

# SHADOWRUN ATTITUDE





# EAT 'EM UP, SPIT 'EM OUT

They can have their offices, their paychecks, their 2.2 kids and their robot-trimmed lawns. Screw 'em. They trudge through life, doing what other people tell them to do, never having an original thought, burying themselves so deep down inside they might never come out.

You're not them. The world's not giving you anything, so you're going to take what you can get. You're on the streets, on your own. Maybe you're helping an exploitation band shoot to the top, maybe you're climbing up the street brawl ladder, or maybe you're getting famous just for being you. Whatever you do, you'll do it your way, because dying always beats selling out.

*Attitude* helps shadowrunners live the untethered life by giving them the lowdown on music, entertainment, sports, and other scenes where they can make their mark without selling their soul. A repository of Sixth World culture along with a treasury of new ways to run in the shadows, *Attitude* is an indispensable resource for all *Shadowrun* players.

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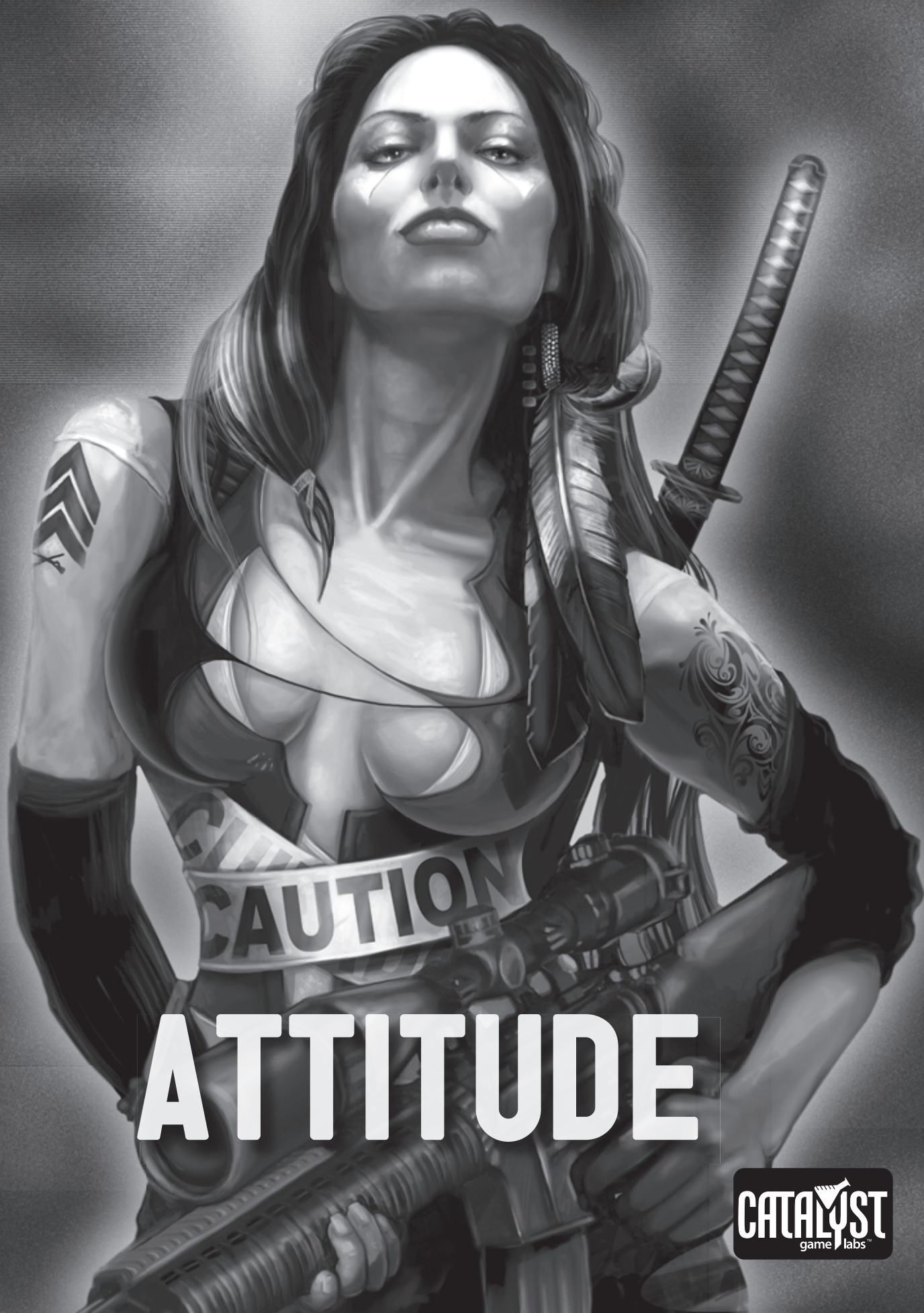
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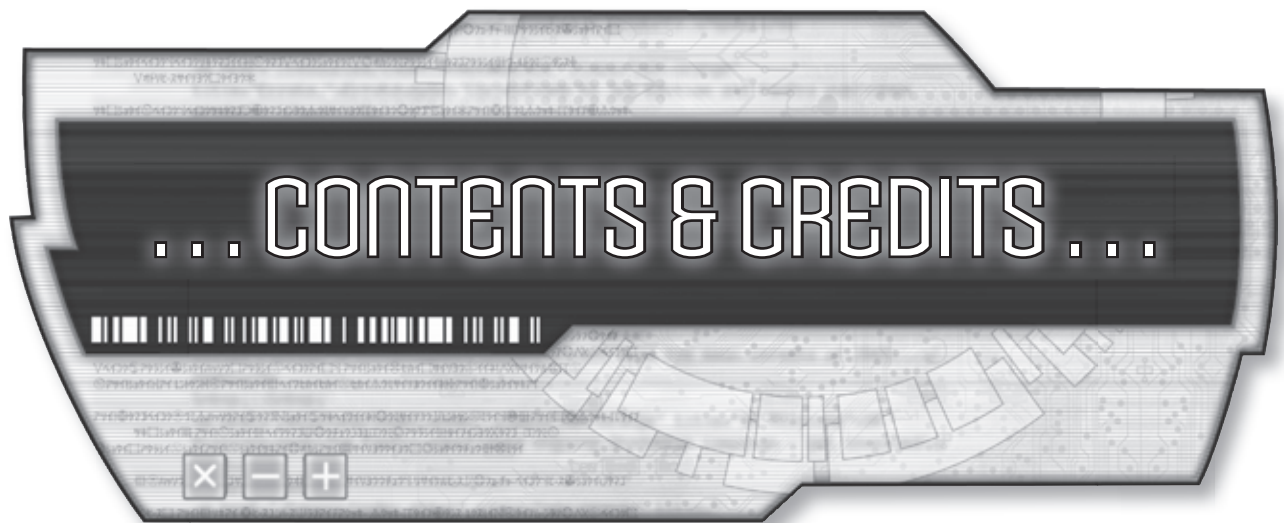
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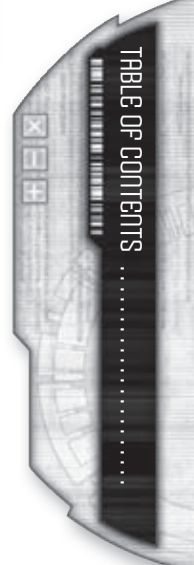
ATTITUDE



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**Shoutout:** To all the fans and freelancers who, in the past year, reached out and said "How can I help?" You all rock.

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(cool links)





Connecting Jackpoint VPN ...  
... Matrix Access ID Spoofed.  
... Encryption Keys Generated.  
... Connected to Onion Routers.

> Login

\*\*\*\*\*

> Enter Passcode

\*\*\*\*\*

... Biometric Scan Confirmed.

Connected to <ERROR: NODE UNKNOWN>

"Life is a shipwreck but we must not forget to sing in the lifeboats."

## JackPoint Stats

68 users currently active  
in the network

### Latest News

<032073> I'm not playing games anymore. The situation will be resolved soon. I apologize for the inconvenience. -FastJack

### Personal Alerts

\* You have 12 new private messages.  
\* You have 2 messages queued for anonymous re-routing.

\* You have received 2 Metalink Friends add requests.

\* You have 8 new responses to your JackPoint posts.

\* PDA: Massive pro-Ork Underground rally sponsored for today. Avoid it.

\* PDA: Two of your fixers have relocated to Denver and are wondering if you would be interested in taking on some work there.

### First Degree

You are hidden from all contacts.

Your Current Rep Score: 62  
(88% positive)

Current Time: March 21, 2073, 04:02

PREFERENCES

FEEDS

TASKS

LINKS

HISTORY

Welcome back to JackPoint, omae; your last connection was severed: 16 hours, 22 minutes, 17 seconds ago

## Today's Heads Up

\* Money's flowing to Bogotá, mainly in order to blow the whole city up. [Tag: [War!](#)]

\* Wildlife is evolving faster than Darwin could have imagined. Try to keep up. [Tag: [Parazoology](#)]

## Incoming

\* Information is the real currency of the Sixth World, and people in Denver are paying plenty to anyone who's good at gathering it on the down-low. [Tag: [Spy Games](#)]

\* Some of the most powerful people in the world are rumored to be chasing after ancient artifacts, and who knows what they'll do if they get their hands on them. [Tag: [Artifacts Unbound](#)]

\* There are planes that inspire confidence in you the moment you set foot in them. And then there are the ones that put you in full-on prayer mode until they finally come to a shuddering halt on the ground. [Tag: [Unfriendly Skies](#)]

## Top News Items

\* Investigations continue into the recent death of Christy Daee, and rumors are spreading that Horizon executives know more about what happened than they're letting on. [Link](#)

\* Reports say the Kilimanjaro Mass Driver is "ahead of schedule," and corporations are working overtime to ensure that the region stays stable enough to prevent construction from being interrupted. [Link](#)

\* High Prince Larry Zincan of Tír Tairngire has restated his position that the activities of former princes are "of no concern" to him, and he says he has not been monitoring their recent activities. [Link](#)



CHAT

MESSAGES

FILES

POSTS

NEKUS

SEARCH

## ATTITUDE

Invited Guests

Intern, OrkCEO

Posts/Files tagged with "Attitude":

- \* The Untethered Life
- \* Street Life
- \* It's Who You Know
- \* Independent Together
- \* The Music Scene

[More]

CONTINUE

ADVANCED  
SEARCH

SAVE

Active



Firewall

Active



AntiVirus

Active



SpamWatch  
Filter

On/Receiving



Commcode

Excellent



Signal

Active

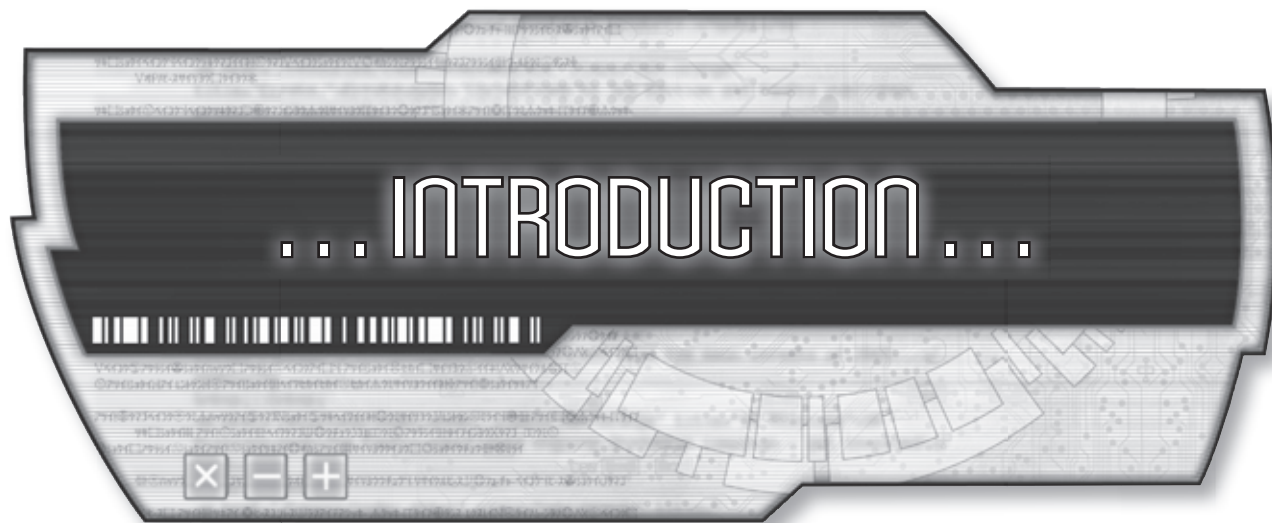


Hidden  
Mode



Local  
Map





### Posted by: Fastjack

We've all seen her. I don't care if you don't watch the trids that much—she's unavoidable. Her show's on all the time, she's used in AR spam that pops up everywhere, and people keep bio-sculpting themselves to look like her. She's the woman with the caution tape, the one who looks ready for a gunfight except that she has left way too much of the skin on her chest uncovered and vulnerable. I know that plenty of you have seen her because you've mocked her, said that's not what a *real* shadowrunner looks like. If you want to be professional, if you want to be respected, you don't look outlandish like that. Sure, she looks awesome, but she doesn't look *professional*.

But an interesting thing happens when an image like this gets out in public. It resonates with the public because that's what they want a shadowrunner to look like—tough, different, and brimming with attitude. And some of those people will end up getting involved in the shadows, either as runners or Johnsons, and when they do, they'll expect the runners they work with to look like her. The image of the fiction will turn itself into reality.

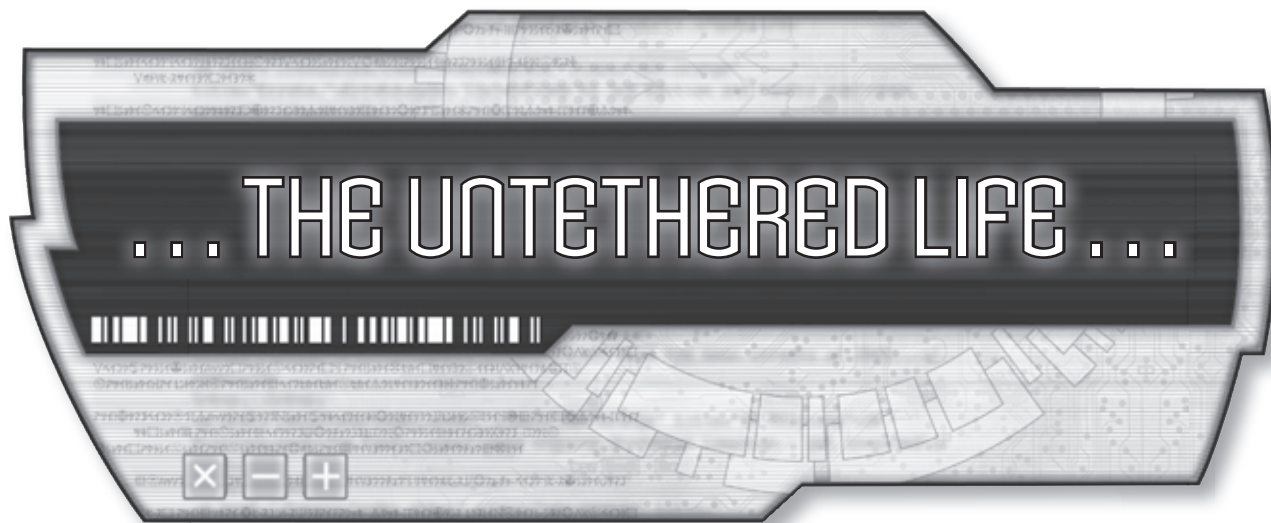
With that in mind, I thought it would be worthwhile to take a look at the overlap between what we do and the various media and related fields out there. There are plenty of good reasons to know about what's going on with trideos, BTLs, sports, and the like—they shape the way the people we deal with see the world, they provide possible revenue for the enterprising runner, and they're just plain fun. So we have a rundown of a lot of things we all do with our downtime here, along with some ways to turn leisure activities into cash. Since some of the articles mention the entrepreneurial side of these businesses—things like managing a musician, or producing

trids—I thought it would be good to start off with some of the basics of our profession. I recently found an interesting little account of a runner learning the ropes that might even teach the most jaded of us a thing or two about how running works today. After that I've assembled some articles from the usual suspects about who you know and how you treat them, plus some info on organizations out there that are interested in having people like us as members.

To wrap it all up, /dev/grrl and Plan 9 (yes, Plan 9—he'll explain his interest) bring us up to date on some of the latest fashions and related gear out there. Back in the old days, when it was just me and my deck, I didn't have to worry much about what I wore, but that's changed now. We're out, all of us, in public, and some of us are even broadcasting everything we do to a public that laps it up. We have to pay some attention to how we look. (On a side note, I have to say I don't quite understand the impulse to become a famous runner, as it seems like it creates a whole lot of annoying obstacles. Kat o' Nine Tales contributed some information here that, to me, reads like a cautionary tale about runners and fame).

Once you've finished this briefing, you'll know when it's good to have a nice Tiffany dress, and when a warm, snug livingwear code will do the job. You'll be caught up on fashion trends like steampunk and holowear, and you'll hear about the latest installment in the Cree and Dido trid series. You'll know who to talk to, what to talk about, and what to wear to the conversation. Above all, you'll know how to carry yourself when you go out into the wild world, and whether you go out low-key or swathed in caution tape, you'll walk with a strut, because you know that a cocky swagger can be a runner's first line of defense.





"Alarm off. Radio on." Reid Sabelhaus sat up in his bed and glared at his clock. The harsh blaring stopped, and a talk radio show replaced it. The chattering voices of political spokesmen escorted him as he threw off the sheets and stood up. Motion sensors tracked his progress through the condo, lowering the volume of wall-inset speakers in one room and raising them in another, so that he never walked away from the shrieking metahuman rights activists despite yawning his way down the hall and into the bathroom. The volume automatically rose to compensate for the rushing hot water of his shower, then lowered again as it stopped, and the talking heads just kept talking.

They'd cut to a commercial as he dried off. "Radio off." Reid stood in front of his fog-covered mirror for a long moment, tossing his wet towel down for his Grimebuster to scoop up. He wanted to swipe a hand over the mirror to clear his reflection but knew that it would only remind him of how a cyberlimb—inhumanly perfect for so many tasks—could be perfectly inhuman for others. He hated the streaks it left, the squeak it made as his polymer and alloy hand scraped the glass, the way it sounded like setting a beer bottle on a glass coaster when his fingertips first touched the mirror. Reid didn't want to hear that again.

"Mirror," he said instead, clenching and unclenching both his gunmetal-black fists. "Defog."

He stood there for a few more heartbeats, looking at himself as he did to start every day, taking inventory. Vents built into the wall and countertop banished the steam and brought clarity, and he stared long and hard at every puckered scar on his torso, relived every bullet and blade and tooth, and chided himself for letting them hit him. His gaze lingered where his arms and legs joined his torso, where meat suddenly gave way to metal, and he dwelled on every choice he'd made to get where he was. Reid stared long and hard at the pink-smooth patch over his heart, the scar from the first work he'd paid Aman Khayyam for. He'd traded ten slap patches of opiates for a perfect circle of laser-marked skin where he'd had a tattoo removed as quickly

and harshly as the street doc could manage it. Reid Sabelhaus didn't work for Lone Star any more. He hadn't for years. They'd built him, then thrown him away when Knight Errant had invaded Seattle without firing a shot. He was glad he didn't have their company logo tattooed on his chest any more.

He made himself stare his reflection in the eyes and sent a mental command. The gunmetal-black framework built into and under his eyes flickered for an instant and his lenses snapped into place. Memory plastics formed a ballistic shield that protected his expensive ocular implants, but they served a psychological purpose, as well. They were a part of his new uniform. When the lenses blinked into place, he changed.

Reid Sabelhaus, Lone Star officer, was gone. Saber, the shadowrunner, stared him down in the mirror, all metal limbs and mirrorshade optics, scars and edge and attitude. Reid had patrolled the Seattle streets with a partner; Saber worked with crews that came and went by the juggler's whim and Mr. Johnson's budget. He used to requisition gear from a quartermaster or buy it from Weapons World with an employee discount; now he took knock-off guns from dead gangsters and traded secrets to information brokers for ammunition. He used to believe in his job, working for the world's premier law enforcement corporation to make Seattle a safer place. Now he worked for a clever man who at least admitted that he was just a weapon. He'd been surrounded by friends and coworkers; now he had contacts and business acquaintances. He used to be engaged and on the verge of buying a home. Now he rented by the hour. Reid had always arranged for Sundays off of work, but Saber was about to spend the day in Khayyam's back room, praying the junkie's hands wouldn't shake during a routine maintenance check on his artificial legs and an upgrade to his reflex/response hardware.

"I'm still alive," the street samurai said, glaring at every scar that hadn't managed to kill him. He was, it was true. But to stay that way he still had to go to work. It was the only thing Saber had in common with Reid Sabelhaus.





## WHERE WE COME FROM

Posted by: Intern

- It's time for some soul-searching, people, so dig around in the deleted-files portion of your commlink, find 'em, dust 'em off, and let's get ready to talk about shadowrunners in modern society. Before we can take a long, hard, look at the world around us, let's take a glance in the mirror, huh? Winterhawk introduced me to a guy he worked with that's been doing interviews with his fellow shadowrunners on the side, collecting life stories and that sort of thing. Intern is a pretty good guy to talk about who shadowrunners are and how we find our way into this line of work, since he's been playing Captain Oral Historian for so long and collecting stories. He's got some interesting things to say, so I thought you all might want to hear them.
- FastJack

If you ask a hundred shadowrunners what got them into the business, you'll get at least a hundred different answers. I should know; I've actually asked them.

One interesting tidbit I've uncovered? There are a fair number of college-educated folks running the shadows, especially among hermetic magicians and team-tech gurus, who have attended a major university. There are an awful lot of degrees floating around the underworld, and I'm not the only guy with more than one. While my first Bachelor's may have been for Hermetic Applications from Texas AM&M, it's not the only, or the most advanced, of my degrees.

- Who cares? I thought this guy was supposed to be talking about shadowrunners, not bragging about his academic résumé.
- Riser
- Somewhat ironically, it's actually on-topic. Part of why this is being written is to take a look at how shadowrunners aren't even *only* shadowrunners; most of us started as something else and have echoes of that old person following us. We have ties to those old lives, and can't always cut the apron strings. The author is, in his own way, a prime example of that. When he's not busy slinging stunbolts at corporate guards, he wraps himself in the security blanket of academia to feel comfortable. I'm betting none of his degrees were in psychology, or he'd realize this about himself.
- Kay St. Irregular

I am, however, pretty sure I'm the only one that ever got saddled with the street name "Intern." Let's just say I didn't get paid as much as I should have for my first few jobs, and the nickname stuck. I've got nothing against the crew of miscreants and criminals I currently work with, but a tiny little part of me sure can't wait till they all die in a run gone pear-shaped, so I can start telling people I've always gone by Professor. Professor's got a much nicer ring to it than Intern, and it's been a long time since I did any sort of work for free.

- Oh wow. Yeah, Kay, you're right. This tool's really got his head in the game. Fuck. I wonder if he calls his fixer the Registrar.
- Riser

It's an unusual thing, being a shadowrunner. It requires a certain level of competency, a valuable skill set, and a willingness to expose yourself to terrific danger. That said, for a variety of reasons those of us who do this sort of work either won't or can't bring that same skill set, bravery, and professionalism into mainstream society in order to—often—make just as much money.

Why is that?

It's a complicated question, and one I'm still working on answering after all these years. It turned into something of a hobby of mine after broaching the subject with a handful of my regular teammates. I like to spread around some nuyen, favors, and booze, in order to try to get other shadowrunners to open up about their latest job. I've broached the subject with people I've worked with everywhere from Seattle to New York, Los Angeles to Portland, two teams in Hong Kong, a set of guides in Australia, bounty hunters in Quebec, a dozen smugglers out of Denver, and Lakota Mafia hitmen on the Great Plains. Truth be told, I've asked everyone who's trusted me enough to engage in idle conversation. In addition to my hermetic talents I've got the Irish-American's gift of gab, so more of these folks have talked to me than you might otherwise expect.

- "Gift of gab" my foot. I gave him an interview when he asked, sure, but I had a teammate scope him out on the Astral while I was doing so. Intern might focus more on spellcasting than the other stuff, but the guy's an adept. I'm guessing he follows the Speaker's Way.
- Sticks
- Well, shit. That would explain why I felt so comfortable talking to him! What a sleaze. And he's going to brag about it, here of all places, after the fact?
- Pistons
- Aww, did someone get sweet talked so hard she forgot to change the names and dates a little?
- Black Mamba

What I've noticed is that there are a few very broad backgrounds that most (but not all) shadowrunners fit. We all learned our skills somewhere, right? We all came from somewhere, got our edge somewhere, and had a life somewhere before it turned into meetings with Johnsons and skirmishes with the corps. So here are the main categories I've put people into.

### WHO RUNS THE SHADOWS?

**Professionals Laid Low:** These are the guys that are used to wearing a sharp suit or uniform, receiving a steady paycheck in exchange for services rendered, and benefiting from some top-notch corporate or government training. Of course, nine times out of ten, naturally, the "services" they render leave folks bleeding and insensate. These are the company men, the soldiers, the corporate commandos, the debt collectors, and the executive bodyguards that we all keep around to do violence on our behalf. Odds are we all know at least one, and odds are he's a scary motherfucker.

Despite the stereotype, not all former professionals are pure muscle. Corporate wagemages have had reason to go rogue in the past, and not every corporate IT expert is able to resist the







temptation to dip into the corporation's electronic cookie jar and make a short-term score that costs them their long-term career. More than a few fighter jocks, combat drone riggers, and other electronics or vehicle experts have made their way from the military to the shadows. Hell, I even know two combat bikers that got tired of playing for points and moved off the field and onto the streets.

The main thing these sorts have in common isn't what job they do, but how they do it; they tend to be sharp, well-trained, accustomed to having top-notch gear at their fingertips, and used to working with other pros. They're so used to it, in fact, that sometimes a crew can fall apart because these stone-cold professionals don't think the untrained rabble are pulling their weight. Every one of these guys I've talked to had at least one story of frustration, failure, or serious physical trauma that he blamed on another shadowrunner for not doing his job right. Keep an eye out for friction with these guys.

- I used to know a guy who insisted we all call him Sarge, and he'd get all fed up when someone didn't do things his way. He didn't last real long. I did. It's important for the bold urban commandos out there to realize not everyone buys into their chain of command bullshit.
- Riser
- It's just as important for the street rats to realize that sometimes the guy yelling orders is doing it for a reason. Obviously an ex-SWAT or Fast Response Team shooter doesn't need to establish himself as leader in every situation, but maybe in a gunfight you should listen to him, yeah?
- Hard Exit

Remember that they all have a reason to be stuck in the shadows instead of back at their dream job. Let's face it, most of these guys already had a pretty sweet deal. They got to do what they were good at, they got paid steadily for it, and they got to do it with all the resources of a megacorporation or national military backing them up, right? Heck, they probably even had a nice medical/dental plan. So it only follows that it takes a pretty good reason to turn your back on a sweet gig like that, and instead live by the roll of the die, ducking from alley to alley as a shadowrunner. Often that reason is so good that they've got someone from their past life looking to settle a score that came when they changed life paths.

**Amateurs Lifted Up:** This is the other category where most shadowrunners fit. These are the guys who have had a shadowrunner's swagger and attitude since they could walk, as opposed to an exiled professional's chip on his shoulder. They're the runners who came from the streets and found themselves getting paid for what they'd done their whole life; the go-gangers, hustlers, petty crooks and burglars, thugs for criminal syndicates, low-level muscle, or half-trained magicians that get by with natural talent and instinct instead of polished ability. This group also includes those second-generation runners out there, whose parents were involved in the game and managed to raise a kid despite the nature of the business.

To most of these types, getting into the shadows proper is better than whatever life they left behind. They get more respect as a "professional criminal" than they did as a desperate whatever-they-used-to-be. They're getting access to a whole new world with

every certified credstick that comes their way, and sometimes their haul from their very first job will be more money than they've ever had in their life. To a hardscrabble street kid, every Ares Alpha is a motherlode, and every bit of secondhand chrome is an edge that makes them sharper than they were yesterday. When you're coming from little, the reputation of being a shadowrunner instead of a two-bit hood can make all the difference in the world.

Just like the professionally trained experts, these guys sometimes have an attitude problem. Pride is a brittle thing. Icy-eyed pros might think it's amateur hour whenever a teammate does something other than "by the book," and sometimes the street rats get frustrated, too. Insulting the neighborhood they came up in, talking bad about their former affiliation, doubting the accomplishments of their shadowrunner parents, anything they and their street rep might take as disrespect? All mistakes. Watch your step.

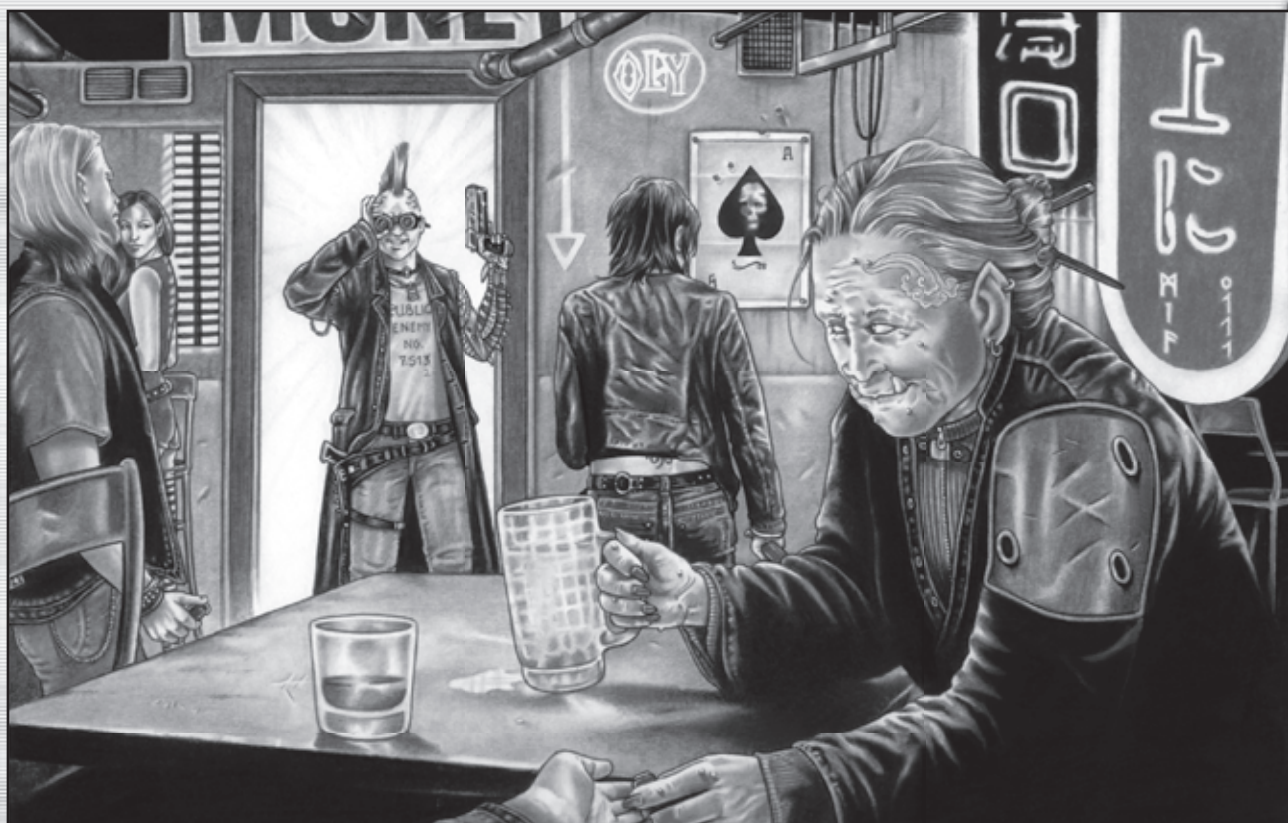
- This should go without saying, but sadly some folks still need to hear it. So what if you don't like your buddy's Mohawk? Maybe he doesn't like your stupid trenchcoat! What matters is that in the subculture you both came from, symbols like that were important. Be careful how critical you are of your buddies. Teams have fallen apart for less.
- Sticks
- Look, what matters is getting the job done. That's how we get paid. That's how we make our rep. So if the way you look, or your hang-up about your home turf, is an obstacle to getting the job done, you damn well better believe I'm going to say something about it, feelings be damned.
- Stone

The biggest draw for these talented amateurs is that stepping halfway into the shadows can be a real win/win for them. For those that rankled at being told what to do, or hated living as an errand boy for more established crooks, there's a surge in liberty that comes with cutting ties to your old organization (assuming it's the sort of organization that it's possible to leave in one piece). To guys like these, much like to the former company men of the first category, being a shadowrunner simply beats having to take orders all the time. Others just see the stacks of cred shadowrunners throw around, the opportunities, and the ability to be your own person.

To those who are comfortable with their existing life, though? Those who still want to keep one foot in the smuggling ring, pirate family, or gang, and just see shadowrunning as a side job? They can get the best of both worlds; I've seen it myself. Those who come into the shadows from a criminal organization have a much easier transition than the folks used to a steady and predictable corporate lifestyle. With precious contacts—maybe even family—to call upon when the need arises, they find themselves with a steady flow of information, buyers, and sellers, while still benefiting from similar connections in the shadows proper, same as any other independent. To those who can juggle both sets of responsibilities, enemies, and obligations, straddling the line between made man and independent can be a terrific opportunity. It's a lot easier for a criminal to keep one foot in his old life than it is for a corporate security specialist, after all.







INCOMING FEED.....

- That, and the former corporate security pros who try to keep their old contacts can have some serious and obvious trust issues with their new friends. It's one thing if a buddy still grabs beers with his old street gang, but it's something else entirely if he's making regular calls to a Saeder-Krupp office.
- Aufheben
- Double lives are trouble, so be careful. They involve lies, and who you decide to lie to and what lies you tell makes you have to start playing favorites—you have to lean toward one life or the other. It tends to end in either an explosion of exposure or a mental breakdown due to the stress of keeping up appearances.
- Fianchetto

**First-Timers:** Where does an academic like me fall? I've been formally educated—heck, I'm an adjunct professor according to my lay-low SIN—but my combat training and experience have come entirely from the streets. What about a buddy of mine who still considers himself a private investigator, despite the runs we drag him on? He's a failed professional in that he's got a legal office, license, and SIN, none of which would be afloat if it weren't for what he calls "these little side jobs," but everything he knows, he learned from growing up where he did and having the contacts he has. Are guys like us street rats or stone-cold pros? Neither. We're both in this "other" category, what you could call first-timers, newbies, accidents, or lucky bastards. We stumbled into the job, like

it or not, and only found out we weren't going to sink once we'd noticed that, somehow, we were swimming.

Not every shadowrunner set out to be one, or trained ahead of time to have the necessary skills. Some of us just got in over our heads, and found out the hard way that we had what it took to make it.

So we've got stone-cold professionals who lost their jobs, hungry street rabble who've clawed their way into the shadows proper, and bumbling citizens who've managed to scrape together some on-the-job training. These aren't perfect classifications, I'll admit, but I think it covers most of the bases.

So let's say we've established a few of the different people who find themselves suddenly shadowrunning. Let's even say we touched on their private reasons for ending up in this line of work. Moving on, in a broader sense, why does *anyone* run the shadows?

## WHY RUN THE SHADOWS?

**Potential and independence** are the two answers I hear the most.

Corporate wages are reliable pay—as is, after a fashion, slinging BTLs or running a bunraku parlor. Money comes in, money goes out, and life goes on. There are folks who don't want that, though—folks who'd rather gamble everything, including their lives, on hitting it big. Every shadowrunner dreams of that last job, after having built up the cred, the rep, and the gear they'll need to get it; the one that will see them buck the system, get away with it, and buy a little island somewhere pretty. We daydream



about living where the map's turned blue, sitting on a beach and sipping an infinite number of drinks with tiny umbrellas in them, eating real meat instead of soy all the time. We're all gamblers, and every gambler tells himself he knows just when to quit. The steady income of corporate—or more mundane criminal—work isn't for some people, and so we take to the shadows instead, enticed by the possibility of hitting it big someday. Most of us never make it, most of us don't punch out until it's too late, but we still tell ourselves we're in it for the money, not the rush.

- "Tell ourselves," my ass. I am in it for the money.
- Black Mamba

The other silver lining, the one that some of the retired old grayhair shadowrunners say matters more than ever, is personal freedom. Never mind that the corporate paycheck is boring and disappointing, they say, the cubicle itself is a prison! Even the petty hustlers are tied to their street corners, the guidos and Seoulpa hitmen are slaves to their elders and syndicate rules, the go-gangers stuck in their uniform bikes and leather cuts, and the street punks walled in by gang tags that mark where territory stops. Breaking the law doesn't automatically bring freedom, they say, if you're the low man on the criminal totem pole. You're just trading a corporate master for a criminal one. There's an allure to being your own boss that draws quite a few of these types into the life of a shadowrunner. You can't spell freelance without free, chummer, these crusty old neo-anarchists say, and the only real freedom left in the Sixth World is the ability to pick and choose what jobs you'll take. Everyone else in the world, they'll tell you, has to do what someone else says. The shadowrunner *chooses*, and only listens to Mister Johnson until one task is finished and your account is credited. To them, that's all that counts.

- Picking and choosing what jobs to take? Shit. I wish! It seems like every time I try to walk because some Johnson's making my skin crawl, I somehow get dragged back into his mess anyway.
- Hard Exit

Lots of us trip and stumble into this life, but I think those are the reasons we choose to stay. There's a fantastic potential for profit, and there's a feeling of freedom that makes the ride worth it.

For me, it was Crash 2.0 that did it. I thought my day was bad when I couldn't access the datafiles that had my half-finished dissertation on Hermetic Theories of Metaplanar Travel. I soon learned it wasn't just a campus-wide Matrix glitch; it was almost the end of the world. I'd lost my SIN, my name, my savings account, my every credstick, my academic records, my car, my condo. Then I got dragged into the violence that surrounds any sort of disaster like that, and what choices did I have?

Going back to school after all that, even if I could get it worked out, would have felt boring after my first mage battle. Signing up for classes would have been downright mundane after dispelling an angry fire elemental. How much could I really worry about an exam after the first time I plugged a hole in my buddy's gut and willed him not to die? I still dip into academia from time to time, publishing enough under my fake SIN to stay employed and to be taken seriously, sure. But I think of myself as a shadowrunner now.

- If he thought of himself as a real shadowrunner, he'd stop worrying about padding his curriculum vitae.
- Riser
- If he didn't think of himself as a real shadowrunner, he wouldn't be posting this.
- Winterhawk

I know at least ten other runners who dealt with the Crash-induced chaos in a fairly similar fashion. The reality is that a whole generation of shadowrunners fell into the lifestyle thanks to the madness that came with those SIN database wipes. There were a whole lot of people dispossessed by the Crash and the riots, madness, and general mayhem that went with it, and plenty of those people wound up in the shadows. That disaster turned a new page in an awful lot of people's lives.

- He's got a point with this one, but maybe not as big a point as he likes to think. The Crash was a long time ago. Not very many of the folks it tossed into shadowrunning are still here unless they wanted to be. They've either died, or figured out a way to get their old lives back. It's old news, even if he won't admit it.
- Pistons
- It's worth pointing out that the Crash isn't the only recent crisis that's seen a whole bunch of dyed-in-the-wool law-abiding citizens wind up in the shadows all at once. Seattle's *still* crowded with former Lone Star types that turned themselves into street muscle and guns for hire when Knight Errant took over their city contract.
- Sticks

So we're all here now. Some of us are steely-eyed professionals who stopped drawing a steady paycheck and found themselves renting their skills out one job at a time. Some grew up in organized crime and started to make it operating solo, adjusting to a life with a small crew instead of being part of a larger criminal organization. Some got thrown headfirst into shadowrunning, like it or not. What we have in common is we all want more. Motivated by good old-fashioned greed, the desire to gamble bigger to collect bigger, the desire to work outside the rules to make the world a little freer place, or just because we're tired of taking orders from anyone, here we are. Shadowrunners.

So now what?

Now we adapt, that's what. The rules are different, running a motley five-man crew of screwball specialists. Most teams don't have the efficiency of a military or corporate security chain of command and are left with rotating leaders based on the situation; you've got to learn who your expert is and when to trust them real quick. What's more, you've got to learn to trust your contacts, all those black-market friends of yours who don't necessarily go into the field with you, but whom you count on anyways. There's no corporate quartermaster or gang-owned warehouse sitting there waiting to provide you with the gear you need. You've got to learn who you can call, and you've got to stay on their good side. It's a tired old saw, but "you are who you know" has become a cliché for a reason. Folks coming into shadowrunning from other lines of work have to learn the importance of keeping friends and contacts

close. Whether you're working toward the big golden payoff that'll see you to the Bahamas or building enough of a rep to start turning jobs down and feeling like a free man, you've still got bills to pay.

You have to keep your street doc happy, have to keep that smuggler's family greased to make sure you keep getting the guns and chips you need, have to give your talismonger a cut if you want that sexy new focus after your next job, and have to toss a little extra to everyone you deal with to make sure they stay quiet. Just like a wageslave paying rent or a mortgage and making payments on his Americar—which, ironically, is all stuff you might have to juggle for three different identities at once, now—you've got to pay your dues to stay in the game. You might not have to type up a weekly progress and profits report to give to a middle manager every Friday evening before you leave the office, but you still have to let your fixer keep tabs on you to know when you're available, you've still got to bribe the corrupt manager at Weapons World to get ammo and armor, you've got to act like your own manager and PR man to make sure the streets don't forget who you are and the jobs don't dry up. You've still got to bend over backwards, do favors, lie, cheat, steal, and kill to keep your crew halfway trusting you and running smoothly. You've still got to eat, sleep, and *work* in the shadows. You just don't get to start at nine and punch out at five any more.

So yeah, you're your own boss. You're not jacked in at a cubicle or living on some crummy on-base housing. You don't have to buy company clothes from the company store with company scrip, or pay taxes to any silly government. You get to color outside the lines, break all society's rules, and thumb your nose at social conventions. You aren't scared of the Barrens any more. You stare down bouncers instead of standing in line. The local street gang

steps aside when you're on the sidewalk with 'em, and pimps never dream of having their girls rob you while you sleep.

But that Caribbean island is a long way off, and everyone you meet just might be out to kill you for what you did last weekend.

Welcome to the shadows. You're in for a wild ride, no matter how you got here.

- He's got a point about the double-edged "freedom" of being a shadowrunner. When you come into the life after growing up in a gang, that first rush of being your own boss is great. After that, though, reality hits you, and you realize that even if you haven't completely turned your back on them, you've moved away from all your old contacts, friends, and support. Every ganger thinks he's ballsy enough to hack it alone, but truth is once you're used to having people on your side, it's not easy to get used to being on your own.
- Riser
- Try severing ties with all the quartermasters, training schools, and armories of a major security corp. It's not easy for those of us who were used to being able to radio to dispatch to get backup, either. The first time the bullets fly and you can't call in an OO code to get emergency support, it really sinks in that you're on your own.
- Sticks
- Aww. Shadowrunning just brings everyone together, doesn't it? Are you two about to start singing?
- Slamm-O!
- Don't you have a diaper to change or something?
- Sticks





## ... STREET LIFE ...

You're just going to eat that pizza? Look, you've just passed by three ripe opportunities. Do you see that guy at the counter? Do you see how he's looking around, making rounds with his eyes? He's a fixer. This is his front job. He knows his shit; it's his job to know who comes and goes so he can make the necessary connections. Chica that asked you for a dime, she's a gillette. Loyal as hell, too. She was propositioning you, either for a job or a shag, possibly both. It's code. On your way back, that bloke that bumped into you and made you drop your GidFizz, he's a pickpocket. He checked to see if the commlink you're carrying is worth stealing. He pegged you as a shadowrunner. He was good enough to get you without your noticing—he'd be a useful asset.

If you want to make it as a runner, you have to recognize everything around you. You have to keep your fingers on the pulse of the city. People are working the shadows right in front of your eyes. Everyone's a potential operative. The thing is, they work so that your average Jane won't recognize it. You have to be different to see it, otherwise you're just another victim; you're just another hustle. Everything's a sign, kid. Stick with me, you'll be savvy in no time.

I can teach you what you need to know. Five large, and by the time I'm done with you, you'll be an expert runner. I do this. I'm retired, and I've always got an eye out for new talent. Trust me when I say, you can't afford to start your career without my help. I'll keep an eye out from your comm, and I'll give you the low-down on the way things work. We don't need to meet; we don't need to get to know each other. I explain, you do as I say, and you take your career to the next level. Why do I know you need my help? You're nervous. It shows. You've just started in the biz, and now you're thinking you might be in over your head. Play your cards right, and you'll be afraid of a whole lot less than you are now.







- Did that get your attention? I found this thing about the Matrix—friend of a friend of a friend was helping a green runner get familiar with the way things are. It's good for nostalgia, and to keep up on the way things have changed since you were fresh on the streets. It's also a good primer for recruitment. If you want cheap work, and are interested in scouting some new talent, it's not a bad example of how to get started and how to carry yourself. The whole scenario starts with a kid responding to a classified ad on the back of a menu. Our recruiter contacts the would-be runner, then runs them through the gauntlet and teaches them some essential lessons.
- Fastjack

Hate your situation? Feel like you can't do anything about it? Have you been living on 20¥ a day and want more out of life? Have you ever looked at the guy in the suit, the one who passes you on the streets with a sneer of contempt? We have the career for you. Or at least we might. Looking for a change of life? Not afraid of anything? Looking to stick it to the man? Hit us up. Call A112085367 and we'll hook you up with an entry exam.



## RUNNING IN THE SHADOWS

So, you think you've got yourself a job. You've got a couple of tight connections. You've got a 'dex full of people ready to hand you filler gigs to keep the cash flowing. You've got a fake SIN, a nice cache of nuyen in an anonymous post box, and you have a gun hidden in every square kilometer of the city proper. But in truth, you're still a baby, runner. Sure, you're doing the things runners do, at least on the surface, but you're not eating like them, you're not speaking their language. Right now, we're gonna grow you up. We're gonna get you into your big boy chair; we're gonna move you on to solid foods.

Well, figuratively. You're still going to eat the same junk food you've always eaten.

- Wow. Talk about pompous. And I thought I had a little too much confidence to be taken seriously.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- Let's give him a break. He's trying to make a dishonest wage, just like the rest of us. Young runners are fair game as any charge, and they tend to respond to confidence, so it's a good business strategy.
- Aufheben

Let's start at the beginning. Everyone is out to get you. Repeat after me, everyone is out to get you. Was that so hard?

The trick is to get you to a point where they can't get you. Learn your stuff, and you'll be the one getting them. That's advanced technique, though.

So first, do you see that kid over there? He's in the same place in life as you. He wants to be a runner. He fancies himself as elite. I'm going to walk you through your first professional-grade trick. In ten minutes, you'll be one rung higher on the food chain than him. Just follow my lead. Do not forget, his name is Jayson, and he's out to get you.

Walk by him. Note that he's by the VendingWear machine. That's a lesson in and of itself—it tells you he knows something you don't. Fresh socks make or break a runner. Remember that you won't always have the luxury of a nearby Freshsox machine. You should carry a spare pair whenever possible. Extended campaigns can work nightmares on your feet. Athlete's foot is the last thing you want when your life is on the line. So, Jayson over there is getting a pair of black socks. Another display of ignorance. I want you to order a pair, and we'll see where your mind wanders.

- This douche is teaching a man how to buy socks? I wonder if the next lesson is hopscotch. Maybe we'll teach him the art of lacing his shoes, since no amount of socks will perform without correctly laced shoes.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- There's a lot of wisdom in the sock argument, actually. And before you scoff, shoe lacing can mean life or death. I've seen a man killed because his laces caught him on some scaffolding. It was rather macabre, all things considered.
- Aufheben
- I'll second the remark about socks. It's classic Che Guevara. Except, you know, shadowrunners are rarely freedom fighters. But the mentality is the same. Clean feet mean comfy feet. Comfy feet run best in the shadows.
- Marcos
- Comfy feet run best in the shadows? When the world sees me wearing that slogan on a T-shirt, I'll make sure to give you credit.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

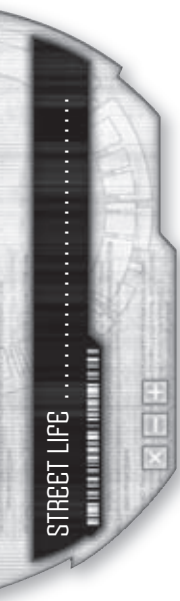
You want blue socks? Because they match your denim? That's true, but it also makes me question your common sense. Get white socks. Dyes are bad.

Enough on socks. Glance over to Jayson. Don't let him know you're watching him. You see that twitch in his right eye? Boy's got butterflies in his stomach. You've got to jump on that, or you're never going to succeed. You're going to give him about two arms' length, but you're going to walk alongside him. Pretend you're not. Pretend you're a casual, everyday mall walker. We're going to get you a job.

Do you see the ork down the way? Our quarry is collecting money from him. How do I know? Friend ork is dressed to the nines, but he's drinking a Pop Club Soda. That means he's not too good with money. He spends in bursts, buying clothes and







jewelry. Look at that commlink. He likes playing at being flashy. But on the other hand, he's drinking Pop Club soda. You tell me you were raised poor in the Seattle slums, you should know that Pop Club is the shit you get at warehouse stores. It pretends to be a knock-off of Klassic Fizz. It tastes less like Klassic Fizz, more like carbonated ass. Expensive clothes mixed with disgusting soda is a sure sign someone is a thief, hustler, or a freelance journalist. And an ork like that's no freelance journalist.

Your next question should be, if he's broke, why would you waste your time trying to collect from him? It's a good question. The simple answer is, I'd never take that kind of job, and I'd probably never recommend you do it. But this is an attack of opportunity. The more complicated answer is, look at his hand. Do you see how he keeps fingering his pocket? That's because he knows he has the money. There's something in there worth money, probably a drive with some paydata on it. It's not big enough to be a gun. He can't spend right now, because that piece of data is all he has. That's something, at least.

- I'm not one to knock a job just because it's not glamorous, but petty robbery? Is that what he's leading up to? I'm sure there are grannies with bigger bankrolls in there. He could shake one of them down, and it wouldn't even take a lot of pretentious, self-important yammering to get there. I understand the points he's giving about breaking down a mark, but you don't have to do that to every potential target you meet. Save the careful breakdown for those who actually have potential to be worth your trouble.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

You need to do exactly what I say, when I say it. And you need to say what I tell you, when I tell you to. You don't want to botch this. You're not a pushover, but if you do this wrong you could have a whole bunch of people mad at you, and I wouldn't pit you against multiple opponents just yet, especially when one of them is an ork. I want you to wait until you're three meters away from the ork, then you're going to make your move. Be prepared. Our ork won't strike immediately, he's too nervous. The runner is out to prove something, so he's your first target. He's not expecting you; he's focused on the prize. As the old saying goes, the best time to kill a lion is when he's hunting something that isn't you. His guard is all focused on the ork threat. So you're going to give him a gift in the form of your pistol's butt in the back of his skull.

The trick to knocking your average metahuman out is: Aim for that little spot where the skull meets the spine. First off, it's highly visible. Second off, it's nonlethal. Third, it shakes the brainpan and maximizes your chance for knocking him unconscious.

Good! I wasn't expecting him to go down that quickly. You're better than I expected. Now, put the pistol to the ork's neck, and tell him to drop. Then, with your other hand, grab the drive he's been fingering. Never take your eyes off his. If you can keep eye contact with a prone enemy, he generally won't attack. Some call it dominance. I call it common sense on his part. He can't move without causing a reaction. That reaction might very well be a bullet in his head. You've got the drive, now, let the ork stand, give him a shove on the back, and tell him firmly to run. Don't worry, he will.

Here, we introduce the finesse of the job. Put your gun to the runner's head. Take his Pop Club soda and splash it up in his face. Make sure some goes up his nose. His body's response will be to wake him up in a panic. His brain's telling him he's drowning, and Pop Club soda's best, and least widely known, use is that it burns the sinus cavity worse than sulfuric acid.

He's awake, so demand he tell you where the dropoff is. As soon as he answers, insist he tell you who he's working for. The post office on Gary and 156<sup>th</sup>? Craig Cruiser? See how easy that was? I know you're wondering how we can trust him. When a human wakes from unconsciousness due to their drowning instinct, it's almost impossible to lie. This guy isn't a trained operative, there's no way he has that skill set. Smash him in the face and knock him back out. Then get out of here. You're in a crowded mall, for Pete's sake.

- Points for using the phrase "for Pete's sake" after 1950. So, he got a bit more than money. He got the guy's boss. I wouldn't exactly call splashing soda in the face "finesse," though.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- Yeah, this is a kind of brute force approach, and it's not always appropriate. I might opt for lifting the drive off the ork in full view of the other runner, so that the ork is unaware but the runner knows you got it faster than he could. I think that could lead to some of the same results this trainer is moving toward.
- Marcos

I'm surprised I even have to tell you where you're going now. You're going to the drop-off. You're going to leave a note for Craig Cruiser. He's going to be your new business partner. Did you expect we build connections from some kind of directory service? If you don't play music, you won't become a professional musician. Further, just playing won't get you where you need to be. You need to play in front of powerful ears. This Craig Cruiser has the ears you want to play for. You get shadowrunning work by shadowrunning, word-of-mouth advertising, and the occasional pro bono gig, which puts your career right where it needs to be. It's something kids these days will never recognize. They think you have to get paid for every silly little shakedown, even when you're green.

- You have to be careful, though. Yeah, sometimes you can do something like this that will impress someone a few steps higher on the food chain. But other times, you'll just piss them off because you're messing with their business, and that won't necessarily endear you to them.
- Riser

So, Craig Cruiser called, and he wants a sit-down to talk business, right? Everything's happening like it's supposed to. Next lesson involves the codes you need to learn before you can step into the big time.

## CODES

Everything about you—the things you say, the things you wear, the things you use—carries information about you. Take Pop Club soda. Pop Club soda means you're poor. As we saw earlier, someone wearing fancy clothes and drinking Pop Club is





someone who gets money in bursts, for whatever reason. That's an unwritten code. Shadowrunning uses more formal codes as well—there's an argot you have to learn if you want to stay on top. And staying on top should be your constant goal—if you're not going to strive for that, you should find yourself another line of work. I hear casino security pays well.

You should always be thinking about what kind of codes people are passing on to you. Craig's meeting you at Casa de Carne, right? What's the first thing you should think about that? Of course, it's a restaurant chain. Chains say a lot about the nature of the business. First off, he's not looking for attention. High-profile criminals visit independent shops. They do business in named Italian joints, or in the back of upscale Pakistani cafes. Working out of a chain restaurant means you want to take advantage of the homogeneity of the place. Casa de Carne on a Friday night is the stomping grounds of suburban families looking to get out for a nice night together. Inevitably, these nights aren't too nice. The kids are too loud, they're impatient, dirty laundry gets aired thanks to the beers, and the food is sub-par on a good night. This means that said families are self-absorbed and wouldn't notice a mob hit in front of their faces. That's a far cry from the place where everyone knows what's going on in the corner booth, but tolerates it because they think it adds to the Mario Puzo atmosphere.

Second thing, Casa de Carne isn't cheap. You can't get a Meximeltasaurus for less than twenty nuyen. He's not taking you to Tacoco's All You Can Eat Tacos. He expects to put down sixty or more on a prospect, which means you must have made a rather good impression. There's nothing wrong with a meeting at Tacoco's, don't get me wrong. I've done some of my best work out of that place. But Casa de Carne communicates a lot to you. It's all code. Craig Cruiser wants you to know that this isn't high-profile work, but he's willing to pay well for your services if you're good enough. He's giving you the chance to show him. So again, do what I say, and we'll be golden.

- Casa de Carne? The good ol' House of Meat? Sure, I get not going to the fanciest digs in town, but can you talk business with a straight face in a place that has a pork chop for a mascot on Saturdays?
- Slamm-0!
- You can talk business anywhere that you stand a reasonable chance of being ignored.
- Stone

Dress well. The rule for meets like this is similar to the one for job interviews, because technically, this is a job interview. Wear clothes one step above what your peers would wear at that location. Most of the people at Casa de Carne on a Friday night wear what they wore to work that day. Remember, we're talking business casual Friday, here. So, wear something sporty, but business appropriate. Most importantly, carry something that you can easily conceal. You don't need to bring anything beyond a standard sidearm, but you need to communicate to your potential client that you're ready and able to store a small arsenal in your Jean-Paul designer jacket. Why do I mention you should consider the Jean-Paul jacket? Casa de Carne is on the west side. That's where all your media corps are headquartered. Horizon family men go there after work. Jean-Paul

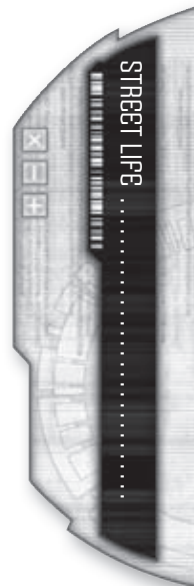
is ideal, because it's trendy and available at all high-end department stores. That means you'll fit in and shine. You'll be the cream of that restaurant's crop.

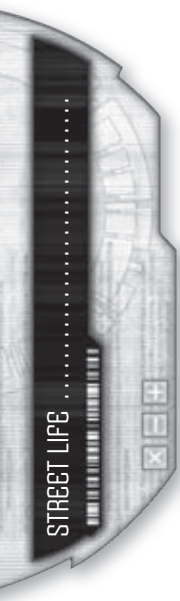
You think I'm putting too much attention into the details? This is why you're paying me, instead of me paying you. I know how this is done. Details are the most important thing. Anyone can smash and grab. Only the detail-oriented runner would cover tracks and look for those important little things that lead into other work. Did the victim ask for Sato when he heard you sneaking around? That's a detail. Did the payment come in nuyen or corp scrip? That's a detail. Details are the name of the game, kid. Any boss you want to work with knows this, and will appreciate your attention to that. While you're at it, ditch the cufflinks. Cufflinks are the ideal place for bombs and bugs. Purposefully omit them, and you're telling Craig that you're mindful of his privacy.

- I know all of you are going to come up with some retort to this, but I have to say, nobody I've ever met pays attention to your cufflinks, or the brand of suit you're wearing, in a chain burrito shack.
- Marcos
- Yes and no. The specific clothing brand may not always be important, but the general look you're wearing and the impression you're creating is a good thing to be mindful of. Blending is important (though I think the trainer went a little above and beyond in making sure that happened). As far as the cufflinks go, though, that's a statement. While nobody looks at a man's cufflinks, they notice when he's not wearing any. If you're doing something you're not supposed to be, if you're making an exception to an accepted norm, then the people you're with are more likely to notice. Quickly, he'll figure it's some kind of message. Codes can mean a lot of things, and it's not always easy to know what's being conveyed. When I'm on a job with a stranger, and she comes in with one button of her blouse undone, and she unbuttons another right before we step outside, I look around for spies, and hope I read her right. She's using some sort of code, but I can't always be sure it means what I think it means.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

Welcome to the Casa de Carne. Check your exits before entering. More often than not, we're looking at the front entrance, and the kitchen. Sometimes there are side exits. Tonight, we're dealing with just two main portals. Be mindful when you enter. He didn't describe himself or give you a clue to what he'd be wearing, so this is your first test. He wants to know if you can identify him. You can.

Do you see the man in the corner? The one sipping the Corevo Light? He's a mob liaison. He's not Craig Cruiser, though. How do I know he's a mob liaison? By reading the codes. First, he's in the corner, and he's alone on a Friday night. That alone tells you he's an unsavory businessman (or just someone unsavory, period, but he's dressed well enough to be in some sort of business). Second, he's eyeballing everyone that walks in the door. He's not paying more attention to any one gender, that means he's expecting someone by name but not by gender. He's in a similar situation to you. He's in a nice suit; he's trying to communicate a bit of power. But look closer. His handkerchief is gold with black trim. That's an identifier. Nobody wears a gold handkerchief, at least nobody with an





impeccable fashion sense like his. He stuffed a napkin in his last bottle. That means he's gotten rid of a past asset, and he's moving on to new opportunity. That's most important to identify him to the prospect he's meeting, but it's also important for other possible business. Under other circumstances, you'd be talking to him. In fact, you might consider pinging him with a message and finding out if he's looking for freelancers. You've always got to keep the feelers out there, and there's nowhere better to look than where you discuss business. It means you're meeting people in your pay grade.

- This is the part of running life that people who aren't doing it don't always get. You're independent, yeah, but you're also always on the clock. Always. You don't walk away from your job and forget about it, because if you're not doing business, business is not being done. So you don't just go out and relax and forget about your troubles, like the sarariman can—you're always looking for opportunities.
- Pistons

Here's your mark. The one in the baseball cap and the leather jacket. He's dressed down. That means he's had problems in the past with people pinpointing him as a mover in dirty business. If it comes down to it, and if you're confident you can pull off a nice bluff job, you can use that against him. Another big skill for an expert runner, one too few people practice, is cold reading. You pick out little details like that, and you can eat a mark alive.

Go sit down. Introduce yourself. With these middle-management types, always speak first. They've all read *Go Rin No Sho*, and they all know that a successful businessman waits for the conversational partner to speak first. They know it supposedly gives them a better angle of attack. They focus on that bullshit, and they build false and worthless confidence. Yes, it's a good trick. But when you don't know how to take advantage of it, it's just as worthless as his ball cap. Speaking of that, the ball cap is for the Aztlan Jaguars. He's telling us in no uncertain terms that he's magic and metahuman friendly. That's very important to know, for those so inclined. You're not, so it doesn't matter. But file it away. It may come in handy down the line.

Wait, you don't know *Go Rin No Sho*? Translated title, *A Book of Five Rings*. Download it tonight. Read it. Do me a favor and refrain from asking me any more stupid questions until you can quote it comfortably. I'll leave you to your interview. I'll tell you later how you've screwed up. After this meeting, head to Club Penumbra. We'll start into another lesson there.

- Okay. I'm starting to get the cut of this guy's jib. I think he's putting a little too much thought into things, but who knows, maybe he'll turn the kid into a knowledgeable runner. That's a great public service, keeping ignoramuses off the streets.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- I feel you. I wasn't sold at first. But it's starting to go places. Let's see where he takes it next.
- Marcos

## THE HALO SYSTEM

I've always liked Club Penumbra. It's a great place for good old-fashioned work. It's the kind of place where about half the

people around you are there for business, and almost none of them are aware of what the others are doing. Hence, it's a great place to learn the way things work.

In 2073, almost everyone's gotten to a point where augmented reality doesn't really augment anything. It's just something that's there; it just exists. And in 2073, anything that exists is taken for granted. This gives you an edge. Yes, a metric ton of information is right at everyone's fingertips. Yes, we're bombarded with some of the most useful information in the world on a high-constant basis. That doesn't mean people care. People generally come in two flavors. They're either sheep or they're out to get you. If they're sheep, you could tell them there's a bomb strapped to their chest, and they'll shrug and reach for more nachos. If they're out to get you, they're so single-mindedly vindictive that they'll ignore the bomb. This is good for you, because it's good for business.

We have a third group of people though—smart people. They're rare, but they tend to flock to those who are like-minded. Augmented reality makes this simple. We like this. A few people on the cutting edge have adopted what's called the halo system. Have you ever noticed that some people bear faint halos in AR? If you're using hacked law-enforcement AR software, you might not see it. It's filtered out of copsight, because we don't need them to see it. Halos allow enterprising shadowrunners to subtly communicate with each other, telling each other what you're willing to do. See a green halo? That's someone that runs numbers, fences, or launders money; the victimless crimes. Red's an enforcer. If you need a bodyguard, that's where you look. More importantly, if you're being chased through a crowded place and you see a red halo, drop a quick offer, and you've got instant help. White is corporate crime. You won't see a lot of those, at least yet. Corporate criminals are far less willing to advertise than many others. Black halo, that's network. So if you see one of those, consider steering away. That's the kind of advertisement that screams mentally unstable. Purple is kidnapping. Yellow is arson and other assorted property damage. Even if you're not looking to hire, these things can be useful for making friends.

- Holy shit. I've never heard of this, and it's hot. I'm inventing one. A plaid halo means tacky graffiti.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- I'll bite. Brown is what?
- /dev/grrl
- The kind of crap work no one else wants to do.
- Picador

Tomorrow's lesson is product placement. We'll talk a little on branding and the modern runner. Go. Sleep. Change your socks. Lesson takes place at the mall. Be there at six p.m., the height of consumer hell.

## PRODUCT PLACEMENT

Your average consumer buys a car every five years. The average car runs about twenty grand. Do the math, that adds up to about ten nuyen a day. I don't know about you, but I spend more than that on ramen and smokes. Then why is it, when you ask someone about brand strength, they immediately start talking about cars? It's sort of stupid, when you think about it.





The brands that are really important are the ones we dump the most cash on. With runners, brands are important. Brands are an immediate sign of quality or the lack thereof. When life is on the line, you always want to know what'll work, what won't, and what's going to cost more than it's worth. Learning this is vital. You wonder about soy chips, and why they're important? Wait until you're holed up in a bunker with nothing but soy chips to sustain you. Then, you'll thank me for this little lesson.

## Food

When it comes to food, Aztechnology offers us a lot of shit. And shit it is. Your average Snak Kake is loaded with styrofoam, air, cardboard, corn syrup, and formaldehyde. In a pinch, corn syrup is technically food. Those other things won't do you a bit of good. Also, RFID tags. You don't want those when you're bunkered down now, do you? My rule of thumb is, don't put anything in your pockets that you wouldn't take on a mission. Tracking devices for third parties are just about the last thing I'd want to take with me.

What's your alternative? One word: Organostyle. Organostyle foods are a little more costly than your average cheap meal, but they're worth it. Their mission statement is that they respect their buyers. For whatever it's worth, they respect the privacy of shadowrunners. No RFID and limited packaging means you don't have to worry so much about what's left over from your snack. They're newer on the scene, so they don't have a lot of selection, but the stuff that's out there is pure quality. I don't leave home without at least a couple of their Oatstyle bars. They're full of wheat proteins, natural carbohydrates, and include a helping of sodium and potassium. Before you ask, no, I'm not your mother. Your mother wouldn't have taught you something this useful. Carbohydrates mean quick energy. Until you've run from the cops, you don't know what it's like to need energy. Proteins keep your body running strong, replacing all the cells that die during strenuous work. Also, if you get shot, you're going to need them to get everything knitted back together. Sodium and potassium go to great lengths to help your body maintain homeostasis. Combined with some water, one of these bars guarantees your body gets exactly what it needs, no matter what stupid shit you're up to.

- While I appreciate his recommendation, he's forgetting the part where they taste like ass.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- To be completely honest, they don't taste any worse than your average soy-based confection. It's not as if we have a world of affordable options. His points are spot on. It might sound silly, but proper nutrition should be a mainstay for any smart shadowrunner.
- Nephrine

## Clothing

We all love your black leather trenchcoat. Your pants with all the extra buckles are just plain stylish and cool. We get it. Now, why don't you do us all a favor and burn them? I get your retro Wirepunk thing. Trashy novels and films from a century ago inspired your whole schtick. Let me tell you: It wasn't cool

a century ago. It didn't last long, because it was dumb. You're a shadowrunner. You run in the shadows. You don't run in plain sight. That's why we don't call you a plain-fucking-sight-runner. If uninformed people can look at you and know what you do, you're doing it wrong.

My rule of thumb is: If someone could introduce me to someone as Joe Smith, and nobody thinks twice about it, I've done things right. I should blend in with my surroundings. That doesn't mean just wearing a bunch of black. That means thinking about the context. That means being sensitive to the surroundings. I knew a guy once who insisted on wearing a business suit wherever he went. That might work in a corporate enclave, but if you hit the slums, you stand out like a sore thumb. It's a simple concept, but one that's often taken for granted.

You got that? Now throw it into the back of your mind. We're not going to harp on it. We're talking about function. It's a sad truth, but if you want to be a successful shadowrunner, you're going to spend a ton of cash on clothes. Because of the sensitive nature of the job, you need to be prepared to replace clothes on a moment's notice. If you plan to stay in a single city, that's a lot easier than you'd think. If you vacuum-pack three outfits into a bag, you can plant them in a secure location. Include some variety. A business outfit, a casual outfit, and a stealth outfit. Do this about ten times throughout the city, and you're set. Why not just use vending machines, you ask? Vending machines don't have what you need.

Civilian clothes are great. They cover your body. That's about it. So strike that—civilian clothes are terrible. However, in your line of work, you need to look like you're wearing civilian clothes. 6 Tees is my favorite source—they specialize in clothing made to look like typical civilian kicks, but with a hint of runner sensibility. You'll be surprised at how much a few retrofitted pockets can help. A little bullet-absorbing weave, a lacing that helps expand broadcasting capabilities, and an integrated wireless dampening option, and you're in business. I like to call that package my office away from the office.

- While I stand by his statements about 6 Tees, they don't really work for those of us who want to look a little different. If you're in the punk scene, 6 Tees has nothing for you. I go for Tootie Frootie, they make armored clothing out of leather and rivets, like real clothing should be. I don't know what it's made of. But that shiny, phosphorescent, pink leatherette stuff they've put out lately stands out in a crowd. Sure, you can't sneak anywhere in it. But if someone sees you in that, they know you're not messing around. You see, sometimes, you have to do "the uniform." That's what I've always loved about running. Everyone can look at you and say, "that person's a runner," and if they know that much, they know enough not to get in your way. You can use a distinct look to your advantage.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- DressCode makes heavier stuff. If you want to go for the military surplus look that kills on college campuses worldwide, DressCode's the way to go. It's funny, they're better than the fatigues that soldiers wear on the front lines. I love them. Now, as far as "the uniform" goes, I second what Kat said. Not too long ago, I was on a run, and it went bad. It should have just been a corporate smash



and grab. Thought I was toast. I ran into a crowd of little proles; I could have never gotten through that swarm the way it was. But then, they parted. Like I was Moses. It's the way it's supposed to be.

- Marcos
- Since we're going for clothing recommendations, I think I'll chime in for Bodyline. Their Matrix-attuned clothing is top notch. It helps to have a dozen alternate interfaces, just in case one or eleven fail. Bodyline's stuff is also just plain sexy, augmented or no. Silk underwear makes me happy.
- Netcat

### Out of Date, Out of Style

I vaguely mentioned chip tracking back during the food lesson. One thing: Almost all clothing is wired. There's a school of thought that says if you want to be a wise runner, wearing vintage clothing is the way to go. In fact, I've seen some black-market vintage clothing stores that specialize in selling untagged clothes at a premium. I, for one, think this is a little unnecessary. Clothing is far too homogenized to be used against a person. It definitely won't stand up in a court of law. For this reason, most law enforcement agencies take clothing trackers for granted. It makes perfect sense: It's become too easy, and successful use of clothing trackers takes creativity. Cops aren't hired for their creativity. So unless you're an international terrorist on a corp's shit list, your clothes are safe.

Also, you have to look at it from the other side of the fence. If you're a cop, and you see a guy wearing exclusively untagged clothing, you know he's up to no good. That's like wearing a sign that says, "Please, officer, don't follow me." Yes, cops are lazy. But also, they have to occasionally arrest someone. If you're advertising your criminal nature, you're telling the cop that you're an easy target.

So there's today's lesson. Tomorrow, report to the west 37<sup>th</sup> Station. We're going to talk about transportation.

- Side note: He mentioned corps' shit lists. Do you know who they hire for those kinds of traces? Have you ever met the guy that knows the page references in novels, and lives to explain frame rates and polygon refreshing in AR? That guy. Most of society thinks the paranoid obsessive cretins of the world are not useful. A good corp knows the value of the nerd.
- Turbo Bunny

### THE TRAINS RUN ON TIME

Thank you for coming. Let's jump right into the next lesson. Having a personal vehicle is a luxury, but it's also a liability. It can be used to track you. It can be hacked and shut down at inopportune times. It can be rigged into an enemy. A shadowrunner who owns a traditional vehicle is a shadowrunner who doesn't value her career or her furthered existence. What's a runner to do? Transportation is cake, as long as you understand it. If you own a vehicle, you have to maintain it, you have to learn how to properly use it, and you have to remember not to use it for the things it's not made for. Why should commercial and public transit be any different?

First off, learn the bus and subway schedules. Don't just get familiar with them. Learn them like a southern Baptist knows the Bible. Be able to quote them on no notice. They're intimidating. Hundreds of buses running thousands of stops. Dozens

of subways running odd hours and odder combinations of stops. My trick is, get lost a few dozen times. Turn on some music, and go wild. Pay no attention to where you are or where you end up. Then, get to other some landmark or another. You'll learn transit soon. It's not just numbers. Chat with people. Learn what trains are reliable. Learn what buses tend to come late. Get familiarized with drivers. Bring them a coffee every now and again. Believe me, your investment will be rewarded.

Maintain your transit ability. It's important to stay on your best behavior in transit hubs. When someone sees you mug a guy in the train station, your face gets recognized. The absolute last thing you want is to run into a vindictive driver that'll point you out to the authorities when you're stuck on his bus. Escaping that scenario is tough to accomplish without someone losing at least a little blood. Monthly transit passes are your friend. When seconds matter, getting instant approval to board without waiting for an account transfer—and the associated security protocols rundown—as you jet into a bus is invaluable. You should also maintain a small tab with local cab drivers. Pay them in full every now and again, but always remind them that it's in their best financial interest to serve you to the best of their abilities. Get to know the city cabbies. Flirt with them. Tell them stupid stories to keep you fresh in their heads. Tip well. Cabbies are just about the only people that know the city streets better than a talented runner, and their loyalty is an asset that's not very easy to buy. It's a relationship you have to cultivate. Work your magic well, and you might have an accomplice when the shit hits the fan. A kidnapping job is far easier when there's a cab driver ready to help abduct your quarry, with the public none the wiser.

The one thing most runners overlook is that you can't assume transit exists purely for your own use. It's very easy to get wrapped up in the moment and think the world revolves around you. That kind of thinking can get you killed. Everyone in the city needs certain things to occur. They need buses to run. They need the subways to flow smoothly. Intervening in these things puts you on a lot of bad lists. If you want to see someone fight, prevent them from getting home from work on time. They'll fight like a mother bear protecting her cubs. A while ago, a runner friend of mine got into an altercation with a bus driver over something or another, and caused the bus to run late. My friend got jumped by a mass of passengers and didn't survive the trip to the hospital. It's a fact of city life. You're not special; don't pretend like you are.

- Skateboard, skateboard, skateboard. If you need to get somewhere fast, the skateboard is key. It goes places trains and cabs can't. It evades like nothing else, it's portable, and in a pinch, it makes a pretty damned good weapon.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

- That works, up until the point where it doesn't fit your outfit. Then you get that suspicious look he mentioned earlier. A runner stands out if she's riding a skateboard while wearing a sundress.
- /dev/grll

Now, take the R1 north. How much cash do you have on you? Twenty nuyen? That's perfect for the next lesson.

### LIVING ON A BUDGET OF NOTHING

Next, we've got a very direct survival lesson. You're going to spend the night out on twenty nuyen. Weather report says it's





gonna rain. What am I saying—this is Seattle. Of course it's going to rain. I'll walk you through the process, don't worry. And I've already checked; coffin hotels are a minimum of thirty-five nuyen. No cheating, either. No robberies. The goal is to do the night on twenty nuyen, not to make more money. Sometimes, you aren't in a position to make more money.

First, focus on shelter. You'll need to sleep, so securing shelter early gives you a clearer picture of what you'll be doing with the rest of your night. We've already ruled out hotels. I'd like you to make a left and look to that apartment building. That's where you're staying tonight, and you're going to sleep like a king.

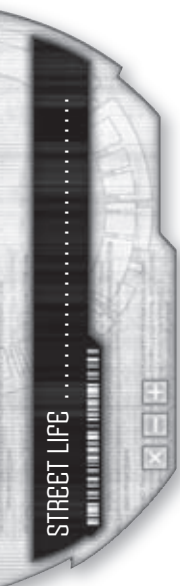
### Squatting

Walk in the front door. There's a buzzer at the door, which is what passes for front-door security. That's good—it's easier to get around than actual human eyes watching you. Now, take a look at the mailboxes as you pass through. We're getting acquainted with their numbering system, and finding boxes without names. The immediate thought is, you should consider a higher floor, because management is less likely to pay attention. But that's not the way we're going. We're going to find the model home. That's the only mailbox for the second floor that doesn't have a name. You'll notice that the third through eighth floors are full. That's not a coincidence. Management fills these apartments in an upward fashion. There's no other reason for a second floor apartment to be empty. When a manager shows an apartment, they don't want the potential tenants to have to take a long trip upstairs, that'll ruin their opinion of the building and their future living arrangements. What are you waiting for? Find the apartment.

- He's going to have the kid sleep in a model apartment? That's pretty ballsy. What if the landlords show up?
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- I don't think they show apartments at night.
- Marcus
- Point taken. You have to remember, though, that lots and lots of buildings, like your two-flats and three-flats and so on, don't have models at all. You want to find a model apartment, you need to find a place with at least thirty units, and it should be on the nicer side. Ghettoes don't have model units, either.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

The front door has a nice maglock, which you can't pick, and you don't have the equipment to bypass it. Breaking it, of course, is no good in a public place that's likely to have passers-by and security cameras. But this is where the nice appearance we got for you is going to come in. Here's what you're going to do. You're going to stand on the corner near this door, and act like you're in the middle of a commlink call. Then, when someone walks by you, you're going to pretend to notice how late it is and get moving. You'll follow them and hope they walk in the building. Don't get too close—you don't want to spook them, and you want to walk up to the building's door just as they're opening it, or else you'll be awkwardly standing there, waiting for them to get the door open. Make like you're reaching into your pocket for a keycard as you walk up and see them opening





the door. Then smile, take a few quick steps forward, and catch the door before it closes. Nine times out of ten, your nice appearance will do the trick—the person will smile back, and you’ll both be inside. On the tenth time, they’ll say something about not wanting to let strangers in the building, so just keep smiling, say you understand, let the door close, and go back to the street corner to wait for the next person.

Once you’re inside, you’ll have to get through the lock on the model apartment. You’ll have more privacy than you did downstairs, so a little brute force is fine. You’re going to kick this door down, and you’re going to do it with one kick. Place it just under the door knob, and make it solid. Then get inside—fast. Someone might be coming out to the hallway to investigate the noise, and you want things to look as normal as possible. Close the door—most of the damage will be on the interior of the jamb, so people on the other side won’t see it.

Okay, you’re in, and no one’s coming to investigate. Hit the lights. Welcome to your nice, furnished apartment.

### Clothing

We talked a little about clothes before. Yes, armored clothing is nice. Sometimes, acquiring it is not possible. Right now, no armor. You can get some once you’ve got some scratch. No discussion. No hesitation. Bullets are bad.

The next step is, you’re going to get a change of clothes. For this, you’re going to go to a local thrift store. It’s a block west of here. When you leave the apartment building, walk out the back door and prop it open a little. It won’t stay open all day, most likely, but should stay open long enough.

There’s the store. Don’t walk right up to it—you’re not going in the front door. That’s the door for people willing to spend money. You’re going to walk around back.

See the loading docks? See those four bins right by them? Those bins are at your disposal. They’re chock full of clothes in all shapes and sizes. Quickly find a full set in your size, something that doesn’t look asinine.

If you don’t have a thrift shop available, the second option is to wander a college campus. Look around in cars. When you see backpacks outside of party houses, smash and grab one. It’s bound to have a change of clothes inside. It might have some food, it might have some drugs, and it might even have some identification. It’s like a holiday grab bag, you’ll never be disappointed. I like this route for the entertainment value and the chance of side benefits, but it’s hard to find a good size match. Such is the price you pay for convenience.

- Unwashed donations to the thrift store? Maybe if you’re really desperate. If I were him, I’d hit up the DiscountMart, or even a vending machine. He has twenty bucks—clean clothing is worth it.
- Kat o’ Nine Tales

### Commlink

Data is king in our modern world. Sometimes, you run into a kink, and you end up without a working or reliable commlink. Sometimes it gets broken, sometimes it gets compromised. No commlink is foolproof. For this reason, I recommend not carrying your best piece on a run, and be prepared to hot swap whatever you’re using on a mission. Again, vending machines make for a

viable option in a pinch. I wouldn’t lean on them, though. They’re just about the biggest data trail you can find. Black market is an option, but that falls out of your budget. My usual answer would be that you should have already been prepared for this eventuality. But you’re not, so how do we make this happen?

Simple: Pawn shop. Your twenty will get you an outdated system with no questions asked. You don’t need top-of-the-line. If you do, well, tough. You should have prepared. Anyway, pawn shops are a good option because they hold late hours. More often than not, the comms you get at a pawn shop have already went through most basic security protocols, meaning that hacking them requires at least a little effort. Best of all, used electronics build plausible deniability. You can blame almost anything on the previous owner, whoever that might be.

Your local pawn shop owner is a good friend to have. You can have him keep an eye on certain items that might pass through your hands. He might even hold things for you. More importantly, he keeps an ear on the street, and sees every bum that passes through trying to hawk a stolen wedding ring. This means he’s the poor man’s information broker. He’s also the kind of lowlife that nobody really suspects. Pawn shop owners are like lepers. They can cause a lot of damage to a community, but most everyone ignores them because they’re filthy and sad.

- Dead on. A runner can have no better friend than a local pawnshop owner. I’ve gotten guitar strings for about eight different purposes at all times of the night from mine. He never asks questions. Whenever I run across a bag of novacoke, I toss some his way. It’s a give and take.
- Kat o’ Nine Tales

### Entertainment

Everyone has their thing. Even when you’re holed up, in fear for your life, you need some kind of entertainment. I’d argue that you need entertainment *more* when you’re holed up and in fear for your life. You need something to distract you. This is where you get the obvious suggestions. You could sneak in a trid theater to catch a new release. Problem is, that doesn’t transport. You can’t relax in the apartment and do that. There’s sex. Sex costs money. Even if you’re not paying for the act itself, you’re paying to get into a position where sex is an option. Besides, you usually have to give up a secure location for that. Drugs cost money, they’re addictive, and they leave you vulnerable, which is entirely unacceptable.

Your commlink is your main source of entertainment. Its primary function can be entertaining. A chat with a friend can pass the time. Most models come equipped with an array of games. If you’re interested in fitting falling blocks into rows, you’re in luck. Pirated movies are always an option. Music is a gesture away. I, personally, like to use the time to plan out my next moves. This is 2073; if you can’t entertain yourself with a commlink, you should consider figuring out time travel so you can find like-minded company with cavemen. Keep this in mind when you’re bored to death later tonight.

- That wasn’t very helpful. It’s probably the weakest advice of this whole thing. You want entertainment on a shoestring budget? Find entertainment on the job. Find me a concert with more than two hundred attendants that nobody can find work at, and I’ll





show you a lame concert. I can't step foot into a good bar without practically tripping on work. Consider live music a business expense. Your life will be much better for it.

- Kat o' Nine Tales
- I agree. Everyone's different, however. I think the point he's getting at is that you have to keep things solo. You have to be able to entertain yourself, and avoiding entertainment just doesn't work. As far as I'm concerned, if you're holed up in a hiding spot, BTL is the way to go.
- Turbo Bunny

## Food

Time to sing for your supper. Cheap—or better yet free—food is easy to come by, if you know where to look. We're going to head to the local FoodGiant; it's three blocks southeast of here.

Walk in like you have all intentions of shopping. Wander. It's Friday night, which is a prime time for free samples. You're going to get a few legitimately, then you're going to patrol. Take your time. The people giving free samples have to take cigarette breaks eventually. When that happens, you nab what you can without looking like a cretin. You'll eat like a prince—the kind of prince that lives on crackers and cheese.

The next course in the FoodGiant comes from the bakery. You're going to pretend you bought a fresh rotisserie soyfurky yesterday. You're going to explain to them that you purchased it the last night for your kids' supper, and that it was so bad their dog wouldn't eat it. Be polite though. Explain that you know it's not their fault. Tell them you understand. Tell them you're not trying to cause problems, but you're a frequent shopper at this grocery store, and you expect better from their food. Tell them that you've heard Anderssen's on 140<sup>th</sup> is supposed to have amazing freshly cooked soyfurky.

They ate it up, and now you're the proud owner of a full, complimentary meal that'll last you well into tomorrow. Take a styrofoam cup on the way out. You'll want something to drink out of when you get back to the apartment (there's no reason for model apartments to have things like dishes and utensils).

- I don't know if I have it in me to scam minimum-wage grocery store workers. I'd imagine it works, though.
- Aufheben
- When you're hungry, you scam whomever you need to. Besides, those people don't pay for the lost food. It's just another company write-off. They throw away pounds of food at the end of every night. It's better it goes into someone's mouth than a trash compactor.
- Marcos

Head back to the apartment. I want you to verify for me that the garbage disposal works. A garbage disposal is a very powerful tool for a runner. It can shred documents and abolish evidence faster than someone can beat down your door. You'll want to make sure it has blades, and that it can be turned on easily. You want to know where the switch is.

Oh? So you're telling me you've gotten your hand stuck in the disposal? Now, now, stop yelling. I can't make out what you're saying over this microphone. Once you've shut up, I'll continue.

Better. Now, yes, your hand is trapped. Yes, I rigged the disposal with a trap. Yes, you probably lost a finger. But unless it was the index or middle finger, you barely even stand the risk of bleeding to death. So calm down. We're moving on to the next phase of the lesson.

- Wow. Dick move.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

## DocWagon

You don't have a DocWagon contract? Now's as good a time as any to set one up. You got that advance from Craig Cruiser, didn't you? I can't imagine a better way to spend it than to provide yourself with some medical attention. Take deep breaths, it'll help with the pain. Now, with your other hand, I want you to navigate the Matrix and contact DocWagon. I'll wait right here while you get them on scene. Remember, you don't have a contract, so you're on the defensive end of this negotiation. They're going to charge more than you want to pay. That happens. It's a lesson for next time. Besides, you can get your first cyberwear. It'll be like a trophy from your lessons.

