley (yeah, the guy they named the parkway after) became the first mayor of Metro. This is where the name starts getting screwy. See, most of the municipal services became Metropolitan Nashville Whatever, the maps and the guidebooks still called the place Nashville as if it was a city, and some of the former county services even kept their old names, like the Davidson County Sheriff's Department. The courthouse became the Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County Courthouse, and the phone book promptly shortened it to the Metro Courthouse. Well, it was amazing enough that people finally agreed on the merger, considering that Briley had been pushing for it since 1955. Nobody was really surprised when the result had fifteen different names.

The same basic thing happened again in 2022. This time, the merger was a desperation move to keep the corps from taking over and renaming the place Renrakuville. Mayor Bradley of Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County and Mayor Scott of Metropolitan Murfreesboro-Rutherford County put together the basic plan. The state government threw in on it, having decided that it was better to try and save Nashville than to have to move the state capitol, considering that Memphis was half under water from Ghost Quakes and Chattanooga was right on the border with the Cherokee. The coalition got approval from Atlanta to extend diplomatic recognition to the Sovereign Cherokee Nation, signed a mutual support treaty, signed a charter and Metropolitan Nashville-Murfreesboro/Davidson and Rutherford Counties was born. Folks on the street promptly cut it down to

Davidsford. After all, speaking is work and there's no sense putting forth any more effort than you have to. The maps and guidebooks still show Nashville and Murfreesboro as two separate dots, and there's still some rural land in between the two. Give'em another ten years before they sprawl into each other.

Oh, and sometimes you'll hear people call the place Nashvegas, but that's another entry later in the FAQ (4. Wasn't this place called Sin City a hundred years ago?).

## II. Exposition

### A. Down to Their Last 50 Nuyen

#### *Tell It Like It Is:*

You've all been hanging together for about the past two months. You met under various circumstances and just sort of fell in together. With your mix of talents you thought you'd make a pretty good run team. It's not working.

You're all just about flat broke, down to your last 50 nuyen. Work has been slow, especially for street runners with no major rep. The rent's coming due in a week or so and it's starting to look like you might have to go get real jobs, at least for a little while.

So you're sitting in the Stars and Bars, a real dive before Shade bought it and turned it into a runner hangout. Some big names in the shadows are seen in here from time to time, taking a Johnson into the back room. With luck, maybe a Johnson will notice you. It better happen soon.

The door opens, and Jala comes sliding in, looking like she's lost her last friend in the world but doesn't want anybody to know. She's a dancer (call it straight: she's a stripper) from the Platinum Club down the block, dances there and a couple other places, and sometimes does things for close friends for recompense. She's human, half Black and half Creole, and my, that combination should be made more often. Moves like she's on bearings, got eyes like a deer that you could get happily lost in. She's wearing her regular street clothes, which means baggy Pakistani cotton pants in stripes that were bright when she bought 'em three years ago, slung low on her hips, a loose white blouse tied just under her breasts to show off her flat stomach, and sandals to show off the gold nail polish on her toes. She's got her hair in a thousand tiny braids with little brass beads on the ends; the jingling has to drive her nuts when she turns her head. She spots you and heads your way, moving like she's got a serious purpose.

One of you is polite enough to offer her a seat and a beer. Don't look like anything that mild would do her any good, but what the frag. She gratefully accepts the drink, and takes a long pull off it. Reinforced by it, she clears her throat and says, with a catch in her voice that speaks of repressed tears, "You're runners, right? I wanna hire you. M'main chummer vanished two days

ago, ain't seen him since. Billy Banzai, lives over in the Projects, building 12, apartment 517. I can't go over there by m'self, and I don't think he's there anyway. Can you find'im? I can make it worth your while."

She tosses a wad of corporate scrip onto the table. "That's two thousand nuyen. I got another of those if you bring me Billy -- " She chokes up a little. "Or what's left of 'im." A sniffle, and she gets up abruptly. "Excuse me." And she goes off into the Ladies.

When she returns, the runners get a description. Better yet, they get a cheap trid snapshot of Billy. He's kind of a redneck, with his brown hair buzzed on the top and sides and long in the back, wearing a t-shirt with a Gerst Beer logo. He's got some scar tissue around his left eye, which is cyber, an obvious street job. The remaining eye is light blue. He's got a chipped front tooth, upper right incisor, and the tooth next to it is gold with a star sculpted into it.

The last time Jala spoke with him was two days ago. He was really excited. "He said he had somethin' big about to happen, that this was the big time. Said he finally had his ticket. Wouldn't tell me nothin' about it, said he'd jinx hisself. Said he'd tell me all about it when he took me out someplace expensive afterwards." She bites her lip, and smacks the table with her fist. "Dammit, Billy, what've you got yourself into?"

Finally, Jala's talked out. She fixes her makeup, and tells the runners that Billy didn't have a car, so he was probably in the deal with Steel Skidmore, another wannabe who had a pickup. Him and Billy are chummers from way back. Don't know how to get hold of Steel, but his number's probably at Billy's place.

### B. Preliminary Legwork

Shade can tell the runners a bit about Billy. Asking him doesn't require a roll, as Shade's pretty free with information of that sort. Sure, I know him. Robin Hood wannabe. Always givin away what he made on a run, buyin groceries for some old lady or somesuch. Then he'd come up to the end of the month, and come up short on his bar tab. I kicked im outta here for it. Look, I done my share of good works, but you gotta pay your own bills first, y know?

Finding Steel Skidmore's address isn't as easy as looking in the phone book. He doesn't have a phone. You're going to have to deck for it or ask around. Checking contacts requires a Street Etiquette (5) Test. Not many people have heard of Steel Skidmore, and those who have aren't real interested in finding him - unless he owes them money. On a single success, the character has to pay 50¥ to cover Steel's old debts before the address is given. On more than one success, the address is free. If the character gets three or more successes, the contact offers a ten percent commission on collection of a 500¥ debt. Decking for the address will require checking the Department of Human Services. The DHS has Steel listed in the

unemployment compensation database, with a long list of failed jobs. Make a Decking (6) Test to find the information. The DHS doesn't stash much in the way of paydata, so it isn't well protected enough to be worth giving stats for.

Searching the public news database for information is a possibility. Make a Decking (8) Test to find news articles about Billy. In the news database, the decker will find two short articles on Billy Banzai. Both are arrest reports, one for assault in a local tavern and the other for car theft. In the car theft report, the guy busted with Billy was Steel Skidmore.

If the decker wants to check the missing persons files, they're going to have to deck into the Police Department stack, definitely not a good idea. It's widely known to be Red and staffed with hounds at all times. Besides which, no missing persons report has been filed. Jala doesn't trust the authorities that much. Make the run difficult, frustrating, annoying and a general waste of time.

### C. Debugging

There's not a lot that can go seriously wrong here. If the characters don't take Jala's run, then the scenario won't fly, so play up the fact that they're dead broke and that's two thousand fraggin' nuyen sitting there in the middle of the table. If they don't take it, somebody else in the Stars and Bars will. Play up the emotional side of the situation as well -- having Jala cry on somebody's shoulder ought to get the characters involved.

If the group's decker decides to run the Police stack, don't bust him for it, but frag with his day a little. This is just exposition. Get on to the next part.

### Shade, retired runner, bartender and owner of the Stars and Bars

Use the Troll Bounty Hunter archetype (Sprawl Sites, p.104). Raise his INT and QCK by 2 each. Shade is married to an ork woman and has four children who sometimes hang about the bar in the late afternoon. He lives in an attached house at the back of the building and will not take kindly to violence around his kids or his home. Play him with a thick Cajun accent if you can do it properly.

## III. Billy's Apartment

### *Tell It To Them Straight:*

This is a Z Zone, no law enforcement authorities of any sort, which means gang control. Billy lives in the East Nashville Projects, that used to have a name and are now known only as The Bricks. Ambitious federal projects such as high-rise apartments for the poor, older style rowhouses and long buildings that look more like barracks, all were abandoned and left to sink or swim on their own around the time of the Secession. No grass, just a few scrubby patches of weeds here and

there. The property is technically Federal land, but there's just no budget to try and bring it back under control. Maybe someday some megacorp will buy up the land to build an arcology, and then they'll take care of cleaning up the area with bulldozers and tac-nukes. In the meantime, y'all are seriously on your own.

### A. Angels at the Gate

Billy's building and the surrounding area has guards, what looks on first glance to be a well-coordinated gang of some sort. A Street Etiquette (4) Test will allow them to be recognized as Avenging Angels.

The Avenging Angels are a radical offshoot of the Guardian Angels, a pre-Awakening vigilante organization. Some people are happy to see them, others would prefer they kept their theology and guns to themselves. You can't please everybody. They spend a lot of effort in grassroots work, clearing out the lowlifes (as they define them), enforcing the law (as stated in the scriptures), and generally trying to clean up the bad ends of town. Their uniform is a blue jumpsuit under an armored duster, and a white beret. Their patch is worn on both shoulders and the front of the beret, over the left eye, and consists of a red circle around a white-robed arm holding up a flaming sword. The Securetech long coat is usually blue, with the Angels patch on the back and on the breast pocket.

Apparently this building is their latest reclamation project in their campaign to take back the streets. The buildings around the Angels have been cleared out, salvaged of everything salvageable and have had all primary cover removed (no doors, shrubs, etc). The Angels maintain a patrol of all the buildings immediately adjacent to theirs, keeping an eye out for snipers etc. There are no signs of any other gangs within about a three block radius, other than the occasional body crucified head-down on a telephone pole or a street sign. These people apparently do not take border incursions kindly. The building has its own parking facility, an armored loading dock around back guarded by half a dozen big chummers in armor with heavy guns.

The Angels maintain a patrol at irregular intervals around the building. They have a couple of spotters on the roof, probably with sniper rifles, and have squads of 2 or 4 (it varies) that wander around through the surrounding area in no set pattern. They also have a salvage crew in one of the neighboring buildings that brings out several wheelbarrows and carts loaded with wire, drywall, wood, pipe, etc. -- urban salvage from a decaying building. All this gets hauled around to the loading dock of the main building, and brought in under heavy guard. They make a real show of force when the loading dock doors are rolled up. The runners spot a Troll in heavy security armor carrying a Panther cannon. It looks pretty well used, but in good condition. The rest have medium-sized automatic weapons. No AUG-CSLs or MMGs, but some decent

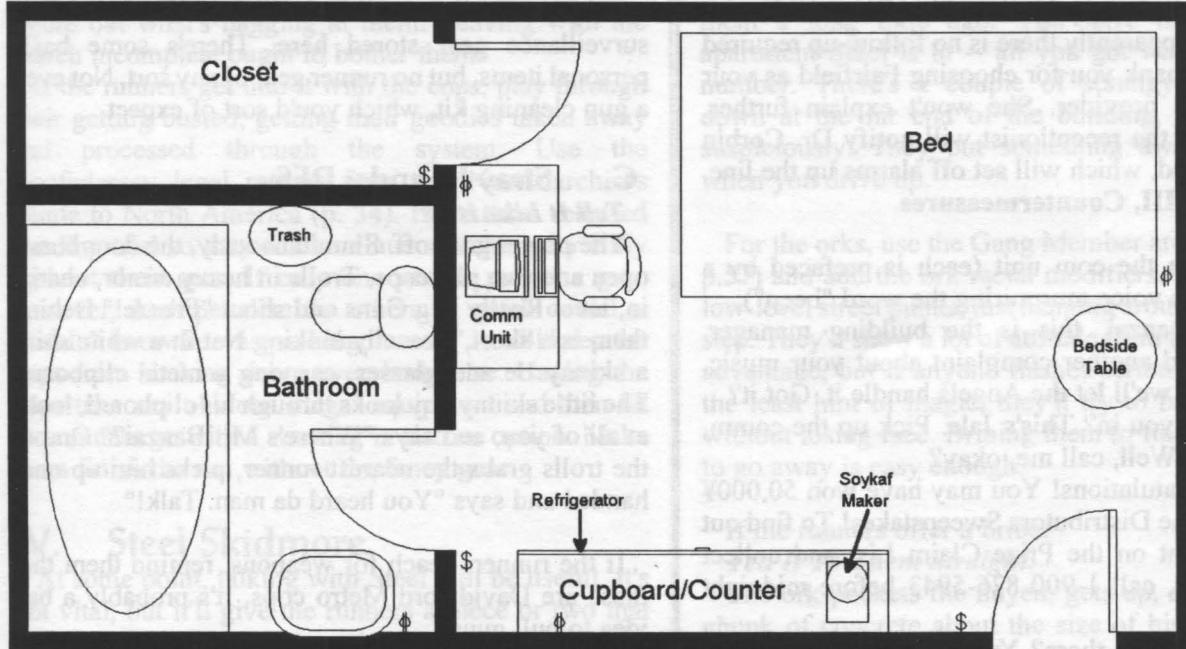
assault rifles and LMGs. They also have astral cover, a couple of Watchers (Grimoire II, p. 73) that patrol around the building, and one mage who pokes his head out astrally when the loading dock is opened.

Getting past these guys is going to take some serious thought. A frontal assault is obviously out of the question. Quoting a few Bible verses at random is definitely not going to do the job. These people may be fanatical in their beliefs, but they're not stupid. Stats for the average (human) Angel are found under **Cast of Shadows**. Apply racial modifiers for metahuman Angels as appropriate.

If you really want to play it up big, have the Angels quote Psalms 11:5-7, Psalms 55:9-11 and Psalms 58:2-3.

## B. The Apartment Proper

Once past the Angels, the building is in pretty good condition. Some of the walls are recently plastered, with the tape still showing. Paint is apparently harder to come by than drywall. The elevator is reserved for the construction crews. The stairs creak a bit, but hold



up well enough for the climb to the fifth floor. The runners pass the occasional Angels (never singular) in the hallway. Unless they cause trouble, the Angels will assume that anyone inside the building is supposed to be there, and will leave the runners alone.

Billy's door is a metal security door, like all the others, with a few dents and scrapes. Security is a cheap rating 2 maglock. As long as the runner opening the door doesn't invoke the Rule of One, no trouble comes of picking the lock. If the runner completely botches opening the door, an alarm starts screaming. Two rounds later, a squad of half a dozen Angels will show up, ready for a fight. The runners had better be able to make a Security Systems (4) Test in that time to get the alarm shut off. If the alarm is still going, the

Angels are not going to believe a story about fumbling the passcode. A stand-up fight with the Angels would be a really stupid thing, but if the runners insist, send in more Angels after three rounds, with a Mage of Initiate Grade 2 (Grimoire II, p. 38).

### Tell It To Them

#### Straight:

Billy's place is an efficiency, filled with cheap furniture and Rocker posters. There's no kitchen, just a mike and a cupboard half full of Zap-a-Paks, a soykaf maker and a small refrigerator (half a sixpack of really cheap beer and two slices of dried-out

## BILLY BANZAI'S APARTMENT

and grey soypizza). The vid has an annoying vertical roll and looks like it was scavenged. Pinned to the wall over the bed is a bra with the letter "V" scrawled on it in magic marker; it looks like it would fit a twelve

year old, except it's a C cup. The comm has a few sticky notes around the screen and the Messages light is blinking. The place is actually pretty well-kept, if you ignore the dirty laundry under the bed. The place has not been tossed, not so that you could tell.

### 1. Clues on the Comm

The comm is a low-quality boosted link, not suitable for decking. There is no dialing directory. There's a series of sticky notes around the edge of the screen, a series of unidentified LTG numbers and a reminder. A check of the comm reveals an alarm set for 04:00 two days ago.

The sticky notes for GM reference:

1. LTG 73-8724 (Jala)
2. LTG 73-8972 (Express Pizza)
3. LTG 73-2345 (The Fairfield Family Clinic)
4. 05:00 Roller Coaster (in red marker)

Trying the numbers on the sticky notes is an obvious action. The first one the runners will recognize as Jala's, since she gave it to them back at the bar.

The second one is answered "Express Pizza, can you hold?" and the runner is put on hold before she can answer yes or no. The pizza joint will not deliver to the building without a 100¥ insurance deposit.

The third one is answered by a female voice: "Fairfield Family Clinic, may I help you?" The receptionist will be annoyed at her time being wasted if the runner does anything beside schedule an appointment. She certainly won't answer any questions about patients, even so much as whether or not Billy was a patient there at all.

If a runner gets the bright idea of presenting himself as Billy, and asking for confirmation of his next appointment, the receptionist will apologize for not finding one. Apparently there is no follow-up required at this point, thank you for choosing Fairfield as your general health provider. She won't explain further. After the call, the receptionist will notify Dr. Corbin that Billy called, which will set off alarms up the line. See Section VIII, Countermeasures.

Messages on the com unit (each is prefaced by a breathy female voice murmuring the word "beep"):

1. Mr. Banzai, this is the building manager. We've received another complaint about your music. One more and we'll let the Angels handle it. Got it?

2. Billy, you in? This's Jala. Pick up the comm, Billy. (pause) Well, call me, okay?

3. Congratulations! You may have won 50,000¥ in the Magazine Distributors Sweepstakes! To find out your placement on the Prize Claim List and collect your winnings, call 1-900-876-5943 before midnight tonight!

4. Billy? You there? Yeah, it's Jala. Where are you? 'N' you better have downloaded that beep. I find out it was recorded live, you're gonna be missin' somethin' dear to your heart an' near to your navel.

5. This is Nate Pickens with Davidsford Electric Service. Mr. Banzai, we've detected an illegal connection with our service. Under our corporate amnesty program, you can convert this to a legitimate connection by paying the standard connection fees and deposit at any of our offices. If we don't hear from you within 48 hours, we will be forced to disconnect your electricity and prosecute you for theft of services. Please let us know your decision quickly.

6. Yeah, Billy, this is Athro Sloane. You said you'd be by this morning to help unload, and when you didn't show, we got worried. Call me at the Temple

when you get in.

7. (Jala) Dammit, Billy, where are you?
8. (Jala) Billy? Billy? Fraggit!
9. Hey, Billy, this's Steel, dude. You goin' out tonight? Drop by, dude.

10. (Jala) Billy, please pick up the comm. Billy? Where are you?

11. Mr. Banzai, this is Nate Pickens with DES. I wanted to remind you that you only have 24 hours to pay your connection fees and deposit to avoid prosecution. Thank you.

12. (Jala) Billy, if you got a job without tellin' me, I'll slice your nuts off. Where the frag are you?

## 2. Clues in the Bathroom

A search of the bathroom reveals old bandages in the trashcan, that are too cut up to tell what part of the body they went to. There's also three used transdermal patches, labelled "Batch X707A", but no unused ones.

## 3. Miscellany

The runners find several bugs of the six-legged variety, but none of the electronic sort. Billy has no surveillance gear stored here. There's some basic personal items, but no runner gear of any sort. Not even a gun cleaning kit, which you'd sort of expect.

## C. Stray Rounds: DES

### Tell It Like It Is:

The power goes off. Simultaneously, the door bursts open and two plexcops, Trolls in heavy armor, charge in, level Really Big Guns and shout "Freeze!" Behind them is a short, weaselly looking Nat in a white shirt, a skinny tie and glasses, carrying a metal clipboard. The little skinny guy looks through his clipboard, looks at all of you, and says "Where's Mr. Banzai?" One of the trolls grabs the nearest runner, picks him up one-handed and says "You heard da man. Talk!"

If the runners reach for weapons, remind them that these are Davidsford Metro cops. It's probably a bad idea to pull guns.

Anyone who makes an Intelligence (3) Test realizes that the guy with the clipboard has a Davidsford Electric Service ID badge. Assessing the trio reveals that the Trolls are cybered heavily. Use the Street Cop Contact archetype (SRII, p. 211), apply Troll racial modifications and add Wired Reflexes 2, Smartlinks for their guns and Spurs (SRII, p. 261). Give them HK227s with the smart modification (SRII, p. 241) and Full Suit body armor. The DES guy is a Nat with no magic or cyber other than a datajack and some headRAM. Use the Mr. Johnson Contact archetype (SRII, p. 210) with no modifications.

A little fast talking will go a long way. Telling Mr. Pickens (yes, it's him) that the group is looking for Mr. Banzai themselves, to repossess some of his stuff will result in the runners getting sneered at for being repos,

but left to go about their business. Any other halfway reasonable explanation for being in Banzai's apartment will do. Pickens is just here to make sure the power is shut off, stays off, and Banzai, if present, is busted. The cops will only roust the players if they're carrying obviously illegal gear, or if they start trouble (like pulling weapons). Concealment ratings apply.

