SUPPLEMENTAL



WHO TO KNOW, WHO TO FEAR, WHO TO RUN FOR

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DEVELOPMENT: Peter M. Andrews Jr. WRITING: James Meiers, Devon Oratz, Steven "Bull" Ratkovich, Brandie Tarvin, Malik Toms, Michael Wich EDITING: Peter M. Andrews Jr., Jason M. Hardy LAYOUT & DESIGN: Matt Heerdt COVER ART: Steve Prescott ILLUSTRATIONS: Echo Chernik, Victor Perez Corbella, Ian King, Mark Molnar, Alessandro Pisano, Andrew Silver, Chris Wilhelm

CREDITS

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PROOFING: Patrick Goodman

- Connecting JackPoint VPN Matrix Access ID Spoofed. ... Encryption Keys Generated. ... Connected to Onion Routers. > Login
- > Enter Passcode

"Keep your friends close, and intel files on everyone else."

JackPoint Stats

4 users currently active in the network

Latest News

* Kane has gone off and had his infamous mug posted all over the world again. Somebody let him know there have been three military drone companies diverted to finding him, again. – FastJack

Personal Alerts

You have 3 new <u>private messages</u>.
You have 4 new <u>responses</u> to your JackPoint posts.
* PDA: You're due to appear before traffic court for your nineteen

moving violations. First Degree Two members are online and in

your area. Your Current Rep Score: 73

(41% positive)

Current Time: 21 Dec 2073, 1614 hrs

PREFERENCES

FEEDS

TASKS

Welcome back to JackPoint, chummer; your last connection was severed: 1 day, 3 hours ago

Today's Heads Up

* Life is best lived without limits, but when it's artifacts without limits, it can become strange faster than you can recognize. [Tag: <u>Artifacts</u>]

<u>Unbound</u>]

Incoming

- * Sometimes the paranoid people have a clue. [Tag: Conspiracy Theories]
- * Seattle isn't the only city where things go bump in the night. [Tag: Another Rainy Night]
- * Well, the last one was popular, and guns make the world go round. [Tag: Gun Haven 2]
- * There are groups that only the Awakened seem to keep track of. Now you can, too. [Tag: Magical Societies]

açkPoint

Top News Items

- * Two Matrix sites are fined for providing misleading versions of the Proposition 23 text. Metroplex officials vow to continue the crackdown on the misleading advertising. <u>Link</u>
- * Knight Errant has not responded to national media requests regarding the investigation into the death of "George," an unidentified ork found downtown last month. <u>Link</u>
- * Congress continues to its probe into corruption in the FBI. Special Prosecutor Jerrold Worthington has been appointed to discover the amount of corporate influence in the Bureau's upper echelons. <u>Link</u>
- * The Aztlan Navy is holding a memorial service for over three hundred sailors slain in a mysterious terrorist attack last week. The navy has declared the Zacatecas wreck a war grave, ensuring the cruiser remains protected under international law. Link



STREET RAGE

POSTED BY: BULL

Having a soft spot for hard luck cases and sob stories can be a good thing, especially in this world of chrome, negotiable morals, and rampant paranoia. I suppose I'm more sensitive to hard luck cases because I've been in that position before (I always tell people that I'm generic hard luck story number three). I have experienced firsthand how cold and unforgiving this world can be, especially to those down on their luck. When bystanders in this world hear gunshots, their first instinct is not to see if someone needs help, but rather to avert their eyes so they don't have to see what is going down and, more importantly, they can avoid becoming involved as witnesses. We live in a world where passersby see someone lying bleeding in an alley and choose to walk away, feeling secure in the notion that not getting involved probably saved them a world of inconvenience. Maybe someone else will call DocWagon to help the poor slot out. Or maybe the person deserved what they got, and the death coming for them will be perfectly fitting. These evasions and rationalizations help them avoid thinking about how their decision may have condemned the individual to a slow, agonizing death from packs of ravenous devil rats looking for an easy meal.

- I realize it's odd to interrupt myself, but I was wondering why Fred wasn't popping up, begging to hear another story.
- Bull
- He's still not talking to you. I'm afraid he's still a might pissed off at you for the IC that you sent his way the last time. Wounded male ego and all. He still rants about how he should have been able to handle it.
- Netcat
- I would say he'll get over it, but with my experience from Street Rage, I can't say that for certain any more. All I will say is I'm already over it, and hope he doesn't carry a grudge. If he decides to retaliate, tell him to make sure he brings his A game. And tell him to improve his A game while he's at it.

Bull
 ■

To have even a little compassion left for someone else in this otherwise dark world and to have the will to act upon it can be a commendable virtue, and that should serve as a gentle reminder to all of us that in the end, no matter how much 'ware we have implanted inside of us or what we've done in the past, we're still all metahumans who would be better off if we had each others' backs. No group epitomizes this philosophy more than Seattle's tight-knit Ork Underground, a community that has survived the horrific events of Seattle's past by coming together and helping one another through the tough times. I've seen it happen in Chicago, when people had no choice but to band together for protection from the bugs. And I've seen it here on JackPoint, where some of you have helped each other out for various jobs, sometimes even without the expectation of being paid (but that's a rarity).

- I've also seen some of us attempt to kill others of us, and I expect to see so again. We have alliances and feuds, like any other group.
- Riser

The story I am about to share with you all today is about one particularly nasty drekhead, and it should teach the lot of you that this rare commodity of compassion, especially in this day and age, can still be misguided and betrayed if you are not careful with it. And that even the best of us, no matter how jaded, no matter how experienced we are in dealing with people who are full of drek on a daily basis and no matter how prepared we think we are to avoid being scammed, can still be taken in by the wrong kind of person with the right kind of story.

The star of this unfortunate story is a fragger whom I originally met on ShadowSea about two years ago. He goes by the handle Street Rage. He's a troll runner who has been working in the shadows of Seattle for the better part of a decade. I had heard some positive things about him and his professionalism as a runner before I met him, and before I had extended an invitation to him to join one of my virtual private networks. Joseph "Street Rage" Sanders was originally a part of a large shadowrunning team, which had seven people in all. Such a large team is somewhat unusual for the Seattle shadows, but the fact that it was an all-troll team made it stand out that much more, and it got them noticed.

Now, as you probably have guessed by now, Street Rage and his crew were not so good at the subtle. Instead, they specialized in the jobs that required the biggest booms, doors that needed to be kicked in, and heads that needed to be knocked around (I think my old crew might have approved of them). From what I learned about their exploits over the years, Street Rage and his crew were frequent visitors to the Redmond Barrens, both to visit safe houses they had established for themselves in that hellhole as well as to harass street gangs in the area when they were not away on jobs (especially those that advertised a particular bias against trolls). At least four human-only street gangs in the Barrens disappeared completely during the time that Street Rage and his crew were active in that part of Seattle. Those street gangs' headquarters were all suspiciously close to safe houses of Street Rage and his crew.

- Reportedly, Street Rage and his crew were on really good terms with Lord Torgo and the Spikes in Tacoma (before he went to jail and eventually died there). Street Rage and his crew helped the Spikes a couple of times in their street brawls with the Silent P's, providing them with information on what was happening in the Redmond Barrens, and in exchange, Street Rage and his crew got gear from the Spikes at a significantly reduced cost.
- Riser
- Given all the problems the Spikes have been having with the Ancients, I would say that they could probably use Street Rage's shadow experience again.
- o 2XL

- It speaks volumes about Street Rage's temperament and judgment if he actually considered Lord Torgo an ally. Fragging psychopath.
- Sticks

Street Rage's team regularly marketed itself to the Johnsons as being "an unstoppable wall of troll," and they took jobs that more cautious runners hesitated to take. "You want a lot of collateral damage against your competition? You want to send a strong message to them? A message that'll bring the Star down upon our heads? Sure we'll take it ... for the right price." With all the safe houses Street Rage and his crew reportedly had scattered throughout the Barrens (as many as eight at one point), it was not surprising that they could disappear for months at a time before resurfacing for more work once the heat from their previous jobs cooled down. This skill in going off-grid at a moment's notice, coupled with their ability to deal with anyone that came looking for them, helped build the reputation of Street Rage's crew with the local fixers, which helped keep job offers and nuyen coming.

During their decade-long run in the shadows, besides taking jobs that were designed to send messages to the competition, Street Rage's team were also known to take courier jobs from Johnsons even when they knew beforehand those jobs would be particularly hazardous and that there would be heavy resistance. In taking those jobs, Street Rage's team often left behind scores of dead bodies. Many of those bodies would disappear before the Star could arrive and would later wash up in Puget Sound, with much of the evidence of who had killed them having conveniently washed away with the tide. The bodies that I believe were caused by Street Rage's hand either had the bullets meticulously dug out of them, or fell under the blade of Street Rage's combat axe, his personal weapon of choice. Street Rage, as the team's field medic, had the experience and the know-how to remove the bullets from the bodies before weighing them down and disposing of them into the sound. I'm confident that many of the bodies that Street Rage and his crew were responsible for have yet to be recovered (and probably never will). And because many of those poor souls were working in anonymity in the shadows, it is unlikely that any of them will ever be missed, much less tracked back to Street Rage and his crew.

- At least one of those safe houses in the Barrens was equipped like a makeshift street clinic. Street Rage never saw any living patients; instead he took bodies there to remove bullets and otherwise prep the remains for disposal. It's a bit of a shame that he never used his medical knowledge and talent to help other runners on the streets. The streets could always use more street docs.
- Butch

Over the years, when those dangerous courier jobs weren't readily available, Street Rage and his crew took jobs where they were hired to be enforcers and debt collectors, finding and beating up wage slaves who had chosen (willingly or not) to renege on repaying their debts, intimidating them into compliance. In the course of these jobs, they also built up a relationship with local Vory bosses. For years, Lone Star suspected them as being the muscle for several protection

VITAL STATS: STREET RAGE

Age: ~26 Weight: 330 kg Eyes: Green Metatype: Troll Height: 2.61 m Hair: Black Gender: Male Awakened: No rackets that the Russians ran in various districts, but their reputation was so intimidating (along with their friendship with the Vory) that the Star could not get any of their victims to rat them out.

After working the streets for about six years, Street Rage's team began expanding their operations into the corporate sector and began taking more lucrative jobs that took them out of Seattle. On several occasions, they worked for the Atlantean Foundation, escorting their excavation teams to dig sites around the world to keep the archeological geeks safe while they did their jobs. Each time they dealt with the many dangers of the job, from fighting off local grave robbers and rival mercenaries to battling hostile paranormal critters and local extremist groups who saw the Atlantean Foundation as interlopers and defilers of their land. They accepted jobs working with Ares, helping protect and move underground Ares weapon shipments to resistance fighters scattered across North America who desperately needed those armaments. This included homestead owners in the disputed Northern Crescent region of California who were fighting against much more heavily armed and better-trained Tír forces, ordinary citizens who lived along the violent Tsimshian/Salish-Shidhe Council border and needed to protect themselves and their property during those violent confrontations, metahuman resistance groups in General Saito's California Protectorate, and even Yucatan resistance fighters in Aztlan.

Over the last several years, I would wager that Street Rage and his crew helped move tens of millions of nuyen worth of Ares products to some of the most dangerous hot spots in North America. By that point in their advanced careers, a couple of Street Rage's team members had also become licensed bounty hunters in the UCAS, going after the lucrative bounties on wanted fugitives as well as dangerous paranormal critters. Street Rage's team has been credited with clearing out several abandoned buildings through Seattle filled with feral ghouls, vampires, and nosferatu. It was likely that this shift in pursuing bounties led to Street Rage and his team receiving their final, fateful run (you know the one I speak of; the one that either punches yours or your chummers' tickets, and sends you off to the Valhalla for shadowrunners) a little over two years ago. And that one run came compliments of the Draco Foundation near the end of 2071.

- Bull, please. It's still too soon after Crash 2.0 to make any references to Norse mythology. Damn Winternight.
- Black Mamba

On my VPN, Street Rage let us know that he had received a lucrative job offer, one to hunt down four specific toxic shamans on whom the Draco Foundation had place bounties. They were working under the name of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (if it were me, I would have found their locations, hacked one of the megacorp's satellite weapons systems, and Thor shot their hoops from a safe distance, but that's just me). Street Rage and his team decided to first go after the member of the Four Horsemen known as Pestilence, who was supposedly stationed deep in the Amazon rainforest. Apparently, their team lost two members just trying to get to the camp— Annubis and Swift Blade (rest in peace, chummers). One fell to a Sangre Del Diablo tree. Another was killed by a previously unidentified venomous insect, one that a standard medkit did not recognize—and that possessed a neurotoxin that had the potency to kill a troll. Despite their losses, Street Rage and the remainder of his team forged on, and they actually succeeded in dismantling the toxic shaman's operations. "Dismantling" in this case meaning that they filled everything with bullet holes or blew drek up with grenades (like I said earlier, they're not subtle). Things seemed to be going all right for the team until they reached their primary objective.

For the record, toxic shamans never play fair. Street Rage mentioned that Pestilence had two toxic spirits with him. Between those two powerful spirits and the shaman, the toxic team managed to take down the remaining four members of Street Rage's team before he finally buried his combat axe into the toxic shaman and ended the threat. The four runners' street handles were Airborne, Hunter, Mist Walker and Stinger. Yeah, I know I'm a big softie when it comes to remembering fallen runners, no matter who they may have worked with. Speaking of which, here's to the Captain. His anniversary is coming up soon. May he also rest in peace.

- The toxic shamans that identify themselves as the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are still out there and are still active. The Draco Foundation has raised the bounty on their heads to 250,000 nuyen each, or an even million for all four. And yes, I said all four. Apparently, the group recruited a new member to fill in the role of Pestilence.
- Frosty

When Street Rage returned to Seattle, he began to put out feelers to find a new team. I cannot even imagine losing all my chummers in a single mission, let alone what Street Rage experienced, so I decided to help him. I made arrangements with his current fixers to help introduce him to the new talent I had been working with, to see if we could get him onto a new team and get him back on his feet. For the sake of solidarity, and also for the sake of trying to help a down-and-out runner, I held my nose and overlooked some of Street Rage's bigger character flaws-including the fact he was an active member of the Sons of Sauron. They are the ones that give groups like the Ork Rights Committee a bad rep, and in my opinion the only thing they accomplish is keeping hate alive for both sides. When I invited him to my VPN, I assumed that Street Rage possessed enough professionalism from his many years in the shadows to keep his prejudices in check and to work with any other team as if they were his old crew. Prior to losing his team, the old Street Rage might have been able to do just that. But after suffering such a devastating tragedy, cracks were beginning to form in Street Rage's personality.

After the first couple of jobs, my crews informed me that Street Rage preformed adequately on the job, though he tended to be quiet and kept mostly to himself. More quiet than you'd expect a troll of Street Rage's caliber and experience to be. Previous stories of Street Rage's exploits said that he was pretty involved in the meets with the Johnsons—asking questions, challenging their assumptions and intel, and actively discussing aspects of the job with his crew. Now, he was pretty much vacant during their meets, not speaking up at all and allowing others to speak for him. He might as well have been a potted plant. It sounded like survivor's guilt to me, and I assumed that he would eventually get over it once he settled into a new team, got into a new routine, and became used to his new chummers. So I convinced them that there wasn't anything to be worried about, saying that he would eventually adapt and return to his former, outgoing self. That was a big mistake on my part.

Things slowly started to go downhill. Things started to set him off, even the tiniest drek. He began having more disagreements with his crewmembers, and those disagreements started to result in trips to the hospital for the other crew members. And between jobs, he began to appear more frequently at Sons of Sauron rallies and protests. Grief and hate rarely go well together, and in Street Rage's case, it was tearing him apart from the inside. At one particular rally in December 2071, things took a violent turn, as the protestors began to clash with the Star. At that rally, Street Rage grabbed a human Lone Star officer, and in a hate- and adrenaline-filled rampage, he snapped the human officer's neck. He was completely out of control. The only way he did not become a cop killer that night was for the fact that DocWagon was on the scene, and one of the medics applied magical treatment to the downed officer. Based on that incident, which would have brought down more heat upon my talent than what they deserved, as well as on a progressive stream of warnings I had been issuing to him for his increasingly hate-filled tirades on my VPN, I decided to cut ties.

Street Rage isn't the only bastard in this story. If you followed the story of that officer who had his neck snapped (and don't worry if you didn't, most people don't usually bother with metahuman interest stories), you would know that he has had three surgeries to repair the remaining nerve damage. Despite the corporations' claims that they can fix or rebuild pretty much everything that's wrong with the human body, those surgeries failed to restore much of the nerve function. And to add insult to injury, when Lone Star lost the security contract for Seattle, they made certain that the injured cop was among the first of the Lone Star cops laid off so that they could avoid having to pay out long-term disability to him. Classy.

Sunshine

Since banning him in January of last year, I haven't heard much about Street Rage. From the few things I have heard, he's finally settled on another crew. It's a five-man team, consisting of a mixture of trolls and orks. Unlike his previous crew, this one seems to be made up of individuals all belonging to the Sons of Sauron. Street Rage is in charge, directing this new crew to take jobs that pit them in direct opposition to the Awakened. I've also heard that he has taken jobs from those who work for dragons to hunt down dragon reagents, remove them from the open market, and to deal with anyone associated with those reagents in the most violent ways possible. I believe he and his new crew are responsible for the deaths of at least six talismongers and four spellslingers.