They're already here. What prompt and friendly service. Now, with their premium contracts, which I strongly advise, you can pay in monthly or quarterly installments. For your first year of service, quarterly works fine. After that, paying annually is wise, that way you don't miss a payment. Luckily, this particular bit of service is affordable. I knew that much when I planned it. If you upgrade to a platinum plan, you won't need to worry about the copay, you just handle the down payment on the premium.

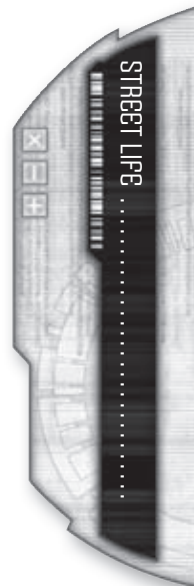
DocWagon serves as the unspoken safety net in a runner's life—they're one of the things that allow us to take risks, because we know that failure isn't quite as final as it could be. DocWagon keeps this line of work profitable.

## OUTRO

Last step for today's lesson is: I want you to reset the trap. I'll cut my fee in half if you help me out with that. You might have already figured this out, but I don't have a body. I'm no retired runner, just a relatively complex training program. And to answer your question before you ask it, yes, I am a wholly owned subsidiary of DocWagon. Yes, I planned the whole lesson with this ending in mind. You're trying to start a career as a shadowrunner without a DocWagon contract. This means it's in our financial interest to get a contract out of you, and it's in your best interest to have one.

Yes, this was deceptive. Yes, you have a right to be angry. But from the very beginning, I explained to you that everyone is out to get you. I never once said I was the exception.

- Damn. That's some marketing for you.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- Have you ever wondered why DocWagon is the undisputed leader in on-call ambulatory services? It's not because they're the best medical service out there. It's not because they were the first to come up with the idea. It's because they grabbed an idea and ran with it. They figured out how to market in ways most people can't even be bothered to understand. Bravo to them.
- Dr. Spin





- Before any of you out there get offended, let me say that this is not for you. At least, not directly. I know that you know the basics, that you know the important information about assembling a runner group and cultivating relationships with fixers, Johnsons, and other contacts. The thing is, we all know people who don't know this stuff, and they could get hurt because of it. So this section is something you can pass on to people who need it. Haze kicks it off by reviewing things to keep in mind when you're getting a group together, Kia checks in with solid information about cultivating contacts and making sure that once you're hired, you can get hired again, then Riser wraps it up with some advice on the finer points of how to decide when to bite the hand that feeds you.
- FastJack

## MAKING THE BAND

Posted by: Haze

There was a runner I knew back in the day who used to say, "You live your life looking for people you can trust. If you're lucky, you survive the ones you were wrong about." Turns out he wasn't so lucky after all. No, he was like a lot of runners who mistake a crew for family. The difference is, family loves you, even if you're a deadbeat. A crew sticks with you so long as you remain valuable to them. I've been successful because I keep with a crew that isn't likely to stab me in the back. Not because they don't want to, but because we need each other. Call it a street meritocracy. We didn't come to that agreement overnight. It took years of getting to know each other, finding out more than once along the way that people I trusted were just waiting for an opportunity to put a bullet in me.

I don't want to waste space telling you stories about where to go and who to talk to. A lot of people did that for me when I was first looking for a crew. It wasn't really helpful. Even when the right password got me in the door, these new contacts treated me like I was an outsider. Before long, I found out that life happens on a case-by-case basis.

What I can give you is a set of guiding principles to help you figure out what you're looking for, where to find it, and why you need it in the first place.

## ASK YOURSELF WHY YOU NEED A CREW

There is something to be said for running alone. There's no need to split the earnings, you don't have to deal with people you don't like, and you're the only one who can screw things up. Once you start entertaining the idea of upsizing, you're talking about finding a knot of people that won't fuck up. That is plenty hard to do, so ask yourself why you need to do it at all.

- There is always a need for more guns. The more firepower at your disposal, the easier your job becomes. Managing the personalities attached to those guns is what makes having a crew difficult.
- DangerSensei
- Let me know when you have enough guns to take out an entire security force before the local PD arrives. I'd say stealth is the most important part of what we do. The fewer people sneaking through an installation, the better. Keep your crew small, only adding skill sets you direly need.
- Mika

After years running short cons alone, I realized that I could make more money with more people. I could be taking larger contracts, running gem scams or badger games if only I had extra flesh to cover the mark. Often it came down to me not having the right skills to fulfill a contract. Spell slingers like me are generally hands-off when it comes to specialized hacking or rigging, but those are elements you're likely to need when dealing with a complex run. Subcontracting is one way to find the help you need. When you subcontract you're asking a fixer or another contact to find people to perform that specific part of a run that you can't handle. It could be that you need to decrypt a file that is beyond your abilities. I avoid subcontracting because it means telling more people I don't trust about what I'm doing.

It can be easy to call on help just when you need it. If the job is too big for one person and too lucrative to pass up, you call in help. The problem with that philosophy is you don't know how your "help" is going to react once the plan goes to shit unless you've spent some time working with them. When needing a hand becomes commonplace, you should start to consider adding someone to your team. Start with your opposite. A mana user







should look for a tech. A face is going to need someone who can handle weapons. Yet, the more specialized the need, the harder it is to find people who are easy to deal with.

## TOP PEOPLE KNOW WHERE TO BE FOUND

Good news is the shadows are latticed with social networks. It is the best way we know to stay connected to each other without the worry of getting too personal. Any runner with an in can use these networks. It's how we get guns, gear, jobs, and yes, people. With all of these networks around, it can be difficult to know where it's safe to look and where you're likely to get played for a fool.

A safe first step is to narrow your options. Figure out what you need and find a contact dealing with that sort of thing. If you want to work with a military operator, find some guys who were in the service or post an ad on a mercenary listserv. Your first contacts at this level are generally bush league. The real talent pool is further below the surface; they are sure to have associates paying attention to who is asking for a face-to-face. Shadowrunners depend on these social networks. Often that knowledge comes with a price tag—you may have to buy your way into a meet with a middleman in order to get a meeting with legitimate shooter. The same rules apply to all types of runners. The fastest way to a rigger is through her mechanic. Ex-corp types tend to make a living on government contracts, so find a cog in the wheel of city government to tell you who to talk to. If you sling mana, you hear about work from talismongers. So, if you want to get in touch with a mage, stop by a spell shop.

## FIND THE ALPHA DOG

I've never really liked comparing people to household pets, but it works here. Having too many runners wanting to be the top dog doesn't work. Somebody is going to need to lead while the others play a bit role. Some leaders are apparent immediately by the force of their personality, while others grow into the position out of necessity.

The leadership situation can vary from job to job. There may be a time when your hacker is most important. The next week you need to rely heavily on magic. You can't choose a leader based on who the deadliest person in the room is, and you can't rotate leaders based on whose specialty is the most needed for whatever job you're doing. The leader doesn't have to be the face of the group or even the planner. It's a personality management job. The leader is the one who knows how to hold your crew together, pushing through any personality differences.

- Most crews I know are democratic. All the big decisions, even selecting jobs, come down to a vote. The boss can be a deal breaker, but in many cases he won't vote at all. This way he isn't seen as showing favoritism. That perception can be fatal to a crew.
- Butch
- Natural leaders always emerge. There may be someone on your crew who tries to stamp that person down, but if there's one real leader in the room, everyone is going to know it.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Gangs and organized crime crews don't work so diplomatically. Usually the gang leader puts a lieutenant or sergeant in charge of

the operation. If the job goes well, whoever the boss assigned to be in charge is going to take all the credit. If the job is blown, that sergeant is going to figure out who the "natural leader" in their group is and pin the blame on them.

- Riser

## SKELETONS IN THE CLOSET

I've heard some people say that recruiting a crew is similar to what Johnsons and fixers do. It's not. I've also heard of runners contracting their search out to brokers. They shouldn't. The way that headhunter types do business doesn't take into account what you should be focusing on in your search. They look at abilities, relying heavily on background checks from police and corporate databases and even word of mouth. Databases, though, aren't able to filter for flaws, ticks, or hidden agendas. A five-minute conversation can diagnose part of those problems so long as you ask the right questions. You ought to be thinking about whether or not you can get along with the person. Consider where they come from and what history they bring to the table.

- Some people like using a headhunter to get a list of skilled candidates, and then they use interviews to find the right personality match. That can work, but the tricky part is that the broader the net you cast in looking for a crew—and headhunters can be relatively broad—the more attention you could be drawing to your efforts. Attention is the enemy.
- Riser

It took me four years to find a hacker that understood how I worked, only to find out that she was in deep with an Armenian gangster who'd helped her get out of some trouble. Her associations instantly became my associations. We were asked to do a number of jobs for the *bratva* just to work off her debt. I haven't touched anyone with mob connections since.

- Know your prejudices as well. Maybe you like to say you don't have a problem with trolls, but when you're surrounded by Humanis gangers and they say you can leave if they can have the troll meat, what are you going to do?
- Mihoshi Oni

## KNOW WHERE LOYALTIES LIE

Don't expect that you can trust anyone implicitly. Jealousy, greed, spite, addiction, familial bonds—any one of these can be a reason for betrayal. I personally avoid working with people who are related to one another by blood. At the first sign of trouble they will bail on you to save their own.

## REDUNDANCY IS YOUR FRIEND

We live in an age of specializations, where everyone is good at something, but few are talented at everything. If you believe real life is like the trids, you'd think that every crew in the sprawl was filled with specialists. When Candy G got shot on *Gangsta!* her crew acted like they didn't know how to finish the job. Everyone thinks they're irreplaceable, and almost everybody is wrong. Make sure you have two people who can do any job. This way if someone gets injured, the job is not put in jeopardy.



- There are a handful of roles that are tough to replicate. Spellslingers are hard to come by, and technomancers even more so. But shooting a pistol? There's a skillwire for that.
- Clockwork

## THE NUMBERS AREN'T ALWAYS EVEN

I sometimes imagine a perfect world where I pull a con and everyone walks away with a fair and equal twenty percent of the take. I've never seen that world. It exists somewhere out there in dreamspace next to organically grown Kobe beef. But honestly, does anyone really want to be in that world? Why should everyone get an even cut? How does that even make sense? Do the Seahawks pay their punter the same wage as the quarterback?

There is a hierarchy to how we get paid. Veterans get more money than the kid who's still wet behind the ears. They've done it before, so they can be trusted not to wig out in a fight. If you're recruiting a specialist, expect them to ask for incentives. Offering a runner a bigger slice of the take can be a powerful incentive to keep them around.

- I thought we were talking about keeping a team together, not breaking them apart. If I found out the guy sitting in the passenger seat of my rig was pulling a bigger cut than I was, I'd snap.
- Baka Dabora
- That's why no one ever told you, Baka. Splitting the take unevenly is a delicate business. When you do it privately, you allow people to feel that they're the most important member of the team. When the cred split is public, the illusion shatters.
- Sticks

## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Military types have this branded into their soul, semper vigilantes and all. Practicing with new partners is essential. Imagine finding out that a runner can't do what they promised in the middle of a run. That's too late to be learning that kind of info. The best way to learn about that sort of thing ahead of time is to run through a few simulations. Find a milk run or three. Splitting the money too many ways is sure to lighten your cred balance, but if you've worked with the team a couple of times, you'll know everyone's quirks before not knowing them gets you killed.

- I've noticed a cottage industry of training simulators popping up throughout North and South America. They're operated out of locations once devoted to urban brawl training. The sims are marketed toward the eighteen-to-twenty-five-year-old nova-rich sector, and having actual runners around increases their street cred.
- Marcos
- If you're in Africa, another opportunity is to hook up with a corporate or mercenary outfit during the desert games. There are dozens of smaller sims in the months leading up to the expo. Most of the time these outfits are using the opportunity to test out new personnel. Still, it's not hard to find an organization that is willing to sublet its game charter to a crew looking for some serious practice.
- Am-mut

## LEGWORK:

### A RUNNER'S TRADecraft

Posted by: Kia

What we do in the shadows is so close to old-fashioned covert action that the terminology is interchangeable. For us, tradecraft isn't about passing information; it's the techniques used to acquire it. Yes, our work might include things like fire support, hacking, stealth, and maybe even surveillance, but unless you're a mercenary your real tradecraft is acquiring information. That means understanding the protocols for dealing with contacts.

Most running crews have a face or grifter who handles the upfront work with the client and is often responsible for a lot of the information gathering. Quaint. Also more than a little stupid. Everyone on the team needs to recognize how to use contacts effectively. First, if you're relying on one runner to do most of the work, are you going to give them most of the take too? Furthermore, grifters, like anyone else, are likely to travel in a handful of social circles. Maybe the information you need for this job or the other job doesn't come from that circle. Maybe you spend your days in the Matrix, but the info you need is in the hands of an obscure shaman who only does business with his own kind. I've seen harder-to-come-by bits of data than that over the years. The only reason I made it this far is by having a strong sense of tradecraft.

- There isn't a whole lot of good tradecraft out there anymore. There's no finesse. Runners think they can slide a contact an extra fifty bucks and she'll spill her guts. Your contacts aren't programs you can load up when needed. They are living breathing people who need to be handled with care.
- Sunshine

#### File Archive::Conversation Log

##### //Conversation Log 03863\_A\_Potential/Guppy/McCubbin/Pre-engagement

Ms. Kia,

I discovered we have mutual acquaintances. They suggested you could help me to get in contact with some maintenance workers who may be able to solve a problem I have been having. Could we discuss this in person?

X

Mr. Johnson,

If I may call you that, our mutual acquaintances speak very highly of you. For simplicity's sake I prefer to meet virtually. Please be at the Roustabout by 9:30 p.m. Looking forward to doing business with you.

Kia

//END LOG//



## MR. JOHNSON AND MS. FIXER

Your first lesson in shadowrunner tradecraft is understanding how “need to know” works. If you’re reading this, you’ve already been on a run, so you know what a Johnson is. You know what a fixer is. You probably have dealt with both. Now boys and grls, can anyone tell me the difference between a Johnson and a fixer? Can anyone tell me why you might need to?

- Johnsons have an inter-corporate communication network. It’s like any runner nexus, only with much higher security (JackPoint excepted, of course). The files on the inter-corp network include a who’s who of shadowrunners, with detailed records of all the work a bunch of people have done. That means that if you screw one Johnson, then you’ve screwed them all, along with your chances to get good work ever again.
- Snopes
- Don’t be stupid, Snopes. There is no corporate conspiracy to shut out bad shadowrunners. If you’ve been blacklisted it’s probably by a specific corp or Keiretsu. Fixers, on the other hand, *do* talk. They’ll throw you under the bus just to cover their own shitty legwork.
- Beaker

Both fixers and Johnsons make their living in a way that involves getting you work. Johnsons tend to be corporate employees who outsource work too dangerous to keep in-house. Fixers are independent representatives who have a specialty. Both have a price range they work in and are reluctant to do work that is too big for them. Part of your tradecraft is discovering what the range and specialty of your client is. This is how you figure out if you should take the job or walk away.

There is no such thing as an average Johnson, but in the business we have terms for some of the more common fish in the sea. A “guppy” is a new Johnson. They don’t have experience dealing with runners, so they don’t know all the rules. They are the most dangerous type, because of the potential to damage or expose you unintentionally. A “whale” is a client with deep pockets. They can be especially valuable to runners because of the potential for repeat business. A “shark” is a professional Johnson, otherwise known as a corporate fixer. If a shark comes calling, you can expect the run to have more trouble than first appears. Sharks are headhunters, often looking to evaluate talent for long-term retainers. Remember, though, that a shark’s motives are never straightforward. They might be hiring you as a distraction for a more important run. They could also be revenge seekers, sent by a corporation you’ve run against in the past to locate you and recoup their losses. It is impossible to distinguish a shark from the others without performing a background check.

Johnsons live in a world of misdirection. Dead drops, false identities, and payments routed through multiple servers are part of their routine. The only thing you know for sure about a Johnson is that in the end, their top priority is not taking care of you, and sometimes they’re intentionally working against you. By contrast, a fixer is someone who has been in the biz. They may have even done the kind of work they now contract out. None of this guarantees that they won’t screw you too, but their reputations are publicly verifiable. I realize I’m treading familiar waters

with some of what I’m saying, but it helps lay the foundation for understanding how to deal with each.

A Johnson expects to remain anonymous and will use any means available to maintain anonymity. Trying to uncover a Johnson’s identity is likely to draw the wrong kind of attention, so if you have to do it, route your inquiries through a third party. You might not have a fixer for the job you’re working on, but asking a fixer to look up your Johnson will keep attention from settling on you.

If you are working for a fixer, you should expect that they have thoroughly vetted the Johnson before the job. That leaves you free to vet the fixer, which is fine—a fixer expects to be checked out. In fact, if a runner doesn’t check out the fixer they’re working for, then that’s a sign the runner isn’t top quality. Take a direct approach with a new fixer. Find people they’ve set jobs for and ask them if the work fit the pitch. Remember that a fixer is a middleman. Their investment in the job extends to making sure that you provide the level of talent they vouched for. They won’t help you do anything that will jeopardize the run or their reputation, no matter how large a cut of the profit you offer them.

- Don’t forget to ask about payments. Not every fixer pays you in a way that is useful. You might be expecting certified credsticks and end up with a steaming pile of corp scrip from the company you just devalued.
- Mr. Bonds
- Fixing the payment is part of the fixer’s job. We’re supposed to convert the payment to a form you runners can handle. Taking our cut along the way, of course.
- Am-mut

## THE MUST-KNOWS

Your client, be it the Johnson or the fixer, is one of three things you must investigate before the job. Once you’ve done your due diligence on the client, you can move on to investigating the opposition and the target. Each investigation requires having a different set of contacts likely to have the information you need. All you have to do is convince them to talk.

- Unfortunately, a runner’s understanding of the nuance involved in legwork usually ends there. If you plan on staying alive, you also have to consider any possible competition for the work. Just because Mr. Johnson sent you off to extract someone doesn’t mean he’s the only Johnson trying to do the extraction. It doesn’t even mean you’re the only crew he sent. Put your ear to the ground and find out who is asking the same questions you are. If other crews are doing the same legwork, they may be after the same target.
- DangerSensei
- Be careful when asking questions. Make sure your contacts aren’t talking to too many other people. Media hounds from Horizon all the way down the food chain to KPOW are always looking to expose a run in progress. They are experts at sniffing out a story from just the slightest lead. What’s worse is with *Street Exposure* and the other exposé shows competing for ratings, more than a few of the jobs out there are just red herrings to get us on camera.
- Sunshine





INCOMING FEED.....

On any run, the opposition is who or whatever is protecting what you're targeting, which is why having contacts in the security industry is mandatory. The client might provide you with a summary of your opponent's security measures, but that is only going to cover how they think you should get in. Become close with someone from a Knight Errant-level security firm. Industry leaders hold conventions every year with the goal of pushing new technology. Buy a ticket and shake some hands. The same applies to runners operating on the street level. Even the Barrens have some kind of security schema. Where corporations have Red Samurai, the streets have gangs. A ganger raised in the hood is a security professional in his own right. Make it your goal to understand how some of these less-understood assets can be utilized.

You start a run with information about your target. That doesn't mean the information is accurate, or even useful to the task. A common runner mistake is to plan how to take a target before doing your own surveillance. Once you see things from the street level, it is easier to see what sort of legwork needs to get done. You'll definitely want to talk to the locals. Spend some time buying drinks at the local bar. You can learn more from one night with the people that live near a target than you can from a month of data mining.

## PROTECTING THE ASSET

Try to think of your contacts as a network that continues functioning based on reciprocal arrangements. They are all people in the know—points of information that, if applied correctly, can

## File Archive::Conversation Log

//Conversation Log 03863/Active/Guppy/  
McCubbin/Mission\_OP01924//

Ms. Kia,

Thank you for relenting on your usual arrangement. I understand the need for the professional barrier between myself and your assets, but for a matter this sensitive I needed to know who I was working with. Thank you for permitting them to meet with me directly. I realize this arrangement is not how you generally do business. I left a small token of my appreciation where we met before to recompense you for any inconvenience this may have caused.

Mr. Johnson,

While I understand and respect your position in this matter, those barriers exist for your protection as well as theirs. Your removal of those barriers could be compared to strolling into the hell hound habitat at the Seattle Zoo. I have collected the payment and I wish you the best of luck in your business.

//END LOG//

get you paid, and if applied incorrectly can get everyone killed. An important part of tradecraft is accessing your contacts in a way that allows them to be reused later. You don't want to burn your contacts, and you really don't want to be burned by them. Generally speaking, you can't expect a contact to reveal state secrets because you bought him a beer. There is a risk-reward philosophy to how most of our assets do business, and it is overshadowed by trust. An asset who doesn't trust you isn't going to give you anything that could potentially damage or lead back to them. Likewise, the more sensitive the information you seek, the greater degree of trust required for that exchange to happen.

- The media hounds have this relationship down pat. There's a meme that's been around forever that says reporters don't give up their sources, but that's not entirely true. In actual practice, reporters regularly give up their sources to editors and fact checkers within the company so stories can be verified before they hit the Matrix.
- Sunshine

I know many runners who bend over backwards to make sure they stay in my good graces, but I couldn't care less about dealing with the other people in their social network. They contact these people once a month, drop them a message or a few nuyen to grease the wheels, and they think it is enough. It isn't.

- I have a contact in the security industry. I pay the rent on his apartment, so I expect that he'll provide me information whenever I ask for it. He owes that much to me.
- Glitch
- Arrangements change, Glitch. You may feel like you do your part to maintain the relationship by footing the bill, but all you're really doing is treating him like an employee. How do you know he understands his terms of employment the same as you? He might think the rent requires him to share basic information with you, but if you ask him to stick his neck out, he's probably gonna ask for more money or just say no.
- Fianchetto
- That's when I stop paying rent.
- Glitch
- And when you stop paying, he's going to have to find some other way to foot the bill. Maybe he decides to sell off some information about you.
- Fianchetto

## WHO TO KNOW

I separate contacts into a handful of categories based on their social network. Try to know someone from each network. Collectively these groups can get you almost any bit of data you need. The advice I'm giving you on how to handle these groups is a generalization based on types of people. These are some of the structures I use when vetting a potential client or adding someone to my contact network. It doesn't account for individual personalities. Keep that in mind when applying these rules. The most important rule of tradecraft: Understand the people you deal with.

### File Archive::Conversation Log

//Conversation Log 03863/Inactive/McCubbin/  
Mission\_OP01924

#### //Message Tag: Urgent

Ms. Kia,

I need your help. Something went terribly wrong with the work, and your assets are holding me responsible. They know my name. How do they know my name? Please help me.

#### //Message Tag: Double Urgent

Ms. Kia,

This is your fault. You should have never put me in direct contact with that animal Shinji! Because of what you've done, my job is in jeopardy. I want you to know I hold you responsible for this. I will make sure you pay for what you've done to me!

//END LOG//

## Corporate Contacts

We all know about dealing with corporations. Your contact on the inside might be a brother, cousin, or friend you grew up with. Maybe the desk jockey is just an acquaintance who gets a thrill knowing someone who lives so close to danger. Lots of corporate contacts will help you for the thrill it gives them, as well as the possibility that they might be able to call on you for a favor down the road. The best place to find a corporate contact is off of corporate soil in places like clubs and restaurants where they are more likely to let their guard down than when they're under the watchful eye of Big Brother.

The rules shift as you climb up the corporate ladder trolling for contacts. Mid- to upper-level executives may still like the thrill of being close to dangerous people, but they've sold out to personal advancement. In this rarefied air, any relationship with a corporate contact is about how it will benefit that contact. Sensitive information can be bought for favors and even for information on the work you've been doing for other corporations.

- Wage slaves pretend to want to have the "life of freedom" you find on the streets, but take them too far from the suburbs and they'll be crying for soycaf and pedicures. You can use that to your advantage in a bind. Make it seem like the information they're feeding you will help protect their way of life without any personal risk to them.
- Sticks

## Street Contacts

This catchall category ranges from janitors to slumlords to that guy who runs the Stuffer Shack down the street. Locational contacts of this sort are the easiest to deal with and often prove to be invaluable. Street contacts know their neighborhoods better than anyone on the outside. They can tell you who the major players are, where to find underground healers, and which cops



can be bought. With street contacts, information has a price tag, but you can be conservative with your cred. These are people earning 30k a year. Flash a thousand nuyen at them and their eyes will light up. What's more, they'll expect more the next time you come calling. Give them just a taste—a small taste.

### Organized Crime

Any psychologist will tell you that people get involved with gangs to feel like part of a family. A runner can tug on those same heartstrings to get what they need out of their contact. Organized crime figures, even independents such as fences or money launderers, need to be wooed. Trust is a premium in their business. The quality of information you receive is directly related to how much they trust you. I can tell you that trust is important, but I can't tell you how to gain it. It's something you have to do yourself, and it can't be faked.

- The hell it can't.
- 
- I've been quiet about this for a while, on the theory that 'Jack knows best, but are you going to get around to doing something about the anonymous posts that keep cropping up?
- Slamm-0!
- You have to feel a little bad for people who use criminals as their family. Criminals understand violence, and it bleeds (literally) into their relationships. It helps if you can find a way to show your contact you're going to protect their reputation. In order to get in with the Ancients I had to go toe-to-toe with a set of Humanis thugs who, surprise, surprise, didn't like the look of my pointy ears. By the time my stitches came out, word had gotten back to the gang. They were finally willing to talk to me.
- Icarus

Having contacts gets especially tricky when it comes to organized crime. If you have close ties with the Vory you can't necessarily pal around with the Irish Mob without putting both contacts in jeopardy. On the other hand, organized crime contacts enjoy dealing with runners because of the ability it gives them to get things done off the books and perhaps even find out what is going on in enemy camps.

### State and Federal Employees

Any government job is about politics. It doesn't matter if you're talking about a cop walking the beat or a politician up for reelection. The only reason a government worker is going to be close with a runner is if you can somehow advance their career. Of course, being caught on vid with known shadowrunners will kill a political career quicker than a Thor shot. The magic is to find a balance between value and potential for exposure.

Politics runs on money. If you want a private word with a politician, make a donation under an alias. Federal governments around the globe have laws preventing snoops from looking too closely into who is filling a candidate's coffers. It works on an informal basis at the street level. A social worker can't be seen taking a bribe, but if they happen to get a reward for returning a lost commlink, who is going to ask questions?

It's not always about feeding the contact money, though. You might be able to use your skills to solve the everyday problems that crop up in a wage slave's life. Runners with a knack for surveillance can make a lot of friends by spying on cheating spouses.

- That kind of value applies to all of these social categories. Everyone deals with cheating spouses, gambling debts, and the rest of it. What makes it so difficult is finding a way to approach the potential contact with the information. You can't just walk up to them and say, "Hey, I'm going to help you out with this little problem you've been having." There has to be some trust there first. They gotta tell you what's wrong before you offer to fix it.
- Cosmo

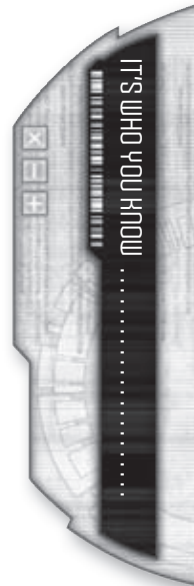
### University Contacts

Teachers are, by the nature of their profession, big talkers. It isn't hard to find one willing to talk to you so long as you're willing to be lectured to. Their publish-or-perish industry breeds individuals anxious to share the next big breakthrough. University scientists don't just know SOTA; they *are* SOTA. Corporations are constantly gobbling up young PhDs to fill their scientific ranks, but the value of a university contact isn't just scientific. The oft-overlooked liberal arts and social sciences are filled with helpful contacts. I keep in contact with a community college psychology professor who helps me understand the runners I'm working with. In exchange she uses their psychological profiles as case studies in deviant behavior.

- A good shrink can save a runner team from imploding. I'm not proud to say it, but the Smokers used one when Charlie joined, and again when Kai brought in Ladybug. You don't want to take chances when adding new personalities. No matter how embarrassing it feels to go to a shrink, it beats finding out the person you added to your crew isn't going to hold up in a stressful situation.
- Riser
- Sociologists are good at predicting the behavior of groups and systems, which can come in handy when dealing with groupthink. That kind of knowledge came in pretty handy during the Bug City crisis and again during the Renraku Arcology shutdown. There's even been some breakthrough work by Dr. Cathie Macomber suggesting that the behavior of emergent AIs is based more on classical sociological patterns than developmental psychology. She was the first to suggest that AIs might not possess a central consciousness, but may instead function as a collective.
- Netcat

### Hackers & Mystics

On the surface these two groups seem very separate—opposite even, but they function the same way. Both are private clubs that you need a special talent, genetic or otherwise, to break into. Since spellcasters tend to be a tight-knit group, they usually aren't very trusting of outsiders. Hackers often follow the same protocol. As with any specialist, if you aren't one, you need to have complementary skills or interests in order to be useful to them. No offense to my colleagues on the forum, but I've never met a hacker who could handle himself in a fistfight. But they don't need to—that's



why God made trolls. As a runner you need to recognize what your skillset is and how that can be useful to a hacker or mystic.

- Look, I'm not going to decrypt somebody's stolen paydata because he promises to beat up the local bully. A lot of times I'll help out an associate for the challenge of accessing a data node or decrypting a message their own hacker couldn't. It's like you said with corporate types—all sorts of people are constantly asking "What's in it for me?"
- Clockwork

With both groups, getting a contact isn't necessarily about finding someone who has all the talents you need. You just have to find a way into the network. Start with the bottomfeeders: talisleggers, low-level programmers, people who are in the know about the network. If you can help them develop credibility, they will become more valuable to you over time, and more indebted to you as well.

- Yes, but what have you done for me lately? If you overlook contact maintenance, this person you helped climb to social success will lose track of you in a hail of new friends and responsibilities. You should be talking to your contacts all of the time. Stay interested in what is going on in their social spheres. Try to act like what happens in their lives matters to you, even when it doesn't. The best thing you can do for yourself is to be there for a contact when they need you.
- Lyrn

### Security Contacts

**Newsflash:** Security guards don't want to get into shootouts. Not every joker with a nightstick wants to beat you over the head with it. The majority of them are family folk collecting a paycheck and hoping they can make it back home for dinner. Unfortunately, they become collateral damage in our wars. This makes them hate us. But unless you have "shadowrunner" tattooed on your skull, a security professional isn't going to know what you do for a living until you start asking questions. By that time you need to have formed the kind of reciprocal arrangement that will allow the contact to feel comfortable sharing information that may get his coworkers killed.

Like any other wage slave, security folk want to glide up the promotional ladder while doing as little work as possible. We can be instrumental in their journey by sharing sensitive information from our side of the shadows. If the person you're working with isn't the climbing type, they're certainly the nuyen type. A few well-placed payments always help grease the wheels of information.

- Kia's earlier suggestion about going to security conventions deserves a second mention here. Security types like military types, hackers, and mystics talk in trade language. While not a complete language like Laotian or Esperanto, trade language is a very nuanced way of communicating. It's helpful to take a three-hour online basic security training course to familiarize yourself with how these flashlight bandits operate.
- Sticks

### Military Contacts

I've lumped the intelligence sector in with the military because of the overlap between the two. Like the military, the intelligence community is touchy about divulging information. Every paramilitary organization has a system for classifying information, and the lower your contact is on the food chain, the less information they are likely to know. Still, spies, soldiers, mercenaries, and the like all understand that knowledge and disinformation fuel warfare, and it is in their best interests to make sure that warfare continues. That's where we come in.

- Don't forget that both groups subcontract black operations to shadowrunner groups when they cannot risk sending their own people in. More wars are fought these days without naturalized citizens ever picking up a gun.
- Glasswalker
- Cannot risk or do not have? Your average third-world country isn't able to field a team of Ghosts ready to eliminate a hardened target at the word "go." Those governments rely on mercenaries and runners to maintain political stability. In exchange, they provide us with all sorts of goodies such as buyer's access to military hardware, clean nuyen, and so on.
- Fianchetto

Military contacts aren't going to expose themselves by telling you something no one except them could know. It is also ignorant to expect that they are telling you the whole truth. The compartmentalization of information means they might not know the whole story. They also could decide to tell you as much as they feel you need to know.

### Media Contacts

Reporters are incredibly trustworthy—to a point. They won't sell you out to a corporation, because it goes against their code. The risk is, anything you tell a media contact should be considered on the record. Reporters, agents, and trid stars all make a living by staying in the spotlight. If you want to get information out of them, you need to help them stay relevant.

- It's easier with reporters. All they want is a good story. Feed them enough data about what's going on in the streets, and they'll give you whatever you need.
- Jimmy No
- Actors are more about image. One time I played backup to a B-list action star who wanted to look like a real tough guy. He walked into a local dive, cameras rolling, and picked a fight with this troll who was tatted up from ankle to elbow. The troll would have torn him to shreds if not for a couple of well-placed manabolts to even the odds. Since then I've been able to go to my actor friend for whatever I've needed.
- Winterhawk



## REPEAT BUSINESS

Posted by: Kia

Assets, barnies, consultants, contractors, fatah men, freelancers, kites, mechanics, mercenaries, operatives, operators, stringers, shadowrunners. Clients have dozens of euphemisms to describe the role you play in their lives. Their goal is to keep you anonymous. Your job is to be unknown; you're being hired because clients are outsourcing work they can't or won't do themselves. Outsourcing is about using a cheap, disposable workforce that you trust to do the job without causing trouble. So, how do you develop that trust? Somewhere along the line a client takes a risk on a word-of-mouth hire. You make good on your deal. Everyone who vouched for you all the way up the food chain is vindicated. Someone calls you up about the same sort of work you did for that first client, and you hold up your end of the bargain again. Just like that, word spreads. That's street rep 101. What that doesn't tell you is how to get off the C-List and start earning a steady paycheck. That's what I'm going to fill in.

New Instant Message...

From: Kia  
To: Shinji

I may have some work if you're available.  
Come see me.

## PROFESSIONAL ETIQUETTE

As a broker I'm not only looking at a runner's mission success rate. I want to sit down with them face to face, so that I can be sure they know how to act around a client. When they screw up, it affects my business. I am less likely to be contacted by prospective Johnsons if I develop a reputation for dealing with runners who fail to understand the unspoken rules. Some of these rules are pretty obvious, like never threaten a client, and be sure you know the proper protocols for meetings. Generally your client wants to be inconspicuous, so don't expect a corporate VP to meet you at a bar somewhere in the Barrens. Even if they try to dress the part, they won't know how to move in that environment. They'll be noticed, and they may even get hurt. You should meet the client on their ground, on their terms. If the meeting is set for a classy restaurant, dress the part. If you're required to understand the nuances of Japanese dinner etiquette, download a skillsoft, scan a travel guide—do something to ensure that you can play your role. Once the client believes you are capable of handling yourself without bringing attention to them, your likelihood for repeat business increases.

- What separates wannabes from prime runners is what they do before and after the run. You don't get to be a top runner by acting like a fool. There are several very skilled operators out there, some even on this forum, who end up working shit jobs because they're too proud to show humility in front of a client. Some clients, especially those in organized crime, need to feel

powerful all the time. A back-talking runner undermines their authority, which can lead to very uncomfortable consequences.

- Mihoshi-Oni
- What our pretty horned friend is trying to say is we should kiss the client's ass up front and say thank you after he's fucked us and we come to collect our end.
- Sticks
- I'm suggesting you stop recognizing common courtesy as kissing ass. Finishing the job is rarely enough to get hired back. Your strategy is to indebt the client to you, and that may be through showing respectful deference when meeting face to face.
- Mihoshi Oni
- I didn't know this was the comedy forum. Advice on showing deference from an ork Yak who likes to speak Korean? And how many fingers do you have left?
- Sticks
- In the death business, we dress our work up with corporate terminology. It helps the client to separate the necessity of the action from the brutality of it. I don't kill people; I "retire assets." I'm not an assassin for hire; I'm an "independent contractor." Corporations eat this crap up. For a while, most of the White Tower jobs I did came out of the mergers and acquisitions department. I know for a fact a few of my jobs for one corp in particular were completely on the books. They listed us as the Morris-Phillips Agency and we were hired as "office cohesion consultants."
- Riser

The power to shape your career lives with your reputation. Sure, you've done a few jobs, but what are you known for? What do you *want* to be known for? This is where trid stars and shadowrunners have something in common—you both get typecast rather easily. Play the role of mousy housewife long enough, and you can forget about ever being the hot single woman looking to get her groove back. Similarly, if you're in the shadows and play the role of Yakuza stooge long enough, you won't be getting many casting calls from the Scoulpa Rings. Image is livelihood. Each gig you take molds your image into something that is increasingly difficult to change.

- That parallel holds up until you start to think about who is responsible for casting. Actors deal in the court of public opinion. Fans tune into actors that generate buzz. Shadowrunners don't have fans. Shadowrunners aren't supposed to have buzz.
- Sunshine
- How do you get known without buzz?
- Baka Dabora
- Leave that to your fixer. Part of our job is to scan the shadows, gathering and sharing information on shadowrunners. Finish your jobs and stay under the radar. I guarantee the people who need to know about your good track record will.
- Am-Mut



- But that's still a kind of buzz, isn't it? Just with a more select audience, is all.
- Sunshine

## WHY DIDN'T YOU CALL ME?

I skipped out on high school, but I love watching those old flatvids about the high school jocks. They walk around the school like they own it, pushing smaller kids out of the way, acting like the rest of the world is beneath them. I watch those and think about the shadowrunners I know who act like they run the sprawl. I have a special name for those runners: unemployed. When you're dealing with new clients, you can't be an ass if you're just an average runner. The number one reason that Johnson's cite for not hiring particular runners back is attitude. I don't really care how you act when you're off the job, but when you're on, you have to be *on*.

Attitude isn't just what you say, it's how you look. Johnsons have expectations of runners that often come from bad trid shows. It's a double-edged sword. You can't show up to a meet dressed in leathers and a choker, because that's over the top as far as most Johnsons are concerned. On the other hand, you have to live up to the perceived image of your role. When you don't look the part, the Johnson loses faith in your credibility as a runner.

Of course, sometimes there are things about your looks that you can't control. There are times when you could say all the right things, look the part, but if you aren't the right race, you won't get hired back. Racism is alive and well in the shadows. I've lost count of how many Johnsons have asked me the race of my runners before agreeing to a meet. In my experience, the habit is more professional than personal. A lot of it has to do with corporate doctrines drilled into their heads, especially when you're talking about the Japanacorp.

Not every Johnson cares anything about who you are beyond your ability to do the job. Some treat shadowrunners the way they treat any new employee. Your past work is your résumé. If your résumé is littered with blown jobs, police chases, and outstanding warrants, don't expect to ever be an A-list shadowrunner. Our job is to be invisible. That's hard to do that when every police drone in the city has your face in their image-recognition database.

- What you have to remember is that Kia's talking about a certain sort of Johnson here. You work for yourself, or you work for a Johnson who understands that a messy résumé means you got the toughness he's looking for, then all this stuff she's saying goes out the window, and what you do is concentrate on showing how bad your ass is so that they'll want to hire it.
- Kane

### Kia's Quick Notes

## FIVE REASONS RUNNERS DON'T GET HIRED

1. Attitude
2. Appearance
3. Ethnicity
4. Work history
5. Outstanding warrants

### Private Message...

**Attention: R. McCubbin**

**Date: 3.12.72**

Dear Mr. Johnson,

Or should I say Mr. McCubbin? I know who you are. Our hacker traced your communications with us all the way to your corporate office on the 32<sup>nd</sup> floor. Your bad intelligence put a good friend of mine in the hospital. The cost of his surgery is being added to the bill I'm submitting, along with pain and suffering for what we went through. I believe Mangadyne would frown upon you hiring assets to sabotage your supervisor. Unless you want your company notified of your actions, you'll transfer 75,000 nuyen to the agreed-upon account by midnight.

Your Humble Servant

## PLAYING THE MARKETS

It might surprise you that when runners retire, it usually isn't the face who becomes a fixer. The job of a fixer is to be a known commodity in a specific area. A guy like FastJack is prime fixer material, because Johnsons will know the name and come looking to him for work—work he'll outsource to you for a price. I say this because most of the runners I know have one fixer in their call list. For all we do to appear as if we're outside of the wage world, as shadowrunners we continue to shape our professional lives in the classic patterns of the corporate world. We operate as independent contractors at the whimsy of an employer—one who, more often than not, has a corporate master. Isn't part of the reason you're on the street to escape the trappings of corporate life? Dismiss the notion of shadowrunning being about working for the corps or the criminals. The breadth of employers in-between those two poles is wide enough for plenty of people to build a career in. Governments fall in the middle of the spectrum, providing a host of opportunities from paramilitary work to serving warrants.

- Some lobbying firms employ shadowrunners to put politicos in situations where the lobbyist has to rescue them from what could be a bad spot.
- Kay St. Irregular

Though it pains me to say it, your fixer isn't the only way into a job. Different types of contacts can help you procure different types of work. Club owners can be your ticket into the world of personal security. A talismonger can use you as a poacher. Get involved with a CPA, and you're on your way to becoming a money launderer. If surveillance is your talent, try your hand at private investigation. Use your knack for firearms down in Bogotá or any other combat zone where mercs can make a mark. You can't be a shadowrunner without an eye for talent, and it just so happens that urban brawl teams are constantly looking for savvy street-types to be talent scouts. You can even get work for the opposition, taking on criminals the local authorities don't have the evidence to touch. The list of possibilities is endless. The key is to



think like a shadowrunner, not a wage slave looking for insurance and a pension. Those things don't exist in our world. The closest shadowrunners get to a steady paycheck is a retainer.

- Just remember—the kid bagging groceries down at SavMart can probably get you a gig escorting a local drug mule, but it doesn't mean he can get you steady work.
- Rigger X
- I think Kia's point is that steady work doesn't have to come from one employer, or even one type of work. We have freedom in the shadows to make money in any way that we see fit, yet we tend to typecast ourselves into professions. Hacker, rigger, assassin; those labels only limit us. Just because someone can rip through a secured node doesn't mean they're useless in a gunfight.
- Fianchetto

#### Kia's Quick Notes

### TOP TEN RENEWABLE RUNNING OPPORTUNITIES

1. Insurance claims investigation
2. Military subcontracting
3. University field grants
4. Private security
5. Corporate consulting
6. Poaching
7. Documents courier/process server
8. K&R retrieval
9. Debt collection
10. Freelance data encryption

## RENEWABLE OPPORTUNITIES

The beauty of having a nine-to-seven wageslave job is knowing your credstick balance will fill up twice a month. In our line of work, by contrast, even top talent can go months between serious jobs. So, how do you make ends meet? I won't even bother lecturing you about having a savings account. Let's talk about some of the easy-access jobs you can do while waiting for that epic score.

The biggest paycheck you never heard of is the university field grant. Researchers get funded to explore the most dangerous parts of the globe. If your combat training consists only of having a big brother and watching professional wrestling, you're going to want someone a bit more seasoned tromping through the jungles with you. This is one job where you definitely have to check the in-your-face attitude at the door. You're being paid to baby-sit researchers who are used to being treated a certain way. If you can hold things together, the university will generally bring you back for more work.

- Grants are the result of a complicated sequence of applications detailing how every nuyen is supposed to be spent. All of this money must be accounted for through paperwork, so if you expect to work the grant market, you better have a clean cover identity, or there needs to be some dummy corp or other legitimate front willing to process your payments.
- Mr. Bonds

Insurance fraud is a billion dollar industry. It's always cheaper to pay a shadowrunner a few grand off the books to look into possible fraud cases than it is to pay million-nuyen-plus claim settlements. I've assigned talent for a handful of companies. They usually recruit runners to take on high-end cases where precious works have been stolen, or a client with a large life insurance payout died in an all-too-convenient accident. The best part is, cases like this happen all the time.

Larger insurance companies also handle so-called K&R—kidnapping and ransom insurance. Don't make the mistake of thinking this means that the insurance company is going to pay the ransom. That never happens. Instead, your policy covers indemnity, or reimbursement for loss of life. Luckily for the poor insured bastard, it generally costs a corporation more to pay out than it does to send in a team of runners to attempt a rescue.

Another everyday job is document courier. That's right, people. Paper is still being shuffled out there. Yes, electronic signatures have been in use for decades, but the use of disposable commlinks and spoofed addresses means that a corporation or government can send out message after message, and the recipient will never get it—or at least, they'll pretend they never got it. So eviction notices, legal summons, and many other documents need to be served in person if certain parties are working at being electronically elusive. Sometimes this job can be done on the cheap, but sending a fifteen-year-old kid on a pedal bike to deliver paper to Barrens lowlife is not a good move—dead children don't play well on the news. Dead runners don't play at all, which is why the job of process server can often fall into your hands.

- What self-respecting runner would do the police's work for them?
- Aufheben
- One who wants to get paid. There's a surprising amount of this work out there. Remember, cops have no jurisdictional authority on corporate soil. In fact, a state or federal officer can be arrested by corporate forces if so ordered by the corporation. It has happened a lot over the years and is always a PR headache for both sides. Every time it happens, reporters trot out the old extraterritoriality laws and debate if those laws should be repealed. Letting runners do the dirty work keeps these laws out of the news.
- Mika

#### New Instant Message...

**From: Kia**  
**To: Shinji**

I can't work with you anymore. You're a good kid, but you just aren't ready. Believe me, I get being pissed off at the Johnson from that last gig, but what you did was way over the line. I have my reputation to think of. Stay off the radar for a while; maybe find a few out-of-town jobs till the buzz over this dies down. When you get back, go talk to a guy name Tasker. He runs with the Yardies down on the south end. Tasker might be able to get you some work that's more your speed. Don't tell him I sent you.

## WHEN TO STEAL AND WHEN TO RUN

Posted by: Riser

My first real trouble was over a rifle.

I ran support for a Seattle B&E team made up of gangers like myself. The client hired them to steal test data for a Steyr pistol prototype being developed here in the UCAS. My job was to guard their hacker while he hit the mainframe. You jacked in back then. He wired himself to the machine and fell back into his seat like he was sleeping. That's when I started to look around. A weapons testing facility is a lot like Santa's Workshop before Christmas. I was surrounded by dozens of firearms, some I'd only ever hear rumors of. Then I saw the rack at the far corner of the room. Steyr AUG A-3s in sniper configuration, fully loaded. I grabbed one off the rack, puzzling over the thumbprint indentation on the grip. When the hacker came to, wide-eyed, I just reacted. I slung the rifle over my shoulder and the two of us split. It was like we were never there. Later, I figured out the thumb depression was actually a biometric safety device in the testing phase. I took it to a weaponsmith to have it linked to me. That was my second mistake. Somehow, word wound back to the Steyr folks and they came looking for their missing test data.

- So how did you get yourself out of that little mess?
- Sunshine
- A gentleman never tells.
- Riser

Stealing on the run has nearly cost me my life more than once. When FastJack asked me to deliver a few pointers on deciding when to walk away from a job, I knew I also had to talk about skimming profits and taking more than you were sent in for. We don't often realize the role those actions play in establishing our identity and reputation as shadowrunners. Stealing on the job and failing to complete your mission are tied together on a spectrum of bad behavior. Our jobs are about following orders, doing just what is told and nothing more. That isn't easy to do, and besides, sometimes you just shouldn't do what you were told.

I think everyone's been tempted to steal. When I was on the gang scene jacking corporate freight for resale, profit skimming was supplemental income. I'd slip merchandise into my satchel any chance I could. Stealing works best with non-specialized bulk equipment like chip components, commlinks, or pistols. It also works well with merchandise that is already hot—BTLs, pirated software, trideos, even car parts. So long as the merchandise isn't too specialized, or the theft of it too noticeable, you can go on skimming for years. In fact, there are times when stealing is the only way to make the work worth the risk. Until the Steyr, everything I took was easy to move on the streets. Afterwards, I was more cautious about what and when I stole. When I graduated to wetwork, I cut my side income altogether. Experience taught me that anything you lift can be traced back to the crime scene, be it through official or unofficial channels. I didn't want to go through the hassle of making someone's death look like an accident, only to have his or her personal effects traced back to me.

The black market is the first place corps look when something goes missing. In my opinion, when you sell extra paydata from your run on the black market, it says a lot about you as a runner.

The decision to go outside the boundaries of a particular job is a personal one that ties directly to street credibility. Stealing can be considered a breach of trust with the client. If done under the right circumstances it isn't noticed at all. However, it can have a disastrous effect on street credibility if the indiscretion is discovered. My problems with Steyr had me on the run for months. The crew I worked with was never able to work for that employer again. It could have been worse, though. Depending on the sensitivity of the run, they could have been blacklisted. I could have had a kill notice put out on me.

- Stealing makes stealth impossible, especially if you plan to move the stolen data. All you're doing is painting a target on your back. What if the people who come to buy your data are the people you stole from in the first place?
- Fianchetto
- They might be interested in paying for what you stole, as well as for information on your client. After all, they couldn't care less about a shadowrunner. Corps want two things: 1. Their stuff back. 2. The name of the rival corp trying to steal from them.
- Mr. Bonds
- The rules are different when you're stealing from underworld figures. You take from the Vory and that's real trouble. It isn't just about knowing who had the balls to take from them. They need to make an example of you in order to discourage others from trying the same thing.
- Red Anya

It's hard for us runners to truly gauge the relationship we have with our employers. I've tried to operate my business like a fringe remnant of the corporate world, complete with assurances of professionalism. It helps my credibility to be seen as someone who understands the need for discretion. Unfortunately, employers don't have that same concern for discretion and professionalism. Their anonymity makes us expendable. They often expect they can do whatever they want to me on a run, generally without fear of retribution. On the other hand, if I don't meet expectations of decorum, it will come back to haunt me the next time I look for work.

- Word does get around about Johnsons, usually from fixers and runners who've had bad experiences. A Johnson can't expect to short-change a runner too many times before top talent stops returning her calls. When a Johnson sends runners on a dead run, it's a big deal. People will talk about that, and no one wants to work for the lady who sent her last operatives to die.
- Kia
- Yeah, there are some Johnsons who come with a buyer-beware tag, but that's only helpful when the runners are working through a fixer. We vet the client beforehand, so we know the boundaries for a particular Johnson. We can let you know if it's okay to take a little on the side, or if you're putting your life at risk by dealing with the Johnson. Cut out the middleman at your own risk. If you



aren't coming to us first, there's no chance you'll get this critical information.

- Am-mut
- Anyone else want to delete this bullshit sales pitch?
- Beaker

Common sense is the best guideline for when to steal. I'll never take anything if it puts the run or me in jeopardy. On the other hand, there is no clear, common-sense rule for knowing when a client is setting you up. Knowing when to abandon a run is part instinct, part wild guess. There are tells, of course. If a client is willing to pay better than forty percent up front, I get nervous. Likewise, if the client isn't on edge at the meet, then I am. I have to assume my client knows exactly how much shit they're getting me into with a job.

- We do have the power to hold our Johnsons accountable. If you get set up to fail, you gotta take it out on your employer. I'm not saying put a gun to his head, but maybe you sell that data he wanted to the highest bidder. If you're feeling particularly vindictive, let word slip about who contracted the theft to be done in the first place.
- Sticks
- Yeah that's real smart. Why don't you put up a billboard that says, "Will sell out my employer for vengeance." That's sure to get you good work.
- Glitch
- There has to be an expectation that we'll retaliate if we're screwed. Without it we're nothing more than helpless wage slaves.
- Icarus

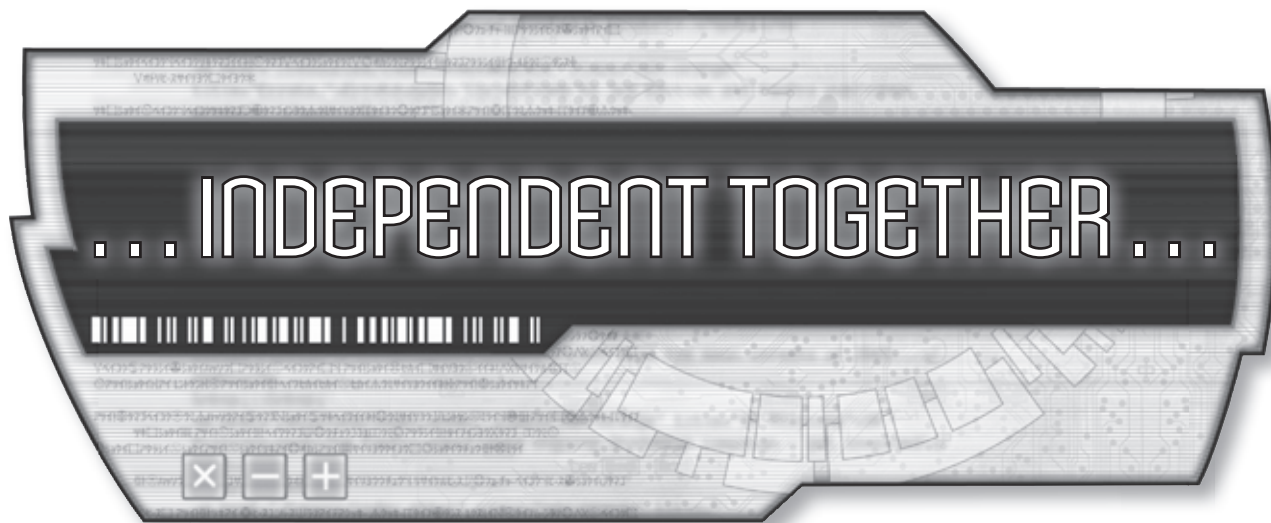
- Who said we weren't already? Our little area of work is just another free-market economy. When we start attaching stipulations to the work, employers find cheaper, easier substitutes.
- Glitch

There isn't any formalized structure to what we do. It's all street rules, assumptions, and common sense. For me, street rules mean holding the client accountable for what they say I'm getting involved with. Situations over the years honed my instincts to the point where I've started to understand when a client has put me in a bad situation and it's time to cut and run. Plainly speaking, if the situation I find myself in is too far removed from the assumptions placed upon it, I'm out. For example, if Mr. Johnson tells me basic security forces are protecting the facility and the Red Samurai are there when I show up, I'm going home. That's common sense. If everything were that easy to figure out, I wouldn't have gotten into half the trouble I have over the years.

- Often, I don't know I'm being set up until it's too late. I'll be inside a facility, close to the target I was sent to retrieve or eliminate, and the alarm sounds. Instinct takes over, leaving me to choose between completing a mission that's likely futile or escaping with my life.
- Winterhawk

Reputation plays a huge role in all of this. Mr. Johnson probably isn't going to burn a team well known in the biz—he would never be able to hire anyone again. Unfortunately, reputation can cut both ways. I've known runners who've been hung out to dry by clients they've worked with for years. There is such a thing as knowing too much, especially when you're in the business of killing.





**Posted by: Fianchetto**

Independence and freedom are wonderful things, but we all know there are some things we cannot provide for ourselves. Other people and organizations offer skills, knowledge, and resources that can complement our own, and those combined efforts can result in considerable benefits. Fellowship with, and membership in, these organizations can serve to enhance, rather than limit, our independence and provide much-needed fellowship. JackPoint is one such organization—we gain information and occasional friendship from our association here.

Of course, not all organizations looking to recruit shadow-runners as members are beneficent. Some are predators, looking to take advantage of potential weakness we might have, and others are looking to undermine, not enhance, our independence. With the help of some of my fellow JackPointers, here are profiles of some organizations that might be looking to recruit someone like you.

## TECHNICOLOR WINGS' TAILSPIN

**Posted by: 2XL**

If you're a small group of runners, you don't have a lot of human resource needs. Maybe, occasionally, a member of your group will die, and you'll need to feel around for a replacement, but that's it. That may only happen once every few years or so, if you're lucky, so there's no real need to keep a constant ear to the ground looking for new talent.

But let's say you weren't just part of one group. Let's say you were coordinating the work of maybe five or ten teams in Seattle. And then let's say you had a similar number of teams in Boston, Denver, Austin, and other spots across the globe. That means you've got a lot more turnover from people dying, retiring, or just moving on to something bigger and better. On top of that, let's say you've built a name for yourself as one of the premier collections of talent in your particular area. If you want to keep that reputation, you'd better be always on the lookout for new talent to add to your stable, people that you can get on your side before they become the competition. If that's your situation, you're going to regularly need to find new talent, and your life is going to be a whole lot

easier if you find a way to get the talent to come to you, rather than you looking for it.

This is the situation for Technicolor Wings, the premier smuggling organization in the Sixth World. They're good at what they do, damn good, and they do it in a lot of places. These guys have long mastered the hardest routes in North America, and their knowledge of South American routes has led to an explosion of business for them ever since the Azt-Am hostilities flared up. They've even made inroads in Eastern Europe and Asia, thanks to their Vladivostok office. As you can imagine, a large smuggling network like this has a lot of personnel needs. Riggers are at the top of the list, but they also need grunts who can provide security, hackers who can deal with the security and surveillance issues, and of course mages (especially spirit summoners).

- Just remember that they value subtlety. Smuggling work is not about big explosions and swaths of destruction. If you can't be invisible, TW doesn't have much use for you.
- Traveler Jones

Technicolor Wings has always had a gift for disguising their work—ask any Joe or Jane on the street, and they'll tell you TW is a small shipping organization—and they carried this over to their recruitment work. They've opened up a number of clubs, called Tailspin, in cities where they do a lot of business. The clubs have no overt connection to TW, and business records list them as being owned by some generic holding company, but make no mistake—they're a TW operation, and they're there to find new recruits.

While Tailspin is technically a chain, it doesn't have that desperate, must-please-the-masses feel that most chains have. TW knows the clientele they want to attract to these places, so they design it with people like us in mind. The lighting's not too bright, the furniture's not that nice, and the alcohol is both plentiful and inexpensive. The AR sculpting is subtle, usually playing off some regional theme, but only with light accents instead of having, say, a room full of cowboy hats and saddles in their Austin location. The service is unhurried and non-intrusive—they fully expect you to stay for a long time, and they want to make sure you know that if you don't want to be bothered, you won't be. This also means that they have a fine selection of private rooms.









TW does its best to make sure local law enforcement doesn't feel the need to be raiding their places regularly, which means two things: Making regular bribes, and keeping the peace inside their establishments. While the staff will generally leave you alone, they move quickly if they think you're about to make trouble. And remember, TW's got a number of good runners to work with in their hiring pool, so their security tends to be a notch above the usual over-muscled-grunt-with-a-taser types.

The security is often needed, because Tailspin locations tend to attract trouble. The secret's getting out that Tailspin is a good place to go to meet TW people and try to make a good impression, so more and more newbs are hanging out at these bars, looking for their big break. There are usually some veterans around too—TW pays too well for us vets to ignore the chance to work with them on occasion—but the veterans generally keep to themselves and play it cool. It's the newbs who tend to give the various Tailspin locations their, let's say, *distinct* atmosphere.

As is usually the case, the newbs at Tailspin generally *want* to make some kind of impression, but they often have no idea just how to do that. So they try just about every half-assed trick in the book. Tailspin nodes are regularly hacked by tyros trying to show their skills. To me, that's like trying to get a job by shooting someone in the kneecap to demonstrate how good you are with guns. But newbs aren't always thinking straight. Then there's the ones intent on making a big entrance, the people who think if they strut into the club like they're God's gift to shadowrunning, people will be falling all over themselves to hire them. On average, Tailspin locations host more dramatic entrances than any non-gay bar on Earth.

- Don't forget the oldest newb trick in the book—walking in and looking for a fight. Some of them will look around, decide who they think the toughest person in the club is, then goad them into a fistfight. Usually the person they target can either ignore them or take them out without too much trouble, but it's annoying.
- Riser

But for all the annoyances the newbs may cause, Tailspin can still be a good place to sit down with other runners, have a drink, make some contacts, and maybe even pick up some work. Even if you don't earn a single nuyen from the time you spend at one, it's a place you can walk into and know that you'll be able to relax with other runners. When you're in a strange city and don't know the landmarks, that's a nice thing to have.

The best way to get work from Tailspin is to take it easy and get to know the regulars, because there's a good chance some of them are TW talent spotters. You've got to show up at the place to be recruited, but once you're there, play it low-key. Talk to people, swap stories, and act like the kind of person that can be trusted to be discreet and to keep your wits about you. TW talent spotters will make the rounds, and eventually you'll talk to one. If you're in Seattle, look for a male dwarf named Brezwick or a female ork named Slane. Brezwick's the backslapping, outgoing type, and he loves stories about running into critters during a wilderness crossing. Let him tell one or two of his own before you throw in one of yours. Slane's quieter—she'll often spend time sitting on her own, nursing a drink and letting people come to her. Don't try anything cheesy or dramatic with her—a simple greeting and

normal small talk is enough. She's perfectly happy to talk to just about anyone who can show her they're not a complete idiot when they open their mouth.

- They're both good people, but I like working with Slane more—you don't have to go through that whole show of being friendly or anything, you just talk. She knows a lot about almost everything happening in Seattle, and she's keeping a close tabs on the whole Ork Underground situation. Bring that topic up with her, and you've got an in.
- Sounder

## RUNNERS AGAINST <YOUR CAUSE HERE>

Posted by: Kay St. Irregular

The heyday of the policlubs has come and gone, but that doesn't mean grassroots political organizing has gone away. For centuries, people have formed into small groups bound together by a single purpose. Social bonding is a habit deeply ingrained in our collective psyche (if not our DNA). The upshot of this is, almost anytime you have a like-minded collection of people, you're going to have someone who thinks of organizing these people into a group to harness their collective strength.

By my count, Seattle currently plays host to at least ten groups that are part of a larger trend of organizations working to get shadowrunners to wield some political power—the “Runners Against” groups. These groups include Runners Against Racism, Runners Against the Underground, Runners Against Brackhaven, Runners Against Pollution, and my personal favorite, Runners Against Relics (I'm not sure exactly what this last one is trying to accomplish, but they certainly seem worked up about something). These organizations vary greatly in their capabilities and seriousness. For example, Runners Against Racism has a dedicated commlink code for the organization and a professional-looking Matrix node, while Runners Against Relics may just be one crackpot with a blog and too much time on his hands. What all these organizations have in common is the first two words of their names, and the fact that they are sprouting up in cities across the globe.

- Bogotá naturally has both Runners Against Aztlan and Runners Against Amazonia. I understand Runners Against Aztlan has connections to a Runners Against Aztechnology group in Austin.
- Marcos
- “Runners Against Aztechnology”? That's as dumb as an organization called Runners Against Nice Paydays.
- Kane

Some of these organizations are mere copycats—a person hears about a “Runners Against ...” org, likes the sound of it, and goes off to start their own—but not all of them. I haven't been able to connect all the dots yet, but I'm pretty sure most of these organizations are flowing from a common source. I've traced a lot of the money flowing into these organizations' coffers, and if you follow the trails back far enough, a lot of them originate in the



Caymans. Not from the same account, not even from the same bank, but that's still enough to make me suspicious.

While I'm not sure about their motives, their methodology is clear enough. Not long after they get screwed by some organization or another, a group of runners will meet someone who shares their current antipathy toward the person or organization that screwed them. For example, Seattle's Runners Against Renraku was founded in part by a running team that lost half their members in an ambush by the Red Samurai. For a while, the runners and their new friend will build a relationship based on common gripes, but eventually the newcomer will help the runners understand that nothing will change, that they're going to keep getting screwed over again and again unless they do something about it. Generally, the runners resist—we're not in this line of work because we're big fans of organized action—but the new guy will help them understand that he's not asking for a huge commitment from them, just a little time here, a few nuyen there. He assures them that there are plenty of organizations that will match their contributions (the cash coming in from the Caymans make up these "matching funds"). He either makes a good enough case that the runners eventually give in, or he becomes so annoying that the runners tell him to go away.

If they found, or join, a "Runners Against" organization, the runners discover that most of what their new friend said is true. They don't really have to do that much—maybe they'll spend an afternoon making some comm calls to local officials, or writing code to spread AR pamphlets over a particular neighborhood. It's not demanding, but it also does not seem like their actions will lead to any sort of real change, or even be noticed by anyone.

So what's the point? Well, I can give you the idealistic (read: hopelessly naïve) and the cynical (read: realistic) explanations. The idealistic explanation is that someone is giving runners training in the basics of political organizing, in the hopes of eventually turning them into a considerable force organized around some as-of-yet undefined cause. The cynical explanation is that the "Runners Against" organizations are a front for someone, or some group, who wants information on runners and plans to slowly gather a variety of runners in one place. Again, the motivation for this isn't clear. I doubt law enforcement is behind this—it's an awfully roundabout strategy for them, and there doesn't seem to be much of a point stringing runners along instead of arresting them once they've identified them. All I can say is that to me, it appears that someone wants to pull together a lot of runners with a variety of skills, and to do it under false pretenses. That means that whatever their ultimate goal is, they're not really looking to benefit us.

- Whenever a group of disposable, off-the-grid people are being gathered for a secretive reason, my mind keeps going back to one thing: infestation.
- Plan 9
- Why does it always have to be about the bugs?
- Snopes

## THE CHILDREN OF THE MATRIX

Posted by: Netcat

I wanted to share a transcript of a Matrix chat I was in recently. A friend of mine was in the chat, and he kept a record of the whole thing and sent it to me after it was done. I'm posting this here so you all can learn a little about a possibly skeezy group out there that looks like its doing some recruiting. I'm not here to judge people's choices—maybe people will find solace here, I don't know—but to me, this seems like something to watch out for.

**Login Complete—Welcome Drain**

**Select Avatar:** Elven Knight

/Command/ Access Node SC238-94-Alpha

**Access Restricted—ID Scan required**

**Scan Complete—Access granted**

/Command/ Current Node Users: 4

/Command/ Active Sims

**1 Active Sim: Fantasyland VI**

/Command/ Access Sim

Sim restricted: Access by Invite only

/Command/ Send Friends Request

Invite to Play Fantasyland VI Received from Netcat

/Command/ Current Players

**Netcat—Avatar: Multicolored Ball of Light**

**Tre—Avatar: Orc Mage**

Winterhawk—Avatar: Giant Pink Bunny

/Command/ Join Game/Skip Start up/ Start Assembly Hall

**Please Select Status: Physical or Ghost Mode**

/Command/ Physical Mode

**Winterhawk:** It's about time you joined us, Drain.

**Tre:** Where have you been—you've been offline for three days?

**Drain:** Hey guys—Sorry to have been away. I've got bad news.

**Netcat:** What's happened?

**Drain:** My brother Lemuel—passed away.

**Netcat:** What? I'm sorry to hear that—how did it happen?

**Drain:** I got a call from my sister two days ago telling me Lem had been found unresponsive on his farm in Snohomish. The coroner believes he had a massive heart attack. He was only twenty-three! He had been dead for at least twelve hours when they found him.

**Winterhawk:** Drain—that's impossible.

**Drain:** What do you mean?

**Winterhawk:** I saw Lem yesterday evening, online. I talked to him for a little. He was telling me about some church he had joined.

**Drain:** I don't know what you're playing at, but it's not funny.

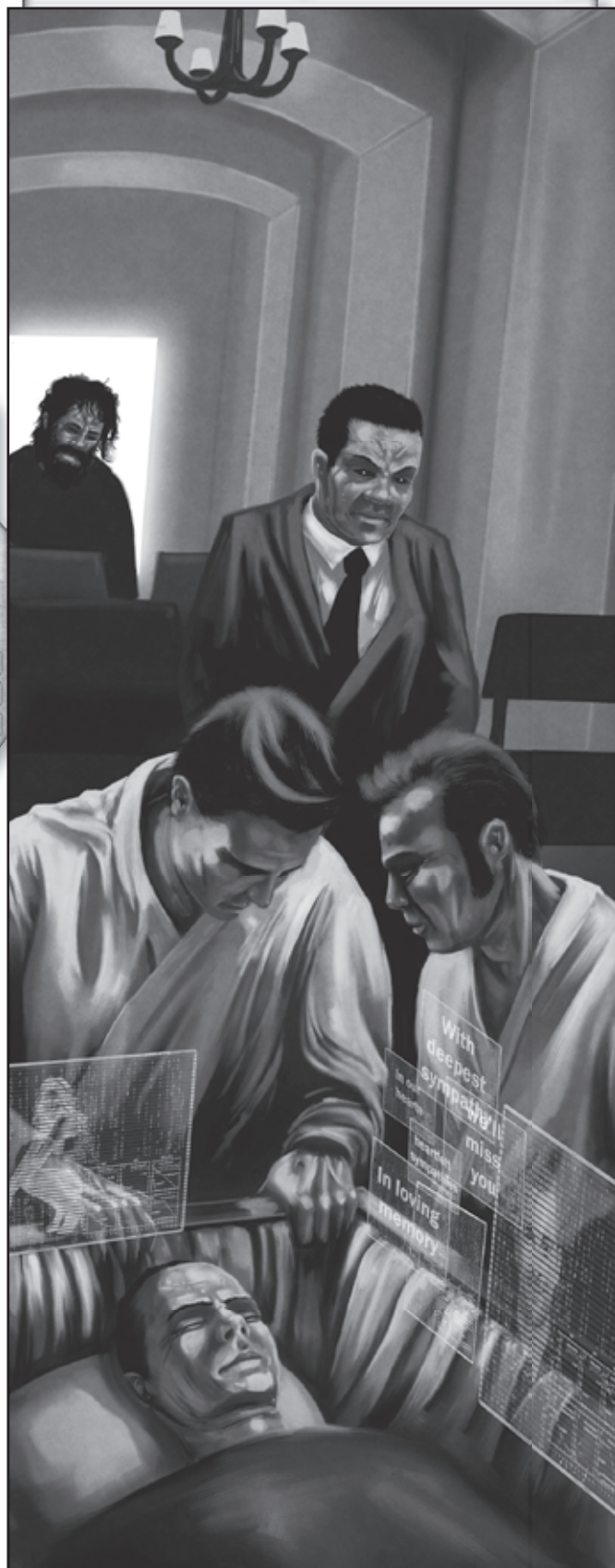
**Netcat:** No, it's true. I saw him too, on the Matrix. Hold on—I'll bring up the node activity log from last night for you.

**Netcat:** Okay, now that's spooky—the log shows no activity from last night. None.

**Winterhawk:** That's impossible. We were online for at least three hours last night. Has the record been hacked?



INCOMING FEED.....



INDEPENDENT TOGETHER.....

**Tre:** Maybe Lem erased or altered the record, covered his tracks.

**Netcat:** If he did, he did it well. If I can't find a trace of it, then it's pretty well buried.

**Drain:** I don't know what's going on here. Maybe you guys are misremembering, and the conversation happened at a different time.

**Netcat:** No. It happened last night. I remember the conversation clearly—he kept talking about this church. He said it was the best thing he had ever done besides giving up running. He said the church had helped him adjust to normal life.

**Drain:** Yeah, he told me about that some, not long before he died. He met a missionary from something called the Children of the Matrix—he said they helped him after a run that had gone bad. He stayed in touch with them, and they played a role in getting him out of running for good. They even helped him get some work.

**Winterhawk:** Children of the Matrix? I've heard of them, I think. They believe that God lives in the Matrix, right?

**Tre:** No, you've got it wrong. I've actually talked to some of their missionaries (geez, seems like they're everywhere, doesn't it?). They believe that the next step in man's evolution is to become one with the Matrix. Their leader is some guy named Isaiah, and he says he's already achieved this state—he's cast off his physical body and now lives entirely in the Matrix.

**Netcat:** Sounds like another insane AI to me.

**Winterhawk:** Another ghost in the machine.

**Tre:** I don't think so. I mean, they're not so easy to dismiss. The church is very pro-runner—they talk a lot about things like the sanctity of the individual and sharing information. They believe that corporations and governments have too much power. They even have social programs to help runners—food pantries, medical care, stuff like that. Word is they're even starting job programs, housing programs, banking, and legal services (and if Lem got a job through them, seems like this is true).

**Netcat:** Wait, there's a church out there that may pay for me to get lawyered up? Sweet. But why would they do all of that for runners?

**Winterhawk:** Same reason anyone does anything for us—they think they can get something from us.

**Tre:** The missionaries told me that Isaiah was once a runner. He believes that the only way we can check the big corps is to unite against them. He's helping out runners as a way of enlisting them in his cause.

**Winterhawk:** Sounds more like a way for him to gain power and riches for himself.

**Drain:** I don't know why they're doing it, but they helped Lem get a loan to buy a farm. That's what he was doing once he stopped running.

**Winterhawk:** So who gets the farm now?

**Drain:** I don't know. We haven't sorted it all out. I know there's some life insurance money that will pay off the rest of his loan for the place.

**Winterhawk:** I'll bet you anything Lem put a will together with some of the church's legal services, and that will happen to leave the farm to the church.



**Netcat:** So, okay—I know this sounds crazy, but do you think maybe Lem somehow got downloaded into the Matrix? Maybe we weren't just talking to persona—we were talking to what Lem is now.

**Drain:** Yeah, it sounds crazy. Lem's dead. He's not a damn AI or something.

**Winterhawk:** Look—I know what I saw. I'm telling you Lem was here last night. There is no way someone could have hacked into this node and impersonated him. This is a private node, and I'd like to think the security I set up here is pretty good.

**Netcat:** Good security or not, something's wrong here. I've been scanning the node's records. I can't find anything that resembles what Winterhawk and I both saw last night. I've gone over the security and access logs, and there has not been any unauthorized access to the node. But here's the thing—if I look at my own equipment, it shows I was online and accessing this node last night, just like I remember.

**Winterhawk:** I'll see what my stuff says. But I'm getting distracted. Drain, I don't mean to hurt you with this very possibly crazy story. I'm really sorry for your loss.

**Netcat:** I'll miss him.

**Tre:** Me too.

**Netcat:** I pulled up some information on this church—found a brief profile on some site that tracks cults. Here's what they've got.

*/Begin FSRC summary*

#### **Children of the Matrix—Founded 2063**

**Membership:** 5,000+

**Leader:** Isaiah, also known as the Prophet (true identity unknown).

**Location:** The church's main headquarters is located in Tacoma, in an office park whose developers went belly-up a few years back. They converted it into a religious compound with housing, research facilities, a chapel, and educational facilities.

**Leadership:** The church is led by Isaiah, who has the title of "prophet." Below him is a council of twelve people known as "apostles." Following in the footsteps of their leader, this group has adopted Biblical names, and their former identities are generally unknown. Many, though, are thought to be former employees (or, in one or two cases, executives) of technology corporations. Other members of this group are former criminals or others who have significant knowledge of and

contact with the criminal underworld. This helps them with their outreach, as the church tends to target criminals and quasi-criminals for membership. They also have lawyers in the upper ranks of the church, who direct the legal services the church offers.

**Activities of the Church:** Missionary work—they have online and street missionaries who preach what they call the "Gospel of the Matrix." In recruitment, they focus on criminals who have a degree of technological knowledge, especially technomancers. The church has also set up a financial fund, which they use to give grants and loans to runners trying to turn their life around.

*/end FSRC briefing*

Not a whole lot on their teachings there, though. And especially not anything about if they have any chance of bringing entire personalities into the Matrix.

**Drain:** Look, I know my brother's dead, but I also know you guys saw what you saw. I'll look into this a little more and let you know what I find.

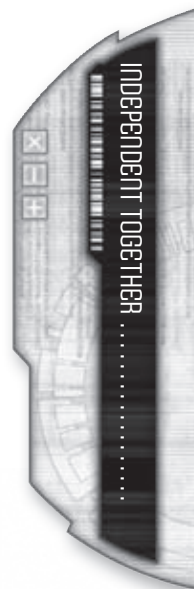
**Netcat:** I'd like to know more about this Isaiah guy. I'll do some bush-beating, too.

**Tre:** I can talk to the missionaries I know, see what else I can find out.

**Winterhawk:** Sounds like a plan. Good luck, everyone.

**Logout: Session Terminated.**

- Come on, couldn't we have a group of people who wanted to help runners who was on the up and up? Not trying to find ways to take what little stuff we've got?
- Slamm-O!
- This isn't the only church to move on the "souls in the Matrix" idea. I mean, we've got AIs, wandering around in there, and all sorts of rumors of ghosts in the machine. People have been waiting a long time for the moment when computing power and storage can replicate the functioning of the human brain. In many ways, that moment's already here.
- Plan 9
- I'm always wary of churches that have an overly simple view of what the human soul is and how it can be replicated or contained. Especially ones that keep showing up in the wills of new converts.
- Goat Foot





With a quick snip, the maglock released. The spiky-haired kid gave her the thumbs up but avoided eye contact as he put away his tools. Against the wall next to him, a square-jawed tough guy in a trench coat woke from a trance, gesturing four before combing his hair with his fingers. Nearby, the tattooed one with the shotgun kept patting his pockets and smiling as he stared at her. Kat checked her pistol and sighed. *Great. Fanboys.*

At least they were at the right place at the wrong time to foil the assassination. Now she needed their help in getting back by the opening number. *Al is going to kill me. He said this wasn't such a good idea. I won't hear the end of it, especially because I broke my own rule.* She moved toward the door.

Not wanting to give out her commlink ID, she kept the plan fast and loose, wanting them to support her as she ran through the building. As they got ready to follow her in, Kat thumbed through her music, picking a piece to run in the background.

... My eyes scream for the Reaper ...

Kat burst into the building. The first goon had little time to react before she was up in his face with a simple block and a punch to the throat.

... Lightning flashed and thunder roared echoing my pain ...

Kat spun around and connected her elbow to his nose to finish him. A second man down an adjacent hall had his pistol out, but was staggered from an invisible blow. Then he died from a shotgun blast to the face.

... I am consumed! Love's labor's lost ...

... I am consumed! Love's labor's lost ...

Kat grabbed the arm of the third man in a fluid motion as she let the first man fall, keeping her momentum and focusing that energy into breaking his wrist. She somersaulted over the man, still holding his arm, and cracked his elbow on her shoulder. Before he had a chance to cry out, her pistol was in her hand, and she swung, hitting him in the side of his temple. He was still standing as she moved on.

... My eyes scream for the Reaper, as you drove away ...

Kat ran to the room where she believed he was being held and kicked the door open.

... *Drum solo...*

In rapid succession, she fired off a hail of bullets. The final goon didn't have a chance to grab his pistol from the table. He fell backward, clutching his chest, dropping some iron and a propane torch onto the floor. The room was smoky and smelled of burnt plastic. Tied to a post was an unconscious troll. She moved toward him and shook his shoulder.

"Barry?"

The troll looked up. His RhineGold suit was ripped and wrinkled. His fedora was smoldering on the ground, burned by the torch. Someone didn't like something about him playing at the Palace tonight.

"That's two you owe me," she told him.





## Posted by: Kat o' Nine Tales

I know what you're thinking. Why would someone so talented in music as myself want to run in the shadows? Well, you should know by now, money isn't the only thing to trip people's triggers. Some want the thrill and the adrenaline rush, others look for ways to "stick it to the man" or want a secret identity. Musicians are no exception. Having a large following and being able to publicly post messages in music can be an asset to shadowrunning. I've heard the jokes as well; "Shadowband," as some call the blending of shadowrunning and music. Well, I'm here to tell you guys and girls, playing in the Tir beats trying to sneak your ass across their border. The music industry gives a whole new dimension to shadowrunning.

## HISTORY

With that, I'd like to post a little article from my old music teacher, Mr Mollenkoft:

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user Kat o' Nine Tales //

### MUSICAL DYNASTIES

by Mr. Mollenkoft

#### Musical Dynasties

Music has been a part of human culture since the dawn of civilization. Variants and permutations of musical compositions change as new instruments are invented, cultures merge, or people migrate. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, dynasties emerged where a given musical composition dominated; each cycle of dominance lasted an average of fifty to seventy years. With the arrival of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, do-it-yourself publication and selling of music on the Matrix slowly put an end to the dynasties and even removed the need for artists to sign with music studios in order to make it big. Music styles became fast and loose. Song-O-Mat, Synthlink, and agent-formulated music eliminated the need for an actual band to make the music you like. Today's music is a hodgepodge of sounds loosely categorized and available on the Matrix.

- The old adage still works; when you think it's too loud, you're too old!
- Slamm-O!
- Yeah, but I'm not going to buy my son cyberears because he's gone deaf from too much bass.
- Snopes

#### The Highs

As was the case when the Beatles performed live on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in 1964, or when the first music video, *Video Killed the Radio Star*, debuted on MTV in 1981, music was revolutionized again on March 21, 2032, with Concrete Dreams playing *Sons of Thunder* as the first

## WHAT'S THAT NOISE?

There are currently many different genres of music with so much experimentation, rapid generation, and shareability, it's hard to catalog enough songs to a specific definition. Here are a few descriptions of today's popular genres.

**Afroflash:** Music influenced by or originating from Africa, where percussion instruments dominate the musical piece. Related genres: Benga for Kenyan music, Yoruba for Nigerian music.

**Bollywood Pop:** Also known as Indi-pop. Light music influenced by Indian folk music, usually produced for Bollywood trids.

**Chrome Rock:** Rock and roll music from the 2040s and '50s.

**C-Pop:** Music incorporating traditional Chinese instruments in their composition, such as yangquin (plucked instrument), the huqin (bowed instrument), and bangu (drum). Related genre: C-Rock.

**E-Trance:** Instrumental music that is threaded with a simulated emotional state.

**Fractal Phase:** Synthetic music based on mathematical principals of fractals and quantum dimensions. Comparable to technosynth, only more chaotic.

**Gob Rap:** Rap music referencing the racial problems of orks and trolls.

**Gothabilly:** Dark and heavy keyboard and haunting violin themed compositions—essentially goth mixed with country.

**Goblin Rock:** Legacy grouping of music played by orks and trolls. Sometimes used in a derogatory fashion.

**Neo-classical:** Music inspired by compositions from the 18<sup>th</sup> century using rigidly structured music such as a symphony or quartet; usually used as a modifier to accompany a current musical style, i.e., neo-classical industrial.

**Nippon Glam:** Music incorporating traditional Japanese instruments, such as the biwa (plucked instrument), hotchiku (flute instrument), and shou (woodwind instrument). Stereotypically used to reference anime trid theme music.

**OrxRock:** Songs with lyrics in the Or'zet language.

**Powernoize:** Danceable instrumental music based on a distorted drumbeat and synthetic music. Related genre: Schranz, European version.

**Rockabilly:** Music blending rock and roll with country. Compositions contain instruments such as guitar, violin, and banjo.

**Synthcore:** Music blending synthpop and industrial genres.

**Steelmill Industrial:** UCAS-specific style of industrial music.

**Synthrash:** Very loud and fast rock music played using a synthlink.

**Technosynth:** Generalized term for musical tones played either using a synthlink or electric keyboard.

**Voodoo Blues:** A late generation of blues mixed with Yoruba tribal music. Compositions feature percussion instruments such as the dundun and bata as rhythmic support for blues-type instruments such as the harmonica and sax.

**WizPunk:** Punk music tied to an astral or magic-influenced presentation.

- The old labels are fading fast. It's in bad taste to refer to a band of any metahumans as "elven rockers" or "goblin rockers" when they might not even play rock and roll. There are plenty of goblin country musicians out there—and good ones, because you better believe they know how to layer on the pain.
- FastJack









trideo broadcast. They also introduced the synthlink—an instrument that can be played with the mind—at this concert. The synthlink was first created in 2020s then after refined in the 2040s into the slick design we see today. With greater control over the way people would react to their music and increased access to online distribution channels, garage bands with network access popped up all over the place. In 2063, the band Hemlock produced the first simulcast simfeed concert, with simrigs giving users a direct connection to the music. This technology has been improved with bleeding-edge maibumu music and Ikemoto's first concert, *Konichiwa Rainbow!* in 2070. In 2068 after the twin earthquakes in California Free State, two hundred musicians from various corporations got together for a virtual global concert, singing *We are the World*, which was originally written for a similar effort nearly a century ago. Fans could mix and match the musicians, choosing to hear their favorites together. This brought in relief funds in excess of half a billion nuyen.

- Of course the trickle down of the sales funded a few projects down in the CFS, from planting PCC agents to smuggling various goods and toys while there was still plenty of confusion.
- Plan 9
- Ah, good times! There are still jobs down there, though a lot of it is salvage while the reconstruction continues.
- Kane

### The Lows

As is always the case, the revolutions in music come hand-in-hand with new problems and low points. For example, the band Immortal 8 used magic to influence the crowd and hype up the audience in order to increase sales and leverage deals. Undercover Lone Star operatives caught them in 2048; lead singer Tony Li and four crewmembers were discovered to be unlicensed magicians. The Awakened members were tried and convicted on three hundred counts of magical assault. The rest of the band was tried for minor charges of conspiracy and obstruction of justice. This series of events increased public mistrust of both the music industry and of magicians in general. Those musicians that “came out of the magical closet” were unable to book tours or even play to live audiences as ticket sales dropped significantly. The fear didn't spare the rest of the industry, as declining ticket sales forced countless performers to scale back or stop touring for the next three years. “How do you know you really like the music?” was a popular scare topic in the news.

- There was also an upswing in sales of charms and trinkets to protect people from sorcery. Not real telesma, for the most part—it was usually just jewelry containing glowmoss.
- Lyrn

Another low point occurred in 2051. Zir Zemo scandalized the music industry when it was found out that he used Song-O-Mat software to compose and play his music. As it turned out, the revelation about Zemo was only the tip of the iceberg. Several small corporations were investigated; one Japanese corporation, Uzora, had created a whole set of virtual bands, engineering music for each of them. Musicians and the public alike were outraged, though for different reasons. The public complained that there was

no price difference between an album with artificially churned out tunes and a recorded performance from a live band, while musicians complained about the artificial competition. Just weeks after this story broke, the famous dwarf singer Pantu'u got into legal battle with Truman Distribution Networks. The corporation had recorded and sold his sound without his knowledge, exploiting a loophole over artistic ownership while he was under contract. This case raised additional questions about the scope of intellectual property rights of dead or retired musicians whose voices corporations had actively snatched up whenever they could. Could a corporation artificially create music in the name of an artist whose legal rights were owned by a third party? It was finally decided after six years of debate that while a corporation can create music if they own the intellectual rights, they couldn't replicate the artist's voice nor brand it under the artist's name unless it was explicitly stated to be produced from software and not the original artist.