#### D. Debugging

If the runners totally fail to get into the building, send them on to Steel's place and have him accompany them back to Billy's. He can get the runners past the Angels. Make the runners feel really stupid if they have to go this route.

If they get into combat with the Angels, let them get beat up but stop short of killing any of them. Have one of the leaders of the Angels give them a good stern lecture on the evils of using force as a solution. Deny them access to the apartment and send them to Steel for help.

If the runners miss any of the clues, have the more alert ones make Intelligence (4) Tests to see if they can figure out what's nagging at them. Leaving with the search incomplete ought to bother them.

If the runners get into it with the cops, play through their getting busted, getting their goodies taken away and processed through the system. Use the Confederacy legal ratings from the NeoAnarchist's Guide to North America (p. 34). Have them released pending trial so they can continue searching for Billy without their gear. If only one runner pulled a gun, however, don't penalize the others. A quick denial -- "I didn't know he was packing, honest" -- will keep the cops from shaking down everybody else. Having the cops take any obvious illegal equipment and then let the runners go with a warning is also an option. Make them finish the run without the fancy gear.

### IV. Steel Skidmore

At some point, talking with Steel will be useful. It's not vital, but it'll give the runners a piece or two that will help with the complete picture.

#### A. Getting There is Not Half the Fun

##### *Tell It To Them Straight:*

This requires a trip further into the Bricks. On the way, you run into a problem. There's a half dozen gogang types parked in a line across the street. The one in the middle is a Troll wearing some really beat-up armor with still-legible police markings (Partial Suit, armor rating of 6/4, SRII, p. 257). As you approach, he uses a loudspeaker. Stop, pay Troll, he says, and laughs really loudly at his own bad joke.

Use the Gang Member archetype (SRII, p. 57), make four of them human, one Ork and one Troll, adding

racial modifiers as needed. Give the Troll Wired Reflexes 2, and one of the humans Dermal Armor 2. Their bikes are all medium-weight street machines of assorted make, except the Troll's, which is a Honda Viking (Rigger Black Book, p. 23). All gang members have melee weapons -- clubs, crude maces and nunchakus -- in addition to pistols. The ork has a shotgun.

The bikers will pursue the runners if they take off, and will fight a highly mobile battle, using their bikes to their best advantage (Vehicles and Combat, SRII, p.104). The gangers will only retreat or break off if the fight goes seriously against them.

#### B. You Actually Live in this Hole?

##### *Tell It To Them Straight:*

Steel's building is one of a row of two-story 1940-era government rowhouses, eight apartments per building. They're in terrible condition, bricks crumbling, roof missing shingles and plastic windows badly scarred. Obviously the government quit doing maintenance on them a long time ago. You have no idea which apartment Steel is in -- all you got was the building number. There's a couple of scrungy-looking orks down at the far end of the building, watching you suspiciously. They put something away really fast when you drive up.

For the orks, use the Gang Member archetype (SRII, p.57) and add the ork racial modifiers. These two are low-level street punks, just hanging around on the front step. They'll show a lot of attitude from their home turf advantage, but if anyone flashes serious weaponry or the least hint of magic, they'll try to back down fast without losing face. Bribing them to find Skidmore or to go away is easy enough.

If the runners offer a bribe:

##### *Tell It To Them Straight:*

The ork pockets the nuyen, gets up, and picks up a chunk of concrete about the size of his fist from the edge of the sidewalk. He chuck's it at an upstairs window. "Yo! Skidmore!" The concrete bangs off the bulletproof perspex and narrowly misses one of the runners. Now you understand why the windows are scarred up. "Go on in," the ork says, and grins.

Once inside, there are eight doors, each leading either to an upstairs or downstairs apartment. There is no entrance lobby. The doors are all dented metal with peeling paint, and all closed. If the runners get announced by the ork, Steel opens his door as they walk in. "Yo, what, Otis? Whatcha got?" He notices the runners standing nearby. "Who's this?"

Steel is a tall, stringy guy with his hair buzzed on top and long in the back, whitewalled around his ears. He's wearing a cheap ripoff of an Atlanta Butchers jersey

and jeans with holes worn in them here and there. His left arm is chrome, the flashy kind that sells real well to the redneck/poser crowd. Steel isn't very impressed with the runners. Any mages or shamans will get a funny look ("One'a those, huh?").

If the runners meet him in the hall or knock on his door, his answer is the same. "Jala hired you to find Billy, huh? Well, geez, I ain't seen'im for days. C'mon in."

Rathole doesn't begin to describe it. This place is falling apart. There's cardboard tacked up where the plaster has fallen away from the lathing, the windows are gouged and scorched from stray rounds, and the furniture looks like it was rejected by the salvage shop. At least it's not grungy. Steel keeps it reasonably clean, as well as you could with a place in this poor a condition. He offers y'all a beer, some local label you never heard of. It's really cheap and really bad.

There's rocker posters over most of the wall surfaces, Steel himself is obviously chromed with the right arm previously mentioned, and since you're scoping' him, you notice that he's got subdermal armor.

Steel parks himself on the bed; it creaks alarmingly. There's a card table with three rickety-looking folding chairs. He waves his beer at them. "Y'all have a sit. So, what kin Ah do ya for?"

### C. What Steel Has to Say

If the runners don't totally geek the introductions, Steel turns out to be a friendly enough sort and will tell the runners a few things.

"Well," says Steel, "Ah ain't seen Billy'n a couple'a days. Jala really hired you t'find'im?" After being reassured that yes, you really are working for Jala, he continues. "Man, I hope ain't nothin happened to im. Billy's a cool guy, y know? Last time I saw im? Coupla days ago. See, Billy'd got some new chrome put in, and that laid him up for a day or two -- not so long as you'd think, now, but he wouldn't tell me nothin', just grinned an' said he'd hit th' big time -- 'n' he said it'd get 'im a job, a real good one, so's he could move into a better place an' all. 'N' he didn't want Jala to see 'im til after the new chrome'd settled in 'n' all, 'n' he'd got paid for th' job. But he wouldn't tell me nothin' about it. I kept after him, y'know? Cause we been friends a long time now, 'n' I figured, y'know, if he's got this big break, he oughta share it with his chummers, 'n' he said he would, but he had to go do this job first, 'n' then he'd split the info with me. 'N' that was th' day afore yesterday, 'n' he ain't been answerin' his phone nor nothin' since then. You think he might could'a got geeked on the run?"

"Naw, man, I got no idea where he got the chrome. Man, it was cool, though. Got rippers put in on both sides, new eyes, got his knee fixed up. He said he'd tell me after he did this job thang, said it was payment for th' new chrome 'n' after he did th' job he could get me in. I dunno, other 'n' me, he hung out at that Temple up on Gallatin, up to Madison -- yeah, the Druid place

-- an' he hung with Jala. I dunno, maybe he had other friends. I never asked, 'n' he never told me. Sorry, dude, that's all I know."

If the runners have a debt to collect (see III.B.), Steel doesn't have the 500¥ to repay the debt, but will offer 100¥ and a BTL. "Still got a coupla plays left on it."

### D. Debugging

Don't let the runners get too involved in the fight with the gogang. If they start taking the worse of it, send in some rival gangers to take the heat off the runners. The point of the fight is to demonstrate how dangerous the area is, not to geek the runners in the middle of the street.

The meet with Steel is going to be hard to screw up, but if the runners really seriously manage to offend him somehow, just deny them the information. They'll have to do without what he has to say. If the runners need him to get into Billy's apartment, have him demand a couple hundred nuyen to take them there. He'll settle for fifty nuyen and a case of beer, but don't let the runners know this up front.

## V. The Temple

The Druid Temple is easily identified with a check of the phone listings. Parthenon Grove of the Associated Reconstructionist Druids has their temple up north of Orktown, not that far a drive.

### Tell It To Them Straight:

You drive up Gallatin Road into the Madison area. You pass through a sort of no-man's-land flanked on one side by the military cemetery and the other side by the Jewish cemetery, both looking reasonably well maintained. A few empty strip malls, and then a massive building with the dim outline of the Sears logo on it, over a banner announcing "MADISON'S LARGEST INDOOR FLEA MARKET!!!". There's actually a few cops in this area. Finally you arrive at the address; it's a modest three-story brick building, next to a really cheap burger place. The parking lot out front is small, but empty. There's a discreet sign indicating more parking around back. The sign out front reads: PARTHENON GROVE, Athro Thomas Sloane, Services Saturday (dusk), Wednesday (8:30PM). The front doors are tall enough for a Troll to walk in without stooping.

Inside the front doors is a lobby, not very large going across or side to side, but two stories high. The floor is hardwood, no carpeting, and well kept. To the right are a series of four paintings showing a hilltop with a stone circle (but not Stonehenge) in winter, spring, summer and fall, and a table with some assorted tracts and fliers. To the left is a wooden door with a small brass plate: OFFICE. In front of you are a pair of brass-bound wooden doors at least fifteen feet high, covered with symbols, runes and decorative carvings.

If the runners park out front, continue with **The Office**. If they drive around to the back lot, skip to **The Loading Dock**. If they frag with the big doors, drop a Force 12 city spirit (SRII, p. 144) on them. There's a couple hanging around the Temple.

### A. The Office

You try the door labelled **Office**. It opens easily enough. Inside is a small reception area, with green carpet, real wood furniture, and an elderly woman working at a desk. She's apparently having trouble reading her terminal, even with some amazingly thick glasses. She peers at you -- the glasses make her eyes look disconcertingly large - and says "Yes? Can I help you?"

There's another door behind her with a small brass plate on it that says T. SLOANE. If you head for it, the secretary says "Excuse me, that's the Athro's office. He's out back on the loading dock right now." She'll make a fuss if anyone tries get past her and into Sloane's office.

If anyone offers her help with her terminal:

The secretary blinks owlishly at you from behind her glasses. "Do you know how to set this silly thing on large print?" she asks.

This may look like a golden opportunity to run the Temple's system. Unfortunately, she's watching what you do far too closely for any decking or riffling through files. She asks constantly "Why did you do that?" and "What was that command string again?" and is taking notes. It's a Computer Theory (2) Test to get the screen set for large print, and now she can read it more easily, but if you try poking around in their files, she'll notice.

Basically, there's not much to be learned here in the office. The secretary can tell the runners that Billy helps out on the loading dock every now and then, but he isn't a member of the Grove. These are NeoPagan religious Druids, anyway, not the hermetic or shamanic types found in Britain.

### B. The Loading Dock

Around the back is another small parking lot, this with a couple of semi-junkers, and your basic loading dock: a concrete platform and a driveway that slopes down into a pit, so that trucks backing into the drive will have their rear doors even with the platform. There's room for two trucks here, but only one parked at the moment. Three people (two humans and a dwarf) are unloading the truck, hauling cardboard boxes from it into a storage room in the rear of the temple building, while a fourth, a female elf with an asthmatic wheeze, sits on a barstool with a clipboard and writes down what they're carrying.

When you ask for Athro Sloane, you're pointed to one of the two humans doing the unloading. He looks

to be in his mid 40s, built pretty solid, like maybe he used to play football a long time ago. His closely trimmed hair and beard are mostly grey. He's wearing a ratty pair of jeans, a t-shirt with the logo for some sort of festival, and sneakers. When he grins, a gold tooth flashes, bright against the dark brown of his skin.

"Yes, I'm Tom Sloane. Athro? That's a title, you know, like Reverend or Father. Can you give me a hand with this?" He hands the nearest runner the box of soy extender he's carrying and grabs another case out of the truck. "Just stack it in there with the others."

He'll talk with the runners, but only if they help him with the truck. "It's for the food closet," he explains. "Lot of people in Orktown depend on us and other religious groups, ever since the welfare system collapsed."

Athro Sloane has a few kind words regarding Billy. "Billy's trying to find direction in his life. Nobody's really happy unless they have a purpose. Helping out here gives him a sense of making a difference in the community. You don't think something has happened to him, do you?"

He remembers that Billy left early a couple days ago for a doctor's appointment. Over at the Fairfield Clinic. It's all he could afford, although I'm not putting down their work. Not often you find a doctor willing to do charity cases. Sloane also had a dream about Billy last night. There were big tanks, and pipes, and a white floor. It could have been a dairy, or a food processing plant. All I got was a brief glimpse, but it seemed so real. The runners will not get anything else useful from him. The vision he had remains vague no matter how many questions they ask.

### C. Debugging

If the runners don't help unload the truck, Sloane won't give them any information. Period. They have to prove themselves to him before he'll offer help. Etiquette Tests are not allowed in this scene.

If they persist in asking questions after the information available is exhausted, have another truck arrive. Sloane asks if the runners are willing to help unload this one as well. It's bigger than the last one.

If the runners insist on trying to get into Sloane's office, have a Force 12 free city spirit (SRII, p. 144; Grimoire II, p. 76)) block their access, followed by Sloane showing up from the back. He tosses them out, not too politely, and will definitely not offer any sort of help.

The sanctuary (the room beyond the big carved doors) is locked. Anyone fool enough to assense these doors runs into a big fraggin' ward (Grimoire II, p. 92) and gets a headache for their trouble. Don't give a rating for the ward, just tell the runners it's too big for them to even think about busting it. Whatever's on the other side, the Druids don't want people snooping from the astral. Attempting to force their way into there will

get the runners tossed out on their ears. For some reason, their guns won't fire inside the building. Don't explain this, other than to suggest that maybe the Temple's being a sort of church might have something to do with it.

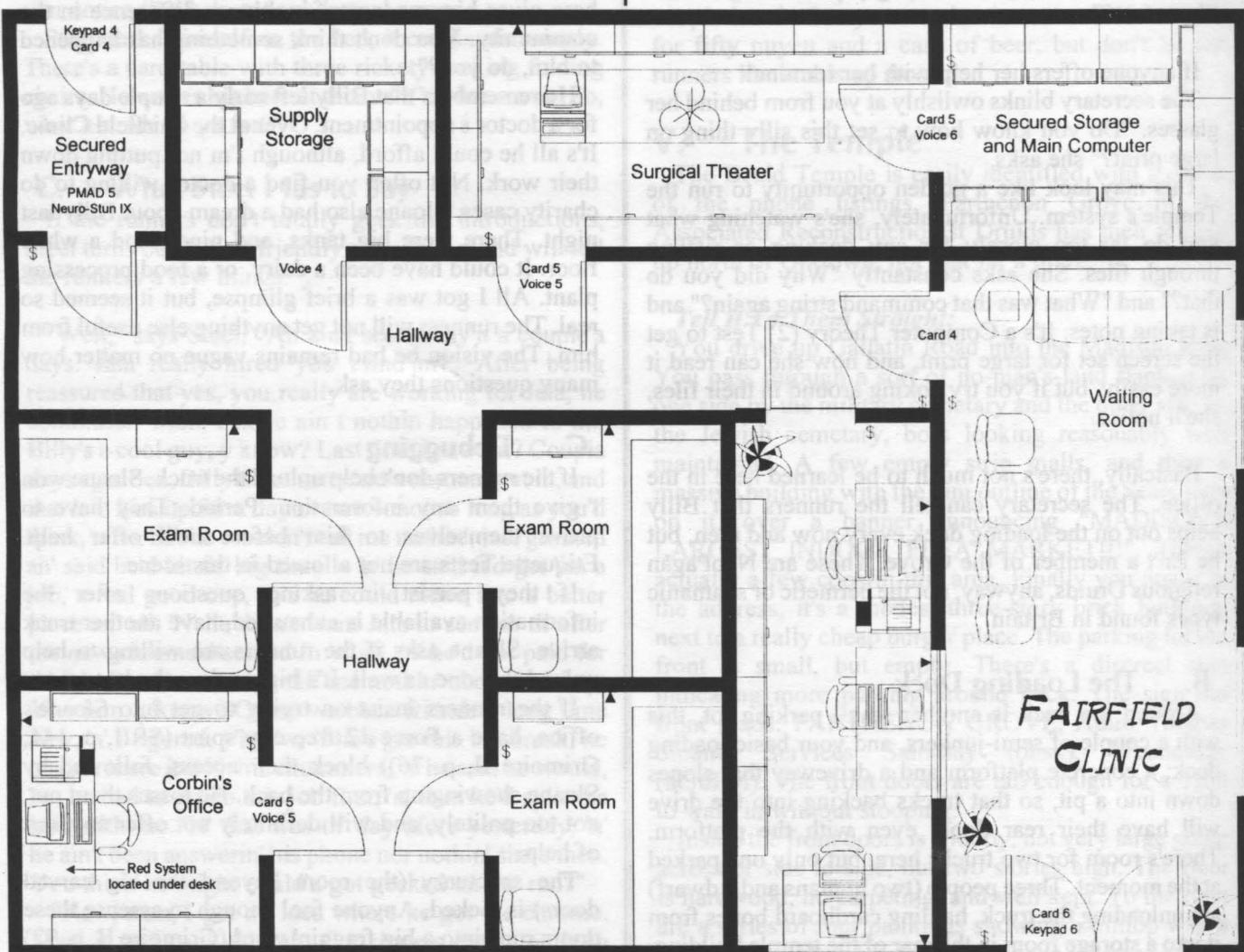
Above all, don't provide too much here. This is not a dead end, but it's not a very helpful stop either. The main point is to convince the runners that Billy was a pretty decent guy, and make them care about what happened to him.

## VI. The Fairfield Clinic

Billy had the number for this place on his comm. After all, it's where he got his great new cyber, in the shadow clinic that Fairfield provides a front for. Walking in the front door is not going to reveal the shadow side of the business, but asking the right questions -- or using shadow methods -- will reveal the truth.

wire mesh. The front entrance has a security foyer, like an airlock, where they can scope you before allowing you into the building proper. There's a heavy-set human working the console, with a couple of big orks for backup. Parking out front is a narrow strip, not much more than a wide driveway, with a few diagonal slots for patient vehicles. The back lot is for employees. It has a three-meter high electric fence and a couple of orks with body armor and automatic weapons making sure nobody gets in without the right ID. Somewhere in the building is a Mage, not an initiate, who maintains astral cover. He's got a Watcher in the building and another out in the employee lot for extra surveillance.

Inside, the place smells like sick people and cheap antiseptic. The counter has bulletproof plastic windows over it, and those armored slots like at the gas station for passing clipboards, credsticks and the like through to the other side. A half-dozen people, mostly orks, are hanging about in the waiting room -- a woman with



### A. Description

Located on Gallatin Road just barely into the Orktown area, the clinic is a two-story yellow brick building with tall, narrow windows covered with heavy

three kids running wild and a fourth sitting on her lap hacking and sneezing, a Troll guy in greasy blue work clothes with his hand bandaged, and a young couple, the woman obviously pregnant.

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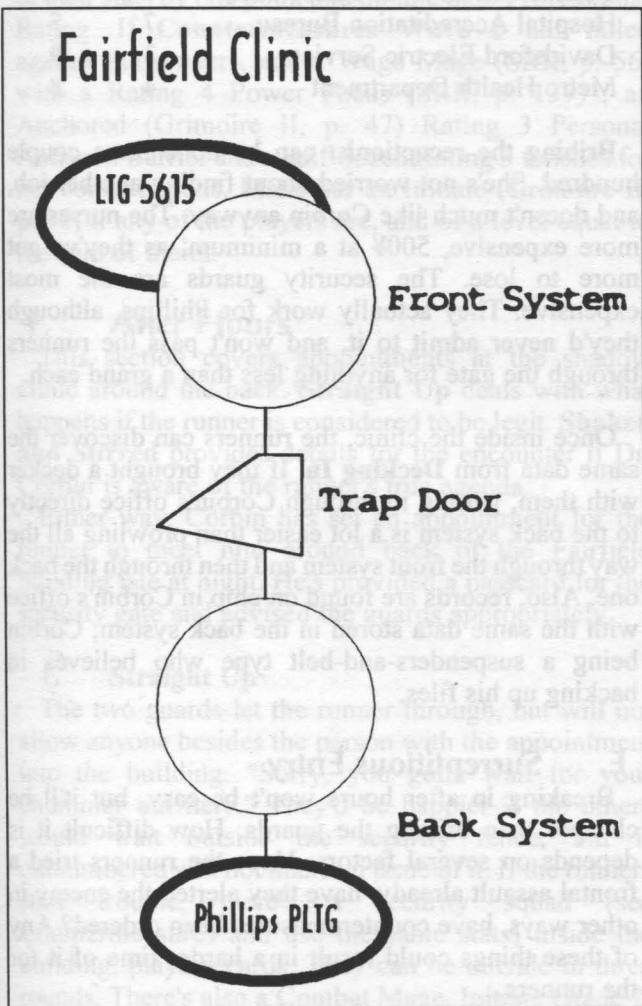
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Staff consists of two orks and a dwarf, all female, all in white medical uniforms and all on the other side of that bulletproof wall. One of the two ork women is at the counter, and looks up when you come in. "Welcome to Fairfield," she says, like she doesn't really mean it. "Do you have an appointment?"

