

# SHADOWLAND

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VOL. 5



Artwork by Jeff Laubenstein

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# SHADOWLAND

**An Official  
Publication Devoted  
to FASA's  
Shadowrun  
Roleplaying Game**

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## The Editor Speaks...

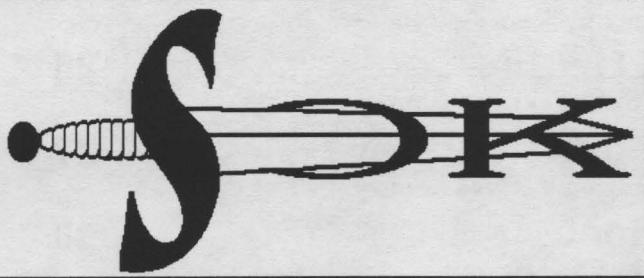
Greetings and welcome to the fifth volume of Shadowland, the Shadowrun support magazine brought your way by Sword of the Knight Publications! We hope you enjoy and come back for more!

First, I'd like to apologize to Stuart G. I seem to have lost your full name and address. Please get in touch with us as soon as possible!

Second, last issue we talked about doing a classified type of thing. We're still interested, but you guys/gals have to send us stuff to run it! Please do so! There's no charge, but try to keep the entries under 50 words. We reserve the right to refuse any classified ad. Thanks!

Later, chummers...

*Kevin Knight*



## How Are We Doing???

Thanks to the people who sent in their response cards from Volume #4! Please keep sending in your response cards, we really like to know what you think of our magazine! Winners of free copies of Volume #5 are John Garrison, William Wells, and John Printon! 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 #2...*

<u>Article</u>	<u>Rating</u>
The Shopping Mall	3.79
The Street Gang Campaign	3.44
Serious Buckshot	3.38
2056 Harley	3.12
The Ahvaz Diaspora	3.74
VatJob	4.18
A Star is Dead	3.79
Dead Air	3.44
<u>Artist</u>	<u>Rating</u>
Cover Art	3.24
Kevin Montanaro	3.33
Overall Rating of SDL 4	3.94



# Cold

## by Gunnar Jaech

The aurora of fluid onyx and emerald gave way to the grim darkness of the cloudy northeastern sky. With only my thoroughly black face mask breaking the water's surface, no one could have hoped to see me had they been watching. But I found myself alone in the night and allowed my equally shrouded shoulders to rise as well. Though the Columbia River flowed swiftly all about me, my body did not move, save as little as was necessary to suspend me in the water and survey the immense face of the Portland Wall. Though the moonless night cloaked the vast structure as much as it did me, the mystical conditioning imbued in my eyes allowed no crack or stain of algae upon the concrete leviathan to escape my glance. Though the mechanical murmur that emerges from any city escaped over the wall, the unabiding screech of a northerly wind most occupied the attention of my ears. I might have smelled the noxious aroma of urban

scramble up. Though I ascended with the speed of an earnest beetle, the wall was easily ten meters high, and it took me a minute or two to near its summit after I had left the chill grasp of the river.

Just below the edge, I allowed the spurs attached to the soles of my feet to sink in and diligently withdrew my hands. Though I was suspended by so little at so great a height, with a malevolent wind whirling all about me that would like not better than to fling me spinning to my death, I was steady and serene as I had ever been in my calmest moments at the training camp on the island. It was with great balance that I withdrew my katana from its sheath on my back and swept it down onto the ledge just above me. The dikoted blade parted the strands of deadly monowire soundlessly.

Still holding the sword, I grasped the wall with a free hand and sprung upwards. The top of the wall was a meter wide, more than enough room for me to land on

my feet without even the thought of tripping. The enchanted art within my steps kept me light enough to avoid startling the pressure sensors I knew lay beneath.

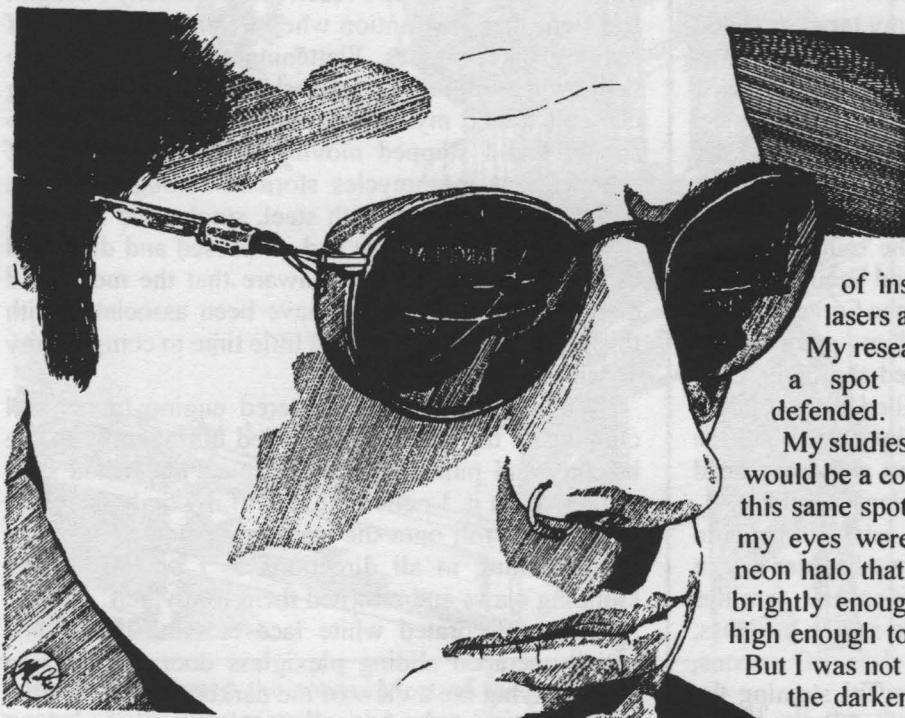
I might have faced further security measures, but the Tir had not seen fit to take on the expense of installing such systems as two-phase lasers at all points along the Portland Wall.

My research had ensured that I could choose a spot that was comparatively lightly defended.

My studies had also led me to believe that there would be a conveniently placed tenant building at this same spot. As I turned my attention forward, my eyes were forced to readjust by sprawling, neon halo that embraced the city. Its lights shone brightly enough and its glass mountains climbed high enough to replace those of the absent moon.

But I was not so dazzled that I could not focus on the darker area that huddled before me for a ways. Apparently the maps had been accurate.

I crouched, my legs coiled like vipers before the strike, and I flew. The ten meter stretch of mines and security alarms that lay beyond the wall rushed below me in an instant, marking briefly the threshold between the darkened wilderness and the burning urban jungle. I landed lithely on the decaying roof and rolled smoothly to a stop. Even such a graceful impact might have stressed the crumbling surface to its limits had it been made by any other. I spun about once, and assured



pollution that clogged the waterway, but the respirator below my mask left me with only the dimly stale scent of canned air. The water was cold.

A single athletic lunge carried me to the base of the wall. I could feel the sharpened edges of gravel that descended below the surface from the artificial shore beneath my knees, but I had no concerns that they would damage the armored fabric of my suit. The mono-tipped climbing claws I had already equipped dug smoothly into the vertical surface and I began to

myself that I was alone before rising and sheathing my sword.

I paused for the briefest moment it took me to catch my breath. So far, all was going as I had planned it, just as it always did. The skills and powers I had learned from my instructors at the secret camp in the Carib League had never failed me. For all the technology and magic at the disposal of my employer's enemies, no amount of material resources could ever defeat the efforts of one such as myself. I, like all the other children who were part of the Romulus Project, had spent my entire life perfecting the unique talents necessary for this sort of work. Some might call me a shadowrunner, if any knew who I was. It is my very lack of a reputation and my utter devotion to the ones I work for that separate me from such mercenaries. I am ninja. The hunt is all I have ever known. I am a professional in the strictest sense of the word. My every thought and action is dedicated to my work for the Renraku Corporation. Only a fellow Romulus operative could hope to match such deadly efficiency.

My feet descended onto the battered sidewalk as I slid to the bottom of derelict drainage pipe. Though the ravaged street was clearly empty, I closely hugged the shadows as I glided silently towards the interior of the city. I already had the safest path to my target mapped out in my head and managed to avoid misdirection as I proceeded. I had to lurk with the utmost care as I passed into more populated areas. The metahumans who fill this place can see as ably in the night as I do, even in the darker areas that I did my best to cling to. I wished to make my visit unnoticed, but I was prepared for a violent encounter. The route I took at least ensured that such an event would occur amongst less reputable citizens rather than Peace Force officers.

It took me at least an hour to reach my goal, but the trip was without incident. I surveyed the hotel from across the street in a narrow, refuse filled alley. A large, rusting dumpster hid me from a lucky glance and the rattling ventilation fan in the wall just above my head adequately masked my practically silent breathing.

It wasn't a coffin hotel like most establishments in such a neighborhood tended to be. In a happier day, it probably served mid-level executives and families visiting the area. It still seemed to do steady business, though to a decidedly different class of patrons, judging by the liberal display of graffiti staining the brick surface of all fifteen stories. Many of the windows were lit, but most of the illumination came from the overhang that faced the street along the entire building. It was supported by cement pillars with empty flower beds around their bases and sported a bank of mostly functioning lights along its ceiling. In addition to many swarms of moths, the space was inhabited by a pair of young, leather-clad elves. Their clothing and oddly shaped and colored hair identified them as street gangers. They paced back and forth beneath the overhang, watching either the street or the

poorly lit lobby through the windows that stretched the length of the wall. I wasn't familiar with Portland gangs, and couldn't identify their colors or whether they were employed by my target, especially considering I hadn't been told who my target was. Nor was I ever. In any event, this was no time to take chances.

I could see enough of the interior to be sure it was unoccupied presently, so I simply waited for the two gang members to cross the area directly across from the alley before flinging a shuriken from either hand.

They might have heard as much as a faint whisper through the air, but neither displayed any reaction before the poisoned blades sawed through the flesh below their pointed ears. Both hit the pavement with no more than a grunt.

Their blood had barely begun to spread by the time I reached the shadowed driveway on the left side of the hotel that led into the parking lot in the back. My electronic briefing had positively defined the room where my target would be located. It was only on the third floor, but brick walls are easy to climb anyway. Halfway down the driveway, I turned aside and scampered up the wall. In moments I had scaled to the third story, within arm's reach of the balcony I sought. But I checked my motion when I caught the sound of igniting bike engines. Flattening myself against the wall, with nothing to support me but my climbing claws, I turned my eyes towards the parking lot. No sooner had I stopped moving when a stampede of cacophonous motorcycles stormed through the path beneath me, filling it with steel, smoke and laughing bikers. In a minute they had all passed and dispersed down the street, but I was aware that the men I had dispatched in front might have been associated with this gang. If they were, I had little time to complete my mission.

With the stench of unfiltered engine fumes still clinging in my nostrils, I crawled horizontally to the balcony and pulled one leg up over the rusted steel railing. With it, I pulled the rest of my body over into a soundless roll onto the steel mesh floor. I kept my gaze roaming in all directions as I unstrapped the climbing claws and returned them to my belt.

The undecorated white lace curtains behind the heavily scraped sliding plexiglass door were drawn shut, denying me a view of the darkened room within. A quick inspection of the maglock on the right side of the door made it clear that there was no opening mechanism on this side. After assuring myself that there were no induction trodes or pressure sensors attached to the windows, I produced my glass cutter. Its edge, technologically owned to the same keenness as my claws, cut the armored glass beside the lock as so much tissue paper. I used the tip of my katana to pick out the small glass circle, which I set down beside me on the balcony. I slipped my hand through the resulting hole and pressed my SOTA maglock passkey

into the slot. A second later, there was a gentle electronic beep.

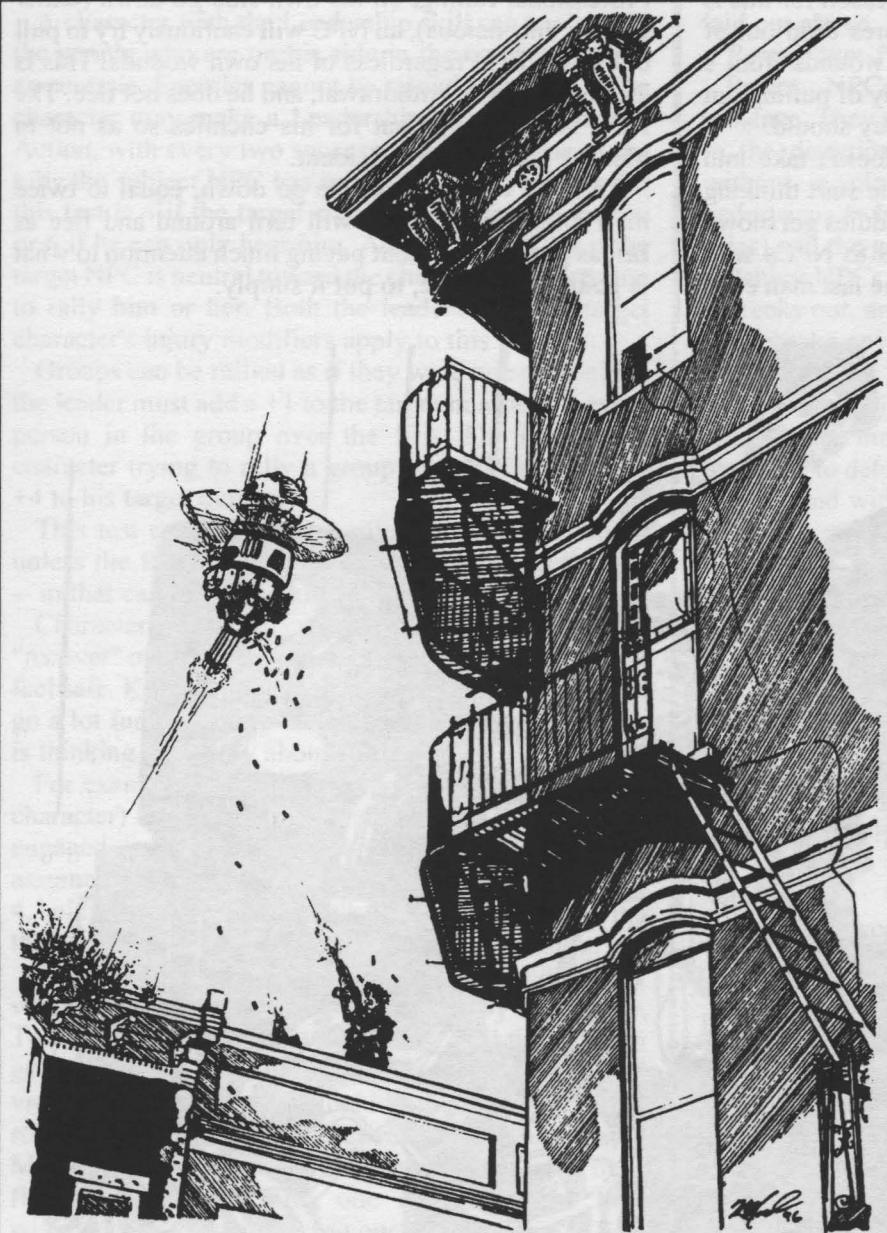
Pushing with the hole, I slid the door open a few inches and passed through the gap, creeping around the corner of the curtain without disturbing it. As soon as I was free of the pale fabric, I knelt on the thinning

was in my hands. With immense graduality I rose, so that the air disturbed by my body would not be enough to awaken my target. I thought perhaps my stealth had been faulty when she rolled towards me, but it was clear in her face that she still slumbered. Not so comforting though, was the clarity with which I recognized her. Even in such feeble light, cast only by the street lamps around the corner and the clock beside the bed, after so many years, I could not possibly have mistaken her soft, narrow features, the full, crimson lips, the thin scar above her dainty left eyebrow, and that lustrous, wavy hair, the same color as the sun, through which barely emerged her pointed ears. Why this member of the Romulus Project would be targeted for elimination I would never know. Why I specifically had been ordered to assassinate the woman I loved was also beyond my knowledge. The only thing I could be certain of was the dark choice I faced. I could spare her, try to protect her and myself from the inevitable retribution that Renraku would send, probably surrendering not only my life but also the tenets of professionalism I had always clung to. Or, I could do what I have always done, the only thing I know how to do, and retain the only part of me there really was. It was only then that I realized, for all my talent, for all my awesome skill, I truly had very little. If I gave it up, the only thing left to me would be her. And her I could never truly have.

The thick pines only a few meters below me undulated like jade waves as I soared over them. The welcoming lights of the Seattle metroplex were just now coming into view. All was still dark though, there was still not a hint of dawn.

Of all the things my masters taught me in my childhood, if it could be called that, I now can think of only one for which I thank them: that when they taught me to kill, they taught me to do so painlessly. For the victim at least.

I pulled off my mask, in hopes that the screaming wind would dry the tears that I could no longer contain.



carpet and scanned the room. Most of the paint had peeled off the plaster walls, and what little remained had no color in the weak light. The occasional movement of assorted vermin could be noticed through the many holes that dotted the plaster. The place was sparsely appointed. There was a small trid-set just next to me on my right, and a squat bureau on the left wall. The door was directly across the room from me, and next to that, a single bed with sheets the same color as the curtains. It was the bed that concerned me, or, more accurately, the curved shape beneath its covers.

By the time I had crawled up to the side, my sword

# 'Till Death Does the NPCs Part?

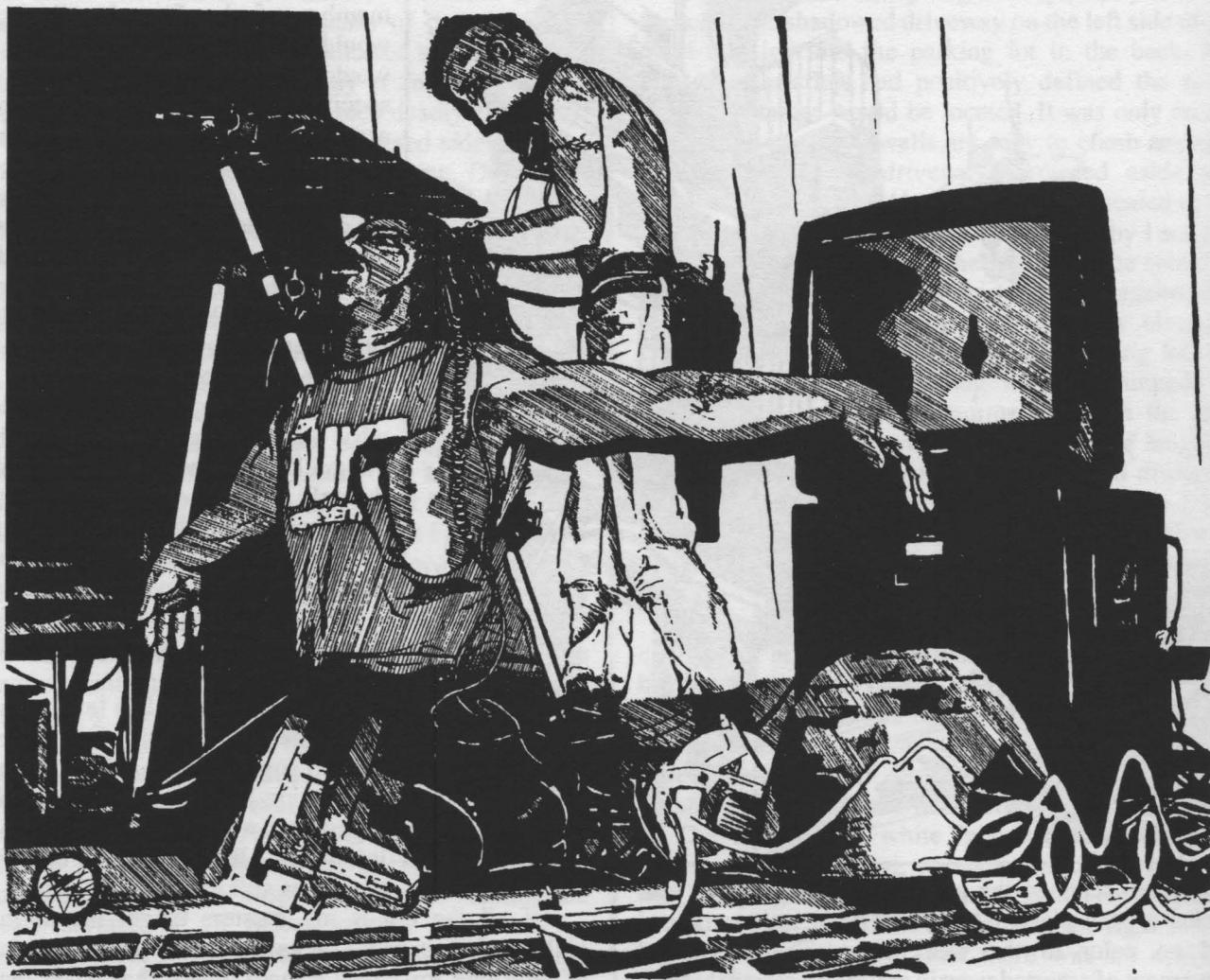
## by Gurth

I make very little use of NPCs' Professional Ratings in my campaign. The most important reason for this is that most of the NPCs in my adventures drop out of firefights because they suffer Deadly wounds from a single shot or burst, and so have no way of pulling out when their Professional Rating says they should.

Similarly, the Professional Rating doesn't take into account the fact that, in real life, people start thinking about retreating when they see their buddies get blown to bits -- in Shadowrun this translates to NPCs with Professional Ratings of 1 fighting to the last man even

down. After seeing a number of people, equal to his Professional Rating, on his own side go down (either dead or unconscious), an NPC will cautiously try to pull out of the fight regardless of his own wounds. This is a common-sense withdrawal, and he does not flee. The NPC keeps an eye out for his enemies so as not to blunder into them by accident.

An NPC who sees people go down, equal to twice his Professional Rating, will turn around and flee as fast as possible, without paying much attention to what is going on -- panic, to put it simply.



if they are getting blown away by Panther cannons...

With this in mind, I came up with the following house rules. Think of them as guidelines, not hard-and-fast rules, as always:

Professional Ratings don't only indicate what kind of wound an NPC must take before he withdraws from a fight (SRII, page 187), but also whether or not he withdraws when he sees others of his own side go

If a character goes down in a particularly gruesome way or by a terrifying weapon, he may count as two (or even more) kills, at the gamemaster's discretion. Anyone killed by fire (for example a flamethrower or a fire-based spell) should probably fall under this rule, seeing that most people fear being burned.

All this preceeds any wounds taken by the character, so that even an unwounded NPC with a Professional

Rating of 4 will withdraw if he sees four or more of his teammates get killed.

The above means that NPCs can have Professional Ratings over 4 to reflect the fact that they stay in a fight longer than others. These always fight to the death, like NPCs with a Professional Rating of 4, with the same exception that is noted above.

A character with the Leadership skill can try to rally the people who are on his side in the combat, as well as neutrals. Enemies cannot be rallied (surprise!). The character may make a Leadership test in a Complex Action, with every two successes removing one of the kills the subject NPC has seen. The target number for this test is 4 if the target character can see the leader, or 6 if he can only hear him. Add a +2 modifier if the target NPC is neutral toward the character who is trying to rally him or her. Both the leader's and the target character's injury modifiers apply to this roll.

Groups can be rallied as if they were one person, but the leader must add a +1 to the target number for every person in the group over the first. For instance, a character trying to rally a group of 5 NPCs must add +4 to his target number.

This test can be made as often as the leader likes, unless the Rule of One comes up because of the test -- in that case, add one kill to the character's total :)

Characters who've withdrawn from the fight "recover" one kill per minute they stay somewhere they feel safe. Keep in mind that someone who paniced will go a lot further before feeling safe than someone who is thinking rationally about getting away.

For example, Richie the ganger street sam (a player character) and some of his fellow gang members are engaged in a firefight with some opposition. We'll assume the gangers all have a Professional Rating of 4, being the trigger-happy folks they are. Richie, seeing that he's a PC, doesn't have a Professional Rating.