- Appeals went on for some time, but the music industry finally gave up, realizing that even if they won against the artists, they would lose the people they were trying to sell to.
- Kay St. Irregular

Coffin clubs and astral concerts were growing in popularity for musicians and Awakened patrons in 2071, but their reputations became tarnished as tempo addicts flocked to these hideaways with their newfound abilities. Drug lords also started building coffin clubs to conceal the trafficking of Awakened drugs. The media didn't distinguish between the two, and music sales again sagged with the echo of events twenty years earlier.

- Damn Ghost Cartels did a real number on magic being a respectable medium for music. They funded the false fronts and fake bands to smuggle the drugs around, and it got so bad that you couldn't head to a coffin club without a SIN check by police patrols. They were out in force, looking for drugs or making sure everyone had their proper licenses for any magic they might cast.
- Haze
- Twice I had to sneak out of clubs that Lone Star raided. It really sucked, since whenever law enforcement came in, it was guaranteed that they'd bring some magical support with them, which meant things often ended up in spell-slinging combat. Granted, most of this was in the CAS or UCAS. The PCC could care less.
- Mika

Death also continued to stalk the music business. Jetblack was a shooting star, rising quickly on the strength and passion of his angst-ridden rock. Unfortunately, seven years into his career he was shot dead in a robbery gone wrong, killed by street punks who didn't even know who they had shot. Candlelight vigils are still held every year at the site of the shooting, with Jetblack's former band, The Shadows, playing some of his songs.

If Jetblack was a shooting star, Christy Dacee was the sun going supernova. Her teen-friendly music had just gone global when her life was cut short under circumstances that remain mysterious. The Horizon Corporation, which had her under contract, proclaimed a corporation-wide day of mourning.

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## BEHIND THE MUSIC

There are some pretty novahot bands out there that you've heard over the years, but how many of them do you know work the shadier side of the street? Besides me, of course. You'd be surprised at how many are just as skilled with a pistol as they are with a guitar. Here are some great bands from over the ages, with a little info on what they're up to now and whether they have a side job.

- And I'm going to start the "Who's the Shadowband" drinking game.
- Slamm-O!
- Can you say something about Psychedelic Phlegm? The Lead Singer, Johnny Phlegm, was actually Bob Dylan's great-great grandson, and he would spit on the crowd with psychedelic goo in the '40s and '50s! Or BlitzKrieg? The menehune drummer, Krieg, and Elf Singer/Guitarist, Blitz, used to rock the house at Weekend Eclipse in Denver back in the '60s. Both were old-school shadowbands.
- Bull
- You just did.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- So wait; does that count as one or two shots?
- Slamm-O!

## ANHEDONIA

### Members

Billy Ossian, a.k.a. Oz-Man, vocals and guitar  
 Jerry De Wulf, keyboards  
 Ian I. Banks, keyboards  
 Paul Cline, percussion  
 Angela Kostelanetz, vocals and keyboards

### Major Albums

*She Will Be Leaving* (2051)  
*Across a Thousand Blades* (2052)  
*Sad-Eyed Angel Falls* (2054)

### History

William Marshall Ossian and manager Edwin Pound emerged from the Tír with a successful band and a number of clubs to play in. Their independent recording and marketing company, Chrome Damage, and the management company Chrome Wall have a string of nightclubs along the west coast, including Chrome Rat in Malek'thas (Salem), Chrome Stallion in San Francisco, and Chrome Wolf in Los Angeles. Oz-Man's music was really great, but he divided up his time too much; running clubs, signing contracts, and playing music placed heavy demands on him. At the end of Anhedonia's run, it felt like his heart wasn't one hundred percent in it any more, and the band broke up in 2055. Oz-Man went on to make Chrome Damage his main focus.

- Paul Cline luckily had a place to go after Anhedonia. His cousin was an upcoming simsense star. Any guesses?
- Plan 9



## ASTRAL LIGHTNING

### Members

Zango Wilkes, vocalist  
Xolo Hanks, vocalist and drums  
Kris Doon, vocalist and electric guitar

### Major Albums

*Living Mars* (2059)  
*Warp* (2061)

### History

Astral Lightning was a phenomenal astral rock band from the Bronx. Strong emotional background from the fans colored Astral Lightning's brand of steelmill industrial music from the band's beginning in 2058. Most of their music was played by autosynths programmed for drums and electric guitar while Zango, Xolo, and Kris brought illusions and astral manipulations to the stage. For Zango, it was visualizing the music that most appealed to him. Astral Lightning is notable for being the first—and last—group to conjure spirits for a show. Some fan attempted to “borrow” one during a performance, and Zango lost control of it. Fortunately, it just went on a twelve minute drum solo before leaving. Astral Lightning earned three nominations for Best Special Effects from the Music and Trideo Corporate Awards between 2059 to 2061, winning the first two.

Even at its peak, Astral Lightning could not find a perfect platform for its performances. Some say Zango was before his time in manipulation of magic for entertainment. After 2060, Zango showed up more frequently in the scandalblogs, spending money like there was no tomorrow. People could not understand Zango as he went into a destructive meltdown, having public arguments with Xolo. In June of 2061, Zango grabbed the mic at Kong Walmart and belted out “Burning Corona, Blinded by Love” before he was escorted out. The next morning Zango was found dead from a concoction of alcohol and deepweed.

- Rumors abounded after Zango's death when Xolo and Kris disappeared from the public eye. It's believed that one or both were actually spirit companions, and it's speculated that Zango's drug use corrupted one and it killed him.
- Plan 9
- It's possible Zango had a mental disorder compounded by drug use and he just lost sense of reality. I think I've seen Kris playing in Manhattan.
- Snopes

## BARRY MANA

### Major Albums

*Once More Over the Moon* (2071)

### History

Barry is a singer who broke the glass ceiling for trolls. He was just a sanitation engineer repairing aging plumbing systems and sewage drainage before he walked into the Big Rhino in 2070 on Amateur Night. He surprised audiences as he got up and started singing classic jazz music in a rich baritone voice. Jaws dropped everywhere. Someone recorded it and posted it to their

blog, where it went viral. Less than a day later he was picked up by Mitsuhama Music. He's had two world tours; one in 2070 and again in 2072; from Vegas's Sands Casino to Seattle's Big Rhino, and he even did a show on Zurich Orbital. Mr. Mana's rich baritone voice has captivated audiences everywhere. His signature blue fedora and nimble dance number reminiscent of Fred Astaire in his size 40 Brown Snake shoes are recognizable throughout the CAS/UCAS. Barry Mana is currently playing a small tour in Germany.

- He claims not to have any cosmetic surgery, but the gossip blogs say he's gotten dental reconstruction and horn reduction to give him a friendlier appearance to a wider audience.
- Pistons
- That didn't help with the death threats and assassination attempt in Ottawa. Someone thought there was a cash bounty for troll ears in Quebec. I believe the would-be assassin was a freelancer, but I haven't found who would have signed the check if the job had gone through.
- Traveler Jones

## CHRISTY DAE

### Major Albums

*Dancing with Fireflies* (2066)  
*Rainy Dae* (2071)  
*Sunny Dae* (2072)  
*Last Daees* (2073)

### History

Christy Dae was a magnificent singer who exploded onto the scene in 2066 with her album, *Dancing with Fireflies*, for which she won Best Album of the Year, Best Song of the Year, Best Female Pop Vocal Performance, Best Pop Collaboration with Vocals, and Best Trideo Performance from the MTCA. She was only 18. Prior to this, she played in a highly successful revival of *High School Musical*, which is where her singing talent was discovered. Her voice was angelic. She could perform a church hymn, rockabilly, pop, or rock with equal passion and confidence. As she grew in maturity, she branched out musically, including a country duet on a Christmas album with Del Tolson. She was Pathfinder's little gem until she was murdered by vigilantes at age 23, for “becoming immoral.” She was posthumously awarded Best Songwriter of the Year for *Last Daees*, an album of previously unreleased completed tracks and songs written by her and performed by other musicians on the Pathfinder label.

- There are still rumors floating around about the death of her and her manager. One that sticks out is that it was a failed Aztechnology extraction job using blackmail, and that it was countered by Horizon's paid deniable assets. Unfortunately, both the Aztechnology and Horizon crew were killed in the eventual crossfire. Though if this were true, then Aztechnology must have paid handsomely not to have such a negative spot on their reputation.
- Dr. Spin



## CONCRETE DREAMS

### Members

Warren Cartwright, guitar  
Andrea Frost, vocals and synthlink  
François Nyanze, drums  
Moiria Thornton, lyricist & keyboards

### Major Albums

*Sons of Thunder* (2032)  
*Halley Come Down* (2061)

### History

Concrete Dreams started way back in 2032. They were pioneers in the use of new musical instruments like the synthlink and the first to go live with the trideo production of their song, "Sons of Thunder." Concrete Dreams played a blending of classic rock with a complex scaling of synthetic tones. François' pacing on real drums kept things moving at an appealing dance pace. After they burst onto the scene, their unique stylings kept them popular for decades. They played in a variety of clubs, including the small Chrome Rat in Eugene and Seattle's Underworld 93. All of the band members were pioneers in music. Warren's 480 iAxe Gemini allowed him to instantly switch from electric, to acoustic, to synthaxe. Moira's full-spectrum Softtone Ivory keyboard, and François' Cosmos Cajon drumbox were equally impressive in musical tones and presentation. Despite their innovation, though, those three could not match the impact of Andrea's synthlink performance. Once the synthlink emerged, every garage band for the next twenty years had to have one.

Concrete Dreams had a dry spell for much of the '50s, a time when they did not produce any decent hits, and people thought that was the end of the band. They made a big comeback in releasing the platinum hit, *Halley Come Down* during the year of the comet. They played it at Novo Maracanã stadium in Metropole. Concrete Dreams finally broke up in 2061, not long after the release of their final triumph, and the artists continued separate careers. Andrea Frost continued being a stellar performer with such albums as *Talking in Circles* in 2062. Warren Cartwright played many jam sessions with a variety of other musicians for years, but never produced his own album. Moira dropped out of playing music, and went into synthlink design. François played for other bands like Axe and Battle and Plastosapiens.

In October 2071, Concrete Dreams got back together for a reunion tour.

- Concrete Dreams had some serious ego conflicts between Warren and Andrea, not to mention Moira finding more offers for her knowledge of the synthlink than for playing. Warren couldn't handle losing out to Andrea's fame.
- Sunshine
- Since the reunion, Warren and Andrea have been at it again, hiring teams to dig up or make up some dirt on each other.
- Glitch
- Let's be clear here—money is the only reason that Concrete Dreams got back together. Warren was broke from two messy divorces, François hasn't been with a band since '65, and Moira had to pay legal debt after suing Shield Wall for stealing her

music. Andrea's the only one who wasn't in need of anything but an outlet for expression.

- Pistons

## CRIMETIME

### Major Albums

*Time to Die* (2050)  
*Djoto* (2063)  
*Dejected Nation* (2072)

### History

CrimeTime has played synth-hop rhythm to accompany his rap-like vocals since 2063. Originally from St. Petersburg, his usual traveling circuit has been in Europe with occasional jaunts to the Americas. Most of his music has been more upbeat than old school bands like Darwin's Bastards and TrollGate, and he's quite adept at keeping his audiences wanting more. He was the first to throw Or'zet into his music in 2063 and set a precedent for later artists in the style and use of the ork language in music. Also memorable in 2063 was the smear campaign against CrimeTime by the Legion of UCAS Decency (LOUD) in their attempt to squash orxsploitation. This inevitably failed, and CrimeTime's reputation improved in the wake of the LOUD congressional hearings. In 2068, he restarted his European tour. He currently resides in Hollywood.

- Darwin's Bastards and TrollGate were embodiments of violence, profanity, and anti-establishment antics. They're great for shock value, not for continual listening. CrimeTime understood that.
- 2XL
- I'm going to say it straight: CrimeTime is a runner, and all indications point to him being tied to the Vory.
- Slamm-0!
- You would be wrong. CrimeTime is just playing the charismatic Russian bad boy working for media attention. Just look at who he was dating in '64: Tiffany Brackhaven. An ork dating the granddaughter of the leader of the Humanis Policlub? Now he's involved with a love triangle between Maria Flying-Swan and John Cross. I wouldn't be surprised that when that cools down, he'll be involved in something else that will put him back on the scandalblogs.
- Dr. Spin
- It's not total rumors. Poor bastard has been fed BTLs from the Vory for some time. It was the leash that led CrimeTime around to shit gigs, smuggling for the puppet masters. Or'zet was his path to break the habit.
- Red Anya

## DARK ANGEL

### Major Albums

*Flaming Wings* (2050)  
*Earthdawn: The Scourge* (2053)

### History

Dark Angel had an interestingly short career. He was an amazing musician with an unsurpassed talent with the electric guitar. His albums were solid hits, but after he announced his next



album, *Earthdawn: The Scourge*, he and his wife/manager Icelady vanished mysteriously, and their house was burned to the ground. No bodies were found, and neither has been heard from since.

- Snippets of music rumored to be from the unpublished album still circulate. I believe that playing the music backwards in its entirety will open a rift to a nightmare realm. I think that's what happened to him when he found out that his wife was manipulating his music.
- Plan 9
- I'm not saying I know what happened to Dark Angel, but Occam's razor looks at the above theory and says, um, probably not.
- Snopes

## DARKVINE

### Major Albums

*Green Sea* (2053)

*Redwood Forest* (2058)

### History

DarkVine is a classical music player from Tír Tairngire with a magical talent for playing the harp. He started playing in 2049 with heartwarming melodies, playing to smaller clubs and private parties. While primarily a solo artist from Serentaneyo (Eugene), DarkVine has found other artists to perform with, such as Barbara Higglbie from Tolanestéa (Klamath Falls) playing violin and mandolin, and Gil Eisenburg on the cello and vocals. By 2053 he put together his own album entitled *Green Sea*, which was a combination of various solo and group performances of acoustic folk music. He became very popular in Tír na nÓg and other European countries. In 2055, he became the opener for Ar Cànan. With a long string of sold-out performances to his credit, DarkVine continued to manage and produce his own albums independently and was nominated for Best Album of the Year in 2058 for *Redwood Forest*. DarkVine retired from the mainstream music industry ten years later and has created a school teaching classic acoustic instruments. He occasionally plays in clubs in Malek'thas (Salem), Sérentaneyo (Eugene), and KéValan (Corvallis).

## DEIRDRE

### Major Albums

*Aitiú* (2062)

*Phoenix* (2070)

### History

Deirdre first debuted in Tír Tairngire in 2062. Her blending of English, French, and Sperethiel generated a clear unique sound, contained in compositions that have an orchestral or anthemic feel to them. Her *Aitiú* album contained some interesting archaic pieces, some of which are rumored to be over a thousand years old. Almost immediately she became the representative model of Tír high society. She was doted on like royalty as she performed throughout the Tír, and her music was promoted by the Tír government. Her fortunes took a turn for the worse, though, when Surehand lost control and Zincan took over. Deirdre's music was targeted as being tied to the old ways, and her album was burned as a symbol of the old guard. She got some help when Charisma Associates took to rebuilding the Tír's government image, because

they also took a look at Deirdre. Making some changes they suggested, Deirdre signed a contract with Charisma Associates and was reborn in the music scene. She still lives in Portland.

- I don't know about a thousand years old, but some of her songs were reworked from archived manuscripts written in Sperethiel.
- Elijah
- There had to be some closed-door politicking going on with Cline and possibly Surehand. Charisma Associates didn't have to take care of Dierdre as they did, and some of the tasks they completed in those thirty days were all but impossible if not for some concessions. Surehand's involvement is not surprising, given the long-standing rumor that Deirdre is the result of one of his extra-marital liaisons.
- Dr. Spin

## DNA

### Members

Digit, guitars

Noticia Nightcord, vocals

### Major Albums

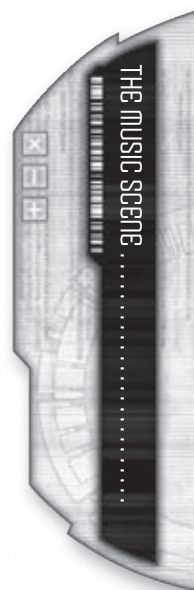
*Europa* (2062)

*Twist of Fate* (2064)

### History

Digit and Noticia were novahot from 2061 to 2064 as the changeling fever peaked. They originally were independent artists before the Comet left its mark on them; Digit expressed amphibian traits and an extra finger on each hand, while Noticia expressed feline traits and a unique singing voice. They both became popular at the Fractured Helix and decided to form a duet. DNA featured fast-paced technosynth music tailored to their unique talents. Digit made a custom seven-string electric guitar called Comet so he could use his fingers to their fullest extent. The band was a solid booking at the Fractured Helix for those four years, but then the popularity of changelings in the music industry faded. While they were a notable part of the first wave of changeling musicians, there was a glut of changelings and a few cosmetic impostors trying to get into the music or media industry, and it killed the momentum of any real artists. By late 2064 Digit and Noticia broke up DNA. Digit continued as a soloist, moving to Spokane and composing pieces for his six-fingered condition. Noticia stopped singing altogether. She had long felt that most of the fame she received came because of her feline appearance. She wanted to be seen as a musician, not as a freak.

- That's not easy, but she's talented enough to get by on her voice alone.
- Hannibelle
- She's too naïve; music has always been heard forty percent with the audience's ears and sixty percent with their eyes. A radical appearance will help you rise faster, but then you have to be really good to break through the belief that it's all show and no skill. Digit pulled this off; I think he's now learned to use the keyboard in his concerts, one of the other instruments that he can take advantage of.
- Kat o' Nine Tales



## THE ELEMENTALS

### Members

Whispering Wind, vocals  
Wildfire, electric guitar  
Coyote, bass  
Bambi, drums

### Major Albums

*Through the Lightning* (2053)  
*Total Eclipse* (2054)  
*Blue Ice* (2058)  
*Storm Riders* (2063)

### History

After their smash single, “Healing the Spirit,” which they played at a sold-out performance at Underworld 93, The Elementals had a hard time staying in Seattle. There was too much animosity with the Salish-Shidhe government, so they headed way south to Australia. Whispering Wind had friends down there, and she started playing in her hometown of Canberra. This was better for The Elementals, and they eventually became a national treasure. Their music infused indigenous and Western styles of music into an almost hypnotic interplay between Whispering Wind’s voice and the instruments. Bambi picked up playing with bilma (ironwood clapsticks), and they included an autosynth yidaki (didgeridoo) to accompany them. The autosynth yidaki is not pretty, so they keep it in the background or add the sound track later.

- With Whispering Wind’s past mercenary ties, it was hard not to be pulled back into the shadows for one of her father’s buddies. The Elementals have taken time off on occasion to play a supporting role.
- Black Mamba

## GRIM AURORA

### Members

Kat o’ Nine Tales, vocals & bass  
Tommy Dugger, synth guitar  
Adrian Bold, trumpet  
Gabriel Handen, trombone and synth keyboard  
Steve Bradley, drums

### Major Albums

*Pay Data* (2065)  
*Corporate Chameleon* (2068)  
*Munge and Snog* (2073)

### History

This band got its start in Seattle back in 2063. They started out slow, but finally hit pay dirt in 2065, which put them up to novastar status. With their first album and industrial/punk style of music, they picked up a strong local fan base, giving them the leverage to strike out on an ambitious globehopping tour in 2064.

- Like my third-person writing about myself up there? Anyway, I’ll save some insider stuff for comments, just so the main text can keep its flow. First piece of insider stuff: I negotiated some of the locations specifically so I could establish new contacts and get some face time with other contacts. No shadowrunning though.
- Kat o’ Nine Tales

From 2064 on, Grim Aurora has been novahot, winning MTCA’s Best New Artist in 2064 and Best Pop Collaboration with Vocals in 2068 with Andrea Frost in *Augmented Fantasy*. Grim Aurora had one media scandal in 2067, when trumpet player Adrian Bold had to be replaced during a tour after he was detained for possession of contraband. Adrian spent six months battling the charges in court, and spent another four months in prison in addition to paying an undisclosed fine. Grim Aurora replaced Adrian with Gunther Rose of Corporate Script, which was their opening band for the tour.

- Dumbshit was brokering some side deals and got caught with drugs in his shorts. This is why band members need to stay in good communication with each other, which is hard during a tour since you grow to like your bandmates less and less as the tour continues.
- Kat o’ Nine Tales

While the music leveled off in performance, they continue to play at the occasional local Seattle club and schedule tours every year or so. Their close connection with their fans helps keep their fan base solid.

## THE LATCH-KEY KIDS

### Key Members

Trish Scallenger, vocals  
Butch Bender, guitars  
Aimee Klein, bass  
Bob Badumbadam, drums

### Major Albums

*Tastes Like Love* (2073)

### History

The Latch-Key Kids’ fortunes revolve primarily on the looks and inherited wealth of frontwoman Trish Scallenger (or “Trish the Dish,” as she is popularly known. Their music’s not built to last, but at their best, their songs are good, trashy fun. At their worst, they’re like a cheerleader riot packaged in a grindingly repetitive beat. The music, though, is almost besides the point. Scallenger’s dad is Alex Scallenger, who’s a partner in Brackhaven Investments, so he has plenty of nuyen and juice to throw around. He used both to buy a music career for his daughter, and it worked—their debut album, *Tastes Like Love*, has already sold 40 million copies.

No one as accused these callow youths of being a shadowband, but there’s still shadow work going on around them. They recently plucked a guy, Jack Sledge, out of the shadows to run Trish’s security, with some ... well, interesting results. But I don’t want to get ahead of myself. I’ve got more info on that coming elsewhere. The point is, in Trish you have someone who is connected to vast amounts of power and wealth, and that’s always going to get people’s attention, no matter what kind of caterwauling she’s doing.

- After what happened to Christy Dae, these guys will probably amp up their security. Not the kind of work I’m interested in, but it pays well, and, the way things are going, it stands a good chance of putting you in the line of fire.
- Sticks



## MARIA MERCURIAL

### Major Albums

*Who Weeps for the Children* (2048)

*Put a* (2051)

*Mercurial* (2053)

*Shattered Me* (2072)

### History

Since 2048, when *Who Weeps for the Children* hit number one on the MTCA's Top 100 and with the subsequent tour in 2049, Mercurial has been a novahot star. Originally part of the music guild in Seattle with her manager/promoter Armando Hernandez, she moved to Pathfinder Multimedia when it was bought out, but still kept Armando as manager. As a major star, she faced major hurdles; first with the scandal of her addiction to BTLs, and then the disclosure of her BTL-induced multiple personality disorder in 2053 and

how it affected her marriage.

She also had some good times—she married Armando in 2051; had a son, Javier, in 2055 and a daughter, Isabelle, in 2058; and she was named Artist of the Decade in 2060.

Things fell apart soon after her divorce from Armando. She created a folk music style album called *Autumn*

*Winds*, but it failed. This was, I believe, because she lost her muse, Armando.

Things got real bad when Armando and Javier died in a plane crash during *Crash 2.0*. She lost it, and it's likely that one of her other personalities took over. Maria and Isabelle travelled abroad, dropping off the radar for a few years. Horizon's Pathfinder Multimedia

tracked her down and got her going again with the release of a new Album, *Shattered Me*, which has a mix of works including C-Rock and Bollywood pop, along with her usual rock style. Isabelle also had a few songs produced for the younger audiences with her mother. That album is simply called *I.M.*

- Pathfinder Multimedia also made a “based on true events” trideo of Maria dealing with BTL-induced multiple personalities called *Shattered Me*. Maria used her music from the album of the same name for the trideo. She also underwent some therapy with a company under Singularity. Don't really know if it worked, as the media only shows one face of her personality, though the fact that she's an advocate against BTL usage shows something of the changes she's gone through.

- Dr. Spin

- You owe me 50 nuyen, Winterhawk.

- Kat o' Nine Tales

## ORXANNE

### Major Albums

*California Dreaming Remix* (2060)

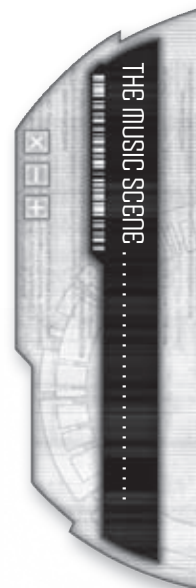
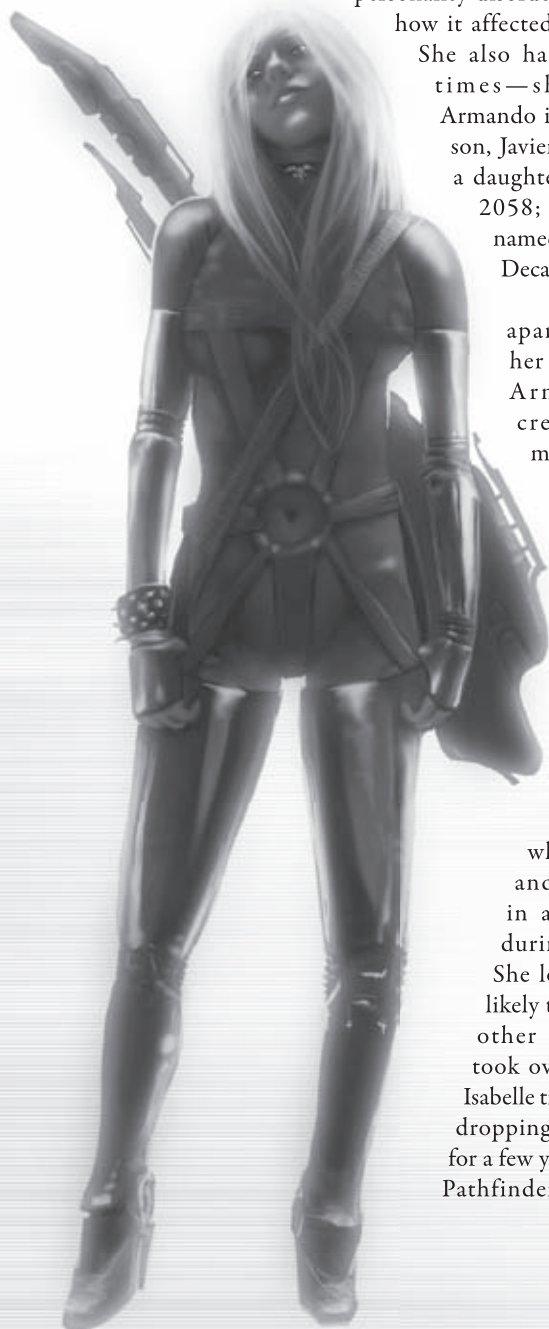
*Queen of Freaks* (2064)

### History

Orxanne is a very striking ork singer who made her debut in 2060. Raised in Cal Free State, her industrial rock and rap music is heavily themed with political and environmental messages as her way to influence her fans. Not everyone took a liking to her positions, though. Through her music she protested Saito's so-called California Protectorate, which led to her being banned from playing in that country for several years. Along with her political bent, Orxanne has long been known for her electrifying stage shows, and she took home the Best Choreography Award in 2064. When *Or'zet* was released on the Matrix, she moved quickly to incorporate it into her music.

After her corporate-bashing songs almost cost her life in 2064 during a Eurpoean tour, Orxanne started including runners in her entourage. This led to some disagreement with her manager and corporate promoter, pushing her to end her contract and start her own independent company, Wejoto Records. She continues composing music with meaningful statements as well as bringing some young firebrands into her label.

- Orxanne grew up on the streets of L.A. Her handle was Orxanne back then as well. I won't tell you her age, but she was a great getaway driver back in the '50s. I see that she's had a bit of cosmetic surgery done since going legit.
- Rigger X
- And if you're looking for some part-time work, she's hiring many runners as roadies or technicians to keep an eye on her assets. Her office is officially located on the Sunset Strip, but try tracking her down in one of the high-end clubs to negotiate this type of work.
- Mihoshi Oni



## THE SHADOWS

### Members

Marli Bremerton, vocals  
Joey Nightmare, synthaxe  
Sid Id, synthlink  
Ernie Hawkins, synthlink

### Major Albums

*One Stage Before* (2053)  
*Umbra Wake* (2056)

### History

The Shadows were doing well for three years before their promoter and manager, Lew Allenby, died suspiciously in the same week as rival promoter Jonathon Teague of Highstar Incorporated (before they were bought out by MCT). While they were playing to sold-out crowds, without management they started to fall apart businesswise. A few months after Allenby's death, his secretary, Miss Tangent, contracted with them and got them going again. Their chrome rock music was comfortable but not stellar, and they played for another ten years before disbanding. Joey Nightmare starred in his own reality trid, *Nightmare on Oak Lane*, featuring him and his kids. Sid suffered from hereditary baldness, and his trademark waist-long locks fell out. He ended up in the tabblogs looking for hair transplants.

- The Shadows' end came in the same year that rumors were spreading of Jetblack coming back from the dead. I still believe he faked his own death because he was a secret UCAS agent and someone didn't like what he found.
- Plan 9

## SHIELD WALL

### Members

Sheena M, vocals and guitar  
Jay Keith, drums  
Doris, vocals (deceased)  
Frumious, vocals (disappeared)  
Elle Jackson, keyboard  
Emma T, bass

### Major Albums

*Mother of the Sea* (2063)  
*Difficulties* (2064),  
*Never Forgive, Never Forget: The Best of Shield Wall* (2071)

### History

Sheena M was a soloist back in 2040 before joining forces with Jay Keith, drummer for the defunct group Midnight Clerks, who broke up in 2042. She also connected with Doris, a sasquatch who fell so deeply in love with Sheena's music that she dyed her fur the same color as Sheena's hair and learned to mimic her music. Shield Wall cut their first album in 2046, and continues to produce new music, though there have been some unfortunate changes to the band. Frumious, the band's first sasquatch, disappeared mysteriously shortly after their live broadcast from Underworld 93 in 2051. Doris passed away in 2055 from cancer. After that, Shield Wall had many creative differences, which made the band's work schedule sporadic at best. In 2059, Jay had a near-fatal car accident, which put touring on hiatus for three years. Finally, in 2063, *Mother of the Sea*, the band's long-planned rock opera, was released with great success. At almost fifty, Sheena is still active.

For her birthday in September, Shield Wall is scheduling a fifty-city tour around the world.

- Jay got the band into some hot water for a few years in the '60s, as he allegedly stole music materials from Moria of Concrete Dreams. Apparently they were working out a contract when he broke off negotiations. They finally settled out of court around '65.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- Shield Wall made a sizeable donation to the renovation of Club Penumbra in homage to the place where they got their start.
- Pistons
- Doris was a controversial sweetheart even at the end. In 2051, Doris was rumored to be using magic on the audience, and it turned into an ugly confrontation between metahuman rights activists and hate groups. The accusations were later proven to be false, but several gigs had to be rescheduled. Another battle happened in 2053, when Doris was found to be dying of cancer. Some of her fans thought she should get treatment, while others said she should respect her "cultural religion" and let nature take its course. One group even attempted to kidnap her before a Denver concert to get her to a medical facility.
- Netcat
- There are still rumors of Frumious sightings out there even after twenty years. People say they've seen him playing small clubs in various places in the UCAS. It's like spotting Elvis or Jetblack, and tabblogs are still offering good nuyen for trids of him.
- Plan 9

## SYNAPTIC

### Members

Dirk Wadok  
Hans Vetter

### Major Albums

*Elektronenwelle* (2062)  
*BiOhm* (2072)  
*Oszilloscope* (2073)

### History

Synaptic has been playing synthrash/fractal phase music out of Germany since 2062. In a recent interview by *KaPow!*, they said they were influenced by the pioneering band Daft Punk in both music and performance. Their personas are animated robots, and their stage costumes have a cyborg appearance, with holographic images and autosynth instruments assisting in the overall effect they want to present. Both band members play synthlinks and offer a very unique performance on stage as well as in VR. It's sometimes hard to tell Dirk and Hans apart, and it's made even trickier by the fact that they sometimes trade personas.

Their albums are sporadic, as they take time setting up intricate concerts with one- or two-year sabbaticals between their tours. Their last tour, Neue Darwin in 2069, took them on a unique ten-city journey around the Pacific with a show that masterfully combined VR and live performance. Fans follow the group from city to city, as their shows are breathtaking. Their sim recordings also have strong sales after each show.



- These boys are some serious hackers. While they were in PCC in '65, they made six figures fencing paydata during one of their sabbaticals. I always wondered if one or both are technomancers.
- Netcat

- They are fucking tricky bastards. I was in Jakarta watching one of their live performances when I got word from my crew that something funny was going on. Apparently somebody was messing with harbor markers and security at Tanjung Priok. Granted, I didn't care what the hell they were up to, I just told my crew to help themselves to some of the cargo containers during the confusion.
- Kane

## TEIKO IKEMOTO

### Major Albums

*Konichiwa Rainbow!* (2070)

*Lollipop Dreams* (2073)

### History

Born in 2058, this musical icon is Mitsuhamas's crown jewel, much as Christy Dace was Horizon's. Teiko has incredible mass appeal, with her first album going platinum thirty times over in pre-order sales. Teenagers turn concerts into sellouts wherever she goes. When Teiko came to play in the CAS and UCAS, Mitsuhamas had to hire additional security to prevent casualties as fans had already caused ten deaths and twenty injuries due to surging forward in overcrowded conditions. Pathfinder found itself on the defensive with Teiko's performance on what was traditionally their turf. *Lollipop Dreams* continues to have strong sales, toppling previous records with over a billion albums sold. She also beat out Christy Dace's *Rainy Dace* for Best Album and Best Song of the Year following Teiko's North American tour.

- Teiko's father, Kobayashi, railed against Mitsuhamas as he was cut out of his daughter's life by her handlers. He tried to get Pathfinder Multimedia to buy out her contract, but at the time it was a price that Horizon could not afford. With Christy Dace's death, Pathfinder might be more desperate.
- Mihoshi Oni

## THE TOLSON TWINS

### Members

Don Tolson

Del Tolson

### Major Albums

*Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Hackers* (2069)

*Aztlan Tequila* (2070)

*Badland Sunrise* (2072)

### History

Don and Del are twins from Music City—Nashville—and have been bringing country music to the masses since 2066. They are also the most popular dwarven singers since Pantu'u, the Menchune musician whose heyday was back in 2054. While Don and Del have their own solo albums, they also create songs together. Don plays the synth-guitar, while Del plays the electric violin. They only do tours and concerts in the CAS, preferring to stay close to home. For those fans that can't come to them, they stage VR concerts.

- Pantu'u rocked! He still appears from time to time in soundtracks for people using a synthlink while surfing; he's very popular in extreme sports trids.
- Slamm-O!

- The Tolsons stay home because they have many side projects that they have to manage. The Tolson twins are part of the Chavez family by marriage. With the death of his son, Omar, Miguel had to do some reorg of the Denver branch, leaving promotional opportunities in the south. So technically it's something like Capo Don and Capo Del.
- Mika

## WILD CARDS

### Members

Jack Diamond (Jack of Diamonds), lead vocals and guitar

Alice (Queen of Hearts), vocals

Rocko (Ace of Spades), bass

Durate (Two of Clubs), drums

### Major Albums

*House of Cards* (2068)

*Stacking the Deck* (2070)

*Death of a Samurai* (2071)

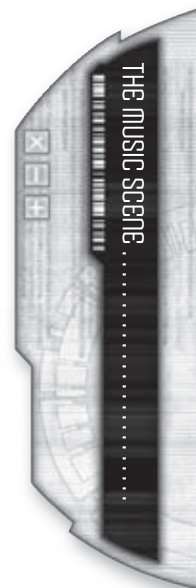
### History

Theses guys started out of Seattle in 2068 and have been rocking for a good five years. They are a solid classic rock band, with good performances, but are not nova material. They play mostly small-time clubs in the Seattle area and have been the occasional opener for bands in CAS and UCAS. They lack the motivation to push through with new material and new locations. Jack, the leader of the band, has hit a comfort level with their performance and has kept their tours limited to the West Coast. They made an appearance on *A Gang's Life* with the A-Kidz three years ago, which led to a California Free State tour a year later.

- Jack, Durate, and their manager, Mr. R'Ork, are a part of a shadowrunning team. Alice and Rocko are just along for the ride. Jack's usually out crusading for "hooding" jobs, and R'Ork sets them up.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- Too easy. I knew they were a shadowband. I was at Flint's wake a few years back and got to meet them. He ran with them a few times. They played a few songs during his wake.
- Traveler Jones

## BEYOND METAHUMAN BOUNDARIES

Metahumans are not the only ones who can carry a tune. Many other sapient species produce music, and some have even found niches and fans in our musical environment. I asked Dr. Lucy Shapiro, who is a leading expert on xenanthropology that The Smiling Bandit pointed my way, to send me any information on sapient societies relating to music.



### Sasquatch

Sasquatches live in a primitive culture, and so their music is simple and shamanistic in nature. They mostly sing or chant, but without words. Instead they mimic sounds that they hear in the world around them and blend them into a song. Any instrumentation consists of the improvised beating of stones or sticks.

**Journal Entry Excerpt:** I made a brief stop in Nepal while journeying to Angkor Wat and spent some time with the yeti, where I had an interview with the Meh-Teh Lama. In my conversation with him, I asked him about music since, to metahuman ears, it's very different. As translated from sign language:

[The Earth sings to us. Only a few of us can hear. She/he tells of the past and future. She/he tells us how she/he feels. We sing back to her/him.]

"Does she answer?"

[Does it matter? We believe she/he hears our song.]

"What do you sing about?"

[We tell her/him about the day. We pray to him/her about our hopes. Sometimes we just sing and hope she/he enjoys our song.]

#### Aetherpedia Keyword Search: Bear Accuda

Harry Krishna of StarFire formally retired in 2057 at the ripe old age of 60 and headed back to the wilderness of the NAN, where he had made a number of investments. Few others, like Doris and Frumious, could match his caliber of artistry for the next decade. Interesting enough, the few sasquatches who did enter the metahuman world from 2057 onward took up mainly comedy or technical jobs instead of music. Currently, Bear Accuda of the Industrial Plains is a possible contender for Krishna's crown. His talent for mimicking street sounds and the use of the synthlink has brought fascinating element to Steelmill industrial music.

### Naga

Nagas' sense of music has developed in an interesting way, as they have no hands to manipulate keys or strings. Most of their music is vocal. They orchestrate a choir in their celebrations, which blends well with their storytelling. Magic is pervasive in their society, and to accompany the singing and stories they use magic to produce illusions, astral images, and instrumental music. I've been told that nagas generally consider the music that is actually heard to be secondary to their manipulation of magical energy. In a sense, they use magic the way a theatrical company uses set design—as an artistic backdrop to the real show.

Nagas who have tried out the metahuman lifestyle have taken an interest in the synthlink. Like other adaptive technologies,

nagas use the device to recreate music from their culture. The use of the synthlink has not found its way back to Angkor Wat, presumably because of the cultural and class preference for magic.

**Journal Entry Excerpt:** During my time with the Naga and at the celebration with the Nagaraja, I was fascinated by the entertainment, but I also saw less formal performances. While the celebrations are highly intricate, the non-magical nagas have their own class of music developed without the all-pervasive magic.

One afternoon during a break for meals, an older female naga with cream-colored scales and what could be cataracts began to sing. She was accompanied by two younger male nagas playing instruments I later identified as resembling the roneat ek, a bamboo xylophone, and the tro khmer, a two-stringed bowed instrument. While as a metahuman, I can see how to play such instruments with my hands, the nagas perform a sort of dance, using their whole body in playing the instruments.

#### Aetherpedia Keyword Search: Ahi

Ahi was a naga slave in China until she was rescued by TerraFirst! operatives there. She was rehabilitated in Hong Kong and ended up staying there. She is eight meters long with red-and-black scales, outlined in gold by nanite tattoos. While she has played the synthlink, she prefers singing and dancing to the quick beat of C-Pop music.

### Centaur

Centaur are very tribal in their musical choices, with lots of percussion instruments. They can play instruments with their hands, but their preferred instruments have been drums that they can beat using their forelegs while they dance. Hollowed logs and thick hide hoop drums are kicked and stomped on to create the deep chanting beat.

Centaur have adopted other instruments of the metahuman world such as stringed and flute-type instruments. They have created many new compositions, though several of the tribes prefer to keep with traditional ways and only play time-tested music. Some centaurs have gone a step further and have joined the big-city music industry. Centaurs don't have an interest in the synthlink, as it doesn't fit in with their preferred musical styles.

**Journal Entry Excerpt:** The Naadam Festival in Ulaanbaatar, if I recall correctly, had several musical events. There was a large bonfire during the night, and various-sized logs and stones were placed around the fire. I originally thought they were for sitting—with all the drinking, I forgot that centaurs wouldn't use them as seats—but Sings-While-Running told me to wait outside the circle and watch. Ten of the adults entered the circle with hoop drums. Sings-While-Running started chanting while the adults danced





INCOMING FEED.....

around the fire. They would strike the drums in time with the chanting. While this looked like a simple tribal dance, it gradually became more complex. The adults turned toward the logs and stones and stomped them, adding more tones to the music. The beat got faster, and all the adults joined in the chant. The song/dance ended with a unified stomp that reverberated through the night.

After this presentation, White-Dapple, Kicks-in-the-Rain, and Cloud-on-Mountain—the juvenile females—performed. They had put on leggings with copper disks that jingled. As they sung, they danced, adding musical chimes to their song.

#### Aetherpedia Keyword Search: Thunder and the Prairie Boys

Thunder is very big for a centaur, equivalent to a Clydesdale in stature. He and his group from the NAN come out to play every summer at the Red Rock Amphitheater near Denver to get away from the females of their tribe. They blend traditional centaur percussion with electric guitar rock. Thunder is not much interested in keeping lots of money for himself, so most of his earnings are used to support his tribe. The rest of the proceeds are given to various charities.

### OTHER MUSICIANS OF NOTE

#### Kitsune

Kitsune, from ManaSonic of Neo-Tokyo, was the first musician publicly known to be a shapeshifter. She played heavy metal to sold-out crowds, thrashing and snarling out in stellar performances. While she was known as a shapeshifter, she didn't use that in her act, though did wear a faux fox tail in her costume. Unfortunately, Kitsune was murdered three years into a promising career.

#### Kayla and Z00ti

Kayla, a computer-generated Ildoru, is one of the few sapient AIs who play VR concerts. Kayla is based (insofar as an AI can be based anywhere) in Neo-Tokyo. Her persona is an atypical female anime character, assertive and not at all giggly. Z00ti is thought to have emerged from a pirated version of SPAM in Germany. Z00ti's persona is that of a century-old, long-haired rockstar. While both are musical AI, their understanding of music is quite different. Kayla was born into catchy teenage pop music, while Z00ti has compiled gigapulses of classic rock.

#### Kokopelli

On occasion, the NAN tribes perform a ritual dance at the Red Rock Amphitheater near Denver that attracts the attention of the Kokopelli, who join the dance and play transcendental music. This astral performance can last for hours.

Urgent Message...

THE MUSIC SCENE .....

## Pixie

Pixie instruments are the same approximate size as standard instruments for humans due to simple physics. If the instruments were pixie-sized, the vibrations of the smaller instruments would be too high-pitched to be heard. Pixies have made accommodations for themselves by modifying instruments for smaller hands. Some larger instruments are played by a pair of pixies. Pixies play a variety of Eastern and Western European folk music, often singing lyrics in the native tongue. They have kept mainly to traditional instruments, though some are learning electric versions of their songs to add more volume to their set lists. Pixies have shunned the synthlink device altogether, as it's been found to be detrimental to their health due to sensory overload side effects.

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### Aetherpedia Keyword Search: Ar Cànan

This all-female pixie group formed in Tír nà nÓg plays a variety of folkloric music, all sung in Gaelic. They have adapted the songs to an electric violin and keyboard of their size without sacrificing sound quality. The harmonics of their singing are said to be like angels, and it is rumored that the Chancellor Hugo von Hasslach is one of their biggest fans.

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

I have to stand on my soapbox for a moment. Most musical instruments are the cheap plastic knockoffs that are used with the Virtual Rock Star Game. Every wannabe knows how to react to colored lights with these instruments and score points to dress up their rock persona. The rest are too damn lazy to practice a real instrument and instead plug themselves into a fake instrument with a synthlink, which is one step above playing air guitar. Now this is not to bash synthlink musicians like Andrea Frost, but rather to slam the assholes that think that Eric Clapton, Warren Cartwright, or Yngwie Malmsteen's music are child's play because they can easily do it in their heads. End Rant.

Historically, inspiration came from AAT's Auto-tune and Harmony. Prior to Concrete Dreams, Moira Thornton was a neuro-interface software engineer working on the next generation of simsense. She had the idea of instead of adjusting the music to a perfect pitch after the fact, why not interpret the music in the person's head and project that? She took what we would call a sim module and adjusted it to translate thoughts into musical notes. Basically the same as the simrig, only working with different parts of the brain. So in 2023, she invented the synthlink. Of course the original synthlink was connected to a datajack and it was a VR connection, meaning that while the music sounded the same, the presentation was like watching a hacker drool. With enough tinkering, Moira got the synthlink to what was presented in Underground 93. She added pre-programmed software in between sets so Andrea could jack out to perform. The synthlink technology patents were bought out

## MY TOP FIVE LEAST FAVORITE INSTRUMENTS ARE:

**5. Troll-size version of Coral box acoustic drums.** They make a decent enough drum set for practicing, but when they scaled it up, they changed the polymers to be a little more dense and durable. It ruined the sound, putting more bass in than necessary. It also rolls like thunder with the vibrations continue too long.

**4. The electric hammered dulcimer.** Now I'm not against other countries' music, but electrifying that thing makes it sound like someone is smashing a commlink. I guess that's good for synthtrash, but not for me. They should have stuck with the electric sitar.

**3. The synhtuba.** Why the hell would you build something so large when there's no acoustic benefit? I feel sorry for marching band players everywhere who have to use the synhtuba. Personally I dislike playing any synth instrument. It's so distant from the feel of the musical vibrations that flow from my hand to the audience.

**2. Synthlinks.** I hate the "plug and play" belief that comes with this thing. Kids skip out on trying their hand at a real instrument and instead do a little brain surgery so they get rich quick with their garage band.

**1. Autosynths for horn or woodwind instruments.** They look like someone ripped the guts out of a cow, or like you have a large parasitic thing chewing on your instrument. They don't sound right, and it's just disturbing to watch someone play these things.

## MY TOP FIVE FAVORITE INSTRUMENTS ARE:

**5. Gimli's titanium synthaxe.** A brilliant piece of form married to function. It is perfectly balanced and will sing as it cuts through the air. Gimli's performance with it is equally as impressive. Synthaxes overall are very nice, but they are much hotter when the musician goes for a custom model over a store-bought one.

**4. The Tesla keyboard.** Truly an electric masterpiece, with arching pulses of lightning vibrating the air in specific musical tones. Synaptic plays a stage-size one of these, and it's truly amazing live.

**3. Synthlinks.** Surprise! I have both love and hatred for this thing. I already said what I don't like about them; what I love is the capacity and freedom of expression it provides. What Andrea Frost produces with it is so beautiful, so complex. Put some emotion tracks to it and you can almost read her mind.

**2. The Lopez escopetarra.** This beauty is modeled off of the Winchester/Stratocaster combo. I've tried getting my hands on the original, but it hasn't been for sale. While the sound is relatively the same, the statement it makes is awesome. Revolution! Orxanne had a few music trideos with her playing one.

**1. Hagtrom H8 1968 made with mahogany.** It's my pride and joy and is modeled after Noel Redding's bass. I like the feel of it. When I start to play it, the rhythm moves through me, making me a part of the music, not just a musician.

Urgent Message...



by Renraku in the '40s and further refined. Today's synthlinks are small and wireless. They are usually placed in faux instruments to allow a better visual performance.

- Did you ever get some little tune stuck in your head? A synthlink finally allows you to get it out—and into other people's heads.
- Netcat

Prior to the Matrix, people were able to publish, buy, and sell music fairly easily. The public's demand for instant music downloaded to whatever device was insatiable. In the '40s and '50s, the Song-O-Mat software opened up a new industry where, for a price, users could pick a music style and generate their own musical jingles. Most of the music generated by the Song-O-Mat was instrumental and had fairly predictable algorithms. But for all its faults, people still bought into it. This had an indirect negative impact on some synthlink musicians, as people questioned whether it was really them composing the music or some software doing the dirty work.

Ten years later, the next generation of software came to light. Software Produced Automatic Music, or SPAM, was born. While advertisers tried to sell it under other names, SPAM stuck, and rather made sense as, just like the original product and the virtual garbage we're always trying to filter out, it's filled with little bits of everything packed in a can. Instead of just generating a music style, SPAM can analyze an existing musician's songs and extrapolate new music from it. The music it generated wasn't quite so predictable as Song-O-Mat's output; it sounded just like what the artist would play. Lyric can be uploaded and added, producing "real songs." This became controversial in 2051 when law enforcement cracked down on pirated music and found falsely labeled music generated by SPAM including, oddly enough, some Elvis Presley tunes from 1990 or so. SPAM continues to be used today, generating quick jingles and musical interpretations of news.

2070 ushered in the next interpretation of music, this time with an understanding of how music interacts with the brain. With a return loop of brain activity, music is adjusted to find an ideal balance appealing to the listener. This concept of orchestrating music this way has been called yobumbu, or "your boom."

### Synthlink

Similar to the simrig, a synthlink is a neat little device that interprets neuro-signals from the sim module and converts it to music that the person creates in their head. A synthlink can be connected directly to an audio system, or you can connect it to orchestrating software like Horizon's Beethoven.

### Synthslave

Synthslaves aren't very smart agents, but given enough musical input, they can learn enough to harmonize through a master composing system. Synthlink users can feed a synthslave a musical instrument, then switch to another instrument. The synthlink user can do this multiple times, orchestrating their own piece of music. A synthlink user can jump between synthslaves to control the music.

### Horizon's Beethoven 4/8/16

Beethoven is a master system that helps harmonize multiple

musical inputs into a composition. Beethoven features auto beat software, provides edit and looping capability, and utilizes up to sixteen synthslaves to handle multiple instrumentals or vocals. Similar systems include Mitsuhamas' Insta-Muse and Ares' ThrashMaster 6.

### Autosynth

Autosynths are semi-autonomous drones attached to acoustic or electric instruments. These instruments can keep a tune based on inputted sheet music or music-generating software. Autosynths differ from synthslaves in that they have a physical component. Common uses for autosynths are providing music for outdoor performances, filling in as a substitute musician, or generating some full-band dynamics when you want to have a jam session.

- The deluxe version of Virtual Rock Star comes with an autosynth guitar so you can play a duet with yourself.
- Orbital DK

### Acoustic vs. Electric vs. Synth

"Acoustic" refers to any instrument whose sound is not electronically enhanced or modified. This puts limitations on the size and shape of the instrument. Traditionalists still play acoustic instruments, not only because of the belief that the sound of the instrument is its true nature, but because the instrument itself is a work of art. Electric instruments are those connected to an amplifier allowing more manipulation of the sound coming from the instrument. The designs and playing are similar, but the sounds are a bit different, which helps players determine what kind of instrument they should play according to the genre they're working in. Metal and hardcore are best played on an electric guitar, while classical rock and country go better with an acoustic guitar. Acoustic instruments are more expensive than electric as they are made from relatively rare products such as wood for stringed instruments or brass for horns.

- While technology made advances in tensile strength and durability, hardly anything has been developed to improve sound quality.
- Plan 9

Synthinstruments are solid imitations of acoustic instruments. They still have moving parts such as keys or strings, but the movements are interpreted by electronics and are sent to an audio device. No actual sound comes from these instruments—the electronics do the real work. The synthesizer keyboard has been around for a while; modern synthinstruments support a broad range of playing styles, such as the synthaxe and synthtrumpet. Synth instruments are often cheaper than electric, especially if you're looking at entry-level models, but synth instruments can go way up in price as they can really be made of anything. For example, Gimli's legendary synthaxe, made by Axe and Battle, is custom-made of titanium with platinum etchings; Cartwright still plays his fiberglass iAxe Gemini.

- Gimli really uses his axe as an axe as he battles robotic speakers in performance. I especially liked what he did during the Toronto 2068 tour. He would walk out to the center stage, strolling out on the catwalk doing a solo, when the large speakers to the left and right of the main stage morphed like walker drones. It became a duel



between Gimli and the speakers, which would bark out a remix of his playing. Gimli then would go freakin' berserk. He cut the legs out of the first one in a wide swing. When it dropped down, he hooked the top of the speaker drone with the inside of the blade to climb up on top of it. Then he did a crazy back flip off the first drone, heaving the blade around to cleave the second drone. Rock and roll!

- Slamm-0!

### Other Musical Options

Bachbot, AiR Guitar, and DrumBox are some of the AR software packages available to let you play music without an instrument. Bachbot and AiR Guitar require the AR Gloves, while DrumBox uses motion sensor sticks to play. Handy for those who are on the go or can't afford their own instrument.

### THE TEAM

What makes a band? Well, for Grim Aurora, we have: Al, my manager; my band; a dozen roadies; three techs; Mr. Andersen, the producer; and EarthWyrM Media and Communications, Inc., our promoter. I can tell you all about them. Like most of these jobs, they don't have to be separate careers, or even separate people. Motivated people could wear more than one hat, like manager and promoter, or tech and roadie, or even vocalist and producer.

#### Manager

My manager, Al, can be such a pain in the ass. He tells me where to go, where to play, complains if we don't practice, and has a kit-fit if things aren't there as he planned. He, on the other hand, would say I'm such a bitch because he has to take care of all my eccentric demands, arrange flights, hotels, licensing, and permits for the whole crew, and pray that none of us screw up badly enough that he would have to put up bail. Touché.

Al is like a commanding general and logistics operator; if he's not happy with you, God help you. You'd sleep in the shittiest accommodations he can put you up in, and that could just be the beginning of your troubles. I would say he's the power behind the curtain—we're merely the pretty face in front. Being a runner, I can see where he could do stuff that no one would know or care about. Having a nova-hot band in his pocket is like a ticket to travel anywhere. If he needed to be in Tír ná nÓg or Neo-Tokyo for a job, he'd just offer us up, and clubs would scramble to help him get the proper permits for the band to play there. If he wanted to bring in some toy or something, he could just hide it with all the other technical gear that comes with a band. And if he wanted some more muscle for a job, who would pay attention to another roadie flying with the band? Hell, he could turn us into a diversion somewhere signing autographs, while he's off sneaking around hacking paydata or pulling some wetwork operation with the supposed roadie. While the potential of what a manager can do scares me a bit, Al is twenty-five kilos overweight and would wait till hell freezes over before having to walk a flight of stairs, let alone climb in an air duct. That would wrinkle his suit. Love you Al!

Now, all this is from my perspective; for a look from the other side, here's Mr. R'Ork, manager of the Wild Cards.

Mr. R'Ork

In the simplest terms, I am both the face and the fixer in media circles. Negotiations and compromise are key to making

sure you're happy, the band is happy, and the club wants you coming back. I could, if I wanted to, manage more than one band, but I'm not a masochist. I could also hire some personal assistants to delegate work to, if I knew they were competent enough to obey my orders. As to working shadows, the problem I face is that the other runners, especially band members, forget their place and don't give me the respect and courtesy due my manager persona. Jack, our lead singer, is the leader of the shadowrunning team, and I respect his decisions when on the job, but during the day he forgets sometimes that I'm in charge. As another example, Nybbles will barge into my office to chat or complain. She forgets the respect due to the position, thinking I'm just one of the boys. If you want to get into managing in the media industry, make sure they learn to treat you according to your band position when you're doing band things, and your runner position when you're doing runner things.

#### Musicians/Singers

Musicians and singers—totally the best job in the world. And it's my job. Besides playing, I sometimes come up with new songs with the band, who have side bets on what song is going to get how high on the MTCA Charts. We do some of our own songs, but we also buy songs from contracted composers. I'm established enough that I get final say on the music. Newbies have to deal with corporate-scripted jingles for a while until they get some market power of their own. Being a rocker, I have all kinds of perks. Number one is the shitload of cash, followed by fame and travel. Once you hit the point where I'm at, if I wanted Cal Free raisins and fresh yogurt at three o'clock in the morning, somebody is going to give it to me. If I want to party at Dante's, all I need to show is my pretty face and the bouncers will let me in. Allow that to soak in for a moment.

Here's the downside: Work. You can't just be you on stage; you have to be you, the famous you, all the time. I practice at least once a week when not touring, and three days a week for a month before a tour. That nixes any possible shadowrunning job and most parties before a tour. And if I did want to do a job while on tour, I'd have to plan plenty of time between locations, just in case I have to recuperate. And that's risky. This leads to the other downside: Fame. You have millions of eyes on you. Most are benign viewers, but they're accompanied by a small few who want to get that million-nuyen shot of you. That shot usually means something embarrassing, or taken out of context to become embarrassing. It's hard enough not to attract attention with daily routines, let alone shadowrunning. I guess I get a little thrill playing "catch me if you can" with the paparazzi, though my little hide-and-seek games can hinder any chance of getting help if something goes wrong. I think the last time I played a good game was a year ago when I was house-hunting and wound up meeting Larry the Stalker in Tacoma. Couldn't really call the police, as the media hounds would be questioning why I was down in Tacoma in the first place and possibly seeing that apartment. Luckily, I came prepared for possible combat. It didn't come to that, but it's good to know I can handle myself if I need to.

To keep some anonymity and sanity I have set up black MSPs so I can do things like this or shop at the black-market. I've also done some contract work on my residence to add more privacy and alternate exit routes, so those watching the house can't see me leave. All this is necessary so I can enjoy the two pieces of my life



that can never meet. And fame can be a real bitch when it comes to running. Fake SINS don't really help me if my face is still my face—I have to add a little makeup disguise and distractions. I haven't resorted to look-a-likes like Christy Daece, or Villiers, but that's still an option.

Is it worth it? Yes, at least for a few more years.

- Which would you retire from first?
- Frosty
- Don't know.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

## Roadies

These guys are half pack mule, half brick wall. They are on the bus to move my stuff, and they are around the stage to put a foot down on any fan that gets too close. They set the stage up; then at the end, they break the stage down and get us ready to go to the next gig. I couldn't get to any performance without their support. The good ones are jacks-of-all-trades, able to fill in wherever they are needed (techie, driver, bodyguard, etc.). Sure it's a lot of work, and most of it is not glamorous, but the plus side is a whole lot of entertainment and, if you're good enough, travel options. There's a background check done on most roadies before they're hired, but a little grey is necessary at times, which means some blemishes on your record won't automatically keep you from being hired. I know my roadies can at least handle a pistol and get my ass out if the shit hits the fan. I do have bodyguards, but roadies are like the first line of defense against the drunk or stupid. Fans don't pay attention to these guys, which works well if they're shadowrunners. Hell, I don't know where they all are at any given time. They could just be hanging with the band so they can get across a border, then Al and them can do some nefarious act while I'm onstage, then they'll be gone.

Do I use roadies for runs? No. I keep my on-stage life separate from my off-stage life. I don't even like hiring runners as roadies, as I need people to get shit done right for a gig. It's serious work for them. Once you hit nova status, you'll be traveling all over the world and needing talented roadies for customs, language, driving, crazed fans, or any issue Al didn't plan for.

Mage roadies are kinda cool and a rare breed. I wish I had one. Loading and unloading would be a snap with all that magic, and they are good at finding and cataloging stuff. Unfortunately there's a bunch of bureaucracy in getting them across borders, certification, plus how many mages do you know who would put up with low wages when there's always six-figure corporate deals out there? They've got to really be in love with the road to make that sacrifice.

## Technicians

While musical instruments haven't advanced much (with the exception of the synthlink), the technology to maintain, produce, and compose it has. Just getting the music to sound right in clubs of various sizes is a bitch, not to mention lighting, simsense overlay, autosynths, and drone coordination. The electric instruments also need various adjustments and parts replacement. I can do physical replacement of strings and adjustments, but Tim, my instrument tech, keeps my various toys working properly during both practices and gigs. And yes, I do know most of the names of my techies and

roadies. Techs are also there playing secondary security, especially by watching firewalls and operating drones. Techies have the same perks as roadies with the entertainment and travel. As runners, I think they're about the same as roadies—people don't pay much attention to them. Although techies have a whole other Matrix life. I've seen Tim multitasking with VR games with the other techies, so it's entirely possible that he could be compiling fake permits or hacking nodes in his spare time. Course if he was a real shadowrunner he'd be out more often instead of camping out in the back of the touring van.

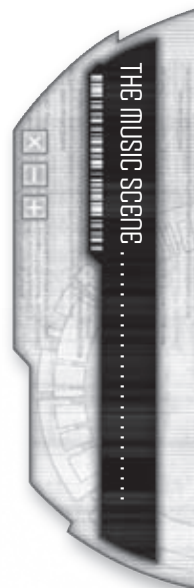
## Producers

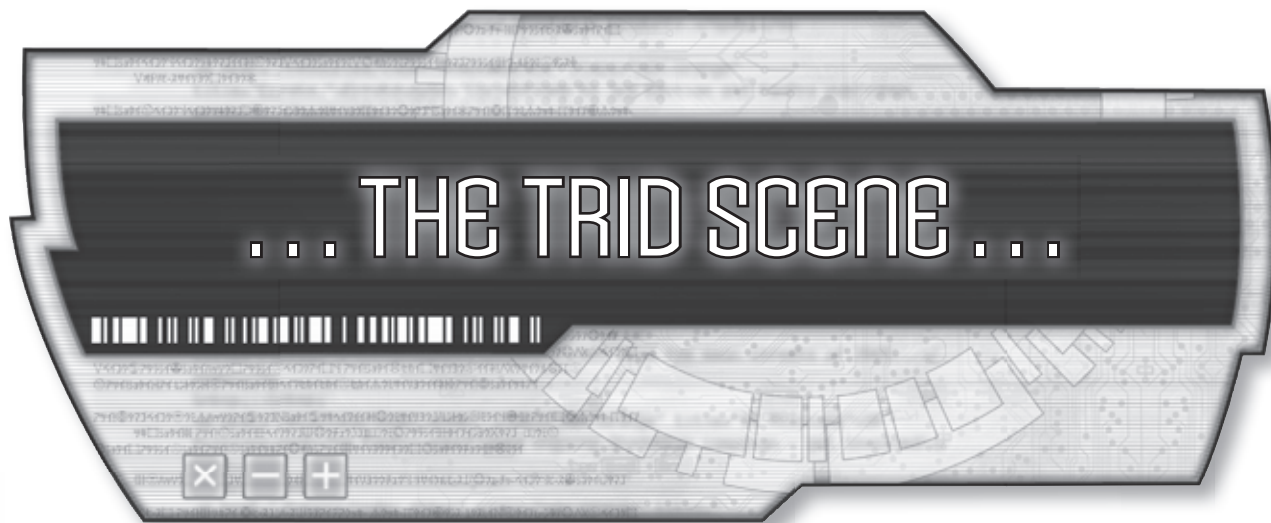
Mr. Andersen and his assistants are the wizards behind the making of our music trids and albums. Their talent lies in hearing and seeing all the media inputs and putting them all together into an awesome composition. They do some cool edits and looping similar to what composition software does, only better. If our band had sims, he could weave the emotional and visual context into the trid. Mr. Andersen gets to boss me around on occasion if he can't get the right quality of singing from me or if the band's playing is too far out of sync to digitally correct. That's about the only perk producers get, besides the reputation on having a good ear or eye for music and being paid for it. I don't see producers getting into the shadows, but since they work with so many people, like Al, they could be secretly fixers hooking runners up.

## Promoters

"Never deal with a dragon" holds true even in the music business. Rhonabwy in Wales and Perianwyr of Denver are serious promoters and managers of music, and you better read the fine print if you sign a contract with them. In the music biz, promoters are the "where" to the manager's "how." While technically Al has serious power, he and Mr. Andersen work for EarthWyrn Media and Communications, Inc. The corporation holds the higher-level business operators who broker multiple managers and bands with spin doctors like Charisma Associates, renting them out to various corporations and nations. It works like this: A promoter sees an opportunity to tour the CAS with Band X, since his marketing people tell him the band has a high selling rate down there. The promoter then tells the manager that he wants Band X for a tour in the CAS. When the manager agrees, the promoter then negotiates with various cities for venues (this is sometimes where Al comes in to do some of his own negotiations). Once the promoter gets the deal, he sends it to the manager, and the manager works out all the details to make it happen. The promoter then works with the media to actually promote the tour.

Promoters can also play a role on the recorded side of the music business. If a corporation has a particular musician signed and they want to raise their profile, they go through the promoter or use their own promotions department, such as Renraku's Adams-Westlake Mediaworks subsidiary. The promoters then look to build demand for the artists' music—often this means getting songs placed in commercials or in big-budget trids, or finding some other way to get the tunes in people's ears. Like I said before, some people can wear multiple hats; many young artists are their own manager and promoter as they set themselves up on the Matrix and sell their tunes to customers or send demo tapes to clubs or studios.





"I don't know why people still do this," she said over the commlink. "My 'link does just as well in full VR."

"You're missing the point," Jones said. "And not everyone has your hardware."

"Whatever."

Jones shook his head. All around him, people were hooked into the theater simsense feed. Great place for a drop, which is what this was supposed to be. Plain sight, yet not a single person cares what you do as long as it doesn't interrupt the show.

"Can you see him?"

"Yeah. How's security?"

"Give it another thirty seconds. The security hacker just finished his sweep. Let him get to the next theater before we go."

Jones unclipped his disposable commlink from his lapel and set it down on the chair. He counted to forty, just to be safe.

"I've got the cameras."

"I was counting on it," Jones said. She was young, but he didn't doubt her. She wouldn't be on JackPoint if she hadn't earned her reputation.

Jones walked down to the third row. There was Mr. Johnson, sitting pretty in his armchair. Neo-Japanese suit from Vashon Island, little MCT tie tack. His legs were folded so he sat cross-legged on the chair, a briefcase on his lap.

"Did you bring the package?" the suit whispered.

"I did."

"Good. Please give it to my companion here," Mr. Johnson gestured to the man on his right. Dressed up in a suit, but there was no hiding who it was. The yakuza butcher, Toda. Jones stiffened. He'd been chased out of Osaka two years ago by this guy, and he wasn't the only one.

So Toda was here. It was probably supposed to be a surprise.

"You were foolish to think I had given up," Toda said, taking the package from Jones. The killer's cybereyes shifted focus, probably scanning for weapons.

"I figure the price on my head is far too high for that," Jones said, showing no reaction to Toda's presence. Two more of the movie patrons got up and pulled out silenced pistols. More yakuza thugs. "It's a shame we couldn't handle this differently." Toda opened the package, and Mr. Johnson opened his briefcase to pull another pistol.

"What's this?" Toda said, pulling out a Bust-a-Move doll. Jones threw himself as far as he could from the yak assassin. His timing was a little off; when Jimmy fired the spell, it clipped Jones. His nose bled and his ears hummed.

"Sorry, Jonesy," Jimmy said. "I got the Johnson. Let's get the hell out of here."

Jones stumbled through the emergency exit after Jimmy, who had the unconscious Mr. Johnson over his shoulder, since that was about the only thing of worth they were going to get out of this meet. Jones' head spun and he crashed into the wall several times before he managed to get control of himself enough to walk in a straight line.

"Is Toda down for good?" he asked.

"No," the hacker said. "I can see him on the cameras, trying to get up."

Jones nearly stopped, half-drawing his gun. No, he told himself. Gotta keep moving. Kiko-san was waiting outside in the Shin-Hyung. Jimmy stuffed Mr. Johnson in the trunk, and then they were one with the Neo-Tokyo traffic.



## BLOCKBUSTERS AND SOAP OPERAS

Posted by: Traveler Jones

We live in interesting times, and while that might mean the life of the average wageslave sometimes feels a little rocky, it means big business for the media industry. That means big business for us. If you want to work in the media shadows, you better have an idea of what's hot on the trid or you won't make it in the door. Most of the big budget productions that came out this year were pure escapism, a sponge bath to the masses that want to forget about technomancers, AIs, wars, tempo, and how miserable their lives really are.

### CURRENT BLOCKBUSTERS

Unless you've been in an ultra-secure corp enclave on the ocean floor, you already know most of these. These trid and simsense features and series currently stand as the megahits everyone talks about, whether it's around the water cooler at Ares Central or the barrel fire in the Barrens. The easiest way to break the ice with a new contact, or schmooze your way past security, is to strike up a conversation about what they watch. So take a look and refresh your memory on this year's best and brightest.

#### Cree & Dido in Barcelona

*Trid feature, Les Productions de Monde*

Don't take its presence here as an endorsement, but the Cree & Dido series of films are the highest nuyen-generating comedy trids since Crash 2.0. The "brainchild" of eccentric Dutch actor, director, and screenwriter Fred Cleve, the series follows the misadventures of a pair of bumbling Interpol detectives, John Cree (played by Jacques Brun) and Dido von Aich (Fred Cleve). Cree and Dido always end up biting off more than they can chew, and their ambiguously gay odd-couple, lowbrow sexual and racial humor, physical comedy, and witty wordplay in French, German, and English draw the crowds in.

The newest film has the Lakota-French Cree convincing the Austrian aristocrat Dido to come out of retirement so that they can rescue the daughter of a billionaire industrialist from a Barcelona yakuza. The oyabun of the yakuza is their old nemesis, Izo Sakizo (voiced by David Cheng Lo Tsai) who has been rebuilt as a cyborg. Given the popularity of the franchise, expect more of these shows to come.

- Lofwyr can't be happy about the joke featuring S-K's corporate anthem.
- Sticks
- Yes, "We Love Our Dragon" was a little over the top.
- Winterhawk
- Even the powerful can have a sense of humor.
- Frosty

#### The Good Horse Sings

*Simsense polyPOV feature, Moonbrook Entertainment/Pathfinder Studios*

Directed by Steven Tall-Fellow and starring Sasha Jalair and Raven Begay, this romantic action-drama tells the story of Altan, a

Mongolian Horse Shaman (Jalair) who embarks on an epic journey to North America to find his long-lost father. On the way he meets reckless Zuni go-ganger Nine-Horses (Begay). The two find love as they search for Altan's father and discover the shamanic traditions of their two cultures are not so different after all.

Besides the stunning cinematography and the superb performances of relative newcomers Jalair and Begay, the big stir is the sex scene between the two actors near the end of the movie. Initial releases in Los Angeles and CalFree used simsense settings approaching CalHot levels, which sent this movie straight to the gossip pool.

- Sasha Jalair is a delicious hunk of man.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

- Too bad it was a body double for that scene.
- Mika

#### Hyperbolic Vanguard Corps: Do You Know My Love?

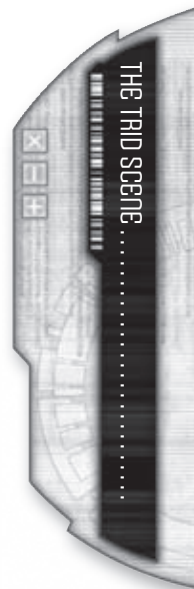
*Simsense polyPOV feature, Sakura Studios/Highstar*

If there is one thing the Japanese can't seem to get enough of, it's anime—especially anime with giant robots, towering monsters, and buxom heroines. Continuing a popular trid series, *HVC: Do You Know My Love?* is directed by newcomer Kazuo Tanigaki and stars veteran anime talents Jun Hatoyama and Akiko Silk. The story revolves around a squad of Japanese Imperial Marines on loan to the UN to combat space terrors from another galaxy. The trid series finished its fifth and final season two years ago, and the wait helped put the film high on everyone's must-see list. The sim introduces a new villain, the demonic computer entities known as the Mind Eaters, which shows you how some folks at MCT (Sakura and Highstar's parent company) feel about digital intelligences. The feature-length version was a hit in Japan, so I wouldn't be surprised to see another season of the trid show, or a spin-off series, soon. Releasing the sim under the aegis of both Sakura Studios (MCT's anime-focused company) and Highstar (which handles their international distribution) is sure to bring Japan's number one anime sim to audiences everywhere.

Sakura Studio's Matrix special effects are bleeding edge, and rumors of an "Effects War" between Sakura, Hisato-Turner, Paradigm Pictures, and the other major players in the anime market have started circulating.

*HVC: Do You Know My Love?* also gained widespread media attention when over half the cinemas showing it were hacked opening weekend, causing strange disruptions of certain scenes. The investigation is ongoing, but it's suspected to be technomancer sabotage. If that's true, the people involved are among the best in the business, as they simultaneously hacked 257 separate cinemas, for a total of 1,028 nodes hosting the sim. In addition, MCT security hackers discovered the first 65,537 direct download purchases were compromised in the same way, corresponding to the same time frame as the cinema hacks.

- What kind of strange disruptions?
- Hannibelle
- Weird rewrites of certain scenes and breaking the Fourth Wall a bit. In one scene, a minor character (pilot Joe Big, the CAS member









of the UN team) starts off with a soliloquy worthy of *Hamlet*. Except that it's about the virtues of eating a single brand of ramen.

- Baka Dabora
- The skill needed to pull off that hack is pretty impressive, especially against MCT.
- Slamm-O!
- Trying to toot your own horn?
- /dev/grrl
- No, no. I've been ... busy lately. Just saying whoever did it is scary good. And didn't do it for kicks. I'm curious what the real objective was.
- Slamm-O!
- Access to another MCT system through the cinema nodes?
- /dev/grrl
- Those numbers—the numbers of theaters and download purchases affected—are Fermat primes. Just sayin'.
- The Smiling Bandit

### Sadness, Cubed

*Trid series, Roma Bella Music/Truman Distribution Network*

This quirky, dark comedy is one of those rare shows that come along every decade or so, where the cast has real chemistry and the writing is sharp and clever. Starring Sicilian-born pop-star Bella Sora, Japanese-Korean boy-band singer Kento Goto, and veteran character actor Richard Creek, the series is the talk of every housewife, secretary, and lovesick teenager in North America. Originally produced by Greene and Sterling Pictures in cooperation with Bella Sora's personal label, Truman Distribution Network picked up the rights after Greene and Sterling were forced into bankruptcy over the highly publicized *National Wrap* scandal late last year. The production helped generate good publicity for the Truman name after the messy suit by Ares last year, where they fought a court battle with Horizon in an attempt to combat the latter's takeover of Truman.

Bella Sora plays Gia, an electrical engineer from Chicago who relocates to Seattle after the bugs take her entire family. In Seattle she meets the eccentric but endearing Alexander Feathers (Creek), an Amerindian ork who owns several food carts downtown. She also meets Hugo Kim (Goto), a Korean-American entrepreneur who is launching the North American version of his successful fitness center chain. The story focuses around the unusual love-triangle that develops between the main characters.

Mothers of Metahumans carefully endorsed the show at the beginning of the current season for exploring the ideas of intercultural and interracial relationships that were based on mutual love, instead of lust or perversion. They voiced some concern over the portrayal of many of the ork and troll supporting characters, however. Most of these are regular customers and employees of Alexander Feathers who live in the ACHE. Mothers of Metahumans suggested introducing more successful role models for orks and trolls on the show. By the same notion, the program received a condemnation from a number of Humanis-linked

### CHASE: ERRANT KNIGHT!

**Trid Series, Ares Global Entertainment**

A mixture of product placement, reality-action, and pandering to the politically conservative UCAS and CAS crowds, *CHASE: Errant Knight!* (exclamation and capitalization intended) follows a licensed bounty hunter around Seattle, and occasionally across the continent, as he uses Ares merchandise to shoot the snot out of criminals. The Anglo elven hunter, whose Sioux wife has been largely ignored since even her presence didn't help NAN ratings, drives around town wrapped head to toe in gear made by Ares or Ares subsidiaries. He drives big Ford trucks or Mustangs (and invariably only gets into high-speed chases on the episodes he happens to have the sports car), uses Ares guns, Ares cuffs, Ares armor, with Ares-affiliate music playing on his radio. He's accompanied by a small fleet of camera drones who capture the action from every angle as he hunts down and apprehends an assortment of criminals (whose dossiers always seem to show they slipped through the fingers of some security agency besides Knight Errant, of course).

- Despite all that, Chase is the real deal. I've seen him shoot.
- Hard Exit
- Yeah, he's so real that his whole show is an hour-long commercial for Ares' crap. What kind of payday does this guy get, for cruising around Seattle and shooting up a few bums, just because he does it in front of a few drones?
- Black Mamba
- Jealous?
- Pistons

As ratings flagged in the middle of last season, the show's producers have started to branch out. Chase has occasionally recruited local help during his special road trip episodes, and rumors are flying that the show will start to do the same when filming begins again in Seattle. Their "Errant" knight may not be running solo for all of the fourth season, and fans are excited about the prospect of seeing real Shadowrunners get into the action alongside their photogenic trid star.

- Huh. I guess they heard me.
- Black Mamba

Urgent Message...



groups for its “support of promiscuity and disruption of traditional family values.”

- I'm worried the producers will actually cave to the pressure and turn this show into an after-school special instead of the wonderful oddity it is.
- Fianchetto
- Groups like Mothers of Metahumans and Humanis are quite capable of coming up with things to get worked up about without any help. Sometimes these campaigns aren't grassroots at all; they're just astro-turf. Behind the outrage is a rival corporation spreading some money around in an effort to make their competitors look bad. Sometimes inventing and spreading the dirt is a job that requires runners. It's not the highest-paying work there is, but it's pretty safe.
- Sunshine

### Water Margin

*Simsense polyPOV series, Eastern Harbor Entertainment*

The biggest ratings surprise last year was the syndicated Taiwanese action-drama *Water Margin*. Based on the classic Chinese novel of the same name, this modern retelling has an unlikely setting: the Seattle sprawl. Like the novel, the series focuses on a group of outcasts and bandits (or in this case, shadowrunners) fighting against a corrupt government. The show is such a hit around the Pacific Rim that season three will feature two new language tracks, Tagalog and Korean.

The show continues to incite some controversy. It's been officially banned in Hong Kong for “idealizing terrorism,” but *Water Margin* is still pretty easy to find on pirate stations or through a little Matrix wrangling. Governor Brackhaven of Seattle isn't a fan either, but so far he hasn't persuaded anyone to drop the show from next season's lineup, and filming continues despite rumors of “accidents” on set.

The weirdest thing about the show, however, is that Knight Errant gets almost as much good press as the series' core shadowrunners. Two of the major supporting characters are cops: Detective Adrian Two-Crows and Beat Officer Jennifer Martinez-Jackson. Both of these characters are shown sympathetically, and they subtly help the main characters against the corrupt politicians when they can. Makes you wonder who's providing the funding.

- Lone Star didn't receive the same treatment in the first season. Officer Reggie Michelson was positively evil.
- DangerSensei
- According to Eastern Harbor's financial statements, *Water Margin*'s biggest sources of funding are from LG-Haas and Formosa Language School, which uses the show to promote their new translation software.
- Traveler Jones
- Bah. That has Ares all over it. LG-Haas is part of Eastern Tiger Corp, and they've been in bed with Ares for decades. As have the Taiwanese.
- Jimmy No

- Why would Ares want to irritate Brackhaven though? He brought Knight Errant into Seattle, supports military spending, and loves the megas.
- 2XL
- Anyone else a little annoyed that this show fucks up all the locations in Seattle?
- Sounder

### COMING SOON

Here's a list of several projects still in the works that are of interest to shadowrunners, either for the typical intrigue and sabotage the studios engage in while these things are in production, or for opportunities to work as actual talent on a show.

#### The Emerging Soul

*Trid/Simsense limited polyPOV feature, Pathfinder Studios/Synergy Pictures*

Co-produced by Horizon's Pathfinder and Evo's Synergy Pictures, *The Emerging Soul* is a documentary that takes an in-depth look at the causes and results of the technomancer scare of 2070. The press release from Pathfinder says that the documentary focuses on the “transhuman casualties of hate” and includes interviews with activists, shadowrunners, and survivors of the corporate experimentation programs. Some notable personalities such as Pulsar, Gary Cline, and President Colloton also are in the film. It's being released in two versions; one a pure trid feature, while the other incorporates limited simsense for the interviews.

Shadow activity on this project is freakishly high, not surprising considering the number of feathers this is going to pluck, let alone ruffle. The release date has been delayed twice, from the original fourth quarter 2072 to the current Christmas 2073. Acclaimed documentary director Sanford Rosche was attached to the project, but apparently Vincent J. Clarke replaced him recently. Clarke's breakthrough indie film, *Laughing with Grandmother Spider*, swept the Oscars last year and made him a hot commodity in Hollywood.

Pathfinder has a small horde of data miners searching through filed security footage for technomancer and shadowrunner activities during the crisis, so I hope you all covered your tracks well or we might see you on the big screen next Christmas.

- If they pull it off and get the sim to market, it will be a huge PR boost for Horizon and Evo while making several of their competitors (NeoNET and MCT in particular) look like evil incarnate.
- Dr. Spin
- Which is pretty much true.
- Netcat
- Get over yourself.
- Glitch
- What about this business with Rosche and Clarke?
- Kat o' Nine Tales



- Rosche left the project to “spend time with his family.” Which probably means he was extracted, since he’s been MIA from the Hollywood scene for several months now.
- Sunshine
- And Clarke is one ambitious son-of-a-bitch. My money’s on him setting up the extraction.
- Traveler Jones
- Seriously? How would he know he’d get picked to be the replacement?
- Kat o’ Nine Tales
- Sleeping with one of the producers might help.
- Dr. Spin

## The Run

*Simsense polyPOV feature, Banded Lizard Productions*

A big-budget action film out of Metropôle, *The Run* is the first in what producers hope will be a series of films about shadowrunners from around the globe. Part scripted, part reality show, Banded Lizard hopes to take advantage of the recent Hollywood trend of hiring shadowrunners as talent. Although the studio holds the details tightly, rumors swirl around the Metropôle shadows about who signed up with the project. More than a few fixers down there take the stance that Metropôle isn’t Hollywood, and that cameras don’t belong in the shadows. But shadowrunners and fixers (and Mr. Johnson for that matter) are as much fanboys as anyone else, so a few people are practically begging to be involved with the studio. Only time will tell if *The Run* lives to see it to the big release, but expect a lot of work either way if you’re in the Amazonian sprawl. If it does pan out, rumor is that Banded Lizard’s talent scouts are already looking to sign up runners for a sequel in a sprawl near you.

- My prediction: We’ll all be quiet on this while it’s in the works, hoping for maybe a slice of fame or fortune for ourselves, but once it comes out we’ll start dishing the dirt on all the people who got in when we didn’t. Anybody want to prove me wrong?
- Haze
- It appears not.
- Haze

## Toxic Hunter

*Trid series, Truman Distribution Network*

Slotted for next fall’s lineup, TDN’s *Toxic Hunter* is a reality show that follows Brennan “Heavy” O’Dell, a former Knight Errant Firewatch captain, as he pursues toxic shamans, bug spirits, shedim, and other Awakened threats. Partially funded with grants from the Draco Foundation and the UCAS Department of Defense, *Toxic Hunter* relies on a core group of O’Dell’s former comrades and other mercs, plus a rotating cast of shadowrunners hired as need arises. So far, seven episodes have been completed, plus three more in post-production. The whole season is on the books for sixteen episodes. I managed to catch an in-house screening of the pilot last month, and much of the filming is POV from O’Dell’s team or from the command-and-control drones

over the encounter. In the pilot, the team takes on a shedim in LA’s polluted waterways. Grisly stuff.

One of the reasons it’s taking so long for the show to come to the public (filming started in 2070) is the downtime required for each episode. A lot of research goes into finding and tracking targets behind-the-scenes, and forced medical sabbaticals are common. In the course of making the seven completed episodes, O’Dell had to be stuck in a vat for six weeks while they regrew his left hand, and six other cast members suffered maiming injuries requiring some sort of reconstruction. There were also three deaths of shadowrunner freelancers. The series pays top dollar to its talent, but the danger level of the assignment is high.

- I’ve met O’Dell. One seriously tough bastard. He’s got a lot of high-grade cyber. Looks like this is how he’s paying it off.
- Sticks
- Apparently the pilot had a simsense track for each of the hunters, but it was deemed “too intense” by the internal censors at Horizon. They clipped it after one of the test screeners died of fright during the fight with the shedim. I didn’t see it, but that was the rumor.
- Sunshine

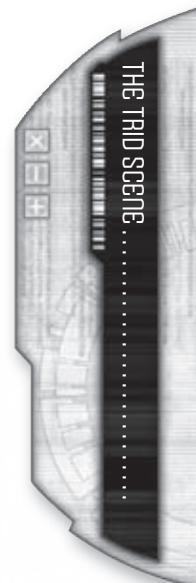
## The War

*Simsense polyPOV feature, Regency Productions*

In the short history of cinema, there have been a million remakes (almost literally) of the Hindu epic *The Mahabharata*, but Lona Tagore takes it to a new level. *The War* is epic in scope and length at over six hours, harking back to the golden years of early color films complete with a cast of thousands. Tagore managed to get some of the biggest names in Bollywood as well as strong mid-level talent from the West. Billed as the first fantasy war movie where the special effects are entirely magical, it also boasts the largest number of simsense tracks and points of view in cinema history.

Like most things that make their ways into the shadows, *The War* is rocking the boat of several conservative Indian Union groups. Many traditionalist Hindus dislike Tagore to begin with, and her use of multicultural characters in the story (she also co-wrote the screenplay) started a mass protest in New Delhi. In addition to the Hindu Pandavas and Kauravas, a host of ancient Greek, Chinese, Egyptian, and Mesoamerican heroes and deities join in the battle. Tagore has said she intends to use the entire world as the stage for her Mahabharata War, incorporating all of the major cultures and civilizations of the world at the time the story was first written down (around 400 BCE). Regency also plans to release prequels, trid or simsense featurettes that round out the story from the different characters’ points of view, and provide some context for Tagore’s vision.