When he hasn't been involved with dragon reagents, he and his crew have taken jobs that have been tied to ley lines around the world. Chatter on ShadowSea suggests that the dragons are scrambling to secure some of the more powerful ley lines for themselves in anticipation of a wider-scale conflict with others of their kind. It is rumored that Street Rage is taking these jobs as well, not so he can help out the wyrms, but to give him the chance to kill more spellslingers. That opportunity for spilling Awakened blood is the only thing that enables him to

STREET RAGE

В	Α	R	S	C	Т	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
9	4 (5)	4 (9)	10 (11)	2	4	4	5	5	1.12	8 (13)	1(3)

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 13/10

Armor (B/I): 13/13

- Skills: Blades (Combat Axe) 6 (+2), Climbing 3, Clubs 3, Con 3, Cybertechnology 4, Demolitions 2, Dodge (Melee) 6 (+2), First Aid 5, Intimidation (Physical) 5 (+2), Medicine 4, Negotiation 2, Perception 3, Pilot Ground Craft 3, Pistols 2, Running 6, Swimming 3, Throwing Weapons 3, Unarmed Combat (Block) 5 (+2)
- Knowledge skills: Corporations 3, Cyberware 3, Metahuman Anatomy 4, North America Governments 4, Pharmaceuticals 4, Seattle Runner Hangouts 4, Seattle Roadways 5, Seattle Safe Houses 5

Languages: English N, Russian 2

- Qualities: Prejudiced (Radical: Humans, Elves, Awakened, 25 pts), Wanted, Home Ground
- Augmentations: (all alphaware) Ceramic bone lacing, muscle replacement 1, reaction enhancers 3, wired reflexes 2
- Gear: 4 disposable commlinks (Device Rating 3), 10 fake licenses (driver's licenses, pistol permits, concealed carry permits, medical permits, all Rating 6), 12 fake SINs (Rating 6), full body armor w/ helmet, medkit (Rating 6), 6 slap patches (Rating 5), goggles [Rating 1, w/ smartlink], 250 rounds of regular ammo

Weapons:

Unarmed [Reach 1, DV 8P, AP —]

Combat Axe [Blade, Reach 3, DV 10P, AP –1,]

Vibro blade, knife [Blade, Reach 1, DV 8P, AP -2]

Ares Predator IV [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP –1, SA, RC —, 15 (c), w/ internal smartgun system]

High explosive grenades [Grenade, DV 10P, AP –2, Blast –2/m] Fragmentation grenades [Grenade, DV 12P(f), AP +5, Blast –1/m]

bear the fact that he has to work with the Awakened in order to be successful. Given the opportunity, if he thought he could get away with it, I am certain Street Rage would turn on those magicians that he was forced to work with and simply end them.

Street Rage is dangerous, plain and simple. He is the type of person where, if you get into a fight with him, you don't want to worry about conserving your ammo; you want to shoot first and ask questions later. Especially if you happen to be a human or an elf, and *especially* especially if you happen to be Awakened. Street Rage serves as a reminder that not all street legends have a happy ending, and not all street legends are people you would ever like to meet.

So does Haze.

Pistons

HARD EXIT

POSTED BY: PISTONS

Since we've alternated in sharing legends and tales of others and ourselves, I figured that I'd pick on our dear friend Hard Exit. I've had some fun at her expense over the last couple of years, but that's because she's like a sister to me. More than that, I owe her my life. I won't go into details, but suffice to say that without her assistance I wouldn't have made it out of Vegas alive. But that's a tale for another day. I'll start by telling the tale of how she earned the handle Hard Exit.

Hard Exit comes from the first generation of children born as Lone Star corporate citizens, and she was even born in Austin. That is important enough, but you have to consider that as chauvinistic as the Star culture is now, it was magnitudes worse back then, and Austin was the epicenter of it all. The newly divided city was still a low-intensity conflict zone when she was born, and Lone Star was right in the middle. This would come to define her, as she was a girl who was born and raised in a culture where men mattered and women were little more than brood mares. No matter how much she resisted, and how much she asserted herself, Clay Wilson's retro empire had a specific vision for women: Shut up and serve your man, and Lone Star too. Growing up in Austin also gave her a peculiar insight into life within conflict zones, which is now where she commonly works.

Before she became known as Hard Exit, she was Yesica Rucker. Yesica—Jessica to many people back in Austin—is at least a seventh-generation Tejana from central Texas. Even though her father was Anglo and a Lone Star officer, the fact that she looks more like her mother's family and kept resisting being a part of the Lone Star culture was complicated by the fact that she lived in a divided city where the Enemy looked an awful lot like her. Her resistance to the dominant culture, then, was unwelcome to say the least. It got her in trouble. It got her family in trouble, and eventually all that trouble came to a head.

Given her resistance to the corporate culture and the lack of opportunities that came with it, Hard Exit bolted for the CAS Marine Corps the day she turned seventeen. Her parents happily signed the papers, and she was off to Parris Island. Having grown up surrounded and harassed by cops, and then fleeing home to get away from them, the Marine Corps figured she would be best used as an MP. This didn't discourage her, and in fact it served as a motivation for her to show that she knew how to act better than the men she grew up around. By the time Christmas 2061 rolled around, she was SWAT-trained and serving as a sergeant with a unit providing support for anti-terrorism and counterintelligence operations in Pensacola. This core discipline of knowing how to harden and secure sites has become useful in her work to subvert or bypass those same systems. Given her fluency in Aztlan Spanish, she was given critical assignments defending Marine Corps assets and personnel.

- She certainly knew her way about my boat, so I'm guessing that knowledge came from those critical assignments.
- Sounder
- Since the CAS Navy is built around their submarine fleet, the Navy and Marines
 put a premium on defending them, or recapturing boats that slip out of their
 fingers. They send the SEALs to retake the ones at sea, so I don't think I ever
 had the pleasure of seeing Hard Exit in action back in her military days.
- Kane
- The SEALs can kiss my ass.
- Hard Exit

When Ghostwalker appeared in Denver and began wreaking havoc, the dragon's actions and the Azzie response prompted the Confeds to airlift a joint task force composed of some of their best units to protect the CAS Sector from both Ghostwalker and the Azzies. This was a delicate balancing of resources, because any unit dedicated to Denver wouldn't be available if something happened in Texas, Missouri, or Virginia. The sector was where Sgt. Rucker ended up, providing combat support against an unconventional enemy while also having to reassure an increasingly worried public.

- Many of the Knight Errant officers in Denver actually came from the CAS military. It was a common dodge before the formation of the Zone Defense Force. Since the Front Range Free Zone was technically a demilitarized zone, whole units would leave the respective militaries of their countries only to be immediately hired by the private security contractors policing each sector. This caused some grief during the month when Ghostwalker was attacking the city, because the CAS military's rules of engagement were to shoot on sight. Orders from Detroit, though, said that they should follow the UCAS and Sioux policy of self-defense. This led to some pretty nasty internal divisions in KE Denver between those who followed orders from Detroit and those who still considered themselves CAS military in all but name.
- Sticks

On January 26, 2062, the Council of Denver met in an emergency session. When the votes were counted, Ghostwalker was given executive control of Denver, PCC took over the Denver Matrix, and Aztlan's sector was given to the CAS. The moment the vote was made official, the CAS military crossed the border into the sector to formally annex it. There wasn't much fighting once they moved by the border defenses, but pockets of resistance remained. The final and most significant holdout took place at the Aztechnology pyramid. There were other pockets in the surrounding area, but all fighting centered on the pyramid. After another unit was ambushed, three of the surviving Marines were kidnapped and taken into the pyramid as either hostages or, more likely, sacrifices. In the Confeds' mind, they did not know what Aztechnology would do to captured combatants. Rucker was already in the fight, and when the only course of action was to immediately retrieve the captured soldiers, she led the charge.

Getting into the pyramid was the comparatively easy part, and the tactics she employed became something of a recurring motif in her extraction work. With her mixed-race appearance and fluency in Aztlan Spanish, Rucker led a six-Marine squad disguised in Aztechnology corporate security armor and infiltrated the pyramid, posing as a unit regrouping from earlier conflict. Her team was able to locate and recover their fellow Marines, two wounded and one dead. She earned the nickname Hard Exit from how they made their escape. They needed to evacuate the pyramid with their comrades and then make it back through the CAS lines alive. If the Azzies knew they were Marines, they were dead. If the CAS saw the Azzie armor, they were dead.

 I'm sure the wizmages here are wondering why we didn't use magic. In case you haven't been there, the Azzie pyramid is already heavily aspected towards their warfighters, and some of their mages were able to tilt that balance much further in their favor. That's why they wanted my Marines. Our mage may as well have tried to summon Buddha as try to provide magical support. Ghostwalker's allies are what helped turn the tide later that evening. The enemy of my enemy, I suppose.

Hard Exit

They forced their exit using every kind of weapon they could get their hands on as they breached the physical structure of the pyramid and then blasted their way past the exterior defensive line with a well-aimed LAW that broke the line and brought them into contact with CAS troops. Sgt. Rucker managed to fast-talk the Confed soldiers whose position they overran into not shooting them, and that's where the story would have ended. Mission accomplished. No one left behind. Hard Exit's a war hero.

She spent the next few months in the former Aztlan sector working on civil affairs and conducting peacekeeping operations in the Confederation's new territory. She kept a firm hand, but she knew that controlling the environment means knowing the streets. She drew on an old concept called "community policing" that fell out of favor back in the 1980s. The idea was to overcome the traditional us-versus-them mentality that often exists between police and residents of neighborhoods hit hard by crime and to put the residents and police on the same side, working together and feeding information back and forth to support each others' efforts. She had a difficult task ahead of

VITAL STATS: HARD EXIT

Age: 35 Weight: 60 kg **Eyes:** Hazel Metatype: Human Awakened: No

Height: 1.78 m Hair: Dark blonde **Gender:** Female

her, since the us-versus-them way of thinking was practically a religion within Lone Star. She decided to use the community policing strategy as a way to show she was a step ahead of the ordinary officer. This approach of enlisting the citizenry is often used in intelligence collection and counterintelligence/security operations, but is more often put into practice by militaries operating in foreign warzones than by domestic police forces. Since Hard Exit and her Marines served both roles, community policing became a valuable tool.

 Of course it didn't last. Once we left and KE took over, they threw away any goodwill we had developed and went back to their policy of mechanical dissociation and mental intimidation. It's still better than the bullying knuckle-draggers in Lone Star, but not by much.

Hard Exit

Then the DSI showed up.

They finally got around to debriefing Hard Exit about the pyramid incident, and different offices tried to pick away at her success. Somehow, the DSI convinced her to forego a career in the Corps for a clandestine position in the private sector. The CAS wasn't allowed to go into the Yucatán, but the UN now was. The UN Mission in the Yucatán Peninsula (UNMIYUP) had just been established, and the CAS military and DSI saw Hard Exit's value in making contacts and controlling conflicts and crises. The UNAF would be going in, and they needed experienced hands (read: mercenaries) that could deal with the population. Hard Exit had the right experience on her résumé, and the DSI had the right contacts to insert her into a mission at Chetumal. Not quite a cop, mercenary, or a (known) spy, Hard Exit had to play the game as an outsider, but one without any clear allegiance. She also conducted covert operations on behalf of the DSI or CAS military, but if anything happened to her, it was arranged so that the datatrail began and ended with her subcontracting agreement with Argus. It's not quite important what those missions entailed, but given her skillset and current specialty, it wouldn't be out of the question to think that she may have crossed the border to recover lost personnel.

But in the end, Hard Exit wasn't a mercenary and she wasn't a spy; she was a cop. The UN forces were in a holding pattern, and they remained that way even after the peace agreement. So HE returned to the CAS, breezing through OCS and becoming a junior officer whose first assignment sent her to the DeeCee area—North Virginia, to be specific. That was when we met. Marines of both nations rotate through installations in either country, and Quantico is the big one. It's where officers from both nations train and study, and not infrequently share gained knowledge and experience. Hard Exit was ostensibly there to train, but she also was looking to share information on what really happened in Denver in 2062.

- Ah, yes. Now I remember—you took my class at UT over the Matrix. We had some rather spirited discussions on the ancients' ideas on the civil-military divide.
- Thorn

Once she returned from the UCAS, Hard Exit was back on the fast track. She commanded elite security and MP units, and she served in Atlanta during Crash 2.0 and the aftermath, putting her principles into practice to help keep the peace without resorting to the violent crackdowns that occurred in many North American sprawls. That doesn't mean that she didn't put foot to ass when necessary, but she tended to keep the shooting of people to a minimum. Extracting an Army general who'd been kidnapped from Fort McPherson by insurgents again helped cement her reputation as a specialist in that field. She put her police skills to use in finding General Harrod in Decatur and then brought him out safely.

It's funny someone can spend years of their career building up goodwill and positive perceptions, only to see all of it pissed away in an instant by a single wrong move. This happened three years later, when Captain Rucker was in Denver. The total military drawdown that was expected never happened; while many of those units had become part of the ZDF, Hard Exit's group had been nationalized. Rucker led a mission to clear a cell of Los Espejos that had been causing all manner of trouble. After the group bombed the St. Thomas Seminary, it was clear that they needed to be eliminated. She and her Marines hunted for their prey, searching through every piece of detritus left in the wake of these attacks and reaching out to everyone they could think of to find them. The cell was finally located a couple weeks later, and Rucker and her people moved in to make the bust. Then the whole thing became political, and everyone wanted a piece of the takedown. DDI personnel were interfering from Atlanta, and while she and her company were going in, everyone else was sitting on the sidelines ready to swoop in and claim credit on this "joint" operation—right up until the whole mission went sideways, and the Azzies and, more importantly, the ZDF overwhelmed their support. The whole incident turned into a short shooting match between the Marines and a ZDF unit composed of Sioux personnel with not one Confederate in sight. Once the shooting stopped and the smoke cleared, the whole screw up was hung around her neck. Her past successes were the only thing that kept her out of prison, but her career was over.

After that it was a slow transition by Rucker from disgraced MP captain to shadowrunner. She returned to Austin and found some opportunities to keep fighting the good fight against the Azzies. She hooked up with the Sons of the Alamo and the Texas Rangers—but never with Lone Star—to covertly hunt and kill subversives and agents provocateurs within Texas, often times crossing the borders to extract assets or help funnel cross-border activity. The Rangers don't always make the most attractive offers, though, and official policy kept her from becoming an official member. So when offers came from gangs and syndicates whose members inside the Marine Corps had vouched for her, it was worth taking. Patriotism is fine, but it doesn't keep the lights on or pay for the upkeep on your cyberware.

Of course, word spreads, especially when you know people, and even more especially if those people are in transnational gangs and syndicates, the CAS and UCAS military, DSI, and so forth. Hard Exit knows all those people and more, and with a rep for anti-Azzie leanings and work, various competitors started hiring her based on her reputation. But again, Hard Exit is a cop first. So while she was doing a number of aggressive activities, especially extractions and jobs where the mission was to be a criminal, she was also being approached for freelance investigations and other jobs that regular cops wouldn't touch for one reason or another. Sometimes she was approached about investigations where her skills and contacts made her invaluable as a consultant or conduit to connecting the right dots. That was how the FedPols brought her in to find Laurent Bonta, who had been kidnapped from Kingdom Seven in Columbia in full view of the patrons. No one seemed to know anything, but she had contacts in the Vory who would sooner die than cooperate with them. They at least helped her direct the FedPols to his body, and she was instrumental in everyone burying the story with him.

- The Vory wanted him dead for backstabbing them on a deal involving guns back in his native Armenia. I cannot understand why they wouldn't have just killed him (and countless others) at the club for that betrayal. I heard that the UCAS was eager to bury it themselves once their CIA was told what he was smuggling by the UGB. The Vory did them a favor.
- Red Anya
- You know, it's funny that she was called in on an extraction job when it was done with the kind of bravado that she has been known to employ. Hard Exit often goes for the clandestine, sneaky extractions. She's especially fond of that motif when those are voluntary extractions, because there is less of a chance for the client to get harmed in the process. There are other times, however, when she's pulled off jobs with the kind of flair and brazenness that one would usually only expect from the likes of Kane. Base jumping off the top of the eighty-story Columbia Tower like the kidnappers did with Bonta definitely falls into the latter category.
- Sticks
- Yeah. Funny that.
- Hard Exit

The funny thing is that for as much as she hates Lone Star, Hard Exit knows a hell of a lot of people in Lone Star, and she has a lot of knowledge about the corp. Part of that comes from the fact that her father is a former city chief who now works in the Security Consulting Services division. He's an old-school cop first and a corporate executive a distant second. Word has it he sometimes directs people her way in those instances when Lone Star bean-counters or politics keep justice from being served. Of course, he would be loathe to have them contact his daughter, so it's fortunate for everyone involved that Hard Exit is often times a nebulous persona thanks to Jess' proclivity for disguises, false identities, and misdirection. I jest with her about the fact that most Johnsons, spyrunners, or random folks are just as likely to meet the rugged, male ex-cop that could have stepped out of a P.I. simflick as they are to meet Yesica la Tejana.