### B. The Frontal Approach

Walking in the front door and claiming to either have an appointment or to be Billy Banzai are obvious ways of checking out the place. This section covers the results.



The clinic puts walk-in customers behind people with appointments. If the runners make an appointment, they'll be seen about a half hour later than the scheduled time. If they don't have an appointment, they can expect to sit in the waiting room about four hours before they finally get called up to the counter to verify their billing information, and then another half hour before the doctor finally sees them.

If one of the runners claims to be Billy, the wait is a lot shorter. Within ten minutes, a couple of plexcops arrive and haul the runner off, charging him with attempted fraud. Physical Masks and other deceptions will only add to the problems. After the cops book the runner, run him past a judge who fines him 5000¥ and

releases him. Go to **Countermeasures**.

Once in to see Dr. Corbin, asking a few discreet questions about acquiring good chrome cheap will get the runner an appointment after normal office hours. Dr. Corbin gets to make a Resisted Test of his Intelligence against the runner's Charisma (plus Streetwise, if any) to see if he detects the deception. He will give no sign if he does, but the runner will get a hot reception later. Dropping Billy's name gives Dr. Corbin a TN# of 1 less.

The runner gets charged 75¥ for the office visit. If he gets a late appointment, Dr. Corbin will give him a passcard and tell him to be at the back entrance at 8PM.

### Dr. Roger Corbin

Use the Street Doc Contact archetype (SRII, p. 211). Raise his Professional Rating to 6, his Quickness to 4, his Intelligence to 5 and his Reaction to 4.

### C. Decking In

Cracking the Clinic from the Matrix turns out to be fairly tough. They've got a dual system configuration, with a trapdoor from the front to the back. The decker is going to have to get into the front system, find the trapdoor, then log into the back system and crack it to find the paydata. That, or the team is going to have to do a physical run on the clinic to get the decker to the back system's console. See Virtual Realities 2.0 for explanations of this section.

#### Front System

LTG: NA/CAS-CE-5615-350-7866

System Security Rating: Green-6/10/9/8/8/9

Paydata: 0

This stack uses regulation UMS iconography, as the management didn't feel like spending a lot of nuyen on what is essentially a clean system. Workstation access is available from the front desk of the clinic. Console access is available from the top of the system itself, which is in the secured storage room. The Files subsystem contains a trapdoor to the Back system. A successful Analyze Files operation is required to find the trapdoor. There's a lot of medical records here, but they're all straight citizens with low income, not the sort of megapulses anyone would pay to have.

#### Security Sheaf

Step Event

- 6 Trace-5
- 12 Passive Alert
- 17 Party IC:  
    Acid-rip-4  
    Bind-rip-4  
    Jam-rip-4  
    Mark-rip-4
- 22 Active Alert

Report filed with Phillips through PLTG SAN

in back system. PLTG SAN is closed.

- 28 Sparky-6
- 33 Shutdown

### Back System

Phillips PLTG connection, no LTG connection

System Security Rating: Orange-8/14/13/13/14/11

Paydata: Special (see text)

Console access is available from Dr. Corbin's desk. There is no direct LTG connection to this system. Access is only through the front system, the Phillips PLTG SAN or the console. Treat the PLTG connection as a triggered vanishing SAN, that closes if the security tally hits 18 or if the front system goes to active alert.

### Security Sheaf

Step Event

- 5 Probe-8
- 8 Trace-8
- 11 Passive Alert
- 14 Cascading Blaster-6 (Shifting)
- 18 If jackpoint not located, Trap Trace 6 (Sparky 8)

If jackpoint located, Bouncer: upgrade Security Code to Red-9, switch to human anatomic sculpted environment, trigger Active Alert

PLTG connection closed after report filed on possible intrusion

- 22 If jackpoint not located, Active Alert and Mark-rip-8

If already at Active Alert, Cascading Black IC-8

- 26 Cascading Psychotropic Black IC-8 (Cyberphobia)
- 31 Shutdown

In a datastore, protected with Scramble-8 and loaded with data bombs, are the records of Billy Banzai and a half dozen others. Most are marked Collected. One is labelled Tagged for Collection, with tonight's date. If one of the runners has managed to convince the shadow operation at Fairfield that he's for real and not pulling a scam, then there's a record for the runner, labelled Tests Pending. If the runner failed to convince Corbin, then there's a copy of a memo to Nathaniel Boggs at Phillips Security advising him of a leak, and urging immediate action.

### D. Bribery and Misrepresentation

There's a saying in the shadows: Beauty is only skin deep, but bribery and misrepresentation will get you anywhere. Masquerading as an official, especially if you've got a decker to provide you with semi-legitimate credentials, is a great way to go poking around in somebody's files. Juicing the credstick of a minor functionary is a classic way to open doors and datastores. Problems can arise, though, if you say you're from an organization that's already been bribed to leave your quarry alone.

Several possibilities are available. Target numbers for producing the credentials should be higher for state authorities than local, for Federal than state, and highest for megacorps. Target numbers to bluff past the staff should be correspondingly adjusted, with the attempt getting easier with higher-level credentials. Dr. Corbin will of course be more skeptical than the nursing staff, and the receptionist will put up less of a fuss than the nurses.

Agency	Cred	Bluff
Phillips Bioware	9	3
Confederate Medical Association	8	4
Hospital Accreditation Bureau	7	5
Davidsford Electric Service	3	9
Metro Health Department	4	8

Bribing the receptionist can be done for a couple hundred. She's not worried about finding another job, and doesn't much like Corbin anyway. The nurses are more expensive, 500¢ at a minimum, as they've got more to lose. The security guards are the most expensive. They actually work for Phillips, although they'd never admit to it, and won't pass the runners through the gate for anything less than a grand each.

Once inside the clinic, the runners can discover the same data from **Decking In**. If they brought a decker with them, getting in through Corbin's office directly to the back system is a lot easier than prowling all the way through the front system and then through the back one. Also, records are found on chip in Corbin's office with the same data stored in the back system, Corbin being a suspenders-and-belt type who believes in backing up his files.

### E. Surreptitious Entry

Breaking in after hours won't be easy, but it'll be cheaper than bribing the guards. How difficult it is depends on several factors: Have the runners tried a frontal assault already, have they alerted the enemy in other ways, have countermeasures been ordered? Any of these things could result in a harder time of it for the runners.

The floor plans for the clinic show the locations and security ratings of all the alarm systems. These ratings will be increased by 1 twenty-four hours after the clinic (or Phillips) are alerted that the vat replenishment project is in danger. The waiting room, exam rooms and secured rear entrance are all equipped with Neuro-Stun IX dispensers, taking 3 rounds for the waiting room and 1 round for the other rooms to flood the area. Neuro-Stun IX does 6S stun per round, and is osmotic, so it takes a full EnviroSeal chemsuit to stop it. All doors have contact alarms (rating 4), and all windows have vibration detectors (rating 4). If active countermeasures are activated, all doors, internal and external, are charged for an 8S stun shock. The main

computer system is in the secured storage room off the surgical theater. The Red system with the paydata is under Corbin's desk. Where two security systems are specified, both must be passed to gain entrance.

There are normally no guards inside the clinic after hours, unless Dr. Corbin is meeting someone at the back. If the clinic is placed on alert, there will be four guards on site. Use the Corporate Security Guard Contact archetype (SRII, p. 205), make two of them human, one dwarven and one an Elf with appropriate racial modifiers, give them all Boosted Reflexes 2, Medium Security Armor and heavy firearms. Raise all of their stats by one point and double their Professional Rating. If **Countermeasures Wave 2** has failed against the runners, add a Wage Mage (SRII, p. 56) with a Rating 4 Power Focus (SRII, p. 137), an Anchored (Grimoire II, p. 47) Rating 3 Personal Antispell Barrier and a half-dozen Rating 3 fetishes for her combat spells. Make her an Initiate (Grimoire II, p. 38) if any of the players are, and of a level equal to the sum of theirs.

## F. After Hours

This section covers appointments at the shadow clinic around the back. **Straight Up** deals with what happens if the runner is considered to be legit. **Shaken and Stirred** provides details for the encounter if Dr. Corbin is aware of the runner's true agenda.

Either way, Corbin has set an appointment for the runner to meet him around back of the Fairfield building late at night. He's provided a passcard for the security gate and advised the guards appropriately.

### 1. Straight Up

The two guards let the runner through, but will not allow anyone besides the person with the appointment into the building. "Sorry, you gotta wait for your chummer out here." They'd be happier if the others would wait outside the security fence, but if outnumbered will not make an issue of it. If the runners start trouble, there's a security squad (see Countermeasures and use the same stats) inside the building, playing cards. They can be outside in three rounds. There's also a Combat Mage, Initiate Grade 2, but he'll only come out astrally and only if there's magic involved in the fight. He's got a Force 5 Earth Elemental hanging about for emergencies. Corbin always has extra security laid on when he has a shadow appointment. You just can't be too careful when you're dealing with runners, y'know?

The back door is a heavy security door, with a passcard slot and a com unit, both heavily shielded. The guards stand back while the runner slots his card and goes in, watching closely for trouble. If both the gate and the back door open for the passcard, they'll assume the runner was expected (providing Corbin told them he had a late appointment).

Beyond the security door is a two-meter long foyer

with another security door at the far end. While stuck in the foyer, the runner will be scoped for weapons with a PMAD and assensed by the mage. Removable weapons have to be dropped into a bin, which will close automatically and lock before the inner door opens. If the runner refuses to disarm, the guards gas him unconscious, then pitch him out of the parking lot. The passcard will be taken away and no second appointment will be scheduled.

Once inside, the runner will be met by Dr. Corbin and an armed guard, and escorted to an examining room. The guard will stay in the room with the runner at all times. Dr. Corbin will offer the runner a chance to get beta-grade cyber at half the normal price, if the runner participates in a clinical trial. Corbin is testing a new drug that speeds up healing after cyber implantation surgery -- speeds it up a lot. The runner will get an initial test to see if he'll respond properly to the drug, and to make sure he isn't allergic to it. If the test goes okay, the surgery can be done tomorrow night. The runner will then be given some transderms and a follow-up appointment in three days. By that time, if the drug has worked properly, the cyber will be settled in and all the damage done by surgery healed. There'll be a follow-up test to check how well the drug worked. Oh -- and a run. Seems Dr. Corbin is getting his cyber from a company that needs runners, and is willing to let Corbin recruit for them. The runners can work off some of the price of the fancy cyber, the company gets its work done cheap and everybody's happy.

The runner passes the (rigged) test for the experimental drug and gets the cyber. At the follow-up appointment Corbin will tell the runner to meet the Johnson at the roller coaster at the old fairgrounds, at four the next morning. The Johnson will have further instructions. No, Corbin doesn't know anything about the run. He just does the drug testing and puts in the cyber. At no point is the drug manufacturer named. Play up the tapdancing around government regs. Most runners will jump at a chance to get in on something shady.

The surgery and the follow-up appointment are under the same conditions as the initial appointment. If Corbin or Phillips are alerted to the runner's real motive, use the next section. Otherwise, play through getting the cyber, the drug and the follow-up.

There's one further catch. The drug isn't quite legit. It's not a fast-heal, it's a tissue prep for cloning vats. It accelerates cell regeneration and growth, allowing healing at triple the normal rate, but the effect lasts for a week after the runner completes the course. The day after the follow-up appointment, the runner will come down with muscle aches and a fever. Over the next three days, the symptoms will get worse. The runner starts taking a 9M each day until somebody makes a Biotech (12) Test to counteract the drug, or seven full days pass, or the runner dies. During all the time on

the drug and after, the runner will be ravenously hungry and painfully thirsty. As well, the runner will begin to bulk out on the fourth day, rapidly becoming musclebound. Strength will increase by up to half the runner's base Attribute score, one point per day, but the runner loses a point of Quickness every other day. Also, the runner takes a 1 point TN# penalty on all physical activity, cumulative per day after the fourth. There had to be hidden costs to the cyber...

## 2. Shaken and Stirred

This proceeds pretty much the same way as the first option. The guards outside will only let through the one person with the appointment. The guards inside are on alert, though, and can be outside in two rounds. The building will have Force 5 wards over it to prevent assensing or astral scouting. The runner will automatically be gassed once in the security foyer.

When the runner wakes up, he'll be tied down to an operating table with all weapons, spell locks and anchored items removed and all cyber in security restraints. Corbin and Boggs will be present, along with half the security squad. If the runner is magically active, the combat mage will also be present. Boggs will ask a few questions, using a voice stress analyzer, and won't be happy with anything he feels is less than completely honest. Have the runner make a Resisted Charisma Test against Boggs' Willpower for each question. If Boggs wins, the runner is given an 8M electric shock.

1. Who are you working for?
2. What is your real objective?
3. What do you know about Batch X707A?
4. What is your connection to Carter CyberBio?
5. Why are you lying to me?

At some point, the rest of the runners (who are hopefully waiting out in the parking lot) should try to rescue their chummer. Give them some sort of clue, like their chummer's radio going dead. A firefight ensues, with the corporate security squad gleefully unloading in the general direction of anything that looks vaguely like a runner. Corbin will be upset at the damage to his clinic and will spend the battle screaming at Boggs to rein in his goons. Boggs has a Ruger Warhawk, but will only use it if he has a really good shot at a runner, or if Corbin gets on his nerves a little too much.

Taking Boggs or Corbin hostage is a valid maneuver. Some information can be derived from them. Boggs carries Phillips ID, although he won't talk except under extreme duress. Corbin will tell the runners anything if they'll let him go unharmed.

If the runner with the appointment isn't rescued, and he survives, he wakes up the next morning in a back alley a couple of blocks away with all his more interesting gear missing. If the torture is too much, the

body gets dumped in a similar location as a warning.

## Nat Boggs, Phillips Security

Use the Mr. Johnson Contact archetype (SRII, p. 210). Raise all physical stats to 3. Add Boosted Reflexes 3 and a Firearms of 4. Give him an Armor Vest and the Warhawk.

## G. Legwork

Oddly, there's no word in regular shadow circles about the new cyber clinic. All professional contacts that are consulted are perplexed, confused, and maybe a little ticked that a new clinic has opened that they don't know about. With a little extra digging, and maybe some nuyen slotted to cover their trouble, the runners' contacts could find out that the clinic opened about the same time that Carter CyberBio went belly-up. Maybe somebody bought up a bunch of cyber from the fire sale and set up shop. Not real surprising that they're working out of Fairfield -- that place never has had a visible means of support. Apparently the cheap deal is only being offered to people who are really hard up for nuyen. Who knows, maybe some runner involved in the Carter deal dumped a stack of loot where it would do the most good. One'a those Robin Hood types, y'know?

## H. Debugging

**The Arrest:** If one of the runners get busted for impersonating Billy, that's a cheap laugh for the GM, but if the entire group gets busted, that's delay of game. Conjure some sort of incident to let the runners escape. A drunken Troll punching out the patrol car is a good distraction, or a gogang thundering by on their way to commit unspecified mayhem. Sure, there'll be a warrant out for the runners for escaping custody and conspiracy to defraud, but once out of sight of the plexcops, the chances of getting picked up on the warrant are slim.

**Return Appointments:** If the runner has spotted the concealed gas ports on the first visit, and has thought to bring filters of some sort, gas him anyway. Neuro-Stun IX is osmotic. If the runner wears an EnviroSeal chemsuit, let him get away with it. Having the inner door open on a squad of goons ought to teach him not to be annoying.

**The Firefight:** Don't let the runners get geeked here. If the captured runner dies, well, that's the risks, but the group should be able to carry on. A run of bad luck for the security types should be easy to manage. With all the med supplies stacked up everywhere, the building will become Difficult Terrain (SRII, p. 89) fast when bullets start making holes. It's tough to make your Quickness rolls when you're wearing armor, y'know? One or two goons falling down at inopportune moments ought to take the heat off the runners. Taking Boggs as a hostage would also get the runners out with no further shots fired. Corbin's not worth as much to

the corp, but if the situation is desperate, have the goons hold their fire anyway.

## VII. The Roller Coaster: A Side Trip

A quick check of the public databases, or an Intelligence (5) Test for native characters, reveals two roller coasters in town. One is at Opryland, the big amusement park that's slowly taking over the better areas of Davidsford. It's a high security zone with a 50¥ entrance fee. The other roller coaster is out on Nolensville Road at the State Fairgrounds, abandoned years ago and known to be the location of a major-level flea market/bazaar. Think Middle Eastern marketplace.

If the runners go to the roller coaster without a meet to either make or crash, they find nothing. They have to have either a meet set up through Dr. Corbin, or have successfully completed a run on the clinic and have details on someone else's meet. Throw in a Squatter Contact archetype (SRII, p. 210) who says he'll tell them all about a previous meet if they buy him a meal and/or a bottle. All he can tell them, though, is that two wireboys and a suit met some guy, the suit shot the guy and the wireboys carried off the body. He couldn't describe any of the four people he saw any better, as he was really buzzed on a bottle of homemade stuff he scrounged.

### **Tell It To Them Straight:**

You come rolling up through the gate of the fairgrounds and into total Middle Eastern Bazaar-type chaos: people on foot, on bikes, rickshas, cars, trucks, and things with wheels that you have no name for. Lighting is provided by a combination of floodlights with solar batteries, kerosene lanterns and torches, with no rhyme or reason to their placement. There's tents, pushcarts, people with stuff spread out on blankets, shacks cobbled together out of whatever metal and wood the inhabitants could find. Hundreds of voices arguing, bargaining and swearing (sometimes all three at once) rise into the din. The smell is almost beyond description -- all these people who haven't bathed recently plus whatever it is they're cooking for dinner plus the odors from the small manufacturing facilities that have sprung up. Distilleries, smithies, plastics recycling -- spirits alone know what all lurks in there.

There's not much over near the old roller coaster across the driveway. The angle it's leaning at might have something to do with that. Apparently people removed some pieces for firewood (it's too rotten to use for building) at some point, and the termites and weather have done the rest. Weeds and trees have grown up around it to where the bottom four meters or so vanish into the brown. In this area of town, you expected green? There's a few paths that lead off into the bracken. No activity is immediately visible around their entrances.

The rest of the fairgrounds rises up a steep hill across the main road from the roller coaster. At the top of the

hill are some concrete-block buildings, and beyond them a haze of light and smoke that tells you that the main part of the bazaar is out of sight from the road.

No particular gang controls the Bazaar. There's a sort of power structure based around some folks that live in one of the buildings, and they pretty much run the place, but there's internal politics and factionalism. After all, this is a community of a couple hundred people.

Runners browsing the bazaar need to make a Street Etiquette (5) Test to keep their pockets from being picked, a Street Etiquette (4) Test to find something interesting in a shop (Availability ratings are adjusted according to GM whim, with lower ratings meaning higher prices) and a Street Etiquette (8) Test to spot any poseurs or lurking corprats.

### **A. What Kept You?**

If Mr. Johnson expects to meet one of the runners, use this section. Corbin's instructions were to meet the Johnson alone, but no runner ever goes in by himself. Attendance by the entire party is assumed for version 1. Use version 2 if the rest of the party hangs back or doesn't go at all.

For Mr. Johnson, use the Mr. Johnson Contact archetype (SRII, p. 210). For his goons, use the Company Man Contact archetype (SRII, p. 204), raise their Wired Reflexes to 2 and double their Professional Rating.

### **Tell It To Them Straight:**

Well, getting there is indeed half the fun. The weeds are obnoxious, tough suckers and some of them are mutated, Awakened and nasty. No injuries or poisonings, but you're tired, scratched and sore by the time you find one of the clear trails.