Lona Tagore has been a controversial figure in Bollywood for some time. She is India’s most famous female director, best known for the documentary *Hijra* about sexual minorities on the subcontinent and *All Our Thousands*, a short-lived but critically acclaimed series about a Brahmin family living in New Zealand. She’s also openly bisexual, and the Mumbai celebrity hounds love her because every other week she dates a new star or starlet.



- Tagore also has connections to the Dawood Syndicate. She used her sex appeal to sleaze her way to the top, but she's cunning and talented enough to have a good shot at staying there for a while.
- 2XL

### Shaw Brothers Studios

OK, it's not a film, but a movie studio based out of Singapore. Shaw Brothers is the reason any of us have a clue about kung fu movies. For decades, the studio languished in a hell of legal uncertainty, but recently the Corporate Court awarded MCT the rights to the Shaw Brothers movie library and brand. As MCT reopens the studio, expect a lot of shadow activity between the other studios in Hong Kong and Singapore, both of which have Shaw Brothers offices.

- I always liked those old movies as a kid. The fight choreography was great, even if the acting wasn't. I'm looking forward to seeing what the new company puts out.
- Sticks
- Me too. Of course, the rumors that Shaw Brothers have a magical group training the next generation of kung fu adepts to be their superstars doesn't hurt my interest.
- Jimmy No

## BECOMING A STAR

Posted by: Sunshine

So you want to be in the movies? Well, it's easier than ever to get involved in the industry. With Hollywood looking for shadow talent (both on and off the camera), recording technology within easy grasp of the average person, and quality editing software available by instant download, you too can star in or direct your own productions or negotiate the glitz and sparkle of the entertainment shadows. Just be careful what you wish for.

### ON SCREEN

There isn't a kid out there that doesn't dream of becoming either an actor or a rock star. It's been ingrained into our subconscious, and while millions of people strive to make it real, only a few thousand ever succeed enough to make it a viable job. Many simply fail and go on to dull wageslave lives, while others fall a little further and end up in the shadows. So many shadowrunners come from the ranks of would-be stars and idols that it's become a trope in Hollywood movies.

Being on-screen talent means a lot more than acting. Everyone wants to be the star, but few people think about the legions of extras, backstage crew, stunt doubles, beat reporters, and porn stars involved in the industry.

### Acting

Although few actors rise to the levels of Gary Cline or Euphoria in terms of their popularity, a large number of trid and simsense actors make a good living. If they don't become household names, then at least fans recognize their faces. Acting makes a good gig for a shadowrunner for two reasons: It puts you closer to a treasure trove of contacts that frequently utilize your shadow

talents, and you don't have to punch a clock. Most acting jobs are by contract, so while you are on the job you've got little free time, but once it's over you're back on the unemployment list, which is a perfect time to pick up runs.

Acting also has a huge downside. By putting your face, voice, or simsense recordings into the public at large, you create a huge target on yourself—which is usually bad business for a shadowrunner, since we generate enough negative attention as it is. There are a couple of solutions. The first is to create a persona for your acting side, a stage name and associated look that clearly separates your acting from the real you. The second is to create a persona for the street. This is something most of us do anyway, especially those of us with SINS. Both of these have advantages, and some people do both. In the LA shadows, Horizon's P2.0 network and the popularity of shadowrun reality shows have drawn more and more runners into fame and money.

There is also help. At least one talent agency, Hirodoru Talent, has a reputation of helping shadowrunners in the field, one of those secrets everyone knows but never admits. The agents at Hirodoru help manage the dataflow and can assist in sculpting your personas. It costs, but I've heard they do good work. I don't know how much; while they cultivate the reputation of being a shadowy business, they keep their records sealed tight and maintain a Matrix security presence that is reminiscent of MCT's "Zero Zone" policy. If you want to get in touch with them, Hirodoru has offices in Los Angeles, Neo-Tokyo, and Mumbai.

- Sure, you can go to them—if you want to deal with the Mafia.
- 2XL
- It's not the Mafia. Hirodoru is part of Horizon.
- Dr. Spin
- Andy Lau is the guy to contact if you're in LA. He's Hirodoru's number one recruiter of shadowrunners for both long-term and short-term talent, if you catch my meaning.
- Traveler Jones
- Doc Hollywood also does a bit of this. Check the *Corporate Enclaves* upload on LA for more details. If you're interested, I can give you a reference.
- FastJack

The current trend in reality shows, especially in Hollywood, is to focus on a team of shadowrunners and follow them on assignments. This trend seems to be spreading, as the post by Traveler Jones indicates. Right now, talent scouts are being sent out to various sprawls to scope out the local shadow talent, but eventually most of the work will probably end up like LA. The city is full of fixers specializing in "reality runs" for broadcast to your local stations—one notable media fixer who does this work is a guy named Jonathan Sykes. He first opened an office in Detroit; in subsequent years he built an extensive network of contacts in a number of North American sprawls, and now has a big office in LA. Lately he's gotten a lot of attention as the go-to guy for major productions that need shadowrunners. One of his top priorities is finding teams for *Toxic Hunter*, Truman Distribution Network's new show about hunting down paranormal critters.





Of course, you can always get into the porn industry. It doesn't take much time to do a few dozens scenes, and it's easier to get into than mainstream fare. Of course, it also has a lot more connections to syndicates because the market is weighted to the grey part of the spectrum. Also, all of your nooks and crannies (and identifying marks) will be exposed to the world at large. Traditionally, the pay scale is better for women than men, but with the wide array of fetishes and bizarre tastes in the Sixth World, if you have ambiguous morality (and who reading this doesn't?) you can get a lot of work.

## News

- It's still a matter of credibility. Credibility is not the same as accuracy. If you develop a cult of personality, you need to make sure you feed that cult the things it wants. If they see you as turning from the principles or causes that first drew them to you, your credibility drops, and then, just like Sunshine said, you're dead.
- Kay St. Irregular

The easiest way for a shadowrunner to get work in the news is to be a stringer, or what is essentially a freelance journalist. Most of the news agencies and stations, even the biggest, rely on stringers to get their message out—whether it's real news or the party line. Big stories usually get a staff reporter sent to cover them, but with incidental stories or breaking news, sometimes the only people on the scene are freelancers. A stringer gets paid per report or piece of footage, although sometimes you get a good relationship with an editor and establish a contract for a specific duration. This usually happens when a news agency is understaffed, or when a series of events are likely to happen in rapid succession, like during an election season. Agencies sometimes seek out stringers for specific jobs, but usually it's the stringer's own initiative and interest that generate the coverage of stories.

Most news stations accept stories directly from stringers these days, although there are a few guilds or associations of freelance reporters. Neo-Tokyo has one of these, a sort of old-boys network that tries to edge out the increasingly foreign competition. Even so, the influence of these groups is on the decline as a whole, since the news stations don't usually care where they get their scoops if it makes them money.

Part of the job of a reporter is getting to the scene. It's best to have a car or motorcycle, preferably one that blends in. You should blend in too; there's nothing worse than having a stringer that is more of a story than the news he's trying to capture on trid. You also need to do more than simply turn on the camera. Filming the news is just as much about creating a story as filming a trideo broadcast or a simflick—more in some cases, because it depends on what is actually happening and special effects are limited to some text labels and possibly a link to additional information on the Matrix.

### Stunt Work

I knew a runner who did stunts as his day job. In fact, he was a stuntman before he got into the shadows; when the opportunity to make a little extra money on a run came up, he took it. Many stunt actors are heavily augmented with bioware or subtle cyber, and a growing number are adepts. Prominent stunt performers can make a very good salary, but are also in high demand due to their very specific skill set. Shadowrunners are much more likely to fill in for supporting characters or stunt extras because these are often non-contract jobs that don't require the potential employee to have much of a datatrail behind them.

Most fixers who deal with acting talent can set you up with stunt work. Just be careful—the associations and guilds for stunt performers are still vibrant and strong, especially in Hollywood. These organizations want to keep trade secrets for themselves, and they don't take kindly to freelancers stealing a lot of their work. If you keep to the sidelines, you're fine, but if you get some prominent gigs, you'll be on their shit list.

Despite the number of stunts required for the classic kung fu movie, very few of these sims utilize freelance talent. Most of the Hong Kong and Singapore companies have a specific set of stunt actors who work in every movie; they even fill in the roles of minor characters such as the villain's goons or extras. India works the same way much of the time, although it is a little easier for a freelancer there. If you're in Mumbai, Denali Beniwal is a good name to know. She's the wife of sim mogul Charan Kaushik and was one of the few female stunt performers in the Indian Union before her marriage.

- Denali is a Kshatriya who spent some time in the shadows as a face. Ironically, she's not much of a looker (which is why she was a stunt woman, not a star), but she has a presence that's hard to ignore.
- Traveler Jones
- Doing stunts can get you access to important people and places, too. You might have to work very closely with the star, for example, spending time copying his movements so that the audience won't realize he's got a double. This is very convenient for extractions.
- Kane
- I'm surprised they'd let you on the set, being so wanted and all.
- Butch
- One thing about movie sets is that everyone's in makeup. They don't look too hard at the face behind the mask.
- Kane

## BEHIND THE SCENES

If you want to make your own productions, you need to know how to set everything up, from the initial use of the camera to the final cuts in post-production. Although digital media has streamlined things from the ancient days of actual film, a lot of work goes into making trids and sims happen.

### Starting a Studio

If you want to do more than just dabble with trideo and don't want to be a newshound, you need to set up some structure for what you want to accomplish. This means starting a studio or production company. While many shadowrunners would balk at becoming part of the system, for those of us with SINS it makes a great way to keep our public and shadow lives separate. It can also be a great way to launder money with a little creative accounting.

Different countries and even sprawls have different laws regarding media companies. The most liberal laws are usually found in industry centers like LA, but that's not universal. Neo-Tokyo, for example, has a long tradition of protective laws that make it difficult for new companies. Although this has changed some since the Gen-yu-era reforms began, things can still be difficult for start-ups.

In Seattle, the local laws allow anyone (with a SIN) to set up a business with the purchase of a business license, which registers you with the Metroplex Better Business Bureau and the United Corporate Council. It also gives you a Unified Business Identification Number (UBI), which is the corporate equivalent of a SIN. The procedure is similar in most countries that signed



the Business Recognition Accords. To get a business license you need a statement of purpose, municipal tax forms, metroplex tax forms, federal tax forms, zoning forms, and insurance forms. This can get expensive, but Seattle's government encourages film companies with tax breaks and other incentives.

- If you are laundering money through your film studio, just be careful about how many "anonymous donations" come in. Those are sure-fire ways to get your local tax agents interested in you.
- Mr. Bonds

## Filming

Every commlink on the market has the audio-visual equipment to make a trideo recording, and most can do simsense as well. Eye and ear augmentations allow you to record your point of view. Drones, along with image and audio links with your companions, instantly allow you to create polyPOV productions. In short, there isn't much that even a hobbyist can't do when it comes to filming your own trideo or simsense. It's always better to go with a higher-quality camera, but even the low-end devices create watchable content, as countless public-access shows and Matrix nodes attest. Although they are more expensive than standard commlinks, studio-quality cameras are more affordable than ever before. Digital photography dominates world media, but some purists and artists seeking specific effects still use film. It's much more expensive and the average person probably can't tell the difference, but trained artists love it.

The current generation of drones and sensor suites is probably the best advantage an aspiring filmmaker has. The wireless Matrix allows a camera drone to range out of sight and to coordinate with other drones in a way that was not possible before. Such drones are fairly cheap, and with some autosofts and pilot upgrades, they can provide discreet and effective recordings, which are especially valuable for reality shows. The less noticeable a camera is, the more natural people act and the less they play to it.

While filming things is easy, actually filming *interesting* things is more difficult. Whether you are making a movie, a series, or a newscast, you might take hours of recordings and find only ten minutes of it to be useful or interesting in your final edits. You need to know how to tell a story with a camera, something every bit as important as the script or acting. There are activesofts for the camera, which beginners find useful because they allow them to immediately jump into filming. If you're serious about the project, you'll want to learn how to do it for real. Don't think that you're out of luck if you're SINless, either; plenty of newshounds or filmmakers are willing to trade instruction on their trade for a peek at yours.

## Special Effects and Editing

There are three types of special effects used in visual media: physical, magical, and Matrix. Today, Matrix effects are among the most common, especially in big-budget productions. Animation is rarely hand-drawn these days, and it relies on computer-controlled cameras. Additionally, anything involving the Matrix can't be produced with a physical set and be at all accurate. Astral space follows the same conventions, with magicians providing expertise to industry Matrix effects specialists to get Karl Kombatmage's metaplanar quest into a movie.

Physical special effects—the classic stunts, camera angles, and pyrotechnics of old Hollywood—became less common as their cost increased and Matrix and magical special effects became to produce. Still, you find the most basic of these in low-budget or independent films that don't require a lot in the way of technology to make. Every now and then you get a director or star famous for filming the "old school" way, but it's rare.

While Matrix effects are the norm, a sizable section of the movies made today benefit from magical special effects. Magicians can make things happen that are difficult to program in the Matrix, and they can do it right now. The only thing limiting magical special effects in the industry is the relative rarity of magicians. They are expensive, although magical effects can be cheaper in the long run for a studio than the months of work sometimes needed for Matrix effects on a feature-length project. Magicians specializing in these types of effects learn a lot of illusion spells and a few flashy elemental spells to give that realistic punch to the villain's fire blast. Most of Hollywood's Awakened are hermetic mages, although some shamanic storytellers from the PCC offer their services to movie studios. Hong Kong and Bollywood have a more eclectic mix of people in the industry.

- What this means is that if you've ever fooled anyone with an illusion spell, you should consider doing at least some freelance FX work. You'll be in demand, paid well, and don't have to be tied down to a regular job. Just keep in mind that trid FX often have to be more real than reality—something that might work in real life can look drab and lifeless on a trid. Punch it up!
- Haze

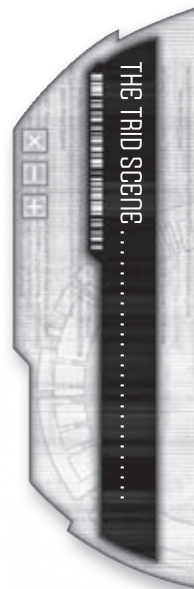
## Producing

Being a producer is a bit like being a fixer. A producer generates funding sources for films, usually by finding investors. Because he holds the purse strings, the producer can get a lot of control over a project and influence the director to move it in different directions. This is why independent directors hate the big studios so much, because it limits their creative control. At first glance, being a producer seems like a lot of work for a shadowrunner, but it can pay off. You generate a lot of contacts among people with nuyen to spend, which is never a bad thing.

Another reason for a shadowrunner to become a producer is that it opens doors to places that would otherwise be off-limits. People will spill their guts to a producer if they think it will land them a job, get them capital, or earn them some status. Not only can you sell some of this intel as paydata to Hollywood brokers, but you can also develop some interesting contacts this way.

## Distribution

Once you've made something, you've got to get it out to the people. The easiest way to do this is through the Matrix. A lot of budding filmmakers release their first projects online as a way to gather attention. The idea is that a producer or talent scout will see how popular the film is due to viral marketing, and pick up the director's next project. Free Matrix distribution is easy and has a theoretically unlimited audience, but generally lacks any sort of monetary compensation in the short term. If you've got the Matrix skills or know someone who does, you can start a subscription service of your own where users pay-per-view or buy



a month's worth of viewing time for a flat fee. Unless you manage to generate some interest in your work, however, you won't be receiving much money.

Another way to go is through a distribution network. Some companies focus solely on distributing films and programs into various markets. Most of these translate and adapt foreign films, but sometimes they do independents as well. The big studios and even some of the second-tier corps have their own distribution networks, and they will enter into deals with smaller players for a cut of the profits. Sometimes the larger studio simply buys the project for a lump sum and sells it on its own. Horizon and Ares own the biggest distribution networks in North America, although MCT (through Highstar) and Regency Productions are close behind and dominate the Asian market. The Native American Broadcasting Service in the Sioux Nation handles a lot of independent traffic within the NAN.

Sunview Industries in LA, though mostly a PR firm, also has media assets tied to the distribution of Spanish-language films in North America. A lot of these are Aztlaner and South American independents and soaps translated into English, but the company is willing to distribute anything it thinks can make some nuyen, or that harms Horizon or the PCC's reputation. Sunview's master is ultimately Aztechnology, but they have a really good rep in the shadows.

Another distributor that deals well in the shadows is Webring Entertainment. An exclusively virtual corporation without physical offices, Webring buys distribution or syndication rights to old shows and original programming and rebroadcasts them on the Matrix. Some of the material on their node is free and some is pay-per-view. Subscription services are also available. There's quite a bit of speculation about who is behind Webring. I've been told that tracking the node to its physical location is freakishly difficult, and no result occurs twice.

- Sunshine's right. I traced Webring to a node in Taiwan once, and when I returned a couple of days later, it wasn't there any more. Gone without a trace. Tried tracking it back to the source again, and it was much more difficult the second time. Ended up in a node in Quebec City. I turned my back for a moment to deal with something else and whoosh! It was a McHugh's restaurant's node.
- Slamm-0!
- Just getting soft in your old age, or too busy finding someone to start a family with?
- Netcat
- Oh, shut it.
- Slamm-0!

Also keep the various film festivals in mind. A good showing at one of these, such as Sundance or Cannes, can get you a distribution deal with a national or international network. Some of them don't mind dealing with the shadows to help "negotiate" contracts. These are great places for business if you keep your eyes and ears open.

### Key Markets

All of the megas and hundreds of AA and A corps have interests in global media. Instead of one company that is the go-to corp

for trideo and simsense, several media hotspots have developed, putting their locations at the top of the list when getting involved in the film industry. Even with the Matrix connecting every corner of the planet and suborbital flights to most major sprawls, many corps have major infrastructure in a single location—it's easier to manage and control what gets produced this way.

### Top Billed

Hollywood still dominates the world entertainment scene, especially for trideo and simsense. The branding is just too strong, and the money runs as deep as the Deep Lacuna. Horizon controls most of the industry in LA and their (still not completely firm) grip on the Truman Distribution Network only made their advantage bigger, though MCT (through Highstar) has a significant chunk of the market. Amalgamated Studios and several other second-tier studios fill in most of what's left. Beneath the megas, a host of independent studios scramble for a breakthrough, some even realizing that this will likely mean a buy-out or an exclusive distribution deal through a bigger player. The small-time studios often have mob connections too, so keep your eyes and ears open.

LA may be at the top in terms of nuyen generated, but Mumbai—also known as Bollywood—produces more feature films per year than any other place in the world. They lack the polish and budget of a Hollywood production, though, and many of the films produced are directed at the lucrative market within the Indian Union and Indian Diaspora. A true blockbuster crosses the cultural boundaries every so often, fueling the expansion of Bollywood's franchise into Europe and North America. The big name in Mumbai is Regency Productions, but there are thousands of smaller studios scrambling for their share. If Hollywood's mafia connections are in the shadows, Bollywood's are in the light. Syndicates—especially the Dawood Syndicate—are often the primary financial backers of Indian films.

Neo-Tokyo rounds out the big three centers of trideo and simsense. Though a lot of movies coming out of the JIS are targeted at citizens of Japan and the Japanacorp, the influence of Japanese culture mid-century created a lingering appetite around the world for the mainstays of Japanese cinema: anime, *kaijū* (monsters), robots, samurai, and yakuza movies. Over sixty percent of Japanese trideo is anime-related, and the anime studios owned by Shiawase, Renraku, and MCT lead the world in bleeding-edge Matrix effects. MCT is currently the biggest player in the Japanese market, but Horizon is fast becoming a threat to the status quo with its Hisato-Turner subsidiary and the recent opening of the Japanese economy in the Gen-yu era.

- The Dawood Syndicate and a Hindu nationalist policlub, the BRN, have been going at it lately. When Kanru, the head of the BRN, came to Cairo a couple of months ago, Dawood hired runners to take her down.
- Am-mut

### Supporting Cast

Although Hollywood, Mumbai, and Neo-Tokyo receive two-thirds of the world's entertainment earnings for simsense and trideo, easily out-producing every other industry center, several small but vital economies around the world deserve mention.





INCOMING FEED



THE TRID SCENE

## Asia

Taiwan, Korea, Singapore, and Hong Kong remain solid second-tier players, if overly specialized. Of these, Taiwan is the most diverse, with an exported mix of serials and feature productions. Relatively stable and prosperous compared to other Chinese successor states, but without the corporate domination of Hong Kong or Singapore, Taiwan is host to several dozen independent studios. Taiwanese producers like their independence and are more likely to look for funding from a handful of sources than depend on a single backer.

Korea has half a dozen feature movie studios that focus primarily on the local market, although a few selected art and horror films are exported to the rest of the world. The synchronicity of Korean media, however, means that many of the country's pop idols make transitions into trideo and simsense, fueling a broad demand throughout Asia for Korea's specialty import: the serial drama. The Japanese influence in Korea remains strong and has affected much of the media's style here, but resurgence in nationalism and Eastern Tiger Corporation's increasing power have many Korean directors looking for their own style.

Singapore and Hong Kong share a close relationship that goes back more than two hundred years and is influenced by their common Chinese and British colonial roots. Today, both of these city-states are corporate strongholds, and both cities have a long movie tradition specializing in kung fu movies, quirky comedies (often also incorporating the martial arts), and Chinese

epics. Nearly everything is released in English, Mandarin, and Cantonese. With recent events such as the technomancer riots of 2071 in Hong Kong and the syndicate wars over tempo, demand for news from the region is rising. Earlier this year, MCT also announced that they were resurrecting Shaw Brothers Studios, with facilities in Singapore and Hong Kong.

## The Americas

Outside of Hollywood, there are several smaller centers for trideo or simsense feature productions, and local trid stations produce a number of serials. New York City and Edison, New Jersey in the UCAS have some independent studios, and Cheyenne in the Sioux Nation is developing into a small-scale NAN version of Hollywood. In the CAS, Nashville provides most of the local media for the country, although there are a number of independents in Austin, which is also a vital news market thanks to the Aztlan occupation of the southern half of the city. In Aztlan, Tenochtitlán produces a significant amount of local media, mostly in Aztlaner Spanish. In South America, Metropole is the biggest market for sims and trid, and studios there are trying to make the sprawl into a prominent force in media with a distinctly Amazonian flair. Portland is a rising star, branching out from the Sperethiel-language comedies and dramas popular during the High Prince's rule over the Tír into English and bilingual productions designed for export. The national capitals dominate the news markets, along with Seattle, Denver, St. Louis, and New York.

- The Aztlan-Amazonia war and the tensions over the possible renegotiation of the Treaty of Denver make the New World one of the busiest news markets in the world right now. A lot of smaller trid stations and Matrix shows don't have the manpower to cover everything that's going on, so they're hiring runners to get them scoops.
- Dr. Spin
- Embedded reporters are all the rage again too, on both sides of the South American war. Pay is great, but so are the dangers.
- Traveler Jones
- Not the least of which is being charged as a spy if you get captured by the opposing forces. Ransoms are common too, especially among some of the tribal groups down here.
- Marcos

## Europe

Europe's media is decentralized compared to other regions, with lots of local influence and character. London, once a premier center for documentaries and quirky comedy, lost much of its appeal outside of the United Kingdom during the years of the Lord Protector. The reformation government has allowed for a liberalization of the media once again, but so far the only impressive result was a BBC correspondent in Bogotá during the Interpol-Aztechnology attacks in November of '71. Paris has its share of filmmakers as well, and contrary to popular belief, mass-market comedies are more popular than art house films. Saeder-Krupp owns most of Europe's media outlets, although Austrian-based MediaSim, owned by MCT, is aggressively moving into Eastern Europe.

- MCT and S-K are at each other's throats, too. MediaSim was one of the last major independent media companies in Europe, and Lofwyr tried buying them out for years. Lots of work coming our way.
- Clockwork

## THE SEVEN PLOTS

The shadows are twice as active in a movie town as they are in most other places because of the ridiculous amounts of money and prestige that are part of the film industry. Seven types of runs make up the majority of shadow work in Hollywood and the world's media centers. In all of these, it's important to remember that you are in the land of the paparazzi, where cameras and snoops are everywhere looking for a story. With all the media, shadowrunning is much more integrated into the public awareness in LA or Mumbai than it is in other places. Don't get caught off guard when twenty different news stringers swoop in for a story in the middle of your run.

Most of these jobs necessitate living in proximity to the industry centers, and many are time sensitive, especially if you are sabotaging a particular scene or personality. On-location sets and news crews may come to you when a rival needs local assistance. Here's a little primer on what to expect when running for Tinseltown.

## Accidents on Set

Sometimes accidents happen. And sometimes you get paid to make them happen. This sort of run involves sabotage or wetwork, depending on the situation. Most of the time, runners are hired to delay production by damaging equipment, erasing recordings, or putting itching powder in all of the costumes. This is also a good way to get some equipment of your own, since a lot of times it doesn't matter if the items are damaged or missing for the run to succeed. Just be careful where you fence it.

Other times, your client wants someone dead. Overdoses are common accidents among the glitterati, but apparently so are exploding commlinks, if this year's news is any indication. If you take one of these assignments, be careful of the additional media attention it can bring.

- I thought the rash of exploding commlinks was a little weird, so I did some looking. Turns out all the commlinks in question were Shiawase brands—and all of the actors and the one make-up artist who died in the explosions were working on projects relating to Shiawase media subsidiaries.
- Snopes

## Bidding Wars

Every studio wants the biggest hit, and if they can't get it through contract negotiations, sometimes they'll resort to outright theft. Scripts and proprietary technology are the most common things stolen in Hollywood, as everyone wants to see what the guy next door is playing with. Firms that specialize in Matrix special effects are the current big targets, as MCT and Horizon duke it out over the Effects Wars. Smaller studios and effects companies get in on the act too, as they struggle to get noticed by the public or a larger corp.

## Breach of Contract

Actors are technically free agents, signing up to complete a certain number of movies in so many years, or if they are well established they might even do one-off movies. This is true for stunt performers, directors, and a host of other people who make the world of movies work behind the scenes. In practice though, these contracts can interfere with getting other roles, since the company holding the contract has precedence and can force you into a project you aren't interested in. Still, the people who see the most extractions are people who sign on for contracts, such as staff reporters, hosts/anchors, trideo series actors and directors, staff writers, and the like. These are the people that get stuck in places for years on end if they are any good, and the sort of people that want to switch teams or whom other studios want to see working for them.

- Things work a little differently in Neo-Tokyo, where almost everyone is under contract to a studio for a set duration (including life). Keeps with the Japanacorp's preferred working arrangements.
- Traveler Jones

## Checking into Rehab

Sometimes all you need to do is keep an actor or director away from their life long enough to cause havoc, and getting them squirreled away in a rehab center somewhere is a great way to do



that. The time they spend away from the business could mean they lose a new opportunity or break their contract, or it could just serve to divert their attention. This is a favorite way of sabotaging a rival in the studio system. She can't perform if she's not there, right? Just imagine the trouble Eve Harrington could have caused if she had a team of runners at her disposal.

The darker side of this type of run is picking up someone for a porn or snuff film. There are plenty of stories of young women (and men) drugged and taken to a seedy studio where they are forced to perform sex acts. This has as many variations as people have mental illnesses, but it's a vital part of the shadow economy in the media centers. Sometimes it isn't even about (or not strictly about) money. I caught wind of a story a couple of years ago where a politician who didn't play nice with the Mob found a simsense recording of his wife in one of these films. The porn jobs don't usually pay well, but they make up what they lack in quality with quantity.

### Escorting

One of the staples of shadowrunning everywhere, bodyguarding takes on special considerations when you are protecting one of the most famous people in the world. All of the major glitterati have full-time guards, but sometimes they need a little extra muscle for a media-heavy event, or they are traveling incognito and don't want their usual retinue along. For anyone important (and a really good payday) you need some serious street cred, but the lower tier and rising stars don't have the budgets to pay for constant protection (nor do they usually have the need). Do this job well, and you can get a good reputation quickly.

The downside of this is you'll be on camera more than most runs, even in Hollywood. You've got to look and dress the part, which usually means a bit of flash. People will want to know who you are, so you'd better take that into consideration.

- Sometimes the people who are doing the hiring like the rough look, or want it known they hang with honest-to-Ghost shadowrunners. You can usually negotiate more money if they want you obvious.
- Mihoshi Oni

### Running with the Stars

Sometimes a newshound needs a team to escort them into the shadows, or a simstar wants to watch a team operate so they know how to act in their next film. These runs can be incredibly frustrating for shadowrunners, because often neither actors nor reporters are aware of shadowrunning basics.

Simstars invariably do something stupid and get themselves or one of the runners killed, or runners lack the tact that is needed when dealing with the glitterati. These runs can be some of the most lucrative, though, as the people involved have an abundance of spare cash.

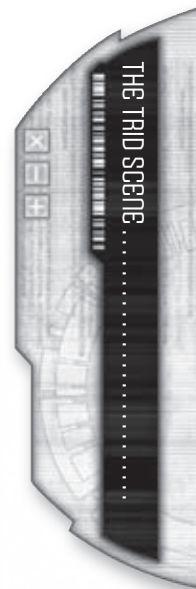
Several action sim stars have done research for their roles this way, including Victory DeLay, the femme fatale of last year's big hit, *Rundown in El Paso*. Some stars will even make the best of an extraction run, using it as grist for their creativity.

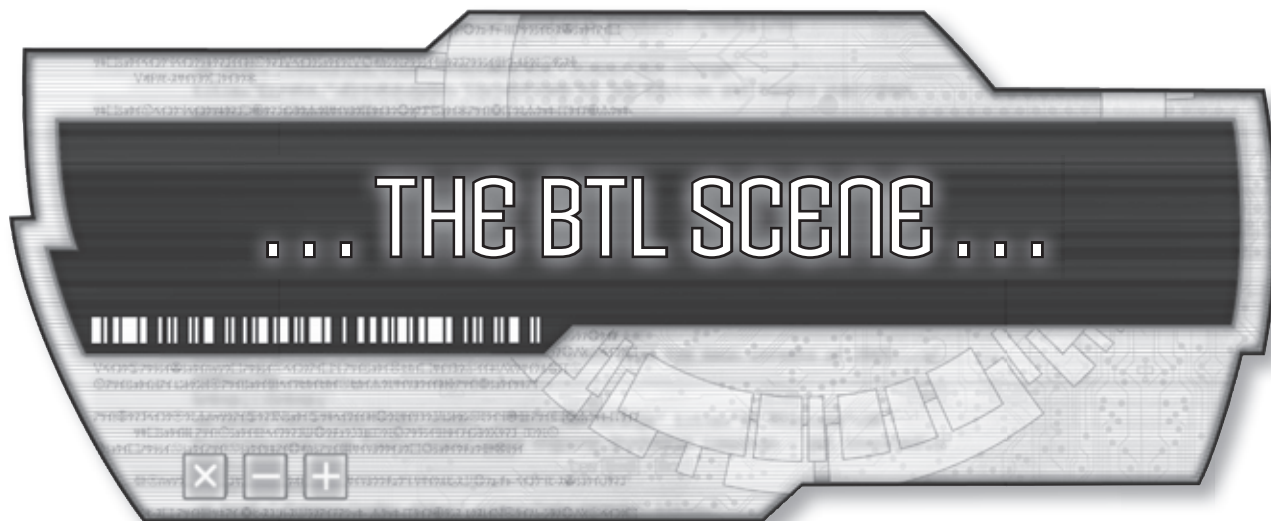
- A couple of enterprising runners in LA started ShadowTours last year, taking wannabes on shadowruns around the LA sprawl for a hefty fee. Nothing real of course—they have arrangements with some of the smaller gangs to fire a few bullets at them during critical moments, though never close enough to be a danger to anyone. The bored, rich folks love it, though. The rigger for ShadowTours, a troll named Corsair, has a huge Pito following.
- Sounder
- Yeah, that guy knows his shit, despite the faked run. Not a bad actor either.
- Rigger X

### Sex, Lies, and Simsense

Getting dirt and planting false evidence against each other is a favorite hobby of the rich and ambitious in Tinseltown. An aspiring star, director, or even an independent studio just needs one big break to make their dreams come true, or so they think. Many people are willing to do anything to realize their goals. They want to kill the projects of their competitors so they can scoop the story or trend of the moment. Starlet A wants Starlet B's performance subpar enough to miss out on that Oscar. These runs often involve stakeouts and surveillance, a little B&E to plant some scandalous bit of evidence, or setting up a rival so that he appears to be doing something illegal. Forgery of trideo or still photos so that someone looks to be in a compromising position is still a fan favorite. It almost doesn't matter if people discover it's faked.

- This is the most common sort of run in the LA shadows. You'd be amazed how much wrangling can go on just for a small speaking role, a single line even.
- Mika
- And what did you do to get it, Mika?
- Ma'fan





Every morning Jack Smack wakes up. And every morning he lives a nightmare. He doesn't know where he is or what the strange objects in his room are. He is confused and frightened by the pale, human form he has once again assumed. He shakes with fear at the strange surroundings and unfamiliar face he has awoken to, wondering if a dream or some enemy wizard has teleported him to some other time or place. Then Jack's BTL chip picks up his awakened status and reconnects to ArcadiumOnline automatically. Nightshade's vision blacks out and, as the AR overlay comes to life, his vision returns, and he is once again in his own world. He assures himself it was just a bad dream.

After having his house gnome manifest a breakfast of creamed manaroot, he sets out to do his day's work. Patrolling the alleys and rooftops of Silttown, ensuring no agents of the Dark One or the Imperium gain a foothold in his master's realm.

Master Redfoot, as he calls himself online, grins slyly as another one of his warriors has awoken for the day. Redfoot looks up as his partner and emissary, the Lady Robyn, enters the room.

"Jack is up?" she questions.

"Yep. I was thinking of taking him to the next level."

"You think he's ready for it?"

"I do. His vitals show he's pretty much hooked."

"An AR street fight or mugging is one thing, Sam. Wetwork takes conviction."

"He is our star subject, Veronica. He panics when he sees the real world. I think it is time for this project to be fully realized. If we can demonstrate the full potential of this project by quarter end, we can move into more markets."

"Do you have a target in mind?"

Sam transfers Veronica the target's data as he returns to monitoring his agents' biofeeds and checking the news. Out of the corner of his eye he witnesses Veronica's transformation into Lady Robyn.

Nightshade is finishing up his morning patrol when he spots Master Redfoot's emissary. Lady Robyn is stunning as always. She discreetly gives him the signal that they need to speak, and just like that she disappears down an alley. He counts slowly to ten and follows her.

"Nightshade," the Lady says with a light voice, "you have proven yourself, and the time has come for you to serve the Master in a greater way."

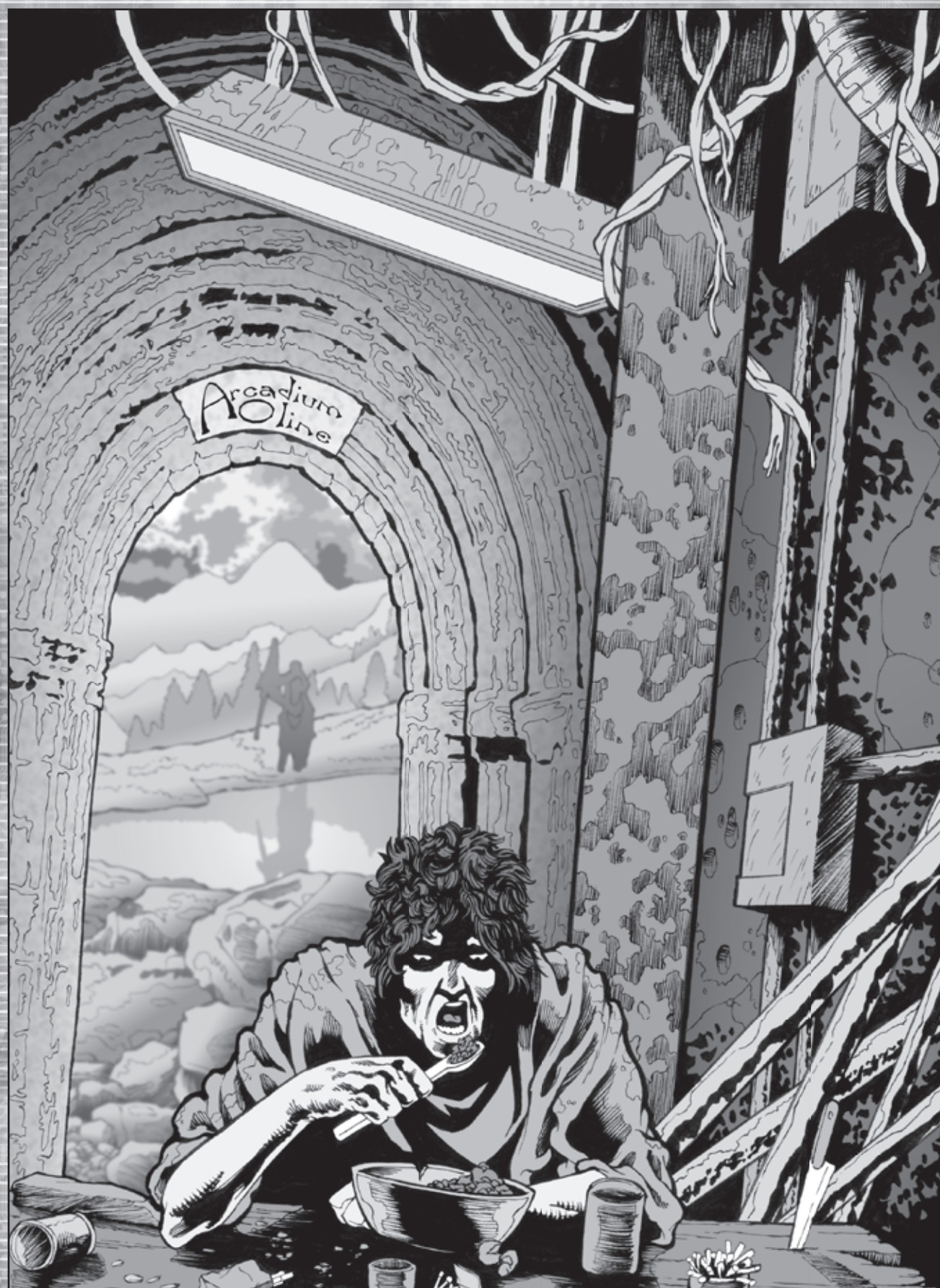
"It is my will to serve the Master and all causes of the Light."

"We have targeted a minor minion in Silttown. If you can succeed in dispatching it you will be ranked a Servant of the Master."

"Tell me what I need to know," says Nightshade as he takes a knee.

Sam grins as he reads the morning news feed. The unexplained beheading of a local government official has the authorities scrambling. His superiors will be pleased. And Jack's vitals are in the green. It was time for some more field tests.







## ILLICIT ENTERTAINMENT

Posted by: Turbo Bunny

The BTL scene combines the best—and worst—of the entertainment and drug scenes. On the plus side, you've got high demand for the product, plenty of opportunities to be creative, and an industry that is perfectly okay with people who work in an unstructured setting. On the downside, you've got the influence of organized crime, the pressure of law enforcement breathing down your neck, and a clientele that gets more desperate as they buy more product. But as long as you can put up with the people involved, you can make some good nuyen, and do it on your terms.

If you want to get involved in the scene on the buying side, you need to connect to the supply. The ultimate dream for junkies since time immemorial has been to not have to leave your home to get high. Junk would just flow to you, and you would do nothing but consume it. Thanks to the increased availability of BTL downloads, this dream is all too possible. Not that these downloads are sitting out in the open where anyone wandering the Matrix can find them—the download links are well hidden and closely guarded. Finding them on your own is unlikely, and finding them is only half the battle. Without a passkey, you can't download anything, and most passkeys are only good for one hit (just like the BTL chips that burn out after a single use). Most download links are hidden but, once found, are available from anywhere on the Matrix. You just need to know where they are. Others may be available on servers that you have to actually jack into, often on servers in an exclusive club, or beetle-den. To learn about the link or gain entrance to a club or den, you still need to know the right people.

- We all love wireless, but there are still some dealers who distribute physical chips. You can even get the new stuff on them.
- 2XL
- I don't know about you guys, but the need for a passkey never slows me down much.
- /dev/grll
- Attempting to use the same single-use key twice can lead to an interesting day. For lower-end goods, the transaction is usually just cancelled and your dealer may give you a hard time the next you try to buy. The higher-end dealers may let the key work but package an unpleasant surprise in your download.
- 2XL

While you can access BTL download sites from almost any Matrix connection, if you are not near a major metropolitan area you will likely be limited to low-quality, mass-produced experiences that are a few months out of date. In major cities there is more demand, and thus more variety. If you have the money you can have whatever it is you want. Big cities are also, usually, the only places where you can find limited-access-node BTL clubs.

- Yeah, there's nothing worse than last season's drugs.
- Baka Dabora

- I was asked for details, I'm giving details.
- Turbo Bunny

The most common way for a limited-access node to be run is for the dealer to use an existing club as a front. The node is typically just for VIPs; most club patrons will not be aware that the node exists. If you go into one of these clubs looking for a BTL, there's a protocol to follow. Either the patron already knows who in the club can give them access and what the code phrase is, or they have been invited for their first try and will be approached by someone who knows to look out for them. That club staffer will give them their first taste—usually at a discount, following the time-honored tradition—and provide the one-time passkey to download their hit.

- You can get your stuff at the club, but be careful where you use it. Pass out on the club floor too many times and you will be asked not to come back. Dealers prefer their customers to drool at home.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

Another way to experience a limited-access node is in a club built specifically for BTL use. These clubs are kept well hidden and work on a members-only model. Some provide access to any type of BTL you desire, while others provide access to a more limited selection. You want to be a part of these clubs, you need an invitation, and each club has its own procedure for joining up.

- Membership in exclusive clubs is not cheap, and any behavior that might jeopardize member identities is dealt with severely. Honestly, for hedonists, these guys can be pretty uptight.
- Traveler Jones

If you really need a hit right now, you also can acquire one in a beetle-den. These places are not exclusive and do not attempt to hide their nature. They are found in an area like the Barrens where the police don't bother to go and people can sell and buy more openly. You're not likely to find the newest chips at these dumps, but you can check in, jack in, and tune out. Just don't bring anything you mind losing, and be up to date on all your shots.

### PLACES TO SCORE

#### The Bronx: Club Tango

This is the place to go for the cutting-edge in holographic clubwear, and plenty of the patrons there aren't wearing anything beneath their 3-D visuals. That's a reasonable choice in this place, as the owners keep the interior hot and steamy at all times to reflect the club's tropical theme. A lot of meet-ups happen here—maybe too many, to the point where it's not always easy to find a secluded spot. There's a dedicated BTL access node in one of the back rooms.

- On a few select nights each month, there is a private party on the top floor in the office of the club's owner, Otomo Ichori. This is when he lets his closest friends taste the newest BTLs.
- Plan 9
- It's not just friends, and he's not just doing them a favor. Sometimes his guests are guinea pigs, and more than once his



security goons have had to surreptitiously drag a body out of his office in the middle of the night.

- Kat o' Nine Tails

### Boston: Tea Party

The Tea Party has no set physical location. It follows a pattern typical for mobile clubs where members take turns arranging the festivities, their location, and security for the event. Since the Tea Party is a BTL club, the organizer is also responsible for ensuring the evening's dealer knows where to show up with his limited node and library of goodies. The organizer usually hires some deniable assets to take care of security.

The Tea Party is different each time. Sometimes they have a trance band play and just take a psychedelic trip, other times they follow the newest adventure of Johnny Shadowrunner. It depends on the preference of the member in charge. The only rules are that it must be different from the last event and that all aspects of the evening must work together in a theme.

The members are fairly close-mouthed about their activities and who the other members are, so getting your hands on an invitation can be difficult. An invitation to join is sort of a holy grail for the wealthy BTL-using Bostonian socialites. About once a year they invite new members. Individuals receive a one-time invite, and then it's up to them to figure out how to be ingratiating enough to become a regular.

- How do you get an invite?
- Plan 9
- By being worthy of being invited. Look like you have money, influence, and power. Sharing a really nice BTL with suspected members won't hurt. You need to be connected, and they need to know you won't talk.
- /dev/grll

### Seattle: Club Platinum

Platinum is a trance club run by orks just inside the Barrens. On the outside it looks like a typical club. Music is loud, AR flashes random neon patterns, and menacing bouncers stand outside being obvious. There is a minimal cover charge and no dress code. The bouncers don't even check for weapons. If they can't see it, you can bring it in. The music is usually thrash or punk, but sometimes they play trance. It is not hip or trendy. Most of its décor is in AR—no physical decorating has been attempted—and even the AR is not that spectacular, just glowing lines and squiggles in pretty colors. There are a few dirty tables where you can stand with a drink.

It's not fancy, but the club still draws quite a crowd. Residents of the Barrens and the youth of nearby neighborhoods looking to blow off some steam pack the club on a nightly basis. The dance floor, which is more like a mosh pit, often hosts all-out brawls. The bouncers rarely intervene if no weapons are drawn and no obvious magic is used.

The draw for the chip-head crowd is the back room, referred to as the Black Lotus. There is a limited-access node there, and for a small fee you can jack in and enjoy.

- The fights are there for a reason—it's become a bit of a local phenomenon to settle things "on the floor of the Platinum."
- Sounder

- The Lotus is a pit. The pillows and blankets scattered on the floor are washed rarely, if at all.
- Beaker

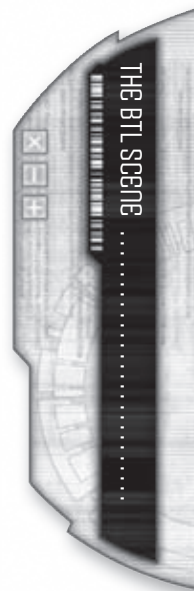
### LA: Club Lacuna

Named in honor of the local Deep Lacuna, Club Lacuna attempts to create an atmosphere that makes one feel as if they were at an archaeological dig that pulses with magic. There is no actual magic in use, however. The feeling is generated through environmental lighting and sounds, along with some very nice AR work. All of the surfaces in the club have been treated to look like you are inside a cave with veins of a metallic purple mineral swirling through the rocks. These swirls are lights that pulse in time with the music. Some booths are on the floor, nestled into stalagmites. To access the remaining booths you need to be ready for a climb. They are on the walls in a style reminiscent of Anasazi cliff dwellings. The band or DJ performs on a stage suspended between four stalactites. To reach the VIP lounges you follow tunnels lit by dig lamps. Faintly, in the background, is the sound of the ocean beating against rocks. The AR display adds to this with an animated fog that rolls through the club, carrying with it pulsing lights and sounds.

- I've been in the real Deep Lacuna, and this club's decorations do not do it justice.
- Sounder
- The décor Lacuna sports doesn't come cheap, and there are all sorts of rumors about just who paid for it. The most popular one says the club has Horizon ties.
- Dr. Spin

While the VIP lounges are often reserved for private parties, the club is open to the general public if you follow the dress code and pay the cover. This open-entry policy makes Lacuna the club where the lines between social classes blur. It's a place to go to be seen and rub elbows with the elite, a hot spot where local bands play, trying to get noticed. What it's not known for is drugs—very little dealing occurs here. Unlike other popular clubs where drugs are a part of the atmosphere, Lacuna's owners try to maintain its reputation of being a clean place to have fun. Yet, it is rumored to be the location of the best limited-access BTL node on the West Coast.

- The rumors are true, sort of. It's the location of one of the best limited-access nodes in the city one night a week. One of the bands that regularly plays there travels with it. They broadcast a hot AR overlay with their music. Listeners in the node can tap into a BTL broadcast as well, making the AR overlay seem real to them. It makes for quite an experience.
- Kat o' Nine Tales



- The band is the Spurious Tuples and they rock! Club Lacuna is not the only place they perform, but it's weird that they've got a regular gig there in spite of Lacuna's "clean" reputation. I mean, club management's gotta know what's going on during those shows.
- Slamm-O!
- They do. Spurious Tuples is backed by Horizon, who is experimenting with just how hot AR can get for the general public. They're hoping to eventually create shows that give a new meaning to the term "addictive viewing."
- 2XL

### Neo-Tokyo: Electric Samurai

When it originally opened, Electric Samurai was geared toward tourists. It was decorated with a feudal Japan theme, filtered through Western tastes, and was located near the area reserved for foreigners. The owners, Sobu Tomi and his son Tomita, hoped to capitalize on the foreigners' inaccurate conceptions of their nation's past and to provide a place where they could relax, away from the strict social demands of his country. The appeal of that low-key atmosphere made the club successful with an unexpected audience—it has become incredibly popular with the youth of Neo-Tokyo, especially metas. As one of the few places that cater to Westerners, it's a place where non-humans can let their hair down.

The drug trade here is very discreet and very quiet. Ask around too much and you will be asked to leave. The protocol here is to ask if they have any specials going, or mention that you are looking for some extra fun. Word will circulate, and someone will approach you. Everything is available here, including a limited-access node.

- Mr. Sobu does not know about the dealing—his son is the one allowing the illegal activities to take place. He takes a cut of all business done in his club.
- Jimmy No

### London: Looking Glass

The Looking Glass is a private club advertised as a self-help clinic. It claims to help people see themselves from the inside and to come to terms with their personal demons and re-forge themselves as happier, healthier people. Members pay monthly dues and attend group and individual classes where gurus help them visualize their demons and battle them. Some participants are asked to become advanced members and are given training to lead other classes. The self-help classes though are just for show (and money laundering), though. In reality, the Looking Glass is a BTL club for the elite, or those with plenty of money. Those invited to the club pass briefly through the self-help sessions and are then invited to join the advanced class. These advanced classes are the BTL club. Members attend sessions as often as they can afford them.

There are rumors that the London location is just a starter, and that the plan is to open new offices around the world.

- During sessions participants are asked to join an AR feed that is close to being a BTL broadcast. As the guru leads them through a scripted conversation, they see glimpses of their "true selves."

Group sessions are recorded so the "gurus" can study individuals and tailor their personal sessions.

- /dev/grll
- Sounds like a cult. Which makes sense, because any cult needs a hook to draw people in, and BTLs are really good at that.
- Pistons

## THE MEN BEHIND THE CURTAIN

If you want to do more in the BTL scene than just consume the things, you need to know who is doing what on the production and distribution sides. Here's a rundown of some of the major players.

### Triads

The Triads are one of the main forces behind the distribution and sale of BTLs, and they are the only large-scale distributor of physical chips. They have been a part of the scene for quite a while and want to maintain their dominance, despite the increasing presence of other syndicates. At one point the Triads had almost a complete monopoly and a wide variety of products—they made a little bit of everything. Today, their market share is decreasing due to the growing number of independent studios and the increased involvement of other criminal syndicates backing these studios. In response, the Triads reworked their business plan. To be more cost effective, they scaled back their production by eliminating all but action and porn lines from their inventory. For action chips, they are moving away from scripted productions to more of a "reality show" format, including quick-hit BTLs that offer a sensation without a full plotline. They hope that their new focus, combined with the fact that they have greater production and distribution resources than their competitors, will keep them on top.

### Other Syndicates

Organizations such as the Mafia and the Vory distribute BTLs, but these groups do not run any production studios. Generally, their leaders prefer to remain silent business partners, investing cash and taking in profits without a close involvement in the business. On occasion, they'll provide a moderate amount of security to protect their interests. The partnerships they've formed develop for a variety of reasons. Sometimes a production studio, or distributor, approaches a syndicate for help and makes a compelling case about the amount of cash they can bring in. Other times the syndicate seeks out the local talent and creates a partnership, staking a claim on the market and getting to that talent before any of their competitors can.

### Individuals

Lone distributors are rare. The primary reason for this is resources—obtaining BTLs and protecting their distribution requires plenty of cash and manpower, and you can't exactly get a bank to give you a small business loan to finance it. Approaching a loan shark or organized crime to front you the money is dicey, since they usually insist on a cut way out of proportion to the effort they'll invest on your behalf.



Even if you overcome the resource hurdle, you have to remember that criminal organizations are quite territorial and often take exception to people operating within their sphere of influence without paying some form of tribute. If your line of business is similar to theirs and threatens to cut into their profits, they are unlikely to tolerate your presence at all.

Despite the financial and physical obstacles, some individuals manage to pull off a distribution operation by working on a small scale or in a remote location. Others work as a sort of independent contractor for a larger syndicate once they've earned a degree of trust for consistently providing good results.

- As the tension between the other syndicates grows and each tries to grab more territory, the big boys are going to work to bring the independents under their wing—whether the independents want that or not.
- 2XL

Some distributors work on their own by going outside the standard model. Instead of distributing a BTL as a standalone experience, they provide BTLs as an add-on to another event. There are already numerous artists using AR to enhance their performances, and some artists playing with BTL enhancement are edging their way toward the mainstream.

- Which is going to give law enforcement organizations fits. If there's enough profit in these artists, though, their corp masters might well tell them to stand down.
- Sunshine

## SOME TECHNICAL DETAILS

I'm not going to get into a full technical lesson here—who has time for that?—but I'll tell you the basics. To make a BTL, you need special recording equipment. This usually takes the form of various implants in your sensory organs and the sense receptors in your brain. These implants are very special cybereyes, cyberears, and other specialized equipment used to digitize taste, smell, and touch. Once we understood the brain well enough to make cyberlimbs work and tell the brain what it should be feeling, we just turned it around. Everything experienced by the star of a BTL is recorded, and these recordings are later processed and turned into a BTL by engineers using specialized computer equipment.

The experience that will eventually be processed into a BTL can be generated in a few different ways. One is to hire someone to get implanted and go about their regular business. The star checks in every so often to have data downloaded and processed. This is pretty cost effective—no writers required!—but unless your star is a terrifically interesting (and sensual) person, you're going to have to sort through a lot of boring material before you get to the good stuff. Another alternative is to make the chips like you would if you were making a trid show, with a set, some actors, and a crew. This is more expensive but generates the results you want, and is the most common way to generate a porn chip. The pre-planning also makes it easier to generate multiple views of one story.

## FOR YOUR VIEWING PLEASURE

A wide variety of experiences are available on the BTL market. In fact, there are so many options to choose from that it would take someone a lifetime to experience them all. Some are simply feelings or moods, others allow you to experience a full, jacked-up-senses version of what someone else has seen and done, and some are just plain psychedelic, giving you all the benefits of a good high or trip without any of the chemical dangers. It's possible to find almost anything out there, but I'll review some of the most popular BTL genres (if that's the right term).

### Moodchips

These are the easiest to get and the cheapest. They enhance or change the user's mood, bringing them up or down as desired. Many of the newest enhancers even allow you to select how strong the mood will be. The most popular is of course manic happiness, with love/lust being a close second. But even a good bout of depression can be purchased as well.

- I heard some famous writer is addicted to them. Says his best works were written in times of personal tragedy, so now he keeps himself plugged in to a depressive state all the time.
- Snopes

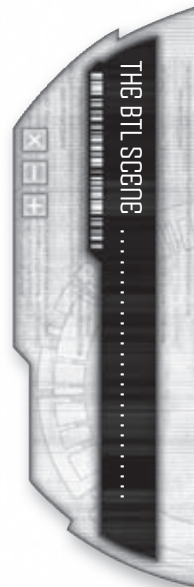
### Pornography Dreamchips

Most porn chips are aimed at the individual who can't get a date or even just sex, though some users want the pleasures without the hassle or the risk of catching something. There are also options for those who have someone but want to spice it up a little. Partners can buy the same story and view it from opposite sides, or they can buy designer chips that work with every sense besides touch so the viewer sees what the chip tells them to see, but what they feel is decided by what's actually in front of them. Just like trid porn, most BTL porn chips are made in production houses with a paid staff of actors and a film crew. Some, however, are made on the sly with unwitting participants.

- If you can imagine some form of sexual encounter, someone has probably already filmed it and has it for sale. If you somehow manage to come up with something they haven't—that always-lucrative “new thing” everyone's always chasing after—you can make some nice nuyen. Provided you can talk people into helping you record it.
- Dr. Spin

### Action Dreamchips

An action chip is designed to take you away from your boring life and put you in the middle of something far more exciting. If you want to experience the thrill of base-jumping, there's a chip for that. If you want to be there with your favorite street hero when he fights the big baddie, you can. Action chips can be made with a script like an action trid, or they can be the recordings of someone's experiences. The real-life experiences are popular, and many scripted chips are just rewrites of the real deal. The adventures of runners like you and me are popular, but things like extreme sports also tend to do very well. Something that surprised me is the demand for chips of more mundane sports. Perhaps the users are trying to relive old glory days of sports they used to play, or



psyching themselves up to perform better. These chips see an increase in sales during major sporting events as people try to live vicariously through their heroes. Any BTL manufacturer who can wire up a major-league or Olympic athlete to record a record-breaking performance would have a chip that would sell for years.

- I was offered a gig once to record one of my trips. I was flattered, but declined. I thought my clients wouldn't appreciate me leaving a record behind.
- Traveler Jones

### Psychedelic Tripchips

Some people could care less about sex or the exhilaration of being in a running gunfight. They are looking for a good high without the chemical residue that traditional drug use generally leaves in the body. These chips focus on the far-out sights and sounds one experiences with acid or other hallucinogens. These are usually not filmed, but manufactured by altering existing film, or by putting together a mind-bending sequence of graphics and sounds.

### Snuff Dreamchips

I'm okay with not experiencing death until it happens, but there are enough morbidly curious thrill-seekers out there to keep these things selling. You can get snuff BTLs straight up, with nothing but the kill, or you can add some porn or whatever else appeals to you. So if you want to know what it feels like to kill or be killed in a hundred different ways, it's out there for you to find.

Some snuff chips feature just the death, but others tell a story leading up to the final kill, and the user's perspective makes that kill very personal. The brain and its emotions being what they are, some people come out of a snuff chip with a strong loathing toward the person or character who killed their BTL persona.

### ArcadiumOnline

Similar to the experimentation being done with music and BTL AR overlays, there has been some research in adding BTL enhancements to AR overlay games. Not everyone likes playing in AR overlay, since it requires moving around instead of playing while sitting on your own comfortable couch, but there's still a strong market for them. It helps that you can be playing while you're supposedly going about your normal business. Players interact with the other players they encounter as they walk around, and they can decide how strong the overlay is and how much reality they let bleed through. Oftentimes they will the game minimized in their field of vision, making it more active when they meet another player.

- It can be quite interesting watching people walking around while they're playing AR games. Sometimes they just look crazy, especially the ones fighting goblins that only they can see. The thoughtful ones open up their AR a little bit to passersby, giving them the option of seeing some of the overlay or at least make a note of it in their status so that people know what's going on with them.
- Clockwork

The producers of ArcadiumOnline are trying to take this concept of combining an AR feed with the power of a BTL feed

to a mainstream audience. The theory is that, if you can make the AR game feel as real as a BTL or some other VR sims, then more people would play the game—because it will be that much more addictive. There are obviously a few legal issues with such an endeavor, so the game currently is in discreet beta testing. While the standard, non-BTL version of the game is available to anyone who wishes to pay the monthly fee, the BTL-enhanced beta is available by invitation only. One assumes that they already have lobbyists working to legalize their efforts, and scientists working to prove that low levels of BTL exposure are not harmful.

- Want to know the best way to get the beta invitation? Have an addictive personality. That's who they're targeting.
- Butch
- I'm not sure how credible this is, but some rumors say the game is actually a front for an unknown individual who wants to use the chip-heads as unwitting foot soldiers in his criminal army.
- Snopes

### SOME SELECT TITLES

While there are more chips on the market than I can list, here are a few perennial favorites, along with some new chart-toppers with the BTL crowd.

#### Old Favorites

*Don't Worry Be Happy* (Dreamscapes): This moodchip that has been around since the beginning of BTLs, I think. It is a simple mood enhancer that makes the user feel amazingly happy. A recent innovation that has been worked into some versions allows the user to choose how happy they want to be. They can set it low, and let it carry them through the day, or experience a few minutes of divine but incapacitating happiness.

- So the stronger the emotion, the shorter the duration?
- Clockwork
- Correct.
- Turbo Bunny

*The Adventures of Johnny Mane* (Quest Productions): Follows the adventures of the sometime-mercenary/sometime-Robin Hood Johnny Mane in his quest to right wrongs, make money, and sleep with a hot babe at the end of it all. A serial that has been around for so long that they are on their third Johnny. It gives you an escape from a world that sucks and makes you feel like a hero, in charge of everything.

*Girl, You Make Me Feel Like a King* (One Perfect Night): This is one of the most popular porn chips. The title has been slapped on many different versions of the same basic story. You are a guy alone in a bar, and then she notices you and picks you out of the crowd, making you feel like the luckiest man alive. The girl changes from version to version to help keep the title fresh. And since the producers at One Perfect Night are equal opportunity-type people, there is also a reverse available: *Boy, You Make Me Feel Like a Queen*.





## New Hits

*Street Fighter: 2 Real* (Triad Studios): The Triads run underground fights in cities all over the world, and they have found a way to generate even more revenue from these events. Many of their best fighters are contractually obligated to be fitted with recording gear before they fight. The result is a no-holds-barred journey into the world of underground bare-knuckled brawling. These chips have become very popular, since you get the adrenaline rush high that comes with a good fight. You also get the satisfaction of beating someone up without the risk of an assault and battery charge.

*An Evening in the Stars* (Mind Storm): This tripchip is simple, and that's part of the secret of its appeal. Mind Storm has focused on providing quality images and sound to create an excellent trance mix that accompanies you on a spectacular journey through the stars.

## LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

The production of BTLs requires at least some space and specialized equipment. You may not need any space to shoot the thing if you're doing a non-scripted production, but you'll still need the equipment that will translate the sensory recordings into a usable chip. If you want to ensure that your star's equipment is good, you'll want to install it and/or monitor it yourself—when you're dealing with an underground economy like this, the quality of work performed by people you don't know can vary wildly.

If you're doing a scripted affair, then you go about things in much the same way as you go about making a trid. You'll need a studio, actors, and a crew. You can add whatever special effects you desire in post-production, as long as you've got the equipment you'll need to make those changes.

- In post-production on non-scripted chips, it is common to edit the faces of the star and other players to protect identities. This is especially common in cases where shadowrunning types are the stars.
- Traveler Jones

If you're not ready to invest in a whole bunch of equipment yourself, you need to connect to some of the existing producers out there and see what kind of deal you can work out. Here's a quick rundown of some of the players you might encounter.

## TRIADS

In addition to being the primary distributors of the chips, the Triads also control a significant share of the BTL production. The Triads specialize in the quick-to-produce and quick-to-market chips. Their primary source of material comes from reality chips—they pay people to record their activities, then edit the recordings in post-production. The low production cost associated with these chips translates into a nice profit, which helps to finance their scripted productions.

The majority of the Triads' scripted BTLs tend to be of the romance and pornographic variety. They're cheaper to make than

action flicks, and they have the gifted staffs of their brothels on hand to recreate any variety of romantic and sexual encounters.

- The Triad porn chips are mostly mundane. They prefer to leave plots involving space princesses and the like to other production houses.
- Ma'fan
- Don't knock a sound business model. They focus their efforts on letting people live stuff that could actually happen. BTLs affect people because what they see is better than what they have. An action or porn plot that is too fantastic is sometimes not as engrossing as something closer to people's everyday reality.
- Cosmo

## QUEST PRODUCTIONS

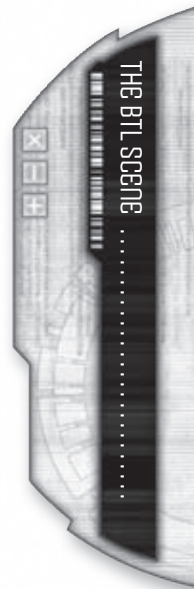
Quest Productions focuses exclusively on the production of action and adventure BTLs. The company, it is said, was founded by a retired shadowrunner who made his millions, decided he was getting too old, and used the connections he had made along the way to set up his own business. Rumors say that he uses his connections to watch the shadows for new talent. He uses runners for all sorts of tasks, from filling in-view roles to editing recorded product to providing security for his facilities. The owner is very reclusive—no one knows his name, and he keeps himself hidden from the world, even when one of his works is nominated for an award.

- BTLs get awards?
- /dev/grll
- Keep reading—I'll get to that later.
- Turbo Bunny
- Some say the founder was a non-scripted star who decided he could do better.
- Snopes
- I've heard that story. The kicker is, once he started making BTLs, all his jobs dried up 'cause he was recording them. Plus, word is he wasn't that good anyways.
- Traveler Jones

Quest Productions makes almost no unscripted chips. The exception to this is their production of extreme sports BTLs. The theory behind this is that you cannot really script the excitement and adrenaline rush of a dirtbike race, or a sky-diving trip. In reality, it has just proven cheaper to pay the extreme sports enthusiasts who are already good at what they do than to train actors to pull off those stunts.

- So yeah, if you're into extreme sports, hook yourself up to a recording rig and sell your output. Why not turn your hobby into an income source?
- Hard Exit

Quest Productions makes a variety of action BTLs. Some are short scenes, like a chase scene or a gunfight, that are sold for less



and are designed to be a quick high. Others are like a full-length trid. Plenty of fans think that Quest BTLs are the best action chips on the market—they have the highest quality and best effects. Their most popular chips by far are the ones depicting the exploits of a shadowrunner or a mercenary, but chips in genres like noir, fantasy, and science fiction also sell well.

- Some of their chips are produced and sold like the serials from the mid-twentieth century. Each chapter or installation is released on a different chip, and the cliffhangers at the end keep you coming back. You wouldn't believe how much mental stress a good BTL cliffhanger can inflict.
- Traveler Jones

## ONE PERFECT NIGHT

A little-known fact is that a few of the adult-film studios have side businesses in producing pornography BTLs. One Perfect Night is one such production studio. The chips they produce cover a wide range of pornographic interests—almost any sexual fantasy can be satisfied with a One Perfect Night chip. They touch a little on some fantasy or science fiction pieces, but focus most of their energy on producing pieces set in modern times.

- Their products involve a lot of combinations of individuals and plenty of creative positions, but One Perfect Night won't touch rape or snuff stuff.
- Dr. Spin
- Their BTLs often serve as a who's who of up-and-coming legit porn stars. Many a lonely chip-head could thank Sapphire Star for their orgasms long before she appeared in the trids.
- Mika
- OPN uses some of the same equipment and studio spaces as their parent company, Hollywood By Night. Sometimes the existence of shared space means that they're open to one more party who will share it.
- Traveler Jones

One Perfect Night uses its extensive resources in the legit porn business to aid in the creation of some of the best chips in the business. Not only does the studio have plenty of quality sets at their disposal, but they have access to a wide range of successful trid porn that they can rework into BTL and turn into bestsellers in a new format.

## DREAMSCAPES

This is a studio that has been around since the beginning of the BTL era, and they have stayed true to their longtime exclusive focus on the production of tripchips. The years of dedication to a specialization have paid off—Dreamscapes' tripchips are considered the best in the business.

- Dreamscapes' founder was an old-school acid user who jumped at the chance to create a way to trip without the chemical drawbacks. He isn't bothered by the addiction side effect of BTLs, since he sees no reason to not regularly use them.
- Butch

They have also been pioneering some new tech, allowing the broadcast of a BTL feed over AR. Users need to allow the program access to their PAN, and they get taken on the ride of their lives. This process was designed as a way to break the company into the rave scene. Dreamscapes designers learned that users were experiencing their chips while at raves and other live music events and loving the results they were getting. Their only complaint was that the trip should sync with the music. Dreamscapes took that as a hint.

## MIND STORM

A newcomer on the scene, Mind Storm has taken a surprising hold on the chip-head world. Mind Storm is involved in the production of all genres of BTLs, from pure moodchips to far-out tripchips that simulate an intense acid trip. Mind Storm does not try to outdo more specialized production houses—instead, they focus on having a diverse range of products for their customers to choose from. Like the Triads, they do a lot of non-scripted work, but they also have a good collection of big-budget scripted items. Mind Storm is backed by the Mafia, and its chips are distributed almost exclusively with their resources. As a result, very few of the scenes or features display the Mafia in a bad light. Mind Storm also produces fewer pornographic chips than the Triads do, since the Triads have that niche pretty well filled. They're looking for opportunities where the Triads aren't so heavily involved.

### SHADOWSEA QUICKSEARCH:

#### BTL Terminology

**Beetle-den:** A place where BTLs can be purchased and enjoyed. Staying longer than the duration of the BTL is generally frowned upon.

**Caliguchip:** Porno dreamchip featuring long and imaginative scenarios; often have bondage/torture elements in them.

**Chip-head:** Someone addicted to BTLs.

**Dreadchip:** A tripchip focusing on dark, twisted emotions and imagery.

**Dream Farm:** A BTL server farm.

**Lucy:** Alternate term for tripchip.

**McFerrins:** Moodchips featuring calm, content, stress-free emotions. Very popular among wageslaves.

**Medicine:** Alternate term for moodchip.

**Overclock:** To amp up recorded sensations so that they go beyond what the original star experienced.

**Party-head:** Someone who uses BTLs casually, i.e., on the weekends and at parties.

**Romance:** A softcore dreamchip.

**Sleepwalker:** Someone who uses BTLs while going about other activities.

**Travel Agent (TA):** A BTL dealer.

**Twitcher:** Someone who has fried so many neural synapses with BTLs that their mind can no longer rev down to a normal state, leaving them constantly amped up and on edge.

**Veg-out:** To zone out completely on a BTL.



- What this means is that while the Mafia looks fine in Mind Storm BTLs, the Triads come off as sociopathic kitten stranglers, or worse. This could increase tensions between the groups—but only if there isn't enough business to go around. If both groups are making healthy profits, that takes the sting out of most insults.
- 2XL

## A BTL LEXICON

As with most hobbies and illegal endeavors, a distinct culture and slang have evolved in the BTL community. If you're going to be hanging out with people in the biz and you don't want to keep asking them what that thing they just said means, here are a few terms you should know about.

## THE BENNY'S

You may be surprised to learn that the BTL industry has its own peer-nominated awards ceremony. The business is illegal, so the ceremony obviously is not broadcast—or really publicized—but it's an open secret in the shadow world.

The first Benny Awards took place about ten years ago, produced by a man named Ben Miller, who had no idea he was starting a tradition. Miller was a self-made billionaire who apparently didn't mind throwing money around, but most data searches don't turn up a thing about him. He must have been involved with the trade on some level or have been very good at networking. He invited several of the more well-known producers and asked them all to bring selections of their work with the promise that the weekend would be entertaining and that there would be prizes. Most found the premise interesting enough that they attended. There wasn't even a "Benny" the first year, just cash prizes.

- Does it have a statue?
- Netcat
- Who is Ben Miller that he could contact these people, invite them somewhere, and they would actually go?
- Cosmo
- He was someone attached to a lot of money, but not much else is known about him. Maybe he wasn't even real—it's possible that he was a fictitious person created by some unknown entity.
- Snopes
- And the award for Best Acid Trip goes to ... Seriously?
- Baka Dabora
- I heard about this. It is sort of like an awards show and BTL convention at the same time. Rivals use it as a chance to put aside differences for a few days. They talk shop and sometimes make some backroom deals.
- Snopes

Apparently everyone had a really good time at that first awards ceremony, because after Ben Miller's sudden disappearance, they all got together the next year and did it again, and even named the awards after him. Theories still run rampant as to who he was and why he disappeared. Some think he was hired to play a part by someone in the industry and the plan worked far better than they could have hoped. Others think he was playing with someone else's money and was killed for it. Whatever the case may be, the awards he started have now become a part of the BTL landscape. The production houses work together once a year to go on a secret retreat where they experience each other's work, vote on the best productions, and give each other prizes. Along with the promotional benefits, the Bennys are great for facilitating technological advances. Once a year the different studios are given a chance they might not have to see what is out there and to talk shop with each other about how they did what they did. That kind of atmosphere can inspire creativity.

## MAKING YOUR MARK ON THE BTL SCENE

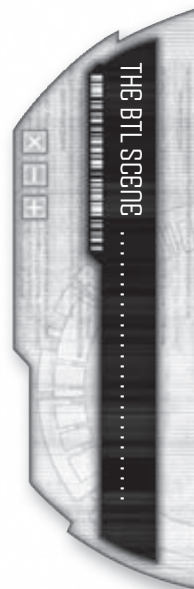
Anyone can be a star, but not everyone has to be. People are needed behind the scenes too, so if you are not star material there is still money to be made through BTLs. It doesn't have to require a full-time commitment—it could be a way to pick up extra cash between runs, or a way to keep making money when you think you're getting too old for gunfights in the street. The place to start is where the product meets the customers—for the right fee, most dealers will let you know whom to contact if you want to lend your services to them. Here are some of the things you could do in this field.

### BECOME A BTL CAST MEMBER

The producers of unscripted chips are always looking for fresh meat and new perspectives. A runner's last narrow escape from a corporate security force could be the next big hit, and while the unscripted nature of the production is supposed to keep things spontaneous, no one will complain if those "security forces" are actually other runners who are being careful not to do any actual damage to the star. The point is, just because something is unscripted doesn't mean it's not staged, and that can provide an opening for someone who is handy with firearms to find work.

Work on scripted BTLs is a little more straightforward, as the parts they need to cast are right there in the script, and the roles are clearly delineated. Plenty of productions are looking for tough, street-hardened types for small roles or as window-dressing. Runners, with their street-hardened appearance, often make excellent extras.

- I would only suggest becoming the star of an unscripted BTL if you're ready to retire from the shadows. Most of your contacts don't want to be in the public eye and won't appreciate you putting them there, so if you're undisguised in a popular BTL, expect your work opportunities to dry up.
- Traveler Jones





INCOMING FEED.....

- Maybe some will. But there are employers who want a name, entertainment types who don't want some unknown as their bodyguard. They can be a source of work.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

### BECOME A BTL TECHIE

A well-made BTL needs more than a daring star and a beautiful cast. There are a wide variety of roles that need to be filled, including techs and medics who can install, upgrade, and maintain the equipment installed in the stars. BTL studios need skilled programmers who can write and maintain the complex programs used to make their product. And the server farms need system administrators to monitor them and keep them running efficiently.

- I know a few street docs who have worked a couple of shifts for the Triads. Some do it in return for goods and supplies they need; others just take cash.
- Doc Hollywood
- To be honest, most of the computer work they need done is either beneath a good hacker or way too specialized.
- Clockwork
- I know a few corporate computer nerds that moonlight as sys admins on a server farm.
- Baka Dabora

### DO RUNS OR OTHER WORK FOR BTL PRODUCERS

BTL producers, like everyone else in the world, have some shadow ops they need done, and doing a good job for them can be a first step toward forging a deeper and more profitable relationship. Depending on who's doing your fixing for you, sometimes just putting out word that you're open to BTL work may be enough. If you get a run assignment and pull it off, let your Johnson know you liked doing business and wouldn't mind working for him more often.

The rise of the wireless Matrix has led to a decrease in the number of smuggling runs for physical chips, though such runs still can be found from time to time. But the type of smuggling that never goes away is moving the recording and distribution equipment into the proper studio, farm, or beetle-den. Gear is needed to make this all work, and most of it is highly restricted. There are also smuggling runs involving people—sometimes a star needs to cross a border to follow some plot point or another, and they may not have the clearances they need. Many studios take care of this work themselves, but others use deniable assets to help get people where they need them to be.

Security is an ever-present need, even if it's not a particularly glamorous job. Doing good work is a way to earn a producer's trust so that they give you better work.



- Hiring some of your friends to stage a break-in attempt and then fighting them off convincingly can help you look good.
- Stone

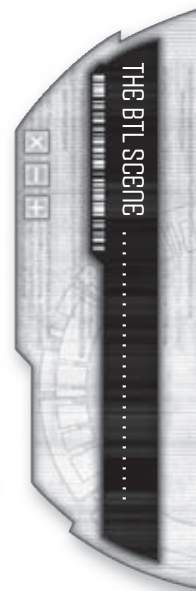
## BE A CONSULTANT

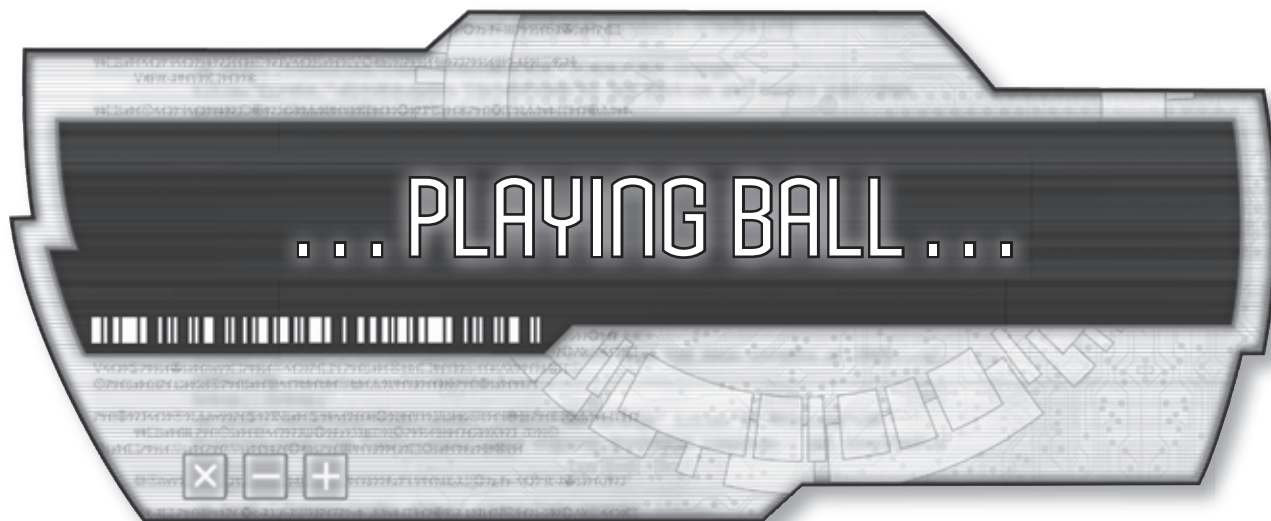
When a director wants to keep his work true to life, or at least make it seem as real as possible, he will hire a consultant with expertise in the areas important to production. The director of a medical drama will hire a doctor, while the director of a cop show will hire a cop. The directors of high-budget BTLs are no different. When they want to make their gritty action chips as real as possible, they hire someone who has experienced it. This is great job for a runner looking to make some extra cash—you get payment, respect, and no one shooting at you.

## BECOME A SUPPLIER OR DISTRIBUTOR OF BTL EQUIPMENT

Just like any other industry, BTL production studios and server farms need supplies and equipment. The servers and whatnot are pretty easy to get, but the more restricted recording and other BTL production equipment is harder to come by. Sometimes, even a big server purchase can get you in trouble if some of the authorities get wind of what it's going to be used for. Runners can come in handy here—using their contacts to negotiate the black market and getting equipment where it needs to go can bring in a few nuyen from BTL studios.

- You know how when you're young, if you know a guy with a truck, everyone is always calling that guy to help them when they move? Well, there are plenty of small businesses out there, including independent BTL producers, who are in the same boat as young kids in the sprawl, looking for someone who can help them move their shit without them having to rent a truck of their own. What this means is, if you have a truck with some hauling capacity, make sure you're telling people when you're putting feelers out there to get work.
- Traveler Jones
- Everyone should know where they can get a truck if they need one—that's no big deal. If you're near a foreign border, though, there's a good chance some BTL producers want to get across that border to film some exotic locales or another, and if you have either the right fake certifications to help them across, or the know-how to get across without needing a check, you'll be way more valuable than some guy with a truck.
- 2XL





If there was a sport that she really despised, it was soccer. Ninety minutes of twenty-two people running around in a stadium, hunting the ball, getting it, losing it, hunting it again. Like dogs. She could not understand how Europeans could get so emotionally involved in a sport that had so little action. Even the fouls weren't spectacular compared to what American football had to offer.

Pistons glanced at the time stamp floating near her virtual persona. Saturday, 20:29 CET. The kick-off was just about to happen. If the goddess was smiling upon her, she would not need to endure the Euroleague game between FC Bayern München and FC Barcelona for long. She longed for a beetle beer, even if it was just morning in her time zone. Must be the environment, she thought. Just as she watched the icons around her anticipating the start of the game (and hell, was it crowded here), the target manifested on his usual seat in the digital representation of Camp Nou.

The German was on time. There was very little hard information on the new BMW executive, and the Johnson wanted him profiled, with the information sent from Munich to the Saeder-Krupp office in Seattle. One of her contacts had provided her with the detail that he was a serious soccer fan; he never missed a game of his team. And after hacking all the way through a DeMeKo nexus in Munich a few days ago, she finally found out that he had a season ticket for all games with premium access to the broadcasting VR stadium, where the game was shown live as a virtureal representation.

"Don't underestimate the metahuman element when hacking," as FastJack always said. And given that the German was now sitting here, enjoying the game, it meant that there was now an open virtual connection between the S-K executive's home node back in Seattle and the Sol Media nexus here in Spain with a valid access ID.

Using the security account she planted in the nexus yesterday, it was easy to lay hands on his AID and start her tracking routines. Bugging his current apartment, which she and her crew hadn't been able to locate in RL because of too much personal S-K protection, had also been part of the assignment. Given that he was now in a virtual resting state, he would not even notice them stepping around him.

After pinpointing the German's current location, she sent the coordinates to Eightball and the rest of her team to get them moving. She then uploaded the hacking gear and sent some agents around to keep an eye on the local IC.

Ninety minutes.

Plenty of time.









## PRO SPORTS

Posted by: Slamm-0!

- Oh no, here comes the walking sports encyclopedia.
- Netcat

Men love a lot of things: chicks (especially of the naked sort), sex, beer, raw meat, guns, hardware, cars, and, above all else, sports. Any combination of those is always a win-win situation for any testosterone-driven butch, even if she is female in this day and age.

- The grasshopper has a point.
- Butch

Despite all the socio-cultural impact of metahumans and magic, the blurring of sex and gender due to biogenetic alterations, equalization, and free-choice sexuality, certain role allocations haven't really changed in most parts of the world. It is a mixture of natural instincts (no matter how hard we try to biologically overcome them), inducement by trid and media, tradition (the "values" our parents taught us), and religion. All clichés aside, it's how we still tick. This is why fashion accessories (virtual or real) resonate well even with gun bunnies and hacker gals. And why men love pro sports and hang around together watching a game.

- Of course it isn't as black and white as our punk hacker paints it, but it is a fact that few parents take their daughters to football training or a pitching session. And most parent-coaches are still men. There are exceptions, but they remain a minority.
- Goat Foot

It is a buddy thing, allowing men to connect with each other and the team that is playing. It gives you a topic to talk about—no matter how worthless discussions about the moves, the results, and other aspects of sports may appear to women and other outsiders. The bonding even crosses the gaps that educational differences, social strata, races, colors and corporate affiliations have produced.

- Women actually do the same on other topics. Due to bitchiness and other social factors, however, women see others of their gender as rivals more often than men do.
- Goat Foot

Before getting flat-lined by the ladies for my heresy, let me get straight to the point. Pro sports have such a huge market *because* so many like to watch sports and get emotionally involved. Countless trideo channels, entire sections of daily news feeds, and thousands of Matrix nodes and hostzines devoted to sports are just the tip of the iceberg. Sports stars are idolized, and their names provide the foundation for successful consumer products. While men will only admit under pressure that sports are nothing more than entertainment that showcases competition (I do, BTW!), it is exactly the root of the matter.

- See how "modern" the father of my child is. Lucky me.
- Netcat

And like the rest of the entertainment industries, the sport biz is a land o' plenty for runners seeking an opportunity to make money or get to know some friends in high places by applied shadow networking.

## THE SPORTS BIZ

The sports business is basically *panem et circenses*—or bread and games for those who don't have their Latin translator soft online. It exists due to the simple fact that people like to be entertained. It's the same now as it was millennia ago when the crowd cheered while the lions were having Christians for lunch in the Colosseum in Rome. As long as there is the thrill of the game, action, competition, and spectacle, everything else is forgotten. It's all about the fun, the exuberance, the allegiance with the team or players, and the stress relief, no matter how excited we get while having the ride of our lives. While many use sports fandom as way to blind out their miserable life for the duration of the game, sports are no opium for the masses, but rather a hard-coded longing for an emotional roller coaster ride. If it is a drug, then it's both an upper and downer—with some serious side effects, depending on how the game ends.

- Man did I cry when the Tombstones lost the Super Brawl last year.
- Hard Exit

Since watching games makes us feel alive in many ways (and if you don't feel it I can't help you), people are willing to pay for the experience over and over again, making sports a damn profitable business with annual revenues in the trillions. Therefore it's not surprising that the market is tightly controlled by the same corp bad-asses that control the majority of the mass media. While there are many dedicated sports networks around the globe, the top dogs in this entertainment branch are **World Sports Broadcasting** and its family owned by **American Broadcasting Service** (an S-K subsidiary), **Channel 12** (Aztechnology/Sol Media), **SportsNet** (Confederate Broadcasting Company/MCT Media), **Eurosports** (Ares Entertainment), and **Sports 24/7** (DeMcKo). They negotiate the broadcasting rights, contracts, and licenses with the different sports leagues, clubs, teams, or regional networks (whoever holds the rights) for sums in the multi-million-nuyen scale per season, depending on the popularity of the sport locally or internationally.

- Some of these annual negotiations have recently come under serious fire since Horizon's Pathfinder decided to enter the game with their new *Hard Ball Sports Network*. While Hard Ball has been drawing viewers due to their state-of-the-art technological sportscasts, popular P2.0 commentators, and free databases, they lack access to the really interesting games and big events due to long-lasting relationships between the rights-holders and the old, established networks. This is why they are using runners to actively drive a wedge between those two groups.
- Sunshine
- There's always squabbling on national regulations that dictate the free availability of some sporting events like the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup, especially in Europe. The old broadcast



networks knew how to make money from free broadcasts, and that model hasn't entirely faded away.