Richie an one of the gangers are behind a dumpster while three others charge a house held by the enemy. Too bad the bad guys have AK-97s... All three of 'em get wiped out before they even reach the door, in full view of the ganger who's behind the dumpster firing rounds into the house to cover the failed assault. Moments later, a fourth ganger gets hit, now by a flamethrower spell. This one counts as two kills witnessed by the ganger, so now he's seen five.

Five? That's more than his Professional Rating, so he now ducks behind the dumpster and starts urging Richie that they had better retreat while they still can, seein' what happened to the others and all, you know?

Richie, firmly believing in his own bulletproof-ness (which isn't even that far from the truth), also happens to have Leadership skill at 6, plus two dice for his tailored pheromones bioware. The ganger is on Richie's side and can see him, so Richie's target number is only 4 (both Richie and the ganger are unwounded). Piece of cake, resulting in four successes. Those "erase" two of the kills the ganger has seen, so he

decides to stick around anyway, at least for a while.

Had the ganger received a Light wound previously, Richie's target number would have been a 5, for only two successes. That would have removed only one kill, leaving the ganger at 4, and therefore still wanting to retreat.

Also introduced, partly to make use of the guidelines laid out above, is another Professional Rating:

#### *Panicy Non-Player Characters (Rating 0)*

Panicy NPCs are untrained and are scared of violence. They react to any combat situation by fleeing in the direction that seems to be safest, absolutely without a plan. Examples of panicy NPCs are pedestrians (who were Average, rating 1, under SRII rules) and the general Joe/Jane in the street.

Panicy NPCs will withdraw from a fight as soon as it breaks out, and will not try to participate in it at all. If they take any wound at all, they immediately break into a run for the nearest place of safety, probably screaming their lungs out while doing so. The gamemaster may make a Willpower (4) test for the character to determine whether or not he is able to steel his will and withdraw normally.

## New Contacts

### Elven Photo Model

"Some people just have it, you know? We look like the way everybody would want to look, if they were given half a chance. I can't help that I was born looking the way I do, can I? And if I can make my money because of it, I'll take the opportunity with both hands."

### Quotes

"Hey, this work isn't as easy as it looks."

"You want me to wear THAT?"

"No, I don't do nude shots. How much?! Forget what I just said, okay?"

"Excuse me, do you know where the toilet is around this place?"

### Commentary

The fashion industry needs people to show their latest designs on, and naturally they have to look better than life while doing so -- and elves are a gift from the gods as far as this industry is concerned (hey, would you want to buy clothes you saw some ork wear?).

### Attributes

Body: 2

Quickness: 5

Strength: 2

Charisma: 8

Intelligence: 2

Willpower: 3

Essence: 6

Reaction: 3

## Skills

Etiquette (Corporate): 2  
Special Skill: Acting (Posing): 4

## Notes

Cosmetic surgery to suit currently fashionable looks.

Professional Rating: 0



## Former (Decker)

## Shadowrunner

"When I look at all those hotshots that run the Matrix these days, I see myself 10 years ago. I used to be like them, living on the edge and always on the lookout for, what's the current word again, paydata. I think the term for it changes about once a month. Anyway, I used to be one of the best, not /the/ best, mind you, I have no pretensions of claiming that honor, but I was damn good. You could count on me to cut that Ice and get the files. I see them do the same thing, despite all the advances made by the corps and the governments, and by anyone else who has anything worth taking from them.

"Nothing ever changes, really..."

## Quotes

"It's all so much more better-looking than it was in my day."  
"WHAT did you say its I/O speed was again?!"  
"Wish we'd had that kind of hardware back in '50. The software, too."

## Commentary

He has long since stopped running the Matrix for personal gain. In fact he stopped shadowrunning completely a few years ago, when he realized he was getting old and couldn't keep up with the new generation anymore. This seemed the perfect time to erase all traces of his existence, step out of the biz, and concentrate on doing something not quite as dangerous. He still has his old deck, but with the SOTA being what it is, the only thing he ever uses it for is to access hosts that won't get him into trouble with anyone. Apart from that, all links to his shadowrunning career in the early '50s are broken.

## Attributes

Body: 2  
Quickness: 3  
Strength: 1  
Charisma: 3  
Intelligence: 6  
Willpower: 4  
Essence: 4  
Reaction: 4

## Skills

Computer: 3  
Computer Theory (2050's systems): 5  
Computer Theory (2057's systems): 2  
Electronics: 4  
Etiquette (Street): 2  
Etiquette (Matrix): 1  
Firearms: 2

## Cyberware

Chipjack  
Datajack  
Display Link  
Headware Memory (100 Mp)  
Program Carrier

## Gear

Armor Clothes (3/0)  
Colt American L36  
Fuchi Cyber-7 cyberdeck (very high SOTA Factors for MPCP and persona and utility programs)

Professional Rating: 2

## **Former Shadowrunner (Gang Member)**

"Look at me. I said look at me. Yeah, I know it's hard, but how do you think I feel? I can never leave, and believe me, I tried to get away from this fragging place and find some rest. It didn't work. No matter how hard I try, I always come back here. It's like half of me stays behind waiting for the rest of me to return, you understand? No, I guess you don't either.

"HEY! What's that broad doing? Are those Hounds colors she's wearing? Dammit, the fraggers STILL can't stay away, can they? Just you wait, I'll show 'er whose boss here now!"

### **Quotes**

"Hey you! Yeah you! This is my turf!"

"No, I don't use chains. Kind of old-fashioned, know what I mean?"

"Whatsamatter? You look like you seen a ghost."

### **Commentary**

In case you hadn't guessed it yet, this guy's dead. He died in a brawl in some stinking alley in some stinking city a few stinking years back, and now he haunts it. He viciously keeps other gangers out of "his turf" -- the alley he has haunted ever since he died -- and can never, ever, leave. Unless someone helps him.

The question is, how do you approach him?

### **Attributes**

Body: -  
Quickness: -  
Strength: -  
Charisma: 3  
Intelligence: 4  
Willpower: 4  
Essence: 6A  
Reaction: 6

### **Skills**

Etiquette (Street): 4

Professional Rating: N/A

## **Former Shadowrunner (Ork Merc)**

"What do you mean, I used to be great? I still am among the best, I just can't prove it because of this damn wheelchair. I lost my legs a few years back and since then I've been stuck in this thing... Believe me,



I don't like it, and that's why I and hard at work making my comeback. I keep in touch with all my old buddies and I work out harder than I ever did before, all as a preparation for when I get my legs back. Once I get them, I'm gonna kick ass again."

### **Quotes**

"New Guinea in '49, yeah, now you mention it... We went in and out without anybody even knowing we were there until the C4 went off. \*grin\* Took out half an airfield with that."

"This chair? Risks of the trade, chummer."

"No, I'm not bitter about it. I'm bitter about not having saved enough nuyen to buy me a pair of legs..."

### **Commentary**

The Former Ork Merc Shadowrunner was forced out of the biz by an accident that cost him both his legs. If it weren't for that, he'd still be fighting wars for whoever pays him for his troubles, but now he has to contend himself with watching from the sideline until he can scrape enough money together to have his legs

replaced. When that finally happens, he's determined to get back to doing what he does best.

### Attributes

Body: 7  
Quickness: 4  
Strength: 8  
Charisma: 2  
Intelligence: 4  
Willpower: 6  
Essence: 3.2  
Reaction: 4(6)

### Skills

Armed Combat: 3  
Biotech (First Aid): 2  
Car: 3  
Etiquette (Mercenary): 6  
Firearms: 6  
Gunnery: 4  
Interrogation: 3  
Stealth: 3  
Unarmed Combat: 5

### Cyberware

Smartlink  
Wired Reflexes (1)

### Gear

Camouflage Jacket (5/3)  
Remington Roomswelder  
Wheelchair

Professional Rating: 3-4

### Private Carrier Pilot

"I'm a businesswoman, just like the next person. The only real difference between me and a cabbie is that I can take you to a lot of places a car can't or won't get you, apart from that my work is essentially that of anyone else involved in transporting things -- people, goods, animals, you name it and I can carry it, to any destination you want. It will cost you something, of course, but I can guarantee you that everything's on a strict no questions asked-basis. I'll even arrange things with the authorities, for the right price. Free enterprise, bud."

### Quotes

"You pay, I haul."  
"Anywhere in the world, chummer. As long as a plane can go there, I can. And you can, too."  
"Look, I told you I never heard of him or those beetles. Huh? Oh, just a lucky guess..."

### Commentary

She owns her own plane, and has built a thriving business around it. With smugglers, shadowrunners, corpse, other thugs, and just about anyone else wanting transport that can't be traced back to them, transport that will go anywhere, and/or transport that will carry anything, she has what they need. As long as they pay, she arranges departure, flight, and arrival, all without asking any nasty questions.



### Attributes

Body: 3  
Quickness: 5  
Strength: 3  
Charisma: 4  
Intelligence: 6  
Willpower: 4  
Essence: 3.75  
Reaction: 5 (7 while rigged)

## Skills

Etiquette (Corporate): 2  
Etiquette (Street): 2  
Negotiation: 3  
Rotorcraft: 5  
Winged Planes: 6

## Cyberware

Datajack (4)  
Vehicle Control Rig (1)

## Gear

HS-895 Skytruck

Professional Rating: 2

## Radio DJ

"Radio's still popular after a hundred and fifty years, chummer. I'm proof that it still is, just look at the ratings my show gets. We play all the top tunes of the moment, and all the greatest hits of the past to top it off! You have to be diverse these days, though -- it isn't anymore like it was for the old-timers, that they could play a single kind of music and still get a large audience. Stations nowadays have to play just about anything to keep people attracted to the radio, and it's... Oh, if you'll excuse me, I see that song is almost over."

## Quotes

"...and that was an oldie, from way back in forty-eight. Now on with a brand-new one..."

"We'll be back with you in a moment. Right after these messages."

"Aaawww, the wrong answer! Better luck next time, (quick, what was her name again?) Sue! Line four, see if you know..."

## Commentary

As long as there is radio, there will be DJs. Even though the trid is a lot more popular, lots of people still want to listen to a real person talking away about nothing while they're at work or trying to relax, especially if that person also plays their favorite songs and gives them a chance to win a prize at least once every hour.

## Attributes

Body: 2  
Quickness: 3  
Strength: 2  
Charisma: 5



Intelligence: 2

Willpower: 3

Essence: 6

Reaction: 2

## Skills

Computer: 2  
Electronics: 3  
Interrogation (Verbal): 3  
Leadership: 1  
Negotiation (Fast Talk): 2  
Special Skill: Music Knowledge: 4  
Special Skill: Talk Nonsense: 6

Professional Rating: 0-1

## Restaurant Piano Player

"Do you think I like doing this, practicing my art for a bunch of people who don't really appreciate it? They come to have a meal, and because there ought to be a piano player in a restaurant, they take me for granted."

They're usually polite about it, but believe me when I say I can pick out the ones that aren't sincere -- and that's most of them. I'd like to do something else, but this is all I'm good at, I'm afraid."

### Quotes

"I believe I don't know that one, sir."  
"I believe I know that one, madam."  
"Sam, sir?"

### Commentary

He plays the piano while you eat, and sings too. All he really wants is to get a real job where he can play the piano too, but he fears (quite rightly) that he just doesn't have what it takes. His position in the restaurant does allow him to pick up the occasional rumor, though, so he could be a valuable source of information when tips are not as high as he would like.

### Attributes

Body: 3  
Quickness: 3  
Strength: 2  
Charisma: 4  
Intelligence: 3  
Willpower: 3  
Essence: 6  
Reaction: 3

### Skills

Etiquette (Corporate): 3  
Musical Instrument: Keyboards: 3

Special Skill: Singing: 2

### Gear

Tuxedo (0/0)

"Rocker" Status: Newbie (even though he's been doing this job for 15 years already)

Professional Rating: 0-1



# Bigger, Badder, & Powered

by Erik Jameson and Brian Angliss

>>>>[Greetings fellow shadowfolk! The file that follows is a description of something most of you have only heard about as legend: Powered Armor. But it's a sci-fi legend no more. Powered armor has been around, in some form, for a couple of years now. Well, Stan, you ask, why haven't I heard about it down here in the gutter? Two reasons. One, Powered Armor is extremely expensive. Two, reality doesn't match up with myth. But it's out there, and it can be nasty. Enough from me, check the board!]<<<<

--St. Stan<13:28:34/8-17-57>

>>>>[And three, powered armor isn't for rookies or rank amateurs. Only the best of the best can utilize powered armor to its max potential.]<<<<

--Hangfire<14:36:26/8-17-57>



>>>>[Who died and made you the expert?]<<<<

--Hamster<16:09:27/8-17-57>

>>>>[Stupid question kid. Stupid question...]<<<<

--the Dark Stranger<16:33:12/8-17-57>

There are essentially two types of Powered Armor, all of which utilize limited power supplies. Both types are also built into heavy armor of some type (Full Heavy or better).

The first style is the classic version of Powered Armor, typically called a "Powerhouse," after the Ares beta-test unit. These powered exoskeletons utilize

"slow-twitch" myomer electric muscles and heavy hydraulics to amplify the strength of the pilot. The primary drawback of the Powerhouse chassis is the subsequent loss of quickness and speed. The same "muscles" that provide the prodigious strength also slow the pilot down to sometimes dangerous levels.

>>>>[The longshoremen down at the docks have one of these types for special jobs. You should see the crates that baby lifts...fraggin' amazin'!]<<<<

--SimMan<17:01:36/8-17-57>

>>>>[Entirely true. There is a civilian variant for cargo loading and unloading. Hung on a light security chassis, there is nil armor and costs only about 10 grand less than the Full Heavy variants. You do need to be a licensed cargo company to legally buy one though.]<<<<

--Nazdack<17:19:36/8-17-57>

>>>>[Yeah. Almost any company down on the docks is willing to "have a catastrophic failure" with their armor, for the right price (which is currently about 5 times purchase price).]<<<<

--Shadowrock<17:33:03/8-17-57>

>>>>[True, but how combat effective is a powered lifting

frame?]<<<<

--Hell Raider<17:40:21/8-17-57>

This slowness brought on the creation of the second type of Powered Armor, the "Mercury" chassis, from the UCAS beta-test unit. Unlike the Powerhouse, the Mercury amplifies the speed and quickness of the pilot, primarily by alleviating its own weight, and moving that weight mostly by itself. This creates a pilot who is as fast in his military grade armor as is someone wearing no armor. "Fast-twitch" myomer electric muscles are primarily used in this variant.

Please note that there are no Powerhouse-Mercury

hybrids. The large amounts of heavy myomer muscles and hydraulics for the Powerhouse chassis mean there is little, to no room, for "fast-twitch" myomer muscles of the Mercury. Not to mention the fact that hydraulics simply are not up to the job for a Mercury chassis.

>>>>[Just wait. Give it a few years, and they'll be able to combine strength and speed. They can do it now with cybernetics. A few years, they'll have it for powered armor.]<<<<

--the Marketier<17:57:22/8-17-57>

In addition, there is the Aegis Tactical System from Fuchi, which may added to any type of heavy armor. The Aegis is the next generation of the Fuchi TEX system, and controls and coordinates all onboard systems, including built-in weaponry. Not a true "Powered Armor," so it has been relegated to the OPTIONS section.

>>>>[When you add the Aegis to the Mercury, you have the most lethal foot soldier ever created. Plain and simple. Want an example? Those Welsh cyberknights that Countess of Harlech keeps? Early version of this same concept. Where do you think the original plans were stolen from?]<<<<

--Rigged For Life<18:11:49/8-17-57>

>>>>[The Aegis isn't the only toy you can add on. You've got integral sensors, integral weaponry, unit defense charges (your own AP zone!), a tracking defense system (never worry about getting 'painted' again!), and oodles of stealth systems! Break out your super-platinum credsticks!]<<<<

--Monster Masher<18:20:16/8-17-57>

>>>>[Hehe...the toys, the toys, the TOYS! Just think what I could do with one of these babies!]<<<<

--Steam Train<18:29:04/8-17-57>

>>>>[Why do you think they are so damn expensive? Everyone and their dead grandmother wants one. But have you got a SIN, about million nuyen (for all those toys you're sure to want), and a military buyers license? Didn't think so. So then tag on street inflation. Figure the PA suit that runs about a mil on the legal will cost about ten times that on your shadowy street corner. Still drooling? Then consider the hideous illegality of powered armor. Big time up the river. And the cops count EVERY single toy and option as a separate offense. Your cool 10 mil shadow suit will probably get you the death penalty, three times over. Or at least a few hundred years in a federal hell hole.]<<<<

--Wildsmasher<18:34:26/8-17-57>

>>>>[Not to mention the fact the scale of combat required to have "Unit Defense Charges" and

"Tracking Defense Systems" is way beyond the league of nearly every shadowrunner. We're not mercs, remember?]<<<<

--PJ<18:41:52/8-17-57>

>>>>[Damn. Never thought of it that way. But still, think of what you could do with one of these!]<<<<

--Steam Train<18:42:04/8-17-57>

>>>>[True enough. But be careful out there. The majority of those suits that have slipped into the shadow market are faulty in some way, enough so that their previous owners didn't mind "losing" them. Caveat emptor.]<<<<

--Chrome Executive<18:49:41/8-17-57>

>>>>[I still don't see what the big deal is. We're shadowrunners, right? We sneak in, get the goods, and sneak out, right? What do we really need a full military grade weapons system for, like powered armor?]<<<<

--Unamused<18:59:32/8-17-57>

>>>>[Good point. Most of us don't need one of these. If we need some serious protection, most of us slap on the Full Heavy or Heavy Security armor. However, those select few that can afford one of these babies can use it. Imagine someone like Kid Stealth. One of the top sams, right? Put him in a Mercury. There would be no zero-zone safe enough. You know he'd be shot at and need all the tricks in the world, just to survive the trip in. A top-line Mercury chassis with all the options provides that. Don't be fooled; powered armor isn't for greenies.]<<<<

--Firefinder<19:11:36/8-17-57>

>>>>[So who exactly is making Powered Armor these days?]<<<<

--the Mega-Bite<19:19:36/8-17-57>

>>>>[Well, there's the obvious, Ares. They seem to be real keen on the whole concept; 70% of all powered armor is made by Ares, including the UCAS military units. Fuchi is also in on the game, with about 15-20% of the market, but they focus more on the interface, hence the Aegis. An Ares chassis is likely to be sturdier, but a Fuchi chassis will be easier to control and interface with. Subtle differences, but still there.]<<<<

--Nazdack<19:30:20/8-17-57>

>>>>[Mitsuhama and Renraku are also in on it. Their line of research is heavily weighted towards taking the pilot out of the chassis. MCT is trying to make the suits like drones, rigged from afar. And Renraku is trying the whole robot thing. Neither line of research has panned out so far (biggest problem? Balance.), but you've only got to figure it's a matter of

time. So in the meantime, they crank out their own version of the standard fare.]<<<<

--Half-and-Halfer<19:35:29/8-17-57>

>>>>[Their brand names are as follows:

Ares: Legionnaire Armor

Fuchi: Shogun Powered Protective Gear

Mitsuhamra: Overlord Powered Armor

Renraku: Ultrarmor]<<<<

--Gladiator Watcher<19:43:00/8-17-57>

>>>>[Where's Aztechnology? I would figure them for being big fans of powered armor.]<<<<

--Red Card<19:50:31/8-17-57>

>>>>[Oh, they are. But they don't bother with the open market, at least not right now. They have their Toro class (Powerhouse) and their Jaguar class (Mercury) armor, but they keep them for themselves. Kinda like the Aguilar chopper, you know? They hoarded them for a few years, then sold a modified variant to everyone else a few years later. I expect the Azzies to start selling powered armor by about 2060. Maybe sooner.]<<<<

--Mycenean Merc<20:02:00/8-17-57>

>>>>[Okay, since I'm not likely to ever own powered armor, how do I smash it, or better yet, smash it and live?]<<<<

--Mighty Fright<20:11:17/8-17-57>

>>>>[Well, strangely enough, powered armor functions just like a vehicle for magic. Not sure why, but that's how it is. So if you've got a mage with Wrecker, or even Ram will do in a pinch, then you've got a chance. Not so lucky? I would suggest hit-and-run tactics, even if you've got heavy weaponry. Get in, hit as hard as you can, retreat, repeat as needed. This tends to work best on a slow Powerhouse. Taking on a Mercury? Same idea, but you had better be damn good. Taking on more than one? Run like hell, and pray to the gods above that whoever you drecked on can be persuaded to forget about you.]<<<<

--Magi Maker<20:19:22/8-17-57>

>>>>[Hehe. Yeah, get a chassis to lock up, and watch those nudies run!]<<<<

--Tank Warrior<20:20:01/8-17-57>

>>>>[Uh, nudies?]<<<<

--Confused Everywhere<20:23:36/8-17-57>

>>>>[Originally tank slang for powered armor pilots, without their powered armor. Comes from the pilots not being able to wear anything protective underneath their armor except for form-fitting armor. You know, that armored underwear stuff. So when they have to bail on their armor, the pilots are practically

naked in the battlefield. Now, it's common military slang, used by everyone.]<<<<

--DeTon8<25:33:02/8-17-57>



>>>>[Another relevant question. We know the corps and the nations have a few of these. Too expensive to maintain armies of them, but cheap enough to outfit a squad or two. Now, who in the shadows has powered armor? The Mob? The Yaks? Runners?]<<<<

--Nick Not-So-Quick<20:26:12/8-17-57>

>>>>[Interesting question. You've gotta figure the Mafia and the Yakuza have one, maybe two powered armor units here in Seattle. Probably the same situation in every big city. So that's a few dozen, worldwide, right? Figure maybe a dozen or so in the hands of the world's top shadowrunners. Other than that, I can't

even guess.]<<<<

--the Paid Avenger<20:39:58/8-17-57>

>>>>[I can. And will. So far as it goes, you're right. But I've seen trid footage posted on Shadowland that shows a group of nine individuals in red "dragon" sculpted Mercuries smashing up remote areas of Aztlan. Rumor is they are actually a group of initiate combat mages, but I doubt it. I also hear tell of another group of former mercs, about 10 or so, that have UCAS standard issue Ares powered armor. Now, how these groups were able to muster such a large number of units, I don't know, but it stinks of something big and nasty to me.]<<<<

--Wildsmasher<20:42:06/8-17-57>

>>>>[Okay, sorry to do this folks, but I'm running out of free memory here (got some major stuff coming in to Shadowland, or that's the rumor, so we've gotta save some space), so I've got to close things down here. All the tech specs are available in the next big file. Still want to talk about powered armor? I've just opened a chat arena two doors down. Have fun!]<<<<

--St. Stan<21:00:00/8-17-57>

## Game Effects and Rules

### POWERHOUSE CHASSIS

The Powerhouse chassis is a strength amplification frame. It has three basic variations in strength. The "Warlord" frame has a Strength attribute of 10, the Hercules has a Strength of 13, and the Prometheus has a Strength of 15.

Such strength is not without its cost however. For every two points of Strength above the pilot's own, Reaction is reduced by one. If Reaction is brought to zero in this fashion, the pilot's effective Reaction will be one, as will be their Initiative. This means that the pilot will be able to move, but only barely.

<u>Armor Type Cost</u>	<u>Warlord</u>	<u>Hercules</u>	<u>Prometheus</u>
Full Heavy	54,350¥	90,900¥	171,050¥
Light Military	63,700¥	98,550¥	177,250¥
Medium Military	69,600¥	104,100¥	185,850¥
Heavy Military	76,400¥	111,900¥	197,350¥

Cost is only for the powered chassis. Armor must be purchased separately. Availability is equal to the Availability of the armor type, plus 2 for the Warlord, plus 4 for the Hercules, and plus 5 for the Prometheus. Street Index is for the individual GM to decide, but it should be high, at least 4. In addition, it needs to be remembered that Powered Armor is hideously illegal for anyone but the military (Legality: 1-K).

### MERCURY CHASSIS

The Mercury chassis has no viable variants at this time. At this point, the Mercury chassis will alleviate

its own weight, nothing more. This means that the powered armor does not count for encumbrance purposes. This also means that the combat pool reductions common among heavy armor is also alleviated.