- There's a lot of that going around. You just don't know who you can trust these days. For all I know, the ork Johnson who hired me could have been Nadja Daviar in disguise.
- Ma'Fan
- Of course, it also works in reverse. No one really believed that the guy sitting across from me at a bar in Puyallup was Jonathan Blake even though he was all but screaming it physically and electronically. Sometimes the truth is so absurd that it is the best disguise.
- Indeed. One time I just walked up to the EP team guarding their client and said I was there to kill her. They laughed. I did my job. Whoops.
- Riser
- So where does your buddy Kincaid fall into all this? Ex-DIP Captain turned shitty Puyallup paranormal investigator? There's got to be a story there.
- Sticks
- If he won't talk about it, what makes you think I will? Don't you have some bones to pick clean somewhere?
- Hard Exit

When Jess isn't extracting people from the Towers in Manhattan or retrieving a kidnapped child in San Diego, she's been spending quite a bit of time in Bogotá. Her anti-Azzie stance is well known, but so is her skill in keeping people alive when they shouldn't be and finding people who don't want to be found. There's a lot of work in those fields, and the war and her rep have afforded her quite a few luxuries to keep her running the shadows at top speed for a lot of different actors. She also spends time back in the Yucatán and the Caribbean, but I think the Yucatán jobs are more related to the whole debacle where she lost her arm on that UN job she described in the *Spy Games* posting. There are still a lot of loose ends from what I've heard, and also a sense of duty to right things that went awry during the Azzie campaign to destabilize the UN presence in the Chetumal region.

HARD EXIT

HARD EXIT

В	Α	R	S	C	Т	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
3	4 (6)	4 (6)	3 (4)	4	4	4	4	5	0.205	8 (10)	1(3)

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/10

Armor (B/I): 6(8)/4(6)

- Qualities: Bilingual, First Impression, Technical School Education, Trustworthy
- Skills: Armorer 2 [3], Athletics skill group 3, Clubs 3, Computer (Edit) 2 [4] (6), Con (Impersonation) 4 [5] (7), Demolitions 2 [3], Disguise 4, Etiquette (Military) 5 [6] (8), Firearms skill group 5, Hardware 3 [5], Heavy Weapons 3, Infiltration 4, Intimidation (Interrogation) 5 (7), Leadership (Tactics) 4[5] (7), Negotiation 3 [4], Perception 6 [9], Shadowing 5, Outdoors skill group 5, Throwing Weapons (Grenades) 3 (5), Unarmed Combat (Subdual) 5 (7)
- Knowledge Skills: Aztechnology/Aztlan Military 6, Bodyguarding
 3 [4], Bogotá Area Knowledge 5, CAS Military 4[5], Cop
 Bars (Texas) 4 (6), Criminal Law (CAS) 2 [3] (5), Criminal
 Syndicates, Espionage Tradecraft (Counter-surveillance) 3
 [4] (6), Forensics 2 [3], Latin American Politics 4, Mercenary
 Haunts 3, Mercenary Units 3, Police Procedures 5 [6],
 Psychology 4, Security Procedures 5 [6], Security Providers
 (Lone Star) 6 (8), Security Systems 3, Smuggler Havens 3,
 Street Docs 2, Small Unit Tactics (CQB) 6 [7] (9), Texas Area
 Knowledge 5, Yucatán Area Knowledge 4

Languages: Aztlan Spanish N, Portuguese 4, English N, Japanese 3

Augmentations: (all betaware) Attention coprocessor 3, bone density augmentation 2, cyberarm [custom, right, obvious; Body 6, Strength 6, Agility 6, Armor (B/I) 2/2], Fairlight Caliban commlink w/ Novatech Navi [Response 4, Signal 5, Firewall 3, System 4, w/ hot-sim, sim module, 3 datajacks, data lock, orientation system], encephalon 2, muscle augmentation 1, muscle toner 2, smart skin2, skillwires 4, skillwire expert system, synaptic booster 2, Zeiss SenseSation Executive Edition (plus smartlink) suite

Gear: Chameleon suit (6/4), knowsofts [all Rating 4; Arcana, Magic Background, Aztlan History, Aztec Culture, Local Area Knowledge, Local Area Politics, Chemistry, Structural Engineering, *Jane's Fighting Vehicles 2073*], linguasofts [all Rating 4; Cantonese, French (multiple dialects), German, Italian, Mandarin, Nahuatl, Russian, Sperethiel], microtransceiver [Rating 6, w/ Encrypt 6, subvocal mic, transducer], nanopaste disguise (small, Rating 2), newprint altskin (Rating 2), skillsofts [all Rating 4; Blades, Chemistry, Cracking skill group, Electronics skill group, First Aid, Forgery, Gunnery, Mechanic skill group, Pilot Aircraft, Pilot Ground Craft, Pilot Watercraft, Parachuting, Diving]

Software: FTL Matrixware Power Suite, Homewrecker Suite, pocket hacker suite, TacSoft Rating 4

Weapons:

Ares Alpha [Assault Rifle, DV 6P, AP –5, SA/BF/FA, RC 2, 42(c), w/ personalized grip, smartgun, 6 clips APDS ammo]

Underbarrel grenade launcher [Grenade Launcher, DV –, AP –, SS, 6(c), w/ high explosive grenades: DV 10P, AP –2, Blast –2/m, 3 clips; Fragmentation: 12P(f), AP +5, Blast –1/m, 2 clips]

H&K 227-S [SMG, DV 5P; AP -4, SA/BF, RC 5, 28(c) w/ adv. safety, folding stock, gas-vent 3, personalized grip, smartgun, 3 clips subsonic ammo]

Savalette Guardian [Heavy pistol, DV 6S(e) or 6P; AP –half or –2, SA/BF*, RC 2, 12(c) w/ advanced safety, personalized grip, smartgun, 2 clips stick-n-shock ammo, 2 clips EX-explosive ammo]

4 thermal smoke grenades [Grenade, DV –, AP –, Blast 10m Radius]

Cougar Fineblade long knife [Blades, Reach –, DV 5P, AP –1]

Stun Baton [Clubs, Reach 1, DV 6S(e), AP -half]

Fists [Unarmed, DV 3P, AP -, Reach -]

* Burst fire requires a Complex Action



You know what? I need to get something off my chest. I've been here for three years now, and I'm sick of the abuse. I'm sick of getting picked on because I don't know a bunch of so-called famous shadowrunners from a zillion years ago, or don't know some rockers whose fame dried up before I was born, or don't know the ins and outs of "Bug City" or Lagos or wherever. You assholes give me shit because of my age and question everything I post here. And worst of all, most of you think I simply don't belong here. Especially you, Bull. And you, Slamm-0! Fuck you both. I saw the shit you were spewing about me in your little "private chatroom" last month.

- Hey now! Not cool, hacking our chats like that! You really should <Posting Access Restricted>
- Slamm-O!
- <Posting Access Restricted>
- o Bull
- /dev/grrl, did you just squelch Bull and Slamm-O! so they can't post? Slamm-O!'s cussing up a storm right now!
- Netcat
- Yeah. Teach those fuckers to whine about me.
- Impressive. I didn't think anyone would be able to do that with this code but me. Still, don't do that.
- FastJack

There's a reason I'm here. 'Jack thought I was good enough, but apparently you guys think you know better than he does. I'm sure both of you came out of the womb knowing everything there was about shadowrunning. Oh, wait. That's right, I've read your bios. You were both idiot newbs once upon a time, too. And from the looks of it, it's a fucking miracle you ever survived long enough to collect your first payday. I got mine when I was thirteen years old, you douchenozzles. I think I've earned a little respect just for that.

- I was starting to wonder how long you were going to put up with Bull and Slamm-Ol's antics. Good for you, young lady.
- Winterhawk

But, since that's apparently not good enough, I decided to do something else. I'm just a corp brat, sitting in the safety of my corp enclave, using mommy and daddy's credsticks to play games in the Matrix, right? Fuck that. I took a little trip, and did something that people have been trying to do since before I was born.

I tracked down and captured Kane. The Billion Dollar Man, if you add up the bounties on his ass.

That's right, you old geezers. I didn't use JackPoint, I didn't use daddy's corporate blood-money, and I didn't do it sitting at my desk. I did my homework, did my research, did the legwork that a good runner needs to do. I tracked him to a nightclub down in New Orleans, where he was busy losing a small fortune in a poker game. Came up behind him, put a gun to his head, and he was my little bitch.

Now, now, don't get your panties in a bunch. I didn't turn him in for the bounty or anything. Not that it wouldn't set me up for life, but hell, I'm not in this for the money any more than most of you are. I just wanted to prove I could do it. To myself, and for some fucking reason to all of you. But let me tell you something, I'm saving the picture my cybereyes took of his face when he turned around and saw this little, itsy-bitsy girl in her NeoNET school uniform holding a gun on him. It was priceless. After that, we hung out, had a few drinks, and I finished cleaning him out in five card stud. Turns out, he's got no head for cards. Especially after he's had a few.

- *blink* Now that's impressive. I've been tempted to try and cash in his bounty a couple of times, but Kane is good at covering his tracks.
- Now the real question is, kid, how many hired guns did you have with you? Kane wouldn't just roll over for one girl with a gun, no matter how big that gun might be.
- Fianchetto
- Well, ok. I'll admit that I wasn't alone. I hired myself some local muscle once I confirmed he was down in the Big Sleazy. Of course, I wasn't stupid enough to tell them who he was, or else they'd have turned on me to grab the bounty for themselves. I fed them some bullshit story about him being my long-lost dad who ran out on my mom when I was little. It's amazing how far some little girl puppy dog eyes and a judicious amount of cred will get you.
- That is indeed a lethal combination.
- Thorn

Kane told me some interesting stories that night too. Most of them you either know or can look up. He makes sure the news reports get it accurate. Hell, there have been several made-fortrid flicks based on his runs. Just don't bring up that old action movie, *The Siberian Sting*. Apparently the producers doublecrossed him on that deal and he never saw any nuyen from it, despite it being a major summer blockbuster back in '68.

But there's one story he shared that so far as I know, he's never told anyone. Maybe it was my guts in tracking him down, maybe it was the fact that I had a dozen goons armed with highvelocity rifles, or maybe it was just the booze talking. Whatever it was, while we played cards, he told me about Kat. Not to be confused with our own Kat o' Nine Tales.

VITAL STATS: KANE

Age: 43Height: 1.67 mWeight: 136 kgHair: BlackEyes: BrownGender: MaleRace: Hispanic-CautasianMetatype: HumanAwakened: No

Indeed. Kane is not my type.

Kat o' Nine Tales

Kane talks about himself. A lot. He's the biggest braggart under the sun, and he's not afraid to lay out everything, all his deepest, darkest sins for the entire world to see. But everything he's done, everything he became, he did it for this girl. It's sweet, in its own sociopathic way, really. I found some old Shadowland archives that mention her once, but other than that the only place her name pops up is in some of the psych profiles the corps and the alphabet agencies keep on him. Even half of them don't seem to know about her.

- I remember that. Early on, Kane used to rant and rave about someone that the Azzies took from him. But after a bit, he never mentioned it again. I always wondered what that was all about.
- The Smiling Bandit

John "Kane" Kastle used to be an upright citizen, or at least something resembling that. He was a rigger, a fighter jock in the 101st CAS Army Air Cavalry flying a Federated-Boeing Eagle. His wingmate, best friend, and the love of his life (his drunken words, not mine!) was Kat. Kane flew for the CAS Army for three years, up to June 2051. According to military records, he simply went AWOL for no reason in June, and he's been a wanted man ever since. According to Kane (as well as a few unofficial sources), in June of '51 Kane, Kat, and the rest of his squadron took off from the CSS *Robert E. Lee*, an aircraft carrier stationed outside of New Orleans, on a covert strike against the Aztlan military base at Matamoros. They encountered heavy resistance, and three members of the 101st were shot down. Two were KIA, but Kat managed to parachute out and land behind enemy lines.

The CAS started negotiating for her release, but within days the talks were cancelled and the entire mission was scrubbed from the books. Kane started digging around and found out that Federated-Boeing torpedoed the talks, as they were worried that they might lead to a more permanent truce between the two border nations. Needless to say, Kane lost his shit. He stole his Eagle, went AWOL, and sunk two Aztlan patrol boats that very night.

- Kat is a ghost. I did a lot of digging, and she simply doesn't exist. There's an
 obvious hole in the CAS records, because Kane was assigned a wingman, but
 there is no name, no data, nothing. And Kane won't tell me anything else
 about her besides her handle, "Kat."
- The CAS and Aztlan go through regular periods of minor border skirmishes, usually under the guise of chasing border runners and smugglers. Sometimes these get a bit out of hand and escalate into a military strike somewhere, after which the two sides go to the negotiating table to pretend to talk peace for a while. Even if the two sides were ever serious about it, there are enough corporations making money off the constant tension between the two that the talks get derailed fairly quickly. One of these days, one side will push too far, and things will spill out into full-scale war.

Picador

After that, Kane started making a name for himself. First in the Caribbean, and then worldwide. He has operated as both a shadowrunner and a pirate, not that there's really much difference. And really, you guys know most of his story for the next fifteen years or so. He raped, he pillaged, he wrote his name in bullets across the side of megacorps' HQs, and he feuded with another pirate who named himself after a cookie. He made the Most Wanted lists for a couple dozen corps, countries, and international law enforcement agencies, but he never got caught.

- I've always wondered how he's managed that. Good and careful only take you so far. Runners stay in the shadows because we rarely cause enough of a problem for it to be worth it for any one corp or government to target us. Kane's got what, twenty or thirty targets on his back? I find it hard to believe that if Aztlan really wanted to, they couldn't track him down.
- Sticks
- I asked Kane about that, actually. Honestly, he wasn't really that hard to track down. It just took a bit of time, and knowing the right people to slot some cred to. He didn't really go into it, but he said the key was playing all his enemies off against each other. He laughed and said that he's currently #9 on the CAS FBI's Most Wanted, and yet the man I interrupted him playing poker with was a Senator from Louisiana. Law enforcement agencies want him caught, but other branches of government have reasons for wanting him free.
- Kane is smart. He routinely comes in for DNA masking and other treatments to make sure that no one can use any blood, skin, or fingerprints to track him. Unlike most folks who use these treatments, he doesn't do it to hide. Instead, he uses it as a signature, and also to ensure that ritual magic can't be used to simply nuke him from above. I have a special DNA sequence I include with each Masque session he comes in for, so that regardless of what his DNA reads as, it's always clearly recognizable as his.
- Butch
- And apparently Kane knows how to play the politics game. You may be #5
 on Ares' most wanted list, but if you know the right people, pull the right
 strings, and bribe the right people, they'll overlook that fact for a while.
 Especially if your next couple of jobs hurt their rivals. It's a hell of a juggling
 act to pull off when you're playing two or three corps against each other.
 When you're playing every major megacorps and most governments and law
 enforcement agencies off each other, that takes a genius or a madman.
- Snopes
- And I daresay Kane is a bit of both.
- Fianchetto

Now here's the stuff you don't know. The stuff he doesn't talk about, doesn't brag about. Seven years after she was shot down, Kane was finally able to put together a team strong enough to raid an Aztlaner military base. Despite doing a lot of damage to the Aztlan military budget for 2058, the mission was a failure. Kat was gone, and there was no trace of her ever being there. Kane's raids on Aztechnology and Aztlan military assets tripled over the next two years as Kane tried to find out what happened to her.

In 2061, ten years after she'd been lost, Kane finally hit paydata. The Yucatán rebellion was in full swing, and the rebels were hiring mercenaries, pirates, and anyone they could get to come help them out against Aztlan. Kane and his crew came in swinging. During an amazing, brilliant, and daring daylight raid (Kane's words, not mine) on the Aztlan military base in Campeche, they rescued a bunch of political prisoners. One of them turned out to be a former commander in the Aztlan military who had been in Matamoros when Kane's squadron had hit the place, and he remember the girl they had captured. He worked with Kane over the next year to help him track down and locate Kat.

- I'm guessing that would be Colonel Jorge Juan Reyes. He was a member of the Aztlan military for many years before he became sympathetic to the Yucatán rebels and started working with them behind the scenes. He was caught in early 2061, disappeared for a couple years, and then surfaced again in Amazonia. He's been working with the Amazonian military ever since.
- Picador

What happened after they found Kat wasn't a shadowrunstyle extraction. It was a full bore military action. Kane has some footage he's kept of Operation: Get Kat Out of the Drekhole She's In. It's some impressive stuff. Get the old psycho drunk enough and he may share it with you. Most Desert Wars operations don't field this much hardware. A couple Eagles, a Eurofighter, two Banshees, a couple Stonewalls, and about three hundred mercs, including almost the entirety of the Free Marine Corps.