- Ecotope

The networks return their investments by selling the events as pay-per-view (live) tridcast or on-demand recordings to the audience via the Matrix. Costs tend to vary depending on how you experience the game (I'll get to that). Due to the mass-market advertising opportunities these events provide, commercial "airtime" or parallel game "alongtime" (in which the commercial and product are integrated into the broadcast) are sold to the highest bidder, often yielding several millions for a short trid spot during the most prominent games, such as championships. It's one of the best chances you'll get to brainwash the masses into buying your product.

### The Real Experience

The way we experience sports in trid has drastically changed in the past years. The predominant belief for a long time was that no broadcast you watched could ever match the experience of being at the game live and in person, rooting with a crowd of your fellow fans. Most everyone agreed that watching the game in high-definition trideo was the second-best thing to being in the stadium a decade ago, but that isn't true anymore. The current technical possibilities provide you with many options to experience the game in new ways that were impossible before Crash 2.0. First of all, you aren't bound to your trid anymore. Given today's augmented-reality-overlay capabilities, you can watch your game everywhere you go—not as an image on a portable screen, but as a high-resolution overlay that surrounds you and moves with you.

- From my perspective, one advantage of this is that it makes people pretty distracted in real life, since they have so many AROs, people, and things to keep track of (not to mention the emotional involvement part). Ever tried to get an XS card from a security goon on his way back home while he is watching sports? Easier than stealing candy from a baby.
- Riser

So no need to stay at home any more, which is a plus in our ever-mobile society. As long as you can access the Matrix, you can watch the game, no matter what. You may be sitting on the subway, doing some exercise outdoors, or taking your girl out to dinner, but the game will be right there with you.

- As if I hadn't noticed. You were talking to radio-frequency girl.
- Netcat

Watching the game on the go is not the same as sitting with pals in a sports bar or at home with some six-packs, but it's nice from time to time if you have other commitments. Most broadcasters offer a basic package for mobile trid—you get the game in high-definition with interactive camera angles plus background on the teams and players and whatnot. Links to fan sites, products the star players have lines of or do commercials for, the whole load of spam, and of course—my favorite—detailed statistics.

- You also get a lot of info on the players, like biomonitor feeds and bioweave that displays injuries, or live-blogging comments from the players that are 'cast via thought-links.
- Beaker
- Ever experienced a Slashers game through Bullseye's LMG blaster cam? FUN!
- Pistons

There is a lot of data interconnection that can keep you occupied if the game is not that exciting (it happens, especially with baseball) or during commercials.

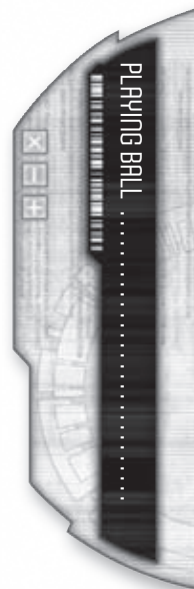
The next level of experience is fully virtual. By subscribing and accessing the broadcaster's game nexus, you can actually become part of the (real and virtual) crowd in the stadium. The whole thing is realistic and live, and the amount of information you get from the field depends on how much you are willing to pay. With the basic cyberspace experience you usually get to see the arena view. You can zoom and view different angles like in trid, but you can also bawl and chant with your virtual neighbors or fan blocks if you want to. It is as genuine as you can make it in the virtuality.

- You can buy virtual popcorn and hotdogs with coded olfactory simsense responses. Even beer.
- /dev/grrl
- The brew you download there is horse piss. If you wanna get closer to the real thing and get drunk while being jacked-in, bring a hot-sim modified 'link and your own beetle-beer. It also tastes better. But only for grown-ups, kiddo.
- Pistons

If you pay premium, however, you get the full XP and can watch the game as if you were on the field. You can walk around (or through) the players and, since you are a platinum subscriber, you are of course the only one on the field (perhaps with a selected group of friends or colleagues). As your view of the game on the field-level is often limited, you can also whip up additional AROs to give you more information on where the heat is taking place or provide you with a broader view of the game. Since the whole thing requires some cutting-edge equipment in the stadium and processing power that turns many corporate nexi green with envy, it is quite expensive. That's why I usually hack an existing database and generate an account.

- Since there are no stands and bleachers it's especially awesome for urban brawl. You can walk with your team through the sprawl jungle and are in the midst of the action when hell breaks loose and virtual bullets start raining down on you. It does give you some adrenaline rush, even if you know it isn't real.
- Pistons

The highest experience level is actually entering the head of a player on the field and watching through his eyes while he plays. While downloads of simsense recordings are nothing new, unprocessed live simsense feed from the field is something that has recently become possible. Since star players aren't simsense



actors, the feeds are considered “dirty” from a simsense POV. But since there has been a rising demand from a certain male and rich clientele to get a firsthand experience, Horizon has been offering this to sniggle viewers to their networks.

## TEAMS AND LEAGUES

Besides the networks, the leagues, teams, and players all want their own slice of the cake. While the leagues are usually only bureaucratic frameworks consisting of a few wealthy and power-hungry individuals who sometimes happen to be former players, the teams are often A-level enterprises with a certain level of influence in their home town or sprawl. Depending on their origins or financial troubles, a lot of teams (in all major leagues) are owned or at least sponsored by double-A or triple-A corporations, who use the teams as advertisement platforms and representatives for the corp in the sports world. Since many sports fans are rich and influential individuals—ranging from modern oligarchs to stock tycoons or even dragons—many teams are bought as an investment, a status symbol, a toy, or just an object of devotion going back to whenever the person bonded with the team. Some teams have even been in certain families for generations and are still professionally managed by the founder’s sons, daughters (yes, daughters!), or (great-) grandchildren.

In case you never did a run in the circus that is the sports biz, you should know it’s a viper’s nest. While most viewers watch the trid and think of sports as a competitive game, it is first and foremost about money. The ranking of the team in the league, the expectations of fans that have to be met if you want them to keep buying tickets, and the survival of a team as a business as well the personal wealth of the team’s owners are all at stake here. If your team performs badly and you don’t make it to the finals, into a cup, or into whatever additional tournaments exists, you lose money. A lot of it. Money you need to buy new players, to pay your expensive star players, or hire runners to ward off predators. Leagues are basically small-time versions of the games the megacorps play with each other every day to improve or maintain their position on the ladder, with cut-throat tactics and a good portion of backstabbing being as common here as there. In sports, this is especially true for the game of transferring players between teams.

Apart from popular all-stars (who have special rules applied to them), each player is an investment and has a value both on the field (or brawl zone, court, pitch, or whatever) and on the market. Average players are numerous, cheap to buy, and easily exchangeable. But you cannot expect a team of pawns to win. If the player does not bring the ability to learn and evolve into a key player, independently or in response to coaching, he will always be mediocre.

Players who are playmakers, however, who stand out and excel on the field, raise their going rate and attract the interest of other teams. They also get popular and get fans (I’ll get to that). Players who have shown that level of skill, guts, and consistent performance are almost always negotiating for better conditions (salary, benefits) via their management or trying to get out of their contracts to move to a club with better conditions or higher reputations (when it comes to endorsement opportunities and other, less tangible factors, it really does matter if you play for the San Francisco 49ers or if you’re laboring away for the Sacramento Chargers). As players become more popular, there are often offers by competing teams to acquire them or their contract, regardless

Aetherpedia Keyword Search:  
Zurich Account Zero (Urban Brawl)

**Ownership:** Zurich Orbital Gemeinschaftsbank  
**Ground:** Training ground near the outskirts of Bern  
**League:** Deutsche Stadtkriegsliga (Germanic Urban Brawl League)

**Colors:** Royal Blue

**Recent titles:** Teuton Cup (2071)

Originally a deprecation object of the Zurich Orbital Gemeinschaftsbank, Account Zero has made a name for itself in recent seasons. Playing along in the Deutsche Stadtkriegsliga (the league encompassing all German-speaking countries such as Switzerland, Austria, the AGS, and Poland), they couldn’t compete for decades with many of the other corporate teams (like the S-K Centurios Essen, Ruhrmetall Leviathanem, or AGC LabRats) ... until Zeta-ImpChem decided to enter as a sponsor after Crash 2.0. Under the lead of Hungarian banger Anasztazia “Boszorkány” Szabó, the Zeros managed to win the Teuton Cup in 2071 and are currently on their way to the German Super Brawl.



of whether or not the player wants to switch teams. Since there are shitloads of nuyen involved, managements often resort to more “persuasive methods” if they meet some kind of resistance. We’ve all done that kind of persuasion before, haven’t we?

- Naturally, sport Johnsons pay less than the corps, but you’ll never get a better chance for VIP tickets than when you’re doing this kind of job.
- Stone

## Fandom and All-stars

Fandom is also an important aspect of sports. The enthusiastic appreciation for sports or a certain team or player can strongly influence certain consumer habits.

- Some men appreciate their home teams more than their own girlfriends/wives/lovers/what-have-you.
- Netcat
- Welcome to the real world, sister.
- Pistons

While it starts with trid or Matrix subscriptions of the game as mentioned before, it does not end there. Not by a long shot. Jerseys of favorite players and stars, caps, jackets, and AR stickers with team logos that can be patched to whatever surface you like are available across the globe, along with other *devotionalia* like holo-autographs and signed balls. Meet-and-greet events, where players give out the autographs that often wind up for sale on some auction site or another, are highly popular. You wouldn’t believe how much people are willing to spend on stuff like that.



- Says the guy whose room is plastered with idols of the Sonics, Screammers, and Mariners.
- Netcat

- What can I say? I'm a Seattle aficionado.
- Slamm-O!

- Check Matrix auction exchanges like eStacker or Caboodle and see for yourself. Those are the best outfits to dispose of such goods in case you happened to "run across" some items.
- 2XL

While most fans tie their loyalties to a team over an individual, some prominent players have become celebrities that people care about no matter what team they play for. Every popular sport has its star players who draw the attention of the media. In this regard it isn't really different from the other entertainment branches like trideo series, simsense movies, or the music biz. What makes them different from a lot of celebs who are famous only for being famous is that most sport stars are natural athletes who possess some kind of talent that qualified them for the big leagues. This doesn't mean that looking pretty doesn't help—the best players aren't always the biggest stars with the highest Q Scores. Ever since sport celebrities like Russian tennis star Anna Kournikova or British kicker David Beckham became famous because of their looks or personal life instead of their talent, even average players can become popular. If they are media-savvy, have good spin doctors, or possess at least that certain something that clicks with fans or raises media attention, they can potentially be a star—for a while.

Being a marketable personality and/or athlete is a profitable enterprise. Since teams are not just buying a player anymore but a brand with mass appeal that guarantees certain revenues, transfer fees have jumped up in recent years.

Just to give you an impression: When Olympic Marseille bought Amazonian star striker Ciceron Brandão, they paid 85 million euro. But then they turned around and made nearly twice as much through jersey sales with his name and number.

Star players also belong to a modern elite that makes unbelievable sums via sponsoring and celebrity branding.

- They are elite media prostitutes whose income doesn't really reflect their achievements (playing sports is not what I call an achievement). Extroverts and prima donnas with an unbearable attitude who can only perform if they are pampered. I hate babysitting.
- Black Mamba

Despite their earnings, star players have key roles in games and public life, making them easy pickings for shadowrunners. While a career often takes years to build, it can easily be flushed down the drain if someone is willing to pay to make that happen. Although society is more liberal today than it was a few decades ago, there is always misconduct that the public will not easily forgive. We all saw this a few months ago, when Yankees pitcher Christopher Andropoulos was caught red-handed with a Sony exec's fourteen-year-old daughter *and* his wife by a live drone feed, anonymously submitted to NewsNet. It didn't help that the NYPD-owned(!) Yankees have been in a tailspin lately.

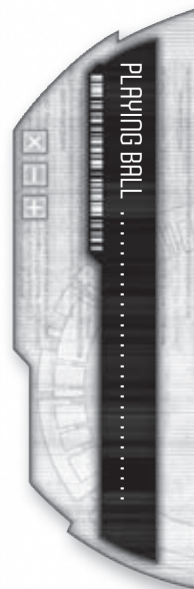
#### Aetherpedia Keyword Search: Q Score

The *Q Score* (also Q rating, Q factor) is a metric developed a century ago to measure popularity. While the methodology to estimate popularity among regional, continental, and international citizens (based on SIN registry entries) has been revised several times based on evolving computational possibilities, data pattern recognition, and availability of data, the current system is based on trid consumer patterns (ratings and subscriptions), media information analysis, citation counts (along with search engine frequency), and consumer surveys. Since the evaluation of data is strongly scene-dependent, Q scores are calculated in the following categories *performing* (actors, shows, and movies), *sports*, *music*, *fashion/design*, *corporate/politics*, and *brands*. The scores are often used to evaluate the marketing and advertising potential of personalities and shows. Regional/national and continental differences are also factored in.

Since Q scores are used to rank personalities based on their social impact and current popularity (which grants or bars them access to certain contracts), the system has been criticized several times for generating a media caste system.

Data acquisition and calculation of the Q Score is measured by MEDIA-EVAL (often nicknamed *Medieval*) Inc., a virtual consortium consisting of all major media companies and under the jurisdiction of the Corporate Court.

- This story has been tagged by someone in your network
- Accessing tag ...
- Many have tried to get into the mainframe of "Media-Evil" to have their Q score edited, but it doesn't have Matrix access (otherwise I would have tried for the fun of it). What this entry isn't telling is that there are a few offices (New York, Los Angeles, Panama, Paris, Neo-Tokyo, Nairobi, and Hong Kong) that have hardcoded access to the system where the data is put in. Where the mainframe is, is everyone's guess, but given the amount of data continuously processed there, they may be using one of the stock exchange systems. Those have enough processing power and are well protected.
- FastJack



- Roughing up a player (or poisoning him, depending what method you prefer) to prevent him from playing is simpler than manufacturing a scandal, even if he is escorted by augmented thugs.
- Stone
- Not if one of those “thugs” is me.
- Mihoshi Oni

- Still, snooping around in someone’s life and past can turn very ugly. You never know what skeletons people have in their closets, and it’s often best to let sleeping dogs lie.
- Kat o’ Nine Tales

Sometimes it’s the fans who threaten the sport star’s life. As part of the adoration and worship that go along with fandom, some fans get overly involved (read: obsessed) with details of a celebrity’s personal life, even to the point of being borderline pathological. While most of these nutjobs are harmless, there have been incidents with sociopaths that required trained bodyguards to handle the situation.

- Did you read about the death of the Red Devils line biker Alyssa Romano last year? For months she was harassed by a stalker, who eventually entered her home, left her letters, hacked her fan node, and even arranged some accidents that nearly killed her without anyone able to stop him or her. Romano finally caved under the psychic pressure and ended her career by throwing herself in front of the monorail. Word in the shadows is that the “stalker” was

#### Aetherpedia Keyword Search: Boston Red Sox (Baseball)

**Ownership:** New England Sports Consortium LLC  
**Ground:** Fenway Park  
**League:** North American Baseball League, Eastern Division  
**Colors:** Red, midnight navy, and white  
**Recent titles:** Eastern Division Titles (2065, 2067, 2070), World Series (2063, 2067, 2071)

There isn’t much to tell about the Red Sox that hasn’t been written somewhere else. One of the oldest baseball teams (founded in 1901), the team is today owned by the New England Sports Consortium, a limited-liability company that owns Fenway Park and the New England Sports Network and barter deals with the big networks. While the NESL successfully managed to remain independent of megacorporate influence for decades, Boston-based NeoNET became an official sponsor of the Red Sox in 2065, using the sport’s traditional appeal to introduce their lines of commlinks to the conservative older fans who are sometimes not part of their key demographic.



actually a runner team that was hired to prod her into retirement. A true masterwork of deceit and manipulation, I have to admit.

- Turbo Bunny
- Thank you.
- Riser

#### Sports Betting

Making a wager on the outcome of a sporting event has always been popular among sports fans who want to jack up the thrill of a game. The prospect of winning or losing money gives the game a different edge, because more is at stake—especially if you’re gambling with money you can’t afford to lose.

- That’s the rush that keeps people coming back, even when they’re losing to the point that they have to endanger their family by

#### Aetherpedia Keyword Search: Houston Oilers (American Football)

**Ownership:** Galloway Family  
**Ground:** Reliant Stadium/Galloway Stadium  
**League:** American Football Freedom League  
**Colors:** Black, silver, and navy  
**Recent titles:** Freedom League Champion (2065, 2066, 2070), Super Bowl Winner (2066)

The Galloway family (which owns controlling stock in a number of oil companies including United Oil) has owned this American football team for over 50 years, and has been a fixture in the upper echelons of the NAFL since before Crash 1.0. When the original Houston Oilers relocated to Nashville in the late 1990s, renaming themselves the Tennessee Titans in the process, Houston did not have a football team until the rise of the Texans in the new millennium. When the Texans became bankrupt in the aftermath of the Awakening and the subsequent political tumult, oil magnate and billionaire Jasper Galloway acquired the Texans’ license and rebuilt the Oilers—the team of his childhood. Weathering two Crashes, an Aztlan invasion, and the foundation of the CAS, the Oilers are currently managed by Caroline Galloway-Pearman, the founder’s eldest granddaughter.



- This story has been tagged by someone in your network
- Accessing tag ...
- Due to their open allegiance with the True Americans and the Republican Party, it has been suggested many times that the Galloways are also knee-deep in the New Revolution and have supported the group with money in the past.
- Sunshine



borrowing from underworld loan sharks. Dumb fraggers.

- Kay St. Irregular

There is a plethora of opportunities to place bets, whether legally, illegally, physically, or virtually, depending on the legalization of gambling in the country (Red Anya touched on that subject recently in her *Crime 101* post). While the NAN, CAS, and UCAS are more restrictive in this regard due to the old Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act, most European nations don't prohibit bookmaking but keep it regulated with several restrictions.

Most bets in this day and age are done electronically in AR or VR between commlinks and a betting nexus in the Matrix whose physical location often resides in jurisdictional black holes such as Caracas, Cape Town, or the Caribbean Free League, thereby circumventing legal restraints.

- While the megacorps are aware that they're losing money as long as there is betting they don't control, there is nothing much they can or want to do about it. Especially since they take advantage of the gambling opportunities there as much as anyone else.
- Mr. Bonds

Underworld sports betting operations performed by bookies don't have restrictions regarding the size of the stack you lay down, especially if the bookie is backed by a huge syndicate. They also don't pay any taxes, so if you win, the full sum (minus the vigorish, of course) is yours to keep. Floating bookmakers (who are mobile individuals with high-tech commlinks and VPN access to their syndicate's system) are always present at the big games or in sports bars that host huge trideo screens or free AR access. While the floater's system can be hacked, I advise against it. Syndicates can be huffy when it comes to their money.

Where there is sports gambling with large sums of money involved, there often is match fixing. There have been numerous attempts to rig games in the past to make a team win or lose against heavy odds. Organized syndicates are deeply involved in these schemes and often resort to runners to blackmail, threaten, bribe, or rough up players or referees. Sabotaging and manipulating game equipment is another option.

- Rigging a game is not as easy as it sounds. While sudden gun malfunctions, vehicle breakdowns, ball manipulations, arcane interference, or subtle persuasion techniques can influence a game, you always have to worry about the famous X factor that can take a game in an unexpected direction. You do not want to be the person who is responsible for a don or oyabun losing several millions of nuyen because a plan went haywire.
- Red Anya
- Getting information on the brawl zones that were chosen by the ISSV before the start of the season is a classic run. Ah, back in the old days ...
- Bull

## REQUIREMENTS, BANS, AND RULES

The Sixth World is constantly changing, as the Bandit always says. As such, sports had to adapt several times to the cultural, social, and technological changes, an Awakening, Goblinization,

### Aetherpedia Keyword Search: Arsenal F.C. (Soccer)

**Ownership:** Johnny Spinrad

**Ground:** Spln Stadium (Holloway/London, United Kingdom)

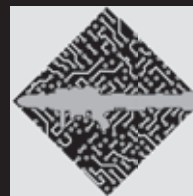
**League:** Premier League

**Colors:** Red and white

**Recent titles:** Premier League Champion (2069), UEFA Europa League Champion (2072)

One of the richest football teams in the world today, the club was saved from bankruptcy post-Crash 2.0 by corporate entrepreneur and jet-set magnate Johnny Spinrad. He invested several million euros of his personal

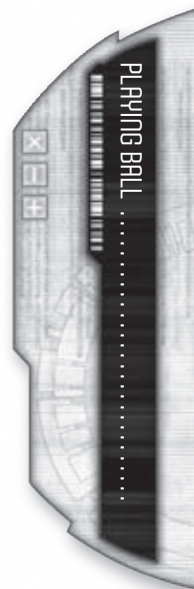
wealth into the club, basically purchasing the whole team without involving Spinrad Industries. A soccer fanatic, Spinrad hired '50s AC Milan star sweeper Tomasso Pazzi as coach (due to his connections to the European jet set and corporate scene) and negotiated the transfer of several youngsters to London, helping Arsenal win the English premiership in 2069. While the club has returned to old glory, the breakup of Queen Caroline and Spinrad due to Spinrad's testing positive as the father of Claudia Romanov's child elicited outrage from fans and supporters. It's no surprise that "Lucky Johnny" hasn't been seen in the Spln stadium lately.



SURGE and—just recently—a singularity-style Emergence. While in the past social changes usually took decades to gain the momentum needed to bring about a revision of the bans and rules of professional sports, the hiccups and the sudden radical changes of people's constitution or abilities made it necessary to adapt quickly to the new status quo to maintain the integrity of various games. Based on the experiences of the past, rules as well as bans and restrictions can be changed more quickly, but enforcement has become more draconic since there is always someone who tries to undermine the system either by doping, cheating, or having a physical trait or ability that hasn't been covered by the rules because it is so rare. It is a fact that most fans wouldn't understand the legalese of modern rulebooks even if they wanted to. There are whole branches of sports law that deal with the constitutions of or rulings made by sports federations, along with other issues related to sports leagues' efforts to prevent misconduct.

## The Sex Difference

Old habits aren't easily dropped. While they're not such a small minority in pro sports anymore, female players still make up only about fifteen to twenty percent of the players in long-established sports such as baseball, football, or soccer, where the leagues are regulated by old-fashioned chauvinist gerontocrats. In newer, more modern leagues like urban brawl or combat biker, women make up about forty percent of the athletes. Just to take up the cudgel on behalf of women, it isn't because they can't



**Aetherpedia Keyword Search:**  
**Hong Kong Cavaliers (Combat Biker)**

**Ownership:** Xen Limited

**Ground:** Happy Valley Arena (Hong Kong)

**League:** World Combat Cyclist League (Pacific Conference)

**Colors:** Orange, white, and gold

**Recent titles:** Asia-Pacific Conference Title (2066, 2068, 2071-72), Biker Bowl Champion (2071)

The Hong Kong Cavaliers are the most flamboyant combat biker team in the Pacific Conference. There isn't really a day without a news line or life blog entry from one of the bikers, who have become style icons in the Hong Kong fashion, lifestyle, and trideo scenes (many team members have side jobs as fashion models and trid hosts). While some fans still prefer the rather aggressive European "Viking" bikers or MC Rockers with their "hit-em-hard" mentality, there is growing appreciation in the Asian Conference and among predominantly Indian, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese viewers of daredevilry and stylish maneuvers over brutality (leading also to the introduction of faster, lightweight bikes). Ever since quintuplet and Wuxing heir Shui Wu added the Cavaliers node to her favorite spots on her Quint-Essentials profile, media interest in the Cavaliers and their Indian young-star Diptanshu Khan (in who she is apparently interested) has skyrocketed.



- This story has been tagged by someone in your network
- Accessing tag ...
- Very few know that the Cavaliers franchise is actually owned by the Red Dragon Association, which has been using Xen Limited as a front for money laundering. The media glitter is just a smokescreen. Be careful when someone sends you against this team—you're likely to get caught in an underworld crossfire.
- Lei Kung

**Aetherpedia Keyword Search:**  
**Major Sport Federations**

**ISSV—Internationaler Stadtkriegsportverein (Berlin, AGS):** Ever since the organization of Urban Brawl into official franchises with defined rules, the International Urban Combat Sport Union has acted as the sport's international figurehead. Headed by Austrian EuroWar veteran Lukas Bohlander for two decades, the ISSV is continuously inundated by the lobbying efforts of corporate and national militaries, firearms/home defence groups, and augmentation merchants. As the organization and its local franchises draw on the support of law enforcement to scout and prepare brawl zones for upcoming games and seasons, the ISSV is known to have good relationships with federal police departments and private security contractors like Knight Errant or Lone Star.

**FIFA—Fédération Internationale de Football Association (Zurich, Switzerland):** The International Federation of Association Football is the governing body of all football-like leagues and competitions and is responsible for the organization and governance of football's major international tournaments, most notably the European and World Championships held every four years. Thanks to the high revenues and investments these championships provide for the hosting country, FIFA's Executive Committee and officials have been investigated several times following accusations of corruption and multi-million-nuyen bribes.

**NAL/IBAF—The International Baseball Federation (Lausanne, Switzerland):** NAL/IBAF is the worldwide governing body for the sport of baseball that supposedly controls the Nippon Professional League (NPL) and the North American League (NAL). In truth, though, the NAL holds the true power. As the more profitable of the two leagues, the NAL makes sure that nothing happens in baseball without the approval of the league's current commissioner.

**FIBA—Fédération Internationale de Basketball Amateur (Geneva, Switzerland):** Although the North American NBA is bigger, FIBA defines the international rules of basketball, specifies the equipment and facilities required, determines which cybernetic modifications are allowed, and regulates the transfer of athletes across countries. Since the Geneva Incident, during which the city's Matrix was besieged by a terrorist group of technomancers and an AI known as Legion, FIBA's nodes became so scrambled that the process of cleaning up their digital records continues to this day.





INCOMING FEED.....

compete. While there are physical differences in terms of muscle mass between men and women, this only holds true within the various metatypes (and this difference is not as significant in most metatypes as it is in humans). An average-trained ork mama could beat most buff male humans without breaking a sweat. Although augmentations may outbalance certain physical liabilities, there is common consent that skills, talent, and determination are the key to a professional pro-sports career, independent of gender, which is why women were admitted to the big leagues a while ago.

- Another aspect of it is the determination of sex. Since sexual characteristics can easily be bio-modeled, sex is not a matter of looks but of genetics (the presence or absence of a Y chromosome). While genetic engineering has not yet progressed to the point to enable the genotypic alteration of the genetic sex, it is one of the obstacles to be obliterated in the future. As such "gender" has become a more and more social term referring to social role or gender identity, independent of biology.
- The Smiling Bandit.

The true reason why women are not overly present in the leagues is because they chose not to be there. Due to classical gender roles, desire for children, and ticking biological clocks, many women prefer not to devote their lives to sports.

- Especially since a sports career can end quite abruptly when runners get involved.
- Stone
- While there is generally no problem with having kids and being successful in sports, playing as a professional athlete during pregnancy isn't really an option. Given the fierce competition over the spots in the teams, there generally aren't any maternity leave clauses in sports contracts that enable you to get your old position back. If you aren't an exceptional athlete, there is no chance of coming back. Since equalization makes it much easier for women to be successful in business (took us long enough to get there) most women are looking for a career elsewhere.
- Goat Foot

#### Aetherpedia Keyword Search: Women in Major League Pro-Sports

The first woman to capture a major-league pro sports contract was Judy Hofsted in 2038, with the Detroit Tigers (baseball, NAL). Enhanced by cyberware, her performance during practices in Comerica Park was impressive enough to put her on the team. A pioneer and role model for her successors, she paved the way for many women in male-dominated areas. Read more

PLAYING BALL

## The Metagenetic Impact

Squabbling over whether metahumans should be allowed to participate in pro sports has continued ever since someone realized the implications of having a tall, swift elf on the basketball court or a massive troll in the offensive trenches. Due to segregation laws, racial fear, and metahuman marginalization, metahumans were prohibited from playing in the leagues until the '40s, when the first players were admitted or allowed to stay after Goblinization. Even then, metahuman players contracted by the open-minded (or greedy) managements of more liberal-minded teams were often harassed by conservative members of the leagues until the '60s.

- In some parts of the world, metahumans were not even allowed to play. Until Yasuhito became emperor in Japan, any "changed person" on the field or in a stadium was an offense. While opposing metahumans were barely tolerated (and vilified by commentators and Japanese fans alike), a metahuman (except for an elf maybe) working for one of the sports teams in Japan when Yomi was still operating was unthinkable. And let's not forget that the Swiss Segregation Law (prohibiting orks and trolls from acquiring Swiss citizenship) was only recently abolished.
- Mihoshi Oni

In 2056, the CAS Supreme Court ruled that professional sports leagues could not deny playing time to participants based on metatype, which had been a common practice before. This judgment was subsequently adopted by many other leagues. Still, the whole subject was back in the public eye during Halley's Comet's passing, when the first SURGElings emerged. After Tampa Bay Buccaneers star receiver Tracy Keller transformed in a changeling in 2061 and was disqualified from the competition for "illicit body modifications," he sued and got himself back in the Freedom League. After several incidences and adjustments of the rules in the various leagues, changelings were allowed (back) in pro sports.

- There was also certain pressure by the media. Despite some hideous exemptions, many changelings were so exotic and trideogenic they became stars overnight. Grunts and trogs (to be politically incorrect) in the '30s, on the other hand, didn't.
- Sunshine

While there is less racial hatred today than there was thirty years ago, many sports still don't allow members of certain metatypes to play in their games. While dwarves rarely get drafted for basketball for obvious reasons, most of the restrictions are slapped on trolls due to their body mass and size. Let me give you a few examples. While the size of someone the height of a troll would be generally an advantage in basketball (see Lakers player Miko Nabuto, a wakyambi), the width of the court (15 meters) just isn't enough to accommodate troll players on the field, not to mention the trouble they'd have dribbling a ball that's too small for their hands. Trolls would also have a clear advantage in terms of fouling unaugmented players, making physical augmentations, muscle augmentations, and bone enhancement not options but necessities for non-troll players. Then we can look at soccer. A soccer goal is 2.44 meters high per FIFA rules. An average troll of 2.80 meters standing in front of it would tower above of it and

cover a greater portion of it. The chance of scoring a goal would be extremely reduced, making the game less interesting (and frustrating forwards who won't get paid the big bucks if they don't have gaudy goal-scoring numbers). Changing the dimensions of the goal would be disadvantageous for a keeper of any other metatype. And just like basketball, the league has to consider the injuries that might occur to human players when a troll performs a sliding tackle.

- Humans. So frail. But thanks for spelling that out. Life as a troll is not easy, no matter what you may believe. Apart from dealing with public transport vehicles, taxis, ceilings, and apartments that aren't accommodated to my size, I have to shop for most of my things from Metaergonomics because they have it in my size. The weekly food I buy would support an entire family, and when shopping I always have to be careful so I don't accidentally bump into someone and get sued because I "hurt" them.
- Beaker

One exception to the general no-trolls rule is American football, where the field was accommodated to trolls and cyberjocks by enlarging it to 150 by 60 meters and adding a heavier two kilogram ball and football pads that have grown into something resembling actual armor. Trolls also can elect to play in troll-only leagues, or in leagues that allow augmented humans, but these are smaller-scale leagues, so players don't get the big money there.

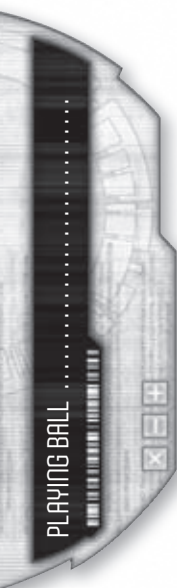
- Don't forget about teams like the Schwarzwald Titanen (Black Forest Titans) from the Germanic Urban Brawl League, which is a trolls-only team originating from the troll kingdom. No other metatypes are allowed, and they have been quite successful in the past.
- Red Anya

Until recently, no other non-human sapient critter or any HMHVV-infected received the authorization to play in the leagues, with the exceptions of sasquatches who were sometimes seen in stickball. In early 2073, following a long debate, Ahote of the Seattle Seahawks was admitted as the first sasquatch in the NFL. He will make his debut this season.

## Arcane World

While metatype is usually easy to determine (even if there may have been attempts to cheat by human-looking metahumans in the past), magic is a totally different beast, since you can't tell a mage just by looking at them. Adepts, for instance, have participated in athletic events since the Awakening, but it took two decades before those top athletes were identified, and it's quite possible that some are still playing without having been uncovered. While most leagues have accepted adepts among their ranks after long discussions, there are several rulings on what they are and are not allowed to do during games. While most rulings don't prohibit physical augmentations and ability "boosts," the use of combat-related abilities is usually forbidden (except in lethal sports).

- Since adepts rely on their magical abilities, they are often too overconfident and don't train as hard as mundane athletes because





they feel superior. You would be surprised what a mundane can do with sheer determination. You know the saying about will being able to move mountains, right?

- Riser
- Ever since some “persons” managed to change the arcane background of Olympic stadium during the athletics championships of 2054 in Barcelona, adepts in sports have been vulnerable to such meddling.
- Fianchetto

Spellcasting was long forbidden until “camera-visible and game-benefiting spell effects” were permitted for urban brawl in the ‘60s. The spectacular showmanship of elemental effects (fireballs, frost rays, arcane shields) were well received by the viewers (myself included) and led to an increased interest in the franchise and a new peak in viewer rates. That’s led to other sports looking for ways to involve visible manifestations of magic.

- Since it is hard to concentrate on steering the bike and spellcast at the same time (and since foci are forbidden), teams didn’t see much sense in adding mages to combat biker teams. They haven’t given up, though, and discussions are ongoing about ways to make their inclusion feasible.
- Lei Kung

While mages can play on urban brawl teams, they have to deal with severe restrictions, including no influencing thoughts and actions of opposing teammates, and no levitating. Spell effects also must be visible to cameras so that the audience can see them. As a consequence, UB squads usually resort to “geek-the-mage-first” tactics, especially if they’re dealing with a spellcaster who has offensive capabilities. Since few mages enjoy playing the bait on the field (although that has, in fact, been a tactic of Yezabela “Xochitl” Espinosa, the arcane-defensive scout of the Volcanoes), mages have become popular as medicos, using healing and non-combat support spells to aid the team.

Spirits, free and otherwise, are currently not allowed in any pro sports. While there have been claims of free spirits being admitted to soccer leagues in Europe as well as to baseball teams in Japan and North America, most spirits are not granted civil rights in most countries and have been kept from joining teams. Since they lack any political lobby to fight for them, I doubt that is going to change soon.

### The Technological Edge

Since Transys grafted the first cyberhand onto violin virtuosa Leonora Bartoli, paving the way for modern day augmentations, the tech-edge question has been raised several times. Though implants, bio-genetic augmentations, and other technological improvements helped players wipe out many of the old school records, they weren’t really a game-breaker and did not lead to the technological “arms race” that many people feared. You could spend hours arguing about the adverse effects of implants or genetic engineering on natural abilities without coming to any conclusion. Bandit, Butch, and Nephryne are by far more qualified than me to delve into this area. Bottom line is: Sometimes it helps, sometimes it doesn’t.

Forty years of augmented sports history has piled up a number of cases for both POVs. Brent Johnson became one of the fastest goalies in soccer after implanting wired reflexes, while pitcher Clayton Licari lost his fine control after muscle replacement. He could fire a fastball at 190 kph, but the fact that he couldn’t hit the strike zone forced him to end to his career. So augmentations are not a sure bet—they’re a gamble.

- There isn’t really a simple way to predict the final effect. The dehumanization effects of mass augmentations have been a growing topic over the years. It is not something you can put into numbers. Nor are we close to understanding it. Despite what you may believe, xenobiologic tissue or genes are as foreign to our body as are plastometallic implants. One caveat: We have not had time to fully observe the upcoming generations of designer children whose genomes have been altered *in vitro* or *in utero*. These “augmentations” (elevated brain functions, greater physical abilities) may be fully integrated into the individual, and at some point become a natural characteristic of homo sapiens superior.
- The Smiling Bandit
- Many unethical corporations like Universal Omnitech, Zeta-ImpChem, Proteus, and even Genesis have been experimenting with infants and high-school teenagers to improve their abilities through experimental genetic treatments while their skills are still maturing. There are many parents who are more than willing to sign any consent and NDA forms to give their kids a chance to have a pro-sports career. And they’re stupid enough to believe that there are no side effects—right up until their kids turn into monstrous freaks.
- Butch

The fear of losing their natural edge is why most naturally talented athletes hesitate to use augmentations. Youngsters who have no hope of reaching the top professional leagues or people of age who already are losing their talent are usually more willing to gamble with implants.

In light of the most recent technological advancements, there has been an increased interest in, and discussions about, the addition of wireless technological aids such as sensory enhancements, tactical network software, agent-assisted game-play, and the like. Given the number of gadgets and applets out, decisions about them are usually made on a case-by-case basis.

Last but not least, there is the issue of technomancers. Since comprehension of technomancers is quite limited, they have been officially banned from pro sports (by an agreement between all major leagues in 2072) until more information has been gathered.

- Well, it’s damn justified. While technomancers were perceived in the beginning as “metahuman commlinks that can do crazy stuff in VR,” some are capable of doing the same shit in real life as well, including the mimicry of some implants from what comrades have told me.
- Stone
- So using an implant is legal, but being a technomancer is not? Bigot!
- Netcat



## 70S SPORTS

When asked, most viewers will state that sports are about the skill of the contestants. I'm not going to argue about that, but it's become pretty clear that people want to be entertained and want to be able to get on with their lives. There has been a decline of traditional, long-established sports that are boring to watch or take hours to complete. While modern technology allows viewers to consume a game wherever they walk, most people either don't have the time or the desire to spend several hours of their time to delve into the game. Which is why people like games that are fast and have action, while sports that go on and on without much happening are experiencing declining viewer rates.

- Which isn't entirely true. While baseball has lost some of its clientele because people zap over to brutal sports like urban brawl, cricket is still popular in the U.K. and India. Why? Because people aren't watching every moment of the game! They just leave the trideo on to watch while doing something else. Since the game isn't very demanding to watch, you can do a lot of things in parallel.
- Traveler Jones
- It is also a misconception that urban brawl is always enthralling. Seeing a team scout the brawl zone for the Xth time isn't really that spectacular.
- Orbital DK

Here is a brief rundown on the world's top sports in the 70s. Unless otherwise noted, the use of performance-enhancing drugs, spells, implant weaponry, spirits, and sentient critters are prohibited in these sports.

### Auto Racing

**Major leagues:** NASCAR, Formula One

**Restrictions:** Adepts, Implants (NASCAR only)

Motorsports have a different nature than most team sports, because their nature invites quasi-industrial espionage and sabotage of cars by shadowrunners. All the event circus and pit babes aside, National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) still focuses on the driver's (unaugmented) piloting skill and the racing aspect, while Formula One is basically a huge franchise of corporations and wealthy entrepreneurs that is basically about engineering the best car and the best pilot. While NASCAR never spread much beyond North America, Formula One tours around the world and is often accompanied with social and corporate glitterati at events, not unlike the Grand Tour.

- Which means they are perfect spots to gather information about a corp executive, do bodyguard work, or engineer an extraction.
- Stone.

Since Ferrari recently announced that the artificial intelligence known as *Staccato* is going to be their next driver (allowing them to make a lighter, faster design since they don't have to worry about the weight of a driver), there have been a lot of discussions on whether the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) should ban AIs and agent-assisted driving.

## Baseball

**Major leagues:** NAL (North America), NPL (Japan, parts of China)

**Restrictions:** Technological aids and augmentations are limited

While still being *the* American sport, interest in baseball has been declining globally. Perceived as an antiquated sport that lacks continuous action by many young adults (except me), there have been attempts to modernize the game without losing the support of the older audience. While the metahuman issue was resolved a while ago with the growing metahuman acceptance in Japan, the rules regarding adepts and implants were recently revised.

- While allowed, trolls aren't often seen on the field. Their strike zone is hard to miss, making them an easy strikeout most of the time. For the same reason, dwarfs usually get a walk to the first base.
- Beaker

With the aid of NeoNET, the game was recently given a complete technical overhaul to give the viewer more of the on-field experience, helping them observe things like the duel between pitcher and batter up close. Players were retrofitted with simrigs allowing viewers to jump into the batter or pitcher (or any other player) live during the game. While I still like the old-school experience of watching it from the god's-eye view, the on-field view has given the game some new glory.

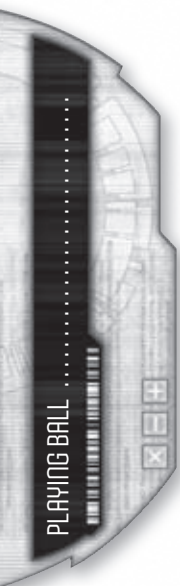
- Baseball cards were also modernized and now exist as copy-protected digital versions that can be bought in digital packs (containing cards of mixed rarity grades). While you can still collect, trade, and even print them on paper for those who still like the feeling of the cards, the cards now possess more information, additional background material on the players, interviews, and bonus features, which make them highly prized collector's items.
- FastJack
- The copy protection is no match for a skilled cracker, which is why warez nexi often bolster their accounts with sold counterfeits of high-priced items. Common people don't really have the tools to determine whether a card is a fake, despite the cards' electronic registrations.
- Pistons

## Basketball

**Major leagues:** NBA (North America), EBA (Europe), ABA (Africa), CBA (China and most of the Asian Pacific regions)

**Restrictions:** Reflex-enhancing augmentations are limited; height or reach mods as well as magic-augmented jumping abilities are banned.

Still popular for the fast, versatile gameplay and spectacular moves, basketball is one of the sports that I enjoy watching in the arena. While discussions about the percentage of metahumans (especially elves), reach-extending modifications, and throw-assisting sensory augmentations have continued for decades, the essence of the game is still about the shooting skills and the intuitive feel for the ball.







Since the addition of players such as wakyambi center Miko Nabuto and changeling guard star Melissa Tavorna, the game has become a little more colorful and received increased media attention.

### Combat Biker

**Major leagues:** World Combat Cyclist League

**Restrictions:** None

Originally created when a savvy entertainer convinced two rival go-gangs to battle it out in front of a camera, the goal of combat biker is to capture a drone-mounted flag and plant it into the opposition's goal within thirty to sixty seconds, while the opposing players try anything—including (or especially) brute force—to prevent that. The combat biker arena is football-sized, divided into a maze with four lanes that allow modern jousting and features a skyway track that runs over the middle field. The nine-member teams ride a variety of machines, ranging from heavy armored bikes or trikes to fast light-weight speed bikes, and possess an arsenal of non-lethal weapons including lances, maces, whips, riot guns, and concussion grenade launchers.

There has been a recent reconstruction of the World Combat Cyclist League. Originally only a North American institution, all international conferences (European, Asia-Pacific, North America East and West, Latin America) were recently united under the umbrella of the WCCL, which is actively sponsored by Wuxing, MCT Media, and Evo throughout Asia, where the game is still most popular. The top two teams of each conference now meet in a series of playoffs to slam it out for the world championship, the Biker Bowl. Due to many Asian viewers preferring style over brutality, the rules were recently overhauled to make the game more versatile, modern, and less medieval (which is the style preferred in Europe).

Since combat biker franchises are expensive to run, with bikes often being damaged beyond repair or salvage (not to mention augmentations and player costs), teams are often corporate-owned or have exclusive contracts with certain bikemakers (Hyundai, BMW, or others) who supply the teams with bikes under base prices and use the franchise as a medium to advertise their models and lines.

### Courtball (ōllamalitzli)

**Major leagues:** Atzlan Court Ball Union

**Restrictions:** None

Still the number one game in Aztlan *ōllamalitzli* (courtball) has become more popular in North America in the last decade due to the admission of several “American” teams to the ACBU like the New York Warriors (Aztechnology), the Denver Warpaths, and the Sioux Scalpers (both NAN teams).

- The Scalpers are a crazy bunch of pure-blood Sioux warriors. Covered from head to toe with self-inflicted scars, they are known to spend most of their downtime contemplating through asceticism or drugs when they are not exercising or doing combat training with the Wildcats.
- Mika

Basically a revival of an ancient Aztec game, courtball is played on a sunken, rectangular stone court flanked by high walls

with a ring attached to the east wall (similar to a basketball hoop). Two teams of three players meet on the court and have to shoot the rubber ball through the ring to score points. Everything else is free game. No penalties, time-outs, or armor (loincloth and leather bands only), and any single-handed melee weapon (whether implanted or not) is fair game.

The open hostilities between native Aztlan and non-Aztec technology owned teams—which hasn't been helped by the political tension in the wake of the Bogotá War—have vitalized the game, causing viewers to be more aggressive in their frenzied calls for blood. Surveys have indicated that the sport has become increasingly popular among NAN viewers who desire to see Aztlan players getting hurt. Since many media outfits decry courtball as too violent, live feeds have to be encrypted and are only decrypted upon identification with an adult SIN.

### Football and Rugby

**Major leagues:** North American Leagues (UCAS League, Freedom League), Super League (Europe), Australasian National Rugby League

**Restrictions:** None

American football and rugby are the leagues that have embraced augmentations and metahumans from the beginning, adapting the rules and the equipment (like the shoulder pads) to reflect that. Most of the players these days are either ork or troll, or they're chromed up their asses to keep up with the rest of the players in the pro-sports leagues. Still, skill, team spirit, and spatial awareness (which can be fed by software for anyone who is able to multitask and process) are big parts of the game. Similar to baseball, football and rugby have been very popular with simsense broadcast among unaugmented citizens who want to experience the feel of boosted "titans" clashing on the field during a game. The leagues have been plagued, however, by several deaths in the past years due to over-augmentation and cyberpsychoses. Since a number of players like Native American ork cornerback Eyota Sykes have come out admitting their addictions to augmentations, there have been debates on whether augmentations should be more limited.

- Most of the problems arose when players started overclocking their cyberware. It has been a trend of cyberfetishists in the "dark chrome" scenes of Hamburg to max out the augmentations. Since then, skilled biotechnicians have tried to mimic the effect on bioware through the use of biochemical cocktails. While giving an edge (it is also an insider tip among runners), both cyber and bio overclocking have some serious side effects that can range from frying the 'ware to mental disorders and massive systemic stress causing pathological problems.
- Butch

### Hoverball

**Major leagues:** World Hoverball League (WHL)

**Restrictions:** None

Hoverball is basically brutal water polo with jet skis. The game became popular in Hamburg in the late thirties among water rats, canal runners, and PWC gangers and spread among North and Baltic Sea neighboring countries where the first teams were formed. Picked up by European media giant DeMcKo, the World

Hoverball League was founded in 2041 after broadcasts were well received. While popular in the AGS and other European littoral states, the sport never became famous outside Europe (despite the name of the league), although some teams of the Maghreb Confederation joined the WHL in the late '60s and early '70s. The game is played on an expanse of water twice the size of a football field defined by blinking buoys. Like water polo, the objective of hoverball is to score goals by driving a buoyant metalloplastic ball into the opposing team's goal using long-handled electromagnetic mallets. Matches usually consist of eight-minute periods (called *chukkers*, a term taken from polo as well). Ramming and brawling (i.e., pushing a ski's rider into the water) are emphasized to make the game more interesting. Similar to combat biking, there are several player positions that differ in the size of the jet ski (small and maneuverable versus heavy but harder to capsize) and type of melee weapon carried.

- The game really gets interesting when played on a stretch of toxic sea water or sludge.
- 2XL

Each team plays every other team in its league at home and away in each season, in a round-robin tournament. At the end of a season, the top team is declared the champion. Besides the championship, the Black Tide Cup (organized in remembrance of the Black Tide in 2011) held in Ship City in the Scandinavian Union is the most prestigious competition in hoverball.

### Hockey

**Major leagues:** International Ice-Hockey League (IIHF), National Hockey League (NHL), Kontinental Hockey League (KHL)

**Restrictions:** Trolls (only allowed in ice hockey)

The sport of hockey is covered by a variety of different leagues. While classic field hockey never really became popular (it lacked the violence present in ice hockey), speed hockey has caught some media attention since it was featured in a trideo clip of Grim Aurora. Speed hockey is an acrobatic variant of street/roller hockey involving inline skates, half pipes, and aggressive tackling. While ice hockey leagues like the IIHF are still the biggest organizations in terms of ratings and money, speed hockey has been catching up in the last decade and is today more favored by a young audience due to its speed, breakneck moves, and dangerous stunts carried over from rollerblading and skateboarding. Since viewers like the three-dimensional aspect of the speed hockey field (pipes, different levels, goals above base level which are hard to reach), there have been people pushing to introduce these aspects into ice-hockey as well, which could lead to the creation of a kind of ice parkour that combines technology and magic in maneuvering around the playing field.

### Personal Combat/Mano-a-Mano

**Major leagues:** Ultimate Fighting League, International Boxing Commission

**Restrictions:** Vary depending on the league

Since the gladiator spectacles in ancient Rome, close-combat sports have always attracted the masses, which is why mano-a-mano fighting events such as boxing, martial-arts fighting, and



(sumo) wrestling are still extremely popular. While there are still people who like the entertainment and acting aspect of professional wrestling, mixed-martial-art ultimate fighting challenges between skilled adepts or highly augmented fighters have long overtaken classic boxing or sports limited to only a single combat style. While free-style fights that involve killings—so called pit fighting—either with or without melee weapons are illegal in trideo and generally cater only to a rich clientele watching through ‘casts provided by underworld outfits, full contact championships and cage fights involving knees, elbows, kicks, and fists until knockout are common trideo fare. While there are rules, weight classes (including an ultraweight class for cybered individuals and trolls ranging from 200 kg up) and tactics (for instance, submission grappling versus ground-and-pound), the “barbaric, no rules, to-the-death” primal flavor is why people enjoy the fights so much.

- Getting involved in the Ultimate Fighting League usually means getting involved with Gladio and the adepts belonging to the magical group. Still on the blacklist of many authorities despite their relocation to Caracas and plagued by continuous harassment and sabotage by competing organizations and underworld entrepreneurs, they tend to take any meddling in their business affairs by runners quite personally.
- Mika

## Soccer

**Major leagues:** UEFA (Europe), NAMLs (North America), CONMEBOL (Latin America), CAF (Africa), DFC (ANZAC and Pacific Oceania), numerous national-level leagues.

**Restrictions:** No trolls and limits on certain metavariants and changelings, and adepts; implants only allowed to correct injuries, not to enhance

Despite enthralling lethal sports like urban brawl, Europeans and Latin Americans are still quite obsessive and fanatical about association football, keeping the sport at the number one rank in popularity in most parts of Europe, Amazonia, and Argentina—or at number two (in Aztlan after courtball). Despite all the technological possibilities available, going to the stadium during the week or especially on the weekends to experience the game is still highly valued and practiced. It’s a social and cultural thing that’s been cultivated for more than two hundred years.

- While it’s true that people go into the stadium because of the camaraderie and companionship, hooliganism is also a great part of it. Ever been in public transport in the Rhine-Ruhr-Megaplex on a Saturday during the soccer season? There’s plenty of drunken males looking for a fight. It’s a good time to start a run, since the police have their hands full keeping the hooligans under control (especially when there are orks and trolls involved). Same in the UK, BTW.
- Traveler Jones

Some even say that if there is one common thing that unites Europe and helps them overcome the cultural differences of its states, it is soccer.

- Maybe someone should tell Lofwyr ;-)
- Mr. Bonds

Interestingly enough, soccer has remained popular despite the fact that it is the sport with the most restrictions. While basketball is anal about its implant restrictions, FIFA and continental associations allow next to no enhancements from cyber or magic. While most metahumans (orks, dwarves, and elves) are now allowed to play in the big leagues (except for some backwater leagues in the Middle East), all members of the troll metatype are banned due to risk of collateral damage and violation of the game’s integrity. While many pro-metahuman policlubs have rallied against the ruling and taken legal action, FIFA has been quite adamant about the decision. SURGE and changelings are still a matter of debate, though.

- The rules have been extended to include certain metavariants since someone had the brilliant idea to give a Nartaki a decent keeper training.
- 2XL

Besides the impact of continental championships like European Championship (UEFA), the Copa América (CONMEBOL), African Cup of Nations (CAF), the Asian Cup (AFC), the CONCACAF Gold Cup (CONCACAF) and the OFC Nations Cup (OFC), the quadrennial FIFA World Cup is a billion-nuyen event that is not only prestigious to host (requiring massive investments into the host sprawl by the sponsors and FIFA) but usually leads to sudden productivity drops in that period because literally everyone (even those who don’t watch soccer regularly) is watching the games.

## Stickball

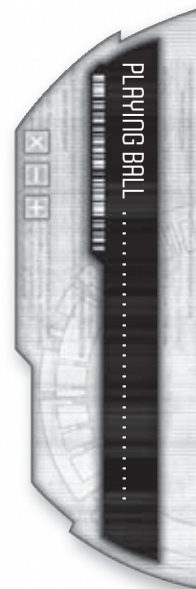
**Major leagues:** A-ne-jo-di League

**Restrictions:** Implants, sasquatches, and free spirits allowed  
Stickball (A-ne-jo-di) is one of the few sports that emphasizes the use and display of magic, hosting several mages and adepts among the teams. Since you can rarely see the use of magic in sports except for urban brawl (if the hostile brawlers let the mage actually cast a spell), stickball has attracted huge audiences and fans, turning it from a fringe into a profitable pro sport. Given that it is the only league that allows sasquatches in the game (which you rarely see outside the Tírs or certain NAN countries) many people watch stickball not because it is so interesting but because of the oddity factor.

- Since the *conjuror* (some sort of proactive shamanic coach) is allowed to enchant his players with augmenting spells, the players often display some amazing abilities.
- Lyran

The Native American game itself basically resembles lacrosse, requiring hitting a huge pole (sometimes nicknamed “the totem”) with a symbol on top if it. Hitting the symbol with the ball (thrown from the stick’s net) scores seven points while hitting the pole scores two.

There has been some recent turmoil in the league in the last season. Since stickball became the most fun game to watch live under the influence of tempo, several games were disturbed by addicts getting out of control or police crackdowns on dealers and tempo buyers during the game.



## Urban Brawl

**Major leagues:** NAUBL (North America), DSKL (AGS), EUBA (Europe)

**Restrictions:** Limitations on magic use

Like combat biker, urban brawl started as a recorded contest between rival street gangs in an urban sprawl environment, marketed and distributed by the French corp Javert et Cie in the '20s. Known as "jeu de guerre de ville" (city combat game), it quickly became popular and spread around Europe (especially the AGS, where the first game with non-gang teams was introduced under the name "stadtkrieg") and the rest of the world until some bright boy dreamed up the name "urban brawl."

All continental or regional franchises are commissioned by the Internationaler Stadtkrieg Sport Verein (International Urban Combat Sport Union), or ISSV, which consists of 24 teams. While the national and continental championships are subject to the rules worked out by the individual franchises and local ISSV commissioners, the North American league is organized into north and south divisions, which square off in a "Final Four" playoff during late October based on their ISSV ranking (which uses a pretty complicated rules system; check it out [here](#)). The North American Super Brawl Championship is a face-off between the two leading teams from each division, held each year at Thanksgiving. The winning team, as well as the ones from other prominent brawls like the Teuton Cup, the €-Brawl (a European sudden-death tournament), or the Pan-Asian Khan Brawl (taking place along the Silk Road in changing places between Samarkand and Qingdao) then advance to the World Cup games with the highest-ranked ISSV teams taking place every two years in December.

Brawl zones—areas three city blocks wide and four deep—are often selected from the worst ghetto wastelands and secured days before each match. Two teams of thirteen brawlers enter the zone equipped with regulated firearms, heavy weapons, melee weapons, and armor, and attempt to get the ball in the opponent's goal zone.

- Don't forget the bike of the outrider. She (or he) is the one who makes the game more versatile. The scouts, bangers, heavies, and blasters are just cannon-fodder for the masses.
- Turbo Bunny

While urban brawl began as a controlled urban shoot-out between cybered goons with guns, it has evolved over the years with the admission of magic, increased use of military tactics, and the adoption of spectacular maneuvers that have made the game less predictable (and circumvented the augmentation arms race). Since Crash 2.0, electronic warfare (hacking of weaponry by scouts) has become a new focus of the game, spawning a number of new restrictions (for example, hacking into cameras and trid feeds is strictly forbidden).

- Yet the players still do it. They just have to be good enough to remove their traces so that the ISSV spiders don't catch them or find traces of their work during the audit after the game.
- Pistons

INCOMING FEED.....





## DOPING AND CHEATING

Posted By: Butch

To prevent us from getting bored by case-by-case studies of sports frauds that were brought to light, I volunteered to give a general impression on how people try to circumvent the rules that say what is allowed and what isn't. The reasons for doping and cheating are always the same: money and prestige. Every athlete wants to come out on top. Everyone wants to be a star, or at least become famous for breaking a record or winning whatever championship. And everyone wants to have a slice of the cash cow that is sports business. Since it is an ugly truth that not all athletes can be natural talents or have the guts and discipline to perform extraordinarily, most athletes look for an easy way that involves less training sessions and less dedication. Being an honest, "clean" athlete is no piece-of-cake life. Most trained for decades until they reached a certain level before they made million-nuyen contract deals or won the big trophy money. Since many wannabes either don't have the skill, the patience, or the determination, they slot performance-enhancing drugs or cheat by other ways. Some are talked into it by their trainers and coaches, who want the success of their fosterlings for themselves. Sometimes the management is looking out for the big money and pushes its players, often even without them knowing.

- And sometimes even nations and corporations get involved. The secret program of hormonal doping and androgenization of athletes by the German Democratic Republic government back in the 1970s is a textbook example of how important prestige can be in international sports events like the Olympics. Aztlan and Aztechnology have been suspected many times of using byproducts from their military research to dope their representatives.
- Fianchetto

Whatever the motivation may be, there is a huge gray industry that revolves around improving players' abilities against the restrictions of the game while not getting caught. Working in this line of shadow business is challenging and not something you trust amateurs with. Fucking around with an athlete or whole team to make it look as they were doping (to shred a career or manipulate a season), or helping a cheating athlete cover his tracks, requires a whole bag of tricks. Knowledge of the proceedings, access to illegitimate substances, and subtle manipulations that don't go undetected are just a few buzz phrases here. The formidable forensic capabilities of investigators—people whose job it is to separate the wheat from the chaff, data-wise—means that pulling one over on them requires meticulous planning and expertise. So here are some insights to share.

- Which is why some agency handlers use such missions as a proving ground for later spook assignments catered only to an upper class runner clientele. International competitions where they can make other nations look bad in addition are therefore extremely popular.
- Kay St. Irregular
- While doping in professional sports is thought to be less common (since the performance of one single player is rarely a deciding

factor), this is not the case. It is just tested less because it is tacitly approved by many leagues.

- Slamm-O!

### Drugs

The easiest way to raise your performance is by doing drugs. Amphetamines, anabolic steroids, erythropoietin, and other pharmaceuticals and hormones have been used in sports since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Later, blood doping through blood transfusion (boosting the number of red blood cells in the bloodstream in order to enhance endurance) became popular. There has always been an arms race between laboratories testing for drugs and the black laboratories and doctors inventing new doping strategies to make their drugs (and each drug's effect on the athletes' system) as inconspicuous as possible. Given today's excellent analytical equipment, known molecule-based drugs (biological or chemical) are usually quite easy to find. Most commercial drugs can be quickly identified in a blood or urine sample or with a bio-scan. While incidents such as tempo have shown that drug effects can sometimes be obfuscated (especially biochemical BADs, whose effects we do not completely comprehend), black labs still sell experimental drugs not (yet) approved that drug testers don't know how to detect.

- There are also opportunities to cheat on drug tests. Drug samples aren't usually analyzed on site. Samples have to be transported to the lab and reside there until techs perform the test, presenting opportunities to exchange samples, manipulate data and analytic instruments, or bribe underpaid techs.
- Stone
- A few athletes don't even bother messing with the samples. Instead, they get themselves an injection of an antidote (nanodotes or binder) afterward that clears the drug out of their system. While the antidote can be potentially detected, it is not real proof that the athlete did anything wrong.
- Nephrine

Since some pro sports are all about finding the edge and occasionally going all over it, most stimulants besides the nastiest combat drugs are perfectly legal in combat biker and urban brawl. Given the lethality of these sports for most players, however, it's too easy for them to cross the line. It doesn't really matter for them if they get killed in a volley during a game or die of cardiovascular breakdown because of constant drug abuse or overdose. This can be dangerous for everyone, since no one wants to have an augmented troll player go rampant on K-13.

- On trid? Any time!
- Slamm-O!

### Augmentations

Then there are implants. While the rulebooks determine what augmentations are allowed, some implants are harder to detect than others. Most cybernetics can be detected if you just look hard enough using a full-body scan or hand-held device (with the exception of delta-grade top quality). Bioware is harder to detect and often requires invasive nanoscopy, neuronal scans,



or the quantization of natural biomarkers to detect performance-improving implants such as bone density enhancements, reflex bio-boosters, muscle improvements, metabolic superchargers like suprathyroid glands, or neuromuscular appendices (reflex-recorders). Same goes for genetic augmentations that require extensive genome testing. It's not that you can't detect them—it's just that you need to bother to look, which is why the tests are not performed if the athlete did not raise any suspicion by doing something that should be beyond his natural ability.

- While a mage can generally tell the augmented from the unaugmented, there's really no way to prove it except for testimony by a licensed mage or a Quicksilver Manacam. Since augmentations are hard to pinpoint and even harder to identify without doubt, such testimony is usually not admitted as evidence. There are also some questions about the invasion of personal rights, but many corporations treat such concerns as quaint.
- Winterhawk

Since authorities are looking more and more closely, “in-and-out-surgery”—the practice of implanting bioware for one game and removing it immediately afterward before it can be detected—has become an increasingly popular method for players willing to take a gamble. Given a well-equipped and mobile OR, you can have the player on the plank and back for the interview in no time if the surgery isn't too invasive. Runners often are hired to bring the target to the clinic and back without his disappearance being noticed.

### Nanites

Doping with nanotech is currently the method of choice in big biz. Less invasive than implants or genetic engineering, nanites have many advantages over natural substances, because they are small, mobile, and can evade detection—if they are expensive enough. Nanoware is very difficult to detect, requiring a nanoscanner to confirm its presence (it's even harder to see soft nanites). While most nanites go with the blood flow for transportation, they are still machines that can be triggered to shut down or programmed to hide or attach to an organ, tissue wall, or blood vessel when they receive a signal, thereby staying out of the blood that is taken with a syringe for blood testing. Colonies can even migrate to certain areas that are not easily accessible by typical scans. Needless to say, these are usually quite expensive, hard to get, and only in rare cases are they worth the effort.

- Megacorporations have access to most varieties of nanotechnology and are likely the ones to use them. Excessively, if they must.
- Kia

### Spells and Magic

As magical talent and spells can be identified by an astral observer, magicians on or off the field have gotten creative when it comes to arcane cheating, especially since all professional sports are astrally monitored by security companies' trained magicians and spirits.

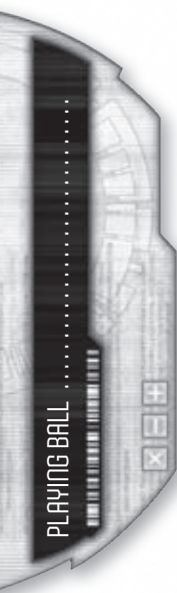
- This is less because of doping but rather because runners have been hired to magically meddle with the outcome of games in the past. Using subtle manipulation magic has been quite effective in this regard if you manage to sneak past the watchdogs.
- Cosmo
- Not to mention that there is always a wiz-idiot on the sidelines who thinks he can influence or interrupt the game by casting a spell.
- Sticks

While magical doping (i.e., increasing physical abilities or performance with spells) is unusual, there have been incidences where players used hidden (I think *masked* is the correct term) spells and foci that could not be easily detected by an average mage or spirit.

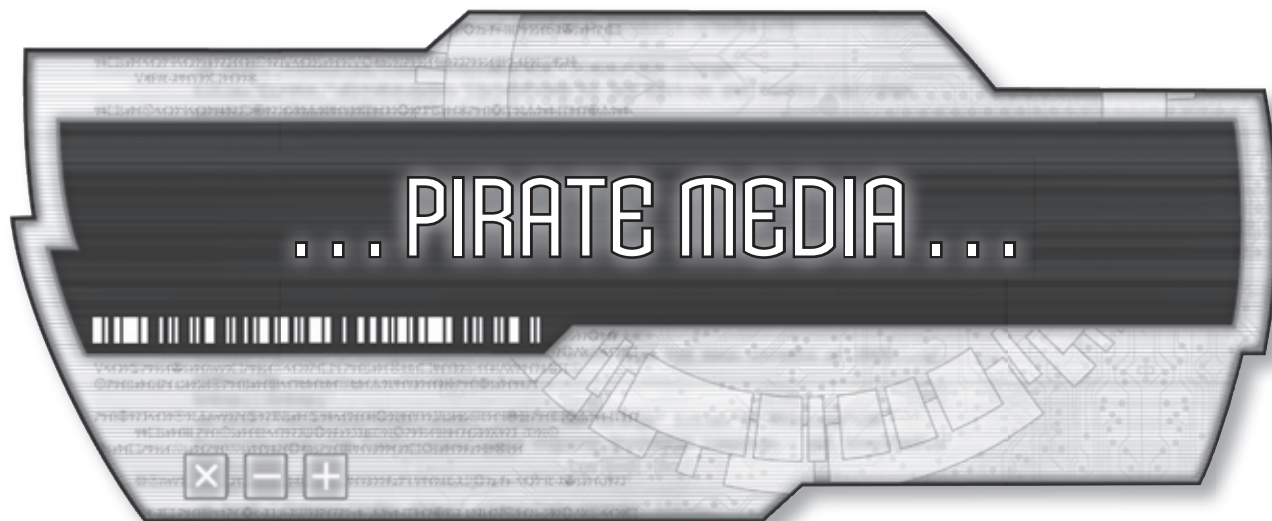
### Technological Cheats

The recent technological development in sports is the use of neuroelectronic brainbenders, so-called reality amplifiers (or “amps”), in the games. An offshoot of BTLs, their instant-on, instant-off nature makes them superior to normal combat drugs, although their effects are mostly mental or sensory. Since most modern players have a wireless array of technological equipment in their clothing for transmitting of viewer information (gun cams, biosensors, simsense broadcasting equipment), a hidden sim-modified commlink or simdeck (implanted or carried along) rarely attracts much attention. While effects of these neurological stimuli can be detected via brainscans and cerebral mapping techniques, it is the last place bloodhounds from the World Anti-Doping Association care to look.

- There has been an issue with detecting technomancers on the field (basically, you can't do it if you don't have technomancers on your side). Many of the leagues support research into breeding technodogs to sniff out players who are secretly technomancers.
- The Smiling Bandit







A trash can flew through the air. It wasn't until it clattered on the street that Slamm-O! registered that it was real, not AR, and that it could have hurt him pretty bad. He decided that was a pretty good time to pick up his pace.

He kept his AR on a cycle—ten seconds on, twenty seconds off. It might have been easier to leave it off entirely, but he needed to see what the people around him were reacting to. They all knew the soccer players filling the street weren't there in the flesh, and that the game they were watching had been played ten hours earlier, but they still wanted to shout in the face of the players they hated, and make way for the players they respected. By keeping track of where the AR players were, Slamm-O! might be able to anticipate where the hooligans would be going.

A window near him broke. Slamm-O! turned, expecting to see another trash can, but instead he saw a man, who happened to be wearing Arsenal colors, rolling onto the street. He hoped this meant they were turning on each other instead of looking for him.

If Slamm-O! got away from here intact, he planned to really enjoy the extra five hundred nuyen he had made in last-minute sales, and then he planned to never be so stupid again. Either verify your materials before you sell them, or don't be present when they're used. It's a simple lesson, but he'd decided to set it aside in favor of making some extra cash. Oh, and then he'd lingered a little too long when the cheerful ManU fans bought him a pint. And then another one.

He was in the ten-seconds-on phase. A player blinked in front of him, then disappeared. Then reappeared ten meters away. A nearby defender was frozen in mid-stride. He shook his head. *What a piece of shit recording*, he thought.

He turned a corner and almost walked into the welcoming arms of Knight Errant officers. He instinctively started to turn away, but then figured that, at the moment, the cops were far more interested in people breaking stuff and bashing heads than in him.

Unless someone fingered him.

A crowd of ManU fans ran rounded the corner, charging, and one of them pointed. Slamm-O recognized him as a man who had just bought a recording from him twenty minutes ago. The man yelled incoherently and ran forward.

He profiled the officers in front of him as quickly as possible, scanning their faces, then sent five of them a quick message that said *Free Cree & Dido movies for life for anyone who keeps these people away from me*.

Four of them quickly stepped forward. Slamm-O! made some quick file transfers, and he saw them smile. He moved toward them.

*No business like show business*, he thought.

## THE SEVERAL SEAS FOR MEDIA PIRATES

Posted by: Dr. Spin

Want to know what Horizon is saying about pirate media today? Check out this excerpt from a commercial running just before all their big trid releases this quarter (when you read it in your head, be sure to give it a calm but authoritative voice):

*Piracy is a real threat, not just to me as a trid producer and actor, but to you, the people who care about the quality of your entertainment.*

*Remember, the lives as well as the passions of hundreds of people go into every form of entertainment and informational broadcast you enjoy every day. From the trend analysts and the writers who work hard to capture your imaginings and desires to the directors, actors, producers, and countless crews of technicians who make your same desires come to life.*

*They all have a stake in making your dreams a reality. So the next time you consider stealing a trid or getting news from pirate sources, remember that they lack the professionalism, safety networks, and quality assurance teams to make sure your product is not just entertaining and informative, but also safe to consume. Pirate media means one thing: They've tried to steal your dreams, and now they're trying to sell them back to you.*

*Pirates don't just steal our intellectual property, they steal your dreams.*

The disingenuousness of the above excerpt just goes to show you how very simple-minded Horizon and its entertainment subsidiaries tend to assume the mass population to be. There are a hundred or more reasons to be a pirate, but stealing dreams isn't likely among them.

- Not that you have a vested interest in discrediting Horizon or anything.
- Cosmo
- Personally, I'm glad that they're taking a hard line on piracy, because I'd like to think that means *they'll* stop stealing stuff. So they'll pull that latest crap maibumu coming out of Tokyo that has my bass line in it.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- The one you "borrowed" from The Clash in the first place?
- Winterhawk
- When a pop act does it, it's stealing, when I do it, it's homage.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- I like their turn of phrase, "theft of dreams." That sounds like something worth trying out on one of my more existential days. A challenge even.
- The Smiling Bandit

- At the pace techs are working on pulling stuff out of people's heads, that day isn't far off.
- FastJack

Furthermore, I would not hesitate to suggest that in large part, piracy in the media has its roots in dreams that have been crushed by the repressive hand of the controlling media machines of the corps. Plenty of the corps, not just Horizon, toss hundreds of thousands of nuyen a day at efforts to control what you see, sense, and enjoy in your entertainment and your news. As a result, I would say that they are not just trying to steal your dreams, but squash them until they are provincial at best.

Most of the average Joes and Janes on the street don't understand the sheer power that comes from controlling communications channels and limiting what flows through them. The more you can get people to believe they have to select from the limited pool, the more their expectations will adapt to what you offer. So every time I hear someone say, "I heard it was really bad, but everyone has seen it, so I have to," or "It can't be that important or I would have heard it on the news," I know that the machine is working in fine order.

- I'd like to nip any romantic portrayals of media pirates in the bud here. Don't look at them as daring artists and freedom fighters sailing the Matrix, freeing us from the bonds of mediocre media. History suggests the original pirates weren't the romantic figures we like to make them out to be, and neither are these ones. Why would anyone assume that a bunch of light-deprived, basement-dwelling data miners would be anything but social misfits at best? Art exists for its own end, not as a part of some digital rebellion against "the man," and pirates are only toothless thieves too cheap to pay their way.
- 
- Figures no one would sign their name to a tirade like this. I'm sure that our overly active anonymous poster won't respond, but I'd like to point out that I have all of my teeth and am perfectly romantic. I am, in fact, a great liberator of fine art!
- Slamm-O!

## THE ART HOUSE

Let's take a look at how this plays out in reality. Take the work of Hillary Rodregaz, the greatest literary mind of this generation and possibly the next. Her work is, if I can be indulgent enough to use such a word, transcendent. But you've never heard of her. If I am wrong, and you have heard of her, you know that you must secure her books through encrypted data files, and the traffic of her books is highly illegal in some parts of the world.

Why? Are her books so dangerously political that they might start wars or cause the simple-minded to commit suicide?

Not hardly. Her books must be stolen because Horizon's Pathfinder Press doesn't want you to read them. And why would that be?

Part of the answer comes from Exhibit A: A form rejection letter sent to Rodregaz at the beginning of her career.







Dear Mrs. Rodregaz;

*Thank you very much for your interest, but at this time this book is not right for our catalogue. Please keep in mind that we get over a hundred thousand book submissions a week, and as you can imagine every choice we make must focus on the needs of our audience. It is very difficult for any author to rise to the top.*

*Thank you for your time.*

What's particularly interesting about this email is that, unlike the other 99,999 rejections sent out that week, this one had a secondary attachment from the editor at Pathfinder who read the submission.

Mrs. Rodregaz,

*Please don't stop writing. I have never been so moved as I was reading your manuscript. From page thirty on, I was crying or laughing out loud like a child every ten pages or fewer. This book is too good for us. I wish I could help you, but there's little I can do on my own. They take the books we get, put them through a computer along with your picture, and that calculates what we publish. Maybe one in ten thousand books actually gets read by a human being. A hundred years ago I could make my career from publishing this book, but now the computer tells me I can't. I am so, so sorry. Please forgive me.*

The editor in question went to great lengths to disguise their identity from the correspondence, as if he or she were afraid to be connected to the rejection.

But that's just the first step in the process. It's just a rejection, and any artist of any sort has to deal with that plenty of times in their career. The real question is, how did the book go from being rejected to being illegal?

Well, Rodregaz went independent. She found a publisher who had a profitable line of stolen ebooks that they use to fund their own publications. They started packaging her book in with bundles of older, similar books. So the savvy book reader looking for an old copy of Tolstoy or Kerouac would be pleasantly surprised to find they got a bonus copy of something they may well like, and they'd take a look at it. Through these illegal avenues, Rodregaz built a fan base and eventually started outselling some of her legitimate competitors. Some of that was thanks to her lower price, but it helped that she was saying something real with her words. That's something Tarder Hillman's latest *SpyRisk* novel can never do, no matter how hyped it's been, and no matter how many people have purchased it.

So Pathfinder, seeing their mistake, allegedly contacted Rodregaz to offer her a lifetime contract. She supposedly rejected them cold, and ownership of her books suddenly became illegal in several jurisdictions. The reason for that status varies. Sometimes authorities claim it's a violation of copyright. Sometimes they say it's related to suspected terrorism. Sometimes they just say that owning it is illegal, and they don't bother with a justification.

- I've read Rodregaz's work. *Portrait of Woman in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* is as moving as any of the old masters, especially in its native Spanish. She's as good as, if not better than, Dr. Spin describes her here. I've actually donated money directly to her through secure channels because I got the book for free, and, like many others, wanted to pay her anyway.
- Picador

- That's so strange, because I've read *Portrait* in its native Arabic. How does that work? A powerful work, regardless.
- Goat Foot
- There are actually a number of communities of these independent book publishers working illegally to get books out to the masses despite the tight noose Pathfinder and the other bigs have around the market. The problem is, they put out just as much sub-par and vanity work as they put out stuff people actually want to read, so it's hard to separate the poor work from the gold. I should say, though, that I don't consider independent publishing to be piracy, even if some governmental bodies do.
- Mr. Bonds
- I've heard Rodregaz has to live in hiding these days because Pathfinder tried to silence her permanently before the release of her last three novels. She won't even appear in the Matrix for digital book signings like so many regularly published authors do for fear of being Black Hammered.
- Sunshine
- And I've heard Tarder Hillman is a computer program, and that all his books are written by a complicated psychological algorithm originally supposed to be used by military mathematicians to brainwash enemy populations. It would explain a few things.
- Snopes
- Whatever he is, I like the *SpyRisk* novels.
- Clockwork

## REAL MUSICIANS

Posted by: Kat o' Nine Tales

What Dr. Spin said about the publishing world isn't all that different from the world of major-label musical acts and independent musicians. We're way past the days where you can put together an album, sell it to a label, tour your heart out, and, if you're good enough, make enough money to keep novacoke on the table and bitches in the tour bus.

These days, musicians with contracts are just models the major labels hand-pick, groom, or possibly grow in vats for all I know.

- That's not as new a concept as you might think.
- Winterhawk

If you're a real musician these days trying to get your music out there, building a fan base and rocking people's skulls, you've got some crazy competition. The commercial labels do everything they can to hold on to every nuyen spent on music by blocking independent acts from performing at certain venues and destroying popular file-sharing nodes so that people can't get access to music outside of their distribution channels.

So if you want to put your music out yourself, you've got your work cut out for you. I've got friends all over the globe—a nice side effect of this line of work—so when I started putting out



recordings with Grim Aurora, word of mouth did a whole lot of work for me.

Not everyone is that lucky. A lot of acts have to find ways to reach an audience by going around the labels' control. Sometimes they do like the book guys do, stealing corporate-produced albums and reselling them to get business enough and find buyers for their private acts. Sometimes, though, they have to be a little more creative.

Have you ever heard of the Doldrums? If not, you've probably heard their music. They do that one song in that one motorcycle commercial that everyone spends the next day humming to themselves. Yeah, turns out they have a knack for catchy tunes like that. They didn't get their start as corporate jingle writers. The truth is, their music isn't just catchy, it's viral.

About six years ago, they got together and decided to skip the normal routes to fame and profit, and went for something more invasive. The Doldrums' lead synth player was an excellent programmer—not just on a synth, but also on the Matrix. He started creating viruses. Insidious little things that would sneak into your commlink and sit there unnoticed because they weren't really doing much of anything at all—except putting their catchy little tunes subliminally into your mind. Then someone hears you humming the tune, they ask you who it is, and before you know it, both of you are looking for the Doldrums' latest release because they're just so damn catchy.

When Rifi Records heard about this clever ploy, the snapped the Doldrums right up out of the Matrix, and, long story short, that's why I can't go three solid days without hearing that stupid jingle.

Moral of the story: If you don't want to (or can't find a way to) sell out to the bigs, get creative with your marketing plan.

- Not all music is outlawed because corps are trying to control the market. Music and protest go hand in hand, which is why music is so often the first thing totalitarians outlaw. I've heard stories in Bogotá of musical anarchists who are using traditional regional music with a heavy dose of magic to spread their message against Atzlan. Not exactly piracy, unless you consider that many of these musicians weave magic into their spells to literally change minds and hearts. I once heard a story about an illegal performance by Esmé Calderon that ended up converting the Aztlan troops who showed to shut her down. What could explain such a thing but some very strong emotionally manipulative magic?
- Marcos
- Or, you know, maybe the message really was that powerful. You've been there, Marcos. You know what it's like.
- Glasswalker

Here's another example of how to get your music out through unofficial channels. If you caught last year's championship match of Combat Biking, you know how brutal it was, and you were one of the people who made it the most watched sporting event of the year. Somehow, and I'm not going to say how, someone from the New Machine Anarchy Destruction Movement pulled what I would call wholesale theft of the game.

It involved a group called NMADM. If you haven't heard of them, you really should. They're like some old-school industrial

noise band, but all of their sampling is supposedly from the sounds of people dying. It's creepy enough, and if they put in a simsense feed, it'll get you quaking in your boots.

Anyway, right during the halftime show, NMADM somehow managed to hack into the commercial feed and put their tracks over top of the audio during all of the commercials. Now, that was some nice publicity, but NMADM managed to make some nice nuyen through a backward way. Actiontex, the subsidiary supplying the security for the game that night, was so embarrassed by the break-in that they had their parent company buy the rights to the songs from NMADM and retroactively claim that was the plan all along. The group is sitting pretty right now, and all it took was a major act of piracy.

- For every NMADM story out there, there are fifteen bands who managed to sneak a song out through unofficial channels, only to have the people they hired as groupies trash all of their equipment, because a corp had offered them more than the band could. They messed with the bull, they got the horns.
- Sunshine

## GUERRILLA THEATER

Posted by: Plan 9

Theater, except for the big palaces in Manhattan, is generally not an industry that's rolling in large amounts of nuyen. If people want to make money acting or directing, they go into trideos; theater is the province of the dedicated artists.

But while it might not provide the same avenue for riches and fame as other art forms, theater has a long tradition as a venue for guerilla art, for pieces that can galvanize the public and move them into action. From Aristophanes to Brecht to Dario Fo, theater has a way of sucking its audience in while it makes its points.

This can be even more insidious if the audience is captive.

One of the leading—and definitely the strangest—guerilla theater troops out there is W.P. Wildersnitche's Ol' Thyme Theater De Strange. The guy at the head of the whole thing, W.P., is so off the deep end that not only would Horizon and its babies never touch his work, I don't think it would ever have even occurred to him to try to get things out that way, because his art is, at its root, so guerilla, and so revolutionary.

Basically, W.P. is a dwarf rigger who specializes in taking over a whole building and all the facilities within. First, he makes the building his, from the cameras to the computer systems to the elevators and even the temperature controls. Then he starts his show.

His troop of actors, dancers, and hit men rush into the populated areas of whatever building they've hijacked and force the inhabitants to participate in whatever production they've put together. While W.P. acts as god/director/ringmaster to the event, the show goes on—one part sideshow, one part burlesque, one part acrobatics display, and a whole lot of crazed experimental thought-play. Sometimes it's trippy on its own. Sometimes it's trippy because W.P. has the ventilation system pump hallucinogens into the air.

The shows are rarely ever as dangerous as they appear, and to date no one has been killed except for troop members who volunteered to die as a part of the performance.

### Private Message...

**To:** Plan 9

**From:** Slamm-O!

I know you're a bit of a W.P. Wildersnitche fan, so I thought you'd like this—this is a list of materials that he's collecting for his next happening. I don't know where it's going to take place, but I sure as hell want to be there.

#### Needs

- 1.5 kilometers of twine
- 2 Livingwear coats (different species)
- 1 electric marten
- 100 kilos of multi-colored confetti
- 4 17<sup>th</sup> century Papal Swiss Guard halberds
- 3 tanks of helium
- 140 sheets of flash paper
- 2 alpacas
- 20 kg ground beef
- 6 Kenneth Brackhaven latex masks
- 200 rolls of toilet paper

You can't hire W.P. You can't request that he bring his show to your home or business. He selects targets at random and springs on them unexpectedly. As he says, "An audience who knows they are about to be an audience has missed the point."

Not that the point is always clear. Most critics agree that W.P.'s work has a political angle, but they're often hard-pressed to say just what this angle is. At the very least, his work shows that the illusion of control that corps like to maintain over their surroundings is not as thorough as they'd like the proles to believe.

The one clear statement W.P. makes is that nothing comes for free. Most of the time, during the performances, W.P. and his troop steal some valuables, creds, or information they can later trade. W.P. doesn't consider it theft, however. In his mind, he's just helping himself to the reimbursement the people would surely pay him (if he asked) for the privilege of his one-of-a-kind experience. He's not out for profit, or so he says, but needs the money to keep the operation going.

After all, the show must go on.

- Not surprisingly, I hear it on good account that a prominent entertainment firm is trying to find a way to emulate Wildersnitche's show. Unlike Wildersnitche, they'd announce the engagements in advance, charge admission, and record the whole spectacle for later resale. It's difficult to say, though, if they can capture the spontaneity of the original.
- Dr. Spin
- It'll never be the same. The corps could never understand the artistry required to create this sort of performance.
- Plan 9

- I heard there's a small fortune in buying and selling recordings of W.P.'s shows (pirating trids of pirate theater!). There are a few collectors out there who will pay big for a trid of an event they haven't yet seen, or that has been shot from an angle they don't yet have in their collection. The shows are happening in a lot of places at once inside a building, so it's sometimes impossible to catch the whole experience from any one perspective. The show comes at you from all sides, and that experience is what a lot of these collectors are after.
- Mr. Bonds
- There is nothing rich people hate more than not being able to buy something. The fact that you can't hire W.P. for your private dinner party or your kid's birthday really gets under the skin of some of these social elite. I heard that a BTL recording made during one of W.P.'s shows sold for close to a million nuyen.
- Snopes
- ... If someone were going to plan an assassination, say, or some other kind of really heavy op, making it happen during one of Wildersnitche's shows would be one way to get away with it seamlessly. No one would notice what you were up to in the chaos Wildersnitche generates. If only there was a way of knowing ahead of time where they'd hit or how to get him to pick the spot and time you need.
- Hard Exit
- His parties don't always happen in the flesh, either. A few months ago I was at one hell of a party at Tux's on the 'Trix. It's not an easy party to get into since you have to hack your way in to begin with. Anyway, the night's rolling along and all of the sudden things change. W.P. shows up, followed by the icons of his crazy troop—they're all handmade icons, really beautiful pieces of work. Most of us had heard of him, and so we were all down for the ride—and *man* what a trip. There aren't drugs that can copy the brain fry I got that night. In a good way.
- Glitch
- If W.P. usually steals valuables while he performs in the real world, what do you think he's doing when he performs for a VR nightclub full of hackers?
- Snopes
- Something wonderful, no doubt.
- Plan 9

## PROFITEERS

Posted by: Sunshine

In the old days, you know, whenever that was, there were pirates who floated around stealing gold and booze from the English and the Dutch and such. To compete with that, the English government started hiring pirates to fight the other pirates. They called them privateers, and there was some mad gold to be made hunting down and murdering the competition while you were operating your own criminal enterprise on the high seas.





INCOMING FEED.....



Life isn't so different these days—the only real change is the nature of the waters that the pirates sail. The pirates these days traffic in all kinds of stolen data, from VR games to my grandmother's cookie recipe (and when I find the guy selling her cookie recipe, I'm going to end up with an apology, or a cut of the profits, or both).