Plural, yes. There's all sorts of trails that go around and under the decaying structure. They take off in seven different directions from where you are now. Which way?

#### **1. It's a Party**

Have the runners make a few Intelligence Tests against whatever target number you like. The rolls are irrelevant, but they keep the players going. Run their characters around for a few before they locate the meeting point, under the hill to the big curve in the tracks. Once on the right trail, the runners can make an Intelligence (4) Test to realize that there's three people waiting at the meeting point. An astral scoping or a Stealth (8) Test allows the runners to scout without being spotted.

There's two enforcers, heavy cyber and probably some bioware. They're running hot, but whether it's wired, boosted or combat drugs can't be determined. The Johnson has some light headware, including a datajack, and is carrying a Force 5 Anchored (Grimoire II, p. 47) Mana Barrier, currently switched off. He

snaps it on if anyone makes an unexpected move.

Approaching openly is not a bad idea, as the wireboys are ready to open fire on anything sneaking around. If they start shooting, go to **Shakeout**. Once the passcodes are exchanged, Mr. Johnson expresses dismay that the runner showed up with buddies. He hands over a datachip and a bearer credstik, with details on a very simple run. What exactly is entailed is irrelevant -- it's a cakewalk that Johnson brought along just in case he needed the meet to look legit. He specifies that the runner with the new cyber must meet him alone the following night at a different site, and gives that runner a one-read-only chip with the information about the next meet on it. Johnson emphasizes that the runner with the new cyber must attempt the run by himself, and must make the meet by himself. If he doesn't, then it's not a fair test of the fast-heal drug, and the deal will be off. Yes, the company will send someone out to collect the new cyber, and yes, the company will spread the word that the runners cannot be trusted to hold to a deal.

## 2. Running Solo

If the other runners have remained hidden, things will go a bit differently. If the Johnson and his wireboys don't detect the other runners, Johnson outs with a Narcoject and tanks the runner doing the meet, shooting him two or three times rapidly if it looks like the first shot isn't going to take him down. If left undisturbed, he and the wireboys will then load the tranked runner into a black Ford Americar and take him to Phillips. Johnson uses a Rating 5 bugsweeper to check the runner for tracking devices before leaving the clearing. Make an Intelligence (4) Test for the driver (another Company Man, same stats as the two wireboys with Mr. J) to figure out he's being tailed. If the runners intervene when Johnson pulls the trunk gun, or Johnson and his wireboys figure out that there's people in the bushes watching the meet (a Resisted Intelligence Test against the runner's Stealth Rating or Quickness), go to **Shakeout**.

## 3. Shakeout

If the meet goes sour, things get real hot real fast. The wireboys are way overjacked and itching to blow off some steam. As soon as guns are drawn, Johnson retreats behind the wireboys and starts screaming at them to get him the frag out of there. He also pulls a pocket phone and makes a fast report. No backup is available, but he can at least put his corp on alert.

The wireboys open up with burst fire, but will switch to full auto when they realize how badly outnumbered they are. Unfortunately for them, the fight is a foregone conclusion. Yes, these are expensive megacorp goons, but there's only two of them. Mr. Johnson gets winged by a stray round early in the fight, and will surrender as soon as one of the wireboys goes down. Don't let him get killed if at all possible. He offers the runners

lots of money to go away and leave him alone. Unfortunately for him, his DocWagon coverage isn't good enough to get him picked up out of a firefight. He's going to have to leave the area under his own power -- or with help.

Questioning Mr. Johnson isn't worth much. His orders were brief and to the point. He was to meet a lone runner at the roller coaster. After sedating the runner with a Narcoject, he and his goons were to transport the runner to the loading dock of Phillips Bioware. After that, he was to go home and wait for his next assignment. He does not know what was planned for the runner, or even who the runner was. He had a password that was to be exchanged for identification.

Searching Mr. Johnson turns up a Fichetti Security 500A, expensive but not much more than a popgun, in a concealed holster under his jacket. Looking for ID produces a gold credstick with a balance of 250¥, a couple of bearer credsticks worth 500¥ each, and a photo ID badge in his inside jacket pocket, identifying him as Samuel Klein, Department of Research and Development, Phillips Bioware.

That engine is still being revved out by the road. Go to **Amateur Night at the Fairgrounds Motor Speedway**.

## B. On the Night of the Raid

If the runners are not expected, and are crashing someone else's meet, use this section. The runners must have completed a run on the clinic to know that there's going to be a meet. If they haven't, see the top of this section for details.

### 1. Assignment

#### *Tell It To Them Straight:*

Well, getting there is indeed half the fun. The weeds are obnoxious, tough suckers and some of them are mutated, Awakened and nasty. No injuries or poisonings, but you're tired, scratched and sore by the time you find one of the clear trails.

Plural, yes. There's all sorts of trails that go around and under the decaying structure. They take off in seven different directions from where you are now. Which way?

Have the runners make a few Intelligence Tests against whatever target number you like. The rolls are irrelevant, but they keep the players going. Run their characters around for a few before they locate the meeting point, under the hill to the big curve in the tracks. Once on the right trail, the runners can make an Intelligence (4) Test to realize that there's three people waiting at the meeting point. An astral scoping or a Stealth (8) Test allows the runners to scout without being spotted.

There's two enforcers, heavy cyber and probably

some bioware. They're running hot, but whether it's wired, boosted or combat drugs can't be determined. The Johnson has some light headware, including a datajack, and is carrying a Force 5 Anchored (Grimoire II, p. 47) Mana Barrier, currently switched off. He snaps it on if anyone makes an unexpected move.

Attempting to talk with these people is pointless. The runners are not who they're here to meet. The best that can be expected is being told to frag off. Combat will easily ensue, as the wireboys are way over-jacked and itchy for some reason to let off steam. As soon as guns are drawn, Mr. Johnson will start screaming alternately at the wireboys to knock it off and get him the frag out of there, and into a pocket phone yelling for help. Everyone hears an engine being revved out by the road. Go to **Shakeout**.

## 2. Amateur Night at the Fairgrounds Motor Speedway

When you get out to the road, a black Ford Americar takes off in a big hurry. You're standing by your vehicle (possibly with a bleeding prisoner), and nobody seems to be paying much attention to you. As a matter of fact, there's nobody anywhere nearby. The gunshots seem to have cleared out the area.

Pursuing the black Americar ought to be lots of fun, what with all sorts of windy-twisty ways through the bazaar, lots of pedestrians, pushcarts, etc. A high-speed chase through Tight Terrain (SRII, p. 105) with many innocent bystanders ought to give the players something of a challenge. Use the Stray Fire rules (SRII, p. 93) for every shot from both sides, and allow lots of collateral damage. Even if the players catch the Americar, they're going to have an angry mob right behind them.

The Americar should either get away or crash. Considering most runner teams, the car will probably be trashed within the first couple of rounds of the chase. Either way, the runners won't be able to use it to get into Phillips. No other vehicle will do, as the Americar has an identification transponder hidden in the engine compartment. Without the transponder, any vehicle approaching the loading dock will be warned away, and fired on if it doesn't leave. Finding the transponder takes a Vehicle B/R (8) Test, dismounting it and remounting it in another vehicle a Vehicle B/R (10) Test. A failure on the remount test trashes the transponder. Neither Mr. Johnson nor the goons know the location of the transponder, although they do know that it exists. The GM should keep in mind that the guards at the loading dock are expecting a black Americar with Mr. Johnson and two goons, with an unconscious person in the trunk. Any other vehicle or passenger combination will raise suspicion.

## C. Going to Opryland

If the runners go to Opryland instead of the fairgrounds, make it tough on them. The park closes

at 10 PM. Getting in after hours is just about impossible. Opryland is a AAA zone, with heavily armed border patrols, paranimal security teams and nasty sensors. Their stack is Red with proactive grey IC in the low levels of the Security Sheaf and black in the high levels. Feel free to boot the runners' hoops all the way back to Orktown.

## D. Debugging

If the runner with the new cyber makes the meet alone, gets carted off, and his chummers lose him either from their bug being found and tossed or the Americar losing them in traffic, that's the breaks. Should have given your chummer better backup. Give the player a blank character sheet.

The firefight should run like it says, a foregone conclusion. If the wireboys are seriously booting the runners' hoops, have them pull out to protect their Johnson. They're overjacked but not stupid. Geeking a bunch of runners is a lower priority than getting their Johnson away from the mess.

If the runners manage to capture Mr. Johnson and the Americar, and decide to use them both to get into Phillips, let them. They should get something decent for being good enough to pull off a hat trick.

If the runners screw up and go to Opryland instead of the fairgrounds, be rough on them but don't geek them. If the team gets fried, they won't learn anything, now, will they? Provide some sort of escape or just make it too tough to get inside in the first place, and send them packing.

## VIII. Countermeasures

Sooner or later, somebody's going to notice that the runners are asking questions. It really doesn't matter how it comes to the corp's attention. Phillips does not appreciate street punks poking into corporate affairs.

### A. Wave 1: Bubba and Joe-Bob

A couple of company men, big guys with big guns and bad attitudes, show up to warn off the runners. Use the Company Man Contact archetype (SRII, p. 204). Add partial suit body armor, raise their Professional Rating to 5 and give them whatever smart weapons and cyber seem appropriate. If the runners have magic capabilities, give both the goons each an Anchored (Grimoire II, p. 47) Personal Antispell Barrier 4. At no time do they give their names or their corporate affiliation. They threaten to make the runners vanish, and will shoot to kill if attacked.

### B. Wave 2: The Heavies

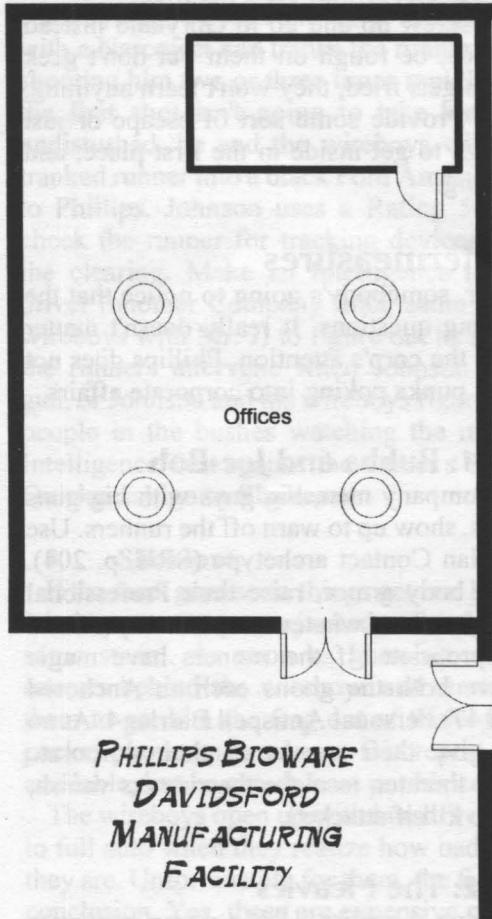
The second wave is nastier. Half a dozen corporate security types turn up at a very inopportune moment and do their best to geek the runners quickly and quietly. The goon squad doesn't want witnesses, so they'll hit the runners in a private location, like a back

alley or a deserted side street in the Bricks. They're carrying assault weapons, but nothing heavier than an LMG, and wearing heavy security armor with all the helmet enhancements. Nothing on them has the Phillips logo. Use the Company Man Contact archetype (SRII, p. 204), and apply racial modifications if you want metahumans in the party. Ditch the Wired Reflexes and give them Boosted Reflexes 3 (Street Samurai, p. 87), symbiotes and orthoskin (Shadowtech, pp. 15, 17). Up their Professional Rating to 5. Toss in an Anchored Personal Antispell Barrier 4 if appropriate.

## IX. Phillips Bioware

In this adventure, all roads lead to Phillips. One way or another, the runners discover that the answers lie within the halls and datafiles of Phillips Bioware, a division of Phillips International.

There's two ways to get the data to prove what happened: run the Phillips Matrix stack, or run the physical plant. This section covers both approaches, gives details on the likely reactions by Phillips to the intrusion, and reveals to the runners what really happened to Billy.



### A. Layout

Phillips Bioware is located north and west of

downtown Nashville, in a commercial/industrial corridor that extends from the Federal zone all the way up to Trolltown. The area is not patrolled by Metro if they can avoid it, since any unit going in alone is likely to get toasted. The corps that have facilities in the corridor maintain their own security forces, and the streets and their inhabitants are left to survive on their own. During the day, there's not a lot of trouble, as shipments going to and from the manufacturing facilities are heavily guarded. At night, though, things can get rough. The corp security forces will only intervene if their own facilities are in trouble. The streets are considered Metro's problem. Various types of gangs use the area as an arena to settle disputes.

For the runners, this means a lot of trouble just getting to the facility, then dealing with heavy security to get inside.

The building itself is a massive three-story structure of prestressed ferrocrite, no windows, armored doors and ventilation intakes. Weak points include the rooftop air vents. While they have motion sensors, they're miscalibrated and will ignore anything larger than a squirrel. The air shafts are large enough for a

Factory Section

Loading Dock

human to crawl through, although a troll should find a different route. Due to bad design, there's a junction

between the intake shaft and a return shaft that lets out in the stairway to the roof. Again, the motion sensors are miscalibrated. The doors to the outside are all reinforced security doors, for all the good that does, and have Rating 5 electronic locks with palmprint readers. These apply to opening the doors from the outside or the inside. Bypassing them is tricky but not impossible.

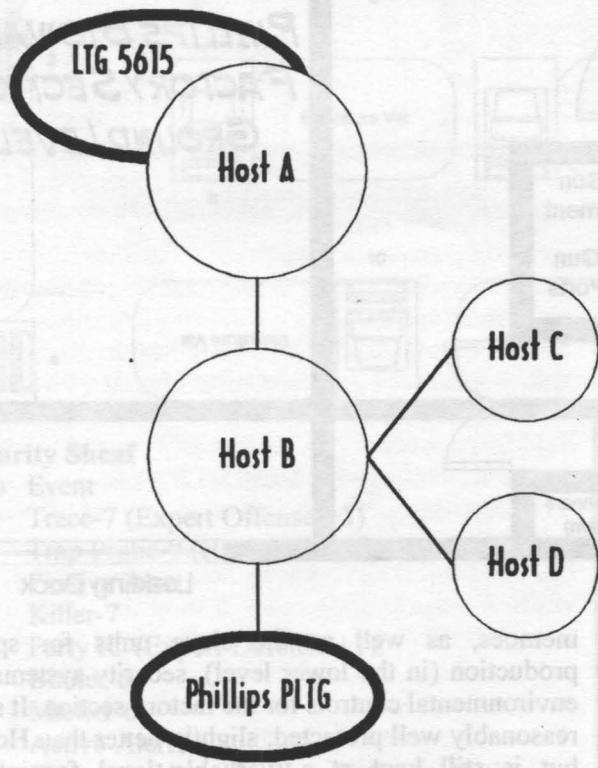
There's a security systems jack just inside the door to the elevator equipment room, which a clever rigger or decker could make use of. Going down the elevator shafts themselves is possible, but risky. The metal ladders are slick with condensation. Climbing requires a Quickness (8) Test to avoid falling, rolling once per floor. There is, however, another ladder that leads down one floor to the electrical equipment room on the third level of the building. From there, the hallway is only a security door away.

The interior of the building is monitored by camera, with a 2 in 12 chance of any particular camera being

echoing chamber, lit dimly with blue-tinted fluorescent floodlamps. Everything in the room is either chrome or white, with the exception of the terminals, which are shrouded in plastic dust covers to prevent contamination. Twelve huge vats, each the size of a minivan, line the walls, six down each side of the room. Large pipes with labels like LIQ O2 and O2 RTRN feed into the vats, wrapped heavily in foam insulation. Large, complex control and monitor panels reside at the left end of each vat, giving constant readouts on the contents. There's a slot for a security chip in the control panel. None of the controls will respond unless the security chip is inserted, or somebody makes an Electronic Locks (9) Test. Air conditioning keeps the room at a constant 20 degrees C, and the humidity at forty percent. If the temperature rises above 25, alarms will sound.

This is a clean room. Entering the vat room without going through the proper procedures in the airlock will set off alarms. Plastic decon suits hang in the airlock, and there are posted instructions on how to wear them and how to shower with the suit on before going into the vat room. Only one door of the airlock room can be open at a time. Opening both doors at once requires defeating a Rating 10 security system, and will set off an alarm regardless of successes.

## Phillips BioWare Davidsford



watched at any given moment. Roving patrols of two Corporate Security Guards (SRII, p. 205) wander around randomly, one per level, with an extra team on the factory floor and in the basement. There's a team of a half-dozen on the second level in the guardroom, playing cards and sleeping. It'll take them three rounds to get their act together and get out the door if the alarm sounds.

The vat room on the factory floor is a cavernous,

### B. Matrix

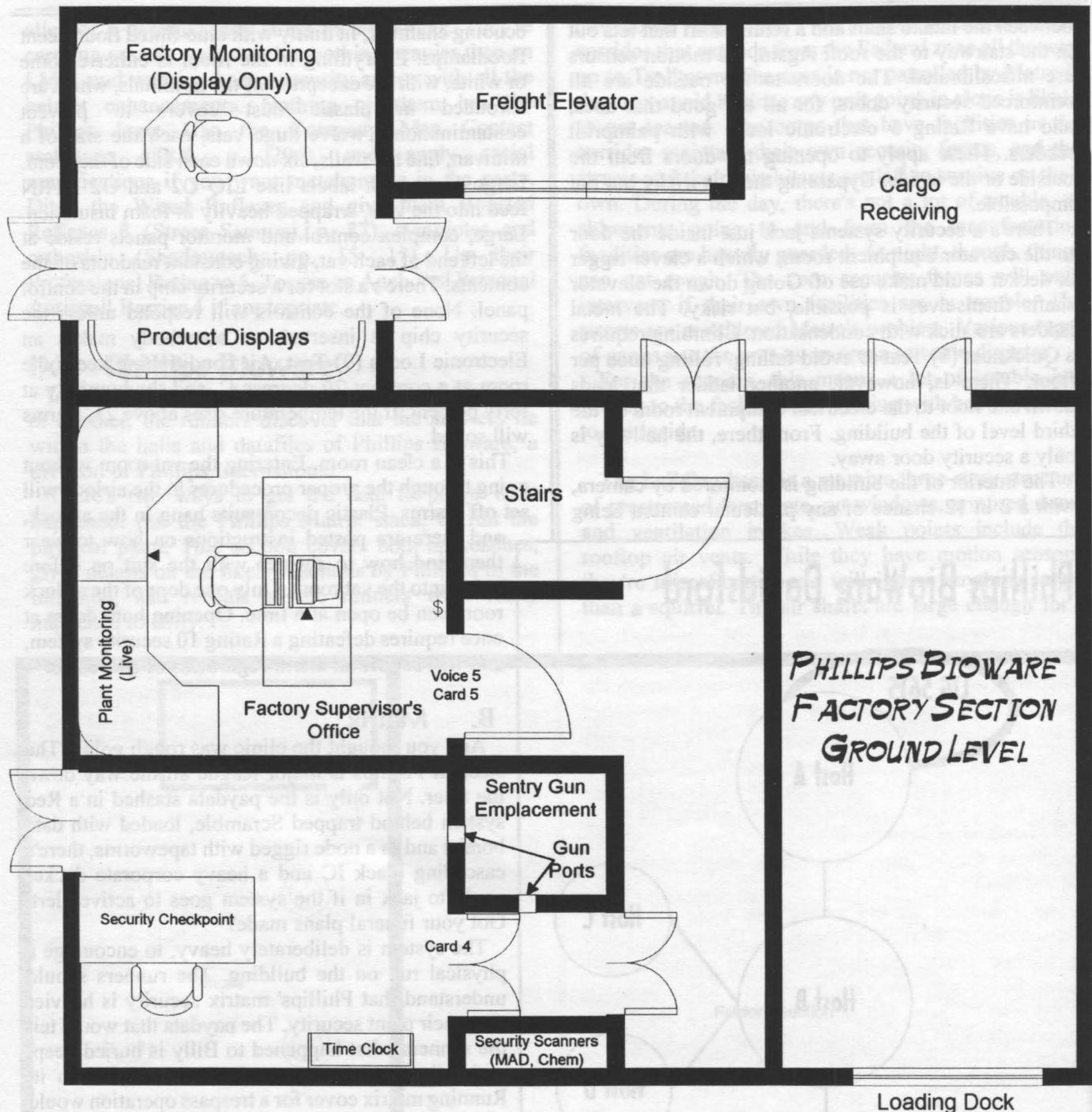
And you thought the clinic was rough going. The stack at Phillips is major league all the way down the fiber. Not only is the paydata stashed in a Red system behind trapped Scramble, loaded with data bombs and in a node rigged with tapeworms, there's cascading black IC and a heavy corporate decker ready to jack in if the system goes to active alert. Got your funeral plans made?