### Armor Type Cost

Full Heavy	130,200¥
Light Military	139,750¥
Medium Military	154,650¥
Heavy Military	182,100¥

Again, price is only for the powered chassis. Availability for the Mercury chassis is as for the Prometheus, plus one (armor +6). Street Index and Legality are the same.

## INSTALLATION

Integrating a powered armor chassis with the selected armor type is extremely difficult, as a single mistake can render the chassis inefficient or even create danger.

Installation costs 15% of the total base cost of the armor and the powered armor chassis. During this procedure, the various parts of the chassis (which is actually shipped in its component parts) are mated to the armor, and thereby gain the protection of the armor.

To determine installation success, use the chart below, with a Target Number of 10.

<u># of Successes</u>	<u>Error Condition</u>
all 1's Total failure	both armor and chassis unusable.
simple failure	Beyond the scope of the armorer; can't be done.
1 success	-3 to Ballistic and Impact, 1/2 power duration.
2 successes	-2 to Ballistic and Impact.
3 successes	10% power duration loss.
4 successes	Success, chassis and armor mated.

## DAMAGE

With most powered armor, the chassis gains the full benefit of the armor it is mated with. However, this does not always prevent damage from reaching the chassis. Whenever the armor is penetrated (for game purposes, whenever the pilot takes damage), there is chance the armor may be damaged.

### Die Roll

1	Total failure, all systems are down. 2 in 6 chance of chassis freezing in place.
2	Overall performance degraded; 50% power loss, all systems function at half capability (round down).
3	Localized failure (where the rounds hit), rest of the chassis operated normally, 30% power loss.
4	Localized performance degraded; function for that limb are at half capability, 20% power loss.
5	Overall power loss of 10%.
6	Lucky, no systems affected.

### Damage Condition

## POWER

Possibly the most important element of powered armor, which is why it has been separated from other sections. It was not until recently that a workable power source was made available, and now there are several different variants. All variants perform reasonably similar to one another.

<u>Chassis Type</u>	<u>Operational Duration</u>
Warlord	15 hours
Hercules	12 hours
Prometheus	10 hours
Mercury	8 hours



**HARDWARE POWER:** The use of the Aegis combat system (see below) as well as most of the systems below cost a negligible amount of power. However, some additional systems that the Aegis can run can cost large amounts of power. The use of the Ruthenium or Active Sonic stealth systems reduce the operational duration of the armor by 20% each. Tracking, articulate, or gyromounts reduce operational duration by 5%, 10%, and 10% respectively. ECM systems reduce operational duration by 10% for all security ECM and 15% for military ECM.

## POWERED ARMOR SIGNATURE

Powered Armor has a vehicle rated signature. A chart below shows what each chassis has as its signature.

<u>Chassis</u>	<u>Signature</u>
Warlord	8
Hercules	6
Prometheus	5
Mercury	8

Keep in mind that because it is a vehicle signature, powered armor can take advantage of vehicle rated ECM, and other similar electronics. Only ECM that take 0 CF of space can be installed into the armor itself. ECM units of up to 2 CF can be installed as optional backpack units (at vehicle cost). Yes, this does mean that ECM for powered armor is going to be obscenely expensive.

	<u>ECM Level Cost</u>		
<i>Security ECM:</i>	1	1	50,000¥
Security	2	2	375,000¥
<i>Military ECM:</i>			
Military	1	4	4 M¥
Military	2	5	48 M¥

## POWERED ARMOR AND MAGIC

Simply put, any suit of powered armor is treated as a vehicle in regards to magic. This means that the Wrecker spell can be devastating. It also means that the pilot is relatively immune to magic, including beneficial magic, until the armor has been "cracked" open.

## POWERED ARMOR AND WEIGHT

Strictly speaking, powered armor is quite clearly heavier and larger than any normal armor. Actual size of the armor is up to the type and sculpting, if any, and should be handled by the GM and the player (if applicable). The issue of weight and encumbrance is almost as simple. While worn, powered armor has no effective encumbrance. The rules for the Powerhouse frame all ready take into account encumbrance and it's own lack of speed.

As a general rule, the weight of the armor is not going to be an issue. However, in those situations where it might be, general guidelines follow.

Warlord powered armor weighs three times what the unpowered armor would (i.e., Bod 5+Full Heavy(15)=20kgs \* 3=60kgs). Hercules and Mercury powered armor weighs four times as much as the unpowered armor, and the Prometheus weighs five times as much as the unpowered armor would (the above example would weigh 100kgs).

## POWERED ARMOR OPTIONS

There exist several standard options that are available for any powered armor chassis.

**AEGIS TACTICAL SYSTEM:** Available for any type of heavy armor (even the security variants), the

Aegis is the bleeding-edge of onboard tactical computers. Not only is it BattleTac compatible, it also functions as a full function level-1 Tactical Computer, with the pilot gaining full benefits. As if this wasn't enough for Fuchi or the pilot, all the onboard integrated systems can be controlled via the Aegis. This means everything from climate control to sensors to integrated weaponry can be controlled by the pilot using the Aegis.

In order to use the integrated devices, the pilot must be linking with the Aegis and the armor via a datajack. In addition, to actually gain the full benefits of the Tactical Computer, the pilot must also have an Encephalon rating 3 or 4. Other pilots gain half (rounded down) of the benefits of the Tactical Computer. In addition, because the pilot is mentally controlling the various systems, he gains a flat +3 to Initiative while in the powered armor.

The encephalon grants its benefits due to taking over some of the simpler background tasks, allowing the main processor to focus on other things. In addition, it also grants a far more intimate relationship between armor and pilot, which borders on rigging.

COST: 676,000¥

INSTALLATION TARGET NUMBER: 16

**ESCAPE HATCH:** In some instances, when a chassis has lost all power, instead of reverting to a neutral state (in which it functions as standard armor), it locks the armor into place, effectively freezing the armor and the pilot. With this option, at least the pilot has a chance of escaping alive. Carefully contrived and placed explosive bolts will open up the back of the armor, allowing the pilot to escape from his frozen power armor.

Salvaged powered armor can be repaired, at a cost of 65% of the original total cost (Repair Target Number of 12).

COST: 35,000¥

INSTALLATION TARGET NUMBER: 8

**EXTENDED POWER SUPPLY:** Essentially a backpack power supply. Double power duration.

COST: 15,000¥

**EXTENDED LIFE SUPPORT:** This is a popular option for deep-sea exploration and select space operations. This backpack mounted unit effectively supplies 12 hours of life support.

COST: 10,200¥

**EXTERNAL AMMUNITION POD:** This is an armored storage unit that stores ammunition for a gyro mount, forearm mount, or articulate mount in belt form. It stores 1000 rounds of light weapon ammunition, 500 rounds of heavy weapons, or 100 rounds of assault cannon ammo.

COST: 12000¥

**UNIT DEFENSE CHARGES:** This hardwired system is a smaller version of the anti-personnel zone concept for tanks. What are essentially shotgun rounds are placed into strategic positions on the armor, providing an incredible close-in defense. The current models cause 20D flechette damage, with an effective choke of 1.

UDCs are purchased in "volleys," protecting either the front or the back of the powered armor unit. These volleys can either be fired by the pilot directly, or can be preset for certain conditions. Presetting charges is not often done however, due to the extreme possibility of accidental discharge.

Note that each volley is not a single shotgun round that the pilot can reload. It is a collection of up to a dozen charges, which can only be reloaded by a licensed dealer or armorer.

Up to one volley for the front and one volley for the back can be purchased and installed at one time (for a total of two volleys).

COST: 8,500¥ per volley

**TRACKING DEFENSE SYSTEM:** This is similar in basic design to the UDC system. However, it is based on a whole other principle. Scattered strategically about the armor are a number of devices designed to detect lasers, microwaves, radar, and various other forms of beam energy used to track and/or target items.

Once detected, the system will automatically release an appropriate countermeasure, typically either chaff or IR smoke. The TDS comes with three charges of each type. As with the UDC volleys, these charges can only be reloaded by someone with the appropriate tools and training.

COST: 17,000¥, 1,600¥ per reload

**RIGGER ADAPTATION MODULE:** This simple device allows the rigger to link with the powered armor as if it was a true vehicle. Even without an Aegis system, all integrated systems can be controlled by the rigger. In addition, the rigger may use his Rigged reaction score.

COST: 5,300¥

## HARDWARE AND OTHER TOYS

While the Aegis system is not truly an independent form of powered armor, it is designed to incorporate and control a wide array of additional hardware, from communications to stealth modifications to integral weaponry. The following systems are available for both powered armor and standard military grade armor. Also note that these systems do not require the Aegis to function, and can be installed "naked." However, none of the Aegis advantages are gained. Costs remain the same.

It should also be noted that there are scads of items

and toys that could be integrated into armor, such as chronometers to onboard decks to flashing "eyes." All of these are available, and cost the same as the cybernetic counterpart (If applicable; if no cybernetic version, cost is as normal item.). Of course, in the end, it is up to the individual GMs decision.

## HARDWARE AND RATING COST

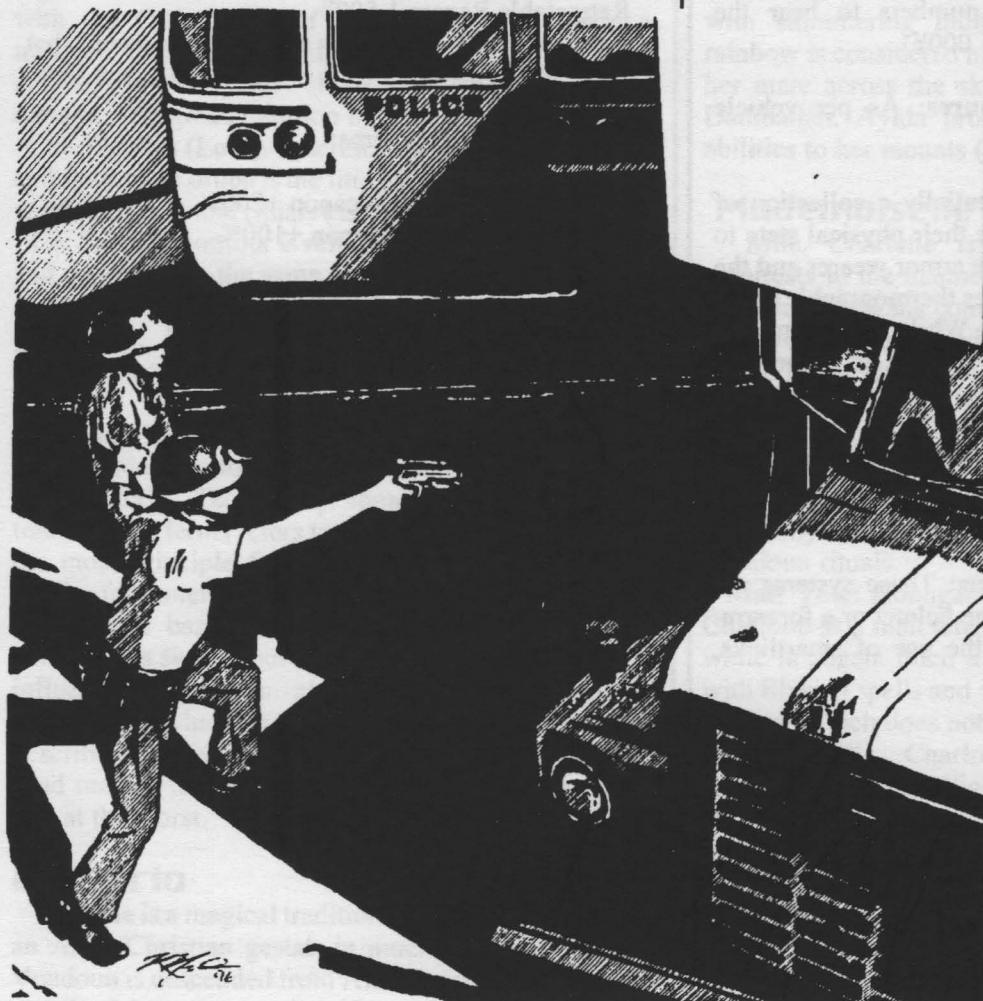
### COMMUNICATIONS and SENSORY HARDWARE:

Radio(standard, transmit/receive) 2,000¥

Telecomm System: This is essentially the portable system described in Fields of Fire, as an integral system to the armor 15,000¥

Commlink: This system allows the Aegis system to communicate and monitor a number of telephone or radio communication channels equal to the level of the commlink. Level x500¥

HUD: Orientation system, Tactical Display. Armor Status is always independent of any other HUD, as is chipjack data display. 500¥/HUD display



Helmet Hearing Systems  
Dampener 1,000¥  
High Frequency 500¥

Low Frequency 750¥  
Recorder 500¥  
Select Sound Filtering, Level 15 Level x 2500¥  
Visual Systems  
Flare Compensation 2,000¥  
Low-Light 3,000¥  
Rangefinder 2,000¥  
Thermographic 3,000¥  
Optical Magnification 1 2,500¥  
Optical Magnification 2 4,000¥  
Optical Magnification 3 6,000¥  
Electronic Magnification 1 3,500¥  
Electronic Magnification 2 7,500¥  
Electronic Magnification 3 11,000¥  
Additional Sensory systems  
Orientation System(GPS/INS) 7,500¥

### ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS:

Respirator 500¥

ChemSeal (Up to Rating 9) 12,000¥ x Rating

Climate Control: makes any temperature, from about -30F to about 115F, feel about 72F. 19,300¥

Independent Air Supply (2 hours) 4,250¥

Radiation Seal (Up to Rating 3) 19,000¥ x Rating

### SCULPTING:

Sculpting is the generic name for the process that allows armor to be reshaped. Sculpting can turn standard military armor into a classic style robot to looking like a dragon-man to old-style plate mail. All sculpting must be obviously humanoid in nature, and cannot be too extreme. Sculpting is expensive, and something of a vanity.

COST: anywhere between 50,000¥ to 200,000¥ depending on the what is desired. The more extreme, the more expensive. GMs discretion.

### STEALTH SYSTEMS:

The Ruthenium, Sonic, and Thermal systems can be damaged relatively easily, making their stealth characteristics useless or even reversing them. For

each attack that damages the wearer, there is a chance that the active stealth system will be damaged. Roll

1d6. A light wound will damage the suit on a 1, a moderate on a 3, 2 or 1, a serious on a 5 or less, and a deadly always damages the system. The end results are up to the GM, but recommended effects include reduction of effectiveness, total system failure, or even reducing target numbers by the same amount they were increased by the correctly operating system.

**Ruthenium:** The basic system provides +4 TN to all non-thermographic visual tests. Additional scanners provide +1 TN per increase. Unfortunately, this system also reduces the armor value of the armor by 2/1. 45,000¥. Additional Scanners 5,000¥ each

**Sonic:** The active sonic stealth system is designed to defeat ultrasonic sights as well as limit the aural emissions of the suit itself as it moves. It increases the target numbers for ultrasonic sights by +2 and the target numbers to hear the movement of the suit itself by +4. 50,000¥

The passive sonic system is merely the diking of joints and the muffling and silencing of joints and the feet. It increases the target numbers to hear the movement of the suit by +2. 35,000¥

**Electronic Counter Measures:** As per vehicle rules, prices given above.

**Thermal:** This system essentially a collection of small thermal sinks that change their physical state to absorb the thermal output of the armor wearer and the power system as well. It increases thermographic based visual target numbers by +4. While it requires no external energy to drive, as the sonic or Ruthenium stealth options, it can only absorb heat for up to 2 hours, after which it must vent the stored thermal energy. While venting heat, thermographic based visual target numbers are reduced by -5, and the system must vent for one hour. 55,000¥

**Target Designation Systems:** These systems are usually incorporated in either the helmet or a forearm. The smartlink systems allow the use of smartlinks, either external or internal.

Radar 50,000¥  
Microwave 12,000¥  
Laser 3,500¥  
Palm smartlink 5,000¥  
Forearm smartlink 6,500¥

#### Misc. Systems:

Armor Cyberdeck Varies  
Chipjack/Datajack 200¥  
Bug scanner(integrated into armor) Rating x 500¥  
Signal Locator Rating x 1,000¥  
Voice Mask Rating x 3,000¥  
Armor access ID scanner (PA alarm system) Rating x 1,000¥

## WEAPON MOUNTS:

Forearm Mount: This mount is capable of mounting a single melee weapon system or a single light ranged weapon system up to an SMG for the Mercury, Warlord, and Hercules systems. The Prometheus can mount up to an assault rifle.

Warlord/Hercules 6,000¥

Prometheus 15,000¥

Standard Mount 3,000¥

Tracking Mount 20,000¥

Articulate Mount 80,000¥

Gyro mount 10,000¥

Note: The Standard, Tracking, and Articulate mounts are identical to the cybernetic mounts in Cybertechnology, p. 40. The gyro mount is a Deluxe Improved Gyro mount as per the Street Samurai Catalog.

#### Melee Weapon systems:

Shock hands 500¥

Retractable Spurs 2,500¥

Retractable Razors 1,500¥

**Retractable Blade:** This is essentially a sword that retracts into a forearm sheath when not in use. 1,500¥

#### Ranged Weapon Systems:

MP Laser 3 120,000¥

Forearm weapons as weapon +200%

Mount weapons as weapon +100%

# That Voodoo You Do

## New Voudoun Magics for Shadowrun

### by Stephen Kenson

Voudoun as it is described in the Awakenings sourcebook is largely based on the Haitian practice of the tradition. There are numerous other "Voodoo-like" magical traditions that resulted from the importation of African slaves to the New World. Each of these traditions venerates different Loas, many of which are similar to the Loas of Voudoun. These traditions all use the same rules for Loas, possessions and other magic given for Voudoun in Awakenings.

#### **Santeria**

Like the slaves taken to French controlled areas such as Haiti and New Orleans, African slaves in Spanish regions combined their native shamanistic traditions with the Catholicism of their masters to create a tradition that was a synthesis of the two. Santeria comes from the Spanish santo, meaning "saint" and is a magico-religious tradition based around the worship of the Orishas (Loas). Practitioners are called santeros and santeras. Yoruba is the liturgical language, used for speaking spells and rituals (as well as a Centering skill). The Santeria honfour is referred to as a "casa" (house) and serves much the same function.

Santeria is practiced in areas with a large Hispanic population, by blacks and Latinos alike, in the Caribbean, and in Brazil.

#### **Macumba**

Common term for the Brazilian version of Voudoun and Santeria. Technically there is no "macumba" tradition, the terms refers to Candomble and Umbanda, the most principle forms of worship. Candomble is similar to Santeria, with different names for many of the Orishas based on Portuguese and not Spanish. Umbanda is similar but has some Hindu and Buddhist influences. There is also a tradition known as Quinbanda, which is similar to the Petro tradition described in Awakenings. It is considered a path of "bad magic" that is mischievous at best and outright evil at the worst.

#### **Brujeria**

Brujeria is a magical tradition that is descended from an Aztec/Christian gestalt in much the same way as Voudoun is descended from African practices. It is still practiced in and around Aztlan (Mexico) and would likely be considered "impure" by the more traditionalist Aztec magicians of Aztlan. Brujos would be useful "street magicians" in Aztlan and elsewhere when an Aztec flavor is called for in magic. Brujos

would tend not to practice Blood Magic as it is practiced in Aztlan. If they used it at all, they would use only blood drawn from self-sacrifice. Brujos channel manifestations of the Aztec gods similar to Loas including Quetzalcoatl (Damballah), Huitzilopochtli (Ogoun) and Mictalantechhtli (Ghede). They provide abilities similar to the Loas, although they are often somewhat more alien in personality.

#### **New Loas**

##### **Ayida-Wedo**

Ayida-Wedo is the female compliment to the serpent loa Damballah. She is usually depicted as a large snake with shimmering multi-colored markings and the rainbow is considered her symbol as she stretches with her mate across the sky. As the feminine aspect of Damballah, Ayida provides the same benefits and abilities to her mounts (see *Awakenings*).

##### **Mademoiselle Charlotte**

Mlle. Charlotte is unique in that she always manifests in the manner of a blanc (white) European woman. Houngans consider her to be a European loa who works with and within the Voudoun pantheon.

**Manifestation:** Charlotte is the very soul of propriety, always insisting on the correct honors and devotions and always speaking in clear and perfect French when she manifests (even if her mount does not know the language). She loves gifts of sweets, especially sweet drinks. She is a rare Loa to appear in Voudoun rituals.

**Mait Tete:** Houngans generally do not have Mlle. Charlotte as a mait tete, although she might be so to a white houngan. Such a houngan would gain +2 dice with Illusion spells and +2 dice for dealing with Spirits of Man (which does not include other Loas).

**Gifts:** Mlle. Charlotte's mounts improve their Etiquette Skills, Intelligence and Charisma.

##### **Manman Brigitte**

Manman Brigitte is consider the consort of Ghede and is the "oldest and wisest of the dead." She is often depicted as a woman whose flesh is clear, making her skeleton visible through it. Although not considered a "major" Loa, Mme. Brigitte is widely respected and worshipped for her power and wisdom. She is venerated with gifts of food and candles placed around sacred trees in graveyards.

**Manifestation:** Manman Brigitte is usually rather

cold and imperious. She carries herself like a queen and her gaze is enough to silence any voice.

**Mait Tete:** Manman Brigitte is a rare mait tete. He chosen gain +2 with Detection spells and +2 dice for magical tests against zombies of all kinds.

**Gifts:** Manman Brigitte increases her mount's Willpower, Charisma, Interrogation and Conjuring skills.

### Obatala

Obatala is one of the primary Orishas (Loas) of Santeria. He is usually depicted as a mulatto dressed entirely in white. Obatala is the orisha of purity and is opposed to all of the forces of evil. He is also the spirit of thought and protector of the weak. He is a force of peace, harmony and mediation.

**Manifestation:** Mounts of Obatala will only wear white clothing. They must remove garments of any other colors. While mounted, they become very calm, radiating an aura of peace and gentleness and speaking in a quiet firm voice.

**Mait Tete:** Those who have Obatala as their patron are often white-haired or albinos. The Orisha grants them +2 dice with Detection and Healing spells. They are forbidden to use Control Manipulations except to bring about peace and harmony. They have -2 dice with Combat spells.

**Gifts:** Manifestations of Obatala increase Sorcery and Social skills as well as Willpower and Charisma.

### Ochosi

Ochosi is one of the Three Warriors of Santeria, the other two being Eleggua (Legba) and Ogoun. He is the Orisha of hunting, also of the jungle and the healing arts. He is usually represented as a young hunter carrying a crossbow.

**Manifestation:** Ochosi is often quite rash and overconfident, mounts must make Willpower tests to keep the Orisha from rushing off into action. Mounts become very quick and energetic as well as skilled hunters and trackers when the spirit is upon them.

**Mait Tete:** Followers of Ochosi gain +2 dice with Detection and Healing spells.

**Gifts:** Ochosi grants increases to Quickness as well as Projectile Weapons, Stealth and Tracking.

### Orunla

Orunla is the Orisha of divination and time. He rarely possesses mounts other than to offer prophecies, and so has no listing for Gifts. Orunla also does not act as a mait tete. What the Orisha will do is mount a follower to offer words of prophecy or advice (always delivered in a deep male voice). This effect is similar to the Foretelling spell (see Awakenings) but far more comprehensive and complete information is provided. The gamemaster can decide the extend of the advice offered by Orunla.

### Shango

Shango is the loa of lightning and storm. He is a savage warrior who wields a double-headed axe that commands the lightning and thunder. He is also associated with guns, since their power is like that of thunder. Fire in its many forms are also associated with Shango.

**Manifestation:** Shango's mounts are often violent, full of barely restrained energy. They are lusty, loud and rude, obeying no authority but their own and given to excessive swearing and profanity. Mounts will find it difficult for Shango to do anything constructive, the Loa likes nothing more than to cause as much damage as possible then disappear before the consequences come. The mount's voice becomes deep and booming like thunder.

**Mait Tete:** Chosen of Shango gain +2 dice for Combat spells and +2 dice for dealing with Storm spirits.

**Gifts:** Shango's mounts gain Armor against fire and electricity equal to twice the loa's Force. They also gain increases to Strength and Body as well as Firearms and Athletics skills.