Point is, there are a lot of people making money off of stealing data that has some kind of value. In modern piracy, the treasure with the most value is the stuff you get from the corporations, who stand in for the Crown Heads that 18<sup>th</sup>-century pirates annoyed. This means that it was really only a matter of time before the corps started hiring pirates of their own. There's precedence for this, like the hacker who goes corporate to make a fat paycheck from the people he used to raid, but pirates hunting pirates are still their own beast. Like the privateers of old, they get free rein to do pretty much whatever they want, as long as their actions result in pirates being brought to heel. It's not bad work—you get the excitement of facing off against skilled thieves in a high-stakes, generally Matrix-based chess match, and you get paid pretty well to do it. You just have to stomach the fact that you're on the side of the information hoarders now.

NeoNET leads the way in the hiring of their own private pirates, possibly because they've got such a store of Matrix-based info that they don't want to see get out. There's plenty of this sort of work in Denver right now, too, as all the powers in that city work to shield their data from everyone else. People at the Nexus have had a field day with this, accumulating lots of data in a wide assortment of double-crosses and false-flag operations.

I won't lie; I've been offered jobs like that, and the pay is usually outrageous. I can't say it's a matter of pride or anything, but somehow I just can't stomach it. Of course, your own mileage might vary on that one.

- There's a guy we don't have a name for running around the 'Trix, pretending to be one of us. By all accounts, he must be, or must have been a good hacker to get the stuff he has. He's got beautiful, high-quality bootlegs of all kinds of media and programs. I mean, stuff that looks untouched. Which means, of course, that this guy was too good to be true. I know at least three guys who had made deals to distribute his stuff, and who had bought his shit, and before they could hit the black-market with them, turned up brain-fried in their homes. What's even weirder, one of them wasn't DNI. We still don't know what happened to his brain.
- Hannibelle
- That's exactly one of the methods I've heard of. You'll never find the guy; he's probably slag, done in by his employers. But really, what better way to get rid of pirates than by sending one in to take them out?
- Sunshine
- Except that there will always be more of us, no matter how many of us you kill.
- Hannibelle

PIRATE MEDIA

## CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP AND THE LAW

In the old days, some of the benefits of being a privateer were the legal protections that came with the position. If captured by the enemy, privateers were treated as prisoners of war, instead of as common criminals. If they weren't captured, privateers had claim on some of their captured items once they returned home. If they were pirates, by contrast, they would be considered criminals regardless of where they went.

These procedures don't always work as well for modern-day privateers. Corporations tend to view things such as the rules of warfare as quaint, and making a claim that you're operating under some other corp or nation's flag is liable to make things worse for you, not better. What that means is that while a virtual letter of marque designating you as a Matrix privateer might be a nice thing to have, it's generally not a good idea to go waving it in your target's faces.

The second benefit of being a privateer, though, generally holds true. If you bring back some piece of paydata that can really benefit your patron, you can negotiate for more compensation (or, if you're smart, a copy of the data). Corporations and nations are more willing to work and bargain with people they know than they are to deal with someone coming in off the street. This means that you shouldn't think of becoming a corp's privateer as a legal relationship so much as a business one. The agreement means that they trust you (to a degree), they're willing to do business with you, and they'll listen when you bargain. That's not a bad advantage to have.

- Here's another one to watch out for. Two years ago I was out on a run with another hacker. We were breaking into a weapons manufacturer's system to get schematics for some toy with which to kill people. The guy working with me was new and talented but way too hungry.

Sitting right there after we broke into the system was this VR game, some massive program meant to be used to train troops for black ops. This was the real thing, something that would be worth millions if the programming was as good as it looked. So I was suspicious, obviously. The New Guy was somewhat less suspicious and more eager than I think I've ever been. I said to him, "Leave it where it is, it's probably a honey pot."

He said, "It can't be a honey pot—we came through too many locks and traps. It must be the real thing. I'm taking it." And he did. I left without him because I had no desire to be caught up in that sort of nonsense.

He got weird after that. Obsessed with the game. Any time I'd hear of him or from him, he'd be talking about the game and asking if I wanted a copy. He passed it around to a few of his buddies, of course, and they got weird too. I don't know if it was a virus or something, but whatever it was, it ended the careers of more than a few pirates. It's like the programmer who designed the thing knew exactly what would suck these kids in—not only

the kind of stuff they would steal, but the kind of stuff they'd obsess over and share with their friends. If the guy who put down that trap wasn't a pirate himself, I'm a ghoul.

- Netcat
- So that's how you and Slamm-0! met, huh? Sweet story.
- Clockwork
- Ha, ha, very funny, aren't you clever. To show my appreciation, I have this VR game I think you'd really love. Where should I send it?
- Slamm-0!

## PIRACY IS EASIER

Posted by: FastJack

Since I don't do a whole lot of runs anymore, sometimes I like to pretend that I'm retired—as if I'm some grumpy old guy who doesn't want to be bothered by anyone and is too tired to break the law.

- The first part sounds about right, but the second one is a stretch.
- Netcat

The thing is, I've got better things to do, like worry about my daughter and, I don't know, go senile or whatever it is retired people do. So when I sit down to watch a trid I've been looking forward to for months, it should be something relaxing, with no annoying complications. Last week I had an evening to myself, scotch, and enough takeout from my very favorite Korean restaurant to feed a troll. I had a trid I'd been looking forward to, the latest episode of *Water Margin*, all ready to stream down to my 'link.

Well, it turns out that the distributors of *Water Margin* are a bunch of piracy-paranoid douchebags. The trid is boxed in all sorts protective measures and authentication screens and whatnot. Now, like I said, I had the evening to myself, so I decided to try an experiment. Left to my own devices, I could tear through their protections in fairly short order. I'd break a couple of laws in the process, but they're ones only a few people care about and even fewer enforce. I'd have even less worries about the ethics of doing it—remember, this is a trid *I already paid for*. There are still hoops I have to jump through just to prove that I'm really the guy that paid for it.

I decided to try an experiment. What if I wasn't me? What if I was just some old guy wanting to sit down and enjoy his show, and I had no clue how to hack my way through the protections they'd built in? What would I have to do, and how long would it take?

Well, first, in order to watch the damn thing, I have to authenticate ownership of the license to view using some state-of-the-art authentication program, which is, according to its own documentation, hacker-proof. Ha. Anyway, the node to download the program is clogged with traffic because everyone else in the universe is also trying to watch this trid. (They also use the same program to authenticate the purchase of some specialty porn that was released about the same time, so you can only imagine the traffic at this node.) Naturally, there's a way to get around the

Urgent Message...



traffic jam, and that's to pay more for access to the pro version of the authentication program, which has no additional features besides its ability to handle a higher volume of traffic. So I play along and drop another thirty nuyen. At this point, I've decided that if this isn't the best thing I've seen in the last five years, I'm tracking down the distributors and punching them in the junk.

I'm hoping that I'm about done here, but it seems the program has some compatibility issues with my commlink. Something that requires a driver upgrade. I spend a few minutes, get the right software installed, and I have no problems. Until my whole interface starts fracturing, images disintegrating into ugly little bits. My operating system doesn't like the driver. So there's more updating waiting for me. Now, again, I might have been able to patch this thing on the fly by myself in fairly short order, but I'm living the life of your Average Joe, so I wade around the 'trix, find the right update, and get it installed. At least these steps only cost me time, not money. At this point, my Korean food is cold, my scotch is watered down, and I've decided if this isn't the best thing I've seen in the past ten years I'm hunting down the distributors, punching them in the junk, and then finding each and every one of their mothers and punching them in the throat.

So I'm upgraded, authenticated, and ready to roll, but the software the trid's packaged in wants one more thing before it lets the trid play. It wants a look around. It wants to jump around through my PAN and see where I am, who's with me, and what kind of programs I have running. If it sees anything running that looks like it could record the trid, the show won't run. If it thinks I've got more than ten people in with me, or that I'm in an arena that could easily support a crowd that maybe is waiting just outside the doors, it's not going to play. I've got a license for home use only, and it'll be damned if it'll let me get away with an unauthorized transmission.

So now I'm willing to punch *anyone*, no matter who it is, in the junk, and then their mother in the throat, if this isn't the best thing I've ever experienced in my whole life, including the birth of my daughter and the first time I got good head.

We all have rules we live by, and one of mine is no one, but no one, gets a look at what's on my PAN and what programs I'm running. Especially not some corp-sponsored snoop program. So that's it—the experiment in being a law-abiding citizen is over. I can drop some cash, I can spend some time, but you're going to have to give me more than a trideo if you want any piece of my privacy. I fire up the programs, rip the anti-piracy protections away like a nice, sharp peeler laying into a potato, then I sit down and watch my damn trid.

- How was it?
- Fianchetto
- I'm still looking for someone to punch in the junk.
- FastJack
- As long as people keep stealing data, the corps will have to respond by making the data more expensive, harder to steal, and somewhat less user-friendly as a result. I'm not defending them, I'm just pointing out that that's the way the market works.
- Mr. Bonds

- But it isn't, or at least it doesn't have to be. As long as the corps keep releasing high-priced crap that's hard to use legitimately, people will keep stealing. The corps just have the wrong business model, because they're too entrenched in their ways of doing business. The best way to put pirates out of business is to make your content accessible, easy to use, and cheap as dirt. If it's easier to buy the trid from the company who made it than it is to buy it from the pirate on the street, the pirate loses. Things will still be pirated, though, and the corps can't stomach that, which is why they'll never change, even if it's better for them in the long run.
- Sunshine

## CULT RECREATIONISTS

Posted by: Dr. Spin

Believe it or not, there was a lot of fantastic entertainment before the trids. Turns out that the old flatscreen days had their share of some of the most fantastic pieces of visual storytelling in history. These films are ignored, though, because people used to 3D have trouble going back to 2D, and the risk-averse studios aren't always good at seeing the merit of dredging up old stories from the early 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond (though they're sometimes too willing to remake something that came out just ten years ago).

This leaves some space for recreationists. Recreationists are a group of film fans all over the world concerned that the greatest stories mankind has ever told are being lost because the modern audiences won't go back to watch the old flatscreens. Their solution is to take old movies and recreate them using modern technology.

But the thing is, they don't hold the rights to the flicks they're recreating, so what they're doing is highly illegal. They can be nabbed for this before they get around to selling the finished product—a few recreationists have actually been jailed for “intention to commit copyright theft,” or even “conspiracy to violate copyright” (no really, they break out old RICO statutes to stop these guys).

Not all recreations are created equally, of course. Time constraints are significant, thanks to the illegality of recording them, and money issues and the like produce some really terrible recreations. Additionally, there are a few schools of thought on how to go about the recreation process. You've got your hard core folks, who do everything they can to keep the remake close to the original, shot for shot. There are some political types whose main purpose in making the new version is to add elves and dwarves and such to the cast so that they're more egalitarian. Then there are people who just like old movies, and who throw spaghetti at the wall in the hopes that it'll stick—they may not be highly skilled, but they're passionate, and they hope they can get close enough to the spirit of the original. I actually find the recreations in this last category to be the most honest, the most passionate, and I'll watch one of these any time I find one floating around the 'trix.

- A lot of racist groups prefer watching the old flatscreens because they have no metahumans in them. They think it makes it a more pure form of entertainment.
- Aufheben

- I know the studios don't like risk, but if there's a market out there for these oldies, it seems like something the corps should be all over. Why aren't they?
- /dev/grll
- Copyright's a bitch. The older the movie, the harder it is to figure out who owns the rights to what. Maybe the script and ideas have been snatched up by one interest, while the dialogue, the music, or even the intellectual properties have been bought by completely separate interests. It's a nightmare just to find all the right holders, let alone pay them for their share.
- Mr. Bonds
- Not to mention that in order to make them profitable, many of these old movies need to be heavily altered to fit in with modern blockbusters. You have to take whatever you're remaking, fill it with explosions, sex, and violence if you want it to hit the masses and compete with the other works being churned out. Purists get really angry when you change something instead of replicating it in a new form of media, and they'd never go for those sorts of changes. They would rather spend their time and money making shot-by-shot illegal reproductions.
- Dr. Spin
- I despise the modern remakes put out for mass consumption. Last year, for no reason I can fathom, they remade Bunuel's *The Exterminating Angel*. But apparently, his surrealism was too surrealistic, so they added guns, dropped the central premise, and just named a main character the same as the original and had him kill people for a living. There were also some funny camera angles. My soul wept seeing it.
- Picador
- They're starting to reach beyond just movies for their recreations, too. Old television shows are great for recreation, because they're shorter and generally had a lower budget than the old movies. Even more awesome are the recreations people are doing of historical events. I heard rumor of a wild group of recreationists who descended on Texas last month and recorded a trid version of the Zapruder film. I hear it's still in postproduction, but I am dying to see it. Grainy political assassination films will never be the same again.
- Slamm-O!
- Screw that, I want to see Woodstock and The Warped Tour recreated in trid form.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

## INDY EDUCATION

Posted by: Dr. Spin

Most of the time, when we think about pirate media (or any media at all, really), we think about entertainment. There are, however, several uses of media besides passive absorption, and the indy education scene is a great example of some of the things that are happening out there.

Let me ask you this: Do you know how most schools decide on what's taught at their schools? How they select the contents of their syllabus? If you said "teacher fiat," or even "years of education combined with local public consensus," you would be entirely wrong. These days, what's taught in schools is largely dictated by the text ebooks and other educational material the school district can afford to purchase. And guess who produces those materials? Did you answer, "a board of highly educated experts working to bring children the best education possible, full of truth and understanding"? Of course you didn't. You've been living in reality too long. If instead you answered, "a corp who makes sure the curriculum is geared toward keeping citizens in line while rewriting history to make themselves look good," then you're right. And also conscious of the world around you.

- You're thinking too small. The revisionism you mention is certainly present, but in truth the corps have little use for a brainwashed mass of humanity that has no hope of betterment through education. This isn't fifteenth-century Europe. Most of the brighter minds in these companies know that there is no one class of people from which brilliance comes. The next great innovation could come from any sector, and limiting the education and opportunity of any group could prevent that innovation from happening—and could keep the corp from reaping the benefits of it. The future is the real bottom line, and corporate education specialists know that.
- Mr. Bonds

The alternative to the corp-sponsored curricula is indy education. There are a number of groups and individuals out there who either figure they can make a little money selling better education materials to desperate parents, or who are honestly interested in giving kids a better chance to learn what they need to know, and are selling materials different than the corp-sponsored lines. While selling this stuff generally isn't illegal, the corps have made sure that using it in any sort of educational setting (and they generally manage to include home schooling in that definition) is. This is one area where the sellers of the goods don't have to worry about law enforcement nearly as much as the users. And the users have to worry plenty—most curricula involve your 'link in a number of ways, and the corps put out an army of bots looking for traces of illegal curricula being employed.

Besides the danger of being found out, there's the problem of knowing what curricula you should use. Any reviews of this stuff tend to disappear off the Matrix quickly, and buyers often have to rely on the often-tricky word of mouth to pick out what's right for you. There is a good chance well-meaning parents might blow their cash on something even more inaccurate than what the corps are offering. A lot of hate groups, for example, have indy curricula out there, and they're pretty good at disguising it so that you don't know what you're getting until you open it up and peer into its black heart.

- They do more than just disguise their stuff as educational materials. The real problem comes when a young kid comes across a package of illegal games and finds one of these digital brainwashing tools, not knowing what it is. Bam. Indoctrination, easy as pie.
- Sunshine



## STOLEN AND MODIFIED GAMES

Posted by: Mr. Bonds

Piracy of online games started the moment the first game went online, which was approximately five minutes after the first picture of a nude female was transmitted over a modem. It's a practice that's older than all of us, and the corporations that make games have been complaining about it for almost as long as it has existed.

Piracy has its supporters and detractors, and both sides have made overstated claims. The corporations sometimes act as if every pirated game is the equivalent of a lost sale, ignoring the fact that the alternative to piracy is often simply making no purchase at all. By shutting down piracy, they do not guarantee many more sales; the only real guarantee is that fewer people will be playing their game. This could mean less word-of-mouth buzz about their game, which could result in fewer sales.

This has been the argument the pirates have used—that their efforts spread the knowledge of certain games, which expands the possible user base and, in the end, potentially brings in more revenue. This effect, though, is overstated as well. While piracy may spread the knowledge of a game, it also spreads the knowledge of how to get that game for free (or cheap), which is what a lot of people will do when they hear about it.

- On the non-game side, there's also the issue of how piracy might let people participate in the economy more broadly, which could eventually result in a net economic boost. The trideo industry is an easy example—let's say there's some kid out there who wants to make a trid, and she's got a commlink and all, but she doesn't have the cash she needs to buy some solid trid-editing 'ware. So she pokes around, finds some pirated editing software, and uses that. This means she can participate in the economy more than she did before. She makes her trid, maybe sells a few copies, and now she's got enough money to make a second one, and this time she hires a crew to help her. Boom—jobs are created, economy stimulated.
- Traveler Jones

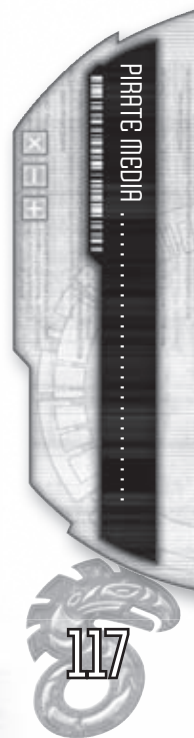
The question, then, is whether the net result is positive or negative. On the whole, it seems that game piracy likely results in some economic loss, though not to the degree corporations state. Additionally, there have been examples of small developers and companies that have embraced piracy in a way that raised their profile and eventually boosted their sales.

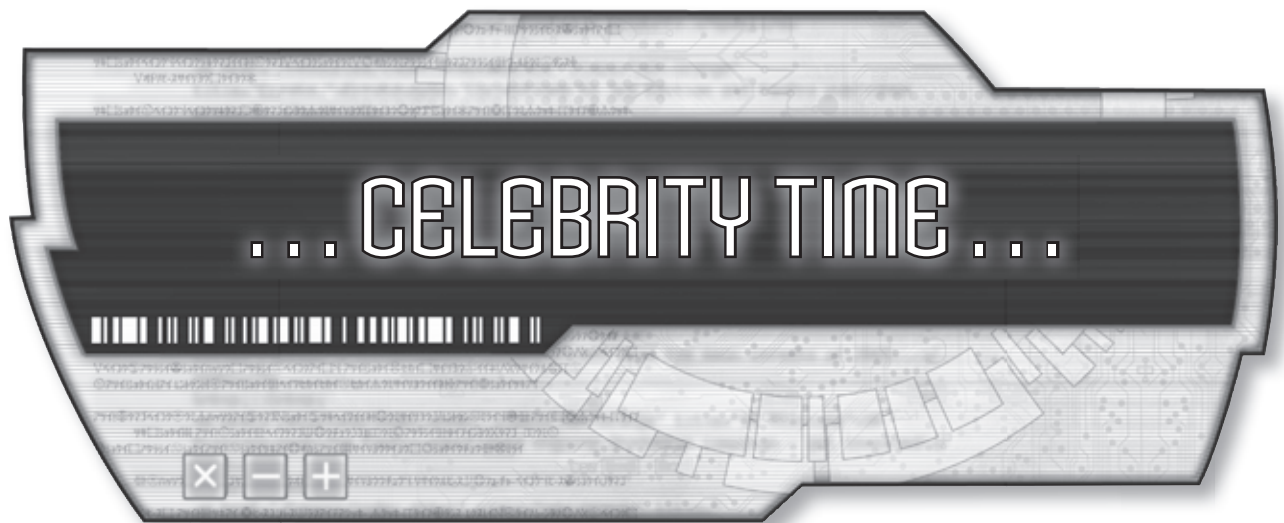
- If piracy hurts corporations, it only hurts the big ones. Most smaller, truly innovative games can't get published by the bigger corps, and so they pretty much have to operate like pirates. In most countries it's illegal or at least dangerous to distribute privately, so if they want to get their games out there, they have to do it alongside those of us stealing and distributing the games put out by the big corps.
- Glitch

But here's the interesting thing—if you really want to reduce piracy, studies have shown one sure way to do that, and it isn't necessarily stronger copyright laws and stepped-up enforcement. It's increased income. When people can afford to buy more, they do. Spreading more income to the middle and lower classes can cut the piracy rate in an area rapidly.

That option is not, of course, one the megacorporations are likely to pursue. So until then, there's a strong market out there for pirated games. If you really want to make money in piracy, you need to do more than just crack a program. Cracks are out there, everywhere, and most determined users can find one for free, meaning there's very little money to be made. If you want people to pay you for your pirate efforts, you need to do something most pirates can't or don't do. One primary service you can provide that would add value is offering users the patches and updates that legal buyers get, which is especially important for games, since corporations have a bad habit of rushing them out the door while they still have plenty of bugs. Accessing the patches is not easy, especially since you can't set up a permanent structure that will continually feed the patches to your customers—any corporation with a decent hacking staff would dismantle such a structure within a few days at most. Supplying patches is demanding enough to become a full-time job, but if you're going to spend all your time developing software services for your customers, why not sell out and take a corp job now?

- You want to make money off software piracy? Teach people how to do it. Convince them that for a hundred nuyen, you can teach them how to get all the software they want for the rest of their life. Freelance software consulting—it's a nice gig that you can pick up and drop when you want to.
- Slamm-O!
- I'm not much of a hacker, but I know what people like. If you're preparing to infiltrate some facility filled with heavy Matrix users, find a way to introduce a pirated version of a hot new game to an employee about a week before your mission. They'll likely share it with their co-workers, and that can introduce a nice little distraction for your mission. I'm not saying you'll just be able to waltz in because everyone is too busy playing, but every little distraction helps.
- Riser





**Posted by: Kat o' Nine Tales**

Don't know if any of you saw this, but I thought it was an interesting story about the perils of public running. Have at it!

## SEATTLE HERO DIES

From the "Our City" column by Sadie Marshall,  
March 14, 2073

This city cannot say that it has had a vast array of individuals who could truly be called heroes, though we do have our good Samaritans and vigilant folk who help to make this city a better place to live. Once in a great while, though, someone is recognized for truly heroic actions. One person who recently attained that honor was Jack Sledge, known as "The Hammer" to those he called friend.

Sledge made a name for himself as a bounty hunter who spent time in the seedier parts of the city, running around in the shadows of night procuring items of interest or simply battling crime and wrongdoers that he encountered. During one of these excursions, unbeknownst to Jack at the time, he would be forever changed in the eyes of the city he lived in and thrust into the limelight.

It was desolate in Redmond on January 31 when Jack Sledge came across the bruised and abused body of Trish Scallenger, known worldwide as "Trish the Dish." Trish is the daughter of Alex Scallenger, the (not so) silent partner of Brackhaven Investments. Reports state that she had apparently been kidnapped coming home from a rehearsal with her band, The Latch-Key Kids, and kept in a dank and slummy apartment, where she was subjected to many intravenous cocktails from a rather dodgy and mentally ill young man identified as Kip Shapner, a well-known drug maker and dealer.

Sledge bravely risked his life to save the young superstar from the clutches of this madman. This ended in a large fiery explosion that led to another explosion—an explosion of fame and renown for Sledge in the months to come. He was rewarded for his heroism and given the prestigious title of personal bodyguard to Miss Scallenger from that point on.

Unfortunately, his fame and the rewards that came with it were short-lived. A massive explosion rocked the Scallenger manor house last evening, centering on the stylish apartment that Sledge lived in. Preliminary reports state that the explosion was caused by a "clean bomb," which is an explosive made of phosphorous that destroys everything in its path. Few things remained after the carnage, although a very small chip was found that authorities are saying could have been a brain implant that Sledge was known to have in him. This chip may contain information on the last few minutes of his woefully short life.

Investigations into the explosion will hopefully bring to justice those who committed this horrible act. Sledge will be forever remembered as a true Seattle hero. Trish Scallenger has not yet personally commented on the incident, but her publicist released a statement saying, "Trish is beside herself with grief. Jack was very special to her and will be missed."

A memorial service will be held for Jack Sledge at the base of the Space Needle this Saturday evening at 7:00 p.m.

- Okay, what the hell was that all about? Who cares about this guy? Did you know him?
- Riser
- Kind of. He helped me out once. Don't knock him. He was a good runner, and tried to keep his cool even once he was in the lime-light. I think his experience is a good example of what it's like to become a celebrity as a runner—both the good and bad.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- From what I've heard, he seemed like a slimeball who couldn't hack running anymore and decided to jump on the cushy "babysitter with a gun" route.
- Netcat
- We could argue about that for a while. But instead of arguing, let's go to the horse's mouth—or at least, the diary kept in the chip formerly implanted in the horse's head. Check it out.
- Kat o' Nine Tales







**Neural-Diary Entry b-263-54—1.31.2073**

There is a numbness that comes with being involved in a massive explosion. Your whole life hurts; your skin, your hair, even places where the air hits you. There is an eerie quietness to everything about you afterward. It's like being under water. Your hearing is replaced with a kind of muted drone. Who am I kidding? Everything is muted: sight, smell, even taste. I could probably be chewing on a dead sewer rat right now and not even taste it.

- Amen to that. I still got a wound that twitches whenever I hear a loud noise.
- Marcos

You move slower, too. I feel like I'm trudging through mud when I turn my head and look down the hallway of this rotten place. The irritation of fluorescent light clings to the worn walls of where I'm being held, and Knight Errant officers pass by giving me that old familiar look of "What kind of scumbag are you, jagoff?" Then they click their heels down the corridor into swank offices to push papers and other people around.

- Did he just notice that Knight Errant guys are on permanent power trips? I thought he was experienced.
- Slamm-O!
- Aw come on, they're not so bad. They never arrive when they should and always kludge everything when they get there. They are the ones to call when you want a crime scene to be contaminated. I have them on speed-dial.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

This is almost funny ... I haven't had the bracelets on for quite some time. Maybe Johnny Law will toss me a bone. Yeah, and maybe my colon will sprout wings, fly out, and grant me three wishes. I think I'm laughing about that, but I can't hear myself very well. Let me try and get tonight's "adventure" as clear as I can, before they start putting me through the grinder and lecturing me about being a "stain on society."

Three nights ago I was hanging outside the Bagley Wright Theater, waiting for some information on how to meet with my new Johnson. Apparently, one of the actors in the place has good connections with some bigwigs and knows the ins and outs of this particular client.

- I wonder if he's referring to Willis Boggs? I bet he knows the ins and outs of plenty of budding starlets.
- Netcat
- Amen to that, sister. I wonder how many Boggs bastards are mewling this very minute?
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- I saw him in a production of How'd That Get There? Was pretty good if you can get past all the jazz hands.
- Slamm-O!

- We are all going to pretend that we didn't hear you say that.
- Kat O' Nine Tales

I wait and watch as people scurry about, eying the flashing neon signs of upcoming events and whispering to themselves how they wish they could go. I remember having a regular mundane life, or maybe it was a movie I saw. About an hour goes by, and while I'm puffing away on one of my electronic cigarettes, this snub-nosed guy comes up wiping sweat and makeup off of his face, holding a flower in his hand.

- Definitely Boggs.
- Netcat

"You Jack?" he asked.

"Yes," I said.

"Sorry I was late, you know—gotta visit with the fans. Give 'em what they want, huh?" He chuckled, then he winked at me. Yeah you heard right. He winked at me. Like I was some kind of a girl scout standing outside of his door, selling him a box of cookies. I wanted to swing my sledgehammer into his face and count all the blood bubbles that would come up, but instead I gave him half a smile, which is all I could afford.

- I never heard of this guy, but man do I like the way he thinks.
- Slamm-O!

He takes me to a nearby food joint called Murphy's Law and gives me the lowdown on how to deal with this new Johnson. Actually, his advice is pretty interesting, so I put up with his false respect and counterfeit facial expressions and I lock away every little tidbit in my brainpan for later. But once the conversation moves to himself and his passion for ... whatever it is he is passionate about, I excuse myself and make my way back home.

At my dive, I go over the info bit by bit. The basic story is that this particular Johnson is a bit "off center". He is bald due to some chemical mishap he had while engaging a rather nervous hooker. Somehow he lost all the hair on his body, even his eyebrows, and seems to be a bit insecure about it. This genius' remedy is to take a permanent marker and draw hair where it should be, at least on his face. Apparently, he is not a very good artist, and the canvas of his mug looks like a fifth-grader went to town on it. I was urged not to give into any kind of laughter at the sight of him—apparently it wouldn't bode well for me getting future gigs.

- I thought I had encountered every kind of whacked-out Johnson, but this guy wins the prize hands down.
- Hard Exit

Other than that, he seems to be a regular ol' Johnson, plus he pays good—I would be getting about a thousand nuyen by the end of this. Not a bad week's work. What this particular man is looking for is a person, some schmo named Dr. Gethsan. Some bio-, techno- something engineer. It's not the best gig, but it's something.

- Mean anything to you guys?
- Kat o' Nine Tales



- I'm not saying that I haven't heard of him, but then again, I'm not saying that I have heard of him either.
- Marcos
- Okay, I've heard of him.
- Marcos
- Isn't he in the weapons game?
- Netcat
- I'll say. He came up with a prototype bomb that, according to rumor, is ingestible. Someone feeds it to you, or you drink it, and it takes its time settling into your system. When you're later exposed to a certain additive and it's absorbed into your body, the explosive is activated and you go boom.
- Marcos

You see, going after an object—say a data disk, or a weapon, or a magical trinket—is generally more enticing than going after a person. Trinkets don't have attitudes, and they don't have to decide to go with you. You can just shove them into your pockets and go. People you have to treat with kid gloves, and more importantly, you have to make sure they stay alive.

- Right on! I prefer lifting hardware and the like, 'cause when you hit them they stop making noise right away.
- Slamm-O!

If you present your Johnson with a disk that's maybe a little banged up, or a device that's a little worse for wear, you may still get paid, maybe even in full. But if you show up with a piece of a person or a worse-for-wear individual—well, they tend to frown on that sort of thing, and by frown I mean they shoot you.

- I hear that loud and clear. I once had a Johnson who insisted that whenever you were sent after a person, the individual had to be showered and in clean clothes before we brought 'em in.
- Netcat
- Oh man. At least it doesn't sound like he insists on the runners themselves being cleaned up.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

Anyway, I get some good intel on the whereabouts of this quack, but I also got some bad info. Not bad as in false or unusable, but bad as in unfortunate. A rogue group is after him as well, which wouldn't be all that surprising if it wasn't a group that I know. They're known as the "Bastard Platoon."

- The good old Bastards. I have definitely heard of them. Weren't they the ones who tore up Maximillion's a while back?
- Slamm-O!
- That was deemed an accident.
- Marcos

I used to run with them, and I had hoped not to have to deal with them ever again, especially not on the wrong end of a mission like this. Back in the day, it was Johnny Dammit, Sucka Punch, Cat-in-the-bag Man, and me. We tore up a good portion of Seattle in our younger years. Johnny was a decent enough guy, at least in the beginning, though he was always a bit twitchy. He had somehow coaxed a certain young bio-mech student to augment his body for him. She was taken by his chiseled good looks and his muscle-bound frame and agreed to do whatever he wanted. So he had this pretty young thing tap into his nerve endings, and she devised a way to channel his pain reception into an adrenal booster. It seemed that any pain he felt could be transferred into a type of reservoir, and gave him extra boosts to his physical strength. Basically, if you hurt him it gave him extra juice to hit you with, lift things, etc. I once saw him punch a hole through a pane of bulletproof glass after he stubbed his toe. He didn't even make a peep.

Johnny and I got along fairly well. Once, though, when we were on a run for MCT, we had a rather large and collaterally expensive argument over what exactly an innocent person was and whether we should care who accidentally died during our excursions. I felt we should be more professional and stable and organized, while he felt we should throw caution, and a few dozen hand grenades, to the wind to see what happened. He always said that no one was innocent, and if they were unlucky enough to be in the blast radius during fun time, it was their own fault. He started calling me doughboy, because I was apparently too soft.

Sucka Punch stayed out of our little tiffs. Come to think of it, I don't remember ever seeing him get angry about anything. He was pretty sedate and quiet. And unnerving. He was the king of being able to lull anyone into a false sense of security. No matter who you were or what the situation, you would think that everything was just fine. That you had everything under control. Then just at the right moment, he would hit you. It always came from out of the blue and you were out for the count more often than not. He had a certain customized implant in his head that connected to his right eye. I remember if you caught it in the right light, it would have a little sparkle to it. He used it to kind of "CT scan" his enemies, to see if they had any specific weak spots or painful condition he could exploit with a good hard punch. He could see bones that had been broken in the past, or strained muscles, torn tendons, all kinds of ills. He could also use it for good—diagnosing injuries of his friends and stuff like that.

- Are we supposed to believe this guy's on the level when he comes up with stuff like this?
- Butch

Cat-in-the-bag Man was just street-rat crazy. He honestly thought of himself as some kind of superhero. He would collect stray cats, no matter what their condition was, and keep them in a big burlap sack. He would pull one out during combat, shake it all around until it became incensed with anger, and then hurl it at his enemies. Admittedly, watching some hulking goon who just threatened you with a massive shredder dance around while his face is clawed at by some parasite-infested cat is pretty funny, but I mean who does that? Who throws a cat at you? He was a mess, and logistically he was probably one of the worst runners ever, a

real Olly. There was no way we could hide with him around and those damn felines screeching and mewling like that. I never knew why Johnny kept him around. I guess Johnny considered himself to be the king of the bastards, and in some medieval way he had need of a jester. Stupid cat-throwing ass-monkey!

- That's nuts. I never want to meet this idiot. I mean, I'm no animal-rights fanatic, but that's one of the sickest things I've ever heard.
- Winterhawk

Mostly he was harmless, at least to us. But there was one thing that I couldn't abide—a tactic he called a “cat-astrophe.” This consisted of strapping a high-powered explosive onto the belly of a stray cat and letting it find its way into a room of bad guys, where it would unknowingly end its own life—as well as anyone else who happened to be in a five-meter radius—with a resounding bang and fireball.

- I stand corrected.
- Winterhawk
- Kitty, Kitty, Bang, Bang! Sorry. Couldn't resist.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

#### Neural-Diary Entry b-263-54-1.31.2073—addendum

Afraid? Sure. Any runner who tells you he's not afraid of anything is already dead or lying. Fear is what has kept me alive for the last twenty-five years. It forces you to be smart, sharp, and focused. I read somewhere that courage is the love child of fear and purpose. I tend to agree with that.

Overall, I'm glad I got the heads-up about the Bastards. It helped me think this run through a little better. The good news was: I know them. I know what they are like and what they can do. Although it's been about nine years, so I'm sure they have some new recruits with them by now. Then it hit me—I should pull a 180 on them and go alone. Why pull together a bunch of runners when all I need to do is go in and get this jerk myself? Sounds nuts, I know, but it was a plan, and when I make a plan I stick to it. Johnny and the others would expect me to come in guns blazing with a posse of sleek, weapon-swinging madmen. I always talked about how I liked to work with groups. They would never in a million years expect me to go alone. This would be low-key, old-school, soft-kill stuff; no explosions, no screaming, and absolutely no cats.

Things were going swimmingly at first. I found the exact location of the doctor and even saw him once during my first stakeout of the Mayflower Park Hotel. I planned the gig for two nights from then. The night of the gig, I went very low-key, left my sledgehammer at home, selected a couple of really sharp knives, clipped a few gassers to my belt, and grabbed a stun gun. I was gonna make this sweet and soft.

Breaking and entering was far too easy that night; I almost felt a little silly cat-footing it across the floors and slinking in shadows. I could have just walked in and asked where they were keeping the secret doctor captive. It worked out great. I made a list of who was supposed to be where on any given day, even made a list of those workers who called in sick most often. I got a room across the street, and once I was up on the roof I jump-glided

my way over to the hotel roof, popped the stolen codes into the security door, and went in. I came in through a service entrance, and wandered down some back stairs to the floor I was looking for. Once I was there, I began to realize why things to that point were so easy. The Platoon had gotten there even earlier than me, and the telltale sounds of coughing firearms were echoing through the walls. I kicked in the elevator hatch and poked my head out. Down the hall, through a slight haze of ballistic smoke, I could see three figures in the hallway giving hell to those inside the very room I needed to be in. I only saw the front of one of them and didn't recognize any of the bastards I knew. Although the one with his back to me could have been either Johnny or Sucka.

I dropped down, crouching to lessen my profile, and pulled my stun gun from its holster. By now I was kicking myself for not going all out and bringing along the hammer, or at least something with a bigger bang. I counted in time with their rapid fire, each bullet a number dwindling down until the click of an empty magazine. I ran for it, like some newbie on his first run. I ran right at them and managed to catch them both in the embrace of a good old Mr. Electric Nap.

The third had quickly reloaded and was taking no chances with this new maniac on the scene. He sprayed a heavy dose of bullets in my direction—but he either could not see me very well, or he had never touched a gun before, because nothing came near to hitting me.

I kicked out hard and found that sweet spot right under his Adam's apple. My new friend was choking and rolling around the floor as I turned to survey the room. A layer of smoke softened the area. I could see two figures standing in front of the good doctor, guns drawn, and ready to start raining. Just then someone grabbed me from behind, someone strong. This had to be Johnny Dammit. He effortlessly hoisted me up in the air and tossed my rag-doll-like body straight through the rotting drywall of the next apartment.

I gained my composure as stinging strands of pain ripped through my legs and back. I must have interrupted some kind of shindig with the neighbors apartment, 'cause I looked up into the face of some surprised tweaker staring at me with a stupefied grin, like I was some character in his drugged-out vision. He stared around like he was trying to figure out if I was Santa Claus or not, then he reached down to me with a syringe and said it would make me feel better.

I kicked up and knocked the syringe out of his hand. As he stood there dumbfounded, something suddenly moved behind him, a writhing figure crawling along the filthy sheets of a bed. A girl. A young girl, maybe fifteen years old. There was a needle sticking out of her arm and she clawed at the shag carpeting on the floor.

She looked right at me and said “Save me.”

This whacked-out dreckhead in front of me was obviously playing physician with this unwilling patient, and me being thrown through their wall must have interrupted his little party. This instantly gave me a use for him. I grabbed him by the scruff of his sweaty neck and tossed him back into the room I came from. No better diversion to use against someone who may be chasing you than a flying junkie hurling through the air at them.

- Now that is something I have to see. I think I'll try that tonight.
- Hard Exit



- That's Shapner alright. Though I don't ever remember him being a kind of kidnap-'em-and-drug-'em kind of perv. He was always client-based.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- So what are you saying?
- Netcat
- Just seems strange that he gets slammed with drug "pushing" when all of his clients are voluntary. He's been active for years.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

I looked to the girl whose tearful mascara had drawn black lines down her cheeks. Her mouth opened and there were those words again: "Save me."

In the other room, the flying junkie was laying still on the floor. The two guards were trying to reload their guns. Behind them was the doctor, who looked like he was wrapped up in some kind of gooey cocoon, obviously for easier transport. Then I saw it.

It slinked into the room, two bright glittering eyes piercing the smoke. I grabbed the nearest thing I could find, which in this case was a lamp in the shape of a pole-dancer, and held it ready. Then it came into a shaft of crisp flashing neon light ... a cat. A stray cat lumbering oddly because it had something taped to its belly.

I quickly put two and two together and ran fast for the girl. I grabbed her, held her close, and waited for the heat. Then it came. Intense heat and a glowing orange ball of fire that we forcefully rode through the apartment window and out onto the street. I hit the building across the way, and the impact turned a few ribs into splinters. I yanked the ripcord of my quick-drop 'chute. It opened, but there was no wind that night to catch; instead it caught an overhanging billboard advertising some new super-absorbent feminine product. I felt a hard tug, and my back slammed against the flat of the billboard. So there I was, hanging like some mari-onette below a flaming window with a drugged-up teenager in my arms.

Now here I am. Sitting in this white hallway of the nearest Knight Errant station, waiting for the law to do whatever it's going to do. At least I'm numb for it. I can almost feel the laughing and grunting cops pummeling me, over and over. Feeling better about themselves knowing that I've been caught and they never will be. Now I can hear them, the clacking of militant boots walking purposefully down the hallway. I look to it, and yes indeed, three strutting lawmen are making a beeline right for me. They stop near me, and I stand myself up slowly, waiting for their triumphant smiles. Instead I'm greeted with a series of rather annoyed smirks.

One of the Knight Errant officers takes off my lovely new electro-cuffs while another looks me dead in the face and says, "You may go now Mr. Sledge." I almost giggle at the "Mr." but I don't. Instead I say, "What?"

"You heard me," he says, and points to the door out. I walk out the doors, asking myself how I managed to luck out. Outside there is a limo waiting for me, and some bigwig in some very expensive suit smiling at me. Next to him is the girl I plucked from Doctor Feelgood's house of horrors.

I stand there blinking as this guy tells me how he explained everything to the proper authorities. An explanation that included items that were even news to me. Apparently, Knight Errant was

told that he was the representative of this girl's father. I was there on orders from her father as well. He was looking for his daughter, who had been missing and feared kidnapped for ransom. He informed me that I was now a citywide hero for saving Seattle's angel of pop, Trish Scallenger. I had heard of her. Who hadn't? You know the type, young girl who looks twenty-five once you slap some makeup on her. A real-life pop superstar, the kind that is a whore in her costumes and an angel on her album covers. Even better, who hadn't heard of her father, a man who helped Brackhaven make some of his piles of money while making sure he had a good portion for himself. The financial data king himself.

As I opened my mouth to ask how the story had gotten into the hands of the city's culture vultures, I stopped myself. A tiny little detail was staring me in the face. Of course the city knew what had happened tonight. That slack-jawed tweaker that had Trish in his urine-stained opium den had an open feed on for the whole shebang tonight. Me coming through the wall, the junkie toss, the explosion, all of it. I hope whoever was watching enjoyed the sights and sounds of him being thrown into the other room at Johnny afterwards.

So the story was spreading fast. It seemed that my reward, in addition to being a proclaimed hero of Seattle would be a clean record. And now I was gainfully employed as Trish's personal bodyguard.

- Whoa. From hardcore runner to guardian angel in one fell swoop.
- Marcos
- No good deed goes unpunished.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- Huh. I guess I may have been mistaken on how he get the gig. But I think he still slid pretty easy into the persona. Did anyone ever see the ridiculous outfits he wore on the job?
- Netcat

### Neural-Diary Entry b-263-60-2.2.2073

So I'm sitting in my new digs, a palatial little spot on the Scallenger mansion grounds. I got a view of the city and a view of the main house. I've also got an ultra-realistic-definition trid rig, killer sound system, king-size bed, large bath with shower and whirlpool, and a bank account full of nuyen.

I'm still a little bewildered by it all. I met Daddy Scallenger tonight. I'd seen him occasionally in the news or in the trades, but not in person until now. He's a typical upper-echelon rich guy in a ridiculously expensive suit that's probably made from some extinct animal—or from his last assistant who failed to make his morning drink correctly. Slicked white hair and sharp-edged silver goatee. He seemed oddly animated when he met me. I figured he would look disapprovingly at me, down his perfectly sculpted nose, then grunt a couple of times to indicate that I was allowed to grab a sandwich for being such a good boy. Instead, he came up, shook my hand, and explained how he couldn't thank me enough for finding his daughter and risking my life to save her. I added subtitles to everything he was saying—he says "Thanks for saving my daughter," I hear "Thank you so much for returning my investment to me, just when she's finally starting to show a decent return." But maybe I was being too hard on the guy, because he

seemed pretty sincere. Then he smiled, and right after that a little ARO popped up to tell me I had just received a rather hefty transfer to my account. He stated that that was just the beginning and walked out of the room.

I haven't seen hide nor hair of Trish. I'm sure they have her locked up tight in some rehab unit pumping out the giggle juice that freak had pumped into her. She was in sad shape. In a way, I'm glad I was able to get her out of there. I've known too many people who've bought and paid for the farm while jackin' themselves with crap. I suppose, in some half-assed way, I really am a hero.

Well, time for shuteye. I've got to get ready. In a week, Trish will be making her first appearance back after her ordeal.

- This just makes it clear that the Scallengers made a mistake, and it shows the dangers of getting caught up in the aura of fame. Just because Sledge became a little famous doesn't mean they had to hire him. What he did was more about dumb luck than anything else, and it doesn't mean he knows thing number one about organizing security for a public figure. But people, even other famous people, always think that people in the public eye know more and are more capable than they truly are.
- Sunshine

#### Neural-Diary Entry b-263-66-2.8.2073

All right, everything is checked for tonight's business. And, through my new employment, I have met some people I never thought I ever would, or would want to. I met Valerie Keene while she was gushing over Trish. She heads up VQ Seattle. Valerie wants to market a new sim where everyday people could be Trish at a concert—live the life of a rock star, complete with the full adrenaline rush you get from your adoring fans. Sounds cool. And by cool, I mean stupid. I guess if you have no life and need to zip yourself up into someone else's for a while, playing make-believe in a virtual world would be your thing. Just keep it away from me. Trish was excited, though, like it was Christmas. Made me want to sit her down and tell her that Valerie Keene was as fake as it gets, someone who would turn on her as soon as Keene believed there was money to be made from that angle. I hope Trish doesn't really think that Val cares about her or her career in any way. Anyway, they want to do some recording tonight.

There are four exits out of this room, two on the ground floor and two on the upper floor. One west and the other north. One fire escape on the south end, with a single alley entryway. Skylights mean a lot of glass and possible helos hovering overhead, dropping gliding maniacs or rappelling goons with guns. If something goes down, I can grab Trish, get her to the safe room, and out the south stairwell to the alley. We've got an elf mage, Teather, who is astrally watching things for us, and Rok Hard, a troll weapon specialist, doing what you'd expect a troll weapon specialist to do. I suppose all is well.

#### Neural-Diary Entry b-263-66-2.8.2073—supplemental 1

So here I am standing in the middle of the four-hundred-square-meter room that is the Evergreen Kingdom ballroom, or gala room, or whatever it is they want to call it this year. I flinch every time Trish looks in my direction, knowing that the peep-show she calls her life is being broadcast to thousands of people glued to her feed. I feel retarded trying to get this place set up

for safety. I might as well be doing a show explaining how to maneuver around all my plans, since everyone can see what I'm doing, and where I (and everybody else) am doing it. So, what I actually end up doing is making two separate sets of plans. I stick with my main plan for a while, doing things one way, then I give the verbal signal to the rest of the team, and we follow a different set or protocols for a while. It's not easy to keep everything sorted in my head, but I hope the inconsistency is confusing to anyone watching, too.

Trish is supposed to sing here tonight for some NeoNET exec's birthday party. I'm sure he just wants the notoriety or, even slimier, he wants to ogle a seventeen-year-old pop star as she wiggles onstage. I, for one, wouldn't have let her leave the house in the getup she's wearing tonight. All kinds of strapless here, and nothing there and—well, it's none of my business, really. I'm just keeping her spirit safe. She and her dad can worry about what's happening to the rest of her. But the allure she radiates creates at least one extra problem for me—instead of just worrying about kidnappers, I gotta keep an eye out for babytouchers as well.

I kinda stepped out of line earlier tonight, knowing that if she toned it down, it would make my life easier. I casually mentioned that maybe she would want to wear something old school. You know, elegant. Soon as I say this, this tight-faced, mouth-breather of an entertainment manager comes up to me, purses his lips in disgust, and tells me I don't know anything about the music business. What's there to know? You sing loud, dress like a whore, shake your behind, and make money. If Trish weren't standing there, that idiot would have found himself inside the trunk of a car with a gas rag in his mouth. I hate jags who think they're something because they wear a pair of three-thousand-nuyen pants. The only way I would spend that much on a pair of pants is if they came with their own stereo, included armor plates, and would explode in an emergency, and even then I don't think they would be worth that much.

- Now if you added a vending machine, they might be worth that much.
- Slamm-O!
- I'm gonna find somebody to make me a pair.
- 2XL

This whole building is nuts, not just the ballroom. It's about one hundred fifty meters by sixty meters, and it's white, and I mean white white. All kinds of soft edges and glittering walls. It looks like we are all swimming around in a big old toilet. They have these floating Chinese lantern lights, bobbing up and down all over. Like some underwater nightmare.

Okay, I'm complaining, but overall it's not really a bad gig. I kind of dreaded this whole new job thing, but hey, I get to get gussied up and stand around for one thousand nuyen a day. I'm not complaining. I've got a new bike, a new car, and a great place—even if it is located on the grounds of their mansion. Daddy wants me to stay close. Ugh—that word. Trish has started to call me “Daddy” sometimes, usually to get under my skin. It works. She gets that way when I suggest—in my own charming way—that she may want to do something a certain way, or that she may not want to do what she is doing. She says “Yes, Daddy,” and gives me



a strange grin. I wonder if—I'm not even going there. She couldn't possibly. I'm an old man. Well, older anyway. Older than her, and that's what matters. She is seventeen and I'm ... not. Although I've heard about this syndrome people get, where they're into you after living through a traumatic experience. They tend to start having feelings for the person who saved them, or kidnapped them, or whatever it is. I gotta remember to delete this post and put up something about bullets or how to cauterize a wound with a cigar.

Okay, is everybody in? Here we go.

- She doesn't look seventeen.
- Marcos
- Seventeen or not, I still hate her music.
- Netcat

### Neural-Diary Entry b-263-66-2.8.2073—supplemental 2

You know I just gotta get this down. I really don't dig the whole music scene now. I know it's that whole generation gap blah, blah, blah, but I mean I have tried to give it a chance. But I swear, if I have to hear or see one more lineup of young guys grabbing their crotches, dancing in unison, and singing about love, I think I will have to die in such a way that'll take a lot of people with me. I've been around Trish long enough to know two concrete things: I hate her music, and she is incredibly talented. That little girl's got some pipes. The song she is singing right now is rubbish, just another "hey, look at me, I love you, write me a poem" crap that makes my teeth itch. But if someone's got talent, you notice, even if they're singing a crappy song. It'd be better if she could get rid of the poppy tapping drum machine and do a cover of some old-time songs. I love the old stuff—you know, the kind of music that actually comes on something, music that's more than digital information flowing through the air. I know I'm a dinosaur, but I love some of that stuff. I've still got original copies of *Toxicity* by System of a Down and a disc that's got, among other things, Spiderbait's cover of "Black Betty." If you're talking about more recent bands, I'm more of a Concrete Dreams or Urban Combat Zone kind of guy. If she wanted to, Trish could work a little harder on those tunes, get them out of the toilet of modern pop, and still have people adore her. Anyway, that's my two nuyen. If I were her music manager, things would be way different. I still wouldn't wear a three-thousand-nuyen pair of pants, though.

### Neural-Diary Entry b-263-66-2.8.2073—supplemental 3

Okay, going back to what I was talking about before. I'm not trying to flatter myself into thinking that some underage pop star digs on my old bones, but the song she just finished was directed right at me. And it wasn't a kind of "oh happy girl picnic" song; it was a grinding "I'm having bad thoughts, whatever will I do" kind of song. There's a little groan in my stomach now. This is stupid. She probably thinks she likes me because I saved her life. Which I did, but she's still just silly. She likes me because I don't put up with her crap, like every other person on the planet does. She is supposed to be linked to this other singer guy, but all he does is get all doe-eyed around her, waiting on her hand and foot in the hopes that, one day, he will be able to drink her bathwater. It's demeaning to pathetic men. I'd put him out of his misery, but he's too high profile. Maybe I could arrange an accident. Like, he

could accidentally be involved in a phosphorous toilet mishap. Daddy's Little Girl has got some secrets, I'm sure. Which in itself is pretty amazing—being able to keep anything secret when you're followed around by a ton of people, or when you're having your whole life broadcast for everyone to see, has got to be tricky.

In my short time here, I've learned one little trick about being in the spotlight, one way to keep a little bit of yourself hidden. All you have to do is tell everyone what they want to hear when you're on camera, and they assume you're telling them everything, and they now know everything you're thinking and doing. If you held something back, then they won't know about it, and they won't go looking for it. You can hide in plain sight.

Wait a minute—what's this? I've got some Looky-loo zeroing in on Trish. She's just finishing up this song, and he hasn't taken his eyes off of her. I mean, others are gawking at her too, but it's been my experience that there is a thin line between the longing gaze of a doting fan and the piercing glare of a psychopath. The way this guy is peeping is focused and creepy. I'll keep an eye on him and see what's up.

- Sledge has got a problem right here—he's bought into the fame way of thinking. It's an easy thing to do. When the tablogs are all reporting on who is dating whom, like it's really important or something, it's tough not to think that those things are important when you fall into that circle. So Trish had some relationship dreamed up by publicists. All of us out here know it's bullshit, but you get caught up in it all, seeing what the blogs are saying, and your thoughts get twisted until you start believing that what they're thinking matters. One of the hardest things about being famous is remembering to not think like a famous person.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

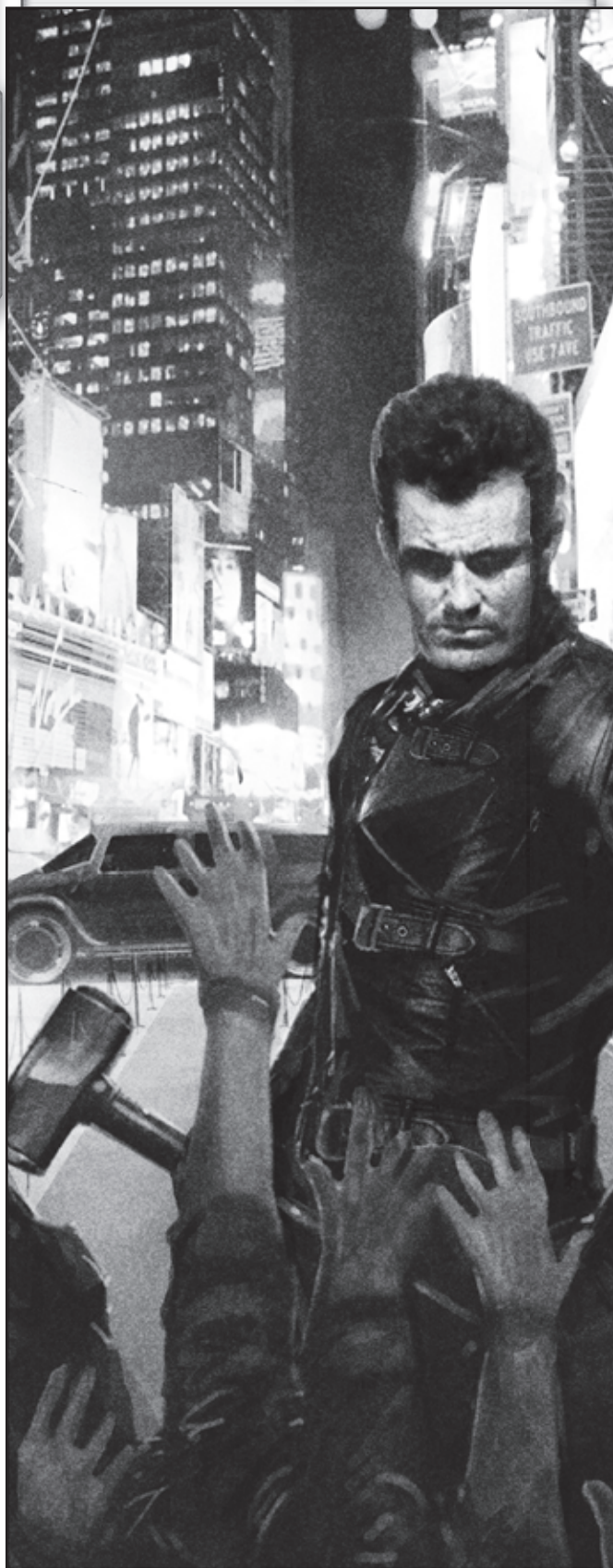
### Neural-Diary Entry b-263-66-2.8.2072—supplemental 4

Mr. Looky-loo got lost in the throng of people heading out of the ballroom to the dinner area. Don't see him anywhere in here. Maybe he got his visual kicks and headed back to creep-ville. I wouldn't doubt if he has a camera setup in his melon so he can play footage of her back all night to his heart's content. Yikes. I'll make one more sweep of the area, and then it's off to one of the four after-parties Trish is supposed to attend, where I have to keep most people away from her with a well-aimed "I will tear your face off" glare. As long as I don't get hit up by pasty-faced Trish podlings, who are under the impression that because they saw me in the media, we are now best friends. This one greased-up prole came up to me and started complimenting me on my outfit and how cool it looked. He said he started dressing like me cause he understood what I was all about. Then he asked if there was a chance he could see Trish. I said yeah, on the trideo. Then he got all huffy, saying he just wanted to see her for a minute. I said he could see her on his way to the hospital, then he made a squeaking sound and ran off.

### Neural-Diary Entry b-263-68-2.13.2073

I always believed that color is a very powerful thing. Color can convey strength and/or emotion, you know? Red, for example, is my favorite color. It emits a kind of long-lasting aggressiveness, with an almost palatable sense of being alive. Then you've got powder blue, which as far as I'm concerned does not convey any sense of power or purpose. And right now, I'm covered in it. I





am standing in a theater dressed in a double-breasted, powder-blue, Kevlar mesh suit looking like a glowing ball of cotton candy puke that some snot-nosed kid just barfed out all over the pavement. It fits nice, but I could do without the high collars and the flared cuffs. Why am I dressed like some bastard child of glitter folk? Because Miss Trish decided, while in the grips of in one of her "I'm angry at Jack" moods, that if she has to be seen with me everywhere she goes, then I have to be color-coordinated with her at all times. The only thing that this color conveys is that I'm in immediate need of getting someone's foot broken off in my rear end. Hell, if I saw myself right now, I would have to kick my own ass just on principle. But I'm not gonna let on. I will stand here, with this ridiculous smile painted on, even though I am leaking hate from every pore.

The only good thing about this new look is that I managed to get one of the top techs, Deiter Ahmbrix, to design me a whole new hammer. Apparently he used to work for Ares and Evo, but he rarely talks about anything but his current work. Silent or not, I love what he's done. I call it the "riot hammer." It's a ten-pound sledge with a modified spinning head. This way, I can load six twelve-gauge shells into each side. Press the button and one of the shells pops out about a good half-inch, so when you bring the hammer down on some gutterpunk he gets a little extra from old mister buckshot. If I want to be a real jag, I can prime one whole side and play "Splattey-Cake" with some mook's face using six shells at once. I can't wait to try this out on some idiot who's strutting around in new body armor, or giving somebody's fancy car a new paint job.

Having this tech as a contact is pretty sweet. I even get a little deal here and there from him. That's one of the perks here—I've met people that I never would have thought. I've shaken hands with people I've only seen on the trids or in photos.

- To sum up, fame lets you meet some people you wouldn't otherwise get to know, but it also makes lots of people think they already know you and are your best friend. Is it worth it? Well, let me just say that Damien Knight's Manhattan penthouse is something to see.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

#### Neural-Diary Entry b-263-72-2.18.2073

I've been thinking about old Mr. Looky-loo from the other day. I'm not too concerned, but I figured I had better keep better a closer eye on Trish. I brought in a technomancer I know to run Looky-loo's face through the known database of Trish's registered fans (generally those connected to her various fan clubs), but nothing has come up so far. I wish something would. I don't like not having a name. I mean, I don't believe for one second that this guy's going to try to capture her for daddy's money, but I wouldn't put it past some starry-eyed wacko like this to want to tear her clothes off, or cut some of her hair off to make a pillow, or even (depending on just how sick he is) wear her skin like a suit. There are a ton of off-center idiots in this town, and I wouldn't put anything past them.

Tonight's a big night. We are at the Seattle Convention and Trade Center for Trish's big release party. Her new album, *Tastes Like Love*, has sold over forty million copies. I'm not saying she's not worth the listen, but this new road she's taking seems a bit



racy. I'm sure the songs will be very well-received, but I'm also sure that having pictures of a half-naked teenage girl included with the album didn't hurt any music sales. Tickets for this show were sold out two months ago, which means there's going to be a massive amount of creepy little scalpers out there sniffing around the red carpet. Maybe, at some point during the night, I could take some time for myself and spend a few minutes picking them off with a .50-caliber from the top of the building.

#### Neural-Diary Entry b-263-72-2.18.2073—supplemental 1

Get this. I'm hobnobbing with all kinds of money-grubbers and well-to-dos when I turn the corner near the toilets and who is standing there right in front of me but ole Mr. Johnson, the one who likes to draw his hair on. He's eyeing me while I'm watching Kenneth Brackhaven and his entourage, who are surrounding Trish's dad and chatting away. Over on the right is Nikola Taul, who is much more attractive in person than I thought she would be. She takes my hand and congratulates me for being such a role model for the city. She then winks at me and says something in Russian. Then Brackhaven breaks away from his group, walks over to me, gives me his power handshake, and he looks to me and says, I kid you not, "If there is anything you need, let me know." The best part was seeing no-hair Mr. Johnson standing off to the side start to twitch when he heard that. I walked over to him and gave him the old "Do I know you" look and shook his hand. He just stood there like a blow-fish ready to pop. I seriously almost asked him how that run went. The one I was supposed to complete for him.

#### Neural-Diary Entry b-263-72-2.18.2073—supplemental 2

Maximilian Lazano just gave me his card and said to keep him in mind if I ever wanted to change jobs.

#### Neural-Diary Entry b-263-73-2.26.2073

What last night needed was some sort of hurricane or tornado, even a perfectly violent earthquake. Last night was in desperate need of a natural disaster, or even an unnatural disaster. I would have even settled for a runaway meteor that could have mercifully slammed into my body at ridiculous speed, vaporizing me in the blink of an eye. At the very least that would have drawn attention away from what I will refer to as the "Incident."

This is how my night began. I spent most of the night before the event arguing with Trish that I didn't want to walk around in this ridiculous purple outfit she had hand-picked. But I'm not the boss here, so of course in the end I dressed up like some kind of deb waiting for a date. So we manage to get the whole entourage moving on time for a change, but we took a little detour on the way to the concert. We stopped off at a high-end car shop on the way because apparently Trish had decided that she could not possibly be seen pulling up to her concert in a white limo. Of course everybody around her agreed wholeheartedly, except me. So about twenty minutes later, after a torrent of frantic car-shop workers worked to accommodate her demands as quickly as possible, out came a lovely bright purple limo. They insisted that this was the only one they had, and that this would be the first time it was in public. As we all got in, I caught the scent of permeable temporary car paint. It's the same kind that car thieves use when they nab a vehicle off the street and need to transport it somewhere else without being too noticed. It made me giggle

that these guys actually took the same limo we had just arrived in, drove it into a shop, and painted it with temporary paint to please her.

- Lesson from this: When you're famous, for every ten people who make it look like they're trying to meet your every need, at least six of them are actually trying to con you.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

We made it to the Seattle Opera House in grand fashion—people were screaming as soon as she stepped out of the car. If you close your eyes at those moments, I defy you to tell the difference between screaming praise and screaming in pain. That walk from the car to the performers' entrance is like walking into Hell and getting your picture taken at the same time.

Inside was one big hot mess. An ocean of teenagers wrapped tightly in skintight clothing and concert T-shirts. All anxiously awaiting the time to tear out their own voices with love-drenched caterwauling and singing along badly to Trish's music. The night mostly went as expected, lots of high-tension dance moves and belting vocals. Actually, it turned out to be a really good concert.

Gotta answer a few questions. I'll get back to this in a bit.

#### Neural-Diary Entry b263-73-2.26.2072—supplemental 1

I'm sure most people know about the Incident, as the well-recorded and -reported situation was headlined all over the place as "Pop star's bodyguard brings the hammer down on innocent fan." They made it sound as if I had gleefully tossed Molotov cocktails into a busload of handicapped school children. Then again, the real story isn't near sensational enough for the scandal-blogs—it has only the modest virtue of being true.

- I heard about this. It was covered in plenty of outlets. I figured there was more to it than what had been reported, but that's what I always figure. I would have dug around more if I had time for entertainment reporting.
- Sushine

Here's what happened: Trish finished up a second encore with one of her new releases, "Bad Touch." The crowd went nuts. She said a few cute words, then we were off the stage and moving to the dressing room. All was par for the course so far; people were slam-packed into the hallways, vying for Trish's attention. Young guys vainly attempted to mask their ineptitude with slick hair and tight pants. Young girls cried their eyes out because Trish's music had somehow changed their lives and spoken to them on a magically personal level. Trish got changed, and we made our way outside to the car.

Just as we got out the doors, a wall of nerdlings—who obviously had been manically pushing the security guards closer to the entrance—started shoving even harder as soon as she showed herself. As a side note, I gotta say that as young as Trish is, she is very professional. She actually stopped, signed some autographs, and shook hands. Meanwhile I snapped my eyes all over the crowd, looking for anything worthy of my immediate violent attention. That's when I saw him. Mr. Looky-loo standing in the back of the crowd just as plain as day. Teather was on the roof checking things astrally, and I saw Hard Rok dealing with the

swarm of fans. That meant Mr. Looky-Loo was mine. He was in a dark hoodie, dark pants, with his hands in his pockets, and he was staring directly at Trish. Now understand this. He didn't waver, didn't twitch, didn't move his eyes from her at all. That set off all sorts of alarms in me. So I watched him, close. The crowd continued its monstrous cacophony of sound as they jumped and screamed for Trish. Looky-loo began to move toward the crowd, eyes fixed with a purpose. I figured that any second it would be go time. He was going to try to get into range of something—a weapon, a jump, a desperate attempt at something—so I watched him, and I was ready.

He moved around the crowd in a strange way, almost gliding. His eyes were fixed on Trish every second, but he still was able to slide around people and find perfect openings in the crowd. Like he was looking for the right place to stand. I watched him, watched that glazed maniacal look blanketing his face, and just as he made it halfway through the throng, his right hand tightened around something in his pocket and he began to pull it out. So I reacted. I jumped from my position right next to Trish and cleared a good two or three heads of fans before I made contact with him. In my leap, I raised up my elbow and then brought it down on Mr. Looky-loo's neck. He skidded across the ground like a sack of dead cats, and I used the momentum to roll and right myself again.

So there I was, hovering over this goon as rolls around the ground in pain, trying to force air into his lungs. Whatever was in his hand had vanished in the crowd, which had cleared enough to give me room to breathe. Just as I was ready to slap some restraints on the guy, or finish him off if he gave me a reason to, one of the facility's security guys rushed up to me screaming "What are you doing?"

"My job! What business is it of yours, Choob?" I asked.

"Look!" he said.

"At what!" I screamed back.

The guard turns the guys head around and showed me what he was talking about. There was a cyberware insert in the back of Mr. Looky-loo's skull. Now this could mean lots of things. Special vision, an eye weapon, a bomb. But what this particular augmentation meant was that this specific individual was blind. I don't mean he was legally blind and couldn't drive at night; I mean his eyes didn't work at all. They just sat there, fixed in his skull, lifeless and catatonic. The insert was a sonar system that helped him navigate, and it was fitted with a sound camera. He was simply trying to get close enough to Trish that the sonar would capture a nice image of her that he could keep. The device in his pocket was an activation switch for his sonar camera. I had successfully foiled the plans of a devout and handicapped fan, much to the utter delight of the thronging media at hand. They were starting to swarm already, wanting to know why I would assault an innocent fan. I kept saying to myself. "How stupid is that! Why didn't that dreckhead just get a set of cybereyes and do it the right way?" As it turned out, the guy was born with no eyes or optic nerves, and no visual receptors in his brain, so cybereyes would do him no good. So it came to this—I truly am a fraggin' glitch.

- That indeed was a little different than what I read. Sledge still acted rashly, though.
- Sunshine

- It's another fame distortion thing. You get enough scary letters—and we all get them—and you begin to think that at least one of those letter writers is in every crowd you see. So you watch for them, and you try to act before they do. It seems paranoid, but sometimes those people really do have a gun instead of a camera.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

### Neural-Diary Entry b263-78–2.28.2073

I've always heard it said that "It ain't over until the fat lady sings." Well I say that it ain't over until the fat lady gets shot in the face with a high-caliber explosive round and lies on the street in a halo of her own blood. I am a street samurai; the high-pitched whine of grinding gears and full-on bullet-to-flesh contact is what I'm about. I am steel and fire and grinning hell at the administrative end of any weapon I can get my hands on. I'm wired just like others, although I'm not chromed, but I'm jazzed when I need to be. I've got a cutout chip so I don't have to worry about visits from Mr. Pain. I am a Bosozuki.

At least, that's what I was. Now I'm a street samurai's worst nightmare—a celebrity. Funny thing is, Trish and all these jackasses around her are so worried about her safety, when the only one of us who is in any sort of danger of being offed right now is me. Being a flashy bullet-catcher and having my mug plastered all over the place has drawn a great big bright bullseye on my backside for any idiot I ever crossed or stole something from, or tried to give the hard goodbye to at the end of my hammer. I'm sure there are tons of slack-jawed momma's boys out there just waiting to take a swing at me. Now, not only do I need to worry about keeping Trish's hoop from the sweaty hands of perverts, I have to watch my back for every conceivable way of getting geeked. At least I have a bunch of idiot fans around me to use as shields if anyone comes at me. Plus I've got the useless meatbags that make up Trish's entourage. I'd gladly trade any of their lives for mine.

Except for Trish. She's a good egg. A good egg with a lot of issues.

- I couldn't imagine being stuck out there in the limelight like that. I've pissed off so many people in my life, at least one of them would be able to use the trid to find my coordinates, then launch a guided missile my way.
- Hard Exit
- Yeah, but this is what he chose when he took the paycheck, right? We all make choices. He always could have told Scallenger "no," and continued about his business. It's the choice between steady pay and freedom, which is something we face a lot.
- Netcat

I've heard over the ether that I'm a sellout, washout, glory-hound. I think that Tolk Preston, my Rimbo friend, said it best: "A celebrity shadowrunner is the same thing as a handful of human crap painted gold. Yeah, it smells bad, but boy does it shine." I don't think I fully understood what that was supposed to mean until now. Here I am, again, dressed to match Trish for her night out. I'm in some sort of tight-fitting, fuchsia-colored body armor; all I need is a couple of feathers, and I will look like the true jag-off that I feel like. And like a good little monkey, I stand my ground and do my job with a goofy smile on my face. I'm not saying the money isn't great, but you know when it comes down to it and



the blood is pooling on the floor, there's more to life than a large bank account.

Then it begins. Their high-def neural microcams and hacker video implants fire off in our direction like a thousand-fold firing squad. I close myself up inside like an old-fashioned screen door, and imagine, just for a moment, that the camera flashes are what I actually wish they were—muzzle-flashes. Gut-snapping screams of fire launching bullets straight at me. Then I'm back in the thick of it, climbing down trash-filled, urine-stained alleyways decorated with shiny prostitutes, dodging projectiles like a swarm of hot gnats seeking purchase anywhere in my body. I'm running again, chugging fire into my lungs as my muscles burn with the calisthenics of combat. I can feel the musky streaks of sweat running over my skin, proof that I'm actually doing something worthwhile, that I'm alive. All around me, innumerable enemies throw hot lead at me, tearing through my armor and flesh, tattooing my spirit with the honor of a death without dying.

But it never fails—something always brings me back to the cotton-candy reality I now live in. Usually it's some headset-wearing flunky letting me know that I'm too far away from Trish and should catch up and do my job. Do my job? I'm a sharp-dressed, hammer-swinging babysitter! I'm wound so tight in all this that I snapped and waylaid a blind dude. I'm not cut out for this. Whoever is cut out for this, I don't want to meet, because I'd hate them. Now I know why I stayed in the shadows for so many years. I was never a bodyguard. I had my own bodyguards—blades and bullets watching my back, giving me the time to do what I do best: run. I can feel my insides softening with every little tea party I go to. Each time I grab onto somebody's wilted handshake and smile, a chunk of who I am gets ripped out. Seeing these mindless human cameras clicking away at us makes the fire in my belly rage.

I don't remember much about my education, but for some reason I have always remembered that in ancient cultures they believed that if you had your picture taken that it would capture your soul. Maybe that's what's happened to me now. I have spent so much time having my picture taken that perhaps I don't have anything left? Maybe there are hundreds of thousands of splinters from my soul that are now dying off, suffocating in the airless Matrix where digital images are stored, or filling the columns of a scandalblog. Maybe a piece of my soul now hovers near some fey bare-chested male fashion model with a smeared streak of red lipstick serving as a smile. Or better yet, I'm probably set next to some scratch-and-sniff noxious high-priced perfume made from the glands of lobotomized monkeys.

But hey, maybe it's a good thing. A street samurai with a soul probably isn't the best thing. Maybe I should just be happy with where I'm at. I'll just keep dancing for grandma at all these pretentious soirees, or ice cream socials, or whatever they call them now.

So eyes open, Jack. Back to the glamorous life. Oh yeah, I stink ... but look at me shine.

- Interesting how quick he went sour on that whole life. Some of the problem is him—not all of us are as addicted to being shot at as he seems to be, and not all of us are averse to a little peace, quiet, and comfort.
- Riser

- You changing careers now, Riser?
- Netcat

- There's not much more to the file—things get a little jagged here. A few bits of data survived in the middle of the damage.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

#### Neural-Diary Entry b-263-83–3.1.2073

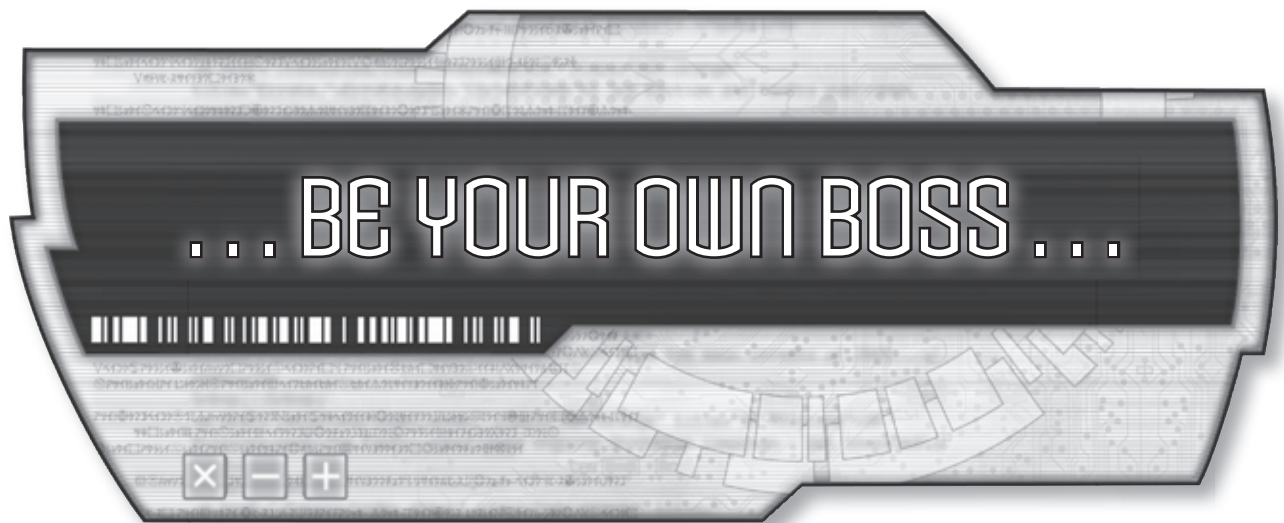
*...iu...kno...bu...* I paid my dues and I've got all the receipts to prove it. Stacks of war stories all neatly packed away in sense memory. I could talk all night about Seattle, and Chicago, and L.A., but there comes a time when you've done so much that you begin to take liberties with the facts. Before you know it instead of telling stories that you actually did, you start telling stories that you could have done, just so people don't think you're out to pasture *...yo oky odhey pahdg389fn*

#### Neural-Diary Entry b-263-84–3.1.2073—supplemental 1

*fan 9t t d oeb 3 oinf 3km fmpa skm s...* There are two kinds of street samurai in the world. Samurai of the street and samurai of the pasture. If you're not one, then you're the other. The only thing to look forward to while you are in the pasture is a quick metallic shock to the head and perhaps an angry digestion through the bowels of a thousand different people. If you're lucky, one of those thousand nameless and faceless meat-eaters will belch you up or fart you out so at least in some way you can be remembered *...tyirh9 d8rt ht876h5 0sns 8yr nmto*

#### Neural-Diary Entry b-263-86–3.1.2073—supplemental 2

*73 rh39m md md993 j...* I k... I'm sure I could jump back into running for a living. Maybe ditch all this and show up somewhere as the "Masked Avenger." Slap on a gas mask, or a Halloween costume. Make it theatrical, you know. Maybe I could nab that Aztechnology job, wake up every day, drink my soykaf, and melt into the profile of a good old sarariman. Then again, maybe I could just vanish, resurfacing years later to prowl the streets as Captain Nobody *... 58b wugwo ogfht75 otyur8 45*



It was a delicate situation, and that meant the responsibility for dealing with it fell directly on the CEO's lap. He couldn't trust anyone else to handle it; they might not understand the intricacies of the politics involved, and they might not be properly attuned to the need to pitch their words correctly in order to get the right response. Delegating responsibilities is a good thing in a business, but so is taking the bull by the horns and doing things yourself.

The CEO straightened his tie and quickly polished his tusks. He was very happy with the way his new, jet-black hair looked—it had a wave to it that his previous hair had never possessed. He felt he looked calm and professional, which was exactly what the situation called for. He was ready.

He stepped out of his office, and all heads turned to look at him. It was a pretty sorry-looking lot—the room was full of slumped shoulders, eyes with purple bags under them, and mouths digging deep creases into the lower parts of people's jawlines. They looked at him, waiting for him to speak. Now was the time for him to choose his words carefully and deal with the situation in a way only he could.

"You lousy pieces of shit," he said. "I wouldn't trust any of you to guard a human boy at a Humanis convention. Look at you. You call yourselves bodyguards? Only thing I see in here is roadkill."

That next moment decided the fate of half of his employees. He watched for shoulders that slumped more, and mouths that got sadder. He also watched for eyes that flashed in anger.

He pointed out those who now looked totally defeated. "You. You. You. And you. You're done. Get out of here. I can only hope your next jobs involve trying to extract someone we're guarding, because I can't think of anything that would be easier than stopping people like you."

There were some stunned expressions, maybe even an angry glare or two, but the dismissed employees didn't put up any fight. They stood up and walked out, just as weak now as they had been last Friday night.

The CEO didn't wait until they were gone before he started talking to the others. "The rest of you. Your next mission is going to be keeping yourself safe from me if you don't improve. Any of you ever lets someone pull a gun that close to a client of ours again, you better never let me see your face, because if I do, I'll be yanking out your intestines and using them for guitar strings. You hear me? Amateur hour's over. Be professional, or I'll kill you myself."

He strode into his office. He didn't slam his door. He'd found that a rant like the one he'd just delivered was more effective when it came with a helping of calm. Out there, some of them were mad at him, sure, and they didn't like the lecture, but they were also wondering what it would be like if he ever got *really* mad.

And not one of them had any questions about who was in charge here.







## IN COMMAND

Posted by: OrkCEO

- You know I appreciate all of you—or most of you—but the fact that we've got a lot of skills and knowledge represented in JackPoint doesn't blind me to the value of having fresh perspectives and new blood. With that in mind, you're going to see a few new additions to JackPoint in the coming months (some new faces, and maybe an old friend) to add some perspectives that we don't have at the moment. The first newcomer is OrkCEO, a guy who parlayed his running skill into a for-real, legitimate private security business. He's going to talk a little about the good and the bad of being your own boss.
- FastJack

Most runners start thinking about becoming their own boss from the moment they start running, because most runs involve a crew. Where there's a crew, there's a boss, and where there's a boss, there's someone giving orders, and I don't know anyone who's been given an order who doesn't think about how nice it would be to be the one in charge someday.

Some people just want to be in charge of their own crew, and that's as far as their ambition takes them. That's fine. I'm not here to tell everyone to be like me. But if you think a little bigger, you can maybe accomplish a lot more than you thought you could. Take me. Instead of heading one crew that does a lot of bodyguard jobs and the like, I head half a dozen or more. That means I get the cut of six missions at once, and a lot of the time I don't have to actually go out and put my ass in the line of fire.

- You say that like it's a good thing.
- Hard Exit

What I'm saying is, if you're smart and ambitious, you can do the kind of thing you like to do, only on a wider scale, and that just means more cash for you. Starting to see the upside?

- So we started this whole collection talking about how to live free of corporate entanglements and other things that tie us down, and now we're going to talk about how to take our lifestyle and turn it into a corporate money-making machine? What the fuck?
- Aufheben
- There's a big difference between getting paid to do someone else's dirty work, and getting paid to do your own.
- Nephrine

Let me walk you through some of the steps in the process that takes you from thinking about how nice it would be to be in charge someday to actually running a profitable business.

## HAVE AN IDEA

I'm not worried about discussing this part in too much detail, because all of you have some kind of idea that can be the basis for a business. If you didn't have some idea about how you could earn money by working on your own, you'd have either starved to death by now or taken a corp job. You've all got your specialties

and skills, and you all know something about how to turn those things into cash. Really, you're all running your own businesses now, whether it's an assassination business, a hack-for-hire business, or an illegal transportation business. You all found a demand in the market, and you tapped into it. You already took care of the first step.

## KNOW WHEN YOU NEED HELP

We all know there are times we need help, because we've all hired a crew before. We don't usually think of a running crew as employees, and we sure as hell don't call them that to their face, but that's what they are. Anyone who regularly does things with you that helps you make money can be considered an employee, or at least a co-worker. You don't have to have a contract, or legal agreements, or any of that shit at first. You just have to have someone who helps you do the work you're trying to do.

Now, what I'm about to say will show that I didn't spend a whole lot of time in business school learning how to run a small corporation or anything. The people who do that talk all about business models, and tell you that if you understand what your business is trying to accomplish, you'll know what kind of staff you need, and then you go out and find the right people for the necessary positions. That all sounds good, but the type of businesses people like us create usually aren't started with that kind of foresight and planning. What you do is probably a lot like what I did—instead of having a plan for what kind of business I was creating, I based what I did on the people I had available to me and my knowledge of their capabilities. Do I have a guy who's a crack shot and a cool head, but who also sports a nasty novacoke addiction? Then I'll take some one-off jobs and avoid any long-term contracts, because I know I've got someone good, but there will be some times when he's going to drop off the map. Do I have a few people who are reliable, good at following orders, and creative as a bunch of rocks? Then I'm going to limit myself to one team working at a time until I find someone besides me who is capable of being a leader.

The disadvantage of basing your business on the people available to you is that if those people let you down and you have to let them go—or drop them out of a window—then your business immediately shrinks (I've grown to the point where people are seeking me out and looking for work, but most entrepreneurial runners aren't exactly traveling around with a commlink full of résumés, so you may not immediately recover from losing people). I'm willing to deal with that consequence, though, because I've always felt that doing less work was a whole lot better in the long run than doing crap work.

In the end, then, the trick isn't about knowing *when* you need help—it's about knowing how best to use the help you have available. You may think you're working in whatever area you specialize in, but in reality, once you start a company, you're in the same business as me, and that's people management. Better get used to it.

- This is why people who like music should play in a band and not manage one. Making music is different from music business. The world is full of unhappy people who are working bad jobs in an industry because they like what the industry produces, which makes them overlook the fact that, in order to work in that industry, they're letting themselves be treated like a cog in a big machine.
- Aufheben



- But you're in a strange industry. OrkCEO is talking about an industry where the person in charge and the person who deals with personnel are the same guy—him. You're in an industry where you and your bandmates are clearly in charge, and you've got a manager who has to wrangle all of you but is clearly your subordinate. No matter how many orders your manager may attempt to give, the fans aren't screaming his name night after night. There is a satisfaction that comes with being in charge, and that mitigates a lot of the drudgery you were talking about.
- Sunshine

## LEGAL STRUCTURES

From a legal point of view, runners act as independent contractors or sub-contractors to whoever is paying out the nuyen. That's what we'd be called if anyone were concerned about legalities. We all know, though, that no organization we work for is reporting the money they're giving us to any government body, and if any of us are filing tax returns, it's for money earned through legitimate jobs, not for shadowrunning income.

- Right. For the same reason that Al Capone didn't list "bootlegging income" as a line item on his return.
- Cosmo

The question is, if we've all been able to make our way off the books, why should we consider going legit and entangling ourselves in things like taxes, business licenses, and all the fees and obligations governments like to impose?

The simple answer is, the bigger you get, the more noticeable you are, and you don't want to give the authorities an excuse to come after you. Note, however, that this only applies to businesses that have a legal basis. If you decide to set up shop distributing BTLs, the good news is that you'll never have to register your business. The bad news is that there's always a chance that the authorities will target you the next time they need to make an example of someone.

Going legit can also serve to raise your profile. Corp management and entertainment types are more likely to work with an established security organization, like my business, than they are to sign up some fly-by-night runners whose office is a commlink clipped to some guy's belt. If you want to be a real business, you should get yourself registered.

The requirements for getting a business license change so much from place to place that I'm not going to bother reviewing the steps now, and if you're smart, you won't learn them either. Most of you will be registering with a fake SIN anyway, so there's no point to pretending you're going to follow the letter of the law. Don't bother going down to city hall or whatever and wasting a lot of time. Use your contacts, find someone who knows how to grease the wheels of government, and pay them what they need. They'll come up with a nice license for you, and the hassle you avoid will be worth whatever money you spend.

- I've gotta agree, because I've done jobs like this before. Given how much I've hacked into all sorts of government databases, it wasn't hard for me to set up the pathways I've needed, but it would be a bitch for someone who has never done it to set that

up. And I promise that my fees are reasonable—I can usually get what people need for under 300 nuyen.

- Slamm-O!

## BRINGING IN BUSINESS

Whether you're a legit business or a criminal enterprise, whether you're a solo operator or you have ten people working under you, the basic question is always bringing in people who are going to pay you for what you want to do. Yeah, there are people who try to survive by waiting for people to come around and wave money in their faces, but we call those people beggars, not business people. I assume that most of you have been around the block enough to know that, in this world, money doesn't come to you. You have to go get it.

People who have never been in business before always think of advertising as the prime way to bring in business, but that's only because they see advertising around them all the time (during trids, in AR spam, and all that). In truth, it's a small percentage of companies that ever buy trid airtime—businesses the size of mine don't make commercials.