The system is deliberately heavy, to encourage a physical run on the building. The runners should understand that Phillips' matrix security is heavier than their plant security. The paydata that would tell the runners what happened to Billy is buried deep, with all sorts of traps and hazards linked to it. Running matrix cover for a trespass operation would be a lot safer than digging out the paydata.

### Phillips BioWare Davidsford

LTG: NA/CAS-CE-5615-252-3000

Phillips is set up in a tiered arrangement. Host A is the public showroom, ordering and shipping department, and public relations. There's lots of press releases and catalog downloads, as well as a counter where orders can be placed and tracked (When was my order shipped?). It has no direct access to production, sales or shipping information, having to pass all requests through Host B to Host C where the data is kept. This results in a slight sluggishness on customer queries, but Phillips uses the lag time to make a sales pitch for a related product. Host B is the big



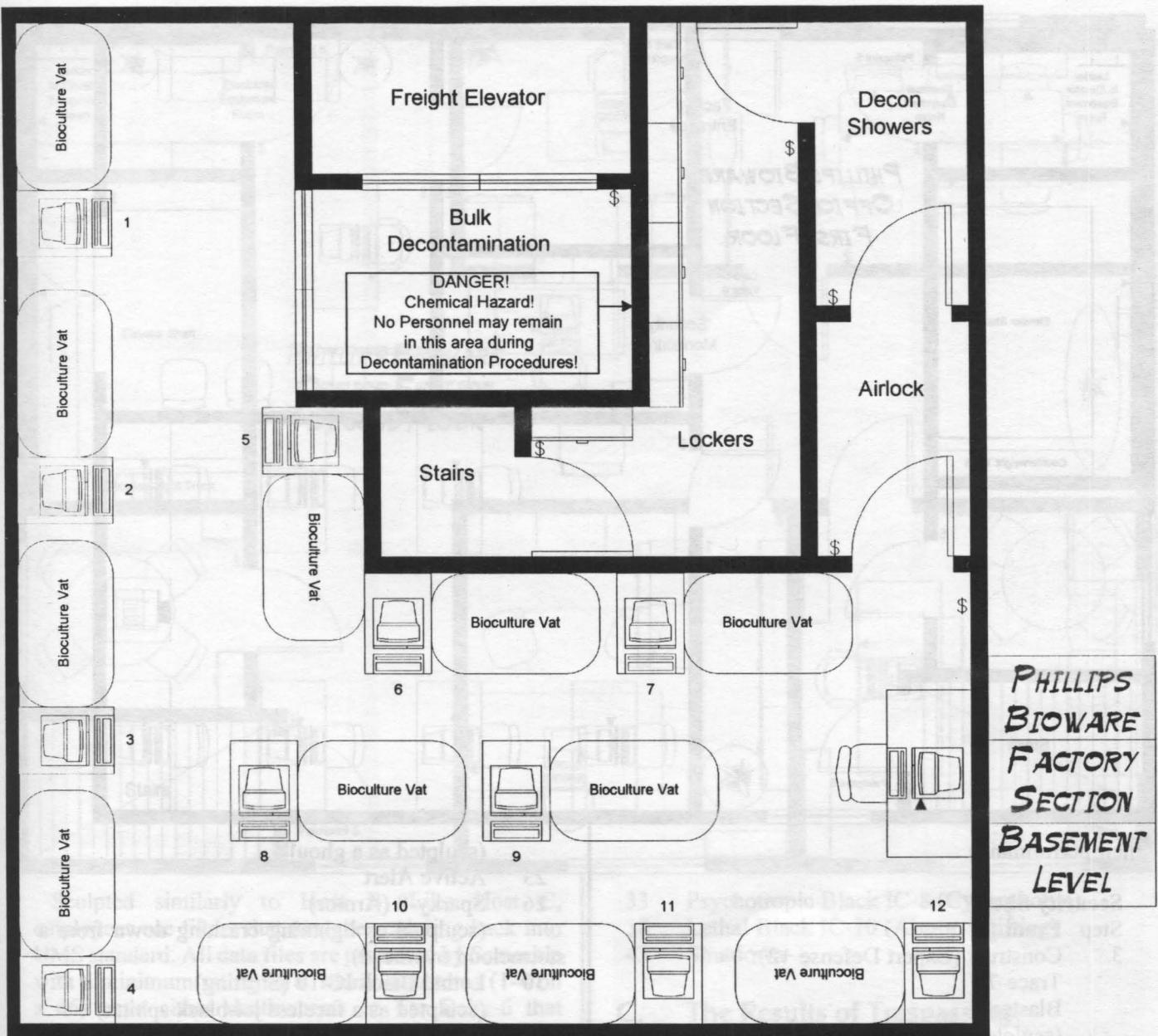
nasty chokepoint that everything has to pass through on its way into and out of the internal systems. All data coming in from the LTG or the Phillips PLTG backbone has to pass through Host B for sanitization. Anything that passes Host B is considered to be at least semi-trustworthy. Host C holds the daily operations records, including personnel, customer and production records, shipping and receiving logs and accounting. It's got some nasty IC but is set down to workable levels for internal operations. Slave units for the standard production facilities on the main floor and environmental controls for the offices are controlled from this system. Host D handles the R&D data and the executive files, including all special operations

memos, as well as the slave units for special production (in the lower level), security systems and environmental controls for the factory section. It's also reasonably well protected, slightly better than Host C, but is still kept at a workable level for internal operations.

**Host A: Green-6/9/8/8/10/9**

**Paydata: 0**

UMS icons with some mildly sculpted factory-showroom environment stuff, that's not divergent enough to count towards variance from UMS. No paydata is kept here; see the foregoing.



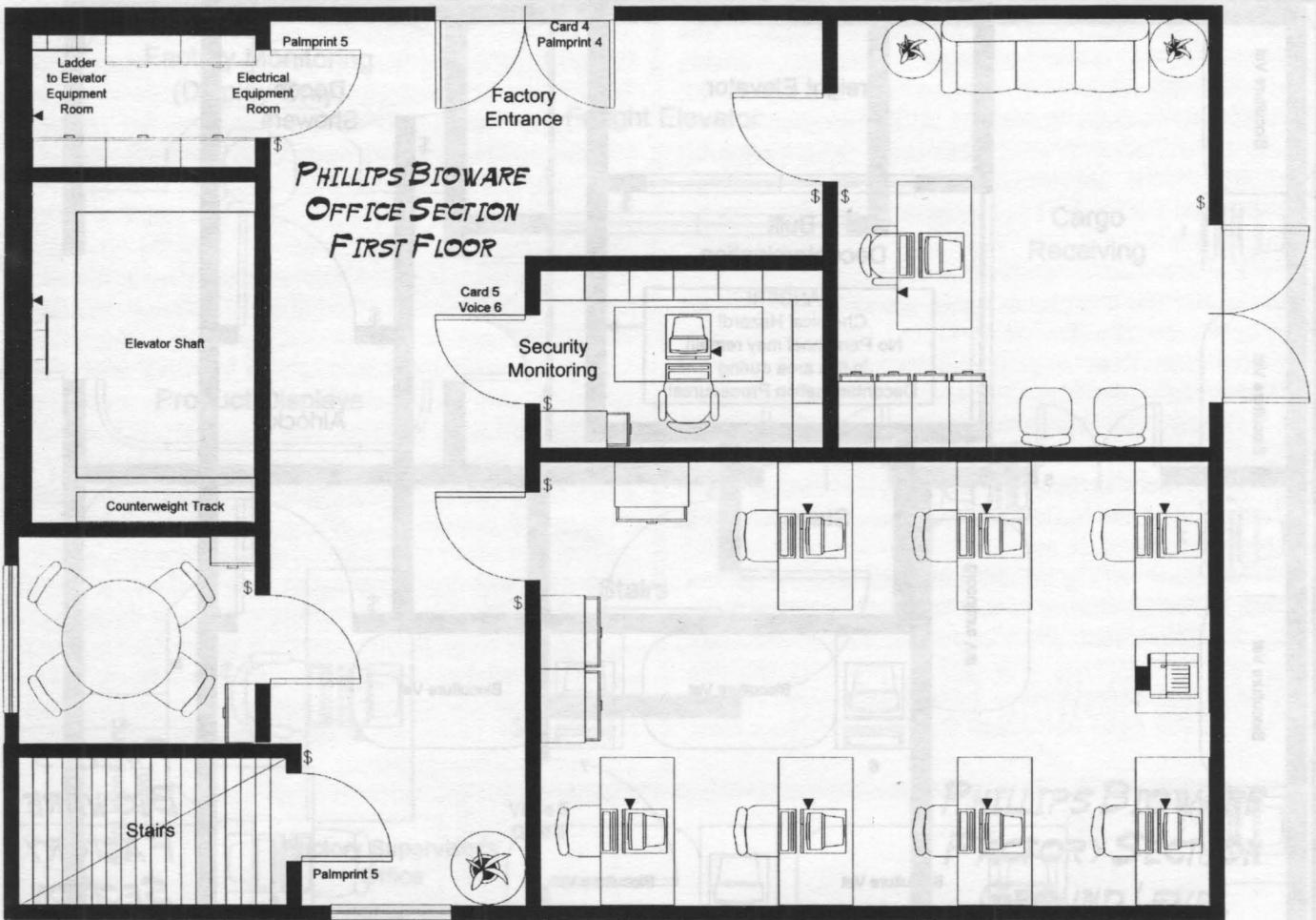
### Security Sheaf

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| Step | Event   |
| 4    | Trace-7 (Expert Offense +3)   |
| 10   | Trap Probe-9 (Blaster-10 (Armor))   |
| 17   | Passive Alert   |
| 21   | Killer-7  |
| 27   | Party IC (Expert Defense +1):<br>Binder-6<br>Marker-6                         |
| 31   | Active Alert<br>Bouncer: Upgrade the Security Rating to Orange-7.             |
| 36   | Construct: (Expert Offense +2, Shifting)<br>Trace-4<br>Acid-rip-4<br>Killer-4 |
| 40   | Shutdown  |

Host B: Red-9/16/15/15/16/14

### Paydata: Special (see text)

The environment is sculptured in a Lovecraftian horror theme, as a small New England town in the late 1800s, plenty of shadows and dilapidated houses and peculiar inhabitants lurking where you can't quite see them. Probe IC manifests as glowing eyes looking out from behind upstairs shutters, garrets and church steeples. Trace IC shows up as hell hounds, and normally is set up as a construct with Blaster for a flame breath attack. Tar Baby IC has a fideal icon and can show up anywhere -- floors, walls, ceilings -- not just in puddles. Other functions have similar horror-based icons, with data packets appearing to be either ghouls, zombies or peculiarly fish or frog-like inhabitants of the town, entrances to files stores as libraries or bookstores, control systems masked as churches or temples to unclean deities, and the like. Play it for all it's worth. Phillips figured intruders would get the creeps so bad it would adversely affect



their performance.

### Security Sheaf

Step Event

- 3 Construct (Expert Defense +2):
  - Trace-7
  - Blaster-7
  - (sculpted as a generic hell hound)
- 7 If jackpoint not located, Bind-rip-6
- If jackpoint located, Mark-rip-6 (Shielding)
- 10 Cascading Killer-6
  - (Sculpted as a Shoggoth, a formless abomination much like a protean)
- 13 Trap Probe-8 (Armor) (Killer-8)
  - (sculpted as a vulture that circles while probing, then is joined by another vulture that swoops for a talon strike)
- 17 Passive Alert
  - Trap Trace-9 Cascading Sparky-6 (Shielding)
  - (sculpted as a hell hound, its fur crackling with static, with a lightning attack instead of flame)
- 19 Construct (Expert Offense +2):
  - Probe-6
  - Acid-rip-6
  - Mark-rip-6
  - (sculpted as a frog-like humanoid that attacks with claws and corrosive saliva)
- 21 Blaster-10 (Shifting)

(sculpted as a ghoul)

23 Active Alert

26 Sparky-8 (Armor)

(sculpted as lightning crashing down from a stormcloud overhead)

30 Lethal Black IC-10 (Shifting)

(sculpted as a faceless jet-black sphinx)

34 Shutdown

### Host C: Orange-8/14/15/13/12/12

Paydata: 15

Sculpted similarly to Host B. Employees use a filter that turns the sculpting back into UMS standard.

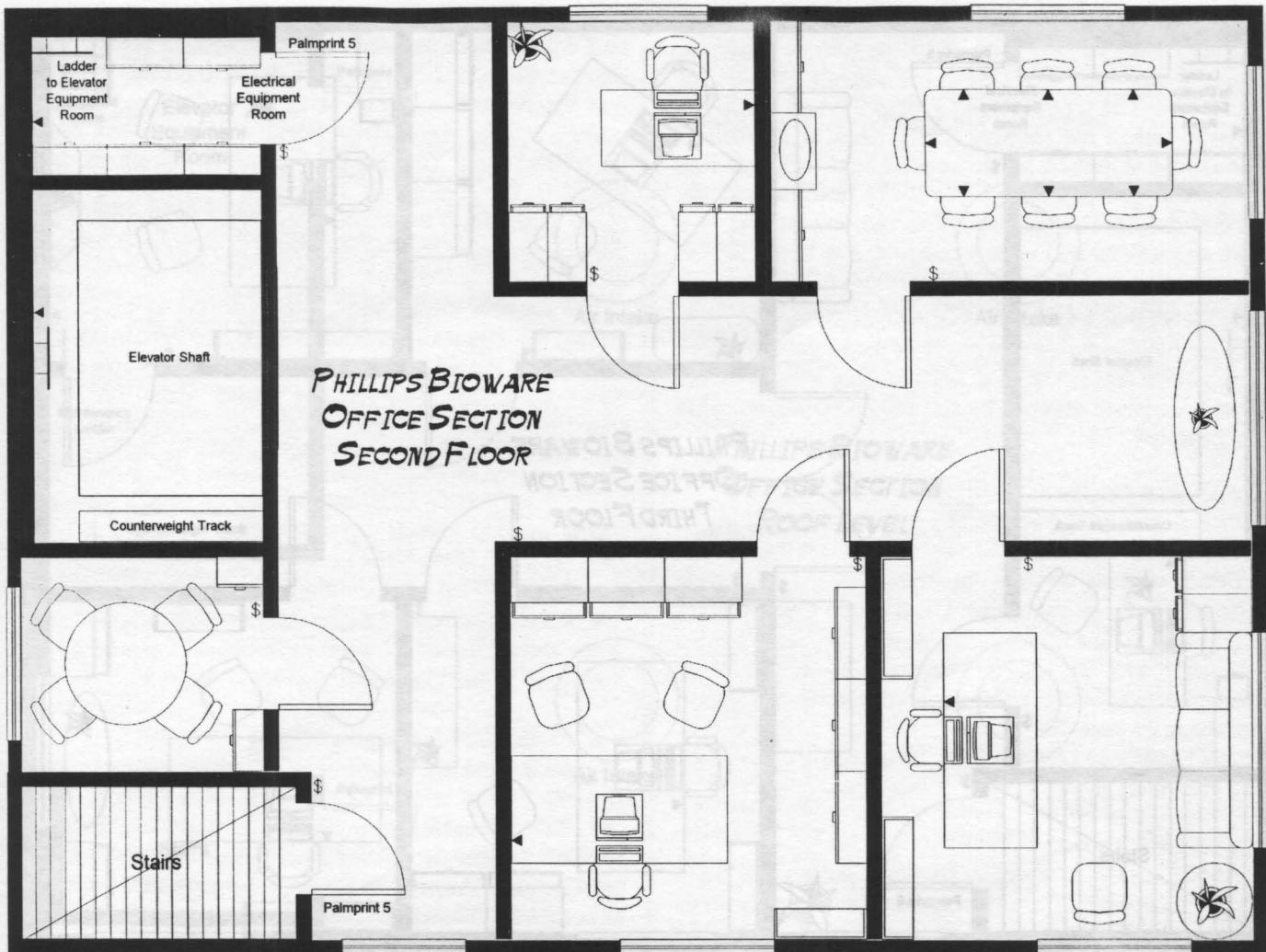
### Security Sheaf

Step Event

- 5 Trap Trace-12
- 9 Cascading Killer-6
- 13 Passive Alert
- 17 Killer-8 (Shifting)
- 22 Tar Pit-8
- 27 Active Alert
- 30 Cascading Sparky-6 (Expert Defense +3)
- 34 Lethal Black IC-8 (Armor)
- 37 Shutdown

### Host D: Orange-9/14/11/12/14/13

Paydata: Special (see text)



Sculpted similarly to Host B. Like Host C, employees use filters that turn the sculpting back into UMS standard. All data files are protected by Scramble with a minimum rating of 6. Many datastores (1-4 on a d6) have either deathworms or Tar Baby-6 that activates on an unsuccessful Decrypt File, Locate Paydata or Locate File action. Any unsuccessful Null Operation activates a Tar Baby-6 as well as adding to the security tally. Any successful Disinfect operation also activates the Tar Baby. Once active, the Tar Baby follows the decker around, popping out from floors and walls and thin air until it successfully trashes a utility or the decker trashes the Tar Baby. All Slave nodes are protected with Trap Scramble-8 (Cascading Blaster-6) to make life difficult for deckers running overwatch on a physical penetration.

#### Security Sheaf

- Step Event
- 4 Probe-10
- 8 Marker-10
- 13 Trap Trace-10 (Killer-8 (Expert Defense +3))
- 18 Passive Alert
- 21 Cascading Killer-6 (Armor)
- 25 Active Alert
- 30 Acid-rip-8

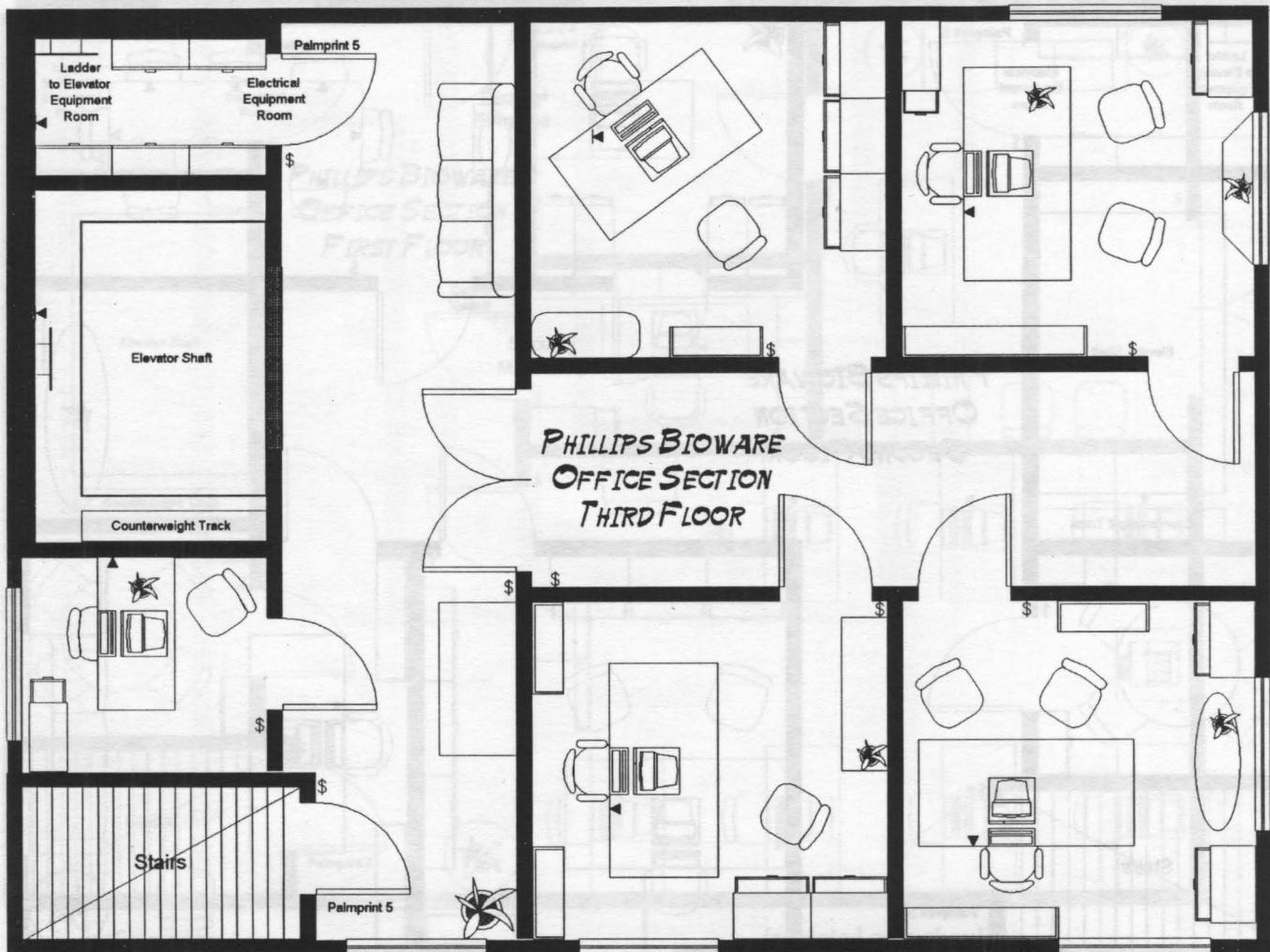
- 33 Psychotropic Black IC-8 (Cyberphobia)
- 38 Lethal Black IC-10 (Armor, Shifting)
- 43 Shutdown

#### C. The Results of Trespassing

The runners are afforded an opportunity to get into the complex when they meet up with the pickup team at the roller coaster. That's going to be tricky, but it is possible.