### Great Form Loa

Voudoun Initiates can also attempt to summon Great Form Work Loa spirits (work loa are described in *Awakenings*, p.127). In addition to the abilities described for work loa in *Awakenings*, Great Form work loa have the additional powers of psychokinesis and manifestation, allowing them to take on physical form. Generally the form of a work loa of this type is a reflection of one of the greater loa, usually the mait tete of the summomer. Thus the spirit might appear as Ogoun the Iron Warrior or in the great albino serpent form of Damballah. Great Form Loa have also been known to appear in various animal forms, including strange combinations of human and beast. Uses the statistics of the Spirits of Man to calculate a great form loa's manifest attributes.

### Non-Voudoun Possessions

Voudoun (and its related traditions) are not the only magical traditions that describe spirit possessions such as the Loa perform. Western and Eastern magical traditions also have stories of spirit possessions by totems spirits, god-forms and the like. Gamemasters may wish to include the occasional appearance by a non-Voudoun spirit possession in their Shadowrun games. Such as possession might be a European witch "drawing down the Moon" and manifesting the power of the Moon Maiden or a berserker being "mounted" by Wolf or the Wild Huntsman. It is recommended that these manifestations remain rare and uncontrollable (by the player characters, at least) so as not to diminish the uniqueness of Voudoun in the campaign.

# Daddy's Little Girl

by Vicki Kirchoff-Martin

Loki shook the Seattle drizzle off his coat as he stepped inside Lexi's Tavern. He glanced around, blue Zeiss eyes searching the smoke filled dive for a familiar face or an empty booth.

"Hey, do I get to come in?"

The silver haired girl grasped his hand as she pushed past him. "I think I see Turbo over in the corner."

Loki sighed and let her lead him to the back of the bar. His hair was silvering as well, but silver from age and worry as opposed to cosmetic modifications. He wasn't particularly old for a normal, but for a shadowrunner, he was positively ancient. His daughter, Suzy was a constant reminder of that age.

The tall, black rigger stood. "Hey, Loki, what's up, mon?"

Suzy slipped beside him. "Hey, Turbo, no hello for me?"

that long, my friend?"

Lilith's green eyes smiled up at him, her brown hair greying even faster than his. The snake shaman had run with him longer than anyone except his late wife, Isis. She smiled. "I remember sitting with her when she was just five."

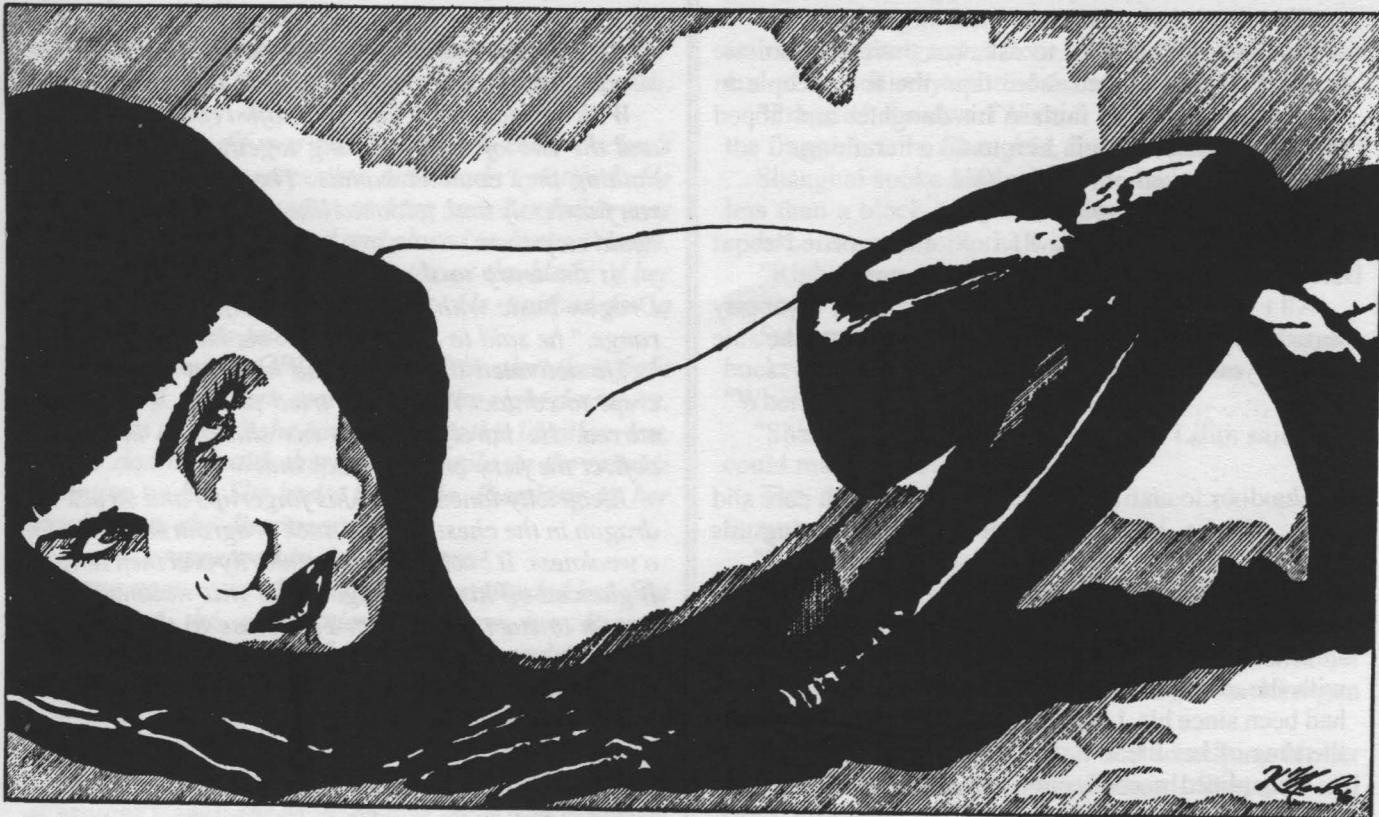
Duster, the dwarf, gave Suzy a critical look. "Didn't know your kid was this age, Loki. Man, you're older 'n spit. What's she doin' here?"

Suzy patted the dwarf on the head. "I'm tagging along, Duster. Dad said I could."

He glared at Loki. "This ain't a kid's show."

"I'm not a kid."

"She's a decker," Loki said in her defense. "I've taught her everything I know and I've taken her along with me on some practice runs. She's never going to learn how to be combat efficient unless she gets



His eyes widened. "Little Suzy?"

He took her hand and spun her around. "Look at you, you all growed up now."

He gave her a hug. "You and Isis made yourselves one pretty little girl, Loki."

"I'm not little anymore, Turbo," Suzy said. "I'm eighteen."

Loki felt a warm hand on his shoulder. "Has it been

combat experience, and I can't think of a group I'd rather have her get that experience with."

"She gettin' a cut?"

Loki glanced over at Shanghai who seemed to have slipped out of the shadows. "Not this time. We'll see how she does. You can't lose. You get two deckers for the price of one."

"We're breaking into MCT, Loki," the oriental razor-guy said. "It's not gonna be a wiz-bang run. Can she shoot at least?"

Suzy held out her hand, showing off her smartlink and he frowned. "Just because you've got the hardware, doesn't mean you've got the skill."

"Mom taught me to shoot," she said. "I can hold my own."

"Relax, Shanghai," Turbo said, sitting down and leaning back. "Isis was wanna de best street sams in de biz. We've run with bigger liabilities and de old man said she's not getting a cut. I don't see no reason not to take her along."

"She is Isis' daughter as well as Loki's," Lilith said. "I think we owe her a chance."

"Yeah, well I think we owe it to her ma not to get her killed," Duster said.

"Doesn't anybody care what I want?" Suzy growled. "You're talking about me like I'm not even here. Look, guys, I'm a decker, not a kid and if you won't let me run with you, I'll find someone else who will."

Loki put a hand on her arm. "I've already spoken to Anathema, and she said as long as we didn't ask for more cash for the second decker, it wouldn't be a problem."

He knew it was a lot to ask, but there was no one in the world he trusted more than the four people in front of him. He had faith in his daughter and hoped they had enough faith in him to take her along.

"I say we take her," Turbo said.

"I agree," Lilith added.

"Frag it," Duster said. "If Loki ain't worried about her fraggin' up the run, it's okay with me."

All eyes turned to Shanghai. The oriental razor guy shrugged. "It's your funeral, kid. You just better be able to hold your own cause I ain't no baby-sitter."

\* \* \*

The door to an office in the MCT research core slid open. "We're in!" Loki announced, holstering his pistol.

Suzy ducked in behind him with Lilith and the two samurai at her heels. "Havin' fun?" Duster asked.

She was breathing hard, but her face was glowing with the excitement of her first real run. As long as it had been since his, Loki knew the look. She was having the time of her life.

He spliced a connection for them from the desk terminal. "You ready?"

She'd already jacked into her deck. "Slot it and run, Dad."

*They stood beside each other next to the I/O triangle. He shuddered when he saw the chrome elf icon. In spite of the time he'd spent trying to talk her out of it, she'd insisted on the flaxen-haired chrome street samurai in her mother's image. His own version of an old twentieth-century comic book representation of the*

Norse god, Loki looked almost clumsy beside her.

*"I've run this system before," he told her, "and have a pretty good idea of where we're going and what we're after. I want you to stay out of contact range unless I tell you otherwise."*

*"How can I learn anything if I can't get close?" she asked.*

*"Hey, it beats the hitcher jack," he said. "You follow my lead and do what I say. This is not a training run, this is for real. MCT IC is not like what you've dealt with before and there are four people on the outside who are counting on this going without a hitch. Understand?"*

*"I guess so."*

*He led her up to the first node. "This one's green. We know where we're going and won't have to back track. Sleaze it."*

*He let her approach to contact range and waited as the chrome elf slipped by the node IC. It remained still. He breathed a sigh of relief and followed.*

*Even though he'd helped her write all of her programs and had designed her deck himself he was still amazed at the ease in which she seemed to move in the matrix. He knew he hadn't caught on as quickly. He also knew that it was only his experience that kept him ahead of the drek hot young deckers corporations hired.*

*With the map of the quickest, safest route to the CPU and the two of them working together, they ran into nothing they couldn't handle. Their Sleaze programs ran flawlessly and, it looked like there was nothing that could stop them.*

*At the entry to the CPU, he recognized the Fuchi Dragon basic with an oriental motif. "Stay in sensor range," he said to Suzy, "and let me handle this."*

*He activated the Sleaze and his icon vanished. He crept to contact range and tried to pass. The dragon stirred. He barely brought his shield up in time to deflect the fiery breath. "Jack out!"*

*Electricity lanced from his fingertips and struck the dragon in the chest as his Attack program searched for a weakness. It backed off momentarily and then lunged. It glanced off his shield again. He was waiting for the system to start screaming. This close to the CPU, the operator would likely shut down the entire thing and he'd be dumped before he had a chance at the information they were looking for.*

*The dragon was a much more immediate concern. His electricity struck it again as it lurched forward. It raked claws down his chest. He screamed in pain he knew his body would be feeling as well. His next attack was enough to finish it.*

*"Daddy, you okay?"*

*He ran a systems check as the chrome elf crept to his side. "I jammed the dragon so there's no alert. We should be clear."*

*"I told you to jack out."*

*She frowned, "But if I had, there's a good chance*

they'd have shut the system down and the whole run would have been fragged."

He sighed, knowing she was right, and followed her into the now unprotected CPU. He could feel the sluggish response time that meant his meat body had taken a beating. At least the worst part was over. "You know what we're looking for, right?"

She nodded, closed into sensor range with the nearest system, and then stopped. "Someone else is here."

Pain lanced through him and he could feel his control slipping away. "Suzy!"

"Lilith, grab him!" Duster shouted as Loki's body began to convulse. "Shanghai, pull Suzy out."

"No," the older decker moaned. "Let her finish, she's almost there."

Lilith soothed him. Shanghai's hand was on the cord. Suzy's eyes were blank, her fingers flying across her keyboard. "It would be a shame to waste all this work, if the kid can do it."

Duster grumbled. "All right, but watch that fraggin' screen and yank her if she gets into any trouble. Loki'd have our asses if we let her get fragged."

He glanced at the older decker laying limp in Lilith's arms. "How's he doing?"

"He'll live," she said. "I can't tell any more than that."

He sighed and squatted down beside the view screen. "Come on, Suzy, do it."

The chrome elf was still behind the other decker's icon. So far, the corporate man hadn't noticed. He seemed more interested in making sure her father was gone. She drew her sword and closed to contact range.

The decker screamed as she thrust the blade of her combat utility through his chest. He writhed for a moment and then faded.

She scanned the CPU, turned off the alert their fight had caused, and then searched for the right datastore. There was so much she could do from this location, but, as her dad had said, there were people on the outside counting on her. She had a job to do. Punching up her destination, she disappeared...

... and reappeared in the datastore.

Rows upon rows of file cabinets surrounded her. She pulled out the chipreader that was her Browse program, opened one of the cabinets, and began to search. Numbers spun through the reader until she was satisfied that what she was looking for was not there and then chose another.

Finally, she found the file and was all set to download it until she realized how big it was. Her deck didn't have enough storage space. Her dad probably intended to download the file himself since his deck had more memory. That meant she was going to have to delete almost half of her own files in order to free up enough space which would leave her practically defenseless. If another corporate decker showed up, she'd be hard pressed to defend herself.

"But I'm just going to jack out after this," she

assured herself.

She began deleting. The Medic program went first, followed by her Browse and then her Attack. She emptied her reserve memory of all but her basics and then started downloading. Her chrome feet tapped in impatience as the data slowly made its way into storage. Her deck was a far cry from her father's and was only slightly speedier than turtling.

When it was done, she glanced quickly around and jacked out.

"We're outta here!" Duster shouted.

Shanghai grabbed Suzy's arm while she was still disoriented and hauled her to her feet. He slung her deck across her back and pressed her Ingram into her hand. "How's Dad?" she asked.

"Lilith's carrying him. Is the system on alert?"

"Not yet," she said "but it will be since I iced the decker that got dad."

"Let's go, then," Shanghai said.

They darted into the empty hallway. Duster took the lead and Shanghai brought up the rear. Suzy adjusted the strap on her deck to keep it flat against her armored jacket and kept her gun ready. The way out was not going to be as easy as the way in.

Duster brought them to a sharp halt just inside the stairwell of the ground floor. A squad of guards at the end of the hallway spotted them and started firing.

"Frag it!" the dwarf hissed. "We can't go back up the fraggin' stairs. Shanghai, find out where Turbo is."

Shanghai spoke softly for a moment. "He says he's less than a block away and gunning the engine as we speak. He wants to know where we want pick up."

"Right here would be nice, but I doubt he could manage."

Suzy was helping Duster return fire. The Ingram bucked in her hands as she sprayed the hallway. "Where do we go?"

"Shanghai, this is an outside wall," Lilith said. "We could make our own exit."

The samurai nodded. "Lilith, take Loki upstairs. Suzy, you go with them."

"I don't need to be protected."

"Well, I need you to protect \*them\*," he snapped. "Now, shut your fraggin' mouth and do what I say."

She changed clips and helped Lilith carry her father up the stairs. She could hear Duster's light machine gun and wished she was back home.

Shots rang out from the hall and something hit her hard in the back shoving her forward. She spun and fired, moving back toward the stairwell. "Lilith!" she cried. "Tell them to hurry. We've got guards up here too!"

She took cover in the stairwell, her fire keeping the heads of the guards down. She could hear the shaman chanting and hoped that whatever she was doing would happen fast.

There was an explosion downstairs and she heard Shanghai shouting for them to move. Lilith carried her

father, and Suzy followed, keeping a steady stream of fire behind them as they headed out the still smoking hole in the building wall.



Turbo had pulled the van up beside the building and the side door was wide open. His grin was wide as he saw her emerge. "Welcome to shadowrunnin' Suzy."

\* \* \*

Suzy walked alone into Lexi's Tavern and found her way to the back corner table. Turbo, Shanghai and Duster were already there. She slipped in beside the rigger. "So, how is it?"

"Not good, Suzy," Turbo said handing her a small chip case. "De bullet went all de way trough de memory board. I saved de persona chips but de deck and alla de programs is fragged."

"Great," she sighed.

"How's your old man?" Shanghai asked.

"Better," she said. "That decker fragged up his nervous system pretty badly and he had a stroke. The doctors say the paralysis is only temporary, but he'll have to learn how to use his muscles all over again."

Duster sighed. "No more decking, huh?"

"No more decking."

"Speaking of which," he said pulling out two credsticks. "One for you and one for Loki."

She took them. "But I thought we were only getting one cut?"

He smiled. "Well, we talked it over and you earned your share, Suzy. That was nice work in there. Isis woulda been proud a ya too."

Lilith slid in beside her. "Just like your father is. I spoke to him after you left. He is very proud of what you did. He asked me to give you something."

She gently placed a well worn case on the table. "I convinced him that you'd take good care of it."

Suzy flipped open the case and gasped at the sight of the deck.

"It's your father's first one," the snake shaman told her. "Of course, it's not as good as his new one, but it has been modified to be better than the one you had. You're going to have to start supporting the two of you now. He's got a long way to go towards recovery."

Shanghai put a hand on her shoulder. "We told Anathema about the run. She said she thinks she can set you up with a group of your own."

"Not dat we wouldn't love to have you, Suzy girl," Turbo said. "Its just dat you're not in our league yet. You will be some day, dough."

"You need anything, kid," Duster added. "You just let us know."

Suzy smiled. "Thanks. I can't wait to install my persona chips into this baby. I promise, I won't let any of you down."

She bounced from the booth and out the front door. The runners watched her go. "Amazing," Lilith sighed. "We've been around long enough to create a second generation of shadowrunners."

Turbo squeezed her shoulders. "Lets hope dey live long enough to make a generation of dere own."

## CAFE BENEDICTION

Full Bar, Live Music, Dazzling Mana, and our Doors Never Close at...

# A Change For The Better

## A look at shapechanging in Shadowrun

### by Stephen Kenson

In most Shadowrun campaigns, magician characters will have a fairly "standard" assortment of spells, including some of the old stand-by "utility spells" like Manabolt, Heal and Armor. However, there is a virtually limitless range of possible spells in the Shadowrun magic system and many effects are overlooked by magician players. One of these effects is shapeshifting.

There are two primary spells for shapeshifting: shapeshift and critter form. Critter form is just a limited version of shapeshift that only allows the magician to assume a single animal form. The text of the shapechange spell is reproduced below for reference (*Grimoire*, p.132):

#### Shapechange

This spell transforms a voluntary subject into a normal critter, though the subject retains human consciousness. To determine the shapechanged critter's Physical Attributes, consult the Critter Statistics Table, p.233, *SRII*, adding 1 to the critter's Base Ratings for every 2 successes the caster generates. Also, increase the critter's Reaction Rating by the subject's Intelligence Rating, to reflect the human mind controlling the animal form. Mental Attributes remain the subject's own. This spell does not transform clothing and equipment. Magicians under this spell can cast spells, but cannot fulfill geasa or use Centering Skills requiring activities that the animal shape cannot perform, such as speech.

**Type:** Physical **Range:** Limited **Target:** Willpower

**Duration:** Sustained **Drain:** [(F/2) +2]S

#### Limits on Shapeshifting

There is no mention in the spell of any limit of size or other abilities for the critter form beyond the fact that it must be a "normal" critter (that is to say, a non-Awakened "real world" animal). To quote Madame Mim from Disney's *Sword in the Stone*, "no purple crocodiles or pink dragons allowed."

However, there are still many "normal" animal forms that can be quite powerful. An elephant must have Strength and Body well into double digits, not to mention what the abilities of, say, a blue whale must be (easily Strength 40 or more). There is also the possibility of turning into a very tiny form, like an insect. What about microscopic life-forms like amoebas or Merlin's trick (again from *Sword in the Stone*) of turning into an invisible germ?

Obviously some sort of limit on the forms that magician can assume is probably needed to keep things

under control. A simple rule is to limit the change based on the Body of the desired animal form (which is also a rough guideline as to its mass), say no more than plus or minus three to the magician's original Body score. This would allow most magicians to assume animal forms with mass a few times greater than human, such as a horse, but nothing as massive as an elephant or whale.

Likewise, the magician is not allowed to reduce Body to lower than 1, and so cannot assume the form of anything much smaller than a rat. Of course, with the attribute bonus generated from the spellcasting test, it could be one tough rat!

Naturally, the gamemaster can vary these limitations as needed for the campaign. Perhaps he feels that the larger forms are not too great of a concern because of their limited utility (you can't become an elephant in an enclosed space nor would you want to become a whale on land) and only very tiny forms are restricted.

Another question to consider is whether or not the shapechange spell allows a character to assume (meta) human forms as well as animals. This is probably better covered by the mask spell, but it might be allowed by some gamemasters.

#### Animal Fighting

The ability or attribute used by a character in animal form to make attacks is also not given by the spell description. Would the human-oriented skill of Unarmed Combat even apply to fighting in the form of an eagle or a tiger?

Normal animals use their Reaction as their attack score and I would suggest that characters in animal form would do the same. This makes a shapechanged combatant formidable, because the animal Reaction is increased by the Intelligence of the subject of the spell, but this seems to well represent the terrible power of a creature like a bear or tiger controlled by a human intellect. This seems to reflect the fantasy-genre fiction where shapeshifting magicians who are quite combat-inept become fearsome fighters in animal form. Keep in mind that all tests (including attack tests) made in animal form may still suffer a target number penalty from sustaining the shapechange spell.

Alternately, the gamemaster might require a specialization of Unarmed Combat for animal forms. This could even be a different skill for each species or even each type of animal! This is generally very restrictive, but it is a good way to limit the combat abilities of a shapechanger, if desired. If Unarmed Combat skill is required, then the shapeshifted

character can also default through the Skill Web to Quickness or Reaction, which will likely be fairly high in the beast form.

## You can't take it with you

One of the limits of the shapechange spell given above is that it doesn't affect clothing or equipment. Anything the character is carrying or wearing will either fall to the ground or might possibly even be destroyed by the shapeshift if the character doesn't bother to remove his clothing first.

This can be a nuisance (not to mention embarrassment) for a shapeshifter. Armor, in



particular, can be lost when changing into a very large form and there is always the possibility of the character becoming entangled in their clothing when assuming certain animal and (especially) avian forms. There are several possible solutions for this problem.

The first, and simplest, is to create a version of the shapechange spell that is a physical spell and transforms anything that the character is wearing (but not carrying). The character's clothing disappears when the spell is cast and reappears when they assume human form. The clothing might be displaced into astral space, be changed along with the character (see below) or perhaps it is a mystery that magical theorists are still working on.

An option within the existing system is for the magician to stack a Fashion spell (*Grimoire*, p.131)

along with the shapechange spell to transform his clothing into a collar, leg band or something similar on the person of the animal form, then reverse the spell upon changing back to human form. This allows the shapeshifter to carry "compressed" clothing along with him. The drawback is that the multiple spellcastings can become very draining, especially if multiple changes in form are called for.

A third option is to allow magicians to spend karma to "bond" items much in the way they bond foci. This allows the items so enchanted (and only them) to change shape with the character. A normal set of clothes might cost a point of Karma or two, while something like a weapon or other item might cost more. If this option is used, magical foci should automatically have this ability as part of their normal bonding cost.

Character with cyberware who are the subject of a shapechange spell need not worry. Although cybernetics are not "living," the character has expended Essence to tie those implants to his personal aura, allowing them to change form along with the rest of the character. It is worth noting that the various bonuses granted by cyberware do not apply while the character is in animal form but return to normal when the spell ends.

## Once through quickly

One thing a shapeshifting magician might want to do that is common in the source literature is change directly from one form to another without assuming human form. This is common in shapeshifter's duels and similar situations. For example, a magician in seagull form flying over the ocean spots something faint under the water. She wants to assume dolphin form to dive down and take a look. Does she have to re-cast the shapechange spell? There are several options.