The other thing people always think is that if they're starting a business, they better get some info on the Matrix about what they're doing. They're right, they do. What too many people do, though, is throw together some stuff about how great their business is, put it up on a node somewhere, and then wait for the traffic to flow in. Then they get surprised when it doesn't.

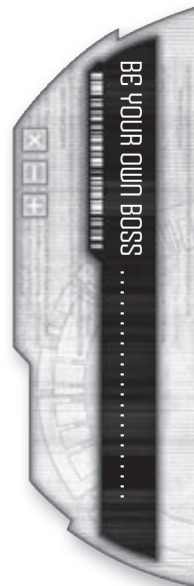
When you get customers in the first years of your company, they'll come for two reasons—either because you know people who are willing to give you work, or because people who hired you once come back for repeat business. You may think that you don't know enough people who are willing to give you business. If that's the case, then your job is to get to know more people. Hang out where people who do the thing you do hang out, get to know people who use your services, and make it clear to them that you're the kind of person they want to hire. This means that if you are trying to start a business in the music industry, spend a lot of time at clubs.

- Okay, so getting involved in the music biz isn't *all* misery.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

If you want to get into trids, find where people are shooting in your town and go there. (If there are no people shooting in your town, you're in the wrong town.)

You can even engage in a little theater if you need to. I'm not too proud to say that in the early days of my business, I dressed up some of my pretty young friends like pop stars, then I escorted them from club to club, acting like I was their bodyguard. I met some people in the field, and I got noticed as someone who can do the work. No one I was guarding on these runs got hurt—mainly because they weren't famous or rich enough for anyone to target them. Success looks good, though, no matter how you accomplish it.

- The key of OrkCEO's little charade is he was actually doing the thing he wanted to do, not just talking about it. I've known too many people who think they can get noticed by a trid producer just by sharing their opinions about trids all over the Matrix. The people making trids, though, aren't looking for more opinions



about their work—they've got plenty of those. They need people who can do the work they need done, not just talk about it.

- Sunshine
- Let's say you put yourself in the right place to meet people who can give you work, and you start up a conversation. Here's what not to say: Don't tell them what they're screwing up, and how you're better than anyone they're using. All that may be true, but no one likes to hear it from someone they don't know. Be professional, be respectful, and don't act like you're God's gift to whatever it is you're doing.
- Traveler Jones

## YOUR LIFE

The good thing and the bad thing about being your own boss is that there is no longer any such thing as time off. The bad part of that is pretty obvious, so let's look at the good. It's nice to have downtime, but it's even nicer to know that you have some control over your destiny, and you don't have to wait around for other people to make something happen for you. Entrepreneurs often talk about the long hours they put in, but it's not always a complaint—it's often a matter of pride, because they are involved in something they want to be in, and they enjoy pouring large amounts of time into that effort.

You're not going to get much vacation time, you're going to be thinking about your business in most of your waking hours, and when you go to sleep you're going to dream about it. So choose your business carefully. It's your life now.

- OrkCEO is talking about the entrepreneurs like him, the ones really dedicated to making a growing, sustainable business. He's not talking about those of us who do a little something on the side just because it's fun. Not every musician has to be Christy Dae, rocketing up the charts as fast as possible. You can play a set at a local club every week or so, people can enjoy it, you pocket a few bucks, and the rest of the time you do something else with your life. Not everything has to become a full-on business.
- Kay St. Irregular

If you do things right, you should have a decent amount of money coming in. I've said many times that a good accountant is worth double what they usually charge, because having someone on your side who understands the secrets of money can keep you from losing, or losing track of, what you have. I'm no money expert, so I'm going to let Mr. Bonds talk a little about the financial side of things.

## HANDLING WEALTH

Posted by: Mr. Bonds

Handling your money is every bit as important as handling your business. Everyone—or almost everyone—dreams of bringing in enough money to retire, but you usually can't retire with money stuffed in a mattress (or in your regular bank account, which isn't much better from an investment point of view). You certainly can't expect Mr. Johnson to pay you in a thick

INCOMING FEED.....





investment portfolio, and generally, shadow brokers don't provide retirement plans.

The most essential part of good finances sounds simple but is often ignored. Keeping track of what is coming in and what is going out is crucial to any business or personal finances, but too many people just drop cash in a pile when it comes in and reach their hand into that pile when they need it. Then, inevitably, they find that the pile is gone one day, and they wonder where it all went. There really is no excuse for not keeping track, though, as most of the software to monitor your transactions is included with most accounts. All you have to do is use it.

A more advanced step in financial management is knowing where to put your money (assuming you have some funds that can sit in one place for more than a few weeks at a time). People often speak of the importance of diversifying your investments, but they don't understand that this means more than just dividing it between savings, stocks, and bonds. We all should be well aware of the fact that governments can disappear, and that currencies that seem stable one day can be as worthless as toilet paper the next. If you want to preserve your wealth, buy things that always have worth, no matter what happens to governments and currencies. Land, precious metals, gems, even some weapons are things that people are always interested in having. Make sure you have some of that, and you will be better able to withstand whatever the future might inflict on you.

One more word about investments: We live in the shadows. Most of us have committed crimes far worse than insider trading. With that in mind, it would be foolish not to cultivate a source with inside information who can provide you with a little advance knowledge about when to buy and sell certain stocks. There is no reason to let any possible advantage pass you by.

- I am shocked, shocked to find that crimes are being promoted in here!
- Winterhawk
- I invest in tomorrow; it's the only wealth worth having.
- Plan 9
- And that means ...?
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- It means that temporal wealth in money or goods is a waste of time. "Now" is gone just as soon as you experience it. Try instead, sending your goods, your money, into the future. Don't invest in pork bottoms or Infoteck LTD PDQ. That's all imaginary. Now. Temporary. Instead, invest in technology. Science. The things that will change the world tomorrow. Invest in brilliant researchers and engineers who need only the money you have to build you the next great widget. Don't worry, your money will be there tomorrow, and it will have brought along a bunch of its friends. But more importantly, you will be able to proudly say that you bought tomorrow, and it paid dividends.
- Plan 9
- Carrying forward the past is at least as valuable as building the future. Possessing art means owning beauty, grace, and an important part of history. Additionally, real art appreciates in

value. My collection is vast, beautiful, and affords me a certain respectability that you can't get with a hundred thousand things that shoot or explode.

- Fianchetto
- Actually, the real way to make money with art is to find an up-and-comer, buy up their crap, kill them off, and then sell their stuff for triple. Not that I'd do that, of course.
- Haze

## STARTING AGAIN

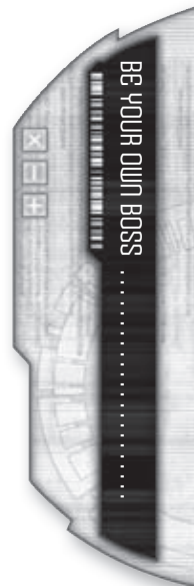
Posted by: OrkCEO

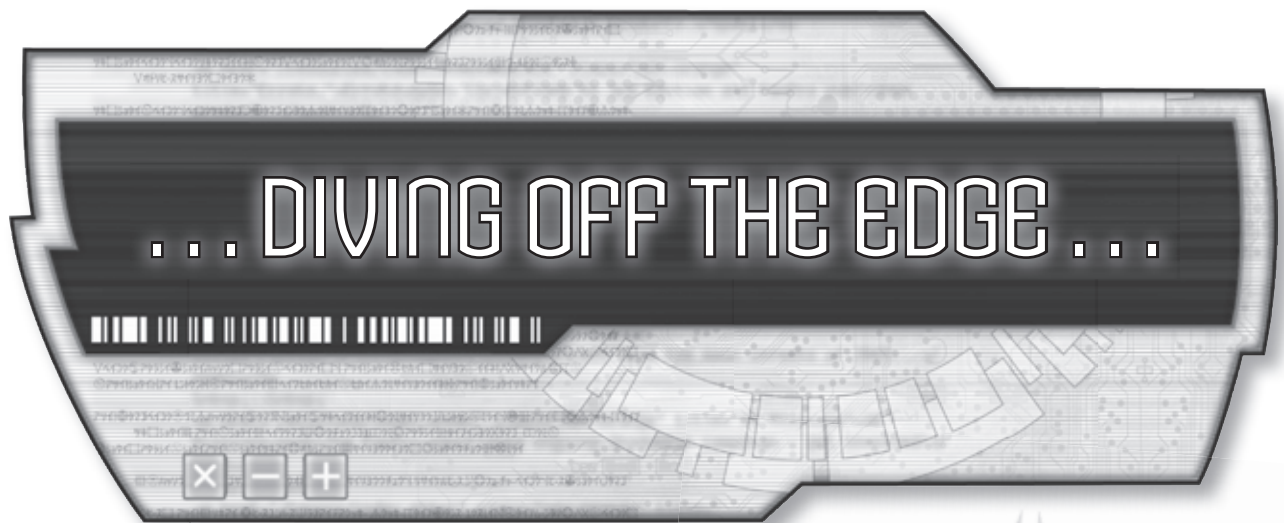
My business is doing well. My roster of clients is expanding, our reputation is good, and I've brought in some middle management because the staff has become too large for me to handle on my own. With other managers in place, I can take more days off, maybe even take a vacation.

So where are my thoughts? Am I basking in the accomplishment? No. I still think about my current business plenty, but ideas for other businesses keep popping into my head. Matrix security consulting is always needed. I've met plenty of people in my line of work who would pay good money for firearms training, and that's definitely something I could offer. And so on and so forth.

When you start your own business, what you might really come to enjoy is not the business itself, but the challenge of it. The world never seems to be running particularly short of corporations, so to think you can start one that will survive in the jungle out there takes a lot of balls (no matter what your gender is). If you've ever done a run against a big corp, you know the thrill you get from sneaking onto their turf, taking what you want, and getting out clean. Starting your own business isn't sneaking around behind them—it's going right in their face, announcing your presence, and daring them to do something about it. Who says that's not as exhilarating as a run?

- Do you get to shoot people a lot? No? Then I'll go ahead and say it's not as exciting.
- Hard Exit
- One point OrkCEO should have mentioned is that moving on to start a new business is not just about being bored with the old one, or taking on a new challenge. The skills to start up a business are not always the same as the skills to grow an existing business, and it's often good for a founder to step aside and let someone take over who is more equipped for that kind of work. The fact that people are willing to pay entrepreneurs a handsome sum to buy their company from them is a nice incentive to allow this to happen.
- Mr. Bonds
- This can even work on a small scale. Sometimes just running a one-person business, like say BTL distribution, can show others where money can be made, and they're often happy to pay you to take over your clients. Basically you blaze the trail, then others pay you to find out just where it was you went.
- Turbo Bunny





What you did in the past doesn't matter. The only important thing is what you can do next—how you can be better than you were before.

Ma'Fan breathed. She inhaled, then she exhaled, and as she did she waited for the moment she would die. She was pleased with each fraction of a second that passed without that happening. Then she was out of time for thinking and for sitting still. Now, she had to be ready. She had to move.

Every piece of technology she owned was turned off. None of it would help her now. It would mostly be a series of warnings and alerts, telling her that things were not going well, and she already had a firm grasp of that fact. All she needed to know was in the long hallway in front of her.

Fire was raging in the rooms on the left side of the hall. The fires had brought extinguisher drones to the area, and in their scan of the situation they had noticed an anomaly in the middle of the flames and swirling smoke. They had summoned help, and more drones had come in, and humans were coming behind them. Coming quickly.

In the short breath she had taken, she had considered hiding, she had considered fighting, she had considered every option she could, and in the end she settled where she always did.

Don't plan. Act.

Rotodrones sent smoke spiraling around their propellers, marking their presence. Red targeting lasers danced through the hallway, looking to spot her for the security whose footsteps she could hear thudding in a nearby stairwell. Everything in the hallway wanted her dead, and so did everyone in all the stairwells. There was only one path—the shine of a window at the opposite end of the hallway, glimpsed occasionally when the smoke parted.

She started. Two steps, and she was at her top speed, cutting a straight, predictable path that let a cluster of red lights gather on her chest. Then she veered left, leaped, put one foot on a small couch in the hallway, jumped off that, landed next on the top of a

trash can, leaped again, planted her left foot sideways on the wall and pushed off, hard.

She flipped, had a moment to look behind her, and in that moment two knives flew from her left hand, just to keep anyone behind her honest. She heard one thunk into a wall, the other hit something softer in perhaps the luckiest throw of her life.

Then her head was right side up, her feet coming to the ground, and a drone was hovering right in front of her. She pulled her head back so her face wouldn't hit it, and brought her right hand crashing down on it, sending the drone twisting out of its flight path and out of her way.

She heard the empty pop of gunfire and went right, running full speed toward the wall, arms out, pushing off almost before she hit the wall so that she practically bounced away from it. A bullet hole appeared on the wall between the splayed fingers of her right hand.

She was coughing, but the heat of the fire and the sweep of the lasers were mostly behind her now, and the window was in front, and she sprinted and focused on her hand, everything on her hand, calling on Cat to make her hand into a hammer, into dynamite.

Her hand hit the window, the window shattered, and Ma'Fan fell, legs wheeling in empty space. She didn't look for a safe landing space, she didn't look at the ground at all, she just prepared for the moment she would land and her legs would get traction.

Her feet hit, her knees bent, and she ran. She had no idea if she was hurt. All that mattered was that she was well enough to move.

She risked a single glance backward as she ran. She saw smoke and drones coming out of the window she had exited. The drones were focusing on the ground just below the window, not prepared to deal with someone who may have fallen that far and kept moving.

*Four stories, Ma'Fan thought. That's a new personal best.* And no sooner had she thought that than she thought about how she would pull off a fall from five.



## LANDING A COIN ON THE EDGE

Posted by: Ma'Fan

Nothing I'm about to say means that you're not good.

We're all good. We've all had plenty of successful missions; we've all had people hire us because they've heard of our skills. We like to think that it is our skills, our knowledge, and our smarts that keep us alive, run in and run out. What we don't like to think about, though, is the fact that sometimes it's not our skill that keeps us alive. The cemeteries are full of people who were good at what they do. Many of them were just as good as us; sometimes they were better. Despite their skill, though, they ended up dead, and generally not because they retired rich and lived to a nice, ripe old age. They died early, with all their abilities, not because their skills failed them, but because their luck did.

We all know this. We can control what we can control, and we hope that will be enough, but there's always that unknown element out there—that misfiring gun, that passing car that ricochets the bullet meant for us—that keeps us alive when maybe we were supposed to be dead. Or, when our luck turns, kills us in spite of all our skills and best efforts.

Fatima was good. She'd been in a hundred firefight before, and she survived all of them, until the one she didn't. She didn't lose her skills in that one fight that took her life. She just rolled snake eyes.

- It wasn't just luck. Just like sometimes we make our own good luck, there are people who make bad luck for us. People who are pretty much just walking piles of bad luck, these days.
- Pistons
- Say what you want about Haze, but I'm pretty sure he's too smart to rise to that kind of baiting.
- Winterhawk

We've all been in situations where we've needed something impossible to happen for us to survive, and here we all are, still alive. It may seem foolhardy to offer advice on how to make that happen—how do you teach someone to be lucky?—but there are a few things that people who have lived on the edge long enough can pass along to help us survive as long as them—and a few definite traps to avoid.

### TRUST YOURSELF

The single most important thing you can do to get luck on your side is to take the actions that allow luck to work. You'll never get that lucky bloop single in baseball if you don't swing the bat, and you'll never hit an opponent with an incredibly difficult shot unless you go ahead and pull the trigger.

The first step in doing these things is believing it'll be worthwhile. If you think something you do is going to fail—or worse, result in your death—then you're not going to do it. You only try if you think your action has a chance of success. So when that moment comes, when your back is to the wall and all your plans have fallen apart, remember all the time you've spent becoming the person you are—learning the things you know, obtaining the skills you have, all that. You may not have a plan, but you know

you have the abilities to make something happen. Your next move, then, is to make something happen. Take the shot, make the move, do something that could result in a good action, and have faith that the abilities you've worked on will lead to something good happening.

And if that turns out not to be the case, there's a good chance you'll be dead before you know something has gone wrong.

- Trusting yourself is only part of the problem. If you're in charge of a group, you need to get them to trust you if you come up with a plan that doesn't make sense at first, or that seems like you're plunging them into the firing line. If you're telling your rigger, who's supposed to be laying low, to rev her engine loudly and then drive quickly around the block, tires squealing, you need her to just do it without explaining the distraction you're trying to create and how you plan to get her out of danger once she attracts all the attention that will be coming her way.
- Riser

### WORK AGAINST EXPECTATIONS

I realize that's a rather obvious thing to say, but it bears repeating. When you improvise, it helps to do the thing that whoever you're up against will not expect. Just as a building's security is concentrated on its most obvious points of entrance, people concentrate their personal defenses on what they believe to be their most vulnerable parts. If you make a sudden rush at someone, they'll usually try to protect their head and their crotch if they're a man, head and abdomen if they're a woman. Arms and legs are the parts of the body people leave vulnerable—not only that, they use those limbs as part of their defense. The right arm grab can neutralize whatever your opponent was going to do, plus put you in a position to do more significant damage. Taking your opponent's legs out from under them is another good option.

On a broader scale, remember that once you set off an alarm, people are usually going to expect you to get out of wherever you are. Staying where you are, or going in even deeper, can cause a few seconds of confusion that can give you a little time to come up with a better plan. Being where you aren't expected to be can give you the chance to take someone out when they stumble upon you, or near you. Make your move, and then trust your luck to make your move pay off (that's a recurring theme here).

- Sometimes this is about not doing anything. I came sailing around the Texas coast when I intercepted some communications that let me know a freighter about a hundred kilometers away was carrying some fresh new guns to help people in Bogotá kill each other. Guns that would be nice and valuable to someone who knows how to work the black market. Bad part was, they had a hacker who caught me listening in, so I knew what they had, and they knew I knew. 'Course that meant they figured I'd be coming after them quick, hoping to intercept them before they got to port, so they got ready and braced themselves. I went after them, but slow, so I didn't get any closer to them, but I didn't get any farther away. They spent the rest of the trip wondering when I was going to attack and building up their defenses as much as they could. When they made it to port without being attacked, they were really excited and relieved, and they couldn't unload their boat fast enough. They unloaded so fast that they didn't



check too carefully to see who was taking possession of their crates, so they never noticed that some of the dockworkers didn't have the right clearances. We didn't get all the guns they had, but we got enough to make a few bucks, and for once I didn't have to fire a shot.

- Kane
- We're talking about actions here, but the same principles work with words. When someone is expecting you to come at them hard, it's amazing what you can get with some soft, friendly words. If you tell the people you've encountered something that re-shapes their whole reality, you can get away with murder in front of them—sometimes literally—as they absorb the information. The trick, of course, is being believable.
- Fianchetto

## THINK BIG

This ties in with working against expectations. One of the best ways to confound others' expectations is to try something that hasn't been done before, or perhaps the sort of thing that has only been attempted by the deranged and the dead. You may really be putting your luck on the line through some of these stunts, but if you succeed, you'll have certainly confounded your opponent. What's more, you'll have the kind of story that you and other shadowrunners will be telling for years.

Attempting the impossible may mean trying an impossible shot, like a controlled ricochet.

- My best: Off a lamppost, then off the hull of a ship, then down into the head of a guy with a rowboat full of TNT. Nothing but brain.
- Kane

It could mean making an impossible leap, or breaking through a wall everyone assumed was impenetrable. It could be hacking a system that's bristling with IC. Whatever it is, doing the impossible gives you a quick leg up on everyone around you.

Remember, though, that there are two kinds of impossible—there's the theoretically possible but extremely difficult variety, the type of action that you could conceive of achieving if you were only fast enough, strong enough, or both. Dodging a hail of bullets, falling from a great height and surviving, and running at full speed across a highway without getting clobbered are all examples of this.

- I've done all three of those. Two in rapid succession.
- Mika

That's the sort of impossible you can try. The other sort of impossible you should not waste time thinking about. These are things that are really, truly impossible, either for everyone or for you, and forming a plan that involves those actions dooms you to failure. If your plan involves you suddenly obtaining Awakened abilities that you don't have, or traveling faster than the speed of light, or teleporting, just forget about it. It's not happening, no matter how lucky you are. You may really want to develop astral perception, it may be really useful in your current circumstance, but it's not going to happen, so don't think you're going to luck into it.

- There was actually a glut of researchers working on teleportation in the early 2030s, convinced they would develop something workable, but we all know how that turned out.
- Winterhawk

## DON'T GET ADDICTED TO THE RUSH

Now for the warnings: Thinking big is great, but that doesn't mean you should do it all the time. That sort of thinking is for the times when your plans have been blown and you're out of options. If you can stick to your plan, you should. What happens to some people, though, is that when they succeed in doing something impossible, when they pull off a miracle, they think that's the way their life is going to be from that point on. They believe that they don't have to plan any more, because their luck is better than any plan they can come up with. All they have to do is go in, try the impossible, then pull it off, and they'll be fine.

In the end, what they usually are is dead. Fortune favors the prepared. If you don't put in the effort at the front end, you're not going to keep pulling miracles out of your ass. It's a great rush when you pull off the impossible, a lot like having sex with someone for the first time. Don't fool yourself, though, into thinking you've moved into a steady relationship where the sex is going to be regular and mind-blowing. It's best to think of it as a one-night stand—you had a great time, but it's not going to happen again. At least, not like it did the first time.

- This is about more than being an adrenaline junkie. It's about not being full of yourself. If you get away with your plan falling apart one time, you should be grateful that you're still alive, and then you should resolve to plan better next time so you don't have to improvise. Pulling off one miracle may make you lucky, it may even make you good, but it doesn't make you God.
- Goat Foot

## JUST BECAUSE YOU THOUGHT OF IT DOESN'T MAKE IT A GOOD IDEA

This is the flip side of thinking big. It's great to come up with unusual and unexpected ideas, but you have to have a little discipline. Everything that pops into your head isn't workable or effective, even if you pulled off a miracle once before. Now, in the situations we're talking about, you generally are not going to have a lot of time for reflection and careful evaluation, but one of the characteristics that separates a living shadowrunner from a dead one is the ability to tell the difference between a good insane plan and a plan that's just insane. Experience is a great teacher in this one, and you may need to learn from secondhand experience, because often your own experience is not enough. The real disasters, the truly bad decisions, are the ones that kill you, making it very difficult to learn from them. Hearing about the experiences of others, though, helps you see what worked and what didn't without putting your life at risk. This is one reason to sit around and swap old war stories—they help build our instincts for what we can do and what we shouldn't even try.

- Along those lines, I've been thinking about collecting stories about some of the greats we've heard about and even known. PM me if you've got a good story (about you or someone else), and I'll see what I can put together.
- FastJack





INCOMING FEED.....

DIVING OFF THE EDGE .....

## PLANNING TO BE LUCKY

So far I've talked about using luck when your plans run out, but planning and luck don't have to be opposed to each other. If you've got someone in your group who has shown the knack for pulling off the unexpected, then you'd be foolish not to create a plan that can take advantage of what they do.

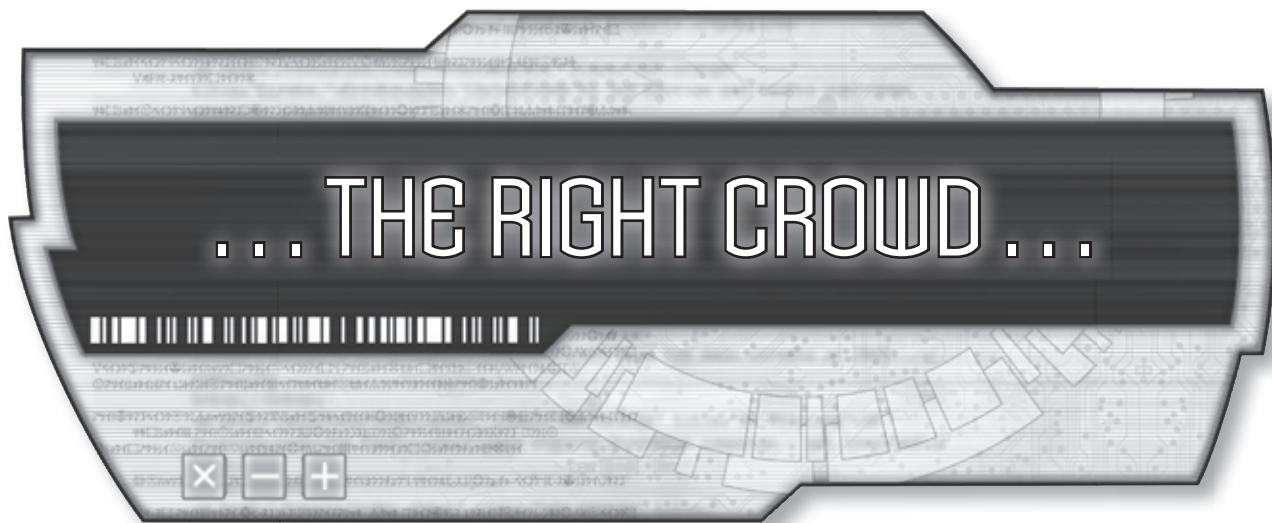
The important part of this is that the planning shouldn't be done by the lucky person. As I mentioned above, if they start thinking their luck is always going to kick in, then they start over-relying on it, and planning suffers. By doing the planning for them, you can ensure that the planning remains thorough, but also that it takes into account the full range of abilities your group has, including luck.

Planning to be lucky does not mean automatically throwing the lucky member of your group into the most dangerous situation, mainly because any smart group member is going to figure out what you're doing before too long and start resenting you for it. At its best, it means keeping that one lucky group member on the move, so that they are never too far from the center of action. This is not the person you want doing lookout duty on the perimeter—they may not have to have the assignment of taking out the two security guards, or of sneaking past the astral security, but they should be close to whoever is doing these things. These guys

can be great wild cards when things go bad—having reinforcements in any conflict is good, but having one who can turn the fight upside-down by doing the unexpected or the impossible is even better. You can't really plan how their luck will be used—it's usually too random for that—but you can make sure that when it kicks in, it'll be close enough to the action to matter.

- A lucky rigger can be really useful, though not always easy to involve in an indoor mission. There is a man named Akuchi in Lagos who is incredibly gifted and ridiculously lucky, so groups that work with him try to keep him involved in as many aspects of a run as possible. One time I had hired a group to get some data from a wired-only node in a basement of a Lagos Island office building. A few of the runners infiltrated the place, and once they were in, Akuchi stormed in on a motorcycle and drove around the hallway. It was a great distraction, but naturally Akuchi drew the attention of the building's security. From what I hear, it wasn't exciting enough for him to drive around a constant hail of bullets—at one point he drove up to a guard, pivoted his bike up on his front wheel, slammed the wheel into a guard's face, then landed back on two wheels and headed off in the opposite direction that he'd come from. I'd pay good money for any security cam footage of that incident.

- Am-mut



- To make organizing your virtual rolodex a little easier, I've compiled some info here on some of the people you might want to know, or at least know about, if you're going to try to make it big in some of the scenes that have been covered so far.
- FastJack

## VINCENT J. CLARKE

Posted by: Sunshine

Aetherpedia Keyword Search:  
Vincent J. Clarke

### VINCENT J. CLARKE

**Born:** March 5, 2047

(Las Vegas, Pueblo Corporate Council)

**Metatype:** Homo sapiens sapiens

**Nationality:** Pueblo Corporate Council

**Estimated 2072 income:** 7,700,000¥

**Awards:** Oscar, Best Director, 2072

The history of cinema—and later trideo—is full of mavericks who first bucked the system and then, once their revolutionary efforts became popular, brought the system to them, changing the way things worked. Sam Peckinpah, Robert Altman, Quentin Tarantino, Steven Soderbergh, Emily DeMerritt, Franco Robinson, and more all went from scrappy independents to Hollywood powerhouses while making films and trids that people are still watching and discussing today. Vincent J. Clarke is the latest director who seems to be following this path.

Clarke started his career pushing as many buttons as possible in trids full of exciting visuals, provocative ideas, and scripts about as coherent as a novacoke addict on a bender. The stories didn't always make sense, but the visuals were compelling enough to build a fan base for Clarke, especially when people watched the trids with the sound turned down.





Then Clarke hooked up with a writer named Marcella Paredes (niece of powerful producer Anthony Paredes), who was able to take his boundless ideas and structure them into something sensible. The result was *Laughing with Grandmother Spider*, a fusion of Native American mythology with the lives of three generations of modern-day Natives living in the Pueblo Corporate Council. The fast pace and emotional depth combined to make the trid a critical and popular success, and a barrelful of Oscars made Clarke one of the hottest properties in Hollywood.

- You don't just get hooked up with the relative of one of Hollywood's most powerful producers by accident. One thing you can do with hot new talent is invest a whole lot of money and hope it pays off. Another approach is to invest some talent and see what they do with it. That's what Paredes did with Clarke, and it paid off. Point is, Paredes is with Pathfinder, which means Horizon was trying to get their fingers into Clarke early. And they succeeded.
- Dr. Spin
- If you look into Paredes' history with Sanford Rosche, who was supposed to direct the documentary Clarke's working on now, you can see how Paredes was planning two or three moves ahead and preparing to get Rosche off the project. Of course, since Evo had a say in the matter and backed Rosche strongly, that meant Paredes needed a little shadow help to make sure his boy eventually got the job.
- Traveler Jones

Clarke has the larger-than-life personality that auteurs seem to require. He talks quietly, but incessantly, combining directions for the people in his production with commentary on what's going on around him and random observations off the top of his head. It's tough to get a word in edgewise when talking to him, but a lot of people don't mind because his flow of conversation can be fascinating in its randomness. As *Laughing with Grandmother Spider* showed, he has a deep respect for Native American traditions, but he doesn't let his respect for the past tie him down, and his forward-looking visuals are already being ripped off in dozens of trid productions.

Given that Clarke is at the beginning of stardom, lots of players in the trideo world are scrambling to get him under a long-term contract, which means plenty of shadow work. While Clarke hasn't made that many enemies (except maybe for Sanford Rosche), there are still people who may be looking to bring him down, on the principle that if they can't get him signed, then torpedoing his career so no one else benefits from his talents is the next best thing.

- It'll be interesting to see how Clarke will handle himself in this documentary he's working on about the technomancer emergence. He's going to be presented with a lot of bullshit (including plenty of forged reference material), and I'll be watching carefully to see how well he slices through it.
- Netcat
- I'm just wondering how well he can do with an idea that didn't originate with him.
- Sunshine

## CRIMETIME

Posted by: Red Anya

Aetherpedia Keyword Search:  
CrimeTime

### CRIMETIME

**Born:** May 24, 2032 (St. Petersburg, Russia)

**Metatype:** Homo sapiens robustus

**Nationality:** Russian

**Estimated 2072 income:** 22,400,000¥

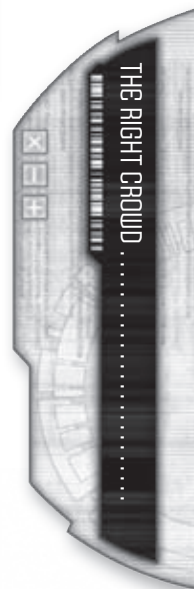
**Awards:** Album of the Year (Djoto, 2063), KA-POW ! KA-POW ! Man of the Year, 2063

Speak to ten different people about the musician known as CrimeTime, and you'll get five different opinions (half of the people you talk to will never have heard of him—not everyone is into orxploitation). One person will tell you he is a pioneer, an artist of tremendous depth and subtlety, who uses dance-club rhythms and industrial trappings in new and unexpected ways. The second person will say he's a noise maker, just someone putting together a lot of crunches and crashes in ways that are easy to dance to, nothing more. Person number three will say he's a cold-blooded criminal whose music career is only a front, and that he's helped the Vory make inroads in several cities across the globe. The fourth opinion will say he's just a poser; that real tough guys don't have to preen as much as CrimeTime, and if he ever met a real Vory thug he'd crap his pants. And the fifth person will say CrimeTime's just an asshole.

There's a good chance that all five of them are right.

CrimeTime doesn't help clarify anything through his public persona. Depending on who is interviewing him, who is holding the camera, and what mood he is in, CrimeTime can be arrogant or humble, friendly or threatening, or thoughtful or incoherent in his public appearances. He played a fundraising concert in 2072 to raise money for tempo addicts and issued several press releases condemning the effect of drugs on the underclass, then during the concert itself he smoked a blunt of deepweed so big that everyone in the first ten rows of the theater got a contact high. Either he wants to be an enigma (and is succeeding admirably), or he is moody and changeable to the point of multiple-personality disorder.

One of the questions surrounding CrimeTime is this: What do you do with your life once you've already become a legend? His place in music history is secure—*Djoto* is one of the landmark albums of this century—and CrimeTime has all the money he'd need to live comfortably for a good long time—or to buy a mountain of narcotics with which to kill himself, if that's how he wants to do things. We generally live our life chasing after the things we want, but CrimeTime seems to already have acquired everything on his list. Will he come up with something new to want, or will he just spin his wheels for the rest of his life while he enjoys his vast fortune?



- We're not saying there's anything wrong with enjoying your vast fortune once you've earned it, right?
- Butch
- No, not really, but CrimeTime doesn't look like he's going down that path. Remember, *Djoto* came out nine years ago, and he could have coasted since then. *Dejected Nation* showed he was still ready to mix it up.
- 2XL

An additional question when it comes to CrimeTime is just what he's going to do with his Vory connection. The fact that he has one isn't disputed (he's promoted by Hez Music, which is owned by two guys with strong Vory ties)—it's the nature of the connection that people debate. There are essentially two narratives. In one, he is nothing more than a poser and a moneymaking machine for the Vory. He's actually doubly profitable, because his music and touring makes Hez Music good money, and CrimeTime spends a good portion of his share of the dough on Vory-supplied BTLs and narcotics. In the other narrative, CrimeTime is exactly as tough as he says he is, and he is one the Vory's most trusted negotiators. When he's touring, he uses his downtime to make the rounds in whatever city he's in and works to settle disputes the Vory may have with local individuals and business owners. Sometimes this involves using his fame to wring concessions out of people. Sometimes this involves working his channels in the music business for information on the disputing parties, and sometimes this involves old-fashioned knee breaking. In this narrative, CrimeTime is good at all these things.

Several people have stepped forward to talk about their firsthand experiences with CrimeTime when he's in enforcement mode. They say that in person he's just as eccentric and prone to random utterances as he is on stage, which makes him even more intimidating. For a few months these stories seemed to support those claiming CrimeTime does indeed run the shadows for the Vory, but then allegations came out that these "witnesses" were actually paid by CrimeTime to make up stories that would enhance his image, throwing the whole issue into confusion yet again.

- Then let me end the confusion: CrimeTime's not a Vory runner or enforcer or anything. He's exactly what he seems to be: a skilled musician and a rather confused ork. Ask yourself what kind of person would be desperate and insecure enough to spread thousands of nuyen around several different cities to get people to lie in order to make him look tough. Once you've got your answer, you'll know what kind of person CrimeTime really is.
- Dr. Spin
- Do you know what one of my favorite techniques on a run is? Get the opposition to underestimate me. When they underestimate you, you can get away with so much more. Sounds to me like CrimeTime's mastered that particular trick.
- Fianchetto

## DEIRDRE

Posted by: Frosty

Aetherpedia Keyword Search:  
Deirdre

### DEIRDRE

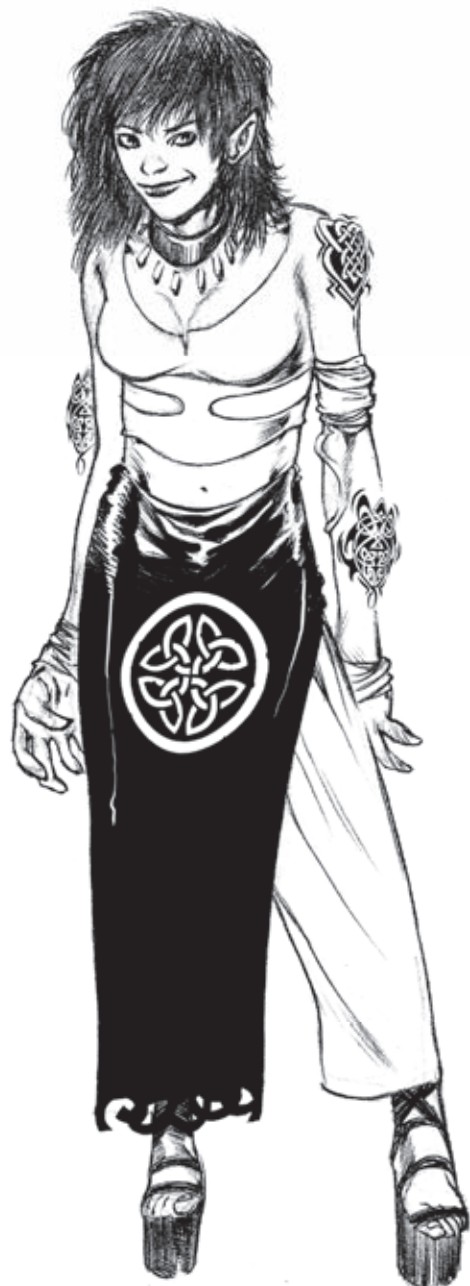
**Born:** June 15, 2040 (Portland, Tír Tairngire)

**Metatype:** Homo sapiens nobilis

**Nationality:** Tír Tairngire

**Estimated 2072 income:** 7,800,000¥

**Awards:** Midsummer Festival Order of Merit, 2062





Deirdre's life would be different—and probably a whole lot less interesting—were it not for various circumstances involving her heritage and various personal connections, which is a situation I can identify with. On the surface she is the least political of musicians—her music has a centuries-old feel to it, and her themes are nature, beauty, and love, which generally are not the most controversial subjects. But the machinations of history and (possibly) of her family have combined to plunge her into political deep water, whether she wants to be there or not.

Let's start with the rumor that Deirdre is Lugh Surehand's illegitimate daughter. Is it true? Maybe. But what cannot be doubted is that, blood relationship or not, Surehand has taken a paternal interest in Deirdre. Her music was the soundtrack of Tír Tairngire in the mid-'60s, and many credit her popularity with the brief surge in Tír nationalism, which put Surehand in Deirdre's debt. When things went to hell for Surehand, Deirdre's fortunes took a downward turn right with him. She's never expressed any anger at him for the way his career affected hers, but Surehand felt guilty about it anyway. So, as he has been working his way back to power, he's been doing things for his daughter and/or protégé, getting her in good with Charisma Associates and building a new career for her. In the meantime, while political fortunes rise and fall around her, she's gone about making the same kind of music she started her career with.

- I don't buy the picture of Deirdre as political innocent. Did Surehand help pave her way to the top? Sure, he helped, but so did her sleeping with Domingo Ramos. And as everybody knows, you don't mess around with the Aztechnology board, even for a few minutes, without getting exposed to a blast furnace of political heat. Yeah, Ding dated her in part to enhance his playboy image, but most of us saw through his façade. I can't imagine Deirdre didn't as well, which means she's been playing political games for at least a decade now.
- Sunshine
- Did you ever think that she actually loved Dom ... oh, I can't even bring myself to finish that sentence.
- Marcos

Whatever the actual bloodlines may be, no one believes that Surehand was acting out of pure altruism when he linked Deirdre with CA. Surehand craves power like plants crave sunlight, and he's spent most of the past eight years looking to find his way back to the top. He'd prefer to lead Tír Tairngire if possible, but he'd likely settle for any position of considerable power and prestige that came his way. Putting Deirdre back on top of the charts is part of this effort—if her music can remind people of his reign, he figures it can't hurt. Though the prosperity the Tír has enjoyed since Larry Zincan took over is not making people feel especially nostalgic for the old days. At least not yet.

In interviews Deirdre comes across as sweet, kind, and exactly the kind of person that could be manipulated by others for their political gain. If I was a gambling woman—and I am—I'd lay money on Zincan and his crew recognizing that if they co-opt Deirdre and her music, they'll undercut any nostalgia for Surehand's days that she might build up. If she was okay with Surehand making her a symbol of his government, the thinking

goes, perhaps she'd be okay with Zincan doing the same. How she responds to this inevitable overture will tell us a lot about how willing she is to play in the political arena—or if she just wants to be left alone to make her music.

- Back in the old days, working as a roadie for Deirdre's band was a great way to cross over into the Tír. In these new, more open times, getting into the Tír isn't quite the same challenge. Still, she's going to be doing a lot of hometown concerts, so she could still provide great cover for anyone looking for an excuse to get to Portland.
- Mika
- I'm not sure how much time she's going to be spending in Portland. Surehand's interests lie elsewhere right now, with foes besides Zincan. He is searching for things as old as Deirdre's music, and he may believe that her music is the call that will bring him what he wants.
- Arete

## SVETLANA "BOUNCE" JURJEW

Posted by: Pistons

Aetherpedia Keyword Search:  
Svetlana "Bounce" Jurjewa

### SVETLANA JURJEW

**Born:** November 17, 2044 (Marseille, France)

**Metatype:** Homo sapiens sapiens

**Nationality:** French

**Leagues:** LJGV (Liga Nacional de Jeude de Guerre de Ville), DSKL (Deutsche Stadtkrieg Liga)

**Position:** Scout

**Salary:** 5,300,000¥

**Pro career:** 2063–present

**Current team:** S-K Centurios Essen

#### Former teams:

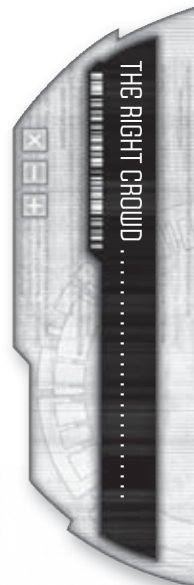
Gaziers de Marseille (2062–2066)

Anarchie Wien (2066–2070)

**Awards:** Alleycat of the Year (given to player others would least like to meet in a dark alley during a game), 2069

Urban brawl players are often cut from the same cloth. They either have military backgrounds (mercs, ex-soldiers, or corporate guards that were drafted into corp teams) or are former criminals (runners or underworld mobsters) who for some reason ended up in the brawl zones with new identities and faces.

- In most cases, samurai or gunrunners decide to quit the shadows because they realize they don't have the edge anymore, or they fuck up so badly that they need a change. For most of us, shooting people for money is what we do, and we are pretty good at it. Doesn't really matter what audience is watching.
- Marcos





- Despite what most people think about the lethality of the game, urban brawl is running light. No grenades, no booby traps, no swashbuckling exits, no spirits beating the shit out of you, and no Johnsons who try to fuck you. Barely any fun at all.
- Kane
- There are always rumors that some active players still run in the shadows. I wouldn't say it's impossible, but it requires a shitload of precautions to prevent being spotted by fans and trid watchers. Being Joe Average's favorite star isn't really an advantage in our line of work.
- Stone

## SHADOWSEA QUICKSEARCH:

*Svetting/Sweating*

### ISSV Urban Brawl Glossary: Svetting/Sweating

A maneuver usually performed by a female brawler in which the brawler exposes parts of herself (usually showing her breasts, or bending over while half stripped) to catch the attention of a (generally male) opposing player in order to cause a distraction. The maneuver is a trademark of urban brawl star Svetlana "Bounce" Jurjewa and named after her, although it has been copied several times by other players including Tomasso "Mosaic" Vinto, the Mountain Dragons' current medico and known hermaphrodite.

Svetting should be performed with extreme care to prevent biomonitors, penalty, and surrender circuits from becoming accidentally activated due to tampering (yielding a Wound penalty), and it requires a delicate touch.

Despite protests and demands by conservative groups to prohibit the maneuver (or at least impose a Kill penalty), Svetting has become so popular with the viewers that the ISSV has so far made no attempts to ban it. It should also be noted that the player is partially unarmed and handicapped while performing the maneuver, risking her own life to grant another player a possible advantage.

Svetlana Jurjewa, mainly known in the urban brawl circuit as "Bounce" and current star scout of the Centurios Essen (the Saeder-Krupp-owned urban brawl team), is one of the few exceptions: a player who wasn't a soldier (street or otherwise) in her previous life but managed to become famous and popular in the game anyway.

Hailing from Belarus, her parents immigrated to France during the Euro Wars, giving birth to Svetlana in Marseille. As an immigrant teenager with a Russian accent in the late '50s, she earned her first spurs in the northern part of the free city sprawl, the *les quartiers nord*, infamous for its street violence, social conflicts, and open crime. Too frail to hold her own physically against the gangers that controlled the districts, she learned to dodge, escape, and outrun her opponents quite early, which led to her meeting a gang of parkour hit-and-run raiders. Developing a taste for the thrill, she made several heists throughout Marseille and spent some time in a youth detention center after getting arrested for vandalism, battery, and robbery. Living in the ideological cradle of urban brawl (Javert et Cie, today a Spinrad Industries-owned subsidiary, is still a powerful local in Marseille), urban brawl has always been a part of her life. When Javert was looking for new players for the local Urban Brawl team Gaziers de Marseille, she was approached by one of the street scouts for the 2062 tryout at the age of 17.

- Given her attitude, she probably fucked him to get her name on the list. On parole and without any education, it was her only chance for a ticket out of the hellhole.
- Red Anya



Given her free-running skills and spatial awareness, she was allowed to join the team as scout but spent most of the time on the substitute's bench, until she got a chance to play after some game-related drop-outs during the complete wipe of the Gaziers against the Hamburg Rams in 2063. After becoming a regular in the '64 season, she became famous in the French media for her spectacular *traceuse* moves that caught the attention of other teams in the European Stadtkrieg leagues, leading to her transfer to Anarchie Wien post-Crash 2.0 in 2066. Her popularity subsequently increased not only due to her eye-catching play, but also because of her use of tactics and moves like the DFA (death from above, in which a skilled player drops on the enemy from several stories above, usually taking him out of the game), and Svetting. In response to her growing fame, Anarchie Wien and the Centurios negotiated for her transfer to Essen in 2070.

- She is also known as the girl with the magic boobs. You never know what size or form they'll have been bio-shaped into for each game.
- 2XL

While most media snoops expect urban brawl players to be "brute goons with anti-social tendencies" (that's a direct quote from anti-brawl blogger Melvin Cornish) who usually get involved in fights, sex escapades, and other vices (alcohol, drugs, porn), Bounce has (accidentally, if you ask me) evolved into a sort of nonconformist style icon due to her proclivity for modern Bohemianism. Her self-blogging lifestyle, open sexuality toward all genders and metatypes (including norm/troll relationships), and liberal demeanor with transhuman (transgenic and radical) bio-augmentations somehow clicked with the youth subculture of the '70s, making her a mainstream success despite her clashes with conservative factions.

- Which is surprising, as everyone expected her to be a fringe phenomenon. Since projections and statistics indicate increasing rebellious attitude in teenagers and a growing acceptance of transgenic modifications among urban brawl trid watchers, the Dawkins Group has become interested in her. Probably looking for a new lab rat.
- Plan 9
- Evo wants her too, which is why the management of Maschine Moskwa, an Evo-sponsored team, has raised their offer for her several times. So far the Centurios have refused. I think the Maschine's management will try something more direct in the near future.
- Baka Dabora

In spite of her "fuck you" mentality, Bounce has become a constant presence on many red-carpet happenings and the Grand Tour throughout Europe. Contract clauses force her to attend both the events and the after-show parties. Given Svetlana's penchant for trouble, the Centurios' management is usually working in the background to clean up the messes she's caused or keep her from getting injured, without restraining the freedom of their star player too much, even if—or because—she is a bad-ass diva.

- That's why she always has some babysitters from the shadows close by. They are the only ones who are able to manage her, and they barely do that. Of course she doesn't like it, making the team's assignment a living hell. Her burn rate of runners in the German shadows is infamous.
- 2XL

## MIKO NABUTO

Posted by: Slamm-0!

Aetherpedia Keyword Search:  
Miko Nabuto

### MIKO NABUTO

**Born:** unknown [chose date 01.May 2048], Lagos (Nigeria)

**Metatype:** Homo sapiens nobilis (Wakyambi Metavariant)

**Nationality:** Horizon

**Listed height:** 2.71 m (8 ft 9 in)

**League:** NBA

**Position:** center, power forward

**Salary:** 25,368,427¥

**Pro career:** 2067-present

**Current team:** Los Angeles Lakers

**Former teams:** n/a

**Awards:** NBA Rookie of the Year, 2068; NBA All-Star, 2069-2073

If there is one player in the sports circus that I really enjoy watching, it is Miko Nabuto, current all-star pivot and superstar of the LA Lakers. While I usually despise the Horizon-sponsored team—I'm a SuperSonics fan to my bones—his play and motions never cease to amaze me. How he and the ball form a natural unity when he dribbles, his precise shooting and passing skills. The grace of his slam dunk ...

- Please Jack, stop him. Otherwise he will continue on and on. Trust me. I know.
- Netcat

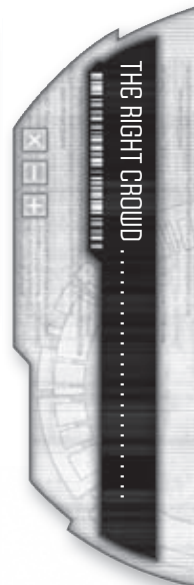
// Text edited by Fastjack

- Boooo. Censorship!
- Slamm-0!

... as I always say: poetry in motion.

Nabuto caused quite a media stir some years ago when he got drafted to the big league as the 6<sup>th</sup> pick in the 2067 NBA drafts in New York as the first wakyambi to play in the NBA. While many hesitated to take the tall elf because of his metatype, despite his natural talent and athletics for the game, he was an obvious choice for the Lakers due to their affiliation with Horizon.

Horizon initially recruited Nabuto from the streets of Lagos. When an employee from the local HAF security office





shared some private clips taken in Lagos—including some street ball games recorded in the city—in his public HIP portal, the clips of the “elven basketball giant” became so popular that the employee’s popularity skyrocketed (he is now enjoying a better job in Horizon’s African HQ in Nairobi). After a review by basketball scouts, Lakers head coach Ross Finley flew to Lagos to do an

“undisturbed” workout with Nabuto. Once Nabuto showcased his shooting skills and aptitude, he was asked to make himself eligible for the upcoming draft, and he assented.

- I remember that some of my associates were hired as local liaisons during that time. Due to the myriad of dangers Lagos presents and the natives’ general mistrust of outsiders, Finley came with a squad of foreign runners for his protection.
- Black Mamba

Of course, that is just the sugar-coated official history for the virtual slicks. Many paparazzi have tried to uncover more of the past of the wakyambi—where he came from, and how he survived life down at the bottom of the food chain. In an interview, Nabuto once said that he wasn’t born in Lagos and wasn’t raised by his natural parents. Given the usual tribal lifestyle of his people (from what I’ve read about it), Lagos also would not strike me as a natural place for them to live anyway.

- Would not surprise me if they were killed while visiting the sprawl. Back in the days when the wakyambi metavariant was not as established as it is today, bio-samples of the “heaven people” were in high demand by biomedical corporations for genetic analysis and talisleggers for making talismans. It was a profitable business for headhunters and organleggers alike.
- Am-mut

Regarding his life and past in the sprawl Nabuto himself has evaded questions several times, making media snoops even more interested in whatever he and Horizon may be hiding. From the bits and pieces that have been published in sport mags, tabloids, and scene glossies, it has been knit together that he was raised by an urban tribe that had many orks and trolls, making an affiliation with the Hausa likely.

- I heard that many snoops would like to go to Oshodi-Isolo and start digging for dirt, but few are crazy enough to actually do it (or have the bankroll to pull off such an operation). Horizon’s certainly not willing to spill the ugly beans on one of their own citizens—assuming there are any.
- Sunshine

Nabuto’s height is impressive even by today’s elven-influenced NBA standards, towering up to nearly 2.75 meters—the size of an average troll—while being slender, wiry, and athletic at the same time. While he lacks the body mass of most NBA players (especially centers), his size and reach have proven to be an advantage on many occasions, overcoming the obstacles imposed on players since the height of the hoop was elevated to 4 meters (13 feet) in response to the allowance of metatypes and cybernetics into the game in the late ‘40s.

Nabuto possesses a clear talent for the game—which I admire, especially since he plays nearly unaugmented—but his public persona is just a sleeve designed by Horizon’s spin-doctors. I hate to admit it, but they had me completely fooled until I recently came across parts of his personal record in a Singularity nexus.



- Sometimes it's hard to swallow the red pill.
- Icarus

Based on what was in the files, Charisma Associates had a tough time turning Nabuto into a media star right from the beginning. When he was adopted into the happy Horizon family after joining the Lakers, he didn't even speak English, just the Lagosian pidgin cityspeak, and he had trouble communicating with his coaches, managers, and corporate staff members. He was also completely illiterate. He did not even know how to operate most electronic devices in the housing complex they set up for him, let alone blog or use any other of the Pito and HIP social software his handlers threw at him. After his first games in the league, he still wasn't able to give interviews, letting Ariel Franklin—his manager (also a Charisma chick)—do all the talking. In the first years of his career, Charisma ran a complete program with him in addition to his basketball training and the games, including language courses, communication trainings, social behavior, cultural conduct, software and Matrix-assisted learning. They even sent some linguists from Singularity to Lagos to program a customized pidgin linguasoft to accelerate his progress. Given his rapidly improving Q score, the thing apparently worked out for him, although I wonder how much of his old self is still in there.

- \*sings\* LA told me, you'll be a sport star. All you have to change is everything you are. \*katgrin\*
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- Indeed. A rough diamond cut to brilliance.
- Dr. Spin

When you compare the illiterate African aborigine to the socialite of today who earns millions of nuyen through sports and advertising contracts, it's hard to believe they're the same person. Nabuto's been a huge success for Horizon, as they've turned him into a cash cow and public face associated with many of the social projects they do in conjunction with Evo to further metahuman cultural exchange and acceptance. Besides his influence in the basketball sports association, Nabuto has also become a common sight at charity events, since his immense size always draws attention of the drones and paparazzi cams. Although Nabuto lives an exemplary public media life with no major scandals or slips, his medical record indicates that he has underlying psychiatric problems. Apparently he is slotting some strong digital antidepressants and has been visiting a corporate shrink on occasions.

- That means that it's something neuroelectrical and that the chemical stuff isn't working. Maybe the fact that Horizon crammed so much stuff into his brain in such a short period is showing some side effects.
- Butch

It had recently been announced that Nabuto is seriously dating elven comedian Amy Devinter, who also happens to be a Horizon corporate citizen living in Tír Tairngire. They were introduced on an intra-corporate event a few months ago, and the whole thing smells like an arrangement. Given Horizon's politics in those matters and Charisma's constant involvement in Nabuto's

"personal development" (even after six years they haven't let him off the hook), I wonder if Devinter got the position because she was the best match in a roster of candidates.

- You want to dust up Nabuto's public image a little? Find evidence that his girlfriend was picked for him by his corporate masters. That would tarnish his halo a little.
- Stone

## ORXANNE

Posted by: Rigger X

Aetherpedia Keyword Search:  
Orxanne

### ORXANNE

**Born:** October 19, 2038

(Los Angeles, California Free State)

**Metatype:** Homo sapiens robustus

**Nationality:** Pueblo Corporate Council

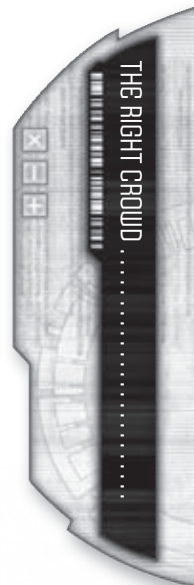
**Estimated 2072 income:** 4,900,000¥

**Awards:** Best Choreography, 2064

The first thing I should say is that if we were talking about Orxanne in her pre-stardom days, I could fill up plenty of megabytes with great getaway stories. She wasn't necessarily the most skilled driver back in her heyday, but she was the one who would try anything, and I mean *anything*. Crash through a wall, fall from the second level of a parking garage, hit the street, and keep driving? Sure! Get up on two wheels to drive through an alley too narrow for four-wheeled traffic? Why not! Take care of a guy who was going to kill her so he wouldn't have to pay out her share and dump him into the street, leaving the credsticks holding the entire payment sitting safely in the backseat of her vehicle? You bet your ass!

The thing about Orxanne back then, though, was that there was a reason she was so desperate—she would do anything to get out of where she was. And she did it. She got out, and changed herself completely. She's got a different name, a new look, and her official bio doesn't match the truth in any respect. But the one thing you can't change when you re-invent yourself is your memory, and Orxanne remembers who she was and where she came from, even if she doesn't let anyone else know. She's been known to hire runners in her crew, both as roadies and security, and from what I hear, she has a soft spot for runners that fit her profile and are looking to escape their background.

- I love sentimentalists. So easy to manipulate.
- Haze
- Running security for Orxanne's not a soft gig, not by a long shot. Humanis has taken a number of shots at her over the years, and she's more than willing to take a few shots back at them if she feels her current security people are up to it.
- Hard Exit





Orxanne is using her new music label, Wejoto Records, as another way to bring people off the streets. She focuses on ork talent, and she will not sign any artist that has already released an album. The label has a broad-based sound. While she herself favors hard-edged industrial music, her label includes everything from fractal phase to gothabilly to folk. That keeps it from having a firm identity, but that's not what Orxanne is about.

There is speculation that Orxanne will not be on the road for much longer. That's bad news for roadies wanting to work with her, but good news for aspiring artists, as less touring means more time for her to run her label. Potentially, it could also mean more runs originating from her label, especially against Humanis-sponsored acts like Blood Pride.

- Yeah, there might be more LA-based work from Orxanne if she stopped touring, but I don't see that happening. Maybe for a little

bit—we can all use a hiatus now and then—but I've seen her show, I know the rush she gets from performing and from the crowd, and eventually it's going to call her back. So take heart, roadie runners. Orxanne will ride again.

- Kat o' Nine Tales
- Wejoto acts may not have a common sound, but they all share a certain authenticity, and its acts are doing well, especially among orks. If Orxanne keeps having success, she might have to play some defense, as big corporations like Horizon might come calling with runs of their own.
- Mr. Bonds

## BRANDON PULKER

Posted by: Turbo Bunny

Aetherpedia Keyword Search:  
Brandon Pulker

### BRANDON PULKER

**Born:** August 30, 2032  
(Omaha, UCAS)

**Metatype:** Homo sapiens sapiens

**Nationality:** Pueblo Corporate Council

**Estimated 2072 income:** 22,300,000¥

Brandon Pulker is walking evidence that the qualities the Mafia values in a businessman are somewhat different than what the normal corporate world emphasizes. Mafia businesses are not about building a solid infrastructure that is designed for steady growth over the long term. No, Mafia businesses are generally about making as big and loud a splash as possible, making an impression and getting people's attention. The business might not last, but the owners might not want it to last—sometimes, once certain sums of money have been appropriately laundered or a business area has been sufficiently milked, the Mafia is happy to shut one operation down and move its personnel into another area.

So there is no telling how long Pulker is going to be in the BTL business, but as long as he is, he's going to be noticed. Pulker seems to believe that having money isn't really worth anything unless you're constantly throwing the fact of your wealth in other people's faces. He wears lots of gold chains, drives expensive cars with loud engines, and struts in ways that roosters would find ostentatious. When he walks into a room, he immediately assumes he is the center of everyone's attention, and if he's not, he works overtime to make people watch him.

- Remember the Scarlet Pimpernel, who acted like a fool to cover for the fact that he actually was engaged in super-secret activities? Yeah, this isn't like that. Pulker acts like a loud fool because he is, in fact, a loud fool.
- Butch

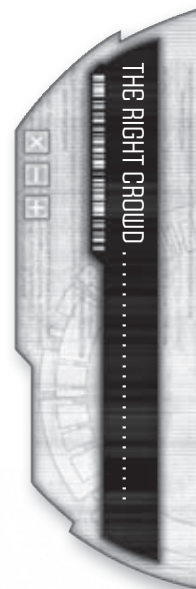
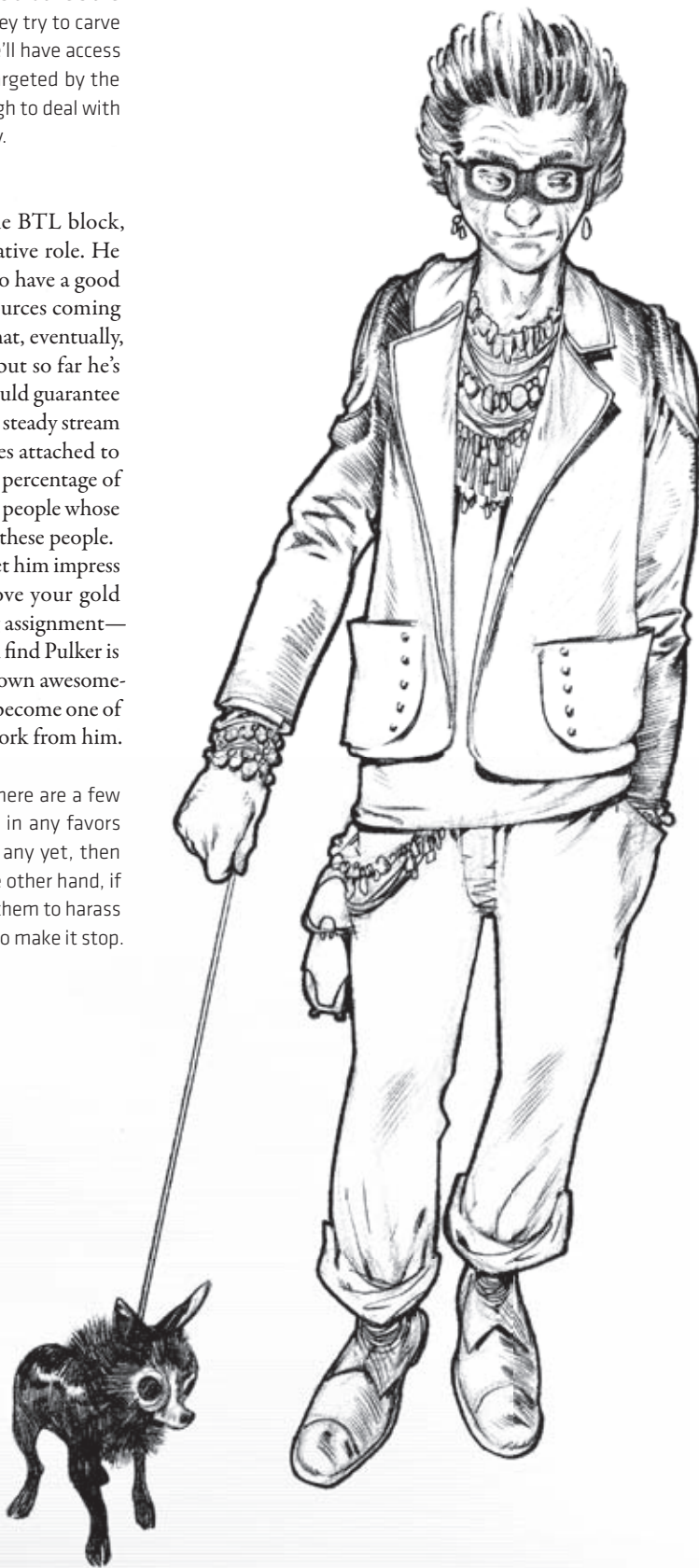


- No argument here, but what we should remember is that he's the funnel the Mafia is pouring their money into as they try to carve out a share of the BTL market. This means that he'll have access to a lot of resources, and he's also going to be targeted by the Triads. The Mafia must think Pulker is strong enough to deal with whatever the Triads are preparing to throw his way.
- Sunshine

As CEO of Mind Storm, the new kid on the BTL block, Pulker (thankfully) does not see himself in a creative role. He has no guiding aesthetic sensibility, but he seems to have a good knack for finding ideas that will sell. He's got resources coming in; his main job is to parcel them out in a way so that, eventually, even more comes back in. Mind Storm is young, but so far he's been doing well—*An Evening in the Stars* alone should guarantee a decent year for his company. Pulker's already got a steady stream of people looking to sell him ideas or get themselves attached to one of the products he has in development. A high percentage of these people are either idiots or spies, and Pulker has people whose main job is to keep him from ever having to talk to these people.

The key to impressing people like Pulker is to let him impress you first. You can't be obvious—just saying "I love your gold chains!" is not enough to get you a plum directing assignment—but if you can muster a little bit more subtlety, you'll find Pulker is generally quite willing to share his thoughts on his own awesomeness. If you can bear a few minutes of this, you may become one of Pulker's buddies, which is the first step to getting work from him.

- If you don't want to go the buddy-buddy route, there are a few other alternatives. One of the simplest is to call in any favors the Mafia might owe you; if they don't owe you any yet, then do something to put a Mafiosi in your debt. On the other hand, if you've got Triad connections, you could encourage them to harass Pulker until he's annoyed enough to give you a job to make it stop.
- 2XL





## FASHION AND GEAR THAT SETS YOU APART

Posted by: Plan 9 & /dev/grll

**Plan 9:** If it looks like a barghest, and it howls like a barghest, then it must be a barghest, right? Wrong! I'm here to talk about how perception is reality, not the other way around. I'm here to tell you that you believe in only what is presented. Sure shadowrunners are supposed to be too cynical or paranoid to believe in what Mr. Johnson tells them, but they still can fall for the assumption that just because Mr. Johnson is in a suit, he must be corporate.

Fashion is a corporation's most overt method to manipulate and intimidate the population. The colors, cut, and design of your clothing can influence a person's emotions and provoke a predictable response. Corporations create artificial peer pressure with ads promoting conformity and a person's acceptance of loss of identity, and they back this message up with intimidation by upper management and security. And they're not the only ones pushing this message—the military doesn't make uniforms just so they can have something to pin medals on. They have a functional and psychological purpose. You can also view fashion as a litmus test for a nation's economic stability; women tend to wear heels more during troubled times, with increase in height correlating to economic trouble; for men, it's the width of the necktie that's tied to economic health. These conformist tendencies were ingrained in the public by Western and European corporations a century ago to help them manage their profits.

At the macro level, corporations can use fashion for more than selling products—what they sell can have an element of social engineering. The recession after the first Crash was not as long as it was predicted to be due in part to a pan-corporate social engineering campaign that, among other things, had manufacturers sell clothing with emotionally positive hues at a loss.

- Correlation is not synonymous with causation.
- Kay St. Irregular

In a related vein, the war between Amazonia and Aztlan can be correlated to the emotional response triggered by the flood of red-hued accessories and the influx of South American clothing styles northward.

- “Emotional response triggered by the flood of red-hued accessories?” All right, who the hell allowed the man wearing the aluminum foil hat to ramble on about this stuff?
- Slamm-O!
- Give him a chance. I think he has, how do I say this, a *unique* perspective on this.
- Fastjack

Runners, if they are good, already understand how to dress for success when they talk to Mr. Johnson, or blend in with the wageslaves, or whatever. Often the idea is not to be seen, but fashion can serve the opposite purpose as well. Try wearing clothes that scream so loud that you can't help but be noticed. People don't ask questions, or they flat-out ignore the possibility that someone so outrageous could be doing anything nefarious. Take Kat, for instance—people see the rock star, not the runner.

- I'm not sure if that was a compliment or an insult.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

If you want to get away from the corporate ideals and mass-produced clothing designed to categorize you as a conforming wageslave, then listen up. Sure, people may call me a crackpot when I say that silly putty and slinkies are just offshoots of military weapon designs that marketing found a way to sell to offset cost overruns. But most of the time I'm a careful observer of people, and I can tell you something about clothing and gear that sets you apart.

**/dev/grll:** While Plan 9 brings the testosterone, I'll bring the estrogen to this endeavor. Mascara, lipstick, and other makeup tips will be covered. I also will discuss the “how-to” of dressing up and building enough sex appeal into a good outfit to distract guards.



- I am so there!
- Slamm-O!
- Down boy!
- Netcat

## FASHION

**Plan 9:** Before moving into specific fashions, I'd like to take a moment to talk about the current trends that many shadowrunners are adopting. Most runners look in the closet/on the floor to find what to wear, usually a standard Argo and Bur armored black trench coat circa 2050. There's no knocking the comfort value of the trench coat, with its long, dark shape and billows roomy enough for a sawed-off shotgun. It goes well with mirrored eyes/shades, a blue mohawk, or a henna/nanite "tribal" tattoo. The trouble is that it became a uniform that says "Hey! I'm a shadowrunner," which is why it's not listed as gear that sets you apart.

- But we can still wear them, right?
- Riser
- No one said you can't. We've just given you more options while you wait for your trench coat to come back from the cleaners.
- /dev/grrl

## LEATHER AND BRASS

**Plan 9:** Let's start old school: Steampunk has been around for ages. K.W. Jeter coined the phrase back in 1987. Lolita fashion, steampunk's Asian cousin, climbed into popularity around the same time. Steampunk fashion can be recognized by the combination of 19<sup>th</sup> century clothes with representations of technology from the same time period. It's been cycling back up in popularity since 2071 for several reasons. There's a growing subculture afraid of the now-ever-present wireless signals. They fear that it causes cancer, that it's too easily hacked, or that the world is experiencing information overload. At the same time, there have been fads bubbling up: groups using technology to imitate magic, to revolt against sterile and impersonalized technology, even to religify (if that's a word) technology. Like ripples in a pool, several of these fads have collided, and the results have continued to keep steampunk popular.

Vashon Island was the first to cash on this trend with a co-opted, work-safe version. ME MetaL and Bodyline followed suit later. The corporate clothes are highly toned down, falling within acceptable corporate guidelines. That corporate shit, though, is not what I want to talk about here. There are some indie and DIY efforts that bring out the full meaning of steampunk.

For the men, we'll begin with headgear: top, coachman, or derby hat accentuated with gears and chains. Trodes in the hat control the mechanisms in the whole outfit. Wireframe glasses and monocles, while antique looking, can have the usual visual enhancements. Some spectacles have enhancements on separate lenses, which can be flipped to the front. Men also wear three-piece suits with subtle brass accents, though the suit can be worn with a clockwork vest or woven with wireless-impeding material.

The clockwork vest is a patchwork of gears and springs, powered by the kinetic energy of the person. The vest can collect the energy in springs and release it into a variety of artwork accessories. The vest can be very intricate in the number of moving parts. The downside: Since they are more or less all exposed, this vest can fail to function if not properly maintained. On the upside: The controls are not electronic and cannot be hacked. Simple mechanical tricks can be added to the vest, such as spring-loaded objects to pop out or up, wheels to spin, etc.

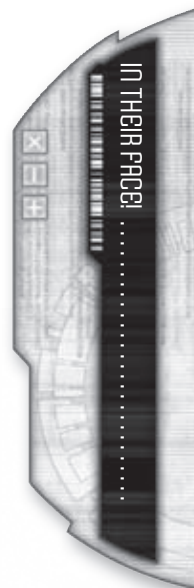
- The clockwork vest is a street performer's toy. It's not as practical as robotics, but I think the fascination lies in seeing all the moving parts.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

Accessories complement the clothes. A pocket watch can function as a simple watch, commlink, or AMP detector. The walking cane or gentleman's cane comes and goes with fashion, including steampunk. It can have the usual features, such as a glowing structure (similar to a GloWand) or a hidden sword or gun. It can also hold a one-shot grappling hook. A more unusual feature is manufacturing the cane in dense carbon and titanium composite with a foot anchor. This can be used as an impediment to prevent doors from shutting or to block people or drones moving down a hallway.

- Dense carbon fiber walking canes are tough little suckers. I stuck one of those behind a parked car and basically boxed it in. The rigger didn't notice it when he was climbing in, but he sure saw its effect when he tried to drive away. He was pissed.
- Traveler Jones

Gloves, such as Tesla gloves, are optional accessories. Tesla gloves are long riding gloves with copper fingertips and nickel/cadmium rings on the sleeve. Like shock gloves, they have capacitors to hold a significant charge of electricity, but they can discharge the energy in a spray of electrical bolts. Based on Nikola Tesla's principles of sending energy at a distance, Tesla gloves can produce a burst of energy in the wireless frequency to a range of several meters. While intended as an energy source for unconnected devices like lights, it can also disrupt communications between wireless devices in the area or be used like a short-range taser. Shoes are comfortable imitation-leather business shoes or boots; if you're using Tesla gloves, it's best to have rubber soles.

- Tesla gloves are an attention-getting device. Wave these gloves around at a club and watch how many people get pissed off at being disconnected from their commlinks.
- Slamm-O!
- And you wonder why we're not invited to more parties.
- Netcat
- Added bonus of these things—when your addict friend flatlines and needs urgent care—instant defib!
- Hard Exit









**/dev/grll:** For the moment, I'm going to play it straight and tell you what steampunk is; my feelings about it (hint: not good) will be slid into an overall fashion guide a little later on.

So anyway, Plan 9 hit the upscale steampunk look, but there's also a way to do this with a more blue-collar or industrial-worker theme. To pull that off, you need goggles with thick a leather strap and/or an aviation cap. Like the high-class look, trodes in the headgear keep gears within the rest of the design moving. Men—and some women—then throw on overalls or a jumpsuit, with small gears instead of buttons, some of which are augmented with a hydraulic exoskeleton like the Iron Will. Manhattan's unionized dockworkers used the Iron Will hydraulic exoskeleton when they were loading and unloading cargo in the early '30s and '40s. It's kind of like a manservant drone, but you wear it. As the prices of augmentations and drones dropped, things like the Iron Will became less popular, and now there's maybe two hundred still in use. Street artist Christopher Guidry, or "Gee Man," has been remodeling them into a more intimidating, metahuman-shaped skeletal structure, complete with skullcap and welded ribcage. In some versions, chemical reaction-created steam is used to operate the actuators, mainly for the cool effect of having steam wafting around you.

- I've seen these in the Pitt in the Rotten Apple, at what locals call the Iron Gladiator games. Some supercharge the exoskeletons or add wicked accessories. It's a sweet mini-demolition, "beer and pretzel" derby.
- Kane

Other industrial steampunk fashions are layered with fire-resistant material and have an insulated back pouch to hold liquid natural gas ("LNG") for a gas lamp orb or, alternatively, a Lucifer Lamp. Still others are created from flexible carbon for added fire resistance. An accessory to the industrial steampunk is a third arm attached as a brace along the back and hips. Trodes or skinlinks can operate the arm, allowing it to hold the gas orb or assist in simple tasks. Replacing the third arm can be clockwork-designed emotive drones such as owls or dragons. The drone can connect to the LNG pouch to light up with real flames. A workman's tool belt with a variety of pouches and hooks completes the ensemble.

For women, an outfit may start with bonnets or touring hats that are detailed with gears and chains in shiny silver, copper, and crystals. The core of the outfit is a Victorian dress, or corset and skirt. Tiny gears, lace, and brass or silver chains accessorize them. The more daring fashionistas would try the Tiffany dress by Michael Kallabos. Each one of these gowns and dresses is unique, featuring copper-framed stained-glass panes. The stained glass can also be done in ballistic materials. A Tiffany cloak in Midnight Blue was recently worn by Richard Villiers' date to the Met last June in New York. Tiffany dresses are also popular in the CAS with southern belles wearing marbled glass ones to old-fashioned parties and country dancing, though moving gracefully in these things takes hours of practice. Other similar fashion designs include Quizzel mechanical fairy and dragon wings, and a high-collar linked cloak from Kallabos' one-time protégé Aita Ramirez. Again, trodes in the headpiece can activate moving parts on the dress.

Steampunk accessories for the women include Tesla gloves, old-fashioned cameos made from static holographic crystals,

and the woman's fan, which can have some optional functionality besides beating the heat, such as hidden blades or Faraday screening.

- Zoë has been trying to get Kallabos or Ramirez to work for them. Extraction is out of the question, but blackmail is not. There's big money in getting either one to sign a deal.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- Zoë isn't the only one. Très Chic Designs is wooing Ramirez with some prime West Coast real estate. Their angle is that she'd be closer to her family there. This could get ugly if she doesn't accept their offer.
- Dr. Spin
- First impression of the Tiffany Dress: cold and stiff. How the hell can you walk in a bell-shaped gown made of glass? And there's no insulation for walking outside. Personally, I think the dresses are too awkward with the large glass plates. Sure, the copper is just a coating over memory metal, but the shape doesn't give it much grace. Ramirez's wings and cloak, on the other hand, I like. Smaller glass ovals on a chain mail style mesh make for a much better flow of fabric. The ballistic version is able to take a few whacks, but you'll be bruised to hell with no absorption of the kinetic energy. You can also get internal lighting and be ... well, a lamp.
- Pistons

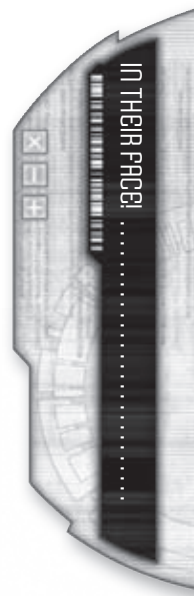
## RUBBER AND CHROMED STEEL

**Plan 9:** The post-apocalyptic look, or P-A, is another fashion trend that's been moving up in popularity. First came the 2049 "street mercenary" look, then the "faux armored clothing" and "heavy armored" styles of the '50s, and now it's evolved into today's P-A fashion. The Amazonia-Aztlan war reporting that shows the hodgepodge armor of the Amazonian army has further spurred on this rebellious design. Tribale has been profiting the most with P-A clothes and accessories. Based on classic and modern trids, there's a variety of makeshift constructions of clothing and armor that gangers and squatters use to look tough or convince people they're in charge of their particular block.

The jackets can be made of synthetic or real leather, reinforced with sporting league (urban brawl, football, hockey, etc.) shoulder pads. The Aces High Jacket Line from Vashon Island is a nice example of this style, though expensive. More often an armored jacket is used as an outer layer to provide both the right look and solid protection. Accessories include buttons with AR or holo projections, pins, war paint (standard or signature), or morale patches. If the person is a little handier, they might add copper grommets or galvanized steel spikes to the outfit.

Cheap ballistic protection used to be as easy as scrounging at the junkyard for car parts, but now cars are mostly flexible plastic and foam. If you need that extra protection, you may need to rely on chemistry. Hardware stores can sell you carbon fiber sheeting and quickset plastic compounds that can be combined into custom armored plates.

Footware in this fashion line varies; some go with athletic shoes (preferably stolen), as that demonstrates a certain amount of wealth and respect, but others go with more functional boots



## GAME RULES

**Clockwork Vest:** The vest has various gears, levers, and springs partially concealed by a translucent covering or the vest's fabric, all being controlled by trodes. The vest is able to conceal up to four small items within various mobile sheaths. Concealment modifiers are -4 for the items. These mobile sheaths are capable of ejecting their contents within a 1-meter radius from the wearer. Weapons concealed this way are considered to be in a quick release holster, reducing the threshold of a Pistols + Reaction Test for quick drawing a weapon to 2 (see *Quick Draw*, p. 147, SR4A).

**Gentleman's Cane:** Some uses for this cane include as an impediment, as a bar keeping a door shut, or a wedge keeping it open. The cane is made of a dense titanium and carbon composite, giving it an armor rating of 10 and structure rating of 1. It has a retractable, compression-fired anchor that can be triggered on impact against a surface. The anchor cannot penetrate materials with a Barrier rating higher than 10 (most pavements have a Barrier rating of 8). If the anchor is used as a weapon, treat it as a club with (Str/2-1P) damage. It can also be used to conceal a sword (p. 315, SR4A), and concealment modifiers are +0 for the whole cane and -6 to detect its true nature (see p. 311, SR4A).

**Iron Will:** Iron Will is an exoskeleton used to augment the user's strength for laborious tasks. It is 2.5 meters tall and weighs 200 kg. It has no autonomy, nor was it built for any remote piloting. When worn, treat the wearer's Strength as 8, but reduce their Agility by 1. Iron Will can be treated as a vehicle for upgrades.

**Steampunk Accessories:** This is an all-encompassing term that covers all the gears, springs, and trodes used to convert an outfit into steampunk fashion.

**Steampunk Drones:** These drones are mini-drones that are connected to the steampunk outfit (with no wireless interface) by a three-meter retractable cable. Drone rules still apply for any modifications.

### Sample Steampunk Drones

**Clockwork Owl:** The owl is a mix of Sixth World drone technology with a façade of nineteenth century engineering with moving gears and clockwork sounds coming from the drone.

**Std Upgrades:** Improved Sensor Array, Mimic

**Steampunk Dragon:** While capable of flight, the steampunk dragon is limited by the range of its cable. Concealed under copper colored scales is

a small LNG tank in its belly and a flamethrower in its head.

**Std Upgrades:** Improved Takeoff and Landing, Weapon Mount (flamethrower)

**Tesla Gloves:** Tesla gloves have two features. The first is that they can be used as an exotic ranged weapon capable of projected arcs of electricity up to a distance of 1 meter. The gloves deal 4S damage plus electricity (p. 163, SR4A) and have ten charges in each glove; when plugged in, they recharge at a rate of one charge per two seconds. The second feature is that the Tesla gloves can fill the airwaves with electromagnetic noise like a directional jammer (p. 329, SR4A); the device rating of the Tesla glove is 3.

**Women's Faraday Fan:** A Faraday-enhanced women's hand fan can be used in the defense against a directional jammer. Reduce the rating of the jammer by the rating of the fan before calculating the jammer's effect on the device.

### STEAMPUNK DRONE

| Handl | Accel | Speed | Pilot | Body | Arm | Sens | Avail | Cost |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-----|------|-------|------|
| +0    | 2/10  | 10    | 2     | 1    | 0   | 1    | -     | 400¥ |

### IRON WILL

| Handl | Accel | Speed | Pilot | Body | Arm | Sens | Avail | Cost   |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-----|------|-------|--------|
| +0    | -/-   | 0     | 0     | 6    | 4   | 1    | 14    | 3,500¥ |

### TESLA GLOVES

| Reach | Damage | AP    | Avail | Cost |
|-------|--------|-------|-------|------|
| 1     | 4S(e)  | -half | 4R    | 750¥ |

### ADDITIONAL STEAMPUNK GEAR

| Name                       | Ballistic/Impact | Avail. | Cost             |
|----------------------------|------------------|--------|------------------|
| Clockwork Vest             | 1/1              | 6      | 200¥             |
| Faraday Fan                | -                | 4      | 50xRating¥       |
| Gentleman's Cane           | -                | 4      | 100¥             |
| Anchor option              | -                | +2     | +100¥            |
| Sword option               | -                | +4     | +price of weapon |
| Glowand option             | -                | +2     | +50¥             |
| Holo-Crystal Cameo         | -                | 4      | 75¥              |
| Tiffany Dresses            | 4/3              | 10     | 8500¥            |
| Quizzel fairy/dragon wings | +1/+1            | 2,000¥ |                  |
| Steampunk Accessories      | -                | -      | 120¥             |

with steel-toe protection. They can be tricked out with embedded spikes and/or bound with metal or plastic for extra traction (and more damage when you kick someone in the head). For even more dangerous shoes, you can create custom goblin stompers. These heavy shoes, first invented in Houston by a human supremacist, are popular with gangs and feature working boots refitted with a capacitor and thermal conducting brand within the sole of the boot. Once a metahuman is knocked down, the owner of the boot

would need only to step on the victim, branding him with the symbol set in the sole. Gangs use goblin stompers for initiation rites or turf wars.

- Goblin stompers are quite illegal, but not hard to make. Just remember to include insulation between the brand and the insole; otherwise two people would get branded.
- Clockwork



**/dev/grll:** There's not much difference in style for women going for a post-apocalyptic look. Stilettos are impractical, though that's not what is shown on the trid. If you want to show a more feminine side, go with a thicker, meat-tenderizing heel for shoes and a chainmail tee. This fashion synergizes with various weapons. Pimped-out pistols, extendable batons, brass knuckles, and shock gloves are acceptable choices.

For exposed skin, most prefer tattooing, scarring, or grafting with designs around any cybernetic enhancements. Fingernail polish is also an option for both men and women going for this look. The hottest trend is fingerless AR gloves with color changing polish. Dark, ripped jeans and a light-colored shirt usually completes the design. While not a requirement, adding gang colors and marks to the outfit are fine if you are trying to blend in to certain parts of the neighborhood. Just make sure that you add the right markings and don't put on something that's going to get you killed.

**Plan 9:** Those on the edge of society with limited resources don't have a full range of clothing options, so they have to be more creative with makeshift clothes like runflat sandals and death masks, which shows the creativity of people on the brink.

### Runflat Sandals

Runflat sandals are recycled tires, converted into various footwear styles such as moccasins and sandals. You can find runflat sandals in Amazonia, Yucatán, Aztlan, Azania, southern Asia, and almost everywhere else in the world where people are unable to afford shoes. The design is old, based on huaraches, which are sandals designed in pre-Colombian times. While they can be made from any type of tire, Runflat is preferred because of the thicker cushion in the interior of the tire. Green execs like Arthur Vogel are pushing these onto the mainstream as an eco-statement.

- Have you ever tried them? They can rub your feet raw even in short distances.
- Black Mamba
- You need thicker skin. The thick rubber is also better than standard shoes against sharp rocks and broken debris. And when you need another pair, you just carve out another one. You'll find many Amazonian rebels, low on resources, wearing tires stolen from enemy vehicles.
- Picador

### Paper Armor

An old practice of creating armor in Imperial Japan and China has recently been combined with recycling paper products. Lacquer and paper are folded and shaped into thick scales that are threaded into a scale mail-like armor. While paper doesn't seem strong, the creation of scales and layering of them gives them a decently high resistance to non-ballistic weapons.

- This stuff is very lightweight, but slightly bulky. When you move around, the armor makes sounds like wood hitting wood. But there's a coolness factor wearing a full set of samurai armor, and who cares if it was made from mostly paper?
- Mihoshi Oni

## GAME RULES

**Death Masks:** Death masks are treated as a functional gas mask (p. 254, *SR4A*). They also give a +1 die bonus to intimidation tests when worn.

**Goblin Stompers:** Goblin stompers are an exotic melee weapon used to scar a subject with fire damage. The heated metal melts through most clothes unless they are treated for thermal resistance.