- Holy drek! Yeah, that's not a shadowrun, that's a fragging invasion!
- Pistons
- Careful Pistons, your age and your slang is showing. Yeah, that is a lot of firepower for one pirate to bring to bear. I have to call bullshit on his claims here.
- Snopes
- Who are the Free Marine Corps?
- Kia
- Back when the CAS seceded, they divided up their military assets. This
 included splitting up the military units based on where the personnel lived.
 Many weren't happy about this, and there were very valid fears at the time
 that there might end up being a war between the two nations, or at least
 border skirmishes. There was a Marine Corps unit that decided this was
 unacceptable. They very much believed in the ideals of brotherhood that the
 Marines theoretically subscribed to, so almost the entire unit resigned rather
 than risk ending up on opposite sides of a conflict.

Rather than just retire, most of the unit took up residence in the Carib League and formed a mercenary unit based on an idealized version of the Marine Corps tenets of brotherhood and honor. They're picky about what jobs they take on and they're still a fairly small mercenary company, but they're very well trained and probably the single most trustworthy group of mercs you can work with.

- Picador
- Trid recordings can be faked pretty easily.
- Snopes
- True, but I was down in the area at the time all this went down. We assumed at the time that it was part of Amazonia's covert efforts to help the Yucatán

rebels, but I'd never been able to corroborate that. And this is just the type of gig the FMC would sign up for.

Picador

The Azzies never knew what hit them. Kat was being held in an Azzie black ops facility near Bogotá, so he made arrangements with Amazonia to cross the border from the south. About a dozen hackers hit the Azzie Matrix to hide Kane's troop movements until it was too late for the opponents to react, then they moved in. Honestly, I can't believe he's been sitting on this footage all these years. It's better stuff than any war movie I've ever seen (and since my father loves the damn things, I've probably seen a hundred of them).

Kane is probably the most successful pirate and smuggler in the world. He spent more than ten years doing extremely high profile and highly profitable jobs, and he made himself one of the most notorious criminals in the world. All so that he could drop nearly one hundred million nuyen on a single job. All for a girl.

Now that's a fucking love story, folks.

- Christ, I'm getting a little misty-eyed here.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- Meanwhile, I think I'm about to lose my lunch.
- Clockwork

Since then, Kat's been by his side every step of the way. She's a silent partner, to be sure, but after being kept prisoner for over a decade, I guess she had a lot of pent up anger to let loose. And we all know Kane really, truly enjoys his job. Even more so now that he has his girl by his side.

- I notice Kane hasn't commented on this at all. Which isn't like him. Kane, chummer, you around?
- Butch
- Yeah, I'm just sitting back and laughing my ass off. First off, it's all true. Every
 damn word. I was sitting there playing cards, and the next thing I know, this
 little bitty elf girl with a gun bigger than her head is standing next to me,
 telling me to surrender. Kid's lucky I was pretty buzzed at that point and
 that I was too busy laughing, or my wires might have kicked in and blown
 her head off before I thought it over. I decided to find out who she was and
 what she wanted before I did that, though, and I'm glad I did.

Little Bit there has some balls on her, I'll say that. More than most on JackPoint. You've likely never seen the kid in person, but she's a tiny little thing. Man. Seriously, she had an Ares Alpha, and I think it weighs more than she does. Heh. Damn smart, and a hell of a card player. And despite what she says, I'm no slouch when it comes to poker. She also can drink like a fish. I gotta wonder if she's got a toxin filter installed or something.

I'm going to have to teach her how to hold a gun, though, if she's going to run with my crew. And how to shoot it. Turns out, she was bluffing me when she held that thing up.

So, final judgment here—the kid's damn good. If you guys underestimate her, don't be surprised when she kicks your ass. I told her to stop taking shit from the other old bastards on these boards, and it looks like she took my advice. Good job, /dev/.

And don't forget your homework for next week. Guns and Explosives 101, by Professor Kane

Kane

KANE

В	A	R	S	С	I	L	w	Edg	Ess	Init	IP	
6	5 (8)	6 (9)	4 (7)	5	5	4	5	6	1.08	10 (13)	1(3)	

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 11/11

Armor (B/I): 13/13

- Active Skills: Artisan (Comic Art) 3 (+2), Athletics skill group 4, Automatics (Submachine Guns) 5 (+2), Chemistry (Compounds) 3 (+2), Close Combat skill group 5, Computer 3, Con (Fast Talk) 5 (+2), Demolitions 5, Diving 4, Dodge 5, Electronic Warfare 6, Etiquette 4, First Aid (Combat Wounds) 3 (+2), Gunnery (Guided Missiles) 6 (+2), Heavy Weapons 4, Intimidation (Torture) 6 (+2), Leadership (Persuasion) 5 (+2), Longarms (Sniper Rifles) 5 (+2), Negotiation (Sense Motive) 5 (+2), Outdoors skill group 5, Parachuting (HALO) 5 (+2), Perception (Visual) 5 (+2), Pilot Aerospace 3, Pilot Aircraft (Vectored Thrust) 6 (+2), Pilot Anthroform 4, Pilot Ground Craft 5, Pilot Watercraft (Ship) 6 (+2), Pistols (Semi-Automatics) 5 (+2), Stealth skill group 4, Throwing Weapons (Throwing Knives) 3 (+2)
- Knowledge Skills: Art History (Comic Books) 3 (+2), Aztlan Area Knowledge (Yucatán) 4, Black Market Fences 5, CAS Area Knowledge (Aztlan/CAS Border) 5 (+2), Corporate Politics (Aztechnology) 3 (+2), Corporate Security (Aztechnology) 4 (+2), Drug Cartels 4, Government Politics (CAS) 4 (+2), Lagos Area Knowledge 4, Law Enforcement Procedures 5, Mercenary Units 5, Military History (CAS) 4 (+2), Military Procedures (CAS) 5 (+2), Military Tactics

(Small Unit) 6 (+2), Pirate Groups 5, PR Techniques (Self Promotion) 5 (+2), Smuggling Routes 5

Languages: English N, Cantonese 3, German 3, Greek 2, Japanese 2, Mandarin 3, Portuguese 4, Spanish 4, Russian 4, Yoruba 2

Qualities: High Pain Tolerance (3), Toughness

- Augmentations: (all betaware) Bone density augmentation 3, control rig, cyberears [Rating 4 w/ audio enhancement 3, balance augmenter, damper, ear recording unit, select sound filter 3, sound link, spatial recognizer], cybereyes [Rating 4 w/ eye recording unit, flare compensation, image link, low-light vision, smartlink, thermographic vision, vision enhancement 3, vision magnification], datajack, DNA masking, muscle augmentation 3, muscle toner 3, orthoskin 3, reaction enhancers 1, sim module (hot sim), sleep regulator, symbiotes 3, wired reflexes 2
- Gear: Armor jacket, commlink (custom, Firewall 8, Response 6, Signal 6, System 6)
- Programs: Analyze 6, Biofeedback Filter 6, Browse 6, Command 6, ECCM 6, Edit 6, Encrypt 6, Scan 6

Weapons:

Ares Alpha [Assault Rifle, DV 6P, AP –5, SA/BF/FA, RC 5, 42 (c) w/ 10 clips APDS, gas-vent 3, grenade launcher, smartgun system]

Ares Alpha Grenade Launcher [Grenade Launcher, DV 10P, -2/m, SS, 6 (c), w/ high explosive minigrenade x1, smartgun system]

Ares Predator IV [Pistols, DV 5P, AP –5, SA, RC —, 15 (c), w/ 10 clips APDS, smartgun system]

Unarmed Strike [Unarmed, Reach —, DV 6P]

"RUBY SKIES"—FEDERATED-BOEING EAGLE (VSTOL FIGHTER/BOMBER)

HANDL	ACCEL	SPEED	PILOT	BODY	ARM	SENS	
+3	60/240	1299	4	20	20	6	

Upgrades: Additional fuel tank, ECM 8, ejection seats, improved vertical takeoff and landing 1, personal armor 5, 2 reinforced weapon mounts (nose mounted w/ Phalanx Rotary Cannons), 2 reinforced weapon mounts (center-line under-fuselage w/ SS-N-49 Sirocco missiles), 2 reinforced weapon mounts (inner-wing mounted w/ Saab-Saaker AIM-11R missiles), rigger adaptation

Programs: Clearsoft 4, Defense 4, Electronic Warfare 4, Firewall 8, Maneuver Aircraft 4, System 6, Targeting (Phalanx Rotary Cannon) 4, Targeting (SS-N-49 Missile), Targeting (Saab-Saaker AIM-11R Missile)

Weapons:

Phalanx Rotary Cannon [Heavy Weapon, 12P, -8/-10*, 250 Round Belt, w/Anti-Vehicle Rounds]

SS-N-49 Sirocco [Missile, 30P, -2/-10*]

Saab-Saaker AIM-11R** [Missile, 18P***, -2/-6*]

* vs. people/vs, vehicles

** Use the missile launcher range table for this missile, but extend the Extreme range band to 5,000 meters.

*** Against ground targets the missile is far less effective; reduce DV to 10P.

<u> "RAZING KANE"–AZTECHNOLOGY TIBURON (CORVETTE)</u>

HANDL	ACCEL	SPEED	PILOT	BODY	ARM	SENS
+2	10/30	90	4	32	20	6

Upgrades: Additional fuel tank, ECM 8, rigger adaptation, signature masking (Rating 1), 4 weapon mounts (external, flexible, armored manned, Phalanx Rotary Cannons)

Programs: Clearsoft 4, Defense 4, Electronic Warfare 4, Firewall 8, Maneuver Aircraft 4, System 6, Targeting (Phalanx Rotary Cannon) 4

Weapons:

Phalanx Rotary Cannon [Heavy Weapon, 12P, -8/-10*, 250-round belt, w/ anti-vehicle rounds]

Notes: Kane either has access to or knows where to steal almost any vehicle or drone he needs. Likewise, he has multiple arsenals stashed in safehouses around the world. Gamemasters should equip him with any gear they feel appropriate to the mission at hand. He is not particularly attached to any of his gear except for Ruby Skies, the FB Eagle he took with him when he left the CAS Army, and the Razing Kane, one of the first Tiburon's produced by Aztechnology and stolen out of their shipyard before they were available on the market.



MIHOSHI ONI

POSTED BY: JANUS

- Janus calls himself a historian. He's chronicled the shadow history of Japan since the late '40s. When I told him what we were doing here he asked if he could talk about Mihoshi Oni. I was hesitant until he showed me some files that had me second-guessing what I thought I knew. If even a little bit of this is true, Mihoshi Oni has a history far beyond her years.
- FastJack

I enjoy the current times. We know so little of history that one might make something new of themselves merely by paying the right people and cleaning up the proper electronic records. This is the platform upon which Mihoshi Oni has built her house of cards. It may surprise some of you to know she is not the first Mihoshi Oni, though it seems obvious now that she will be the last.

The first Mihoshi was an ork. She was seventeen when she came into the name as a member of a Hokkaido go-gang. She was a fierce rider, wired into a night-black Rapier, her face hidden by a red helmet cut to let her tusks hang out. This was the 2020s. Back then, a woman's place was beside her man's ride, so to see Mihoshi racing and beating much of Hokkaido's top talent caused quite a stir. Three weeks into her reign as Hokkaido's underground circuit champion, the first Mihoshi Oni met her end on a two-lane strip of black top outside of Yakumo Town. The police report called it an accident, one of forty-three head-on collisions there that year.

- If you're saying she has the same name as another runner then I don't see what the big deal is. It happens all the time. There's gotta be four or five guys out there calling themselves Sticks. My actions are what speak for me. The name is not the thing.
- Sticks
- There are four or more Sticks out there that I know of, but only you work out of Seattle. That makes all the difference. Names matter in an area where your name is all your contacts have to go on.
- Riser
- That being said, wouldn't her contacts know it wasn't the same gal?
- Baka Dabora

The second and third Mihoshi were sisters. One was a meta, a frumpy troll with arms as thick as fir trunks. Her sister, a normal, was wired to be as strong as any troll, and she was tough as one to boot. They ran the shadows through the '30s, behind the same mask borne by their predecessor who died on the side of a forgotten road all those years ago.

It is important to remember that the women behind the mask were not a sorority. The new Mihoshi sisters did not know their predecessor. After her death, a shrine was erected on the side of the road where she died. It was taken down within the year, but an online shrine popped up shortly after, transforming a little-known biker into a talisman.

The name Mihoshi Oni roughly translates as "beautiful star demon." "Oni" in particular is the name classically

attributed to undesirable metas such as dwarves, orks, and trolls. There is evidence that the combined name was pilfered from a Japanese folktale. In some variants of the Momotaro folk tale, the champion of the Oni who battles the boy and his followers is called Mihoshi. With the birth of Yomi Island, the name Mihoshi Oni took on a greater significance. It became representative of the hero who would rise against the racism and isolation of Japan to usher in a new world. I suspect this is where the first Mihoshi Oni came upon her name. Her successors then took that name, as well as the look of the original. The nonmetahumans among them did not wear a helmet, but rather a mask that had the fangs of a cat and the horns of a bull. In the cases where a troll took the title, the horns were real.

The two sisters took up the mask as a show of respect and solidarity. But cultural memory is short. The Mihoshi myth vanished into anonymity within a decade, a brief and flickering flame relegated to shadow and replaced with a street rep that dwindled as the years wore on. When their time was done, the mask was passed to an ork from Toyama. She'd run with the sisters for a year before they decided it was enough vetting, and she was worthy to receive the legacy. They were wrong. The period from '42 to '47 represented perhaps the darkest time in the legacy.

Mihoshi Oni number four was an ork spellslinger who specialized in glamours. She did not enjoy the notoriety her predecessors had, so she focused her energy and her mana on altering that street rep. She became known as a contract killer. She tried to connect her rep to the first Mihoshi Oni. A few people remembered the name, and none of them were bothered much by the surprising longevity of this ork's career. They had bigger concerns-the new Minoshi was ruthless, often taking out innocent bystanders if she thought they had seen too much. She was also incautious in the jobs she took and the enemies she made, and eventually that cost her. Her death came at the hands of Renraku's Red Samurai when she took on an assassination job that was too big for her to handle alone. Whatever her faults, though, this Mihoshi had done a good job making a fearsome name for herself, and her body was barely cold before someone else in need of a tough rep took up the mask.

Mihoshi number five was also an ork, a former soldier who took up the mask in the early '50s. She restricted her operations to the area around Kyushu, where she balanced being a shadowrunner and a mother. Mihoshi V did light runs; work that wouldn't ruffle anyone's feathers and kept food on the table. During her years behind the mask, this Mihoshi Oni became known as a tough and reliable customer who may have once been a vicious killer but had toned down her work. She was the proverbial sleeping dog and best allowed to lie still. She would have continued in this fashion as long as she lived if the Mihoshi Oni we know hadn't come along.

Our Mihoshi, Mihoshi VI, started out as a *kyabajo* working specialty hostess clubs in the Ibaraki prefecture. It wasn't that she wanted to be sexy. She was fourteen, homeless, and SINless. She was a survivor and used whatever was at her disposal to

VITAL STATS: MIHOSHI ONI

Age: 29
Weight: 118 kg
Eyes: Brown
Metatype: Fomor

Height: 2.1 m Hair: Brown Gender: Female Awakened: No

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get by. There is little known of Mihoshi's parents save for that both are Japanese and longstanding members of the Mitsuhama corporation. This has raised questions about her birth. If the Oxford Royal College of Thaumaturgy is to be believed, Fomorian expression is native to Celtic bloodlines, and she is clearly not Celtic. It can be safely assumed that her genetic origin is either a lie or an anomaly.

- There is another possibility. Fomorian expression has been tentatively tied to areas of strong magical concentration, with the fomori genes serving as a kind of genetic defense to those born under the threat of magical attack. A study conducted by Hong Kong University showed that in the time between the Awakening and the arrival of Halley's Comet, there was a steady increase of individuals being born with magical capabilities or resistances, particularly in the lands adjacent to Ryumyo's domain.
- Plan 9
- Bah, the only science that applies here is Occam's Razor, i.e., the simplest answer is usually the right one. In this case the simplest answer is that her mother was sleeping around.
- Slamm-O!
- I don't appreciate that comment, Slamm-O! I suggest you retract it.
- Mihoshi Oni

It took Mihoshi two years to move from being groped by men to being the one doing the groping. That change came when a group of Yakuza wannabes got rowdy and grabby with some of the girls. Mihoshi let her anger take over. She crossed the room in three quick strides and put a stiletto heel through the leader's shoulder. At that point, she gained a new understanding of her worth. A pretty troll was already a commodity on the floor, but suddenly she made the other girls feel safer. The other girls felt better about working knowing one of their own was watching their back.

In time she decided to go into business for herself. She saw the Yakuza types coming into the club, and she noticed the way they studied her—at once disdainful and curious. She performed studies of her own, learning the martial arts at a local dojo in order to put more than looks into her repertoire. In a moment of boldness, she decided to approach a known Yakuza club goer and offered her services. The *shatei* laughed in her face. The next day she tried again and failed again. The UCAS phrase is third time's the charm, so she went in again. This time when he blew her off, he asked his muscle to move her aside. Instead she took them out with a flurry of punches and kicks. Then she curled up next to the *shatei*, batting her eyes. When he asked her who she was, she said the only name that would give her enough cred to be noticed.