The gamemaster could require that a character assume human form (i.e., drop any existing shapechange spell) before assuming another form. This would prohibit changes like the one described above, and the magician would have to dive into the water in human form, then become a dolphin.

The gamemaster can allow another shapechange spell to be cast while in animal form. This assumes the magician has no geasa or fetishes required for the spell that the animal form does not have or is not capable of. For example, if the magician needed to speak to cast the spell, she would have to be in the form of a parrot—not a gull—to pull it off.

Lastly, the gamemaster can allow a single shapechange spell to grant multiple changes of form, with the same number of successes as the original casting. Whether or not these additional changes cause any additional drain is up to the gamemaster. This option makes shapechange a highly flexible spell and should be considered carefully before being adopted.

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## Going over to the beast

A common danger of shapeshifting in the source literature is losing one's own personality in the mind of the animal form. The longer the shapeshifter remains in animal form, the more likely they will become the animal in mind as well as body.

If the gamemaster wants to include this possibility, a shapechanged character must make a Willpower test every hour against a target number of 4. A failed test reduces the character's Intelligence by 1. When the character's Intelligence drops to the normal level for that animal (as listed in the critter descriptions) the character mentally becomes that animal and the shapechange spell is effectively Quickened at the force it was cast at (at no Karma cost to the magician, unless the gamemaster is especially cruel).

The only way the character can assume their normal form again is if the shapechange spell is dispelled or overcome in astral combat by another magician. This ends the spell and returns the character to normal with no adverse effects.

## A changeling primer

Listed here are some useful forms for a shapechanging magician to keep in mind.

**Combat:** Most predatory animals are useful combat forms, especially tigers, bears, and wolves. Gorillas have great Strength and Body as well as the ability to handle equipment when directed by a human intelligence. A shark form in the water can be frighteningly effective.

**Disguise:** Any breed of domestic dog is good for this in the city as are rats, pigeons and other critters that are omnipresent in the city.

**Fliers:** Bird forms of all kinds are useful for aerial scouting and spying. Pigeons and seagulls are common enough in most cities as not to be noticed by anyone, while falcons and eagles have extraordinary distance vision and also make useful combat forms. Bats are an excellent aerial form at night, providing natural sonar. Owls make a good nighttime form as well.

**Poisonous:** Some small forms can be highly effective in combat because they are also poisonous. This includes most poisonous snakes like cobras and vipers.

**Runners:** Swift land animals like deer, antelope and cheetahs are superb for fast pursuit or escape, especially in wilderness areas. They are less effective in the metroplex where smaller forms like rats and domestic cats allow one to disappear more easily into dark alleys and small nooks and crannies.

**Swimmers:** Useful aquatic forms include otters, seals and small cetaceans like dolphins. Shark forms can be very frightening and strange ones like manta rays and jellyfish (especially poisonous ones) have their uses as well, and don't forget electric eels.

## Lycanthropic Adepts

A specialized "shapechanger" adept would make an interesting character to play. The character (most likely a sorcery adept) would specialize in spells like shapechange and mask that allowed him to assume different forms and the various support spells (such as fashion, mentioned above). The character might even be unaware of his abilities and believe himself to be some kind of "were-creature" instead of a normal magician.

## The Shapeshifter's Duel

Another common occurrence from the source fiction (remember *Sword in the Stone*?) is a duel between magicians using the shapeshift spell. While the duel is in effect, each magician assumes a series of shapes, trying to use superior knowledge and cunning to overcome his opponent.

Each participant cast shapechange normally at the start of the duel. During the duel, the magician may not use other magic, but may assume a new shape as a Simple Action. Each form change requires a new Force Success Test, but does not require an additional Drain Resistance Test (this may vary if the gamemaster places additional limits on shapechange). Remember any limits on different forms that the magician may assume.

This sort of combat exists in numerous traditions (most of them shamanic). At the gamemaster's discretion, any magician who knows the shapechange spell may participate in such a duel. Indeed, it would be interesting to see such a conflict played out between two magicians of different traditions.

## Exclusive Sustainment Modifier (Optional Rule)

This spell modifier is similar to the normal Exclusive modifier for spell force (SRII, p.133). Exclusive sustainment has the same requirement that the caster may not cast any other spell or perform any other magical activity while this spell is being sustained. It is different in that the modifier is not applied to the spell's Force, which remains at the learned level. Instead, the caster is allowed to expend a Free action each turn for the sustainment of the spell and takes no distraction modifier for sustainment. Therefore, the caster can act normally while sustaining the spell, with the exception of not being able to take any other magical actions while sustaining.

# Sister Savior

by Chris Hussey

"Hi. This is Terri. Well, okay, maybe it's just my telecom, but it's pretty close to being me. Not to say that I'm boring, but I am kind of a busy person and--I'm babbling again aren't I? Sorry. Anyway, leave your message after the beep and I might just call you back if you're cute enough." The image of Terri smiled pleasingly and froze as the beep sounded.

"Terri, hi this is Bruce. Look, I've got the files you were looking for. It was pretty tough, but I got them. I'm going to send them over now, because I know how bad you wanted them. I'm really looking forward to Friday. See you soon."

The telecom emitted a series of beeps and tones indicating that the file transfer was not only successful, but complete. With that, the connection broke.

On the nearby couch, a form slumped down, head hitting the soft, naughavelvet cushion. A hand draped down to the floor, an empty chip case falling from slender fingers. A small gurgle.

\* \* \*

Greg burst from the alley, shrapnel of masonry chasing behind him. His legs pumping, Greg continued across the empty street and into the connecting alleyway. He could hear the footfalls getting closer, and knew their aim was improving, if their last shots were any indicator.

He had no idea where the frag Angel was. As far as he could be sure, the damn illusionist could be right next to him and he'd never know it. Greg sprinted past a dumpster, but stopped and turned back. Using all the strength he could bring forth, Greg turned the dumpster out into the alley, hoping to slow his pursuers. Loud pings of lead against steel answered him and sent Greg moving again, stopping only briefly to pick up a half-empty liquor bottle standing in his path. He wasn't sure if the dumpster would put any more distance between him and the quickly approaching

elves than running would have, but when he burst from the alley and nearly ran into a trio of Rapiers, complete with more go-ganglers, Greg knew his answer.  
\*Should've kept running.\*

Being nearly struck by the elf's bike brought Greg to a stop. He had precious few seconds to asses his situation. His pursuers numbered three and would be

on him in moments. The three bikes that nearly ran him down were blocking off his escape route. With few options and not enough time to consider them, Greg charged the bikers.

\*I wish I had my sword.\*  
Greg thought to himself leaping aside as the elves drew their pistols. Greg reacted first.

Feeling his magic coalesce around his hand and the bottle, Greg flung it at the nearest ganger, striking him



square in the face, and shattering the bottle. The blow threw the elf from his bike.

Greg dived for the ground and tucked into a roll. Shots rang past Greg's head as he rolled to his feet and charged the last two.

He easily slammed into one of the go-gangers, throwing both himself and the elf off his crotch rocket. Greg and his foe hit the hard, dirty pavement and rolled into the corner of the brownstone which rested across the street. Both did their best to slam fists and knees into the other as they struggled for superior position. Greg braced his back against the brick wall and pushed the elf off.

As the ganger lept to his feet, Greg readied himself into a defensive stance. \*My magic just never flowed without a weapon in my hand.\* The ganger, a small, bloody cut running down his cheek, slowly approached Greg, ready to fight. A shout from behind stopped both men.

"That's it!" shouted the third ganger behind Greg and his opponent. "Till, back off, we've got him covered." the other elf ordered.

Without looking back, Till shouted. "Frag that! This breeder's mine."

"Not this time. He fragged with stuff he shouldn't have. He's gotta answer." the other elf shot back. A chours of soles on asphalt announced the appearance of the three elves that had been chasing Greg originally. They stopped by the elf that was arguing with Till.

Greg's eyes darted around for something, anything, to get his magic functioning. Then he saw it. On the elf, Till's, bike, in a makeshift sheath, rested a billyclub. The upper third of the shaft was studded with razor blades angling upward, a vicious homemade concoction. \*There it is.\*

While the one elf kept his shouting match with Till, who had now turned away slightly, Greg leaped at the chance. Using what magic he could muster, Greg lunged for the club. He knew the other three gangers were watching him, but Greg didn't care. With a weapon in his hand, he was unstoppable.

It worked. As Greg yanked the club free, and turned toward Till, the other elves in the group finally began to shout warnings. Greg knew they were too late for Till. As the elf turned around, Greg was on him, swinging the weapon. He'd never held the club until this moment, but in his grip it felt like an old friend. Powered by his magic, the weapon sliced clean through Till's face with deadly accuracy, a contrail of blood spraying behind.

As Till spun backward, howling in protest, Greg ducked low and rushed toward the elf previously arguing with Till. Greg had noticed that he was the only other elf showing a weapon at the moment, and knew he was the greatest threat. The elf proved fast too. Chipped for sure, thought Greg.

The elf brought his submachinegun to bear. Greg darted left as the muzzle flashed and barked, bullets flying just centimeters over his head. Greg came up on

the elf, and resting the club against his forearm, he thrust upwards.

The elf let out a gurgle as the blades cut through the underside of his slender chin. The force of the blow, and the hook of the razor blades, picked the elf up and sent him flying backwards. Before he hit the ground, the other elves had rushed Greg.

Greg let a cackle escape his lips as the go-gangers closed into range. One by one, Greg demonstrated the power of his magic when combined with a weapon. A scream of agony, a spray of crimson, and the tear of synthleathers signaled the dowing of another elf. Only moments after it began, it was over. All the elves, members of the Ancients, were sprawled out on the asphalt of the sidestreet, groaning and clutching their wounds.

Greg surveyed the carnage briefly, then went for the Rapier that once held his newfound weapon. Holstering the club, Greg mounted the bike and went to key the ignition.

"Looking for this?" came a voice.

The club was quickly in Greg's hand once more as he turned in the direction of the voice. Off to Greg's left stood a rough, muscled ork. In his hands rested a massive assault rifle, one Greg couldn't identify in the dim light of the overhead streetlamps.

"Who the frag are you?" shouted Greg.

A small halo appeared over the ork's head, and the rifle transformed into a long-bladed ornate rapier. Greg immediately recognized it as his sword.

"Angel, you fragger!" Greg protested.

The ork smiled, and approached Greg. As he did, the image of the ork dissolved into wisps of smoke. It was replaced by a human in black denim and a long coat. The halo remained.

"You here the whole time?" Greg asked as he started up the Rapier.

Angel took a seat behind as he handed Greg the sword. "Yup. Don't worry, I wouldn't have let them finish you."

Greg shook his head in disbelief. He rested the sword across his lap, gunned the engine of the cycle and he and Angel fled into the night.

\* \* \*

A sea of colors swirled past her vision, spinning madly out of sight. Vertigo crept in as spirit forms screamed toward her, their mouths gaping with sharp, jagged teeth. A thrumming in the back of her senses erupted as the forms flew past. She felt adrift in the color sea, helpless of her situation. Then it changed.

Slowly, the colors slowed and changed. Forms began to take shape into familiar objects. A lamppost, the telecom, the edge of her couch.

Teri's sense snapped to attention and she found that she was moaning. How long she had been doing that she had no idea, but she promptly stopped. Sensation

returned to her fingers and hands, and she gripped the couch. Slowly she rose.

She hit the floor quickly, retching out the entire contents of her insides. By the volume of things rushing past her teeth, Teri was sure some internal organs were swimming in the growing puddle on the floor. Teri groaned again as the vomiting ceased. Her

Teri grapsed about for her sink clock. Finding it, Teri forced her eyes open and checked the time.

\*Oh drek. 10:00. I'm dead.\*

\*\*\*

Greg and Angel sat casually on the ratty couches that made up Derrin's "Conference Room." Greg hated doing this. Derrin never liked to meet face to face to discuss jobs. He always preferred to do it through the closed circuit telecom in his building. Indeed, Greg didn't know the entire layout of the three story brownstone, and he'd never seen more than the conference room, emergency flop room, and bathroom. He had no idea where Derrin lived in the building, if he even lived in it.

What bothered Greg more was the fact that Angel thought the whole set up was wiz. It had to do with hiding reality and deception and evasion, all the things Greg knew the illusionist got his rocks off about.

Derrin's dwarven features flickered a bit as he spoke. "Good job on the last run against the Ancients, you two. Greg, Angel tells me you dispatched six on your own. I knew you had talent." Derrin smiled.

Greg raised his eyebrows in speculation as he glanced at Angel. That damn halo still hovered above his head. Greg noticed that Angel was still retaining his human form. Greg was convinced that Angel was a human, but with the illusionist, he could never be sure.

Derrin cleared his throat, and continued speaking. "You can pick up payment on your way out. I'm working on a couple of other jobs for the both of you. I'll contact you when I know more." Derrin promptly



left hand, dripping with the expelled contents of her stomach, groped for the chipjack just to the side of her left eye. She fumbled for the chip in the slot, droplets of vomitus making the chip slippery. Hooking her nail on the edge of the chip, however, she yanked it from the jack and cast the chip into the barf pile.

Teri wobbled to her feet and zig-zagged to the bathroom. The harsh glare of the incandescent light forced her eyes shut. In the self-induced blackness,

killed the com screen, dimming the room substantially. Greg turned and look over at Angel.

A copy of the illusionist rose from the couch, and stepped away, leaving the real Angel behind. Then again, Greg couldn't tell if the real Angel had gotten up and left the copy behind. Both forms smiled at Greg's confusion, and the Angel on the couch got up and merged with the standing Angel.

Greg again shook his head and sighed. "You're good, Angel. That's for sure."

Angel nodded. "Yup. Look, I've got things to do, so I'll catch up with you later, okay?" Angel's form promptly vanished into thin air.

Greg smiled. He'd seen this trick before. He stared hard at the space from the couch to the rooms exit. Just barely, he saw the outline of Angel's body. It hadn't moved one inch. "After you," Greg spoke.

\* \* \*

Teri fumbled with the door as she burst into her apartment. Ripping off her coat, Teri threw it toward the couch, just missing the now dried mound of vomit that had went uncleansed when she left this morning.

The day had not been kind to Teri. Besides being late for work, and feeling like drek the entire day, her supervisor, Alan, had decided that it was Teri's day to suffer. He didn't let up on her once. He dug up every mistake Teri had made over the past year (an extensive list, to her shock), and being late today, hadn't helped her case one bit.

Then the worst news: Bruce didn't show up for work today. Bruce never missed work. Even when he was half-dead, he always showed up. If Bruce wasn't there, something was seriously wrong. Teri was sure she knew what that something was.

Teri raced into her room and fumbled through her vanity. \*I've gotta have one here somewhere!\* She thought, as she flung objects left and right. Not finding what she was looking for, Teri ran across to Greg's room. She rifled through his desk until she found her prize.

Taking the blank optical chip, she slotted it into her telecom and access her downloaded files. Finding the files Bruce had sent, she copied it over to the chip and erased it from the com's hard disk. It wasn't until after she had taken the chip and hid it in her bra that she noticed the note on the com. It was from Greg.

Teri quickly read it: \*Hi Sis. Nice present on the carpet. I'll let you clean that one up. Not feeling well I take it? See you soon. Greg.\*

Teri's eyes started to water. Greg was always so good, while she had always blown her life away. Now she was in real trouble. If Bruce wasn't at work, it meant to Teri that they had got him. And she knew that he would talk. She had to get out of here and fast.

Teri raced back into her room and began to fill a backpack with clothes. She secured her Beretta into the

back of her waistband after she had finished the packing.

Terri knew she had to get out of her right fraggin now. The data on that chip could get her in real trouble, maybe even dead. Not only at work, but in the real world.

Terri scooped up her bag, grabbed her purse, praying her cell phone was still in there and ran to the door.

It opened before she could turn the knob.

Terri gasped as she looked up at the person standing in the doorway. It was Greg.

"Where are you going in such a hurry?" Greg asked. Terri burst into tears and hugged her brother.

"What the hell!"

"Greg, I'm in real trouble." Terri dragged Greg into the room and closed the door.

Greg knew what it was before she even began her speech. Her chip problem. Terri had been an on-and-off chiphead for years. Greg had tried to get her help; checking her into every rehab, detox and self-help program around. It never really worked for long. Now Greg knew. His years in the shadows told him right away. She had gone too far this time. Some dealer had pushed her over the edge. Made Terri do his dirty work for him, so she could get her next fix. When he heard the words roll out of Terri's mouth, she only confirmed what he'd guessed.

Greg cursed himself inside. Blame laid into him like a hammer, making him feel guilty, for everything he'd not been able to do. He'd been too busy with his own life to really help her. Greg fought back. \*It's not all my fault. I can't blame myself totally for her problems. Neither of us have been able to stop her problem. Not anymore.\*

Greg stood up, and went towards his room. "Pick up your stuff, Terri. We're going to get you outta here."

"Huh?" Terri stifled her sobbing.

"This is it, Terri. I've had enough. I'm sick of your habit, and it's over, starting now."

Within moments, Greg emerged from his room, with a small pack and his sword case in hand. "Let's go." he said solemnly.

Then the door burst open.

Greg's reflexes took over. He kicked Terri to the ground, and threw himself backwards over the couch. Staying down, he opened his case.

"Don't be a hero now!" shouted a voice. "We only want the girl."

Greg saw an ork moving around to cover him. The ork's eyes widened when Greg stood ready. A pair of knives whizzed through the air, and found purchase in the ork's gun arm. The man howled, as he reached for the knives.

The couch in front of Greg erupted in a cloud of upholstery and stuffing as the ork's partner unloaded at Greg. As he grabbed his sword, Greg felt his magic surge into his hand. He lept at his enemy. Greg closed the distance between himself and the human in an

instant. The man was ready, obviously chipped, he targeted Greg as he came down. Praying, Greg went low and to the side as he landed. The burst of lead flamed just above Greg's right shoulder. Taking a small step back, Greg sliced up with his sword in a vicious stroke that laid a deep gash in the man from his hip to scalp. A trail of blood followed the arc of Greg's sword.

As Greg spun to assess the situation, he saw Terri still lying on the floor, apparently unhurt. The ork had just

needed to regain his sword.

"Terri, run!" Greg shouted as he closed with the two metahumans.

Terri scrambled to her feet and raced out the door. Greg descended on the two remaining foes he faced, and with two solid blows from the pommel of his rapier, brought blackness to their minds.

\* \* \*

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removed the last knife, and was trying to pick up his submachinegun.

Then Greg dropped to his knees.

The pain was incredible. Greg felt something slamming his brain around, acting as if his head would explode. He tried to deal with the pain, but found the effort nearly impossible. \*Magic.\*

Greg looked around and found the source of his pain. An elven female stood just out of reach of Greg's sword. He tried swinging at her anyway, but realized that during her attack, he had dropped his blade.

The elf drew her hand back to let fly another spell, but Greg acted first. Fighting through the fog still floating through his mind, Greg grabbed the closest thing to him, Terri's backpack, and chucked it at the elf. The bag struck her square in the stomach, producing a loud oomph, and disrupting the elf woman's magic.

Acting reflexively, Greg secured his last throwing knife, and launched it at the ork. Again, the knife found its home in the ork's arm. This bought Greg the time

"You're going to be okay for now." Greg spoke softly to Terri, who simply stared straight ahead, numb. Greg continued. "I've got enough saved up that we can get you out of Seattle and into the UCAS proper. I'm going to come with you, and make sure you get everything going okay." Greg patted Terri on the leg. "You'll get through this."

Greg moved away from his sister and approached the elven male sitting across the room.

"How is she?" he asked.

"Not too bad." Greg paused. "Angel, I'm going to have to go away for a while, you know."

Angel nodded. His form slowly changed shape to an asian human with spiked hair, and chains. "I know. Derrin won't be too pleased. You're one of his best operatives."

"He doesn't pay me like I am."

Angel chuckled. Greg had related Terri's whole story to his partner, and Angel understood the situation. Greg had also told Angel he knew who Terri's dealer was and that he was going to make sure that he didn't deal again.

"You're making a big mistake going after this guy." Angle tried to convince his friend.

Greg shook his head. "Jackson's got to know that he can't keep ruining lives like this. His BTLS would have killed my sister. Spirits knows what she stole from work to have a hit team come after her. I'm not sure if I even want to know."

"Still, man. Drew Jackson is a big-ass chip dealer. Trying to mess with him by yourself is suicide. You won't even get close before you're cut down."

"Watch me." Greg said with resignation.

Angel stood, once again shifting his form into an ork in a business suit. "I will." he spoke.

"Huh?" Greg said in surprise.

"You'll die alone in there, man. I can't let that happen. I'm going with you."

Greg stared at his friend and partner for a long time. He looked back once more at Terri, who had finally succumbed to sleep. Turning back toward Angel, Greg spoke.

"Okay. Let's do it."

# Hardware: Guns

## by Brian Downes

>>>>[Killing is our business. Here are a few far-flung pieces of hardware I've had experience with. I've had the technical data and some of the ad hype lifted for your continued education.]<<<<

--Manowar (10:37:21/02-04-57)

### Ares MonsterHammer

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

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

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

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

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

--Jackrabbit (02:48:04/02-06-57)

### Ares Dervish Machine Pistol

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

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

\*Accepts only caseless ammunition.

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

--Jackrabbit (02:57:21/02-06-57)

>>>>[Too damn bulky and hard to conceal. Why give up my Ingram Smartgun?]<<<<  
--Flashfire (03:19:55/02-06-57)

### Smith & Wesson .44 Magnum 2054

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

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

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

>>>>[Just the thing to punch straight through the fragger.]<<<<

--Slaughterhouse Five (17:15:02/02-11-57)

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

--Crosby (21:07:23/02-05-57)

### Colt Centurion

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

Colt is proud to bring you this big brother to the massively successful Colt Manhunter. The Centurion features the

same integral laser sight, but chambers the heavier 11.25mm!

>>>>[The classic more bullets vs. bigger bullets debate....]<<<<

--Jackrabbit (03:05:04/02-06-57)

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

--Flashfire (03:24:07/02-06:57)

## Fichetti Arms Spider

Type: Light

Mode: SS

Damage: 6M

Cost: 350¥

Availability: 5/2 days

Conceal: 6

Ammo: 6(cy)

Weight: .9 kg

Street Index: 1.2

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

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

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

--Flashfire (03:30:45/02-06-57)

## Fichetti Arms Basilisk

Type: Heavy\*

Mode: SS

Damage: 9M

Cost: 450¥

Availability: 4/2 days

Conceal: 6

Ammo: 5 (cy)

Weight: 0.65 kg

Street Index: 0.8

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

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

>>>>[Finally! A belly gun that's worth a damn! I'd prefer a semiautomatic, though. . . .]<<<<

--Slaughterhouse Five (17:21:53/02:11:57)

## Ingram Saracen

Type: SMG

Mode: SA/BF/FA

Damage: 6M

Cost: 2,200¥

Availability: 7/4 days

Conceal: 3

Ammo: 25/25(c)

Weight: 2.5 kg

Street Index: 3

Legality: 3G

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

The Saracen also features an integral laser sight.

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

carry an extra clip.]<<<<

--Matador (12:11:10/02-04-57)

## Griswold Gravedigger

Type: Shotgun

Conceal: NA

Mode:SA/BF

Ammo: 20(c)

Damage: 8S

Weight: 4 kg

Cost: 1200¥

Street Index: 4

Availability: 14/2 weeks

Legality: 3G

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

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

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

>>>>[Blamblamblamblamblamblamblamblam!]<<<<

--Senorita Arma (02:10:55/02-05-57)

>>>>[Thy Kingdom Come.]<<<<

--Slaughterhouse Five (17:25:12/02-11-57)

>>>>[Oh, please. . . .]<<<<

--Snow Crash (17:26:02/02-11-57)

## Griswold Wombat

Type: AR/Shotgun

Conceal: NA

Mode:BF/FA|SA

Ammo: 25(c)/5(m)

Damage: 7M|8S

Weight: 2.8 kg

Cost: 975¥

Street Index: 2

Availability: 6/4 days

Legality: 3G

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

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

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

--Jackrabbit (03:11:56/02-06-57)

## SKS Mk. VII Carbine

Type: Carbine

Mode: SA

Damage: 7S

Cost: 650¥

Availability: 4/2 days

Conceal: 2

Ammo: 25(c)

Weight: 2.5 kg

Street Index: 0.6

Legality: 6F

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

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

>>>>[I see these damn things everywhere on the streets. . .]<<<<

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

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

--The Devil in Georgia (18:23:40/02-08-57)

## Muller P-410

Type: Shotgun

Mode: SS

Damage: 9M

Cost: 525¥

Availability: 7/1 week

Conceal: 3

Ammo: 6 (cy)

Weight: 1.13 kg

Street Index: 1.2

Legality: 4E

A small-bore shotgun pistol. Imported from Germany.