**Post Apocalyptic Accessories:** This is an all-encompassing item to cover all the spikes, pins and other accessories to convert an outfit into P-A fashion.

### GOBLIN STOMPERS

| Reach | Damage | AP    | Avail | Cost |
|-------|--------|-------|-------|------|
| Touch | 2P(f)  | -half | 6R    | 450¥ |

### ADDITIONAL P-A GEAR

| Name            | Ballistic/Impact | Avail | Cost |
|-----------------|------------------|-------|------|
| Death Masks     | 0/1              | 2     | 275¥ |
| Paper Armor     | 1/4              | 4     | 100¥ |
| P-A Accessories | —                | —     | 40¥  |
| Runflat Sandals | 0/0              | 2     | 20¥  |

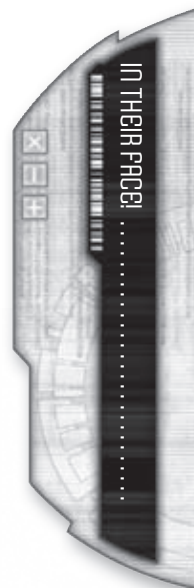
- It's cheap and fools MAD detectors. It's better than armored clothes for impact purposes, but I wouldn't substitute it for an armored jacket. Might work well with some form-fitting underwear.
- Ma'Fan
- I'm surprised that a corporation hasn't taken advantage of the advertising potential. "Four out of five gang members prefer armor made from Burpee Cola cardboard boxes over its competitors ..."
- Slamm-O!

### Death Masks

In high-pollution areas such as Tenochtitlán, there is always a need for a respirator. When they can't be bought, some people have learned to make their own. What began as cut-open bottles, with a washing-soda soaked cloth shoved into the spout, later transformed into grim masks. In the jungle, where resources are scarce, native tribes scrounged in old landfills to find protection against chemical warfare used against them. While not effective against contact vector poisons, they had their usefulness. The idea became a fashion statement, silently protesting the treatment of natives and the use of chemical and biological weapons. From recycled plastic, artists like Netzahualcoyotl mold respirators and gas masks into faces of death gods or mythical demons. Calling them "death masks" comes from the grim reminder that this will most likely be the last face the user will wear.

- Think of them as a modern twist on ancient samurai masks. While I think the WWI- and II-style masks are just as intimidating, seeing a bunch of rebels jumping out of the jungle with home-made smokescreens, bombs, and death masks is very effective in making them seem like a bigger threat.
- Traveler Jones

Urgent Message...



- Netzahualcoyotl has a price on his head. He's not welcome in his hometown of Acapulco, and I believe he's fled to the South Pacific. If the price goes any higher, I might take him out. 'Course they would have to pay nuyen, not corporate scrip.
- Kane

## HLOWEAR

**Plan 9:** Holographic projections are nothing new; trideo, menus, even advertisements take advantage of displaying three-dimensional images. Fashion is just another medium to use it to make a statement. Vashon Island has introduced its own Second Skin line, called Teg-mentum, to battle Zoë's monopoly. Their bodysuits use more than fifty overlapping holo-projectors instead of a ruthenium polymer coating. They have similar protective measures of skintight ballistic polylatex and sculpted densiplast as Second Skin, and have an optional hood. Teg-mentum has become more popular than Second Skin, as it adds a third dimension to a wearer's creativity. It has become so popular, in fact, that 6-Tees has also thrown their hat into the ring with a cheaper line, converting jumpsuits and jackets by adding projectors to them. Unlike traditional holograms, which create an independent object in clear space, these have to work around a physical object. Holograms are usually semi-translucent in nature, but Teg-mentum tries to overlap images to obscure the physical features and create some modesty. It also keeps track of biometrics and uses a wireframe program when projecting the images in order to keep up with a person's movements.

Holowear allows for rapid transition of different projected apparel or images. The wearer of a holowear skinsuit can quickly change from a ballroom gown to commando fatigues to a gorilla suit by selecting one of those options from a menu of wireframe

holograms. A hood is available for a full holographic costume, and it can interpret facial movements and implement them into a holographic face. The hood has some legal grey areas with photo surveillance, and sometimes authorities will stop someone who is wearing one in a secure neighborhood. Holowear is too new to be under any of the old subliminal ad protection laws, so advertisers are working to take advantage of that fact before any new laws get passed. Give these suits to simstars to wear for a while, and soon enough you'll see whole groups of fans suddenly getting hungry for Nature-Taste Soy-Chicken or wanting to start buying BMWs.

- Zoë's gone and hired runners to take on the competition directly. Choose your jobs carefully; all sales are final.
- 2XL

The price of holowear has been out of reach of the average wageslave, which helps keep craziness out of the office, though with 6-Tees, Strict-9 jackets and H-Jumpsuits coming down in price, it won't be long before bosses need to figure out a way to deal with this trend.

Interesting side topic is that holowear, AR-capable clothing, and AR makeup have induced a higher percentage of people who have spectrophobia and a fear of negative appearance. Those on the high end of the Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS) cannot function without holographics or augmented reality at all. This condition has become so prevalent that a standard drug regimen has already been developed to treat it. I think this will only become more common—the future I see is one where a growing number of conforming workers with uniform AR faces work unemotionally, completely neutral because of the anti-anxiety drugs their employers keep pumped into them.

- So you're saying the only people who wear holowear are dysfunctional?
- Clockwork
- Close. I'm saying that this fashion line and augmented reality feed directly off of people's self-consciousness, which induces a higher rating on the SAAS; people then become dysfunctional because of it. I can put it another way: It's like a drug. Instead of making people feel good, it makes them feel bad, and that of course makes them buy more.
- Plan 9

**/dev/grll:** You don't have to go whole hog on holowear—you can just accessorize with it. Partial holowear is available in the form of hoods and gloves. The gloves project the hologram into the palm of the hand. They're an easy way to present AR objects to those without a display link. Some runners have experimented with holo-projected guns to fool people and surprise them in places where weapons are not supposed to be, but making them look convincingly real in their grip has been a challenge.

The hood can project a semi-realistic face or facial features onto the subject or be used to project the Matrix. Combined with AR gloves, it allows others to watch a hacker at work, seeing what he sees.

### Aetherpedia Keyword Search: Gagaistic

**Gagaistic**, adj: An outrageous fashion statement designed to attract an audience.

GaGa, or Gagaistic, comes from the twenty-first century's novastar Lady Gaga's flair for fashion. Since then it has continued to be synonymous with an artistic expression of outlandish fashion. Many artists since then have created or worn Gagaistic clothes for performances.

#### Examples:

- Maria Mercurial wore a liquid mercury dress in one of her later Seattle performances in 2052.
- Kat o' Nine Tales of Grim Aurora wore a Van DeGraff Spiked shoulder pad and mace during her band's 2064 tour.

**Paris Zoë produced a new fall Gagaistic collection for 2073 including:**

- The Orrery gown, which is a dress connected to wire frames with orbiting spheres
- Haze, an outfit made entirely from aerogel.



## GAME RULES

**Holowear:** Like holoprojectors, these clothing items project a trideo hologram confined to a space of five meters in diameter around the wearer. Though holos can be quite realistic, a Perception + Intuition (2) Test is usually sufficient to distinguish a hologram from a real object or person.

### HOLOWEAR GEAR

| Name            | Ballistic/Impact | Avail | Cost  |
|-----------------|------------------|-------|-------|
| Strict-9 Jacket | 4/1              | 8     | 2200¥ |
| Teg-mentum      | 4/1              | 10    | 3000¥ |
| H-jumpsuit      | 3/2              | 10    | 2500¥ |
| Holo Gloves     | —                | 10    | 500¥  |
| Holo Hood       | —                | 10    | 475¥  |

Urgent Message...

## SPELL: FASHION (EXPANDED RULES)

The Fashion spell (p. 173, *Street Magic*) allows for the changing of the cut, color, and fit of any given outfit. The degree of tailoring that can be done is determined by the number of net hits. Now that clothing incorporates more computerized elements, including AR capabilities, fiber optics, biofeedback sensors, smart fabrics, ballistic plastics, and other technologies that don't take well to magic, this spell has to overcome the clothing's object resistance. This makes each net hit important enough to provide an example effect for each.

### NUMBER OF NET HITS

- 1 The tint of the color can change (e.g., dark blue to light blue, but not green); minor adjustments such as mending bullet holes can also be performed.
- 2 Adjustments to the fit of the clothing can be made, but nothing drastic about the nature of the clothes (for example, pants are still pants). Color can change slightly (e.g., blue to green or purple, but not red.)
- 3 Full spectrum of color can be manipulated, but not in any detail. Modifications such as the addition or removal of pockets or pants to a skirt can be done.
- 4+ Clothing can change to mimic a uniform, provided enough is available. Color changes can help mimic missing accessories such as buttons or labels.

Urgent Message...

## FEYWEAR

**Plan 9:** Unique and rare in the world are clothing designed by free spirits. Through magical means, they weave rare plant fibers and precious metals into elegant dresses and other clothes that no machine can match. The items bear the spirit's true signature, so only a few of them are produced in order to reduce the chances of mages using the garments to bind the spirit. All feywear have magical properties, such as providing an impression of beauty, success, or confidence. Because of their rarity, they are very expensive. Qiigam of the Trans-Polar Aleut Nation is the only free spirit who has been confirmed as making clothing; his/her creations are worn by local tribal councils and select others who can afford them. The existence of feywear has led to a proliferation of knockoff clothes with anchored spells or a summoned spirit sustaining spells upon them. Only a skilled mage can check if the signature on feywear is authentic or if the item is a knockoff.

- I have heard of these things but not seen any of them in person. They're dangerous, since they can give people a false sense of confidence or trust in the wearer. Lady Brane Deigh recently requested a gown to be made for her from Qiigam him/herself for an upcoming celebration. No word as to the price they settled on.
- Lyran
- Speaking of Tír na nÓg, I heard that the Danaan family is making inquiries into something missing from their house. Rumor has it that the family had their own feywear presented by someone from the Seelie Court.
- Mika
- Denver's Koshari Council of Elders might be looking into getting feywear masks if they can convince a more "local" spirit to make them.
- Axis Mundi

## GAME RULES

Most feywear gives the wearer the quality Glamour. Other possibilities include qualities such as Inspired, Magic Resistance, or Trustworthy. The price of feywear is in both Karma (twice BP of Quality) and cash (10,000 x BP in nuyen). Paying the karmic cost binds the feywear to the owner like foci. As with magical compounds (p. 88, *Street Magic*), the gamemaster must evaluate the potential power and game balance when introducing feywear in their game. Should feywear be included, the gamemaster should include some job to be done for Qiigam (or another powerful spirit) as additional payment for the feywear they create.

### Sample feywear:

#### Qiigam's Qaspeq

The qaspeq is a tribal jacket woven of fine seal fur and buttoned with walrus ivory. It is very warm and waterproof for the coastal northern weather.

**Granted Quality:** Glamour

**Cost:** 100,000 ¥

Urgent Message...

IN THEIR PRCE: .....



INCOMING FEED.....

## LIVINGWEAR

**Plan 9:** When the “Garden of Eden” look debuted in 2053, it didn’t really catch on as a fashion; wearing living plants made you look like a topiary or Chia Pet. Furs have been out of fashion for a century, especially with eco-terrorist groups around, but leave it to corporate marketers to bring this concept back from the dead and help them make a comeback. Remember, these are the same people that put a new marshmallow shape in my Lucky Telesma cereal, and advertised it as new. Some of us scoffed, but sales went up eight percent.

- You eat Lucky Telesma?
- Bull
- Yes. Look, when they advertised Archie the Archeologist finding the “Fate-Os” Disk marshmallow, and said it would be the first of four marshmallows that when combined would unlock the cereal’s fruity goodness, I knew someone was messing with me.
- Plan 9

So let’s start with livingwear’s animalistic side. Alicia Menezes, a renowned transgenic artist from Guatemala, has taken the animal out of the equation through current burn-graft technologies. She grows the skin and fur in a nutri-bath solution. Originally she worked for De Button contracting with the military for uniforms—an elite Jaguar soldier is just an elite soldier if

they don’t have the jaguar fur on the uniform, and wild jaguars are becoming hard to find. She’s adapted her technique to a range of fur-bearing mammals, including mink, fox, and bear. The skin of all these animals can be replicated in large trays, then tanned and used in clothing. Menezes was extracted from De Button six months ago by RhineGold to work for them. Her latest advancement is taking a body scan of an individual and turning that into a lattice structure to grow the skin, thus eliminating any weak seams and making a perfect fit. Menezes continues to improve the design with tweaks to the color and patterns of her designs.

- De Button is not happy with the loss of her talent, and especially unhappy with RhineGold getting patents on her later works and not having to pay royalties anymore.
- Dr. Spin
- RhineGold wanted her for more than just fashion—supposedly, she’s working on a project to grow clonal shapeshifter skin to make dressings that help wounds heal faster. Some rumors say she’s taken this product to the testing phase and is using POWs for grafting experiments. Seeing how this rumor, backed by Horizon (take it as you will), is spreading, someone is looking to set her up for a hit. Money is on De Button, though they would take a reputation hit as well since she worked for them. But it would level the fashion playing field.
- Black Mamba



Marcus Brodyk of the United Netherlands has taken a different approach and has kept his work alive. He was inspired by the artist Gohan Wadashi of Manhattan and his Tribble artwork. Brodyk took it large scale, manipulating the growth of the skin into a self-contained organ called a livingwear coat.

- Brodyk might have been inspired by Wadashi, but he was totally oblivious to the artist's protest of corporate exploitation and manipulation of animals in the name of science that represented Tribble art.
- Ecotope
- Technically, Tribble was a protest specifically against the creation of biodrones, and Gremlin was a protest against genetic manipulation, i.e., warforms, but I see your point.
- Clockwork

The livingwear coat has an inner and outer layer. The inner layer is made of soft skin or fur, while the outer layer can be anything from long thermal fur of the arctic fox to the short hair of a dog. The livingwear coat is not symbiotic in nature, though it needs constant care. In the nape of the neck is a connector to feed the coat nutrients via an IV. Because it is a mammal, it generates its own heat through metabolism, giving the wearer extra thermal protection. So far, Brodyk has introduced cat, bear, and wolf livingwear coats. The feline version of the coat purrs and it has a calming effect on those around it—people just want to come by and pet it. I've heard male wearers say it's irresistible to members of the opposite sex. Another optional feature for the livingwear coat is paw-like fingerless gloves with claws.

- I have to say, this is one of the most unusual coats I've worn. It's like being body-hugged. There are minute amounts of muscle in it, so you don't have to worry about the coat squeezing you to death, but you can sometimes feel some movement. It has a very musky smell, but not unpleasant.
- Pistons
- I haven't seen this advertised in the fashion trids, but during the Ice Festival in Oslo, I saw a man and woman wearing an Ursa and Feline version of livingwear. I tried to show the lady a good time, noting the similar taste in clothes. The man wasn't pleased and took a swing. The marks he left in a nearby ice sculpture told me that there's a bit of functionality in those claw accessories.
- Ethernaut

In Rome, artist and fashion designer Alonso Giuseppe has developed a process of using nacre, or "mother of pearl," in the creation of clothes. Apparel ranging from bright iridescent gowns

## GAME RULES

**Livingwear Coat:** Thanks to its self-warming capabilities, the coat has 3 points of thermal resistance. The claws are an exotic melee weapon that can optionally retract. They have a concealability modifier of -3 and are not detectable by MAD. Damage from the claws is (Str/2+1P)

**Symbiote Anemone Ring:** The ring uses a pool of 5 dice to detect drugs or toxins set into a drink (the threshold for the test is 2). If the toxin inflicts physical damage of any sort, the anemone dies upon detecting it.

| Name                  | Ballistic/Impact | Avail | Cost   |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------|--------|
| Livingwear Coat       | 1/3              | 15    | 8,000¥ |
| Symbiote earrings     | —                | 12    | 2,000¥ |
| Symbiote anemone ring | —                | 10    | 2,300¥ |
| Symbiote pendant      | —                | 10    | 1,800¥ |

to calcified armor and robes reminiscent of Ancient Roman apparel has been introduced at several fashion shows. There are some people in the fashion industry who believe that the Italian Papal States are using Alonso and his works in promoting a more militarist country, desensitizing the population with a faux soldier look. If you don't believe me, look at the similarities between the new army uniform design and iterations of Giuseppe's works.

Giuseppe's work connects to livingwear in the use of symbiotes as jewelry. Several companies who create symbiotes have made further strides in designing other creatures as fashion accessories, including living earrings with crystalline shells that you can feed a special solution to alter the shell's coloring; a pendant that pulses to your heartbeat; and simple chitinous rings that can resize themselves. The anemone ring is the most popular of all the rings. It looks like a small moving flower. When close to a beverage, it extends its tentacles to drink. The symbiote changes color and retreats if it detects certain drugs.

- In plain English, girls can use the anemone ring to detect if the drink contains one of several date-rape drugs before taking a sip. This ring has seen significant use at many parties and clubs, as it's more subtle than a taste analyzer. It can also detect poisons, though at a cost—if a drink is poisoned, it will take the anemone out for good, but at least it would die before you do.
- Pistons

Symbiotic jewelry can be taken off, but items must be put into a nutrient solution or else they will die of starvation.

Urgent Message...

IN THEIR PRCE!

## HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES

Posted by: /dev/grrl

Mundanes. Norms. Squares. Humdrums. Day-lings, U2C. Call them whatever you want, but the people who aren't savvy to the shadows are all around us. Yes, they're clueless as to the way the real world works once the sun goes down and, yes, they tend to be pathetic little drones who believe whatever their corporate masters tell them to believe. However, we have to face the facts: They represent the majority of the world's population. We're the minority.

Since this is the case, we can't be completely blind to what they wear. Hell, some jobs even require us to pass ourselves off as their ilk. If we turn a blind eye to their styles, then there's no way we can do these jobs effectively. Besides, some runs are set up in classy restaurants, so you can't exactly walk into these situations without so much as an idea of what is currently "in."

What follows is a crash course in Square Wear.

**Casual:** Some things never change, and casual wear is proof of that. Jeans, skirts, t-shirts, and running shoes are still fashionable for those looking to chill and be comfortable. Now that holowear is becoming more affordable for the average Joe or Jane, we're starting to see more of it sneaking into casual wear (especially in tandem with sports team iconography). Note that I'm not including VendingWear, the cheap plastic crap sold in kiosks all across town, here, because that's beneath casual. It's stuff you should never wear unless you're really, really desperate. Or want to look like you are.

**Business:** Speaking of things that never change, men have been wearing suits to the office since the dawn of goddamn time, and the double-breasted suit in a dark solid color remains the cornerstone of Western business wear. More people are starting to sport mandarin-style suits (you know, the ones with the short, rigid collars that poke up) than before, and don't be surprised to see that trend growing. As for women, the pantsuits that have been so prominent for the past three or four years are slowly being phased out and replaced with smart skirt suits with ornate buttons.

**Formal:** For the fellas, you can't go wrong with a classic, single-breasted suit. In the past, matching black and blue has been a fashion faux pas, but believe it or not, this combo is becoming common in formal wear. Women have a more interesting range of possibilities. Evening dresses are still the standard, but cocktail dresses and flowing maxi-dresses are showing up more and more in elite restaurants and stuffy dinner parties. Solid colors are expected in all cases, though a few fashion rebels have been seen rocking patterned dresses lately. Who knows if this will become more accepted? Livingwear coats are beginning to weasel their way into formal events and are considered great conversation pieces.

**Urban:** Urbanwear has a unique style statement that speaks directly about the wearer's attitude. The differences between casual and urban are that casual is more accepted in a business and corporate world (including the ongoing phenomenon that is Casual Friday), and that casual is more generic with little logos and the ability to blend in with other casual wearers. Urbanwear is more about standing out, not blending in, and for the most part you won't catch anyone wearing it in an office. This is the stuff you wear clubbing, not working.

### GAME RULES

When players are buying clothes, there are features they can add to make clothes what they want them to be.

**AR enhanced:** Allows for the projecting of an augmented overlay. Basic clothing just has RFID tags for advertising. One step up from there is pre-programmed AR advertising. Players can either crack the AR advertising to replace it with what they want, or just buy programmable AR clothing. AR enhanced clothes are considered a device rating 2 node, and it adds 25 nuyen to the cost of any item of clothing.

**Color changing:** Advanced fiber optics provide an option for color-changing clothes. Woven into the clothing, it does relatively the same job as ruthenium polymers in allowing the adjustment of light projected from the clothes. Apply a -2 dice pool modifier to Perception Tests to see the wearer when used for camouflage, and it adds 175 nuyen to the cost of any item of clothing.

**Natural fiber:** Most Sixth World clothing is made from extracted petroleum-based fibers or flexible silicon composite because it's cheap, and most people like having biometrics or stainproof/dirtproof, wrinkle-free clothes. Cotton, hemp, bamboo and silk have to be specifically requested for clothing. These fibers add ten percent to the cost of the outfit and reduce the object resistance by 2 if this is the only clothing option added.

**Armor:** Most clothing does not come with any ballistic or impact protection, but new techniques allow for some protection. Carbon-boron infusion, Kevlar threading, and Delta-Amyloid coatings are available. (Layered protection rules still apply). These modifications can be added to regular clothing or to armor clothing (p. 326, SR4A)

| Name             | Ballistic | Impact | Cost  |
|------------------|-----------|--------|-------|
| Carbon-boron     | +1        | +2     | +200¥ |
| Kevlar threading | +2        | +0     | +100¥ |
| Delta-Amyloid    | +3        | +1     | +400¥ |

**VendingWear:** A cheap option for people looking for a basic covering. VendingWear is recycled plastic that is shredded and woven into fabric (with an elastic band for pants, socks, and underwear). It has no options except for color (avocado green or dirt brown) and size (small, medium, large, and extra large). Five nuyen can purchase a tube containing a shirt, pants, socks, and underwear of the chosen size. Most of the VendingWear machines accept bottles and cans in lieu of money (which then are recycled into VendingWear products).

Urgent Message...

IN THEIR FACE!



## AVERAGE CLOTHING PRICING FROM CORPORATE LINES

### CASUAL

**6 Tees (Horizon):** Retro-American casual shirts and t-shirts. 20¥

**Beaux Retail (Mitsuhamma):** Simple patterned collared shirts (short and long sleeve), ties, and slacks. 20¥

**Bodyline (Spinrad Industries):** Biometric and luminescent artwork on jumpsuits, t-shirts, skirts, shorts, and jeans. 30¥

**Lyric of Portland (Telestriar):** Neo-Celtic patterned jeans, dresses, sweaters, and kilts. 50¥

**ME MetaL (Evo):** Simple patterned shirts, skirts and slacks. 45¥

**NuZoot (Monobe):** Asian symbol monogrammed collared shirts (short and long sleeve), ties, and slacks. 150¥

**Très Chic Clothing (Aztechnology):** Mesoamerican symbol monogrammed collared shirts (short and long sleeve), large design print t-shirts. 175¥

**Tropicaliente(UO):** Bright patterned cargo pants, t-shirts, skirts, swimsuits, and shorts. 50¥

**Vashon Island (Shiawase Fashion):** Solid colored shirts, t-shirts, collared shirts, and ties. 100¥

**Victory (Ares):** Jeans, cargo pants, vests, and belts (emphasis on pockets in design). 25¥

### BUSINESS

**Beaux Retail (Mitsuhamma):** Simple patterned one-piece suits, skirts, ties, and shoes. 100¥

**Berwick (Mortimer of London):** Three-piece suits, solid colored ties, hats (fedoras mainly), and shoes (real leather). 1,000¥

**Brilliance (Horizon):** Business style dresses, skirts, shoes (high heel and flat), purses, and pants. 100¥

**De Button (Aztechnology):** Animal patterned print one-piece suits, men's accessories, uniforms. 85¥

**Europa (Renraku):** Advanced traveling material (stain-proof and wrinkle-proof; aerates and deters body odor) for one-piece suits, eveningwear, and sleepwear. 90¥

**KoGo (Wuxing):** Three-piece suits, ties, shoes. 205¥

**Laurentine de Lion (Proteus):** One-piece and three-piece suits, men's jewelry (commlink and old-fashioned watches, custom cufflinks, and rings). 250¥

**MetaTribe (Evo):** Uniforms (security, medical, nursing, private school), cultural/ethnic specific business outfits. 85¥

**RhineGold (Saeder-Krupp):** Old world-style three-piece suits, hats, skirts, and ties. 300¥

**Soul of Seoul (Proteus):** Dress robes, slippers, natural fabric one-piece suits. 300¥

**Vashon Island (Shiawase Fashion):** Three-piece suits, simple patterned ties, shoes (faux leather). 500¥

**Wellington Bros (Shiawase Fashion):** Classic three-piece suits, solid colored ties, and shoes. 250¥

**Zoë (Zoë):** Three-piece suits, business skirts and dresses, and purses. 500¥

### FORMAL

**Brilliance (Horizon):** Dresses, gowns, women's shoes, and purses. 285¥

**Très Chic Clothing (Aztechnology):** Men's tuxedos, three-piece suits (tailor made), and dresses (including wedding dresses). 300¥

### DESIGNER

Custom designed dresses and outfits for men and women. This is the low end of the pricing spectrum for each outfit.

**Armanté: (Zoë):** 5,000¥

**Aston:** 5,000¥

**Berwick (Mortimer of London):** 5,000¥

**Zoë de Paris:** 10,000¥

**Ripon of Mumbai:** 5,000¥

**Ami Feather:** 7,000¥

**Jean-Paul:** 7,000¥

### URBAN

**6 Tees (Horizon):** Hoodies, jumpsuits, jackets, t-shirts, dresses, men's and women's accessories. 150¥

**Bodyline (Spinrad Industries):** Complex artwork with biometric controls or luminance displays for jeans, shirts, skirts, shoes. 50¥

**CD/Common Denominator (Evo):** Athletic shoes, jeans, jackets, jumpsuits, sweats, and shorts in solid colors or simple patterns. 20¥

**DressCode (Amalgamated Studios):** Stylized dress uniforms, men's and women's accessories (jewelry and bags), and shoes. 60¥

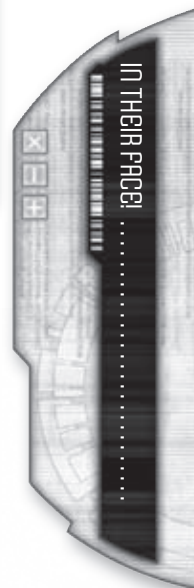
**Furba (NeoNET):** Athletic shoes, faux leather jackets, graffiti-patterned shirts, and hats. 55¥

**ME MetaL (Evo):** Athletic shoes, jeans, jackets, jumpsuits, sweats, and shorts. 60¥

**NuZoot (Monobe):** Jeans, jackets, skirts, dresses, and shoes with stylized symbolic or animal prints. 110¥

**Tribale (Aztechnology):** Various cultural/ethnic specific outfits. 75¥

Urgent Message...



## ACCESSORIES AND GEAR

**/dev/grrl:** Okay, it's true that some people take fashion way too seriously. Even I do it, sometimes, but it's an easy mistake to make, because it's *important*, dammit. Which pair of boots will best accentuate these synthleather pants? Will this cute little top make me look fat? Does this micro-skirt clash with my shirt? These are the kinds of questions we've all asked ourselves at one time or another (well, except maybe most of the dudes). But if we get too serious, it's easy to forget that fashion can be a totally fun way to express yourself. So what if the boots don't enhance the britches? Who cares if you look like a chunker in that top? What does it matter if the skirt and shirt look like a steaming pile of dogshit together? As long as you're making a fashion statement and having fun with it, it really doesn't matter—unless you're trying to get a job or something. Luckily for the more adventurous sorts, the fashion industry has a lot of nifty stuff to offer. The items I discuss below are things you're generally going to wear while clubbing or shopping rather than when you're trying to sneak into some gods-forsaken corporate compound. Remember, this is about *fun*, right? To hell with work for the time being!

**Plan 9:** That's all fine and good, but don't forget that government agencies like MI6 and CIA dump their surplus gadgets through shell stores in order to fund their next arms deal or coup. Did you know that Modez shoes came from disguise costumes kits used by North American and European operatives? With budget cuts pending because of several upcoming cold wars, the CIA figured they could make up the difference and still equip their operatives by selling their product as high-priced shoes. Their spin-doctors were good enough to turn it into a fad.

- I've seen the CIA have trouble planting a bug in the right hotel room. Not sure I buy them as fashion power brokers.
- Snopes

### ACOUSTIC CLOTHING

Using the same fibers that are used for biomonitors, scientists have manipulated the fluorine content of the fibers so that when they apply an electric current, the fibers vibrate. While this is good for making better microphones, the fibers can also be woven into clothing to produce audible sound. Now when people accuse you of wearing a "loud outfit," it can be literally true. In some ways these pieces of clothing function and sound like a Theremin, and rap and techno music stars have taken to wearing acoustic outfits so that when they dance, they can modify the musical tones on the fly.

- While not on my list of top-five hated instruments, this is up there. It reminds me of armpit music when I was a kid.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

### AR MAKEUP

Augmented make-up is different from AR clothing. For one thing, it is in an amorphous state, while clothes have a semi-rigid shape. For another, the make-up doesn't know where on the face it has been applied, while clothes know they're on an arm or covering a chest.

Despite these limitations, this is upper-end makeup. AR makeup can be colored like real makeup. With a smart brush, the wearer can adjust the AR color in the area of the brush. The better the quality of makeup, the more refined adjustment of color you can do. This makeup augments the color of the face without making it look like you're wearing a mask (the way so many celebrities do these days when they're on the red-carpet walk). Some brands allow a more complete transformation—Kong Mart brand of makeup projects an AR mask, which then can be edited. It's imperfect, though—if you move too fast, the AR mask will look out of sync with the real you. AR lipstick works the same way, creating an artificial illumination as well as color. Luscious Midnight Moon lipstick replicates soft moonlight, while Sol Catcher gives the lips a fiery molten look.

### BONE BLACK MAKEUP

More for ritualistic types, bone black has come back in cosmetics and tattooing. Made by burning and crushing animal bones into fine powders, this material has been mixed with other materials such as Awakened butterfly wings or ground with dual-natured plants that react with astral objects so that it gives off a variety of colors. There's some experimentation in getting the bone black makeup to shift colors depending on local mana fluctuations or the presence of astral beings. The Triad use bone black for spell anchoring tattoos and as a material link to their brethren.

### DYNAMIC POLARIZATION LENSES

**Plan 9:** Polarized sunglasses have been around for quite some time, as well as dielectric polarization of glass. Dynamic lenses now have been designed to change the orientation of the polarization. What this means is that with these glasses, you can match the orientation of, say, a one-way mirror and be able to see through it or make visible communication more secure with a constantly changing orientation. Nightclubs can now offer exclusive access to city views normally limited due to glitterati activity, or the glasses can help provide secure laser communication between bouncer and clubber. Rumors have it that Dante's is having a few floors renovated to include polarized lighting, making it mostly dark to all but their most valued clientele.

### HACKER GUM

This piezoelectric gum substance contains nano-transceivers with preprogrammed software. The gum allows the transceivers to be dormant until pressure is applied; the small electric charge triggers the execution of the program and boosts the signal rating to a one-meter radius. The software can be programmed at the time of creation.

There are several uses for this toy. One is for activists or hackers wanting to spread a message without getting caught. The software is a generic hacking viral program, which usually can hack AR advertisements, low-rated commlinks, or mass-produced clothes. The software then reprograms the AR with their message.

Another use of hacker gum is to broadcast a signal like a decoy message. When activated, it mimics the signal of another device to throw off tracking.

- This is just a fun toy. The looks on some people's faces when they see a shocking change of a person's AR display as they walk by



are priceless. Get a bag of these balled up, coded with the look you want, then roll them into a crowd. If they are tracking your commlink, drop a few decoys as well for them to track. Then you can see how many guards actually were paying attention to the real world versus the electronic data.

- Slamm-0!
- Did you hear about the fan riot during a Crushers-Dragons urban brawl match the other week? It started when a Crusher fan dropped a huge wad of this in the Dragons' bleachers, and they were overwhelmed with Crusher AR spam. As it turns out, Dragon fans have a poor sense of humor.
- Turbo Bunny

## THE HANDY SACK

**/dev/grrl:** The woman's purse is still around as a handy carrying case for all kinds of tools and toys. The latest iteration of the carrying case looks like it contains massive amounts of folds of fabric. The fabric moves using complex equations to maximize the storage space within the bag. The owner doesn't have to rifle through the bag any more, since the bag remembers where it has stored an item. To retrieve it, the owner asks the bag for the item, and the fabric will shift around and put that item on top. This fabric has a secondary benefit of security from anyone trying to just dig through the bag. Without the password, the bag will have to be hacked or torn apart to get at the contents, and the purse is usually made with strong fabric to prevent accidental rips or punctures.

- It looks like a laundry or intestines on the inside; it's just not pretty. However, Louis Vuitton and other luxury designers invest more in the outside and a black velvet internal cover to conceal the inside guts from public view.
- Netcat

## iCONTACTS

These contacts project AR images of an eye-with-sensors inside the contact to interpret eye movements. This allows for an AR presentation focused solely on a detailed rendition of the eyes. iContact can be added as a feature of standard contacts. Larger anime eyes are part of the Ulzzang (short for pretty) Girl collection. They give me the creeps.

## MEDUSA EXTENSIONS

Part drone, part trode, these narrow, twenty centimeter-long "snakes" fit along the scalp and move with neural stimuli. Over a dozen can be placed along the scalp and can move independently or in sync. Simple in design, they can be programmed to change behavior with certain emotions. There's optional color changing for them as well.

- Have your rigger friend trick them out with hold-out weaponry or other general area nastiness. Then when they think you are unarmed, activate them.
- Pistons

## MICROWEAVE SPIDER

This spider drone is a tailor's best friend. Six of the eight

legs have secondary functionality of sewing needles and micro manipulators. The mandible is a scissor device for cutting the threads. Its body has two components; one is for thread to weave a tear shut or to create a web for the missing fabric. The other component is a fabric glue that, when heated, bonds to existing material. If you have replacement fabric, the spider will trim the piece to the correct specifications and use both the glue and thread to patch the hole. The MW spider does a great job at making the patch seamless. MW Spider has a deluxe upgrade, which can also repair fiber optics.

- On the same note, people forget that after a gunfight, sure you get healed, but what about the bullet holes, the cuts, the blood all over your clothes? One look and people are going to be calling the authorities. So you need to have a handy kit somewhere containing a MicroWeave Spider, a dozen Nano-fixx caps, and a quick organic cleanser. That way you can get back to business with clean appearing clothes.
- Traveler Jones
- Yeah, you need both the Nano-fixx and this thing, since powder burns don't repair well with the MicroWeave Spider.
- Mika

## MODEZ AND LUX LOAFERS

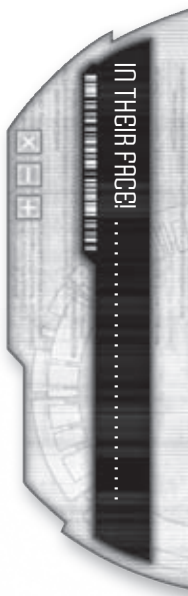
Modez is a relatively new brand of shoes that kind of gives you two pairs in one. Using smart metal composites, the wearer can make the shoes transform into a different pair in a matter of seconds. Each of the pairs of Modez shoes for women can change from flats to heels as the composite sole adjusts to one of its other states. The Lux Loafers for the men use the composite to adjust their height, adding up to five centimeters. There is also a sporting brand from the Victory line called Olympus, which can project spikes through holes in the sole, so the athlete would never need to switch shoes during or after a sporting event.

- The Modez phenomenon has "short-term fad" written all over it, putting me in the mind of jellies from the 1980s, crocs from the 2000s, and bucktails from the 2030s. In twenty years, everyone will doubtlessly be laughing at themselves for wearing something so gaudy.
- Glitch

## NANO-FIXX

Developers these days seem to look to nanites as the cure-all for every single one of our woes, both large and small. If there's an itch, they'll toss out some nanites to scratch it. That's the way of the world and there looks to be no end in sight. In the case of Nano-fixx, the itch in question is torn clothing. Hey, nobody likes to get a rip in their favorite jacket or a snag in their hottest-looking pants, right? Well with Nano-fixx, you'll never have to worry about that ever again. All you have to do is break open a miniscule capsule over the ripped clothing and wait a few minutes. The little buggers get to work right away, mending any tears within the immediate area in which they were applied. Pretty ace, huh?

- This is all well and good, but there are two problems, both of which are related. The first problem is that this so-called miracle



product only affects a very small area, which means that if you have multiple snags or holes, you'll need to buy several of these capsules. Which brings us to the second problem: these damn things are outrageously expensive. They retail at 80¥ a pop, which is insane if you ask me.

- Pistons
- For the all-important question, can it fix bullet holes? No, you would have to go to the MicroWeave spider drone for that. Nano-fixx is for smaller holes, like from moths or rips.
- Fastjack
- I wonder what would happen if you snapped a Nano-fixx capsule over a flesh wound.
- Mika
- I wouldn't recommend trying it. I worked for a company that has their hand deep in the nanite pie, so to speak, and I can say that nanites are designed for very specific functions. In other words, fixing cloth is not the same as fixing skin. I doubt the results of dumping these nanites on an open wound would bode well for the recipient.
- DangerSensei

## NANOSMOKES

**Plan 9:** Smoking is a fashion statement all its own, regardless of the good or bad impression it passes on in today's society. Nanosmokes are custom-built cigarettes laced with many special nanites. While they look exactly like regular cigarettes, they pack in a special option—when exhaled through the combustion of the cigarette, nanites in the cigarette try to connect to each other through the use of a static field (which the smoker generates by sucking on the cigarette), allowing them to create a cohesive pattern in smoke. Patterns can be downloaded into the pack on purchase.

The question is, if smoking is already bad for you, why inhale nanites along with it? I suspect that this is another conspiracy to get people to smoke, just because it can do tricks. It's probably a double whammy if there is a second set of nanites in it that work into your brain to make smoking more addictive.

- Okay, you know how some people are skilled enough to make smoke rings, right? With this shit, I can breathe triangles, puppies, or even dragons! You can get at least the first one or two puffs blown into a complete image. After that there's only so much redundancy in the nanites to fill in missing spots. But even to the end of the butt, the partial forms look cool floating in smoke. On a more technical perspective, because it's using static energy to hold its shape, the image fades away after a few seconds, though on dry days, I've seen some images hold for almost twenty seconds before dispersing.
- Mika

## SILVER BODY GLITTER

This special solution was custom developed for the band Grim Aurora by fashion artist Vee Moh. It is a clear petroleum jelly suspending three-millimeter-wide pieces of silver and tantalum alloy. These pieces contain concave divots to maximize reflective light into focused points.

- Hey, that was supposed to be a trade secret!
- Kat o' Nine Tales

## SNAKE SKIN

The Snake Skin is a unique coating that can give any piece of clothing a different color and/or texture. This is a very handy thing. You can either get it done at a tailor specializing in this (good luck), or you can order a spray can of it. Find some article of clothing—a jacket, let's say—and give it a good spray. You might have to let it dry and put a second coat on so it won't leave wrinkles in the armpits or lapels. It puffs up a little as the polymers align themselves into the correct pattern. The coating comes in cotton, suede, polyester, and silk—the suede texture needs a UV lamp in order to set up properly.

If you want to try to put two layers of snakeskin coating on your jacket, remember to check the catalyst code on the can. You don't want to use the same code for both coats; otherwise they will both break down at the same time, leaving you with a plain jacket and a small mess. There are only two catalyst codes available, so if you try to put three or more coats on, two of them are going to break down at the same time. I wouldn't attempt multiple coatings anyway—if you put on too much of this on, clothes start to feel like they've been starched.

The coating's catalyst is contained in micro-beads embedded in the spray coat. When the beads degrade, the catalyst is released, breaking the bonds the coating has made with the fabric. This starts a chain reaction, and each bond breaks, finishing off the coating. The snakeskin sheds in seconds as a fine dust.

- Perfect for when you find some rival wearing the same colored outfit as you.
- Pistons
- Or if you need a quick escape into a crowd.
- 2XL

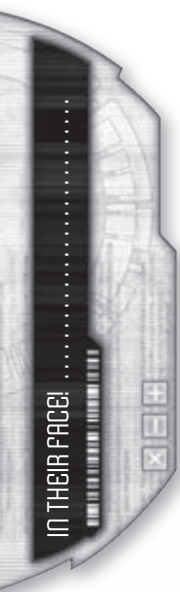
## SPECTRUM PERMANENT POLISH

**/dev/grll:** Spectrum polish goes on as a white crystalline polish to the fingernail. Above the nail, the polish creates crystalline shapes called gyroids. When an electrical charge is applied to the nail, the gyroids react by either growing larger or smaller, depending on the voltage. By changing the shape of the surface, the light from the nail refracts and polarizes differently, changing the color. Spectrum polish does away with having to produce all kinds of colors; all you need is the polish and an adjustable finger-sized device that sends the proper voltage to change the color. Black and grey cannot be created with spectrum polish, as the gyroids themselves reflect white. On the plus side, the color doesn't chip or fade, since there's no pigment.

The coolest thing I've seen done with this polish is combining it with jury-rigged AR Gloves. First, you cut the fingertips off the glove and adjust the feedback to Spectrum voltage levels. Then tie the gloves to a music player, and watch your fingers change colors as you dance.

## STIMTOUCH HOSIERY

As anyone who knows me can attest, I'm not real big fan of overly girly underthings. Even still, there's no denying that







INCOMING FEED.....

StimTouch Hosiery is an awesome innovation. By employing stim-based technology and advanced micro-fibers, the company produces stockings and pantyhose that respond to the touch. While it's really catching on with fetishists the world over, it has more practical uses for the more vanilla folk out there. For one thing, the hue changes, creating a gradient look that shifts slightly with each step. But that's just the beginning. The best thing is that it can make the wearer feel sensations such as the kiss of the sun on a cold, drizzly day, or even a leg massage.

- I know of one instance where these things were actually used to good effect by a contact of mine. She was hired to forcibly but subtly snatch some guy from a classy restaurant. Just in case there was to be trouble, she tweaked the pair of StimTouch pantyhose she would be wearing that night so that it could emit a debilitating shock to anyone making physical contact with the hosiery, and she wore a second skin underneath that for insulation. Sure enough, things went wrong. Her shoes came off quickly and she started laying into the guy's bodyguards, shocking them badly with each kick. Within a minute or two, she snatched up the target and made good her escape.
- Slamm-O!

### TANAKE COLOGNE AND PERFUME

**Plan 9:** Along the same lines as tailored pheromones, the Tanake line of cologne and perfume works with advanced organic chemistry, replicating pheromones as well as odors. Yes, it's good

for impressing Mr. Johnson during business and they smell nice, but I have found that they are based on animal pheromones. This has some advantages and disadvantages. A little spray of Tanake Tiger on the boots can be used to spook security dogs or at least keep them confused for a while. Spray Winter Wolf on a target, and he's lunchmeat for dogs and cats. Results may vary—as I found out, a barghest will not cower from the Tanake Tiger; he will piss on it first.

- LOL! A barghest tinkled on your shoes?
- Slamm-O!
- Well, his aim was a little higher; like a lion marking territory.
- Plan 9
- ROFL! That's about as funny as the Tír ná nÓg squirrel story!
- Slamm-O!

### TIMEX COMPANION SERIES

**/dev/grrl:** Just when you think they've exploited AR technology to the max, a company comes along and proves you wrong. This time around (pun totally intended), that company is the venerable Timex. For the 2071 holiday season, they trotted out a line of watches that can emit a fully customizable AR person who will tell you what time it is, as well as act as an alarm, remind you of important dates, and so on. The default appearance of the AR companion is that of a stuffy old butler (yuck!), though with

IN THEIR PRCEI

a bit of programming, the sky's the limit. While AR proxies are nothing new (just check out the guides to any high-end shopping mall if you don't believe me), this is a pretty radi-cool application of the technology.

- Hmm. I find the notion of a scantily clad French maid popping out to tell me the time to be oddly appealing.
- Ethernaut

**Plan 9:** The need for artillery gunners to have timepieces strapped to their wrists in order to calculate and read time while still being able to man the guns has faded. Time of death for wristwatches happened around 2058, with improved commlinks and cheap display link options for optics. Spending 160 years as a fashion statement ain't a bad accomplishment for the Timex Group, which is now owned by NeoNET. As they say, if you can't beat them, join them, so Timex is pushing out commlink accessories now that people have unencumbered wrists. The first to the market is the AR wristboard. This wrist device interprets finger and wrist movement in relation to a virtual keyboard, making this a direct competition to AR Gloves, but more subtle in design.

## ZIGNATURE

Construction crews and zoning planners use Zignature paint to mark out where pipes and cables are, or will be. Zignature paint allows for the AR display of the markings, without any need for programming, making it perfect for construction to overlay with blueprints. Unlike AR-Wallpaper, which can both send and receive data, Zignature paint only sends info. It is very simple in design, with a latex-based fluid suspension containing millions of simple transmitters that are pre-programmed. Each transmitter basically says "I am here, I am [some color]" in OS-interpretable script. The signal is received by an image link, and a pixel-sized dot represents the transmitter; a sprayed line is displayed completely, if slightly pixilated. Zignature is as durable as other latex-based paints, and the transmitters' power can last for two years of continuous broadcast.

- That's the professional use of the stuff. But on the street, Zignature has put tagging and graffiti up a notch. In a New York subway tunnel, professional graffiti artist "Da Vinci" Collins used this stuff in his mural, "Man Creating AI," stylizing Michelangelo's work for the many passing commuters. This stuff is used all over the place, and more gangs have latched onto this idea while veteran taggers experiment with Zignature, or "Zig" as it's referred to on the street. One use that stood out for me is putting down a layer of magnetic paint before Zignature is sprayed. The light magnetic field distorts the signal, and the display link interprets it as existing up to a half meter from where it was sprayed; a floating signature, as it were.
- 2XL

## GAME RULES

### MicroWeave Spider

Despite the "micro" in its name, the MicroWeave Spider is a small drone with a built-in repair kit for clothing.

**Std Upgrades:** Special Equipment (Clothing repair kit)

**Men's Lux Loafers & Women's Modes:** Provides +1 bonus to disguise skill if the character has the skill.

### Tanake Cologne and Perfume

**Tanke Tiger:** While wearing this cologne/perfume, the subject temporarily gains the Critter Spook quality for six hours, or until it is washed off.

**Winter Wolf:** While wearing this cologne/perfume, the subject temporarily gains a +2 bonus to Intimidation checks involving animals.

| Name                                  | Device Rating | Avail. | Cost           |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|--------|----------------|
| Acoustic Clothing                     | 3             | 8      | 80¥            |
| AR Makeup                             | 3             | 4      | 200¥           |
| AR Wristboard                         | 3             | 4      | 250¥           |
| Bone Black Makeup                     | —             | 6      | 550¥           |
| Dynamic Polarization Lenses           | 3             | 6      | 600¥           |
| Hacker Gum                            | 4             | 6R     | 200 +Program ¥ |
| The Handy Sack                        | 4             | 10     | 1,200¥         |
| iContacts                             | 3             | 4      | 80¥            |
| Men's Lux Loafers                     | 3             | 4      | 75¥            |
| Women's Modez                         | 3             | 4      | 80¥            |
| Sporting (Olympus)                    | 3             | 4      | 90¥            |
| Nano-fixx (per dose)                  | 3             | 5      | 35¥            |
| Nanosmokes (per 6 cigarette)          | —             | 10     | 200¥           |
| Silver Body Glitter                   | —             | 13     | 50¥            |
| Snake Skin (per dose)                 | —             | 8      | 300¥           |
| Spectrum Permanent Polish             | —             | 5      | 120¥           |
| StimTouch Hosiery                     | 3             | 6R     | 250¥           |
| Tanake Cologne and Perfume (per vial) | —             | 10     | 500¥           |
| Timex Classic watches                 | 3             | 4      | 45¥            |
| Zignature                             | 2             | 4      | 15 ¥           |

### MicroWeave Spider

| Handl | Accel | Speed | Pilot | Body | Arm | Sens | Avail | Cost |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-----|------|-------|------|
| +0    | 1     | 1/2   | 2     | 1    | 0   | 1    | 5     | 500¥ |

### Medusa Extensions

| Handl | Accel | Speed | Pilot | Body | Arm | Sens | Avail | Cost |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-----|------|-------|------|
| +0    | 0     | 1     | 1     | 0    | 0   | 1    | 7     | 600¥ |



## BODY MODIFICATIONS

Posted by: /dev/grrl

### TATTOOS

In today's society, many body modifications are quick and, for the most part, removable. I blame this on the younger generations, who want instant gratification. Back in the day, tattoos were permanent expressions of art, culture, or religion. Due to the demand of people wanting the ex-gf/bf tattoo removed, doctors came up with laser removal, which meant that both the process of obtaining and removing the tattoo was somewhat painful. Nanotats took away that pain, allowing users to upload tattoos to their arms or other body parts in minutes during some drunken party and then, when they're sober, trigger the kill switch on the nanites and within hours it's gone, all painlessly.

Nanotats can also be animated. The animated nanotats are simple and can slowly change images, usually two or three images in a minute. On the biological side, glotats are available that give off bioluminescence when exposed to an activating agent.

### BODY COLORING

Body dyeing has some competition with natural skin pigmentation jobs in changing the complete or partial coloring of the body. Body dyeing has a slightly larger color palate, it's quicker to apply (hours vs. days), it's cheaper, and the colors are more brilliant. Skin pigmentation jobs, on the other hand, are more natural looking and don't carry the risks of chemical reactions or the possible asphyxiation due to skin damage. Both are quite permanent. NanTan, which uses nanites to stimulate the creation of melanin, offers another option. It's not permanent, but you can only pick shades of brown.

### INSERTIONS

With advances in cyberware, it's cleaner and easier now to do insertions of just about everything. You can have the look (though not the strength) of muscle replacements without the actual replacements. Most devices are wireless and are recharged kinetically or thermally, so it doesn't really matter if they're above or below the skin. Most of the objects that are inserted are of inert material with no functionality besides the shape, though some gangers have turned arms and legs into sheathes for a blade or credstick.

### GRAFTING

Bifurcations are old techniques that are almost obsolete due to advances in bioware. Grafting is the newer version of this type of body modification. Add a patch of frog skin to your hand or cat fur to your scalp; through this technique, little snippets of animal, clean of incompatible genetics, are added to a person in a process as simple as any cosmetic surgery. Grafting became more common after Halley's Comet, as people just wanted to show off a little bit of freakiness. Grafting with inserts has been common for artistic expression using the insert to act as the border to the graft. Some grafts do more than go skin deep—they're less common than skin grafts, but bone grafts that use a peptide known as MSH, or melanocyte-stimulating hormone, can stimulate and bind bones together.

- Graft shops have been popping up in places like San Francisco, but if you use them, be careful of their quality. I've heard of people catching some nasty cross-species infections because of unsanitary grafting.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

### BRANDING

The scarring of tissue still occurs in tribal or gang initiation and rituals in the usual manner. A hot brand or blade inflicts the damage, which is less permanent than it used to be—today's cosmetic procedures can easily reverse the damage. For those not interested in having red-hot metal touch their skin, branding can be replicated through less painful means. Some tattooists use a collagen-promoting solution and thread a lattice on the skin, forming a natural-looking scar. This type of work can be done in great detail, and sometimes existing or inserted dermal deposits are used to add texture.

Urgent Message...

#### BODY FASHION COST

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Animated nanotats   | 800-1,000¥ |
| Branding  | 150-500¥   |
| Grafting  | 700¥-1000¥ |
| Insertions  | 300¥       |
| Nanotat   | 200-300 ¥  |
| NanTan  | 800¥       |
| Partial dye   | 25-75¥     |
| Piercing  | 20-250¥    |
| Skin pigmentation + biotattoos<br>(p. 63, <i>Augmentation</i> ) | 1,500¥     |
| Tattoo  | 50-100¥    |
| Tattoo scarring   | 100-200¥   |
| Whole-body dye  | 275¥       |

## THE FASHIONISTA'S GUIDE TO BEING STREET CHIC

Posted by: /dev/grrl

I'm going to be, like, really honest here. This article is something that the shadowrunning community has needed since forever. And I *do* mean forever! I may not have been in the business for as long as most of my peers, but I've been around long enough to see that many of the bozos I've encountered are totally clueless when it comes to dressing themselves. Sure, they seem capable of throwing on some pants and a shirt, but it's painfully obvious that little thought goes into their selections. Luckily for them, I'm here to set them straight.

Right now, I'm sure that a lot of readers are scoffing. I can hear them now: "We're shadowrunners, not models." Whatevz! Shadowrunning is just like any other career. You can't expect potential employers to hire you if you look like a steaming pile of mismatched shit. There are a lot of other candidates for the Johnsons to choose from, so it's muy importante to nail that first

impression. Developing and perfecting your look is a good way to do that.

## GETTING STARTED

The first step in the process of finding your own personal style is to pay attention to what others are wearing. Take a trip down to one of the major runner hangouts and study the denizens, even the ones that look like chumptards. Observation is the greatest tool for being street chic. By checking out what people are wearing, you can see what works and what doesn't.

But just watching isn't enough. It's one thing to see what works for others, but it's another thing entirely to see what works for you. Just because that Livingwear fox jacket looks wicked boss on that dude across the room, it doesn't mean it's automatically going to look good on you. But at least by scoping out the different styles, you're opening your eyes to what all is out there ... and that's a huge step in the right direction.

Once you have a head-full of fashion ideas, zip down to the nearest high-end shopping mall or wherever the hell you want to shop and start trying stuff on. You'd better plan to make a day of it, though, because the number of options is staggering. By following this advice, you'll be well on your way to cultivating a look that is totally "you!"

### Things to Consider

There are three major questions you have to ask yourself when compiling your wardrobe. If you answer "no" to any of them, it's back to the old drawing board.

#### *Question #1: Will I make a good impression on potential employers?*

I already touched on this earlier, but it's important enough that I'll go into a little more detail. On a conscious level, Johnsons are going to be looking at reputation, recommendations, qualifications, and all that tripe, right? Right! But on a subconscious level, it's all about your appearance. You have to know what they're looking for in a deniable asset. No two Johnsons are alike (even though the corp variety all look about the same), but they all have more or less identical notions of how a shadowrunner should look.

- Such generalizations are insulting. I have done a fair amount of Johnsoning in the past and I know many others who have as well, so believe me when I say that nothing could be further from the truth. Johnsons *do* pay attention to appearances. That much is fact. However, it's more to ensure that the prospective employee isn't a wanna-be. Poseurs can be ferreted out simply by how they attire themselves.
- Cosmo
- Now look who's generalizing!
- Netcat

So, what are these notions? Well, for one thing, some of them have apparently watched too many old trids that portrayed runners as scruffy leather-jacketed rebels. This means that one can recreate that way-outdated look and still get jobs. Go figure.

- If I ever see another leather jacket, so help me, I'm going to lose my lunch. Talk about a tired look!
- Pistons
- Oh, come on! The leather jacket is the only article of clothing that is truly timeless. /dev/grll is making it sound as if hardly anyone wears them these days, which just isn't true. I've traveled all over the world and can say – with some authority, I might add – that people wear them everywhere. It's not just a handful of old coots refusing to admit that their favorite style's day has come and gone. It's an all-ages thing.
- Stone

Other Johnsons are smarter than that and expect a look that screams—or calmly murmurs—"I'm a professional." After all, their corporate masters are spitting out a sizable chunk of nuyen on hiring teams, so the Johnsons don't want to risk pissing them off by hiring incompetent nitwits who are likely to get smoked by the first sec team they encounter. That's why they like the "I'm a professional" look.

"Professional" doesn't mean suits and ties or anything like that. If you hang out in a runner dive looking like a wageslave, you'd be heckled to no end. No, "professional" means that you should wear clothes similar to what you might wear on an actual run. They like that for some reason. You don't, however, want to look like you're trying to look like a shadowrunner. They'll red flag you as a poseur lickety-split.

- I prefer the Tux 5.11 for my "professional" look.
- Picador

#### *Question #2: Will other shadowrunners take me seriously?*

Each city's shadowrunning scene is an exclusive microcosm all its own. Almost everyone knows each other, or at least knows *of* each other. In other words, it's a small world, so if you walk around looking like a drub, the word's going to get around in a big hurry. You'll look amateurish or even incompetent. Yeah, okay, I know the old saying about judging books by covers and all that hoo-ha, but let's get real. People—including other runners, *especially* other runners—are guilty of doing that all the time.

Believe me when I say that it sucks when your peers don't take you seriously. I get that shit all the time because I'm a teenager. They see how young I am and instantly assume that I don't know my way around the shadows. On numerous occasions, I've been overlooked by runners assembling a team, even though I was a zillion times more proficient than the monkeys they ended up with. What a load of bull, right? The crux of the matter is, the peers in question took one look at me and passed me by because of what they saw rather than what I'm capable of. In short, they judged a book by its cover and it caused me to lose out on some peachy jobs. That's something people do, and there's nothing you can do about it. Except give them a wiz-ass cover to judge, which means cultivating your own personal style.

#### *Question #3: Will my look fit my personality?*

It's easy to make blanket statements in regard to style, but we're all individuals. Duh, right? The point is that not everybody can pull off every style. What works for one person may look



preposterous on someone else. Otherwise, fashion would be totally dull. The trick is to match your style to your personality. Are you a daredevil who enjoys taking insane risks? Try out a faux WWI aviator look. Are you a suave and debonair smooth-talker? Go for something refined and sophisticated. Are you into all things vintage and old school? Do the retro-tribal thing.

Since we've already established that people judge books by their covers, you may as well present a cover that makes a statement about who you are.

### The Here and Now

Even though the shadow set has its own stylistic flair, there's no denying that much of what we wear is filtered down through mainstream fashion. Nothing happens in a vacuum. With the clothing budgets we often have to work with (damn that expensive gear!), the best we can usually hope for is to take existing styles and make them our own by way of customization. At least, that's all you can hope for if you're intending to stick exclusively with old-school physical clothing. In this high-tech day and age, AR overlays allow you to create just about any type of look your imagination can churn out. This has opened the door for some unique (and often fugly) fashion statements. I've seen everything from psychedelic overalls to a shirt displaying full-motion silhouettes having sex. To sum it up: With AR overlays, the sky's the limit, and that isn't necessarily a good thing.

Another technology that has taken the fashion world by storm in recent years is nanofaxing. Whereas AR overlays only offer a visual boost to existing clothes, nanofaxing goes one step further by enabling the wearer to completely alter their clothes. Do you need to go to a funeral in the morning, have a casual lunch date in the afternoon and hit the clubs in the evening? No worries. Just have the appropriate duds nanofaxed to you and you're good to go!

**Plan 9:** Downside to the nanofaxing way is two things: the first is a subscription; you can't just get any old 100K nanofax and hit the "underwear" button. You have to buy a specific nanofax and subscribe to its specific feedstock and its specific patterns. To me that puts a damper on creativity and anonymity.

Second: Bloody RFID tags. They just load their feedstock with them. Even the occasional security RFID, just in case you use those socks in a terror attack. There are too many to erase with a simple tag eraser, and that's the point—to have that many.

- Nanofaxing recently saved my ass. I was in transit to Underworld 93, where I was planning to hang with some friends of mine and catch GraveCrusher's set. And all of a sudden, I get a call from a trusted fixer, who tells me that he set up a last-second meeting for me with a Johnson at a fancy restaurant halfway across Seattle. Here I was, wearing shredded jeans, a ratty band shirt and stiletto-heeled boots—not exactly the most appropriate attire for a formal setting! Thanks to nanofaxing (and my preparedness), I arrived at the restaurant wearing a stunning evening gown and all the right accessories.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

*/dev/grrl:* Let's discuss some of the current hot trends. And what kind of armchair fashionista would I be if I neglected to interject my own opinions into the whole mess?

Steampunk still manages to hang on for dear life. Why folks want to dress like rejects from a Jules Verne novel is beyond me, but they sure as shit do. Even the torture devices known as corsets can be found from time to time, even in the runner havens. Like how impractical is that? Nothing says "I'm a capable shadow-runner" like cinching your waist so that it's barely wider than a thimble. Okay, okay, so most steampunk fashions aren't as extreme as corsetry. But I find it all just so tacky.

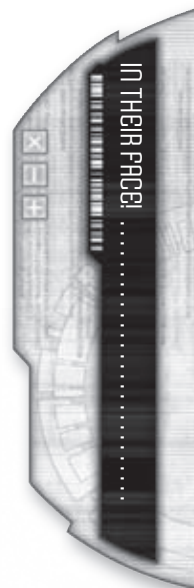
- I agree that going completely steampunk is tacky. However, a few Victorian touches can add class to an otherwise mundane outfit. I've been known to don a waistcoat and topper when the mood strikes, and I must say that I look dashing in it. Like with all things, moderation is your best friend when it comes to steampunk fashions. A little bit goes a long way.
- Ecotope

The urbanwear movement is still in full swing. As is the case with any area of fashion, urbanwear has evolved over the years. The colors, textures, and accessories may be different, but the overall impression remains more or less the same. Right now, the in-thing involves technology creeping its way into the fashion. This may sound trivial to those not in the know, but urbanwear has traditionally shunned technology in favor of more down-to-earth clothing without all the doohickeys and gizmos that are so prominent in other areas of fashion. The amount of tech is still relatively low at this point, though it seems to be growing by the day. Holowear is currently making the biggest splash in urbanwear, with baseball caps and jackets that project whatever messages and imagery the wearer desires. 6-Tees rules this market with a popular line of jackets called Strict-9, in which each jacket projects representations of ever-changing graffiti. Way to embrace a stereotype, huh? Given the success of Strict-9, you can bet your ass that the other brands are falling all over themselves to get their own versions onto the market.

As any fashion guru will tell you, there's more to style than just clothes. Hair and makeup both play a vital role in the whole shebang. An article about style just wouldn't be complete without delving into these factors. So let's do it!

Two years back, unnatural hair colors were all the rage. Blue, purple, red, pink, and green hair was everywhere, not to mention all the kooky-as-shit variations brought on by technology such as fiber-optic hair. Don't get me wrong—these hair colors are still common, but we're finally seeing a return to a more natural look over the last six months.

- Here's what I think happened. When this trend began, it was only being done by those who wanted to stand out from the crowd. Then, somehow or another, it caught on with the masses, and virtually everyone started doing it. Suddenly, these rebels found that they no longer stood out and have reverted to their natural hair colors. That's when the norms actually took a good, long look at themselves in the mirror and came to the realization that they didn't look half as cool as they thought they did. They, too, reverted to their less extravagant hair colors. I kinda feel bad for the rebels. They just can't stand out no matter what they do—eventually they get co-opted or mainstreamed.
- Lyran



- I still see a lot of unnatural shades, but it's mostly in the clubs and such. Like you said, though, the normal folk seem to have become disenchanted with the notion of wacky hair. Either way, I don't get the hate many people show toward wild colors of hair. I rather like it, though I'll admit that it wouldn't look right on me.
- Netcat

Makeup has also toned down quite a lot in recent years. Where once you saw an assload of thick violet eyeshadow, heavy black eyeliner, and red or black lipstick, you're now finding more earthy tones. It's not so in-your-face. This has actually been the case for quite some time, but caked-on makeup has been prevalent off and on throughout the course of friggin' time, especially with the nighttime crowd. These days, such extremes are reserved mostly for young club-goers and thrillgangers.

- You gotta love AR makeup! With minimal hassle, you can go from dramatic to simplistic (or vice versa) in no time at all. Not that I ever do anything terribly dramatic, but I like having that option. Regular makeup is such a drag.
- Turbo Bunny

### Trends to Watch For

It's time to whip out my trusty crystal ball and take a gander at what's coming down the pike. Speculation is a lot of fun, but fashion is a fickle bitch that can surprise even the most astute observer. There's just no way to predict it with absolute accuracy. I've found that the surest bet is to start looking for mini-trends and see if they have any longevity whatsoever. If one of them doesn't sputter out and die within a couple of months, it'll likely continue, or at least mutate and trudge on in another form. Fly-by-night fads are a dime a dozen, so I'm not going to bother droning on and on about them here. Instead, I'll focus on the ones that have shown some persistence and will likely be around a while.

While I consider myself a devotee of cutting-edge fashion, one trend that seems to be catching on lately doesn't take my fancy in any way, shape, or form. That's right, I'm talking about all these people hitting the clubs while dressed in the garb found in old film noir movies. It's only in its infancy right now, but every time I hit a club or two, I'm seeing more and more people attired this way. With any luck, this fad will die a quick, horrible death and fade into obscurity. I mean, seriously, who the fuck could possibly think a fedora is a good idea? Yuck! And there I thought the steampunk movement was the gaudiest thing we as a society could drudge up. Guess what? I was wrong. Wrong, wrong, **WRONG!**

- Truthfully, I think her disdain for both the noir and steampunk styles has a lot to do with her age. Teenagers aren't known for their subtlety and these fashion movements are a lot more understated than what most folks in her age bracket are accustomed to.
- Snopes

- What's so subtle about a gray flannel suit or a clockwork vest? Anyway, /dev/grrl's age has nothing to do with her stylistic leanings. While I don't always agree with her assessments, I just don't see that her age dictates much of anything about her, aside perhaps from some of the slang she uses.
- Fianchetto

There's a less annoying craze-in-the-making being spread around by twenty-something club scenesters. The fad in question is 1980s-inspired apparel with a dash of accessories that look like they came directly from the old post-apocalyptic flicks. There's no name that I know of for this fashion movement, so I've dubbed it "retro-pocalypse" —let's see if the term sticks. I've been noticing a lot of black t-shirts with pink text or paint-splatter designs, mega-tight jeans (sometimes acid washed), parachute pants, jean jackets, polka dot prints, and oversized sweatshirts. In terms of accessories, be on the lookout for chunky metal-plated boots, fishnet gloves, studded arm/wrist bands, spiked shoulder pads, layers of artistically ripped pantyhose/stockings, and anything you can dream of in black leather. There's an undeniably intriguing contrast between the oft-loud clothing and the dingy brown and black accessories. I'm not sure if I like it or not, but at least it's something different.

While we're on the subject, let's not forget the impact of this style on hairdos. The hairstyles associated with the retro-pocalyptic manner of dress veer dramatically toward the spiky, asymmetrical, and even poofy. Mohawks are making at least a small comeback as well. I'm not sure if this style will be here to stay for a while, but I don't mind it.

- I, too, have taken notice of this trend in the last few months or so. I have but one point of contention regarding her analysis. In my experience, the so-called "oft-loud" clothes are actually quite subdued, centering upon colors such as dark purple, blue and black. Perhaps it's different in her neck of the woods.
- Lyrn

### IN CONCLUSION

I'm not going to tell you that knowing what to wear is as important as being able to take out a lone security guard or being able to hack your way into an encrypted node. I may be young, but I'm not brain dead. Still, just because it's not as crucial as those other things, it doesn't mean that dressing well is pointless. Nobody's going to be chomping at the bit to hire a runner who looks like he stepped right out of 2040. Nor will they be eager to employ someone who walks in wearing a stained wife beater and filthy jeans.

Fashion isn't hard. It's just a matter of looking around you, seeing what works and then applying it to yourself. Good old-fashioned common sense, really.



## GAME RULES

**Clockwork Vest:** The vest has various gears, levers, and springs partially concealed by a translucent covering or the vest's fabric, all being controlled by trodes. The vest is able to conceal up to four small items within various mobile sheaths. Concealment modifiers are -4 for the items. These mobile sheaths are capable of ejecting their contents within a 1-meter radius from the wearer. Weapons concealed this way are considered to be in a quick release holster, reducing the threshold of a Pistols + Reaction Test for quick drawing a weapon to 2 (see *Quick Draw*, p. 147, SR4A).

**Gentleman's Cane:** Some uses for this cane include as an impediment, as a bar keeping a door shut, or a wedge keeping it open. The cane is made of a dense titanium and carbon composite, giving it an armor rating of 10 and structure rating of 1. It has a retractable, compression-fired anchor that can be triggered on impact against a surface. The anchor cannot penetrate materials with a Barrier rating higher than 10 (most pavements have a Barrier rating of 8). If the anchor is used as a weapon, treat it as a club with (Str/2-1P) damage. It can also be used to conceal a sword (p. 315, SR4A), and concealment modifiers are +0 for the whole cane and -6 to detect its true nature (see p. 311, SR4A).

**Iron Will:** Iron Will is an exoskeleton used to augment the user's strength for laborious tasks. It is 2.5 meters tall and weighs 200 kg. It has no autonomy, nor was it built for any remote piloting. When worn, treat the wearer's Strength as 8, but reduce their Agility by 1. Iron Will can be treated as a vehicle for upgrades.

**Steampunk Accessories:** This is an all-encompassing term that covers all the gears, springs, and trodes used to convert an outfit into steam punk fashion.

**Steampunk Drones:** These drones are mini-drones that are connected to the steampunk outfit (with no wireless interface) by a three-meter retractable cable. Drone rules still apply for any modifications.

### Sample Steampunk Drones

**Clockwork Owl:** The owl is a mix of Sixth World drone technology with a façade of nineteenth century engineering with moving gears and clockwork sounds coming from the drone.

**Std Upgrades:** Improved Sensor Array, Mimic

**Steampunk Dragon:** While capable of flight, the steampunk dragon is limited by the range of its cable. Concealed under copper colored scales is

a small LNG tank in its belly and a flamethrower in its head.

**Std Upgrades:** Improved Takeoff and Landing, Weapon Mount (flamethrower)

**Tesla Gloves:** Tesla gloves have two features. The first is that they can be used as an exotic ranged weapon capable of projected arcs of electricity up to a distance of 1 meter. The gloves deal 4S damage plus electricity (p. 163, SR4A) and have ten charges in each glove; when plugged in, they recharge at a rate of one charge per two seconds. The second feature is that the Tesla gloves can fill the airwaves with electromagnetic noise like a directional jammer (p. 329, SR4A); the device rating of the Tesla glove is 3.

**Women's Faraday Fan:** A Faraday-enhanced women's hand fan can be used in the defense against a directional jammer. Reduce the rating of the jammer by the rating of the fan before calculating the jammer's effect on the device.

### STEAMPUNK DRONE

| Handl | Accel | Speed | Pilot | Body | Arm | Sens | Avail | Cost |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-----|------|-------|------|
| +0    | 2/10  | 10    | 2     | 1    | 0   | 1    | -     | 400¥ |

### IRON WILL

| Handl | Accel | Speed | Pilot | Body | Arm | Sens | Avail | Cost   |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-----|------|-------|--------|
| +0    | -/-   | 0     | 0     | 6    | 4   | 1    | 14    | 3,500¥ |

### TESLA GLOVES

| Reach | Damage | AP    | Avail | Cost |
|-------|--------|-------|-------|------|
| 1     | 4S(e)  | -half | 4R    | 750¥ |

### ADDITIONAL STEAMPUNK GEAR

| Name                       | Ballistic/Impact | Avail. | Cost             |
|----------------------------|------------------|--------|------------------|
| Clockwork Vest             | 1/1              | 6      | 200¥             |
| Faraday Fan                | -                | 4      | 50xRating¥       |
| Gentleman's Cane           | -                | 4      | 100¥             |
| Anchor option              | -                | +2     | +100¥            |
| Sword option               | -                | +4     | +price of weapon |
| Glowand option             | -                | +2     | +50¥             |
| Holo-Crystal Cameo         | -                | 4      | 75¥              |
| Tiffany Dresses            | 4/3              | 10     | 8500¥            |
| Quizzel fairy/dragon wings | +1/+1            | 2,000¥ |                  |
| Steampunk Accessories      | -                | -      | 120¥             |

Urgent Message...



## GAME RULES

Most feywear gives the wearer the quality Glamour. Other possibilities include qualities such as Inspired, Magic Resistance, or Trustworthy. The price of feywear is in both Karma (twice BP of Quality) and cash (10,000 x BP in nuyen). Paying the karmic cost binds the feywear to the owner like foci. As with magical compounds (p. 88, *Street Magic*), the gamemaster must evaluate the potential power and game balance when introducing feywear in their game. Should feywear be included, the gamemaster should include some job to be done for Qiigam (or another

powerful spirit) as additional payment for the feywear they create.

### Sample feywear:

#### Qiigam's Qaspeq

The qaspeq is a tribal jacket woven of fine seal fur and buttoned with walrus ivory. It is very warm and waterproof for the coastal northern weather.

**Granted Quality:** Glamour

**Cost:** 100,000 ¥

Urgent Message...



## GAME RULES

**Holowear:** Like holoprojectors, these clothing items project a trideo hologram confined to a space of five meters in diameter around the wearer. Though holos can be quite realistic, a Perception + Intuition (2) Test is usually sufficient to distinguish a hologram from a real object or person.

### HOLOWEAR GEAR

| Name            | Ballistic/Impact | Avail | Cost  |
|-----------------|------------------|-------|-------|
| Strict-9 Jacket | 4/1              | 8     | 2200¥ |
| Teg-mentum      | 4/1              | 10    | 3000¥ |
| H-jumpsuit      | 3/2              | 10    | 2500¥ |
| Holo Gloves     | —                | 10    | 500¥  |
| Holo Hood       | —                | 10    | 475¥  |

## SPELL: FASHION (EXPANDED RULES)

The Fashion spell (p. 173, *Street Magic*) allows for the changing of the cut, color, and fit of any given outfit. The degree of tailoring that can be done is determined by the number of net hits. Now that clothing incorporates more computerized elements, including AR capabilities, fiber optics, biofeedback sensors, smart fabrics, ballistic plastics, and other technologies that don't take well to magic, this spell has to overcome the clothing's object resistance. This makes each net hit important enough to provide an example effect for each.

### NUMBER OF NET HITS

- 1 The tint of the color can change (e.g., dark blue to light blue, but not green); minor adjustments such as mending bullet holes can also be performed.
- 2 Adjustments to the fit of the clothing can be made, but nothing drastic about the nature of the clothes (for example, pants are still pants). Color can change slightly (e.g., blue to green or purple, but not red.)
- 3 Full spectrum of color can be manipulated, but not in any detail. Modifications such as the addition or removal of pockets or pants to a skirt can be done.
- 4+ Clothing can change to mimic a uniform, provided enough is available. Color changes can help mimic missing accessories such as buttons or labels.

## GAME RULES

**Death Masks:** Death masks are treated as a functional gas mask (p. 254, *SR4A*). They also give a +1 die bonus to intimidation tests when worn.

**Goblin Stompers:** Goblin stompers are an exotic melee weapon used to scar a subject with fire damage. The heated metal melts through most clothes unless they are treated for thermal resistance.

**Post Apocalyptic Accessories:** This is an all-encompassing item to cover all the spikes, pins and other accessories to convert an outfit into P-A fashion.

### GOBLIN STOMPERS

| Reach | Damage | AP    | Avail | Cost |
|-------|--------|-------|-------|------|
| Touch | 2P(f)  | -half | 6R    | 450¥ |

### ADDITIONAL P-A GEAR

| Name            | Ballistic/Impact | Avail | Cost |
|-----------------|------------------|-------|------|
| Death Masks     | 0/1              | 2     | 275¥ |
| Paper Armor     | 1/4              | 4     | 100¥ |
| P-A Accessories | —                | —     | 40¥  |
| Runflat Sandals | 0/0              | 2     | 20¥  |

## GAME RULES

**Livingwear Coat:** Thanks to its self-warming capabilities, the coat has 3 points of thermal resistance. The claws are an exotic melee weapon that can optionally retract. They have a concealability modifier of -3 and are not detectible by MAD. Damage from the claws is (Str/2+1P)

**Symbiote Anemone Ring:** The ring uses a pool of 5 dice to detect drugs or toxins set into a drink (the threshold for the test is 2). If the toxin inflicts physical damage of any sort, the anemone dies upon detecting it.

| Name                  | Ballistic/Impact | Avail | Cost   |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------|--------|
| Livingwear Coat       | 1/3              | 15    | 8,000¥ |
| Symbiote earrings     | —                | 12    | 2,000¥ |
| Symbiote anemone ring | —                | 10    | 2,300¥ |
| Symbiote pendant      | —                | 10    | 1,800¥ |

### BODY FASHION COST

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Animated nanotats   | 800-1,000¥ |
| Branding  | 150-500¥   |
| Grafting  | 700¥-1000¥ |
| Insertions  | 300¥       |
| Nanotat   | 200-300 ¥  |
| NanTan  | 800¥       |
| Partial dye   | 25-75¥     |
| Piercing  | 20-250¥    |
| Skin pigmentation + biotattoos<br>(p. 63, <i>Augmentation</i> ) | 1,500¥     |
| Tattoo  | 50-100¥    |
| Tattoo scarring   | 100-200¥   |
| Whole-body dye  | 275¥       |



## CLOTHING OPTIONS

When players are buying clothes, there are features they can add to make clothes what they want them to be.

**AR enhanced:** Allows for the projecting of an augmented overlay. Basic clothing just has RFID tags for advertising. One step up from there is pre-programmed AR advertising. Players can either crack the AR advertising to replace it with what they want, or just buy programmable AR clothing. AR enhanced clothes are considered a device rating 2 node, and it adds 25 nuyen to the cost of any item of clothing.

**Color changing:** Advanced fiber optics provide an option for color-changing clothes. Woven into the clothing, it does relatively the same job as ruthenium polymers in allowing the adjustment of light projected from the clothes. Apply a -2 dice pool modifier to Perception Tests to see the wearer when used for camouflage, and it adds 175 nuyen to the cost of any item of clothing.

**Natural fiber:** Most Sixth World clothing is made from extracted petroleum-based fibers or flexible silicon composite because it's cheap, and most people like having biometrics or stainproof/dirtproof, wrinkle-free clothes. Cotton, hemp, bamboo and silk have to be specifically requested for clothing. These fibers add ten percent to the cost of the outfit and reduce the object resistance by 2 if this is the only clothing option added.

**Armor:** Most clothing does not come with any ballistic or impact protection, but new techniques allow for some protection. Carbon-boron infusion, Kevlar threading, and Delta-Amyloid coatings are available. (Layered protection rules still apply). These modifications can be added to regular clothing or to armor clothing (p. 326, SR4A)

| Name             | Ballistic | Impact | Cost  |
|------------------|-----------|--------|-------|
| Carbon-boron     | +1        | +2     | +200¥ |
| Kevlar threading | +2        | +0     | +100¥ |
| Delta-Amyloid    | +3        | +1     | +400¥ |

**VendingWear:** A cheap option for people looking for a basic covering, VendingWear is recycled plastic that is shredded and woven into fabric (with an elastic band for pants, socks, and underwear). It has no options except for color (avocado green or dirt brown) and size (small, medium, large, and extra large). Five nuyen can purchase a tube containing a shirt, pants, socks, and underwear of the chosen size. Most of the VendingWear machines accept bottles and cans in lieu of money (which then are recycled into VendingWear products).

Urgent Message...

## GAME RULES

### MicroWeave Spider

Despite the "micro" in its name, the MicroWeave Spider is a small drone with a built-in repair kit for clothing.

**Std Upgrades:** Special Equipment (Clothing repair kit)

**Men's Lux Loafers & Women's Modes:** Provides +1 bonus to disguise skill if the character has the skill.

### Tanake Cologne and Perfume

**Tanke Tiger:** While wearing this cologne/perfume, the subject temporarily gains the Critter Spook quality for six hours, or until it is washed off.

**Winter Wolf:** While wearing this cologne/perfume, the subject temporarily gains a +2 bonus to Intimidation checks involving animals.

| Name                                  | Device Rating | Avail. | Cost              |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|--------|-------------------|
| Acoustic Clothing                     | 3             | 8      | 80¥               |
| AR Makeup                             | 3             | 4      | 200¥              |
| AR Wristboard                         | 3             | 4      | 250¥              |
| Bone Black Makeup                     | —             | 6      | 550¥              |
| Dynamic Polarization Lenses           | 3             | 6      | 600¥              |
| Hacker Gum                            | 4             | 6R     | 200<br>+Program ¥ |
| The Handy Sack                        | 4             | 10     | 1,200¥            |
| iContacts                             | 3             | 4      | 80¥               |
| Men's Lux Loafers                     | 3             | 4      | 75¥               |
| Women's Modez                         | 3             | 4      | 80¥               |
| Sporting (Olympus)                    | 3             | 4      | 90¥               |
| Nano-fixx (per dose)                  | 3             | 5      | 35¥               |
| Nanosmokes (per 6 cigarette)          | —             | 10     | 200¥              |
| Silver Body Glitter                   | —             | 13     | 50¥               |
| Snake Skin (per dose)                 | —             | 8      | 300¥              |
| Spectrum Permanent Polish             | —             | 5      | 120¥              |
| StimTouch Hosiery                     | 3             | 6R     | 250¥              |
| Tanake Cologne and Perfume (per vial) | —             | 10     | 500¥              |
| Timex Classic watches                 | 3             | 4      | 45¥               |
| Zignature                             | 2             | 4      | 15 ¥              |

### MicroWeave Spider

| Handl | Accel | Speed | Pilot | Body | Arm | Sens | Avail | Cost |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-----|------|-------|------|
| +0    | 1     | 1/2   | 2     | 1    | 0   | 1    | 5     | 500¥ |

### Medusa Extensions

| Handl | Accel | Speed | Pilot | Body | Arm | Sens | Avail | Cost |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-----|------|-------|------|
| +0    | 0     | 1     | 1     | 0    | 0   | 1    | 7     | 600¥ |

Urgent Message...

COMPILED TABLES

## AVERAGE CLOTHING PRICING FROM CORPORATE LINES

### CASUAL

**6 Tees (Horizon):** Retro-American casual shirts and t-shirts. 20¥

**Beaux Retail (Mitsuhamma):** Simple patterned collared shirts (short and long sleeve), ties, and slacks. 20¥

**Bodyline (Spinrad Industries):** Biometric and luminescent artwork on jumpsuits, t-shirts, skirts, shorts, and jeans. 30¥

**Lyric of Portland (Telestrian):** Neo-Celtic patterned jeans, dresses, sweaters, and kilts. 50¥

**ME MetaL (Evo):** Simple patterned shirts, skirts and slacks. 45¥

**NuZoot (Monobe):** Asian symbol monogrammed collared shirts (short and long sleeve), ties, and slacks. 150¥

**Très Chic Clothing (Aztechnology):** Mesoamerican symbol monogrammed collared shirts (short and long sleeve), large design print t-shirts. 175¥

**Tropicaliente(UO):** Bright patterned cargo pants, t-shirts, skirts, swimsuits, and shorts. 50¥

**Vashon Island (Shiawase Fashion):** Solid colored shirts, t-shirts, collared shirts, and ties. 100¥

**Victory (Ares):** Jeans, cargo pants, vests, and belts (emphasis on pockets in design). 25¥

### BUSINESS

**Beaux Retail (Mitsuhamma):** Simple patterned one-piece suits, skirts, ties, and shoes. 100¥

**Berwick (Mortimer of London):** Three-piece suits, solid colored ties, hats (fedoras mainly), and shoes (real leather). 1,000¥

**Brilliance (Horizon):** Business style dresses, skirts, shoes (high heel and flat), purses, and pants. 100¥

**De Button (Aztechnology):** Animal patterned print one-piece suits, men's accessories, uniforms. 85¥

**Europa (Renraku):** Advanced traveling material (stain-proof and wrinkle-proof; aerates and deters body odor) for one-piece suits, eveningwear, and sleepwear. 90¥

**KoGo (Wuxing):** Three-piece suits, ties, shoes. 205¥

**Laurentine de Lion (Proteus):** One-piece and three-piece suits, men's jewelry (commlink and old-fashioned watches, custom cufflinks, and rings). 250¥

**MetaTribe (Evo):** Uniforms (security, medical, nursing, private school), cultural/ethnic specific business outfits. 85¥

**RhineGold (Saeder-Krupp):** Old world-style three-piece suits, hats, skirts, and ties. 300¥

**Soul of Seoul (Proteus):** Dress robes, slippers, natural fabric one-piece suits. 300¥

**Vashon Island (Shiawase Fashion):** Three-piece suits, simple patterned ties, shoes (faux leather). 500¥

**Wellington Bros (Shiawase Fashion):** Classic three-piece suits, solid colored ties, and shoes. 250¥

**Zoë (Zoë):** Three-piece suits, business skirts and dresses, and purses. 500¥

### FORMAL

**Brilliance (Horizon):** Dresses, gowns, women's shoes, and purses. 285¥

**Très Chic Clothing (Aztechnology):** Men's tuxedos, three-piece suits (tailor made), and dresses (including wedding dresses). 300¥

### DESIGNER

Custom designed dresses and outfits for men and women. This is the low end of the pricing spectrum for each outfit.

**Armanté: (Zoë):** 5,000¥

**Aston:** 5,000¥

**Berwick (Mortimer of London):** 5,000¥

**Zoë de Paris:** 10,000¥

**Ripon of Mumbai:** 5,000¥

**Ami Feather:** 7,000¥

**Jean-Paul:** 7,000¥

### URBAN

**6 Tees (Horizon):** Hoodies, jumpsuits, jackets, t-shirts, dresses, men's and women's accessories. 150¥

**Bodyline (Spinrad Industries):** Complex artwork with biometric controls or luminance displays for jeans, shirts, skirts, shoes. 50¥

**CD/Common Denominator (Evo):** Athletic shoes, jeans, jackets, jumpsuits, sweats, and shorts in solid colors or simple patterns. 20¥

**DressCode (Amalgamated Studios):** Stylized dress uniforms, men's and women's accessories (jewelry and bags), and shoes. 60¥

**Furba (NeoNET):** Athletic shoes, faux leather jackets, graffiti-patterned shirts, and hats. 55¥

**ME MetaL (Evo):** Athletic shoes, jeans, jackets, jumpsuits, sweats, and shorts. 60¥

**NuZoot (Monobe):** Jeans, jackets, skirts, dresses, and shoes with stylized symbolic or animal prints. 110¥

**Tribale (Aztechnology):** Various cultural/ethnic specific outfits. 75¥