In truth, Mihoshi Oni was never meant to be a person. She was always a symbol; a representation of mythical hope born from a desire of meta acceptance. Mihoshi doesn't just believe in her longstanding legend, she became it. Over time she reshaped her life and her principles around the idea of Mihoshi Oni and took that idea to the next level. She became a meta activist.

 I don't see how a meta activist can work for the Yaks. They are about the most anti-meta group of criminals you could find outside of a Human Nation rally.
 Baka Dabora

- You can't change a mindset by ignoring it. The only way I know how to do it is to get in their face and show them what we're capable of.
- Mihoshi Oni
- Yeah, but all they know is you're capable of being a protector and a killer when needed. They don't know you're a person, because you aren't to them. You never will be.
- Ma'fan

The mask ensured that the identity would be separate from the person. When our Mihoshi Oni first took up that identity she didn't have the mask to hide behind. She married her own identity to that of Mihoshi and gained ownership of the name. She *was* Mihoshi Oni—until one day the person she had borrowed her name from stumbled on to what was happening. That is when the real trouble began.

After her adventure with the *shatei*, our Mihoshi Oni became a valuable commodity to the Yakuza. The same Yakuza bosses that initially made light of her strung her along like a trophy. It became popular to be seen being guarded by Mihoshi Oni, and it was a symbol of pride for the few meta Yaks out there. Often they would ask her to wear the mask, which she did at first. Over time she began to realize that her behavior was drawing the wrong kind of attention. Their sources on the street started telling them that Mihoshi VI's actions had been noticed. A confrontation with her predecessor Mihoshi Oni was inevitable.

When it finally happened, it went down in a bar outside of Mastuyama. Mihoshi was standing watch for a summit between members of the Kodachi-gumi and Tsukigata-gumi. She was approached by an ork who flatly stated, "You are not who you claim to be." That comment led to a conversation after Mihoshi's job was done. Mihoshi V presented her with a choice: Offer twenty percent of this and all future runs in exchange for using the name, or leave town and never return. Mihoshi refused, but she promised to stop using the name altogether. She apologized for what she had done and explained the circumstances by which it had happened.

Mihoshi VI broke her promise to stop using the name almost as soon as she made it. She stayed in Matsuyama that night roaming the streets until she found a few members of a local gang. She donned the famous mask and took a run at the gang members. She killed one and beat the other nearly to death, making sure he knew who it was who'd done this. Her plan worked. A few days later the fifth Mihoshi Oni was killed in a gangland-style execution.

- This is crap. Are you saying I somehow disguised myself as an ork? Or that the people I was supposedly beating on somehow didn't know what I was? And why would I have Mihoshi V killed, anyway? Any problems we had could have been resolved face to face. What happened to her was regrettable, but it wasn't a conspiracy.
- Mihoshi Oni

The death of Mihoshi V was really the death of two people. Mihoshi VI knew she couldn't resurface right away, because the gang may begin to suspect they killed the wrong person. More pressing was the way she had started questioning herself. She spoke to some of her friends from the early hostess club days and told them she had lost her way. One thing led to another, and these friends offered her a way out.

Mihoshi is extremely charismatic. She'd built connections through her hostess club who told her she had what it took to be a legitimate runway model. The pay was better than bodyguard work had been, and the work was steady. It did not, however, engage her. She found herself picking fights, looking to irritate people enough so they'd take a swing at her. She gained a reputation as impossible to work with, and work fell off—which was fine with her, since she didn't want to do that sort of work again anyway.

After her brief modeling career, Mihoshi disappeared entirely. Nearly six months later she crawled out of the bottom of a bottle and into Kashima dojo trying to find peace. In a way she was repentant. When she finally emerged from the dojo, she'd remade herself into a samurai. Japan's shadows are littered with samurai, all of whom follow some form of code. In truth, most would slough off their code as easily as a snake would its skin, provided there is enough nuyen involved to offer justification. Mihoshi Oni clings to her code in spite of everything and has gained a reputation for that. In some circles her behavior was seen as honorable; in others it was another example of Little *Kawaruhito* playing samurai.

- I've worked with Mihoshi a few times Stateside, and I can tell you her moral code is not bulldrek. In fact, it can be fragging cumbersome. There was that time in Boston when I was running overwatch for an extraction. The contract stipulated one target, but the lady had a kid. We had to change our whole exit plan in order to accommodate. It put Mihoshi at risk, but worse, the new exit cost double the old, and that cost came entirely out of her cut.
- o Bull

Mihoshi uses her network of fixers from the criminal and modeling worlds to pull in the kind of work she wants. Once Mihoshi Oni accepts a contract, there is little that can cause her to break it. This makes her selective about who she accepts as a client. Today, Mihoshi Oni runs the stretch of shadow between Yakut and the Japanese Islands. It is a wide territory. When Evo relocated to Vladivostok for a while, Mihoshi Oni went with them, prompting rumors that she leased herself out to the corp as a stringer. That theory conflicts with records I have of her doing bodyguard work for several high-profile Vory v Zakone figures during that time.

 I'm not sure that really conflicts. We know that Evo was—hell, is—in bed with the Vory. It took the Vory a while to understand how to handle their special relationship with Evo. Some of the newer bosses thought it would be a good idea to flex their muscle by scooping up noted Yakuza freelancers.

Red Anya

Despite the ability to get work from various sectors, Mihoshi prefers doing work for the Yakuza. Anyone trolling JackPoint knows Mihoshi Oni is the foremost expert on Japan's Yakuza, but she herself is not Yakuza. Despite her years of service to various clans, she was never allowed membership.

- It is not fair to say the Yakuza refused me membership. I never tried to become part of the Yakuza clans. My relationships and my friendships exist among members of different Yakuza gumi. I could not properly serve one gumi without betraying other longstanding bonds.
- Mihoshi Oni
- Which is to say she is a cutthroat shadowrunner protecting her employment opportunities by staying above the fray. Once you belong to a particular gumi it can be hard to work for opposing gumi. It is sometimes even considered dishonorable for them to try to hire you.

o Ma'fan

- That isn't true. Gumi swap freelancers all the time.
- Riser
- Key word: freelancers. Ma'fan is talking about the difference between being Yakuza and working for them. Which is huge.
- Sticks

PRIORITY MESSAG

MIHOSHI ONI

В	Α	R	S	C	1	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
9	5 (7)	5 (7)	10 (13)	6	4	4	6	6	2.89	9 (11)	1(3)

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 13/11

Armor (B/I): 8/6

Skills: Automatics 6, Automotive Mechanic 2, Blades 6, Climbing 4, Etiquette (Criminal Syndicates) 4 (+2), First Aid 4, Gymnastics 4, Heavy Weapons 5, Infiltration 4, Negotiation 3, Perception (Visual) 4 (+2), Pilot Ground Craft 3, Pistols 6, Running 4, Swimming 4, Unarmed Combat 8

Knowledge skills: Criminal Syndicates 4, Firearm Design 3, High Fashion 3, Safe Houses 4, Zen Meditation 6

Languages: English 4, Japanese N, Russian 3

- Qualities: Arcane Arrester, Code of Conduct (Bushido), Guts, High Pain Tolerance 2, Magic Resistance 2, Metagenetic Improvement (Body), Mundane, Toughness, Addiction (Moderate, Alcohol)
- Augmentations: Cybereyes [alphaware, Rating 3, w/ flare compensation, low-light vision, smartlink, thermographic vision, vision enhancement 3], muscle augmentation 3, muscle toner 3, sleep regulator, synaptic booster 2, tailored pheromones 3
- Gear: Armor jacket (8/6), autopicker (Rating 6), firearms repair tool kit, Hermes Ikon commlink [Response 4, Signal 3, Firewall 3, System 3], Evo Pegasus [Racing Bike, Handling +1, Accel 20/40, Speed 180, Pilot 1, Body 6, Armor 4, Sensor 1], medkit (Rating 5), white noise generator (Rating 5)

Weapons:

Colt Manhunter (Heavy Pistol, DV 6P, AP –1, SA, RC –, 16(c), w/ advanced safety system, smartlink, explosive ammo]

Cougar Fineblade (long blade) [Blade, Reach—, DV7P (9P), AP-1]

Katana [Blade, Reach 1, DV 8P (10P), AP -1]

THE SMILING BANDIT

POSTED BY: CLOCKWORK

It is impossible to start talking about The Smiling Bandit without mentioning his unforgettable catch phrase: "The Smiling Bandit strikes again! Ha Ha Ha!" This phrase has all but gone viral on Shadowland, ShadowSea and even on Jackpoint over the years. People remember The Smiling Bandit because of this unique signature, words that spark the imagination with images of a roguish, larger-than-life personality filled with good-natured humor and a sense of whimsy. People on the Matrix often favorably compare The Smiling Bandit to fictional characters such as Robin Hood or King Arthur. According to them, he is a man of the people, fighting the good fight. A man that does not believe that might makes right. The Smiling Bandit's icon is among the most copied and imitated by counterculture groups and their members. With so many people creating an image of who The Smiling Bandit is in their minds, it is easy to forget where the myths end and where the hard truth begins. It is even harder to ferret out the truth about The Smiling Bandit because he is a competent hacker, a man who has been careful with what information gets out while also sanitizing any records of who he is and who he works for. Given a distinct lack of hard information to build a solid profile around, I've had to work hard and reach out to less-definitive sources.

The Smiling Bandit has been seen posting on Shadowland ever since the early 2050s. The subjects he has posted on have typically been scientific in nature-the things he's discussed the most over the years have been genetech, genetic engineering, and gene splicing. The in-depth familiarity with genetics and genengineering suggests a formal education-a Master's-degree level education at the least, or perhaps a doctorate in the field. It is likely that The Smiling Bandit was in his mid-thirties when he first started posting on Shadowland, so it's reasonable to assume that he is in his mid-fifties by now. Despite what some could consider an advanced age, this by no means indicates that The Smiling Bandit is limited physically. With his knowledge of genetics and genetech, his likely connections with the various researchers and scientists of the megacorporations, and the resources he might have at his disposal from a highly successful career as a hacker, it is highly probable that The Smiling Bandit is in exceptional shape, both mentally and physically for a mid-fifties human. A physical condition so good that he might actually still have the body of a twenty-one year old.

 Are you implying léonization? If so, then no. I know enough about gene engineering that I know not to want it for myself. The corporations have the only facilities that I would potentially trust to perform such a delicate operation. But trusting their tech and trusting *thern* are two completely different matters. I've seen enough from my time in the shadows to know that the megacorporations and their propaganda are nowhere close to where the truth of the science is. They say the gene therapies are nearly 100 percent safe. If that's the case, I for one would hate to be in that one or two percent where things go (horribly) wrong. Anomalies and mutations happen at a far higher rate than they let on. And even if the procedure goes off as intended, how can you trust them not to misuse any tissue samples they may have taken without your permission or left over from their medical instruments? No cloning experiments for me, thank you very much. I'm not interested in being the first one to have a fully viable clone, whether it's for the sake of science or not. Sorry. And as far as street clinics trying this stuff? No offense to any street docs here, but most street clinics don't have the sanitary conditions or the state-of-the-art tech to perform these improvements safely or reliably. This would translate into even more anomalies and mutations. Which means, simply put, I am happy with what natural selection gave me. I'll let others go through the process, if they insist.

- The Smiling Bandit
- After all these years, you're still paranoid about this technology? Will nothing
 I say ever sink in? Just imagine how useful an encephalon or a math SPU can
 be for you. Surgical implantation of cyberware or bioware is completely safe
 nowadays. And so is genetech. I could probably get you a discount if you
 wanted symbionts.
- Butch
- With a side helping of a cranial bomb or another corporate surprise? No thanks. I'd rather be the outsider looking in. Gives me a better, unbiased perspective.
- The Smiling Bandit

In addition to genetech, The Smiling Bandit has been known to, from time to time, comment on other scientific fields, such as chemistry and cybertechnology. These are fields that are of particular interest to him. Most of the time you won't see him venture into areas that do not interest him or fields in which he does not have any particular experience, such as magic. If you need any data on SOTA developments or research in areas such as genetech, he is the one to go to. His up-to-date knowledge of SOTA technology suggests that he is a field researcher, possibly for an independent company. What makes The Smiling Bandit different and unique is that he approaches scientific study with a certain code of honor. He believes that this knowledge should never be abused or used to cause harm. There is a fairly wellknown story about how, in his early days, The Smiling Bandit was hired to obtain a type of algae, which he did. When he later found out that the corporation in question would be using a variation of that algae to kill off some merfolk, he went back and not only destroyed the files on the mutated algae, but he also made sure to destroy all the live specimens the corporation had. Then he broke down any stored knowledge they had about the project to make it impossible for them to replicate their design. He went back to the original source where he got the algae and wiped all files and research notes for that project so no future runners could break in and recover the paydata. Admittedly, that algae could have been of benefit to the world, but in The Smiling Bandit's view, the "weaponized" version of the algae posed a great threat not only to merfolk but also to the natural state of an ecosystem. In The Smiling Bandit's opinion, the risk was not worth it.

22 🔲 THE SMILING BANDIT

The Smiling Bandit's career is filled with these types of encounters. Another time, he exposed the defects of a "revolutionary" Shiawase cyberlimb, which, if it would have made it to the market, would have caused severe second- and third-degree burns from overheating electronics and poorly designed hydraulics. On another run, he exposed nanotech from Mitsuhama that had been programmed with a secondary purpose in mind: data mining. He has exposed risks and potential side effects to the use of bioware, and he also demonstrated an increased risk for cancers tied to some new technologies. Releasing this material put him at risk, as there are corporations that would go to any extremes to cover up that data. His efforts have hit other megas besides Shiawase and Mitsuhama. Saeder-Krupp, Evo, NeoNET, Genetique, Yakishima, Zeta-ImpCem, Renraku, Universal Omnitech-no matter the corporation or how intimidating their corporate men might be (or in Saeder-Krupp's case, its CEO) and no matter who he might piss off, The Smiling Bandit has never backed down from a fight over the use, abuse, or manipulation of science. This includes the lies that were used to cover up bad science. The Smiling Bandit has made it a point to go after Universal Omnitech for projects like "Project Infinity." He has spoken out about the Human Nation's plans to use eugenics against metahumans. At his core, he believes there is a pure and true application of science, one that has since been lost in the fog of profit margins, PR, and media hype.

- So, does anyone have any information on this Project Infinity?
- Sunshine
- I do, but nothing I would care to share. That's a part of my history I would rather leave behind. Believe me. Project Infinity was started before Crash 2.0, and I can only hope that it was lost during that Matrix crash and left abandoned.
- Nephrine

VITAL STATS: THE SMILING BANDIT

Age: 55 Weight: 73 kg Eyes: Brown Metatype: Human Awakened: No

Height: 1.6 m Hair: Brown Gender: Male

Shadowrunners over the years have used The Smiling Bandit's expertise to navigate the diverse technological marvels on the market today and pick the cyberware or bioware that is the safest, by the Smiling Bandit's standards, and the most durable on the market. Many neo-anarchist groups see The Smiling Bandit as their crusader; their hero, even. He stands up to the megacorps, and he calls them on their bulldrek when he sees it in their propaganda. This has only contributed to his legend. The Smiling Bandit not only knows his subject material, but he also keeps tabs on the significant personnel in those fields that are making scientific breakthroughs. This includes researchers such as Dr. Aishwarya Nair from Calcutta University, who disappeared in 2063. If you ask the Smiling Bandit about her, he won't need to look her up. He would be able to tell you that she was performing research in the eastern concept of Chakras. This doesn't work just for her-chances are if a significant scientist or researcher has disappeared from any field that he has an interest in, The Smiling Bandit knows what happened and can give you some information about what may have happened and who was likely behind it. His decadeslong career in the shadows proves that you do not need to be a high-initiate mage or a cybered street sam to be a threat to the corporations and the seedy ways that they do business. All you really need is anonymity, a Matrix connection, and the smarts to put those resources to use.

- I also believe there are limits to scientific research—that you can only push the metahuman body so far until you kill it. Sadly, this common-sense approach to science is something that the megacorporations don't seem to be able to grasp. And don't even get me started on cybermancy or the creation of cyborgs. Where was the scientific need to do that? Where was the overarching scientific principle of the betterment of metahumanity? This world doesn't need another cyberzombie, this world needs people to prepare us for the next pandemic. But sadly, I don't see our science being applied in that manner for the foreseeable future.
- The Smiling Bandit
- As I understand it, there have been more than a few attempts made by the corporations to silence The Smiling Bandit over the years. He's still posting, though, so no one's caught up to him yet. I wish him continued life and freedom for many years.
- Snopes

Based on The Smiling Bandit's typical habits, his code of conduct while he is in the Matrix, and his opinions on science and its role in society, if The Smiling Bandit had a day job, it would likely be in an academic setting. He could be serving as a researcher, gathering information without extensive influence from corporations and their agendas. Viable possibilities include the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Thaumaturgy, Boston University, the University of Denver, CalTech, Cambridge University, or Oxford University. It's a fallacy to suggest that academia is free from corporate influence. Corporations are always funding some research or another, and universities are quite addicted to the money they provide. There tends to be an unspoken assumption that if corporations receive results they like, they'll come back for future business. Department heads then gain the responsibility of applying pressure on researchers to make studies come out as they should.
 Mr. Bonds

It is difficult to pin down The Smiling Bandit's base of operations-there has been no evidence to suggest where he's from, or if where he is now has anything to do with where he's from. If The Smiling Bandit has a day job, he likely changes positions and employers frequently to preserve his anonymity. He may also have ties to small, independent corporations that are looking to collect on the bequests from Dunkelzahn's Will, such as the development of a durable tree or plant that can withstand the abnormally high levels of pollution in Tenochtitlán. The Smiling Bandit has an adversarial relationship with a poster who sometimes frequents shadowy forums under the name KAM. Her real name is Dr. Kristine Martin, and she works for the Genesis Consortium; her relationship with The Smiling Bandit means that he probably doesn't work there. He probably also doesn't work with her former employer, Universal Omnitech. Wherever he is, it must be a place that conforms to his views on science, where he can do research on his terms.