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

--Manowar (10:43:37/02-04-57)

>>>>[Did you blow him away??]<<<<

--Gabe (10:45:07/02-04-57)

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

--Manowar (10:51:11/02-04-57)

## Enfield Enforcer

Type: Shotgun

Mode: SA

Damage: 10S

Cost: 725¥

Conceal: 4

Ammo: 4(m)

Weight: 2.75 kg

Street Index: 1

**Availability:** 5/2 days

**Legality:** 4F

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

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

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

--Crosby (21:18:14/02-05-57)

>>>>[Crosby, you own two.]<<<<

--Flashfire (14:21:32/02-07-57)

>>>>[Hey, I didn't say I didn't like it. (It looks good in my trunk next to my .44 Magnum <grin>.)]<<<<

--Crosby (11:06:37/02-10-57)

## Firestar Tactical Assault Weapon

Type: Cannon

Mode: SA/BF

Damage: 14D

Cost: 6,600¥

Availability: 16/20 days

Conceal: NA

Ammo: 20(c)

Weight: 10 kg

Street Index: 4

Legality: 2H

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

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

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

--Jackrabbit (03:26:09/02-06-57)

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

--Flashfire (14:59:49/02-07-57)

>>>>[How about sneaking in instead?]<<<<

--Crosby (11:11:56/02-10-57)

# On the Nature of Magicians in the Sixth World

## by Mike Bodary

[The following is an excerpt from the lecture *On the Nature of Magicians in the Sixth World*, given by the renowned Anthropologist of Magical Science, Professor Edward Windsor, to a freshman class at MIT&T.]

Magicians. Once, that word might have evoked images among the populace of men in dark coloured robes with magic wands who poured over ancient tomes in their crumbling stone towers. Today, the average person immediately conjures up images from *The Odd Coven*, a popular vid show.

>>>>[Not everyone grew up with European legends of Merlin, Anglo.]<<<<

--Eyes-of-Hawk (08:29:38/05-06-57)

>>>>[Oh, get off your proverbial high horse and read more than the first paragraph. I swear, it's almost as if people have this built in button. They just start ranting when you push it. You trigger them off by saying something and they just go on and on an-]<<<<DATA CORRUPT:::::PARTIAL DATA LOSS 19.71 Mp<<<<

>>>>[You're welcome.]<<<<

--SY800R D00D (hE:IP:mE/mO-mM-y!)

Today, though still scarce, magic has moved from the realms of fantasy and into reality. The essence of magic, and therefore its inability to be properly defined, lies in its inherent "dynamicness"--constantly changing and altering over time and with use.

>>>>[Students in my Magical Fundamentals 1101 class will not receive credit for answering questions with this new-age "Dynamic Theory" hogwash. Windsor does not have the Talent and is ill-qualified to categorize those who do.]<<<<

--Dr. Eldrich (19:14:38/05-07-57)

>>>>[Obviously an old-school Hermetic and on tenure. Does MIT&T have any Shaman? How do they survive in the sterile atmosphere?]<<<<

--Burning-Sky-at-Dawn (19:40:12/05-10-57)

>>>>[Word of mouth to get the right teachers and avoid the wrong. Also, never put your personal beliefs on exams. We have to stick together in this sort of environment. Oh, yes. Eldrich is on tenure.]<<<<

--Khuugar (20:54:59/05-10-57)

Shaman are the more obvious embodiment of this theory. Hermetics, though they might appear rigidly set

in their methodology, are also dynamic. Each mage is different in their own way and has their own style and visualization for creating what, to the untrained eye, would appear to be the exact same effect. Allow me to use a more base example to explain.

A particular mathematics class has ten students enrolled. At the end of the semester, they all take the exact same test with the exact same questions and everyone makes a perfect score.

>>>>[Uh.... Er.... Uhm....]<<<<

--Jitters (20:57:21/05-10-57)

Everything is perfect. There are no variations. Right? Wrong! The teacher of the class can probably differentiate between the students' handwriting.

>>>>[Handwriting? How the frag old is this Windsor guy?!?]<<<<

--The Mad Scribbler! (21:02:02/05-10-57)

Even beyond that, the teacher might also be able to tell which paper belongs to each student by techniques alone. Do they have particular quirks? Did Billy take a certain shortcut? Does Bob like to change all his fractions to whole numbers? Does Mary like to use decimals rather than fractions? Does Joe like to solve the equation for a single variable even though a formula would do? Does Elaine like to include units throughout the problem rather than just insert them at the end? Styles become more and more apparent when the problem becomes extremely complex. This same fundamental concept applies to the magic arts as well as the seemingly rigid field of numbers.

>>>>[AIE!!! MATH!!!]<<<<

--X. E. Decimal (02:12:15/05-11-57)

Not only are there minute variations between individual magicians' styles, there are even greater differences between those of different traditions--Hermetics and Shamanics, to pull out the more common variants. What are some of the more concrete differences between these two?

>>>>[Do tell! Do tell!]<<<<

--Mumbojumbo (04:12:15/05-11-57)

The most notable difference in magical style is in their relation to the Astral Plane and the Entities who reside there. Hermetic magicians are able to exert control over astral manifestations which they call Elementals. Shaman claim to be able to call upon the inherent astral entities that reside in particular locales.

>>>>[Entities? Spirits. C'mon! You can say it!]<<<<  
--Byte (08:53:51/05-11-57)

Most hermetics are capable of enlisting the aid of multiple astral entities. Using time and ritual equipment, they summon a single elemental at a time to serve them.

>>>>[There are ways to conjure more than one elemental at once.]<<<<  
--Boom-Boom (10:32:24/05-11-57)

>>>>[Yeah, right.]<<<<  
--Agua (12:48:29/05-11-57)

Shaman, while they can only have one full astral entity under their power at a time, are capable of summoning the entity in a relatively short time.

>>>>[Some of us like to be more traditional about it and take our time. Good things come to those who wait.]<<<<  
--Tree-Shaker (14:20:00/05-11-57)

>>>>[Full astral entity?]<<<<  
--Atheist (14:46:51/05-11-57)

>>>>[Windsor is differentiating between watchers and nature spirits/elementals--even though watchers are fully astral creatures since they only exist on that plane. Watchers are nothing to simply blow off, especially when they travel in packs or are used for surveillance.]<<<<  
--Spook (15:48:17/05-11-57)

A further difference between the two lies in the ways in which they associate with these entities. Hermetics will order their elementals to do their bidding. Elementals, in turn, tend to follow these orders by the exact letter of the word--often with detrimental results.

>>>>[Frag, yeah! I saw this one mage tell her earth elemental to stop a car. It manifested inside the vehicle which, after gaining a few tons of weight, didn't handle all too well. It bottomed out, threw sparks all over, and smashed right through a bus, a few other vehicles, half a dozen pedestrians and most of a store front. It stopped. Eventually. Hope she didn't want to take the occupants alive.]<<<<  
--Fly Boy (18:09:46/05-11-57)

Shaman merely ask--not order--the astral entity to accomplish a task. These astral entities differ from elementals in that they almost appear to have personalities. These entities also follow the "spirit of the word" rather than "lawyering" over the orders like

an elemental might.

>>>>[He said it! He said it! Spirit! Spirit! Spirit! Muahahaha!]<<<<  
--Byte (08:59:27/05-11-57)

>>>>[It's easy to understand why a nature spirit follows orders better than an elemental. Since a shamanic magician controls one nature spirit at a time rather than three or four or five like a hermetic, the shaman is able to concentrate more on what he is doing and gets better results.]<<<<

--Prof. Osing (19:12:42/05-11-57)

Hermetics, for the most part, conduct sorcery through formula and create through experimentation. Shaman use rituals which vary widely between individuals and often just "do what feels right", creating new effects by inspirations they claim to receive from their totemic animal.

>>>>[Animals? I know a guy that claims to follow the spirit of the sea.]<<<<  
--Ishmal (20:01:08/05-11-57)

>>>>[shaman not follow always animals totems. follow the spirit of a thing. some follow rat. some follow sea. some follow sun. me follow the spirit of seattle.]<<<<

--thumper (22:39:12/05-11-57)

>>>>[I sense a troll in our midst's. That's fascinating, though. I'd never thought of a city having the ability to have such a spiritual resonance that it could function as a totem.]<<<<

--Hunter (23:13:18/05-11-57)

These are only a few of the readily apparent differences between these two mainstream magical traditions. Obviously, with the dynamic workings in this field, there is always opportunity for enterprising young students to pioneer new grounds and astonish their teachers. The field of magic is still young and, I believe, will easily be going through a great deal of growth throughout the rest of this century.

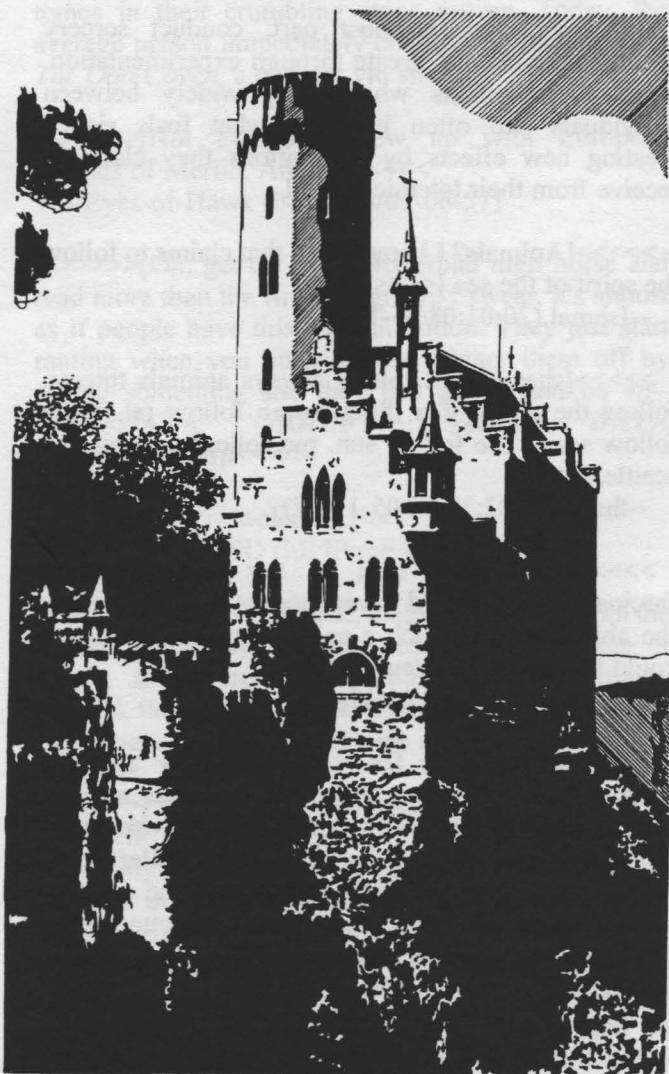
>>>>[Magic is Evil! Deny the evil powers spawned within the body lest ye be cast down into the pits <<block delete 10.41 Mp>>>>>

>>>>(You're welcome, again.)<<<<  
--SY800R D00D (hE:lP:mE/mO-mM-y!)

# Headache: Little Boy Lost

by Chris Hussey

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.

## Tell it to Them Straight

Read the following to the players as they are either running away from some recent action or just making

their way down the street.

*"You're certainly not in a charitable mood. Hell, you're hardly ever like that, but now you've just been waylaid by this kid who's begging for your help.*

*You can tell right out that this kid is no street regular. He's still clean, and doesn't have the lingo. To top it off, he's not armed. You're about to show your charity by shooing him off without any violence, until he mentions Boeing. Claims he's the son of Elias Naughton, the second-cheese in their research division.*

*Yeah, right. Then he whips out a pic of him, dad, mom and the two sisters at a company picnic. Okay, so maybe he isn't lying...*

## Behind the Scenes

The boy is telling the truth. Jason Naughton is indeed the son of Elias, who is the vice-president of the Aerospace Research division of Fed-Boeing, under Reynard Carnet. Jason will tell the runners that he is running for his life. Jason will claim that his family was hit by some sort of commando team that attacked their limo while they were pulling off the interstate.

Jason was able to escape, but the rest of his family was not. Jason will play up the "commando team," making them sound quite fierce and deadly. He doesn't really remember how he was able to escape, he just knows that it was during the confusion, when the bodyguards were mixing it up with the commandos. That was three days ago.

The 10-year old does not know much more than that. However, he wants to find his family. He also wants the runners to do it. When the runners start to protest, or put up some resistance, Jason will become nervous and say that whoever took his family will be on his tail, and that he is honestly scared. He is also quite hungry, and asks the runners to take him to a restaurant to eat.

Elias and the rest of the Naughton family were taken by a group of shadowrunners, much like the characters, who were hired by Craig Felton at Fed-Boeing. Craig works for Elias, but has been taking a lot of heat from him lately at work. Craig knows that this isn't looking good for a promotion, so Craig had Elias and family taken away for a while so he could step in and handle the crisis of Elias' kidnapping. Craig hopes this showing of leadership will impress upper management and lead to that promotion.

While the shadowrunning team Craig hired is tough, they are by no means the military-class commandos Jason is making them out to be.

## At the Restaurant

Once seated and eating (the runners have to pay for him), Jason will again ask the runners to help find his family. He will use the "We'll pay you a dreckload of cash when you rescue my dad..." excuse to lure the runners in.

Also at the restaurant, the runners will discover that someone is indeed tailing Jason. Throughout the meal, observant runners will notice that someone may be watching them. Eye contact is made several times with someone at another table, but only casually. If that doesn't raise suspicions, it will happen again, and again, until finally the person tailing the runners will get up and hurriedly leave the restaurant to go report to his fellow runners.

### Howard

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	Armor
4	7(10)	4(7)	3	5	4	4.3	7(12)	3/0

**Initiative:** 12+1D6

**Threat/Professional Rating:** 3/2

**Skills:** Firearms 5, Unarmed Combat 6, Stealth 5, Negotiation 3

**Cyberware:** Smartlink, Reaction Enhancer +4

**Bioware:** Muscle Augmentation 3, Enhanced Articulation

**Body Index:** 3

**Gear:** Ares Predator [Heavy Pistol, 15 (clip), SA, 9M, w/2 extra clips, integral Smartlink], Armor Clothing (3/0), Pocket Secretary

Howard is an elf who was part of the strike team that swiped the Naughton family. He has been assigned with finding Jason and bringing him in. While a good fighter and tracker, Howard is a little weak willed.

## Catching Howard

The runners will probably go after Howard when they see him leave the restaurant. It is important that they catch him, as they will need to interrogate him.

It will take a bit of arm-twisting (and other fun techniques), but Howard will eventually squeal. He will tell the runners that he was involved with kidnapping the Naughton family and will tell the runners that they were taken to a small estate just north of Seattle in Council lands, which Howard will provide directions to, if asked. He will also tell the runners the general composition of the other members of the strike team. He is unsure of their total strengths, as he was only recently hired by the other runners and hasn't become that familiar with them.

If Jason overhears any of this information, he will really try and put the pressure on the runners to rescue his parents and sisters, promising nearly everything he owns (and doesn't) to get them to take action.

## Heading Out

Once Jason has the runners convinced that they

should rescue his family, it's time to head out to the estate. The runners are of course, free to stop by and pick up any gear they choose to help them. Jason will protest at every possible delay, worrying that his family might either be moved or worse.

Once the runners reach the border, they will have to deal with the customs and border guards, who will obviously be suspicious of any heavy weaponry. It is up to the gamemaster how difficult he wishes to make this part of the scenario, as crossing the border into any other country is always tricky.

If the runners try crossing the border at a non-standard point, they are free to. Again, this can be as difficult as desired, and the runners could run into any problems from squads on patrol to roving paranimals.

## The Estate

The estate which the Naughton family is being held at lies 75 klicks to the Northeast of the Seattle/SS border in Cascade Crow territory. It is in a rather secluded region, away from the main roads, and even the side roads.

The estate is actually nothing more than a cabin set on a small lake, and is used as a summer retreat by its owners (Craig Felton is not the owner). Currently, however, it is housing a group of shadowrunners and their captured victims.

## Approachment

A long, winding, three kilometer, dirt driveway leads up to the cabin, and is the only access by road. The cabin sits on a small patch of open land before meeting the lake and being engulfed by trees on the sides.

The runners can approach from any direction they choose, but face the following threats:

## By Road

If the runners come right up the road, they will obviously have to be stealthy. The team that captured Elias has set up several security measures. Astrally, the open grounds are patrolled by three Force 3 Watchers. Two function as Attack Dogs, hitting any unfriendly astral presence. The other runs back to alert Danor, the shamanic adept who conjured them.

In the physical world, the grounds are guarded by the two trained Hell Hounds that are the prized possession of Randy, the massive troll of the group.

### Force 3 Watchers (3)

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

**Initiative:** 23+1D6

**Threat/Professional Rating:** 2/4

These spirits appear to be rabid dogs with huge maws of glistening teeth.

### Hell Hounds (2)

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
5	4x4	5	-	4/4	4	(6)	6

**Initiative:** 6+3D6

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

**Attacks:** 6M as Melee Combat = Reaction

**Powers:** Enhanced Senses (Improved Hearing and Smell, Low-Light Vision), Flame Projection, Immunity to Fire

**Weaknesses:** None

These hounds have been raised and trained by the troll, Randy. A mutual affection exists between the three, and Randy will not take the hound's deaths lightly if he discovers it.

Also milling about the outer grounds is a Force 4 Forest Spirit that was summoned by Danor to augment the external security.

### Forest Spirit

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
8	2x2	8	4	4	4	(4)A	2

**Initiative:** 12(22)\*+1D6

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

**Powers:** Accident, Concealment, Confusion, Fear, Guard

\*Reaction while in Astral Space

This spirit will concentrate primarily on keeping the runners occupied, trusting the Watchers and Hell Hounds to call up the rest of the team.

### By The Woods

The runners may try and sneak up to the cabin through the woods. This is a sound plan, but there may be problems. Lurking through the woods are a few paranimals that will try and prey upon the runners.

The primary predator lurking around the dark woods is a Bandersnatch. This creature is quite hungry and has been watching the cabin for hours. He has set a crude pit trap to snare an unwary victim. The gamemaster is free to place this trap where he wishes to best screw up the characters actions. Damage for the pit trap (the bottom of which is filled with large rocks) is 6M Stun. Impact armor will help.

### Bandersnatch

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
9	3x4	8	-	2/4	4	(6)	4

**Initiative:** 4+3D6

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

**Attacks:** 8S as Unarmed Combat = Reaction

**Powers:** Adaptive Coloration, Mimicry

The bandersnatch will use his powers to deadly advantage, trying to first mimic a certain character, luring another runner away. He will then use his coloration power to hide and await the kill.

Also lurking about, hunting the Bandersnatch is a group of Leshy. They have been silently stalking the Bandersnatch for weeks in an attempt to eliminate the beast. They now feel they have a their chance.

### Leshy Hunting Party (5)

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	Armor
4	4x4	3	4	3	3	(8)	3	0/1

**Initiative:** 3+2D6

**Threat/Professional Rating:** 3/2

**Attacks:** The Leshy employ a variety of weapons. Spears (3M), clubs (4M) and some vine ropes. The wielding Leshy have an Approximate Skill of 4 for whatever weapons they wield.

**Powers:** Confusion

The Leshy have also set several traps throughout the wooded region surrounding the cabin. Trip wires, spiked pits (8M), and snares abound. The Leshy are not above negotiating with the runners, if they can communicate with them. This Leshy party can speak a very broken form of English, and would be better off communicating via magical means.

### By The Lake

If the runners can figure a way to approach the cabin via the lake, the may find the going a bit easier, but not much. A rather playful Free Water Elemental has taken this lake to be his lair. He will allow the runners to pass through, but first demands payment. The gamemaster is free to make the payment anything he wants, but may simply have the runners recover the power focus that the is currently owned by the magician in the cabin. If the runners have obtained the focus, they need to simply throw it in the lake.

If the characters take the power focus for themselves, they may have just made a powerful enemy.

### Free Water Elemental (Force 6)

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
12	10x2	10	10	10	10	(6)A	9

**Initiative:** 19(29)+1D6

**Threat/Professional Rating:** 5/4

**Attacks:** 10S Stun as Unarmed Combat = 6 dice

**Spirit Energy:** 4

**Powers:** Engulf, Manifestation, Movement, Human Form, Personal Domain, Sorcery

**Weaknesses:** Vulnerability (Fire)

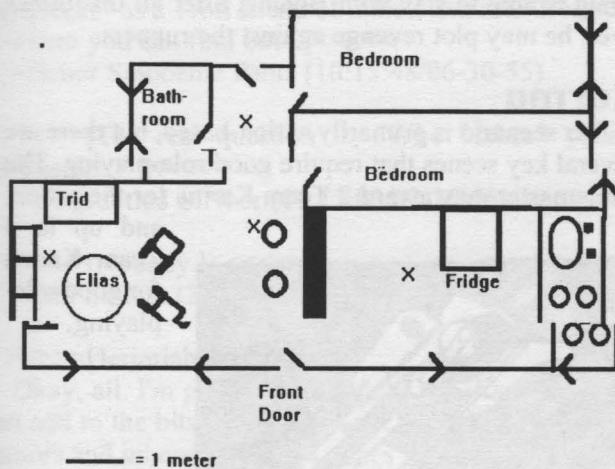
**Spells:** Ice Sheet 4, Chaotic World 4, Mana Bolt 4, Stunball 4

This elemental, who prefers to be called Drench, has chosen this lake as his Personal Domain, and will gladly take on the runners if they choose to attack or ignore him.

## The Cabin

The Cabin is a simple one-story building with a couple of rooms. The remainder of the team is in here, holding Elias and his family. They are out in the open, and will prove to make the coming battle interesting.

The X's on the map designate where the team members will be when the runners make their way into the cabin (assuming they haven't tripped off any other security, of course). The gamemaster is free to place which team members he chooses in these places to suit his interests best.



### Randy - Troll

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	Armor
9(12)	3	10	2	3	3	1.25	3(5)	5(6)/3(4)

**Initiative:** 5+2D6

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

**Skills:** Firearms 7, Unarmed Combat 5, Stealth 3

**Cyberware:** Smartlink, Wired Reflexes 1, Bone Lacing (Titanium)

**Gear:** Ares Predator [Heavy Pistol, 15 (clip), SA, 9M, w/2 extra clips, integral Smartlink], Ares Alpha [Assault, 42 (clip), SA/BF/FA, 8M, w/ 2 extra clips, Gas Vent II Recoil Compensation, integral Smartlink; Grenade Launcher, 8 (mag), SS, offensive, 10S (-1/ meter)], Armor Jacket (5/3)

Randy is a tough bruiser who likes to mix-it up in any form. His titanium-laced bones allow him to deliver devastating melee blows (13M).

### Drent - Human

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	Armor
6	6(8)	5(7)	3	5	5	5	5(12)	5/3

**Initiative:** 12+4D6

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

**Skills:** Firearms 5, Armed Combat 5 (Knives 7), Dual-Knife Fighting 6, Stealth 3

**Cyberware:** Smartlink, Wired Reflexes 3

**Bioware:** Muscle Augmentation 2

**Body Index:** 1.6

**Gear:** Ares Predator [Heavy Pistol, 15 (clip), SA, 9M, w/2 extra clips, integral Smartlink], HK-227

[SMG, 28 (clip), SA/BF/FA, 7M, w/ 3 extra clips, Gas Vent IV Recoil Compensation, integral Smartlink], 2-Cougar Short Blade Knives w/Dikote [7S], Armor Jacket (5/3)

Drent is the speed of the group. He is always on the edge and jumpy. He moves like lightning and often acts before thinking. Drent loves close-up fighting, as he thinks he looks cool with his dual knives flashing with blinding speed.