There are other, perhaps easier and simpler, ways to get into Phillips, which any reasonably clever run team should be able to spot quickly. With all the gangs in the area, using a contact or making one and hiring a gang to cause a disturbance would draw security away from weak points in the perimeter. Scamming a delivery vehicle is a classic, and still works sometimes. There's also the covert approach, sneaking in without a distraction. Run the entry appropriately.

Using Mr. Johnson and the black Americar is a possibility, if they're both in good enough shape to be used. If the runners have not thought to have Johnson cancel his trouble report, they're met on the loading dock by a large security force. They'll get thrown out on their ears, with their more interesting and obvious toys missing. Fighting past the security force is possible, but should be tough for beginning runners.



Once inside, the runners will find what they're looking for in several places. The R&D offices have paper files on several of the missing people, forwarded from the clinic. These are in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the administrator's secretary. There's also information on chips in a rack on the R&D administrator's desk. Reports on the vat replenishment are on chip, with a draft printout, down in the vat supervisor's office. The vats themselves have metal clipboards attached to the control/monitor stations by chains, with a chip containing the vitals on the base stock. This should be enough to identify who each vat was restocked from, if the runners have the files from upstairs or from the clinic.

#### D. The Final Fate of Billy Banzai

Billy was divided up among four vats. His lungs are in one, his heart in another, his leg muscles in a third and his ribs in a fourth. The unused portions were discarded, burned in the hazardous waste disposal system down in the basement. Play up the more gruesome and callous aspects of this. The runners should be disgusted and angry at the corp.

Sorting out Billy's original bits from the parts growing in the vat is impossible. His organs weren't put in whole, but as small pieces, like seeds. Each bit is

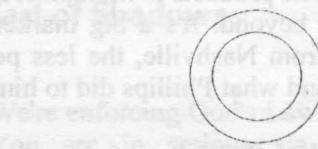
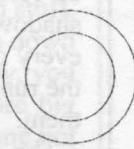
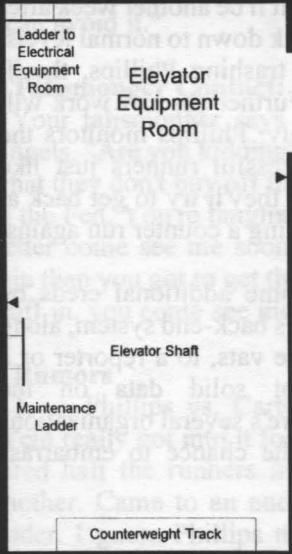
now growing into a full copy of the original. The runners have to either arrange for the entire contents of the vat to be disposed of, or leave Billy's remains for the corp to play with.

Destroying the vats is possible, but will cause a lot of trouble. With a Demolitions (5) Test, the vat cooling systems could be rigged to overpressurize and explode. It'll take a Security Systems (9) Test to keep the buildup from setting off alarms before the explosion. Standard explosive charges will also work. There's a 1 in 6 chance the sabotage will be discovered by a roving security team and the blast averted, 3 in 6 if the runners have set off alarms.

A clever decker could mark the vats as contaminated, resulting in their contents being sent to the hazardous waste furnace the following day. It doesn't matter if they're really contaminated or not -- Phillips won't take the chance. Popping open a vat and dropping something in will have the same result. Opening a vat takes a Security (8) Test.

#### E. Debugging

If the runners encounter a security patrol, give them a fighting chance. Make the security team roll to set off an alarm and get backup. This is the big concluding run of the adventure. Don't end it too soon.

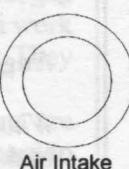
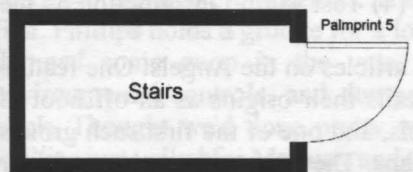


Air Intake

### PHILLIPS BIOWARE OFFICE SECTION ROOF LEVEL



Air Intake



Air Intake

Be reasonable in disarming the explosion if the runners rig the vats. If they don't set off the alarms until they're leaving, let the vats go boom and take the security patrol with them.

Above all, the runners absolutely must discover what happened to Billy. If they get pinned down in an office, make it the R&D offices, so they can find the data while they're making their stand. If they get cornered downstairs, let them escape into the vat room. If they find out what happened to Billy and can't do anything about it, well, that's the biz, but if they don't discover Billy's fate, then they can't bring closure to the story.

## X. Endgame

Once the truth is known, the runners have to decide what to do with it. This may be harder than the run on Phillips.

### A. Talking to Jala

Jala will do her best to keep control, no matter how the runners present the news. If they've done anything to Phillips in vengeance for Billy, Jala will give them a tight smile and tell the runners that she owes them a big favor. If they've left the issue hanging in a bad way, she'll pay them off, throwing the money at them, and

never want to see them again. If the runners got their hoops kicked by the corp, Jala will commiserate with them, pay them off and see them around sometime. Play this up for the emotional impact. Remember that Jala is a tough customer, with good self-control, and likely to be highly ticked at the corp. As long as the runners present the news in a reasonably compassionate way, her anger shouldn't be directed at them. Of course, if they swagger in and tell her in a flippant way that Billy's in a tank, have her toss something heavy at the nearest runner's head.

### B. The Word on the Street

Spreading the word that Fairfield's shadow clinic is bogus is easy enough. Since the clinic closes down the day after a run on it, or on Phillips, and the building is torched that night, spreading rumors is kind of pointless. Producing evidence of illegal activities and sending it to the media or to the legal authorities is also pointless. Dr. Corbin vanishes after the run, the nursing staff didn't know what was going on, and the security boys aren't traceable in the first place.

Spreading rumors about Phillips and where they got their vat seed, however, will be relatively effective. Nobody from the shadows will want to buy Phillips bioware in Nashville. This won't hurt the corp much,

though. They've still got their legitimate business connections, who won't hear the shadow rumors, or won't care. The rumors won't spread beyond Nashville anyway unless the runners really work at it. Phillips can always ship their products to Memphis, Knoxville, Atlanta or points beyond. It's a big market, and the further they get from Nashville, the less people will care about Billy and what Phillips did to him.

### C. What Hits the Newsfaxes

If the runners fail in any phase of the adventure, there is no news report for that section. The events at the Fairgrounds are ignored by the media no matter what the outcome.

#### *Fairfield Clinic:*

Fire destroyed the Fairfield Family Clinic last night, following a break-in. Metro Police attributed the incident to drug addicts, frustrated after not finding narcotics in large quantities. Dr. Richard Corbin, chief physician at the clinic, could not be reached for comment and is feared abducted by the addicts. Community spokespeople were outraged at the loss of the clinic. "I hope those \*censored\*s get what's comin' to'em," said one elderly lady. "Where'm I gonna take my grandkids now?"

#### *Phillips Bioware:*

An explosion at Phillips Bioware during the night claimed the lives of four technicians and three security personnel. Phillips spokesperson Arnaud Chatrain stated that legal proceedings were being brought against the manufacturer of the pressure release valves used in the company's cryogenic storage vats, which were blamed for the blast. Rumors of shadowrunner activity were discarded. "Why would anyone send runners against us?" Chatrain asked. "We don't make that sort of enemies."

### D. Hooks for Follow-Up

The runners could get the bright idea to involve Athro Sloane and the temple. If they do, Sloane will listen grimly to the news, then ask for a sample from one of the tissue vats. If the runners thought to bring one out, and it's less than 12 hours old, then that'll do just fine, but if they didn't, they'll have to go back. Sloane has friends who can do a ritual sending to stop production in the vats and give the remains a decent burial -- which by the standards of his branch of shamanic Druids means cremation. A return trip to the vats will be hard, as Phillips will have increased the guard contingent, replacing any dead or wounded, and equipped them a little better. Their matrix security will also be increased, with a competent system decker online and the stack on passive alert for the next four days.

The runners could attempt further action against Phillips. Making a second run within the week after the

first will be twice as difficult. It'll be another week after that before security slacks back down to normal levels.

If the runners succeed in trashing Phillips, they'll make a rep for themselves. Further shadow work will be forthcoming. Unfortunately, Phillips monitors the shadows for rumors of successful runners just like every other corp. Eventually, they'll try to get back at the runners, probably by sending a counter run against them.

The runners could earn some additional creds by selling the data from Fairfield's back-end system, along with some vid of the Bioware vats, to a reporter or a rival corp. If they've got solid data on the replenishment of the vats, there's several organizations that would pay nicely for the chance to embarrass Phillips.

## XI. For the GM

### A. Maps and Legends

#### *Angels at the Gate:*

*Who Are These Avenging Angels Anyway?*

Make a Decking (4) Test to find information on the Angels.

You find several articles on the Angels: One feature article on them details their origins as an offshoot of the Guardian Angels, and one of the first such groups to accept metahumans. They seemed to go out of their way to do so. During the Night of Rage, they protected some of the projects and metahuman ghettos, initially incurring some bad sentiment but later being lauded by the government for their actions in protecting the citizenry. Their detractors are many, and tend to include representatives of other religions worrying about the Angels' brand of fundamentalist Christianity. They've been involved in lots of altercations, some where they were defending their turf, some where they got into it with people they disagreed with. This is a fairly large organization at this point with branches across the Confederacy, at least in the large cities. Consensus seems to be that they cause a lot of ill-will for themselves by their fervently evangelical religious beliefs, but that they fulfill a highly necessary function by protecting zones that the police simply won't. Sort of the lesser of the two evils -- better the Avenging Angels than no law enforcement at all.

#### *Police Contact:*

"Angels? I wish'em the best of luck," says your police contact. "That's a damn rough area. They've got a rep for cleaning up their zones, and if you can stand their holy-rollin' it makes for a nicer place to live. Watch it, though, they can get rough real fast. They've got their own priests, and half of those are mages. About one in six carries some sort of magic, maybe more if they're in the Bricks. Naw, I ain't heard of 'em

bein' in that area, but you know, I don't go in there if I can avoid it."

#### Talismonger Contact:

Your talismonger says that she doesn't sell to the Angels. "Are you kidding? They make their own stuff, what they don't buy off the Church talismongers down in the Fed. You're tangling with these guys? Boy, you better come see me soon. You gonna need more big juju than you got to get through it alive. I got some hot stuff in, you come see me, 'kay?"

#### Rumors

1. Phillips vs. Carter CyberBio: Yeah, the two of em really got into it for a while there. They must've hired half the runners in Davidsford at one time or another. Came to an end, though, when Carter went under. I guess Phillips must've finally got the upper hand.

2. Find the runners who worked for Phillips: Hey, big budget, no questions. I like that, y'know? No, I'm not gonna tell you what all we did, I might wanna work for Phillips again someday. But I'll tell you this: They wanted Carter out of business real bad.

3. Find the CyberBio runners: Half of em are dead, professional eliminations. The others are hard to find. Phillips holds a grudge for a long time. Yeah, we dumped some goop in the vats, fragged with the environmental controls, and dumped a virus in their stack. Thought we'd done pretty well. Problem was, Phillips just yelled for Mommy and the head office sent down more money than Carter had ever seen. \*shrug\* Guess the folks at Carter learned not to box outside their weight. Last time we take a run for some dinky local corp against a mega, lemme tell you.

Searching the public database for news of the Phillips-Carter CyberBio struggle will produce little. One article is found in which Phillips denies a rumor that they will have trouble meeting their orders due to runner sabotage. The other documents the sudden collapse of Carter, following simultaneous investigations by the Health Department and the Confederate Revenue Service, and a fire at their plant. No details are given.

#### Memo to Nat Boggs, Phillips Security

From: Roger Corbin, M.D.

Fairfield Family Clinic

To: Nathaniel Boggs

Security

Phillips Bioware

We have a security leak of some sort. I was approached this afternoon by a probable shadowrunner. He attempted to make an appointment for implantation of illegal cyberware. I went ahead and made an appointment for tomorrow night, but you may

want to be present to handle this. We need to know how he found out about our operation, and who he's working for. If this operation is compromised, I'll need immediate relocation per our agreement.

## B. Cast of Shadows

#### Angels:

"We're enforcing God's Law."

"You are in serious sin. Prepare to be redeemed."

"Have you given any thought to the hereafter?"

Body: 5

Quick: 6

Str: 5

Ess: 6

React: 5

Cha: 3

Int: 5

Will: 6

Magic: 6

#### Contacts:

Priest

Armorer

#### Skills:

Armed Combat 4

Theology 3

Firearms 4

Negotiation 3

Throwing 2

Unarmed Combat 6

Etq (Street) 2

Car 2

Stealth 3

#### Gear:

Quarterstaff

Sword

Predator II:

Reactive/US/Smart/GasVent4

Goggles/US/Smart

Ingram Smartgun/US/GasVent4

Flash Grenades (6)

Securetech Long Coat

Body Armor 3

Forearm Guards

Firepower Ammo (200r)

Microtransceiver

Pocket Computer Bible

#### Cost:

50

500

4019

4100

3250

240

650

500

250

700

2500

500

*Note:* One in 6 will have either a Quickened (1-4) or Anchored (5-6) spell (Grimoire II, pp. 44, 47) from the following list:

1. Combat Sense 4

2. Armor 4

3. Personal Antispell Barrier 4

4. Personal Detect Enemies Extended 4

5. Analyze Truth 4

6. Personal Clairvoyance Extended 4

# A Star Is Dead

## by Chris Hussey

### HEADACHES

Headaches are short shadowruns for an average size team of shadowrunners. These 'aches are designed to be played out in one or two sessions and can be used as stand-alone runs or as a sideline to a current mission, or even as a plot element to further confuse and frustrate the players (sadistic gamemasters only please...).

The following headache takes place in Seattle but is easily adaptable to any urban location. The scenario is fairly self-contained but allows for gamemaster tweaking and modification. The end of the headache gives hooks for possible plot expansion and potential runs down the road.

### A STAR IS DEAD

#### Tell it to Them Straight

Sounds like a little Glam and Slam job. Your fixer's on the com again. Says he's got a job that's a real no-brainer, low threat kind of scam. Spirits, you wish he'd tell you the truth straight out!

He smiles and says a rising simsense star is in town to push her new sim. Her regular sec team is out, and her agent needs a new team fast. Should only be for about two days. Your fixer looks stern for a tic. He warns you that she's a real looker, and likes to party, with a capital P-ARTY.

He smiles bigger when you say your interested. You need to meet the agent at the Hotel Nikko tonight.

#### Behind the Scenes

Casey Shima is the hottest new simsense star to hit the shelves. Her latest offering, a romantic/action/adventure sim called "With the Dragons" has been drawing big nuyen and staying atop the charts longer than it should. All this has made Shima quite famous, quite fast.

Shima is in Seattle for two days plugging her sim and looking for a little fun. It's part of a publicity campaign orchestrated by her agent, Cal Finn. Cal is a cutthroat agent, always hungry for a buck or twelve. While Cal does have Casey's interests at heart, they only go as far as it serves him and his pocketbook.

Cal, however, has been unhappy with his job lately. Shima has been tough on him, and he's been getting heat from his other clients, who are starting to feel ignored, and a bit jealous. Cal has also felt the heat from competitors. Grinding Rock Sims, a direct competitor to Pixhouse, the firm that released "With the Dragons," is getting set to release their latest offering, which they have invested heavily in. The

execs at Grinding Rock feel that if Shima was out of the way, their new sim could take the top slot.

To accomplish this, they have offered Cal a large enough sum of nuyen to arrange for Shima to be an easy target. Cal thinks he has accomplished this by getting Shima's regular security team sick, and putting Shima so heavily out in the public, that it will be difficult to effectively protect her.

Cal has informed his temporary employers that now is the best time to eliminate Shima.

#### Meeting Cal

Cal will meet with the team and make a simple offer. He wants the team to act as her bodyguards for the entire time she will be in Seattle. He will explain what happened to the regular security team as food poisoning (which it was, courtesy of Cal), and say that they just need to protect her at all times, day and night.

Cal will warn them about Shima's schedule and preference to party. He will also emphasize that the team needs to be discreet at all times, with only one or two members of the team appearing as "obvious bodyguards." Cal will also dictate that those members must be good-looking humans or elves. No orks or Trolls, unless very well groomed. He may be convinced to allow Dwarves (Sorry chummer, that's life under the bright Simwood racist lights...). All members of the team are expected to dress appropriately for the various venues Shima will be attending. The required dress will be listed in each description. Cal also makes it clear that no one must act like her significant other, as it is part of Casey's rep that she look quite single.

Cal himself is a shrewd negotiator and knows who he is dealing with. He has worked with Shadowrunners before and is not easily intimidated. If he has to be a jerk, he will be.

Cal will offer the team 30,000 for the two day mission. Shima does not arrive in Seattle till 1000 hours the next morning, so the team has a little time to prep themselves, and acquire any data they think they might need. Cal will have limos pick up the team at 0800 at the hotel Nikko the next morning.

If the team accepts the job, Cal will issue all members of the team proper security passes to cover Shima when she arrives at the airport, and throughout her schedule. In essence, the passes allow the runners to carry concealed weapons, but no weapon may have a Concealability lower than 4. Gamemasters should be wary of all the modifications characters place on their weapons on this one.

**Cal Finn**

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	Armor
3	4	3	6	6	5	6	5	None

**Initiative:** 5+1D6**Threat/Professional Rating:** 2/2**Skills:** Negotiation 6, Etiquette (Street, Media, Corp) 6, Firearms 3**Gear:** Pocket Secretary, Wrist Phone with Flip-up screen.**Casey Shima**

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	Armor
4	5	3	6	6	5	5.6	5	None

**Initiative:** 5+1D6**Threat/Professional Rating:** 2/2**Skills:** Etiquette (Street, Media, Corp) 6, Firearms 4**Gear:** Handset Phone**Cyberware:** Cybereyes (Low-light, Thermographic), datajack**Prep Time**

The runners only have that evening and the early morning before they are picked by the limos and Cal, to do any legwork on Cal, Shima or any other subject.

No tables are provided here, as it is up to the gamemaster to decide how much information the runners will have access to in the short amount of time.