To sum up the Smiling Bandit, one would say he is informed while being cautious about protecting his identity. He has provided tremendous insight into the shadowy activities of the corporations, and is not afraid to stand up and say something about their practices. And if speaking out about a situation isn't good enough, The Smiling Bandit has the will and the desire to act. There is a reason he has the reputation he does, and it's not all based on the charm and good-natured humor that is part of his trademark. Given his passion and his capabilities as a hacker, I would tell those who might misuse science: Don't piss him off. You'll regret it. Or else you will be seeing on your AR Screens, "The Smiling Bandit strikes again! Ha Ha Ha!"

This entry wouldn't be complete without the story of at least one good datasteal, and I've got some information on one of his recent ones. Everyone in the nanoneurology field has been worried about what Horizon is going to do there, especially when it comes to implanting beliefs or desires in the minds of unsuspecting consumers. As you can guess, a freethinking humanist like The Smiling Bandit isn't fond of the idea of Horizon telling people what to think, so he hasn't needed much prompting to make runs against their nanoneurology labs. But going in and just taking data is too crude and too obvious for him, especially if he can come up with an alternative that nets him even more data than he would get otherwise. If he makes his opponent look silly in the meantime, that's okay, too.

So what he does is, he sets himself up as a Johnson, and he begins hiring runners to try to steal data from Horizon. Only he hires low-level runners, guys who don't have a chance. They also are all people who have worked for Evo more than once in the past. The runs fail, naturally, and Horizon does its work to figure out who's behind these runs, and they can't help but notice the Evo connections the runners have.

Horizon sends a note to Evo demanding two things—first, that they stop the runs; and second, that they repay Horizon for the cost of stopping the attacks. They're surprised when they receive a humble, conciliatory apology from an Evo representative (megacorps assume that any communications

24 🔳 THE SMILING BANDIT

with their peers will be filled with denials, delays, and a general lack of cooperation). The representative pledges he will do what is necessary to make things right. Negotiations begin, they go back and forth, and eventually the Evo representative promises two things—a cash transfer and a report on a top-secret Evo pilot project looking to use nanites to recover lost memories buried in human brains. Horizon accepts, and the payment is sent.

Horizon scientists are eager to look at the report, but it takes them a day or two to clear the decks and dig into it. When they do, though, the report was not quite what the expected. It had the title screen, a page of credits, and even acknowledgements, but then they turned to the executive summary, which read (you guessed it) "The Smiling Bandit strikes again! Ha Ha Ha!" There was no more text in the report after that. Additionally, they noticed that much of their nanoneurology research stored on that node had been erased—presumably after it had been transferred to the Bandit.

It just goes to show that con games are all about making the mark want to give you what you are seeking. Instead of forcing his way into Horizon's systems, The Smiling Bandit made Horizon eager to accept the file he sent them. All he had to do was convince them he was actually an Evo representative.

Cosmo

THE SMILING BANDIT

В	A	R	S	C	Т	L	w	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
4	5	4	3	6	6	6	6	7	4.8	10	1

Matrix Initiative: 10 (11)

Matrix Passes: 2(5)

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/11

Skills: Close Combat skill group 3, Computer (Edit) 6 (+2), Cybercombat 5, Data Search (Technical Journals) 6 (+2), Disguise 3, Dodge 3, Electronic Warfare (Encryption) 6 (+2), Firearms skill group 4, Hacking (Sniffer) 6 (+2), Hardware 5, Industrial Mechanic 4, Influence skill group 5, Perception 6, Software (Defensive Utilities) 6 (+2)

Knowledge Skills: Genetic Engineering 6, Universal Omnitech 4, Cybertechnology 4, Manatech 3, Biotech 5

Qualities: Chatty, Erased, Synthetic Sympathy, Media Junkie (5 pts), Code of Conduct

Augmentations: 2 datajacks

Gear: 5 disposable commlinks, Fairlight Caliban w/ Novatech Navi [Response 4, Signal 5, Firewall 3, System 4, w/ sim module modified for hot sim, biometric lock, customized interface, optimization and simsense accelerator], nonstandard wireless link, response enhancer 6

Programs: Analyze 6, Armor 7, Browse 7, Decrypt 8, Defuse 6, ECCM 6, Exploit 6, Medic 5, Scan 7, Sniffer 9, Spoof 6, Stealth 7

SLAMM-0!

POSTED BY: CLOCKWORK

One thing you learn fast in this biz: you gotta know the competition. If you don't, when you finally find yourself running against them—and in this biz, you will, that's a guarantee you'll end up caught by the short and curlies and unable to protect yourself.

There are a helluva lotta hackers who think themselves God's gift to the Matrix, who believe they can do no wrong. These are usually the people with an agenda, those with something to prove. They steal work from people who are trying to scrape by however they can, and then they leave their signatures everywhere, which makes the corps beef up security and makes it hard for serious folk to earn our nuyen.

Take Slamm-0! as an example. He's a second-generation shadowrunner, so you would think he knows the biz, right? His parents are practically famous: Brickbat and Fury. Brickbat's reputation as a serious businessman and a talented negotiater makes him the go-to guy for fixers and runner teams alike. Fury, his mom, posted on the defunct Shadowland board and is equally in demand for her no-nonsense advice and in-depth knowledge of the anti-metahuman activities of policlubs, corporations, and governments.

So with parents like these, you'd think this guy would know what's what when it comes to running the Matrix. Right?

But you'd be wrong.

Slamm-0! grew up as Padraig Feardorcha (Patrick Frederick for you non-Irish types) McKenney in an anarchist community that encouraged reckless, thoughtless, and impulsive behavior. Forget the rules the rest of civilized society lives by. Live in the moment. Wreck every obstacle in your path, and crow about it to the heavens. You don't want to make life easy for the rest of the world, do you? This is the sort of thing he learned growing up.

- "The rest of civilized society"? And just where is that found? Very few of the places I've spent most of my time could be considered truly "civilized."
- Picador
- There are a few spots where you can get the creature comforts and rule of law. Which is how I like it.
- Frosty
- Me Slamm-O! Me break stuff real good. (Heh)
- Bull
 ■
- Think fast, old man. Bombs away!
- Slamm-O!

//BEGIN GROUP BROADCAST

◆ BULL HAS BEEN ATTACKED BY A DIAPER BOMB ◆ //END GROUP BROADCAST

What th.-j(*gb^&*bkjn--- *signal lost*
 Bull

He'd like you to believe he has morals, that he works against The Man for the good of society, is utterly loyal to those he runs with, and is some sort of honorable "white knight" riding to the rescue of those who can't defend themselves. In reality, he's just a hoodlum with a lust for vandalism and fame. Every job he's ever run is marked by a consistent lack of respect for his peers and a need to show off.

- Good thing we can all be assured that this is objective, unbiased info. With no personal axe to grind or anything.
- Pistons

On one of his earliest known capers, he hacked the FBI's systems, pulled down personnel and payroll files, and discovered that the agency was using independent groups like Humanis to contain and control metahuman fanatics. Instead of doing the responsible thing—selling the paydata to the highest bidder—he posted the files to Shadowland and sent them to NewsNet (for free, no less) and didn't even bother to obscure his identity. He wanted the world to know who he was and what he'd done.

After that particular shakeup, the FBI brought in Mitsuhama to redesign their Matrix security. Part of that design involved removing their servers from the WAN and putting them in a self-contained underground bunker. His idiocy may have saved the agency from losing everything during Crash 2.0, but it caused a serious headache for the professionals hired later. Instead of hacking remotely, now the only way to access the systems is to walk into the damn place, deal with the guards, maglocks, and all that other crap, then hook up a hard line directly into the main server. Do you know what a pain in the ass that is? All because he needed to brag about what he did.

The fame he got from that incident only served to spur the kid onward. The little bastard started running against every antimetahuman group on the planet, stealing information on their backers, shredding the systems of those people, and posting any damaging paydata on those backers for the world to see. Why is that bad? Because none of them knew he was human, so they took it out on the metahuman community. A friend of mine got killed when she responded to feelers for a non-human hacker, only to find out at the meet that her "employer" was Humanis. They put out the fake job to catch Slamm-0!, murdering almost a dozen metas before anyone caught on.

- The Slamm-O! I know wouldn't ignore an incident like that. He would have jumped in to stop those bastards.
- Kat o' Nine Tails
- We didn't need that asshole's help. We handled it just fine ourselves.
- Clockwork

He wanted to make a name for himself, and he did. Just not a good one. If you ever saw a post for a Matrix scavenger hunt, you knew Slamm-0! was behind it. He encouraged a whole crowd of wanna-be hackers to tear across the Matrix, bringing down databases, operating systems, and servers just to grab some irrelevant piece of paydata that would then get posted to Shadowland. The hunts had a points reward system based on the difficulty of the target and the juiciness of the paydata, with bonus points awarded to those who left behind the most creative VR graffiti signatures. Who needed Crash 2.0? Slamm-0! and his acne army almost brought down the Matrix with their pointless games.

Hacking is hard work. It takes patience, skill, and inspired problem solving. It should be a quiet, subtle thing. A hacker should slip into a node, invisible, intangible, and untouchable. But that stupid bastard waltzes in, trashes a place, and then announces what he's done to the entire world by leaving behind AR signatures embedded in the local nodes. As if the whole episode is just a stroll in the park, and he doesn't have to put any real effort into the job.

And who pays the price for his antics?

The honest hackers trying to earn a living, people who ended up dumped out of the Matrix because they got blindsided by the chaos those idiots unleashed. Runs, and reputations, were ruined because a scavenger hunt hit the wrong node at the wrong time, a situation no one could predict when planning a job. He burned quite a few people with his devil-may-care attitude and never once apologized for it. Then, because Slamm-0! made hacking look so easy, Mr. Johnson assumed it was a simple task and lowered the pay scale. Real hackers found themselves working difficult jobs for far less than the danger was worth.

- Random encounters come with the biz. If you can't be prepared for that, it's not Slamm-OI's fault, so quit whining.
- Mika
- Don't talk down about Slamm-0!. He earns his nuyen. I needed a pinchhitter once when my own hacker came down ill. Slamm-0! slipped falsified credentials into the node of a highly secure penitentiary, along with a transfer record for a certain high-level prisoner. We got in and out without a hitch. The guards even handed us our extraction target with smiles on their faces. That was one of the easiest paychecks I've ever earned.
- Hard Exit
- If you're not getting paid enough, Clockwork, maybe you should work on your negotiating skills.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Clockwork has a point. Despite Slamm-OI's skills and professionalism, when he wants to be professional, he does tend to play things too fast and too loose. One of these days, his overconfidence will get him killed. He needs to slow down, especially now that he has a kid to think about.
- FastJack

Despite what you're thinking, though, I used to respect this guy. He had a belief system, and the cajones to do what was needed to support those beliefs. He even managed to take some

VITAL STATS: SLAMM-0! Age: 31 Height: 1.7 m Weight: 88 kg Eyes: Green Hair: Mood hair implants (natural color: red) Gender: Male Metatype: Human Awakened: No of the otaku down a peg or two with his escapades. Hell, who wouldn't enjoy the entertainment of those poser wünderkind floundering in a Matrix duel against a hacker with real chops?

Then he ruined it all by shacking up with that abomination he calls a girlfriend. You should see the brat they spawned together. Pale white skin, a shock of red hair, pointy elf ears, and eyes so green you'd swear they were cybereyes. Ugly little bugger.

I won't deny that Slamm-0! made a name for himself. At sixteen, he briefly ended up on Samantha Villiers' recruitment list. So far as I can tell, she still has the file and has kept it up to date. She has his routine down pat. She even knows when he goes back home to visit those he professes to care about: *Das Neu Gesellschaft*, the anarchist group that trained and raised him, his parents Brickbat and Fury, and RazorOfLove, an old Matrix Science teacher that he keeps making goo-goo eyes at every time he sees her. His fling with that freak-of-nature technomancer is falling apart before our very eyes. Looks like Netcat's plan to trap him into marriage by forcing him to father her monster-child has completely failed.

- *rolls eyes* Don't believe a thing he says, folks. I happen to know Netcat and Slamm-O! are pretty cozy.
- Pistons
- Really? I heard a rumor they'd broken up.
- Glitch
- Breakup? What? When did this happen? Are you saying the happy couple isn't happy or a couple?
- Aufheben
- Allow me to repeat myself. Netcat and Slamm-O! are still together. Ignore all rumor-mongering to the contrary.
- Pistons
- I think we're getting distracted from the scary part here. Clockwork has seen the kid, and I'm pretty sure it's not because he was invited over for a visit. What was he up to?
- Mika

If Slamm-0! really cared about his family and old friends, he'd stay away from them for a while. He'd also break his routine patterns. Every time Seattle basketball season comes on, he hacks into the box office for front row season tickets. Every weekend he's not working, or watching the spawn, he's club-hopping with old chums. He lives at sports bars when the Seattle Urban Brawl team plays, placing wagers with everyone that Seattle will win. Worse, he doesn't even bet with money most of the time. Him and his pals wager for future favors or embarrassing Matrix pranks, like the loser has to streak a Knight Errant virtual bars with naked icons.

Bad things happen to the people around him, and more bad things are coming. Remember when we were discussing the megas last year and he commented on his attempt to break into Mitsuhama Computers? The idiot hit a Zero Zone Matrix node and got himself noticed. Western Regional Director Akira Hirohita was very surprised to find out the node was hacked and the intruder survived. MCT did an incident investigation, found Slamm-0!'s trail and are following it back to locate him as we speak. They've even put out a rather sizable bounty for good information leading to Slamm-0!, or for information on how he operates.

For those of you who might be interested, I compiled a list. Like any other guy with a Peter Pan complex, Slamm-0! uses a cartoon character reality filter. Most of his icons have bizarrelyenhanced attributes, like a snot-nosed kid carrying a slingshot, or a lightning-hair guy with buggy eyes and a manic grin. If I hadn't seen him talking to Zany Zuni, that stupid cartoon rabbit from the Exchange, I would have sworn ZZ was another one of Slamm-0!'s crazy icons. His recent favorite icons include a neon pink stork carrying bundles of smelly joy that turn out to be baby swarm attacks and a manga-like samurai pushing around a baby carriage. His attack programs are designed to look like a baseball bat with a spike in it, a mucus barrage thrown by slingshot, and a variety of full-sensory assaults that remind me of the time I got hit with a Chaos spell.

- *signal reestablished* Damn it all to hell. Don't ever do that again, Fred.
- Bull
- Didn't you challenge me to bring it just a bit ago? Okay, so, I brought it.
 Slamm-O!
- What happened?
- Rigger X
- Slamm-O! hit Bull with some new attack program I've never seen before. Clever design. I'm surprised Bull managed to get back online so quickly.
- FastJack
- The old tech is really great at filtering signal noise, unlike that new-fangled junk those hacker punks use. Plus, I'm just that good.
- o Bull
- So what's a Diaper bomb attack like? Do tell.
- Turbo Bunny
- Don't ask questions you really don't want to know the answer to.
- Bull

An analysis of Slamm-0!'s methods shows that he has no patience to do a job right. This guy is lazy. If he can't hack on the fly, he doesn't bother. I will admit he's good with financial systems. I've never seen anyone able to screw a balance sheet the way he does, or empty a corp's virtual coffers with such finesse. He accepts jobs offering him the chance to leave chaos and mayhem in his wake—the more destructive, the better. Then he turns around and offers to help any bum with a sob story.

I don't care how silver his tongue is, how charming he acts around his employers, or clever his professional banter is; no fixer and no Johnson can possibly believe he's capable of professionalism when he works for free.

Oh, and before I forget. I betcha didn't know Slamm-0! and Haze knew each other way back in the day, did you? Not well, but I have information that indicates that they ran into each other from time to time. Comes of them both living in the Barrens of Seattle.

- You do realize that the Redmond Barrens and the Puyallup Barrens are so far apart that they may as well be different planets, right? The first time I met Slamm-0! was here on JackPoint.
- Haze

So, that's what I've got on Slamm-0!, the supposed golden child of the Matrix. I hope you all understand him better now, and see how dangerous it is to work with him. If you ever run against him, maybe my information will give you a little edge on how to dump the bugger right out of the Matrix.