\*Note: Drent will fight using the 'Second Weapon in Melee Combat' rules from Fields of Fire, p. 81, if the gamemaster allows.

### Tinse - Elf

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	Armor
3	7	4	6	6	6	5.1	6(9)	5/3

**Initiative:** 9+1D6

**Threat/Professional Rating:** 4/2

**Skills:** Firearms 4, Negotiation 6

**Cyberware:** Reaction Enhancer 3

**Gear:** Ares Predator [Heavy Pistol, 15 (clip), SA, 9M, w/2 extra clips], HK-227 [SMG, 28 (clip), SA/BF/FA, 7M, w/ 3 extra clips, Gas Vent IV Recoil Compensation], Armor Jacket (5/3)

Tinse is the negotiator of the group. She uses her female elven beauty and elegance to its fullest when speaking. She also sometimes acts as the defacto leader of the group.

### Danor - Human

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	M	R	Armor
5	6	5	2	6	6	6	6(8)	6	5/3

**Initiative:** 6+1D6

**Threat/Professional Rating:** 4(7) w/ spell lock/4

**Skills:** Firearms 4, Unarmed Combat 6, Sorcery 6, Conjuring 6, Magical Theory 4

**Gear:** Ares Predator [Heavy Pistol, 15 (clip), SA, 9M, w/2 extra clips], HK-227 [SMG, 28 (clip), SA/BF/FA, 7M, w/ 3 extra clips, Gas Vent IV Recoil Compensation], Armor Jacket (5/3), Power Focus 2, Combat Spell Focus 3, Spell Lock (Personal Combat Sense w/3 extra dice)

**Spells:** Personal Combat Sense 4, Detect Enemies 4, Death Touch 6\*, Manablast 5\*, Mana Bolt 5\*, Spirit Bolt 4\*, Power Bolt 5\*, Fire Bolt 4\*

\*denotes spell as being exclusive.

Danor is a Wolf shamanic adept, and quite deadly in combat. While Danor prefers to use his spells, he feels just as much at home using his more mundane means of dealing with his opponents. Danor is generally regarded as the leader of the group, though he often bows to Tinse's better judgment.

### Tactics

Danor and the rest of the team are hoping no one will come after them, but fear it might happen since Jason

has not been found yet. They do not want Elias or any of his family to become injured as that was not part of their contract. Although they may try and use the Naughton family as shields to stop the runners.

Negotiations will be tricky if it comes to that. Tinse will try her best to explain the situation and work out some sort of agreement. If that means fragging Craig over, so be it. Not until they get paid, of course.

Negotiations could easily break down if a stalemate goes on too long. Danor or Drent could lose control and just start attacking. It may prove impossible to salvage the situation after that.

### Wrapping It Up

If the runners are able to defeat or work out some agreement with Danor and his teammates, reuniting Jason with the rest of his family, Elias will be quite pleased. He will be happy to offer the runners fifty thousand nuyen total for the rescue. The runners can

feel free to bargain him up, if they have no taste at all. The gamemaster is encouraged to make this as difficult for the runners as possible.

### Where to Go From Here

If the runners prove virtuous in rescuing Elias, and conducting themselves in a professional manner, it will not go unnoticed by the executive. Elias is not above using shadowrunners to safeguard certain projects, and he may find a ready team in the characters.

The runners may also attract the attention of the Craig Felton, and not necessarily in a good way. If Craig is able to stay with Boeing, after all this blows over, he may plot revenge against the runners.

### Karma

This scenario is primarily action-based, but there are several key scenes that require good role-playing. The gamemaster may award 2 Team Karma for the action, and up to 4 Team Karma for good role-playing.



# Mr. Wherefore

## by Chris Hussey

>>>>[Hey. In this little corner, we're talking about well-known, and not-so-well-known Johnsons. Stop smiling, you know what I mean. Any shadowrunner who thinks he is a shadowrunner knows that checking an employer is often more important than who or what you are going after. It's good to know "Who signs your paychecks" as a Troll friend of mine often asked. Here is where you can find out...]<<<<

--Senor Smoochie Pants (10:15:48/06-30-55)

>>>>[The real question is, "Who \*takes\* your paychecks..."]<<<<

--Disgruntled SINner (19:12:03/02-10-56)

>>>>[Nobody.]<<<<

--Iam Sinless (20:47:13/03-15-56)

>>>>[Jerimiah Wherefore

Okay, all. I'm posting this data to see if any of you can add to the bits I've scraped up. I'm all welcome to rumors and inuendo (besides, that's what makes things like this fun and interesting).

I'm talking about a man named Jerimiah Wherefore. Now, it sure as hell ain't much, but here's what I've been able to dig up on Mr. Wherefore. Please expand.

Jerimiah Wherefore is:

Rich, Powerful, Influential, A frequent traveller, a Total JERK.]<<<<

--Bixby (16:41:30/03-01-56)

>>>>[True, Somewhat true, False, Big-ass True, and you forgot the words "hoop-fragging" before 'jerk.' But true.]<<<<

--Calen (10:21:50/03-03-56)

>>>>[Wherefore is a fairly well known philanthropist who has made, and continues to make his fortune in the global stock exchanges. His assets run somewhere in the tens of millions of nuyen.]<<<<

--Bixby (15:49:21/03-04-56)

>>>>[I've seen figures that say he has a net worth of 100 million.]<<<<

--Horace (04:10:58/03-05-56)

>>>>[I'd like to see those figures, Horace. Even still, Wherefore only has a mere fraction of his net worth in actual cash assets.]<<<<

--Dreks-ter (15:34:56/03-05-56)

>>>>[Big deal. He still paid me. And well...]<<<<

--Billy Bicep (19:28:39/03-05-56)

>>>>[Wow! You got paid by this drekbrain?]<<<<

--Skit (22:49:03/03-05-56)

>>>>[According to my best research, Jerimiah Wherefore started at damn near the bottom of the food chain, a true wageslave. He got lucky one day and won the fraggin lottery and after the gov'ment was done with his fundage, Jer had enough left over to really start playing. He worked up the 50K nuyen or so he had in winnings to over 3Mil in under a year. From there, he just kept going, building his wealth. Long story short, Jer now owns parts of every Triple-A megacorp, and numerous smaller corps.]<<<<

--Kelly (08:10:14/03-07-56)

>>>>[Not completely true. Jerimiah Wherefore will not own stock in Yamatetsu. I say 'will not' instead of 'does not' because Wherefore hates Yama. Why? Easy. That was his former employer. They treated him like drek, and so he has nothing to do with them anymore.]<<<<

--Calen (10:35:29/03-10-56)

>>>>[You're wrong too, Calen. Dig a bit deeper and you'll find that Wherefore does own shares, just through an intermediary. But to be honest, I can't find out who. It's buried pretty deep.]<<<<

--Seeker (07:59:02/03-12-56)

>>>>[I know who, but can't say]<<<<

--Margarinebowl (00:01:00/03-13-56)

>>>>['Margarinebowl'? What the frag kind of name is that? Calen is right about some things though. Wherefore does hate Yama, and even though he would like to see them destroyed, Jer doesn't have the funds to do it, so he doesn't even try.]<<<<

--Skit (23:41:30/03-15-56)

>>>>[Wherefore's become bored playing the market full-time, and has turned his attention to 'other things.' Most of these things involve illegal activities and foreign countries. From what I've found, most of his ops are in Africa and Eastern Europe. Wherefore owns stock in a lot of small corps in those countries and works to get things done his way by the government. He doesn't like for anything to get in his way. Anything.]<<<<

--Kelly (06:48:21/03-16-56)

>>>>[That includes us.]<<<<  
--Skit (23:45:/03-16-56)

>>>>[I've done a run for Wherefore. Won't say where, but I will say I was glad to have my languagesoft. Didn't think they made that odd a dialect, but they do. Anyway, I was out to disrupt a government sponsored food shipment. It was competing with the foodstuff corp that Wherefore owned interest in. Well, the shipment was too heavily guarded, and I barely got out of there. Wherefore was so honked, he threatened to pull all my payment right there. The look in his eyes said that he was ready to kill if he had to. I got the remainder of my expenses fee, and got the drek out of Dodge.]<<<<

--Denny (09:15:38/03-18-56)

>>>>[Wherefore is a rough employer, that's for sure. He doesn't like or expect failure, and will do whatever he can not to pay you what you're owed. The problem is, when a run goes right, he will treat you like no other Johnson. Seriously. I pulled a no-brainer run, that only ran him 3K. Went off without a hitch. Paid me a 15K bonus!!! Double edged sword working for this guy.]<<<<

--Calen (18:23:57/03-18-56)

>>>>[Wherefore's a frequent traveller too. Goes all over the place. Sends his 'freelancers' all over the drek-eatin' planet as well. Can make it a real pain to carry any heavy ordinance along. Foreign customs can be pretty rough]<<<<

--Fitzgibbons (12:38:56/03-19-56)

>>>>[If you're as good as me, you don't need heavy ordinance. Seriously though, if you show some promise to Wherefore, you will see more of the world than you thought. Not that the parts you get to see are anything special, that's for sure. If I'm ever in the slums of Bucharest, it'll be too soon.]<<<<

--Clipper (20:20:45/03-19-56)

>>>>[Jumping back a bit. I've heard some buzz that says that Yamatetsu has finally noticed Wherefore's little activities, and is taking some action against their former employee.]<<<<

--Seeker (11:47:23/03-21-56)

>>>>[Heard that too. I think the reason is because Wherefore made a serious-hoop move against CISLET, an energy corp in Latvia. CISLET is owned by Yamatetsu and from what I heard the run really damaged the corp and is gonna end up costing Yama some hefty cred to get running again.]<<<<

--Puddle Jumper (17:58:10/03-22-56)

>>>>[If Yamatetsu does decide to go all out against

Wherefore, he won't last long. Call your debts in now...]<<<<  
--Calen (20:27:40/03-22-56)

## Gamemaster Information

This section provides the gamemaster with some basic information about Mr. Wherefore, giving the gamemaster potential launching points for shadowruns and other adventures for his campaign.

Jerimiah Wherefore is a philanthropist who has begun to take an interest in establishing himself with more concrete enterprises, namely small to medium businesses in second and third world countries.

Not enjoying failure, Wherefore frequently uses shadowrunners to help him accomplish his goals. These efforts can easily find the characters facing any number of obstacles from governments to simple, yet defiant, villagers. Wherefore's dislike for failure also extends to any shadowrunners he hires. Unsuccessful runs, despite the circumstances easily can raise his anger and cause any number of problems.

As stated above, Wherefore enjoys global travel and usually sends his hired operatives on missions overseas, as he prefers to use runners from North America as he finds them easier to understand and deal with. Runners unfamiliar with travel to other countries will soon find themselves facing a whole new set of challenges and obstacles that they once took for granted in the streets of the Sprawl.

# The Hermetic Lodge

The area for all that's magic, both of a Shamanic and Hermetic nature.  
by Chris Hussey and Douglas Miller

>>>>[Welcome all to our little corner of Shadowland. Just thought I'd mention that we rule, and cyber-boys drool. I know, it's juvenile, but so true. Anyway, we've got some new formulae descriptions. Do with them what you will. Remember, just pick up the right grimoire, and you'll be flying...]<<<<

-Henning's Boy (14:34:59/3-6-57)

>>You have chosen Only New Spells. Do you wish to proceed? Y/N

>>Y

>>Spells logged in last \_\_ days? (enter days)

>>7

>>Read on, oh great and powerful magician!!!

## ILLUSION SPELLS

### Privacy Curtain

This spell requires the caster to touch a voluntary target, causing a shifting curtain of light to appear around him and those he is speaking with. Sight and sound become distorted and muted, making spoken words, text and even lip-reading nearly impossible to comprehend. The effect is one-way, so those inside the curtain are unaffected. Every 2 successes adds a +1 to the Target Number for any Perception Tests against anything inside the curtain.

**Type:** Physical      **Range:** Touch    **Target:** 4  
**Duration:** Sustained    **Drain:** [(F/2)+1]L

>>>>[Good for when you need a little privacy for a minute or two.]<<<<

- Gossip (07:35:16/06-11-57)

>>>>[It may work against most electronic devices, but watch out for bugs. The spell doesn't do much good against radio signals from the inside.]<<<<

- Bugcrazy (21:26:58/06-13-57)

### Concealment

This spell makes it easier to conceal items by using illusions to smooth out bulges, shrink items, or simply change the items appearance. Every 2 successes adds +1 to the Concealment Rating of the object. This spell can only be cast on a single object.

**Type:** Physical      **Range:** Touch  
**Target:** 10-Concealment Rating  
**Duration:** Sustained    **Drain:** (F/2)L

>>>>[Hey! Now it's easier to take my AK-97 through the airport terminal.]<<<<

- Gunsight (22:36:03/06-07-57)

>>>>[Chummer, you're either one drek-kicking mage, or fragging crazy!]<<<<

- Night Speaker (05:29:51/06-08-57)

>>>>[And what kind of mage needs an AK, and what is he doing with a name like "Gunsight"?]<<<<

- I have mana questions (05:42:19/06-08-57)

## MANIPULATION SPELLS

### Transformation Manipulations

#### Dry

This spell sucks out all the moisture within the area of effect. Affected targets may make a Resistance roll to retain their moisture. Water Elementals or any water-based Nature Spirits are affected as if having the Vulnerability weakness. Other living beings that take damage, and remain standing, suffer and +1 modifier to all target rolls because of the level of dehydration.

**Type:** Physical      **Range:** LOS  
**Target:** Body (R) of Object  
Resistance Rating Damage Level D  
**Duration:** Instant    **Drain:** [(F/2)+1]D

>>>>[Yow! Even if you do survive one of these, you're still out of the game.]<<<<

- Kilt-wearing Hoop Fragger (13:12:59/06-04-57)

>>>>[For folks that are over 70% water, I can see how that would hurt.]<<<<

- Brainer (22:13:13/06-04-57)

>>>>[Great way to clean out the pool really quick.]<<<<

- Boss Hog (03:14:28/06-05-57)

### Telekinetic Manipulation

#### Unravel

This spell will unravel any fabric on the target. Each piece makes a separate Resistance Test. The target itself must then make a Quickness Test to avoid becoming tangled in the unraveling cloth.

**Type:** Physical      **Range:** LOS  
**Target:** Object Resistance Table  
**Duration:** Instant    **Drain:** [(F/2+3)]D

>>>>[If you can stay conscious after casting this spell, it's a great sight. Cast it once on a Johnson who was trying to cheat us. Did I mention we were eating at the Space Needle?]<<<<

- Sirman (17:24:36/06-20-57)



>>>>[I was there that night, man! That was great. You've got to show me the formulae!]<<<<

- Posh (20:20:19/06-20-57)

## DETECTION SPELLS

### Assess Target

This spell allows the caster to know just how tough, smart, quick and strong a target is. The target makes a Resistance Test for each Attribute against the spell.

As long as the spell generates one success for each Attribute, the gamemaster must reveal that Attribute score to the player. This spell will affect cyber-enhancements, as Essence has been paid.

**Type:** Physical      **Range:** LOS  
**Target:** Special  
**Duration:** Instant    **Drain:** (F/2)M

>>>>[This spell works great when meeting with any Johnson. Gives you a better idea what you're up against.]<<<<

- Grandahl (10:45:30/06-13-57)

>>>>[Frag the Johnson! I want to know about the Troll ready to grease me!]<<<<

- Slang (23:58:02/06-13-57)

>>>>[Actually, this spell works the best when recruiting new members for your team] <<<<

- Rabid (09:37:23/06-14-57)

### Enhance Swing

This spell allows the caster to lower the Target Number of any character's melee attack by 2. Much like the Enhance Aim spell, the caster may cast it on himself, but the improved swing cancels out the Sustaining Spell modifier. The caster can eliminate that problem throughout he use of a spell lock or other means.

**Type:** Mana    **Range:** Limited  
**Target:** 6  
**Duration:** Sustained    **Drain:** (F/2)S

>>>>[The physical adepts best friend!]<<<<

- Slang (00:01:39/06-14-57)

>>>>[Si. This spell works great for those of us reggalar mages that like to mix it up.]<<<<

- Castagear (15:07:35/06-14-57)

# A Piece of Cake

By Richard April

*"A piece o' cake...?" "I'll frag the next white-toothed fixer that hands me that line o' drek! If I ever get outta here that is.*

*The express elevator chimes the approach of the first wave of Teredyne Internal Security Response Teams. Heavy booted feet weighed down by full suits of Ares Sectec combat armor fan out in a systemic search pattern of the offices on the fifth floor of the mighty Hancock Arcology.*

*"Shoulda known better than to work with a trog and that bleached headed wizbanger! "Where'd Wolf say that gutterprunk was from? Jersey? Yup, I scanned something' was up with him from the start..."*

## Flashback

Good ole' Onset, frag! The 52 wasn't Wolf's kinda hole, but ever since Fireball's burned down Wolf had to make due. I liked the place. Music fresh from the bowels of the CAS reminded me of home and they knew how to pour a shot of synthahol. Needless to say it wasn't hard to pick out my business partners form the local yocals. Wolf said the trog was big but I'm never prepared for just how fraggin' ugly those wartfaced monsters can be. One horn protrudin' from his massively disfigured skull, this troll made no attempt to conceal the arsenal of weapons he was carrying. I assumed the duffel at his feet was reinforcements.

Seth was his name.

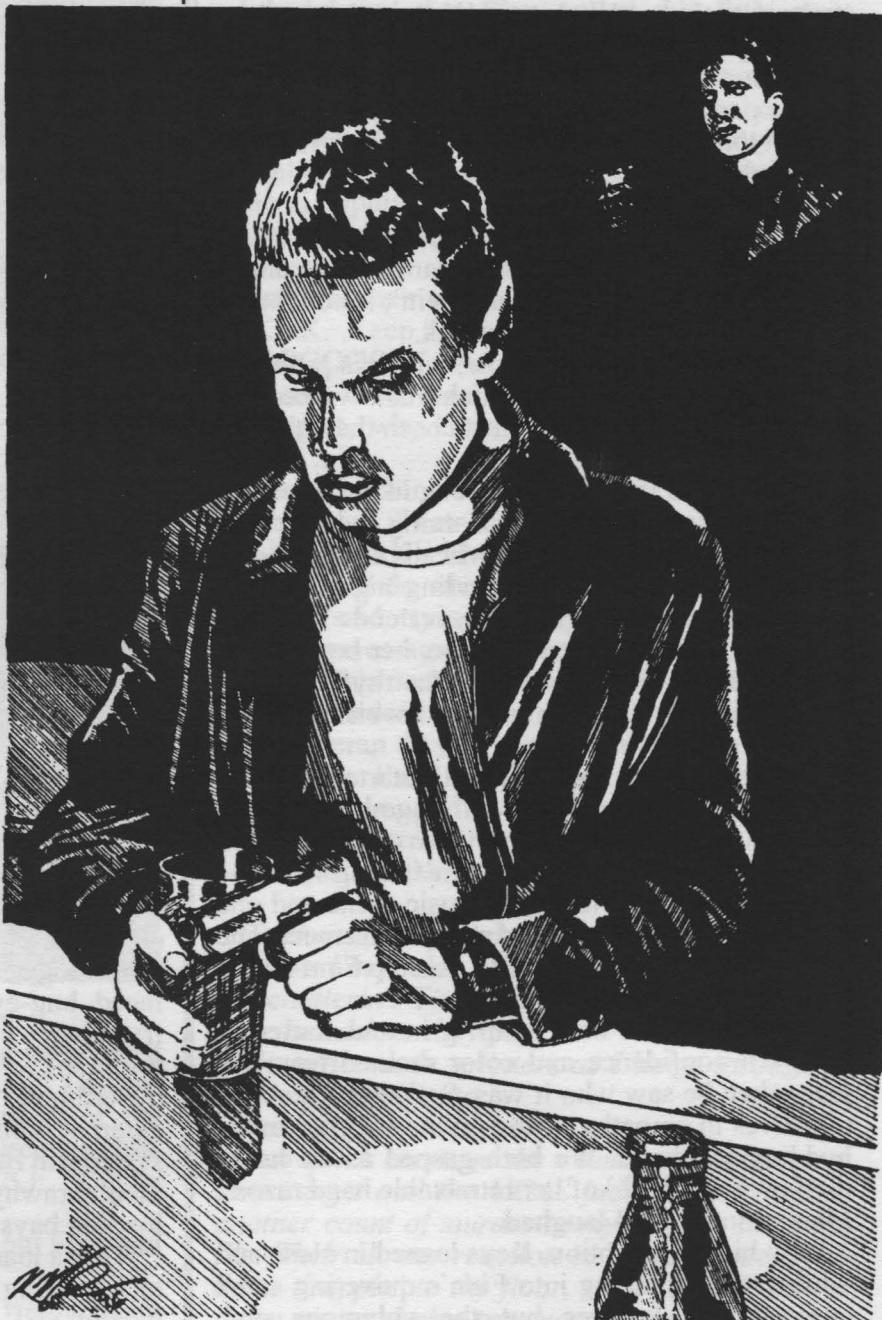
Obviously, an amateur.

"Hey, ya, you must be Shortchange..." This from the slacker next to the trog. Spiked bleach white hair, the short frame of a 9th grade computer geek, rows of throwin' knives under his Impressions Macrotech every day-flak. He put on his most defiant mask behind a pair o' Fuchi Reflect-oc implants and gave me a smile.

I wasn't impressed in the least.

You could tell right off he was from out o' town,

no kick artist with a mind for keepin' his head attached to the rest of his body sported any obvious cyber in the Hub. No use in givin' the competition an unfair advantage.



"No, it's Shortfuse, ya puke, and you must be Finn." I barked.

"S'my name chumma'."

"Wolf sendin' kids ta do his dirty work now?!" I said.

"Na, but I see he got no compunctions about hiring slackjawed hics like you!" Finn jibed.

"Y'll be smart to keep yer pie hole shut and yer mind on the job, punk."

"Whateva' you say Shortchange."

"It's..."

"WE SAVED YA A SEAT." The trog bellowed as he relieves another patron of her chair. She was glad to give it up when she saw who took it.

"Ok, so Johnson here yet?" I asked.

I parked myself with a clear view of the door and my back to the wall and started the regular routine. Scanning the crowd, sizin' anybody up that looked suspicious. If the drek hit the fan, it hit hard and fast. It pays to be prepared. I thought to myself, as I felt that warm sensation from my integra-palm smartlink slid home on my Ares Predator II inside my jacket.

"Nah, we just got hea ourselves...So like I was sayin'..."The runt goes on yammerin' about somethin'. Frag but he was annoyn', I thought, as the waitress brought me my Rock.

He just kept runnin' his hole, which is probably why he didn't scan the slitch that walked up behind him. Of course he musta been the only one in the joint that didn't.

She jandered through the throng like a prowling tigress, A flowing mane of flaming red hair and piercing green eyes drew all heads in the room. Her synthleather mini-dress riding high on long, shapely legs that seemed to never end. Wrapped tightly in gleaming monochrome, her bodaecious figure swayed to the music and the rhythm of her gait. Telling all her admirers that this biff was one-hundred percent natch.

It wasn't til my gaping mouth started drawin' flies, that I realized I knew this goddess o' the plex. I was so used to seein' her in a pair of black camos and combat boots, I didn't recog her. She was Keys, a star of the local music scene and one of the nastiest runners you'd ever wanna meet. The last thing I expected her to do was tap Finn on the shoulder and ask him to dance.

Finn flashed his drek eatin' grin and started to turn. All confidence and color drained from his face when he saw who it was. Seth and I grabbed ourselves in empathy as she put a vise grip on his budding manhood. We both gasped as we heard the familiar schich' of her retractable hand razors. Finn whimpered, I laughed.

With his full attention, Keys leaned in close and whispered something into Finn's quivering ear. I strained to hear her but the volumous club drowned her out. The look of growing dread on Finn's face told us her words were even more threatening than her hold. I loved it.