**Casey Shima**

Casey Shima was a small time simsense extra for three years before finally making her first big budget sim. Made in Hong Kong, it was called "Dexter Decker" and was a complete bomb. After taking some time out for acting and sim classes (not to mention some cosjobs) Caey returned with another leading role in "Princess Mage." An action sim that actually turned a small profit. That sim led to her discovery, and eventual lead in "With the Dragons."

The sim itself is not bad, and hasn't been treated too badly by the critics. It's financial success is well-documented, and it appears that Casey has found her niche, at least for now.

Casey herself is riding the wave of success high. She has always been a partier, and is even worse now that she has more money to spend. There have been rumors that she is a chiphead, but most every simstar is believed to be, so to Casey, it's null perp.

Casey knows she needs security, and likes to taunt and flirt with her sec team, and even try to ditch them. In essence, it's her idea of fun to make everyone else frustrated.

**The Schedule**

The following schedule is listed below. It is made up

of the approximate times Casey will spend at each venue, and a brief description of what is happening there. It also dictates what type of dress is required by the runners.

Also listed will be a potential attack plan by the team that has been hired to kill Casey. The gamemaster need not follow the plan listed, as it is presented as an option.

The purpose of each venue is to see how the runners behave in a stressful situation where something could happen at any moment. At some point however, the hit team will strike. That time is left up to the gamemaster.

In between each venue, if time allows, Casey will return to the Hotel Nikko, to change, rest for a bit, or whatever.

Casey's vehicle entourage consists of a Toyota Elite for Cal and his personal assistant (and any runners). Shima rides in a Mitsubishi Nightsky with any runners, her personal assistant and makeup assistant.. If the runners wish to have more vehicles for safety purposes, Cal will allow it, only if it is not too obvious.

### The Airport

1000-1100 hours

*Dress Required:* Suits or Tuxedos for all visible security personnel. Casual clothes for cover members of the security team.

*What's Going On:* Shima is arriving on the tarmac at Sea-Tac International. Whereas most plane and sub-orbitals pull right up to a walkway, Shima is descending the tarmac to make herself more visible.

About 200 fans and onlookers will be present around her arrival point. Airport security will be fairly tight, as they are very concerned about a terrorist action (civilians are not usually allowed on the tarmac).

Shima will descend the walkway, and the runners acting as frontmen are expected to be right there. Cal will be present as well.

Shima will not make any announcements whatsoever, but will walk along the roped off areas where the fans are to greet and wave. The paparazzi will be in full effect and the runners will be exposed to numerous cameras and flashes (having their pictures taken, should make the runners plenty nervous).

Shima will then board her limo, which is also on the tarmac and peel out.

*Attack Plan:* The hit team will not strike here as it will be too difficult for them to safely get in and out. They will bide their time on this encounter.

### Meeting the Team

1200-1230

*What's Going On:* Shima will make a brief stop at the hotel to change and meet the runners. She is a bit tired after the flight and may not be in the best of moods. She may have a few negative things to say about the team just to vent her mild frustration about the coming days.

### Lunch

1300-1430

*Dress Required:* Casual all around.

*What's Going On:* Shima is off to have lunch at a chic and popular outdoor cafe called Rafters. It is a hip cafe with overpriced (but fairly decent) food, frequented by many people Shima's age. Shima is going not only for lunch, but to be seen.

The lunch is expected to be low-key, but the tabloid tridographers and other celeb hounds will follow Shima to Rafters (or at least find her there). Cal also expects the clientele of Rafters to recognize Shima and make a big deal out of her being there.

The runners will have to deal with endless variables as the cafe is outdoors with hundreds of people walking by (and through) all the time. The runners will also have to contend with autograph hounds and even a few groupies.

The biggest factor is that Cal and Shima will only allow one runner to sit at Shima's table. The other team members will have to take up positions elsewhere. Cal will not budge on this matter.

*Attack Plan:* The hit team can make several attacks here. A Direct approach would involve Shannon walking right up to Shima and taking her out. Shannon would have some added magical protection from Drainer, and immediate backup from Camen and Slink.

A more subtle approach would involve Drainer approaching Shima for an autograph and casting Influence on her to grab a cab and take off to a designated hit point where Slink can pick her off from a distance. The characters would have to play quick catch up on this one.

### Chip Signing

1515-1630

*Dress Required:* Again, let's go casual, but not urban warrior.

*What's Going On:* Shima is going to a local low security mall where her sim is being sold at a chip store. Throngs of people who normally would never get to see her will be here, and the place will be packed. Cal will only allow two runners to be by Shima at the signing table. The rest must mingle. Shima doesn't particularly like the idea of going to this place, but she trusts Cal. The runners will need to deal with numerous variables here, most notably the crowd. The lack of security at the mall is no picnic either.

*Attack Plan:* Again, Shannon and her team have a direct and subtle option here. The poor mall security might allow Camen to get close enough to drop a grenade near Shima's table then get far enough away. A quieter approach would allow Slink to set up in the abandoned store across from the signing and take a shot at Shima. This could prove tough with the shifting crowd. Drainer could also cast a Mob Mind and have the throng rush Shima, allowing Shannon to get close, kill Shima, and plant the weapons on someone else.

## Second Signing

1830-1930

*Dress Required:* Formal all around

*What's Going On:* Another chip signing, but this time at the Renraku Mall. Cal wants a high profile signing here, and wants the runners all decked out. He will require that most of them stay around Shima for image purposes.

The gamemaster should make the runners sweat everything out with Renraku's security team, which doesn't like outsiders coming in and trying to do their job.

*Attack Plan:* None. The security is too tight here for Shannon's team to try anything. But that doesn't mean that the team isn't here watching...

## The Break

2100-2230

*Dress Required:* Doesn't matter

*What's Going On:* Shima and crew will return to the hotel and take a small break. During this time, Shima may try to ditch the runners and slot the suicide BTL (if she has it). This chip can enduce any type of behavior the gamemaster wishes, from grabbing a unsuspecting runner's gun, to jumping out the window of her hotel room.

## Party Club

2230-0200

*Dress Required:* Tres Chic Party clothes all the way. Hip! Hip! Hip!

*What's Going On:* Shima has to make her



## Dinner

2000-2100

*Dress Required:* Same formals

*What's Going On:* After the signing, Shima and Cal are going for dinner with several other local celebs in the Mall. Security will be tight, as these celebs have their own bodyguards, and professional rivalries and posing will be going on amongst the security bent.

*Attack Plan:* Shannon and Drainer will be here. Drainer may be able to Influence Shima to go to the bathroom, where she will meet Shannon. Shannon will give Shima a powerful BTL suicide chip which could kill her by the end of the night, if the runners aren't wary. Even if Drainer can't cast the Influence spell, Shannon may try to slide the BTL to Shima anyway.

appearances in the club scene and plans to do so in a big way. Although she has no desire to, Cal has suggested that Shima make the rounds before stopping at her club of choice, the Psychedelic Pirate.

Before going to the Pirate, Cal has convinced Shima to at least stop and walk around Seattle's higher profile clubs, such as Dante's Inferno and the Club Penumbra. Shima plans to do just that. She will make a grand entrance in each club, take a walk through it, dance one dance, drink one drink, then leave.

Shima really wants to attend the party at the Psychedelic Pirate, which caters more to crowd her age. Once at the Pirate, Shima will be hard to keep track of. She will fly around the packed dance floor, and make the rounds with the crowds. The runners will need to be on their toes for the entire time.

Also note that Shima may try and ditch the runners

during this entire time out. A lot of this will depend on the runners attitude and behavior around Shima throughout the day. The gamemaster needs to make this call.

**Attack Plan:** The Grinding Sims team has their best chance of success here. The heavy crowds, shifting lights and deafening sounds make for perfect chaos to accomplish their goal. The team can try a direct approach with Slink taking a shot as Shima enters a club, and the rest of the team charging forward to finish the job.

A more subtle approach would allow the team to go right up to Shima and employ a number of methods including spiking her drink, blatantly shooting her while dancing, or they may try the suicide BTL again.

### Back Home

0300-1000

**What's Going On:** After partying the night away, Shima will finally have tired, and want to return to the hotel room, possibly with a few other party-goers. The runners by now will be pretty strung out themselves, exhausted from the day's (and night's) activities.

Cal will retire to his separate room, and Shima to her suite. Eventually, Shima will pass out and sleep till about 0800, when she must get up for her second day of promotion.

**Attack Plan:** Shannon and her team can get Shima here as well. A subtle approach would involve one or more of the team members becoming one of the party-goers Shima goes back to the hotel with. The rest of the hit team would follow and break in once the hit goes down.

A more direct approach would involve the team storming Shima's suite and trying to take her down, guns a-blazin'.

### Picking Up The Pieces

The first day of Shima's itinerary is described here. The second day will be very similar to the first, but there may be other events, such as a news conference, a tour or other sightseeing. The second day is left up to the gamemaster to expand upon if necessary.

If the runners are successful in defending Shima, they will be paid by a rather nervous Cal, who is now thinking his time may be up. Cal may even employ the runners to defend himself against a possible revenge attack by Grinding Rock Sims.

If the runners fail, they will still be paid by Cal, but may later be hounded by a number of media organizations who will look into Shima's death.

### Karma

The runners will be forced to deal with endless variables on this mission, depending on the sadistic nature of the gamemaster. Award as much Karma as necessary, but no more than 3 points per runner.

### THE HIT TEAM

This team of professional Shadowrunners has been hired by Grinding Rock Sims to eliminate Casey Shima before her popularity grows too big. Even though Grinding Rock runs the risk of making Shima a cult figure by having her killed, they feel that her popularity is overrated and the only impact her death will have is dropping her latest sim from the spotlight.

This team consists of specially designed NPCs, with some of the members being real heavy hitters. The gamemaster may add or subtract from this team as he desires.

#### Shannon

Human Female - Leader

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
5(10)	5	4	6	6	.66	5(8)	

**Armor:** 5(6)/3(4)

**Initiative:** 5(8)+2D6

**Threat/Professional Rating:** 5/3

**Skills:** Firearms 6, Stealth 5, Unarmed Combat 5, Etiquette (Street) 4, Etiquette (Corp) 4

**Gear:** SPAS-22 [Shotgun, 10 (magazine), SA/BF, 10S, w/ 3 extra magazines, integral Smartlink, Gas Vent II Recoil Compensation], Browning Max-Power [Heavy Pistol, 10 (clip), SA, 9M, w/ 2 extra clips, integral Smartlink], Armor Jacket

**Cyberware:** Titanium Bone-lacing (alpha), Wired Reflexes (alpha), Smartlink, Dermal Plating (alpha), Reaction Enhancer +1 (alpha)

Shannon is the leader of the group and quite attractive. Her long, red hair is usually pulled back into a ponytail. Her looks are slightly hampered by her chrome, but Shannon doesn't really care. She has complete loyalty from her team members, with the possible exception of Drainer, who feels he is too good for Shannon sometimes.

#### Camen

Ork male

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
7(10)	4(6)	7(9)	3	4	4	.7	4(6)

**Armor:** 6(7)/5(7) or 5/3

**Initiative:** 6+2D6

**Threat/Professional Rating:** 4/3

**Skills:** Firearms 7, Armed Combat 5, Throwing Weapons 4, Stealth 4, Etiquette (Street) 3

**Gear:** Ares Predator [Heavy Pistol, 15 (clip), SA, 9M, w/ 2 extra clips, integral Smartlink II], Colt M22A2 [Assault Rifle, 40 (clip), SA/BF/FA, 8M, w/ 3 extra clips, Gas Vent III Recoil Compensation, integral Smartlink II], Fine Long Blade Knife w/Dikote (10S), 3 IPE Concussion Grenades (16M Stun/-1 per meter),

3 HE Defensive Grenades (10S/-1 per .5 meter), Armor Jacket, Medium Security Armor, Security Helmet

**Cyberware:** Wired Reflexes 1, Smartlink II, Muscle Replacement 2 (alpha), Dermal Armor 3 (alpha)

Camen is an ex-CAS military man, who's been freelancing for the past four years. He's built a solid rep for himself, and hopes to enhance that working with Shannon, who he considers to be a professional. Camen gets along with most everybody else, including Drainer, although the ork finds his arrogant attitude a pain at times. Camen also has a suit of Medium Security armor that he will wear only in appropriate situations.

### Slink

Elf male

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
3	7	3	4	5	5	1.5	6(12)

**Armor:** 5/3

**Initiative:** 12+4D6

**Threat/Professional Rating:** 3/3

**Skills:** Firearms 5 (MA 2100 Sniping Rifle) 8, Unarmed Combat 4, Stealth 5

**Gear:** MA 2100 [Sniper, 8 (magazine), SA, 14S, w/ 2 extra mags, integral Smartlink II, Ultrasound Sight and Goggles], Ingram Smartgun [SMG, 32 (clip), BF/FA, 7M, w/ 2 extra clips, Gas Vent II recoil compensation, integral Smartlink], Ares Predator [Heavy Pistol, 15 (clip), SA, 9M, w/ 2 extra clips, integral Smartlink], Beretta 101T [Light Pistol, 12 (clip), SA, 8L, w/ 1 extra clip, EX Explosive ammo], Armor Jacket  
**Cyberware:** Wired Reflexes 3 (alpha), Smartlink II

Slink is the sniper of the group. Slightly paranoid and on edge from his wired reflexes, Slink carries a number of weapons on his person for defense. Slink is a loner who enjoys his job, as it keeps him separated from the group as a whole, whom he has a hard time getting along with, although he respects them all.

### Drainer

Human male

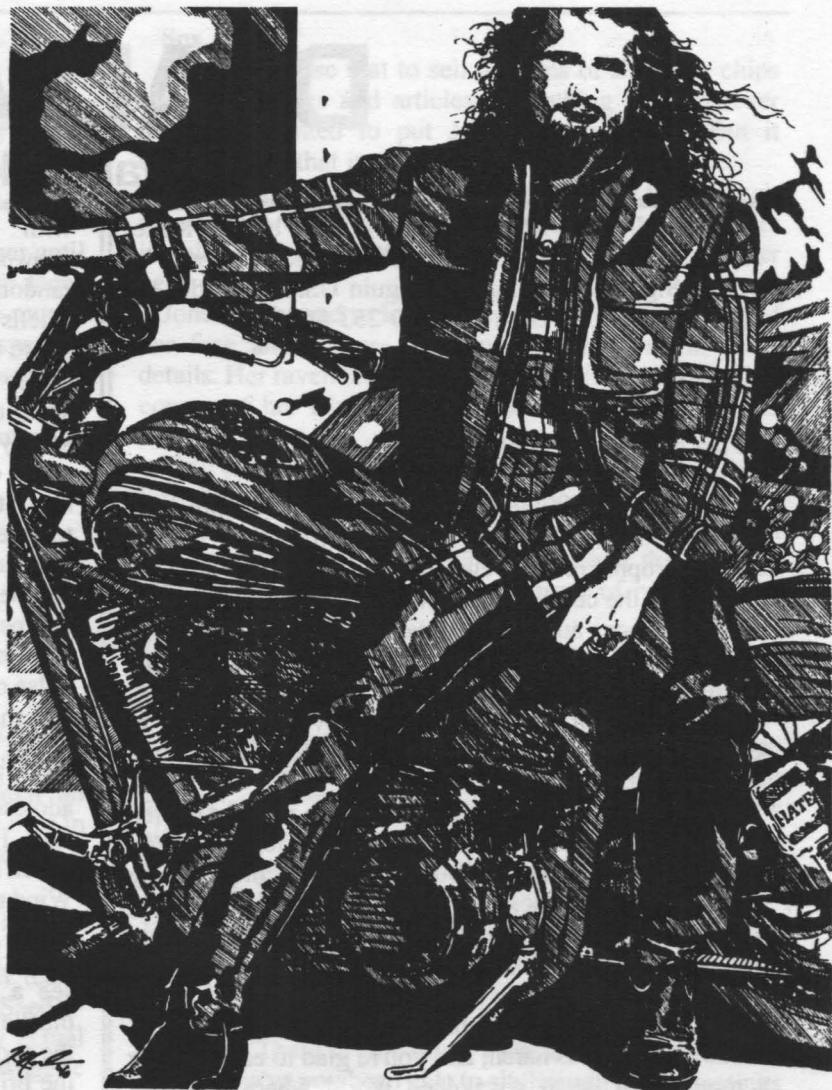
B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	M	R
5	5	3	5	6	6(9)	3.2	3(5)	5(13)

**Armor:** 5(8)/3

**Initiative:** 9(13)+2D6

**Threat/Professional Rating:** 5/3

**Skills:** Sorcery 6, Conjuring 5, Firearms 5, Stealth 4, Etiquette (Street) 4, Etiquette (Corp) 4



**Gear:** Colt Cobra [SMG, 32 (clip), SA/BF/FA, 6M, w/ 2 extra clips, laser sight, integral Gas Vent II (1)], Browning Max-Power [Heavy Pistol, 10 (clip), SA, 9M, w/ 2 extra clips, laser sight], Power Focus (2), Spell Lock (Increase Cybered Reaction +4), Spell Lock (Personal Bullet Barrier 3), Spell Lock (Increase Willpower +3)

**Cyberware:** Cybereyes (Low-Light, Thermographic, Flare Comp), Reaction Enhancer +2, Wired Reflexes 1

**Spells:** Manabolt 5\*, Stunbolt 4\*, Flare 4, Stuncloud 4\*, Invisibility 3, Treat 3, Increase Cybered Reaction +4 2, Personal Bullet Barrier 3, Influence 4, Mob Mind 4, Increase Willpower +3 2

Drainer is an arrogant mage who has done the unthinkable in the magic community: augmented himself with cyberware. Drainer feels that it's no big deal, as it only improves him, and his magic isn't suffering. Drainer goes along with the group, but sometimes falls into disagreement with Shannon, who he doesn't view as the most qualified leader.

# DEAD AIR

by Jak Koke

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## Prologue

First simtime. First day of release.

You are there.

It is the summer of 2057, and you've been waiting ever since they started showing previews on the trid cuts of the catastrophic motorcycle wreck, the giant ball of flame erupting in the center of a crowded stadium. The adverts' staccato images and the tense voice-over hinted that this sim is based on the true story of Jonathon Winger and his deadly rivalry with fellow combat biker, Dougan Rose. That makes it all the more enticing; everyone wants to know what really happened in the days before Jonathon Winger died.

The harsh afternoon heat dissipates in a wash of cooled air as the line advances and you step inside the theater. The sweat on the nape of your neck grows cold, sending chills down your back. Glass doors close behind you, their mirrored surface blocking out the heat and the sun. The odor of burning asphalt and the choking scent of diesel exhaust lingers in the air for an instant before the theater's odor dampeners absorb them.

The real world is harsh, and you're glad to escape it for a moment. It is an Awakened world where powerful magic coexists with rapidly advancing cybertechnology. Where elves and dwarfs, orks and trolls share the streets with humans. Where megacorporations are more powerful than governments, and the global computer Matrix is the conduit through which all information is passed.

Today's simsense will take you away from a world where dragons can run for president, where reality is more shocking than fantasy has ever been. The sim will make you forget about the insanity of 2057, help you escape from the day-to-day grind. If only briefly.

A uniformed teenage girl with platinum blonde hair offers you the choice of an electrode rig or a datacord for straight jack. You slot your credstick into her scanner and grab a datacord. 'Trode rigs are for wimps. You can hardly believe anyone ever uses them.

The simsense in this theater is first release, primo urge, unlike anything you can get at home or on chip. It is Dir-X, a direct recording, untainted by the signal loss that comes with compression and decompression. Using a 'trode rig would dull the experience, like walking through life in a thick rubber suit. No, straight jack is the only way to fly.

You enter the theater and the world of noise and distraction gives way to the lush black carpeting of the aisle. The walls and the ceiling inside the room are lined

with black, sound-dampening foam, and hidden subwoofers rumble with infrasonic white noise to prevent random vibrations from interfering with the sim. The last smells from outside disappear inside the chamber; there are to be no external distractions during the sim.

The chairs are self-adjusting recliners, all facing the same direction, but there's no stage. The chair fits you snugly as you relax into its comforting grasp. One end of the datacord clicks into the control panel by your right hand; the other end snaps into the silicon datajack in your temple.

Whatever remains of the real world dissipates as the sim begins and the sensedeck's RAS overrides kick in to dampen your own senses and muscle responses. The chair cradling you is gone, replaced by a wash of color and pulse of urge. The room fades, and the others around you vanish.