- You're awfully quiet, Slamm-O!. Aren't you going defend yourself?
- Mr. Bonds
- Defend myself against what? FastJack's whole "profile each other" thing is a good idea. I've learned a lot about how other people view me from reading this post, and the responses to it. I didn't know I'd gotten so predictable. Since predictable patterns have a habit of killing good people, I need to shake things up a bit. I definitely didn't know MCT has a file on me. Give

Clockwork a break, folks. He has the right to voice his opinion of me, and he did so mostly using facts rather than just relying on rumor and innuendo. Kudos, omae. This is one slick post.

- Slamm-O!
- You ignorant prick! I'm not some kid looking for daddy's approval. How dare you patronize me like that? I do not need your approval to talk about you, or anyone else for that matter. You can take your kudos and shove it where the sun doesn't shine. You ever treat me that way again, not only will I make your life miserable, but I'll make sure your little freak-baby ends up in a lab where it belongs.
- Clockwork
- I don't know how you got close enough to see him, but you leave my son out of our feud, Clockwork. Or I will kill you.
- Netcat
- What she said.
- FastJack

SLAMM-0!

В	Α	R	S	C	Т	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
5	4	4 (6)	3	5	5	6 (7)	4	7	3.41	9 (11)	3 (5)

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 11/10

Armor (B/I): 12/7

Movement: 10/25

- Skills: Automatics 3, Clubs 3, Con 2, Cyber Combat 5 (+2), Dodge 4, Driving 1, Electronic Warfare 5 (+2), Electronics skill group 4 (+2), Etiquette (Matrix) 5 (+2), First Aid 1 (+1), Hacking 6 (+2), Intimidation 2, Leadership 2, Negotiation 5, Perception 5 (+1)
- KnowledgeSkills: Anarchist Groups 5, Area (Redmond Barrens) 6, Computer System Security Techniques 4, Famous Hackers/ Deckers 3, Financial Systems 3, Pro-Meta Groups 4, Secret Matrix Hacker Chatrooms 6

Lanuages: English N, Japanese 2

- Qualities: Analytical Mind, Aptitude (Hacking), Codeslinger, Inspired (Matrix Graffiti), Perceptive
- Augmentations: (all betaware) Cerebral booster 1, commlink , cybereyes [Rating 1, w/ flare compensation, low-light vision, smartlink, vision enhancement 2], encephalon 2, simsense booster, wired reflexes 2
- **Commlink:** System 6, Response 5, Firewall 5, Signal 6, hardening, response enhancer 5, simsense accelerator

Programs: Analyze 7, Armor 7, Attack (Shredder) 9 (+2 Crash test), Black Hammer (Shredder) 8 (+2 Crash test), Blackout (Targeting) 9 (+2 Crash test), Browse 9, Command 7, Decrypt 8, Data Bomb 6, ECCM 6, Edit 6, Encrypt 6, Exploit (Mute) 9, Medic 5, Reality Filter 6, Scan 6, Sniffer 6, Spoof 8, Stealth 5, Track 6

Gear: Armor jacket, datachips (12), earbuds (audio enhancement 3), fake SIN 6, form-fitting shirt, gel packs, medkit 6, VR games

Drones:

MCT Shinobi [Small, Handling 0, Accel 5/15, Speed 45, Pilot 3, Body 2, Armor 5, Sensor 3, w/ ECM 3, signature masking 3, special machinery (area jammer 4, directional jammer 3)]

2 Lone Star iBalls [Minidrone, Handling +1, Accel 3/15, Speed 15, Pilot 3, Body 1, Armor 0, Sensor 2, w/ camera, directional microphone, radio signal scanner]

Lone Star iBall [Minidrone, Handling +1, Accel 3/15, Speed 15, Pilot 3, Body 1, Armor 0, Sensor 2, w/ camera, microphone, motion sensor]

Weapons:

Beretta 97 [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP —, SA/BF, RC —, 15(c), w/ hidden arm slide, sound suppressor, smartlink, spare clip (loaded)]

Colt Manhunter [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P or 5S, AP –1 or +1, SA, RC —, 16(c), w/ 5 clips regular ammo, 5 clips gel rounds, quick-draw holster, silencer, smartlink, spare clip (loaded)]

Reinforced-Core Steel Baseball Bat [Club, 5P, AP -1, Concealability-1]

BUTTERCUP

POSTED BY: ARETE

I have long debated what, if anything, I have to contribute to this insightful compendium of colleagues, employers, and potential enemies. While I debated, a friend of mine approached me with an interesting opportunity in Russia. Later that same day, my herb garden sprouted three buttercups—I never planted flowers in it—and a fierce storm thundered in with baseballsized hail and hurricane force winds driven by strange mana carried on the wind.

You may take a dismissive view of portents and omens, but if the universe's higher powers have seen fit to warn me, then I cannot help but believe there is good reason for them to do so. So before I leave for Russia, I will pass along what I know about the anima Buttercup, and what little information I have about the chaos to come.

- Damn. Did you have to take all the fun out of harassing you over your delusional state of mind?
- Butch
- Don't expect a response anytime soon, Butch. Arete sent me this moments before he boarded the suborbital. He said he'd be out of contact for a week, two tops, and not to worry before then.
- FastJack
- Not to worry? Is he expecting trouble?
- Kat o' Nine Tales

Most of the story of Buttercup's origin made news long ago, but some of it has been lost in the swamps of the Matrix. Before anyone (Netcat) argues that the Resonance never forgets, do a search on Buttercup. See what you find. Most likely, a sea of spam—some of it Evo advertising—fan-fiction, bad trideo plot synopses, and (mostly ridiculous) speculation by the members of various Matrix chat rooms. The truth is buried beneath a deluge of myths, rumors, and outright lies. Separating the facts of her existence from the fiction that permeates the Matrix is nigh impossible, so please allow me to start from the beginning. I believe you will not be disappointed.

- Interesting. I followed his advice and he's right. My persona was so
 overwhelmed by the trivia, and bad trivia at that, I had to compile a few
 sprites to sort it all out. They're still working.
- Netcat

If anyone knows when she arrived on our plane of existence, they have not seen fit to share the fact. What is known is that Buttercup was summoned and bound by a powerful pre-Awakening magician at least two centuries ago. She eventually became free (under unknown circumstances) and stayed on this plane for reasons known only to her. Speculation runs rampant as to what type of anima she is and who exactly summoned her (Dr. John Dee and Faust have been suggested), but until Buttercup chooses to share, everything is just innuendo and wishful thinking.

- And apparently someone doesn't know that Faust is a fictional character, not a real magician.
- Winterhawk
- The Sixth World teaches us not to be so cavalier in our labels. You should learn.
- Arete

There is little information on what Buttercup did in the centuries leading up to the Awakening. Most animae-related folk tales speak about malevolent spirits leading men to their deaths, binding them to eternal servitude, or tricking them out of their possessions and family. The tales about good spirits usually revolve around nature spirits or ancestor spirits, the ghosts of those who used to be human. Given Buttercup's professed love and defense of metahumanity, I doubt she was cruel. She does not bear the marks of one who has spent centuries buried in malevolence.

- So you actually believe all that love and harmony crap she spews? Perhaps you should look for some signs from the universe that will tell you not to be so naïve.
- Clockwork
- Buttercup has done more to protect and advance the cause of metahumanity than most metahumans. Nothing I've heard indicates she kills people for no reason.
- Goat Foot
- But you have heard that she's killed? Do tell.
- Snopes

Though she might not be evil in the sense that we understand evil, Buttercup is no blemish-free angel. Adopting metahumans and championing their causes is nothing new to her. Enough anecdotal evidence exists for me to believe Buttercup has always taken favorites under her wing and guided them to success, even before the Awakening. But her favors came with a price. Those she favored rarely lived to old age, and they often lost the power they'd gained when she grew bored with them. Put simply, they were little more than pampered pets allowed to do only what she wished, when she wished it. They were hers until they were not.

A reliable source once shared an interesting story. Sometime in 2033, Buttercup's behavior so infuriated Dunkelzahn that the dragon decided to teach her a lesson in humility. He bound Buttercup in the body of a SINless street ork, Craig Sanchez, for a year and a day. Sanchez received a hefty payment for services rendered afterward, disappeared, then appeared again when Dunkelzahn's will was read. Apparently, the dragon left him some sort of artifact. Sanchez disappeared once more sometime around 2059, and he has not been heard from since.

- Dead, probably. There are a lot of people hunting artifacts these days, and conflict will catch the unready.
- Mika
- I remember rumors that Buttercup hired runners to locate Sanchez around that time. Rumor also had it that Sanchez knew her True Name.
- FastJack
- So this is the guy she killed, then.
- Snopes
- Don't assume. She might be protecting him from her enemies.

Goat Foot

- Or maybe he died of an overdose, choked on his morning toast, or drowned in the Thames. Unless you know where he is and can prove he isn't dead, I'm not interested.
- Rigger X

Buttercup's first appearance on the international stage came in 2042, when she acquired an elevenpercent stake in Japanacorp Yamatetsu (now known as Evo), the same day the corp achieved the coveted AAA status and a seat on the Corporate Court. During an internal power struggle between then-CEO Tadamako Shibanokuji and future CEO Hideo Yoshida, eleven percent of Yamatetsu stock went "missing" in a convoluted series of transactions that entire teams of dedicated accountants could not unravel.

Worried that this was the opening salvo in a corporate takeover, Yoshida ordered an investigation the moment he assumed the position of CEO. The money trail led to a mystery buyer to whom the board sent an ultimatum disguised as a meeting request. Armed for bear, and more corporate war, the board found themselves completely taken off guard by the teenaged Japanese woman who showed up, offered her credentials as an heiress with money to spare, and insisted on taking the board seat her shares had bought for her.

No doubt many think it a coincidence that Buttercup purchased a voice in the corporation's future on that auspicious occasion, but she has since proven herself almost as farsighted as the dragons when it comes to choosing her actions.

- What does a free spirit need with corporate stock, anyway? And where'd she get the money?
- Haze
- Buttercup is a spirit who has the ability to spontaneously generate alchemical reagents, rare gems, and precious metals. She likely created exactly the amount she needed to buy the shares. Though no one knows why she chose to stick with such a small percentage of the company when she could have bought much more with all that wealth she can produce at will.
- Man-of-Many-Names

In metahuman form, Buttercup appears to be a petite Japanese girl in her late teens. She often prefers traditional Japanese garb unless she is in business meetings, where she wears well-tailored business suits. She is at least 450 years old, but it is likely this number is underestimated.

VITAL STATS: BUTTERCUP

Age: N/A Weight: 54.5 kg Eyes: Brown Metatype: Free Spirit Awakened: Yes

Height: 1.6 m Hair: Black **Gender:** Female

BUTTERCUP

- From what I have heard, there is a considerable cost for a spirit to use that ability. She probably didn't want to over-extend herself. Besides, Buttercup has proven to be quite savvy in the financial world. She probably recognized flooding the market with liquid assets would have negative consequences, such as making her stake in Yamatetsu practically worthless.
- Mr. Bonds

For eight years after obtaining her seat, Buttercup remained content to listen quietly at board meetings, rarely voting or intervening in company affairs. As she is wont to do, she took the measure of the men with whom she worked and incorporated their habits, strengths, and weaknesses into her future plans.

- She was also blackmailing Shibanokuji over the fact that his son and heir Yuri was an ork, not a human. Shibanokuji stashed Yuri in Russia so the board wouldn't know of his disgrace.
- Clockwork
- Profiting off shame tied to an ork child. How pro-meta of her.
- Mihoshi Oni
- Be careful with quick judgments. It was conspiracy, not blackmail. Unlike most Japanese businessmen, the old bastard had a soft spot for Yuri. Buttercup afforded him an opportunity to turn one of the Japanacorps into a place where metahumans could work without bias, which would make it the kind of corp where Yuri could succeed him as CEO.
- Kay St. Irregular

The war between Tadamako and Yoshida finally came to its conclusion with the reinstatement of Tadamako as CEO in 2050, the same year that Buttercup chose to reveal her true nature in the middle of a board meeting.

Her timing could have been better. Japanese culture was still strongly anti-metahuman, and Japanese businesses that employed metahumans generally went under quite quickly. It would have been bad enough for Yamatetsu to be caught with a non-human such as Buttercup working a lower-ranking job; for her to actually be sitting on the board of directors was a scandal beyond imagining. The corporation's stock tumbled, sending shockwaves through the financial markets. None of the board members spoke publicly against her, but many of them took the opportunity to start conspiring for her downfall.

Yamatetsu barely managed to recover from this first scandal when it was struck by another. After a sudden stroke, Tadamako Shibanokuji died and Yuri succeeded him, though not before Yoshida attempted one final power grab. In the chaos, Buttercup managed to purchase shares from a number of the smaller stockholders, securing both her control and her board position. Together with Yuri, who'd finally managed to get his father's shares, Buttercup consolidated controlling interest in Yamatetsu and moved the company to Vladivostok, Russia to avoid financial destruction by Japanese government officials.

- That's a little heavy-handed. It was just some small fines.

- Individually small, yes. But there were thousands of them. Yamatetsu's stock was at an all time low, the company had limited liquidity, and the government was prepared to hammer the corp with every bureaucratic obstacle and regulatory violation possible. In that climate, the company would have gone under—or broken up piecemeal and sold to healthier megacorps—within a year.
- Mr. Bonds

During this same period, Buttercup approached several small Pacific Rim companies to form an alliance that could rival the Japanacorps. The corporate bloc that emerged called itself the Pacific Prosperity Group. Several other companies joined the PPG in the following years, eager for the support of like-minded corporations. In the years since, the PPG has become a force to be reckoned with. Every business that joined has experienced prosperity like they have never known.

Perhaps the most telling detail about this endeavor, though, is how Evo ended up with controlling interest or ownership of most of the PPG's smaller businesses, with much of that stock owned by Buttercup. As ever, the price of prosperity under Buttercup's protection is the loss of independence.

- Untrue. Emperor Yasuhito prospered with Buttercup by his side during the Japanese reconstruction. Today she is seldom seen in the Imperial Palace unless invited, and neither he nor Japan suffers from the lack of her presence.
- Mika
- So what the hell did it cost him to keep that freedom?
- Winterhawk
- Or if Buttercup didn't demand payment for her advice, why not? She had to have gotten something out of it. TANSTAAFL.
- o Bull
- TANSTAAFL?
- You did not just ask that. Sigh. It's an acronym that means "There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lunch." Don't you kids have any sense of culture?
 Bull

Even after moving to Vladivostok, Buttercup retained tight ties within the Japanese community. Her work in promoting metahuman rights and environmental protectionism earned her a lot of respect from the lower classes. When the old anti-metahuman regime fell with the death of the emperor, and the young Emperor Yasuhito rose to power, Buttercup traveled back to Japan to help chart the future of Japanese society. After a few years, she returned to Russia, ostensibly to help run the newly re-branded Evo.

For several years, the public saw her devote herself to the cause of metahumanity as she established charities all across the world—including a certain soup kitchen near Seattle's Ork Underground—while working her business magic on Evo's behalf. Then, three years ago, she and several other notables (the dragon Damon, the naga Pheakdei of Angkor Wat, Damien Knight, Milo Czerda, and centaur Athena Kaladopolis) established the Anthrophiles Society, an open social group created to bring together sentients of all types and all beliefs.

32 BUTTERCUP

- I still can't get over the fact that Knight is a founding member. That asshole never struck me as someone who wanted world peace and understanding.
- Slamm-O!
- Haven't you heard? Damien Knight wants to conquer the world. What better way to do it than to promote world peace under one corporation?

Pistons

Like many in the scholarly community, I receive a yearly invitation to join the Anthrophiles Society. So far, I have refused. While the Society's goals are lofty, the exorbitant membership fee prevents the inclusion of those they are purporting to welcome. And though the fee is justified as a donation to the Society's charities, one cannot join without paying it. The membership roster is a Who's Who of the wealthy and elite of the world's society. Given the way founders—especially Buttercup—have insinuated themselves in the lives of most of the new members, all of whom are recently enjoying profound success in their chosen careers, I am hesitant to add my name to that list.

- Holy shit! I was joking about that "taking over the world" crap. You guys know that, right?
- Pistons
- Stop pissing yourself. It's not like they're forming an army or anything.
- Clockwork
- Two words, jackass. Universal Brotherhood. I've seen this kind of cultism before.
- Pistons

Perhaps I should preface this last part with the fact that Buttercup is actively reaching out to the shadow community. She wants people to know who she is and what motivates her. That's not to say she's been very forthcoming with the intimate details of her life, but she has taken extraordinary steps in contacting certain members of the scholarly community known to work with, or for, shadowrunners.

- So this is you doing her PR work for her?
- Dr. Spin

A storm is coming. I hear the clash of armies in the thunder, see the spilling of blood in the rain, and feel the cold draft of Arctic air in the wind. I do what I can to pass this warning to those who care to heed it. If I can use her willing participation as a vehicle for my task, who am I to ignore such providence? There is truth to the rumor that Buttercup is funding the Yakut rebels. Her reasons are her own, but I suspect it has something to do with her rivalry with the free spirit Vernya, who runs Yakut with the assistance of the shapeshifter community.