After a long minute, she releases her grip but not her glare. Stepping away from him, I heard her

say.

"...and if you wanna try something, sweetie. I'll show you how it's really done!" With that, she saunteres back into the crowd. I watch her walk away and turn to Finn.

"What was all that Finnmeister?" I asked, grinnin' from ear to ear.

"YEAH!?" Seth joined in.

"Forget it!"

"Good cause here's our man!" I noticed.

I shoulda walked right then...

*Something wizzes past the winder of the office  
I'm hiding in, and my wires jack me into overdrive.  
Moving cautiously to gaze out of the enviro-sealed  
glass, I catch a glimpse of Seth jumping from a  
fifth story window to his death, Teredyne security  
follow him down with a complimentary hail of  
gunfire.*

*Well, you know what they say... it's the sudden  
stop that gets ya. Funny thing is, that bastard  
might of made it, if it weren't for Finn and his little  
tricks...*

## Flashback

"No! A left, my left! I said left Shortchange!" Finn whined.

"It's Shortfuse!"

"Whatever. Slot it big guy, we're here." Finn piped.

"UHNN?" Seth awoke with a start, nearly rocking my Ford-Canada Bison on its side.

"So...ahhh, Shortchange, what's the scam?" Frag, I hate that whiny Masshole accent. This comes from our fourth. Not quite as big as Finn and sporting three ports of shinin' chrome on his temples, Zero is neither the best decker in town nor the worst. I don't pretend to know much about the information superworld, but one thing is obvious; in this the birthplace of Matrix technology, there's always an abundance of zit-faced, bug-eyed, 98 pound weaklings lining up to fry their cyberenhanced greymatter for the promise of paydata. Unfortunately, these cyberthieves are not all wiz enough to crack external security in some of the most tightly IC'd systems in Boston. That's were I come in, coverin' their scrawny tails long enough to access remote loading bays and service elevators.

What a load of drek! What happened to the days of egressing into a villa and hosing every man, woman and ....

"UHNN, WHAT ARE WE DOIN'!!!!!! I'M GETTIN' HUNGRY!" Seth announced.

"Spirit's, Seth, Shortchange was just about to..." Finn began.

"Shortfuse! And what the Christ? Wasn't any

ya'll listenin' to the Johnson?! It's a simple datasnatch. We're in, we're out, we're done! Short and sweet. Zero here cracks this baby wide open and we play sitter."



"OH!"

"We'll slip under the fog to loading bay 6 East wing. Can you get us in from their Zero?" I asked.

Tapping his multicolored keyboard as if the mere presence of this instrument assured success, he grinned wolfishly. "Null persp, S.F. It'll be pissa."

"O.k....so..." I try to move us along but Finn had other ideas.

"Scan it! Before we go anywhere, I wanna make something clear."

"Finn forget it!" I got that feelin' in the pit o' my stomach that I always get when either something bad's about to happen or I just ate a double burrito with the works from McStuffy's."

"We don't need that drek!" I yelled.

"Turn to ice, Shortchange. I don't like surprises on a run." And all of a sudden, he got this look on his face like he was tryin' to keep from shittin' his camos. With a flick of his wrists, three of his knives rose from their sheaths of their own volition and started dancin' around the back of the van. The troll cooed with delight. Unfortunately, Zero didn't respond as affectionately. His eyes reeled back in terror as he recoiled fro the whirling blades.

I knew it.

I had heard that Finn pulled this little stunt before, why did I think he'd behave himself this time? See this ain't Seattle, As much as these Yanks got their heads up their ass over technology, they generally fear magic. With no pointy-eared elves or ghost dancing' NAN influence, the general populace is pretty ignorant. I'm no expert on the subject, but as far as I can tell, most wizkids up here keep to themselves and don't go advertisin' their talents. If they got any that is.

"K...K...Keep him away!" Zero freaked.

"OOOOOOH, AAAAH!"

"Listen Zero, Finn won't..."

"Frag it, why does everyone turn basketcase when I ..."

"I told ya Finn! Ya puke!"

"Frag you, Shortchange!"

"UHH, MAKE EM DANCE AGAIN!"

"Let's just do what we came here to do! So ka Zero?" I said, trying to keep things together.

He shiveres again and regaines his composure clutching his deck tightly to his chest. Chiphead's probably never seen real magic' before in his life. Cept the crap they feed us on the trid.

"S'right, I'm ready. Just keep wizboy at observation range."

Zero whispered.

Finn just sat there smilin'. Drek!

*Readouts in my right eye give the go on both Ingams I'm packin'. I'm chipped so high my teeth are chatterin'. Time to make these slackers earn their hazardous duty pay.*

*The office door splinters as I lunge through it, Ingams on full auto.*

*Caught them unaware!*

*Two quick bursts at the chummer locked in my smarttarget and the UCAS judicial system adds another count of murder to my already extensive file. Their slo-mo reaction is like a B-rated trid. Some droppin' to the floor, some turnin' to bear down on me. I give two more of the rent-a-corps the lead hose before duckin' for cover. Bullets rain down the hall mostly to keep me where I am. Come Monday, some exec's gonna blow a fuse over the damage we're causin'. Funny what goes through your head during a firefight. I key the ten second*

*initiator on the C-4 satchel I'm totin' and toss it around the corner. Enough explosive in that bag to splatter the lot of them and maybe me too. If they got any brains they'll run like hell. I don't wait around to find out.*

*Coast is clear and I head for the stairs. Peering over the railing I scan more figures racing up from below. Only option left is up. Cutting into another dark floor, things are quiet, so I wait. It's when the lights come on that things get hairy.*

**BOOM!!!!!!**

## Flashback

Under the neoncast we rolled up to the parking garage on St. James about a block from the Hancock Arcology, which just happens to house the downtown offices of Teredyne. Our target for this evening's festivities.

We reviewed our plan. I wished Zero could've provided us with more on what we could expect once we were inside but we'd have to go on what we had. Sometimes ya'll just have to take what you can get and roll on the rest.

Finn said something about covering our approach. Hummph. You can never count on that voodoo hoodoo bunk, usually gets ya into more trouble than it's worth. And yes I do mean attractin' supernatural attention or alertin' magical defenses prematurely. This hic's been around.

A heavy fog was rollin' in off the Bay and everyone piled out as we made ready to hit the plasticrete...

"Will you shut yer hole, gutterpunk? Or do you wanna get us fragged?!" I said, this kid never shut up.

"Frag off, Shortchange! You're the one makin' all the noise in those clod hoppers!"

"It's Shortfuse, and these are European LAV Special Forces spec issue jungle boots with the breath easy tapor."

"What? Shut up! Short..."

"Will you both shut up and guard my back?" Zero chirped from his cybernetic trance. Freaky little bastards, ya'll can never tell they're workin' or listenin' to your every word. Of course, that's the least of your worries when one of these arrogant punks gets greedy and goes looking for a little extra nuyen in yonder datastore and leaves your team swingin' in the breeze.

"Got it!" Zero chimes as the elevator light illuminates the loading bay. He pulls the datacord from the access panel and collected all his little tools as we load up. He reconnects himself and that sorry piece o' cyberjunk he calls a deck to the interior controls and away we went.

The trog was unusually well behaved. No stupid questions like his kind are prone to and no dumb

moves like bumpin' into stuff. He keeps his eyes open and his yap shut. Just the way I like it. I just wish that little troublemaker would take a hint.

"...don't worry, Seth ole pal," Finn was sayin' "we get in any trouble and I got a little surprise for these corp goons." he says tapping his pocket.

I was just about to ask him what he was talkin' about when the elevators doors slid quietly open. The deserted lobby was on reserved lighting, almost dim enough for us to jander right past that guard station at the upper floor entrance.

Almost.

I pull my Predator II whole bore with the reactive trigger and bonus bullet clip that you can only get mail order. Seth began to unfold what looked like a compound bow, when Finn raises a restraining hand.

"Allow me." he says as his face knots up and one o' those knives goes dartin' across the lobby towards the guard.

"OOOOH"

"Ok, ya puke, but keep it quiet."

"S'kay ya' didn't hear Zipper go did ya?" Finn bragged.

"Who's Zipper?" Zero asks.

"DA FIRST DECKA!"

"Seth..."

"Waddazat mean Da first decka'?" Zero pressed.

"Ok, Seth, that's..." I tried to put a stop to it.

"HE WAS HERE FOR FINN KILT IM. HARHARHARHAR"

"Seth!" I reproached.

Great the first time the fraggin' trog manages ta conjugate a complete sentence and this is the one he chooses.

"Finn killed him?" Zero blanched.

"Ok, shut em up!"

"But..." The decker tried but I had to stop it right then.

"I said button it!"

"S'OK, SHORTCHANGE."

"That's Shortfuse!" I whispered.

When I look back into the lobby, Finn begins ta mime like he's got the dagger in his right hand. I hate mimes!

Then he makes a quick grabbin' motion with his left. Well, the corp sits right up and grabs at his face like somebody's got im. Then Finn makes a hard, slow draw across an imaginary neck that opens the corp from ear to ear. The blade comes floatin' back, after Finn wipes the blood on the corps armour, and sheathes itself. Finn smiles smugly.

"Ok, good work Finn...hope he ain't got no doc contract though." I say.

"Oh, yeah, uh..." Finn mumbles.

"Frag it. Let's move!" I command.

We covered the huge lobby in a matter of

seconds. Normal op procedure was to monitor the sec net with our new friends head set. I would have liked to leave Finn to keep an eye out but he wasn't goin' for it.

Zero works his electronic wizardry on the security console while Seth stashes the stiff. If we were fast, Teredyne'd never know what hit em.

One of the main elevators rings in response to Zero's summons and we pack it in tight and neat.

From his comatose state, Zero directs the elevator to the 52nd floor where our prize awaits us. Occasionally, his fingers fly over the keys in a particularly unnerving fashion. When these console jocks get into it they're on their own, there's nothin' we can do for em. And disturbing' em can be dangerous.

After a long pause, Zero speaks.

"I'm in. But we've got a problem."

"Ok, so..." I start.

"We've got three troopers positioned outside in the hall. I've been waitin' for them to move on but no dice."

"All right then key the doors and we'll have to deal with them." I said.

"Good." Finn says rubbin' his hands.

I give the signal an Zero opens the doors. Good timing. The slackers ain't even lookin' at us. As they turn Finn makes this elaborate gesture and their glocks go flyin' up into the air. Seth launches two huge arrows at them that lift two of em right off the floor and pin them to the wall. I geek the third chummer with a silenced shot from my Predator.

A few moments later and Zero is hackin' the slag's comp we came for. Seth and Finn keep watch while I wait for Zero to finish up. I start to get a little worried when Zero don't respond for too long. We are way over time.

"Ah,ha!" Zero blurts.

"Ok so you got what we came for?" I ask.

"Uh, yeah but there's a little more here, it'll be null persp."

"Don't get stupid on me Zero!"

"Turn to ice, primo, this is Zero...remember?"

"I remember just hurry it up."

Well, I don't have to wait too long this time. This strange look comes over Zero's face and he starts to bite his tongue real hard. Before I can rip his jack out, sparks of white light course over his console and he starts convulsing. I grab him up



hard into a fireman's carry and make for the door.

"Zero's down, pull out!" I yell.

"Fraggin' deckers!" Finn whines.

"Shut up and move!" I yell.

We're in the elevator before any alerts are raised. We could still get out if we hurry.

"WHA HAPPEND?" Seth asks.

"I dunno looks like he poked his sensors where they didn't belong."

"I say we geek the little bastard!" Finn says grabbin' Zero's limp form and brandishin' a blade.

I step up to Finn with a palm heel that I learned in D'nang. I always liked the move cause it takes the weapon away and gets the opponent off you real quick like. And it usually works, this time was no exception. He glares up at me from the elevator floor.

"Save it til we're outta here!" I says droppin' the knife.

"...save some for you,ya'..." He mumbles getting up.

I punch the key for Lobby,as we speed down into the fire. Without our tech support,we're gonna haveta rely on sheer firepower if any troublr gets in our way. O' course I got no problem with that as I unsling my Valiant and hand feed thecaseless,explosive tip belted ammo. The long smooth barrel glistens in the ambient elevator light making the Series II,Ingrams fullauto,smoothbore light machine gun seem even more feral as my smartlink sends an electrifying rush to the heads-up-display in my eye. Time to git down ta biz.

Seth and Finn got the same idea.

I got that bad feelin' again as the elevator doors slid open and all was quiet. I think I woulda felt betta if a security team met us with a hail o' barkin' autofire. But all was calm. I didn't like it at all. I looked at Finn questioningly,waitin' ta see if he had any special mystical advice to offer. Sometimes those wizfolks sense things normal people don't. Not that I believe in all that drek, but when my tail is on the line I'll take any suggestions that get this old country boy outta a scrape.

He just leers back at me an motions for me to go fisrt. Worthless piece o' drek,I shoulda known

Heftin' ole Bessy,I come outta the elevator fast,makin' for cover. Another fifteen meters around that corner and we're home free. I motion to Seth to cover my back and move real quiet like up to the corner to have a look. Well no sooner does the whole fraggin' compliment of Teradyne's Security Forces open up on my postion. A deluge of bullets pour down the hallway,followed by official commands to lay down our arms and put our hands in the air.

S'right,I wonder how many times that one has worked. Besides I have no intention of becoming an unfortunate casualty of a routine' arrest.

Seth and Finn are soon beside me.

"Ok,so...thet blocked off the service elevators!"

"S'kay,Shortchange I got the thing ta get em outta da way..." He says reachin' inta his pocket.

All of a sudden Zero is back up and boltin' outta the elevator. He makes a run for the far side o' the lobby screamin' his fool head off. Lightining quick,Seth covers the distance between them and decapitates the decker with one swift slash of a wakasashi longer than all of Finn. The corps open up on the big trog and pin him behind a water fountain.

"Null sheen,Seth,I gotcha cova'd." Finn says takin' a canister out from under his coat. As I tries ta read the label he motions and the small tank floats by me on down the hall. Recognizing it as Neuro-tox XX, I quickly pull on my MF-2H self-contained enviromask. I hoped Finn had come

prepared.

Things go from bad to worse.

Before I can yell at the bleach-headed wizzer, Seth gets a break and fires a volley of huge arrows into the corporate ranks. Well those must've been exploding tip bolts cause all of a sudden things start blowin'up... includin' Finns little suprise. Finn gets wide-eyed as a cloud of deadly nerve gas comes funnelling back down the hall towards us. Guess he wasn't as prepared as I had hoped.

Drekhead!

He reacts quickly enough though. Throwin' up his hands and wavin' about, a whirlwind picks up just at the head of the cloud and sends the gas back down where it came from. Right into the corps. Right into Seth.

I see the big trog coughin' and doublin' over. Guess troggy lungs aren't any stronger than us norms,too bad. When ya' been runnin' as long as I have ya don't get bye without knowin' the capabilities and limits of y'all's enemies. So when Big Guns published Ares latest advertisement for state of the art Series VII security armor with full environmental protection built right in, I paid attention. And I moved my tail usin' Finns little cloud for the cover it provided while the corps regrouped.

I grabbed Finn and dove into the elevator, I normally used the stairs in an emergency but the logistics of this situation prohibited that option. Keying the pad for the fourteenth floor, I turns to Finn for an ass-chewin'.

"Ok so... What the frag were you thinkin'?!Drek-fer-brains!!!"

"Frag you,Shortchange,I didn't know they wore fully enclosed combat suits!"

"What the Christ ya'll didn't think ta ask!!?"

"I dunno...I..."

"And why don't YOU have a gas mask?"

"I was gonna use the tox on them, stupid!"

"Looks like you're the stupid one ,gutterpunk!"

"You dumb hick,I'll..."

"You'll do nada,fightin' ain't gonna get us outta here in one piece!"

"But what about Seth?"

"He's on his own!"

"You can't do that!"

"Hey, you're the one who gassed him!"

"I didn't mean too...I..."

"Maybe you shoulda used your head instead o' all that voodoo hoodoo..."

"Scan it Shortchange,what was that?"Finn says lookin' around real nervous like.

"It's Shortfuse!And I didn't hear nothin'!"

And as if in answer to his question,the small space within the elevator starts to get real foggy. Pulling my mask back on,I wonder out loud what was goin' on, but the punk just slumps down in

lotus position and meditates. I knew this wasn't good. This meant some supernatural threat had arisen and wizboy was preparing to deal with it.



And if he handled this like he did everything else, I was up the creek.

The drek creek.

Without warnin' the gas takes shape and concentrates right around Finn's face, as if tryin' to suffocate him. I wasn't sure what to do as Finn writhed around turnin' more blue by the nanosec. I knew we had run across one o' them there elements probably workin' for the wizzer what guarded this joint, but I had no idea how to fight this fraggin' thing. I had heard that guns were just about worthless on these semi-real bein's or whatever they were. And besides a burst from my Valiant would surely just rip the Finnmeister apart. Not that I wouldn't of enjoyed seein' that,

but this was not the time nor place. So as the cloud coalesced further taking on a semblance of manshape I balled up a fist and gave it a shot. The results were minimal as my hand mostly passed right through it, but the thing did let go of Finn.

I tried to reach for the punk, but that elementy was on me in a flash. Flailin' my arms at it like a dang fool, it forced me back out of the elevator into one of the main halls. I could feel the air in my lungs bein' stifled, somehow the thing was stopping me from breathin' altogether. Did I mention how much I fraggin hate magical types.

Through the smoke and haze, I sees Finnboy wavin' his hands about all frantic like an idiot. Figures I'm about to get the life choked outta me and he's foolin' around. Well, all of a sudden, I can breath again and the cloud is movin' back down the hall towards Finn. The little wizzer don't look so good though, he practically slumps forward blood oozin' from his ears and nose. Funny, I don't remember anybody roughin' I'm up.

As the the cloud starts to form around him again he looks up at me. I sees that look you never want to see in a man's eyes. The look like he knows he's gonna die, and there's no denyin' it. With that wiseass wry grin, blood slippin' from his lips, he draws his katana from his hip and falls on it Japanese style. The short curved blade punctures right through to his back, his body slumping forward as I hear...

"Frag you, Shortchange!"

With a quick salute, I turn down the main hall of the fifth floor and make a break for it.

"It's Shortfuse, ya gutterpunk."

*So here I am. Three bodies short of a runnin' team, I got security searchin' high and low for me just waitin' to blow my fool head off and a cloudy air elementn' with my name on it. Ouuta flashpacks, C-4 and reallow on ammo. I can hear the corps makin' there sweep through the offices on this flor, it's just a matter of time before they find me. And there ain't gonna be no trial or hearing when they do. I've geeked enough o' their boys to warrant the lead hose sentence, which is the way I want it. Not rottin' in some bulldrek dentention cell playin' girlfriend to some bruiser named Butch and pickin' da rat droppin's outta*

my chow. Had enough o' that in the 52nd Airbone Division! No I'm goin' out on my feet givin' some misguided, chromed-up corporate badass sellout the last high powered, explosive tipped caseless round in my clip! Yeah!!

And it doesn't look like I have to wait to long fer a court date, as two burly fully outfitted corp security baliffs come up to the office I'm hiding in.



I screw on my Sweet Whispers II carbon absorption silencer on my Predator, as they walk up to the door. They must be newbies and gettin' tired o' this cat and mouse I been playin' all evenin' long. Funny how these security bullies are always more than eager to jack up one o' there own defenseless citizens but put em up against anybody with an ounce o' attitude and watch em turn ta jelly. These amateurs were no exception.

Standard op procedure was to send in your partner in to sweep the room while you cover from the hall. This helped minimize the chance for surprises. I could hear them debatin' who was goin' in first. Of course, after searchin' a few dozen floors like this it was easy to get complacent and the argument didn't take long.

As the door swung open and goon number one stepped in, I waited behind the door. When he was far enough in, I shot his partner waiting in the hall right in the face through the crack behind the door. Before he could turn around to see what just happened I shot the guy inside in the back of the neck. Twice.

You get lazy, you get dead.

It wouldn't be long before the rest of their chums responded, so I had to move fast. Luckily the punk laying face first in the office was an extra large, I could squeeze into a large or even a medium but it just didn't look right. So before the main force of Teradyne's elite Internal Security came pounding down the hall, I managed to put on this guy's uniform and cover my face in his blood. He didn't exactly do my camos justice but I was hoping the trick would hold long enough for me to walk out of this hell hole.

I gave quite the performance as troopers came crashing past me asking what happened. And I even managed to grab a stuffy for their medic as I assured him that I was fine and I would report to the infirmary right away.

As I slipped out an emergency exit and back onto the street, I couldn't help thinkin' about Seth and Zero and even Finn. I wasn't mad at them for screwin' up the job. I was too tired for that. I couldn't help wonderin' if the paydata we were after was even remotely worth their lives. It's too bad in this world of magic and megacorps, simsense and touchscreen convience that a human life or even meta life had so little value.

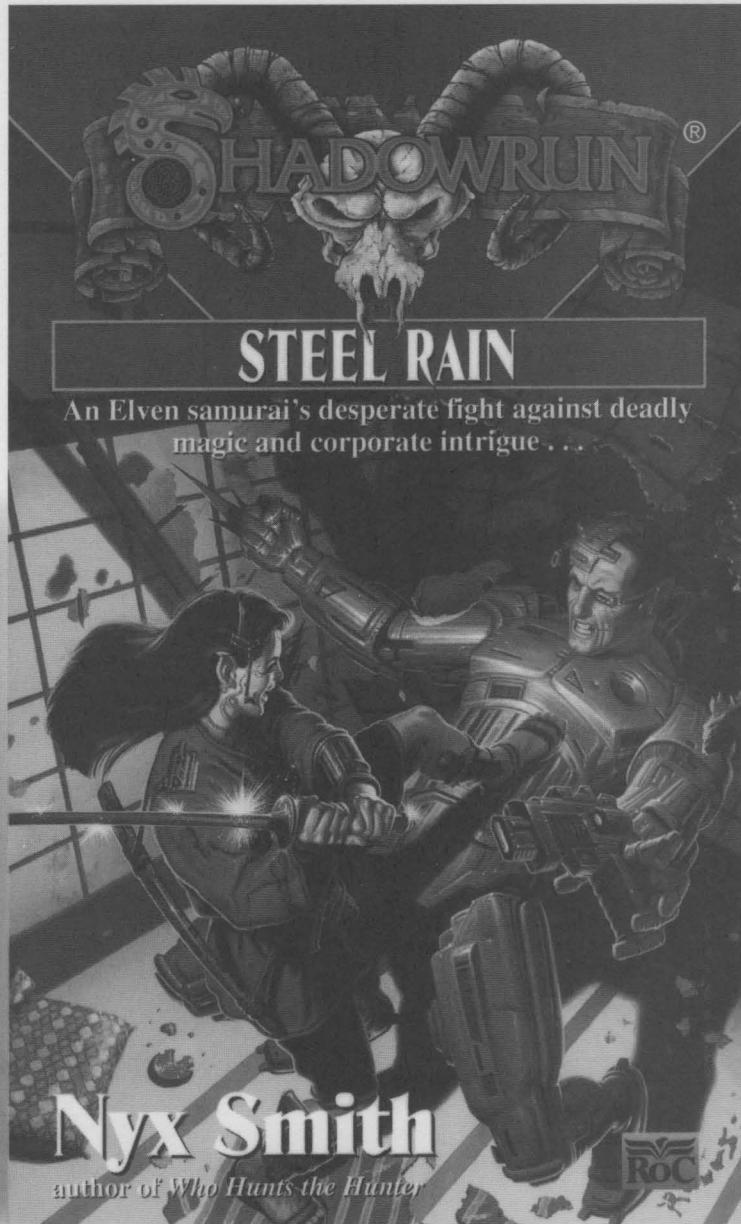
Oh scrag it, who gives a frag.

# SWORD OF THE SERPENT

Machiko is second-in-command of the Green Serpent Guard, an elite corps of Elven samurai who are sworn to defend the Chairman of Nagato Corporation. But she soon gets a promotion—after her superior is ruthlessly cut down in a slew of attacks aimed at the famous Guard itself.

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