The opening music rises into your awareness as you stand in the body of a young elven boy in the throes of adolescence. Thin and tall with bones poking against skin. Heat blasts your face and your bare arms as you watch red and orange flames engulf an old wooden house. Wind rushes past to feed the fire, and you smell the black smoke of burning upholstery and bubbling plastic.

Through the melted remnants of the front window, you see a grandfather clock, its once polished hardwood blackened, its ornate face twisted from the heat. Across the room from the destroyed clock is a bassinet, and for the briefest of moments you think you hear the soft cry of a baby amid the banshee scream of the fire. Then it's gone, and only the crisp anguish of loss remains.

Adrenaline makes your heart pound in your chest. Firefighters rush to pump water over the blaze, but it is a futile gesture. The great roar of the fire seems to laugh at them as the water spray sizzles and vaporizes. Sadness wells inside you, bringing you close to tears. The house is too far gone to be saved. Too far gone. Such a waste.

A thin hand touches yours, and abruptly you realize that a crowd of people stands with you, everyone watching the fire. Gathered for the spectacle. You grasp the hand in yours and turn to see an elven girl of your age. The sadness wanes and a surge of affection rises in you. She is your best friend, your constant companion. You are happy she is here.

Her long hair is raven black, pulled back behind her sharply pointed ears. Her skin is the deep russet of an Amerind, and smudged with dirt. Her eyes are a dull copper color. Beautiful. She stands slightly shorter than you, but she is more fully developed. Rounded in places. She continues to stare at the fire.

You look back into the flames, their ravenous tongues licking black death into the wood around the doorway, the windows, cutting sharp grooves through the walls. The orange and red defocus as you stare, growing glassy and reflective. For a second you see yourself in the

reflection.

You are tall even for an elf, but haven't put on the muscle to match your height. Your hair is a shaggy mane of auburn, straight as straw, unkempt and dusty. Your features are classic; prominent cheekbones, proud straight nose; upturned hazel eyes flecked with blue. The line of your mouth turns down at the corners.

The reflection of your face grows larger and larger until you can see nothing else. The sound of the fire fades slowly, replaced by the rising swell of orchestra music. Your face loses its color, becoming ghostly transparent, and the flickering orange of the defocused fire provides a backdrop for the opening credits. The words DEAD AIR appear and a simultaneous pulse of adrenaline rockets through you.

Time to fly.

## ACT ONE

### His First Death

#### 1

Jonathon Winger stifled a yawn where he sat in the boardroom on the twenty-seventh floor of the Angelic Entertainment arcology in downtown LA. Seated all around him in high-back synthleather chairs were men in gray or blue suits and muted ties, complete with discreet datajacks and pocket computers.

Most of their faces were familiar to Jonathon by now. Execs and VIPs of Angelic Entertainment, which owned the Los Angeles Sabers, Jonathon's combat biker team. There were also some promotion people from Saeder-Krupp, but Jonathon and Tamara were the only actual linebikers present. Everybody knew Angelic Entertainment was merely a shell company for the mighty Saeder-Krupp Corporation, which could technically not do business in California Free State. Too magical or too metahuman or maybe both for the folks up in Sacramento.

Coach Kalish was there too, and though she was a great coach as far as Jonathon was concerned, she was an aging dwarf and not the most trid-ogenic. The promoters were obviously not interested in using her in any special adverts.

Jonathon, however, they were most pleased to have riding for them. He was large for an elf, bulked up by augmented muscle and a regimented workout to almost ork size, but with clean-line good looks. Superstar charisma, according to the promoters.

Whether they were right or not, Jonathon's mane of auburn hair, intelligent hazel eyes, and ten-thousand-nuyen smile had helped, along with his skill in the arena, to land him an unprecedented number of endorsement contracts for one so new to combat cycling. He certainly loved the publicity.

And that's what this meeting was all about\_publicity. The promoters and producers and ad people wanted to hype up the relationship between him and Tamara. Wanted to imply something going on between them. Something intimate.

Sex.

They could use that to sell millions of simsense chips and motorcycles and articles of clothing and whatever else they wanted to put Jonathon's name on. But it bothered him that it was a lie.

He and Tamara had never been lovers even though their relationship was deeper, closer than anything he'd ever imagined possible with another being. And sex had never been part of it.

Jonathon turned to look at her, seeing all the details of her face and posture. Reading her thoughts in those details. Her raven black hair, dark Amerind skin. The dull copper of her irises and the fine, beautiful line of her mouth.

He'd been in her mind so many times via the simsense link they shared. Feeling her emotions as though they were his. He knew what the tilt of her head meant, what she was feeling as she absently scratched the polished red-brown surface of the table in front of her. She was just as bored as he was.

She looked up at him and smiled, then rolled her eyes playfully. And in that smile, Jonathon read her thoughts. She wants to get out of here.

Jonathon stood up at the same time she did. "Excuse us," he said, interrupting the suit who'd been pontificating. "But we've got a tough match tomorrow night in New Orleans, and we'd like to get some rest."

The suit just stared at him, not knowing how to respond.

"I don't really think you need us anymore right now," Jonathon said. "Whatever you decide will be all right with us." He put his hand out for Tamara, and they turned to leave the room.

When they'd cleared the doors, Tamara burst into laughter. "Thanks," she said. "I was about to suffocate in there. How've you been able to sit through those meetings all this time?"

"Must be all the extra nuyen that comes pouring in with the deals," Jonathon told her. "Guess I've just built up a tolerance."

"Slot the nuyen," she said. "We make enough riding for the team. What I want out of it is the limelight. Maybe a chance to make a simfeature or something. But I hate this board meeting drek."

"It gets easier," Jonathon said as they reached the elevator. "You want to stop in the atrium for a cerveza? Venny's meeting me downstairs."

Tamara considered. "Sure, but I need to make it quick. Got a date tonight."

"Oh yeah? The dreamer again? Grids?"

"Grids will be there... sort of... but my main date is that S-K exec from Essen."

"Michaelson? I didn't think you were seeing him anymore."

"This'll be the last time."

Jonathon just shook his head. Tamara was scheming something, he could tell. But he didn't ask about it, didn't really want to know. Besides, she would elaborate if and when it suited her.

"I'll tell you about it tomorrow," she said. "In New Orleans."

"Just be careful," he said. "Playing around with

powerful people is a dangerous business." Jonathan spoke the words even though he knew they weren't needed. Tamara already knew everything he felt, and she would either act on it or not.

Probably not.

She just smiled at him as he pressed the tab to call the elevator. A smile that told him everything was going to be fine. Just fine.

He only wished he could believe it.

## 2

High up the blue, steel-and-glass side of the Venice Beach Hilton, Grids Desmond stared out the window of his hotel room, watching the huge orange sun setting in an ocean of aquamarine green. A brilliant red streak reflected off the water, shimmering, glowing like a broad trail of fire between him and the sun. The Los Angeles smog had few redeeming qualities, but it did help turn the sunsets from merely beautiful into spectacular.

Grids was thin for a human, with little muscle on his bones and less fat. Maybe because he subsisted mostly on a diet of cheese crackers and soykaf. His pale skin showed no trace of amber melanin hue since he almost never ventured into the sunshine without his customary black jeans and Mickey Mouse T-shirt. Despite that, he was handsome in an old-fashioned film star way. Black, tousled hair, white skin. Thin face with delicate, almost feminine features. All but the eyes; his hawk-sharp, dark eyes hinted at what was behind them\_a genius intelligence, and a quick, if detached, wit.

Grids watched and waited. Waited for the sting to begin.

Nearer, the daytime spectacles at Venice Beach were winding down, and the evening shows were about to begin. Grids brought his Ares CCD binoculars up to his eyes and scanned the beach. A team of hugely muscled joyboys performed acrobatics to a crowd of onlookers. The men had been surgically altered to look like clones\_all natural flesh, identical deep brown tans, and blond wavy hair.

Grids scanned across the crowds. There were magic illusions, dance routines, basketball, volleyball, and sparring matches. People sold 'ware of every shape, size, and prescription. Venice Beach was safe territory, bounded by a huge desalinization plant to the south and the walled-off corporate beaches of Santa Monica to the north. It was also protected by the Mafia and thus considered neutral turf by the local gangs who prowled the toxic beachfront district south of the desalinization plant.

Grids brought his headclock into focus on his retina as he pulled the binox from his eyes. 07:18:24 PM. Almost time.

He'd been waiting for Tamara since just after one o'clock that afternoon, arriving at the Venice Hilton early to avert any suspicion. He'd checked into room 2305 seemingly at random, but had actually chosen it from a list stored in his internal headware memory of rooms within range of Tamara's simlink transmitter. He'd had plenty of time to set up the Truman Realink simrecorder

and double-check the mods that would make the signals to and from the simrig implanted in Tamara's head look, at a glance, like portable telecom carrier waves.

Tam's simrig had been far easier to tweak than others Grids had worked with because it was UCAS military grade, from her years as a test pilot for the United Canadian and American States. Its virtual interface was clunky, but once he figured out what it could do, he marveled at its versatility.

Though most simware controls\_the kind used by actors and simtech crews\_were standardized for ease of use, Tamara's required fine-tuning. Even the most rudimentary features like adjusting range and EC/PC ratios required programming, but the sheer range of wiz options in the hardware made it all worthwhile. It was so flexible that the signal could be encrypted in any number of ways. Grids had found it harder to modify the Truman recorder.

But now, the time for action was near at hand. Even though, technically, he wouldn't participate in the flesh. Simming Tamara's wet feed from five floors away was as close as he wanted to get. He never took action directly if he could help it.

Better living through vicarious reality.

Grids turned from the window and sat on the bed next to the simrecorder. The Truman was a small quasi-portable unit in a black plastic box about the size of a briefcase. He set the small gray CCD binox next to the Truman, took the last gulp of cold soykaf in his cup, and double-checked that the chip in the slot was still the ten-gigapulse stack he'd popped in earlier. Wet-record simsense gobbed memory like a ghoul in a graveyard\_one megapulse per second at baseline. That meant he had just under three hours' worth.

Unless Andreas Michaelson was some sort of sexual marathoner, three hours would be plenty for what Tamara had planned.

Grids jacked in and made another check of all the systems for lack of anything better to do. A few minutes later, as he was running a diagnostic on the on-the-fly decryption algorithm, the unit picked up Tamara's simlink signal and started recording.

A thrill of excitement shivered down his back as he reclined against a stack of pillows and faded himself into her feed. The signal was strong and clear, the decryption working perfectly.

Suddenly he was in a helicopter, feeling the resonating rhythm of the rotor blades as the machine descended toward the roof of the hotel. His body was tall and elven, lean and well-muscled. And female, very female.

He drank in the ecstasy of her scent\_the primal sex of this new body, Tamara's body. Drekking tailored pheromones.

The signal coming from her was full-X, the entire spectrum of sensory and emotive tracks, but Grids had programmed the Truman to record only the baseline\_the sensory tracks\_to save on memory. Besides, Tamara had specifically requested that her emotions not be recorded, saying they weren't important or relevant to the task at hand.

She was the boss on this one. He was just technical

support. It felt like old times, really, back when he used to run the shadows, decking for Grayson Alexander. Burning ice. Those were really old times. Before his stint with Brilliant Genesis, before Amalgamated Studios.

At least he wasn't dueling IC on this one. He hated decking, and had never really gotten good enough at battling intrusion countermeasures to suit his sense of self-worth. No matter that the Matrix was virtual, it was all too real for him. In the consensual hallucination of cyberspace, the virtual became realer than real. Data turned physical. The dreck in there could kill you.

It was harder to die in sim. Not impossible, but harder. The technology was the same in both cyberdecks and sensedecks\_Artificial Sensory Induction System Technology, otherwise known as ASIST. But commercial simsense chips were regulated and most sensedecks had built-in peak controllers. Cyberdecks did not.

In the sim, Tamara's svelte elven form sat poised on the edge of the helo's synthleather seat. Grids tasted mint and the faintest hint of garlic leftover from Tamara's dinner. It amazed him how fit she was, how good it felt to be able to move with grace and dexterity without strain or effort.

That professional athlete training really does pay off, he thought.

Tamara was broad-shouldered for an elf and strong for her size, though Grids knew she was acting the role of the female consort this evening.

Cool wind blew her long hair back, tugging at the loose hem of her sleek black evening dress as the helicopter door breathed open. The security guard holding the door for her was a troll of considerable size. Horns jutted from the top of his head, curling up and back like the rack on a huge mountain goat. The ends had been filed to a point and tipped with engraved silver caps. The troll wore a black tuxedo, mirror shades, and he smiled at Tamara as she stepped out.

Behind her came a large man, easily as tall, with a barrel chest and a graying brown beard. His name was Andreas Michaelson, and Grids knew he was an exec of some rank at Saeder-Krupp. He'd been seeing Tamara off and on since before Grids had come into the picture.

Michaelson wore an impeccably tailored suit of shark-skin gray, and a fancy datajack gleamed gold on his balding forehead. He took Tamara's outstretched hand, his palms rough against hers, and escorted her through the blustering wind of the helicopter to the set of double doors.

The troll took up a position behind them as they reached the edge of the helipad and passed through the doors, flanked by two Saeder-Krupp security guards. She flashed them a coy smile as they passed, all the while cozying up against Michaelson's shoulder.

She was really turning it on.

When the high whine of the helicopter's motor faded enough to hear, Tamara spoke. "I've missed you so much," she said. "LA is hardly bearable when you're gone." Her voice was breathy\_a harsh rasp in the back of her throat. "And, of course, I can't come to Essen."

Michaelson laughed. "Yes, well, I'm sorry my wife is such a traditionalist."

Tamara smiled at him. "Is she?"

Michaelson nodded. "But soon, my sweet, soon I shall be spending more time here." He pulled her close and put his mouth over hers.

She reacted in kind, pressing her breasts against his chest and parting her lips slightly in the embrace.

Grids recoiled instinctively as the hairs of Michaelson's mustache and beard scratched against the edges of Tamara's mouth and the warmth of his tongue pushed past her lips. It tasted of cigar and beer. He was glad when Tamara pulled back and pecked Michaelson on the side of his mouth. She jerked her head in the direction of the troll with the mirror shades who walked behind them, simultaneously pulling at Michaelson's arm. "Let's get inside first," she said.

The hall led to another set of double doors adorned with antique-looking silver door knockers in the shape of lions' heads. A palm-scanner hung on the wall next to the entrance. Michaelson pressed his hand against the scanner's matte-black surface.

A second later, the lock released the doors with a sliding click, and Michaelson escorted Tamara into the plush suite. She kicked off her shoes and rubbed her stocking-covered toes into the thick gray carpet as she pulled from his grasp and danced away from him. Playing.

"Ruger," Michaelson said, addressing the troll who stood waiting to attend them, "please have Claudio bring up some chilled champagne and a sushi tray."

Ruger inclined his horned head. "As you wish, sir."

"And nothing local. The champagne should be French and the sushi from Japan or San Francisco."

A slight frown touched Ruger's face. "Of course," he said, "I'll tell him right away." Then the troll closed the double doors, leaving Tamara alone with Michaelson.

Grids took in the hotel apartment through Tamara's eyes as she looked around. The suite was massive and luxurious, with a full kitchen, a dining room, a sunken living room, and a large bedroom. The walls were adorned with paintings of beach or desert scenes represented in Southwest impressionist style\_lots of browns and gray-blues, blurry images, and such. A wall-sized trideo filled one side of the living room and adjacent was a bay window offering a fantastic view of the ocean.

Tamara walked to the window and stood watching the blazing half-circle of the disappearing sun. "Grids," she whispered, "I hope you're getting this. I'm sure you'll enjoy it as much as I do."

Michaelson came up behind her and put his arms around her in a bear hug. His beard nestled up against her neck.

She moved her head against his, nuzzling him.

Shivers of the heebie-jeebies shook Grids, but he fought them and stayed locked into the sim.

Michaelson kissed Tamara's neck, and she responded by granting him access. His kisses were warm and wet, leaving a trail of cooling saliva on her neck and up to the point of her ear.

Grids fought down the urge to yarf up his soycaf.

But Tamara's physical body was responding to Michaelson's attentions. Her breathing grew deeper. Her lips parted slightly, her eyes closed.

Michaelson moved his hands over her body. One

pressed low on her stomach, crushing the black silk of her dress against the sensitive skin of her abdomen. His other hand traced tiny circles over her breasts, causing her nipples to harden.

A knock at the door brought Michaelson's advances to a halt.

Grids breathed a sigh of relief.

"Yes?" Michaelson said.

"It's, Claudio. Here to serve you, my executiveness." Even through the electronic modulation of the intercom, Grids could hear the affected, fake British accent.

"Come in."

The door clicked open and Claudio entered with a silver cart. Michaelson's aide was a fat dwarf, plump and aging; the stark white hair on his head had mostly migrated to his chin. He wore a traditional black tuxedo. "Ah, my dear lady, Tamara Ny," Claudio said, parking the cart near the dining table. "How good it is to see you again."

"Likewise, Claudio."

"I must say that I was impressed with my lady's performance last week against Atlanta. I particularly enjoyed the goal you scored on that hand-off from Jonathon Winger. That was \_"

"Claudio!" Michaelson cut in. "Please set the cart by the couch. And then go."

"Yes, of course. So sorry."

Tamara burst out laughing, rich and full. And after a slight pause, Michaelson joined her.

"I will expect your assistance with the Magenics visit tomorrow," Michaelson said.

Claudio nodded and smiled his assent. "I will be ready." Then with a slight bow, he retreated through the doors.

As Tamara glanced after the dwarf, Grids caught a glimpse of Ruger standing alertly just outside the door. Several other security personnel stood with the troll, including a human woman Grids took for a security mage\_a potential problem if the simlink signal was discovered and decoded.

"Now, where were we," Michaelson said, "before that rude interruption?"

"Right about here." Tamara put her arms around his neck and kissed him.

He reacted by lifting her into his arms. She laughed as he carried her into the bedroom, then laid her down on the king-size bed. Grids tried to get a sense of the room while Michaelson caressed Tamara's whole body as he slowly undressed her. Anything to avoid concentrating on what was about to happen. He thought briefly about jacking out for this next part, but Tamara would kill him if anything went wrong. So he clenched his teeth and tried to keep his attention on the periphery of Tamara's vision, on the decor and layout of the bedchamber.

The room was huge and had a desk along one wall, presumably where Michaelson worked late into the evening. Executive VPs were expected to work long, hard hours, or at least that's what Grids knew from his friends at Amalgamated Studios. On the desk was a cyberdeck and a small telecom unit as well as an open briefcase.

Tamara's vision was filled by Michaelson's hairy chest now. She was naked down to her black silk bra and panties. Her body, when Grids could catch a glimpse of

it, was fantastic. Abdomen, arms, back, and legs cut with muscles hard as stone. Michaelson's, by contrast, was soft and pliable. She kissed one of his nipples, then the other, working her way down.

Grids knew what was about to happen and he cringed. She removed his pants slowly, teasing him. Driving him wild. Grids faded his senses out as she reached to brush Michaelson's groin. Grids couldn't take any more. He dulled the input to where he could know what was happening, but he didn't have to experience it.

The fact that she seemed to enjoy it was bad enough.

Thirty-three minutes later, the two of them had finished and Tamara fell asleep. The Truman simrecorder recognized it and paused itself. Grids had faded himself in once or twice to make sure the signals were clear and strong. After the initial act, to which he had a particular aversion, the sex was more bearable. He even found himself having fun. Michaelson was no porn star, but Tamara knew how to enjoy herself.

By the time the Truman shut off, Grids himself was ready for sleep. Instead, he reviewed the chip. Tamara would be pleased; for a wet record, the chip was excellent. It would serve her purpose well. If Michaelson's wife was as traditional as the exec implied, Tamara now had a perfect tool for blackmail.

Grids fell into a deep sleep on the bed, and didn't wake until 09:28:43 AM the next morning. He went to pack up the Truman and noticed that another fifty-eight minutes had been recorded after the sex. The Truman had detected Tamara's signal in the morning and started recording again.

Grids prepared some instant soykaf, then jacked in to sim it. And as he experienced Tamara's morning, a sinking feeling took hold of him. She had done something stupid. Dangerously stupid.

Something that could easily cost them their lives.

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