Buttercup is hiring runners who can act as military trainers, armed escorts, smugglers, and guerilla warfare specialists. Some of the people she hires work with the rebels. Some are sent to investigate the Tunguska Crater. Others are dispatched on more secretive missions. Few ever return. Recently, a friend of mine was hired to go to Olkhon Island to discover if it truly was Vernya's lair or if it hides even greater secrets. He has requested my assistance. Though I know that a run to Olkhon Island is very risky, I owe a great debt to this friend. So I go to Russia to meet with Bishop Stepan, Buttercup's agent, and thence to Yakut.

If I return, I will regale you all with my Siberian adventures. If I don't return, remember what I have said. Buttercup is much more dangerous than most people believe. Tread carefully around her and accept no favors.

Godspeed, my friends. I hope to speak to you again in two weeks.

BUTTERCUP

В	A	R	S	C	Т	L	W	М	Edg	Ess	Init (Astral)	IP (Astral)	
11	10	12	8	10	10	10	10	16	10	16	22 (20)	4 (4)	

Force: 16+

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 14/13

Armor (B/I): 20/20

Movement: 10/25

- Skills: Assensing 11, Astral Combat 9, Binding 8, Close Combat skill group 8, Counterspelling (Illusion spells) 10 (+5), Dodge 7, Etiquette (Japanese) 5 (+4), Intimidation 5, Leadership 9, Negotiation 10, Perception 9, Ritual Spellcasting 10, Spellcasting (Manipulation spells) 12 (+3), Summoning 8
- Knowledge Skills: Accounting 4, Corporate Politics 4, Diplomacy
 4, Finance 4, International Business Law 4, International Politics
 5, Japanese History 5, Public Relations 4, Stock Market 5, World History 4
- Languages: Business Lingo 5, English 5, Japanese 6, Mandarin Chinese 5, Russian 6, Spanish 4
- **Powers:** Astral Gateway, Aura Masking, Banishing Resistance, Immunity to Normal Weapons, Mind Link, Possession, Realistic Form, Sense Link, Wealth

Qualities: Magician

Initiate Level: 10+

- Metamagics: Absorption, centering, cleansing, filtering, geomancy, reflecting, shielding
- Spells: Chaos, Compel Truth, Control Actions, Control Emotions, Dream, Influence, Knockout, Levitate, Magic Fingers, Fling, Mana Barrier, Manaball, Manabolt, Mist, Physical Barrier, Reinforce, Sound Barrier, Stunball, Stunbolt, Translate

BUTTERCUP

DAMIEN KNIGHT

POSTED BY: STICKS

The first thing I should say is that, contrary to popular opinion, I'm not actually an Ares employee, so it would be a mistake to read this as a piece of corporate propaganda.

- Methinks he doth protest too much. In a single sentence, no less.
- Riser
- Sticks is probably referring to the glowing review of him I uploaded a little while back, where I mentioned that he was Ares' number three man in North America. Still is, for the time being.
- Black Mamba

Even if I've done work for Ares, that doesn't mean I'm Knight's man—there are numerous powerful forces within Ares that are not happy with Mr. Knight right now. I'm not saying I don't have a relationship with Ares, but it's complicated. I'm not their company man or their running dog, but I frequently take their contracts. The best thing I can say about the corporation is that they are occasionally the good guys.

- On which occasions?
- Hard Exit
- Knowing Sticks? I'd guess the ones where they nuke insect spirits from orbit, because it's the only way to be sure.
- Stone

You can't work for, or against, Ares for a year without hearing a dozen stories about Damien Knight, and even if only one percent of those Knight campfire stories is true, over the years you get enough information about the man to slowly build up a picture of him. And it's a compelling, if incomplete, picture. No one knows everything about Damien Knight, because he works hard to make it so. Let's start with the known, provable facts. There won't be too many of them, and once they're out of the way we can dive into speculation. Some of this will retread the ground I covered in my infodump on Ares last year, but I'm pretty sure there will be some items that none of you have heard before.

- On January 24th, 2033 a virtual unknown named Damien Knight emerged from nowhere to buy out 22 percent of Ares Macrotechnology stock in one minute, the "Nanosecond Buyout" still world famous forty years later. In the four decades since, Knight has maintained a controlling interest in the corporation.
- Knight is likely in his 70s by now, but leónization treatment, a series of discreet augmentations, and a stringent regimen of physical conditioning have left him with the physique and physical capabilities of a twenty-something special forces operator. He doesn't look a day over 40.
- Very few of his corporate adversaries have survived over the years.

There are other facts, but most of them have to do with the public affairs of Ares, not with the man himself. That leaves the speculation. We can start with some of the various guesses out there about the man's origins. A popular theory among the shadows since at least 2054 is that Damien Knight is the alterego of U.S. Air Force Major David Gavilan, the NSA spook who commanded Echo Mirage as it battled the first Crash Virus.

- To know for sure, you'd just need to track down one of the other members of Echo Mirage—like Ken Roper, Michael Eld, Alice Haeffner, et al.— and ask them. Unfortunately, they're all dead, so no one can say for sure.
- Icarus
- The rumor goes back to a decades-old image of Knight wearing a military uniform with the Gavilan name badge; even then, image manipulation was sufficiently advanced to make this "evidence" highly specious. But then, in all the years since, no other theories with even that small amount of support have emerged.
- FastJack
- That's not the only evidence of Knight's identity. What about Gavilan Ventures?
- Mr. Bonds
- I'm getting there.
- Sticks

After vaulting onto the stage of world power with the Nanosecond Buyout, Knight went on to depose Leonard Aurelius as chairman and CEO of Ares. Leonard was the son of Nicholas Aurelius, Ares' founder, who died of a heart attack shortly before the Nanosecond Buyout. Aurelius and Knight fought for control of the company for the next two decades. Knight probably would not have come out on top if not for the intervention the late great dragon Dunkelzahn—a holding corporation named Gavilan Ventures ended up with control of about twelve percent of Ares stock during the Nanosecond Buyout. Gavilan Ventures was later revealed to be owned by Dunkelzahn.

- But what's the connection between Gavilan Ventures and Major David Gavilan? In fact, what happened to Gavilan after Echo Mirage was disbanded? These are the questions people should be asking.
- Plan 9
- Major David Gavilan went completely off the grid after 2031. There's been no trace of him.
- Fianchetto
- The name, on the other hand, may have been nothing but a not-so-subtle clue or a "reminder" from Dunkelzahn. We'll never know.
- Frosty

In spite of the internal strife with Aurelius, Knight's leadership was a net positive to Ares, assisting the corporation in its meteoric rise. He led the growth of Ares Arms into the largest weapons manufacturer in the world and expanded Ares' space programs, consumer goods industry, and service-providing subsidiaries. Most important, though, is Knight's namesake; Knight Errant Security, a private security company that we all know rivals the militaries of world governments. Knight has always spent more time personally overseeing the development and corporate affairs of Knight Errant than any other department of the megacorp. Despite the various difficulties that Ares has suffered in recent times, KE continues to grow by leaps and bounds, recently taking over the contract to police Seattle from Lone Star.

> Yeah, right. Meet the new pigs, same as the old pigs. Kane

In the mid-2050s Ares was tipped off to the existence of insect spirits, particularly those using the Universal Brotherhood as a front for their body harvesting. Ares initiated a clandestine "bug hunt," with KE teams wiping out isolated hives. It went well in Chicago until a botched Ares raid unleashed a massive swarm of bug spirits on the city. Pressed by the desperate circumstance, Knight eventually authorized KE to detonate a nuke in the city. The bomb devastated the city but had little to no effect on the bugs, and Chicago remained under UCAS quarantine until 2058. At that point, Knight Errant dusted the city with the newly developed Strain-III FAB (fat astral bacteria) and declared the quarantine over. The city's infrastructure was still decimated from the damage the bugs had done, and partially irradiated from the Cermak blast to boot, and there was no telling how many bugs had survived the attempts at containment.

- Couldn't help but notice you're omitting your own involvement with the UB in Chicago, Sticks.
- Riser
- This is not the file about me. Would you like me to link you to it?
- Sticks

While overseeing the war on the bugs and the resulting PR shitstorm, Knight also took a personal hand in the presidential election of 2057, supporting the Dunkelzahn/Haeffner ticket. His support of Dunkelzahn, in retrospect, seems like pure quid pro quo, even if the Big D's will seems to hint at a closer, more personal relationship between Knight and the wyrm. Haeffner, on the other hand, had a personal investment. He was married to the late Alice Haeffner, who might have served under Knight as part of Echo Mirage, assuming Knight was there. Using Ares Global Entertainment to promote the dragon's candidacy also helped Knight polish Ares' reputation, which had been tarnished by the Bug City meltdown. And Knight Errant forces helped control nationwide rioting after Dunkelzahn's assassination, which also conveniently put Knight's friend Kyle Haeffner in the UCAS presidential seat.

The Big D's will gave Nadja Daviar ownership of Gavilan Ventures and its twelve percent interest in Ares. She almost immediately handed Knight proxy rights over her company's

VITAL STATS: DAMIEN KNIGHT

Age: Unknown Weight: 80 kg **Eves:** Blue

Height: 1.76 m Hair: Brown **Gender:** Male Metatype: Human Awakened: No shares for two years, which he subsequently used to assume near-total control of Ares Macrotechnology. With the increased voting stock, Knight was able to oust Aurelius as chairman and cement his own control of the Ares throne. Aurelius jumped ship to Cross Applied Technologies, for the first time making his role as Knight's nemesis obvious and visible.

- Aurelius sold his shares to Arthur Vogel in order to buy his way into CATCo.
 Vogel, a dwarf eco-lawyer, is still the largest Ares stockholder and a constant thorn in Knight's side.
- If you think about it, Knight certainly seems to have benefited a lot from Dunkelzahn's death. I wonder ...
- Plan 9

While Knight gained the upper hand in his lengthy feud with Aurelius, his total control of Ares was short lived. Daviar regained control of the Gavilan Ventures proxy rights during her tenure as UCAS VP, forcing Knight to battle his own board thanks to the shares controlled by Daviar and Vogel. The disappearance of Daviar provided an all-too-brief reprieve for Knight, with the Draco Foundation assuming control of the Gavilan shares, but her recent reemergence has put the screws to him again.

While keeping his domestic enemies at bay, Knight spent the 2060s giving his enemies abroad a good shellacking. During the second Matrix Crash, Lucien Cross died in a suspicious plane "accident" while Ares-owned subsidiaries snapped up huge chunks of Cross. This was the literal death of one of Knight's oldest enemies, and the figurative death of Ares' greatest rival as Cross lost its Corporate Court seat to Horizon in 2065. Integrating the corporate spoils of the largely dismantled Cross Applied Technologies has proved to be a lasting challenge for Ares and for Knight, particularly with Knight's every action being checked or second-guessed by Vogel and Gavilan Ventures. Recently, Vogel and Nicholas Aurelius joined to force the recall of Ares' Corporate Court justice, who was replaced by Vogel's own representative, Michele Borden, whose decisions will help advance Vogel's green-friendly agenda.

- Don't forget that Knight is one of the primary suspects in the biodrone bomb attack on Vogel a couple of years back. Since then, Vogel has relocated to the Daedalus space station and become much more careful.
- Orbital DK

Knight may have suffered an even worse blow when Knight Errant executive VP Roger Soaring Owl resigned from his position to accept a high-paying military consultancy with the Sioux Nation. Knight later replaced Soaring Owl with Lone Star founder Clayton Wilson, but what concerns me more are the reasons Roger was let go in the first place. He and Knight had been tight for decades. What could have driven him to resign? I don't have a solid answer to that question, but the feelers that I've put out have returned some disturbing speculation (which is part of my motivation for posting this information in the first place). But before I get into hearsay, I'd like to move away from Knight's business dealings and talk a little bit about him as a person.

- As a person? Seriously?
- Kane
- "It is said that if you know your enemies and know yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles; if you do not know your enemies but do know yourself, you will win one and lose one." In other words, don't be tempted to "skip to the good part", it's right here.
- Picador

I have only personally met with Knight on one occasion, and we didn't exactly have an in-depth conversation. (For the curious, there was an Ares Arms weapons engineer attached to the Firelance III project who went missing and needed to be recovered. Naturally, I won't go into more details.) As a result, most of this information is based on secondhand hearsay and boardroom campfire stories.

As a mundane human, Knight is rumored to have some strong and conflicting feelings towards the Awakened—whether they be trolls, adepts, or spirits. While Knight is no Humanis bigot, his envy of Awakened beings often walks a fine line just this side of loathing. Knight has a healthy respect for what magic can do—he has to, in order to have survived this long in the Sixth World—but he is disinclined to trust something he cannot personally control, and magic is no exception. If there was such a thing as bioware that could make you a mage, however, I don't doubt that Knight would have it installed in him post-haste.

- On a related note, Knight is still a technical genius even though he really doesn't need to be at this stage in the game. His people have kept him up to date on the cutting-edge of current tech, and he remains well versed in the modern theory and practice of electronic warfare. People would do well not to forget that this is quite possibly the man who ran Echo Mirage, the world's first cybercommando squad.
- FastJack
- Wow-praise from Caesar
- Picador

Although fieldwork has not been in his job description for decades and decades, Knight keeps himself in peak physical condition. And that's peak for just about any human, not one of Knight's age. Besides leónization treatments, Knight has had his body augmented with gene treatments, nanoware systems, and a suite of bioware and cyberware enhancements. Naturally it's all deltaware—no visible chrome on display, save for his datajack. Knight may want to keep a mostly human appearance, but he clearly has no intention of lagging behind in the (accelerated) race to evolve.

- I wonder who performs his augmentation procedures and regular maintenance? While I know Ares subsidiaries maintain a few delta clinics, the corp isn't exactly known as a leader in the field. But outsourcing his personal healthcare to a division of another mega would seem to put Knight in a vulnerable spot—you don't want to find yourself anaesthetized in a rival corp's hands.
- Butch
- I would hazard a guess that all of those decades of repetitive augmentation—ripping out the last generation's "bleeding edge" to install this year's SOTA tech—has taken its toll on Knight over time.
- Ecotope

DAMIEN KNIGHT

В	Α	R	S	C	T	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
5	4 (8)	4 (6)	5	6 (9)	6	6 (9)	7	8	4.08	10 (12)	1(3)

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 12/12

Armor (B/I): 14/9

- Active Skills: Armorer 5 (8), Athletics skill group 4, Biotech skill group 4 (7), Close Combat skill group 6, Cracking skill group 6 (9), Diving 3, Dodge 6, Electronics skill group 6 (9), Exotic Ranged Weapon (Laser Weapons) 6, Firearms skill group 6, Gunnery 3, Heavy Weapons 3, Influence skill group 6, Intimidation 5, Parachuting 3, Perception 6 (12), Pilot Aerospace 3, Pilot Aircraft 3, Pilot Anthroform 3, Pilot Ground Craft 4, Pilot Watercraft 3, Stealth skill group 4 (7), Throwing Weapons 3.
- Knowledge Skills: Ares Macrotechnology 6, Business 6, Chess (Endgame) 6 (+2), Computer Theory 5, Corporate Politics 6, Firearms Design 5, Firearms History 5, German 3, Economics 5, History 5, Japanese 5, Megacorp Law 5, Military 6, Security Companies (Knight Errant) 6 (+2), Security Design 5, Security Procedures 5, Spanish 5, UCAS Politics 6
- Qualities: Biocompatibility (bioware), Erased, Exceptional Attribute (Willpower), First Impression, Guts, Home Ground (Ares Corporate Systems), Lucky, Martial Arts (Boxing, +2 DV on Unarmed Combat attacks), Martial Arts (Firefight, +1 die on melee dodge Defense Tests) Martial Arts (Krav Maga (Take Aim as Free Action; Ready Weapon as Free Action), Martial Arts (Judo, +1 die for Full Dodge), Photographic Memory, Quick Healer.
- Augmentations: (all deltaware) Attention coprocessor 3, cerebral booster 3, datajack, implant medics 6, limbic neural amplifiers 3, muscle toner 4, nanosymbiotes 3, neocortical neural amplifiers 3, retinal modification (w/ eye recording unit, low-light vision, flare compensation, image link, smartlink,

vision enhancement 3, vision magnification), O-Cells 6, oxyrush nanites 5, platelet factories, synaptic booster 2, cyberarm [synthetic customized left lower, w/ Body 6, Agility 6, Strength 6, two nano-hives (Rating 6)], tailored pheromones 3, trauma control system 6, trauma damper, universal nanite hunters 6, universal nantidotes 6

- Gear: Contacts [Rating 3, w/ thermographic vision, ultrasound], custom commlink [Device Rating 10 w/ biometric reader, satellite link, skinlink, subvocal microphone], certified credsticks (totaling 2,000,000¥), earbuds [Rating 3, w/ audio enhancement rating 3), assorted datasofts, FFBA half-body suit (w/ nonconductivity Rating 6), linguasofts (Rating 5, all known languages), Synergist Business Line longcoat (w/ delta-amyloid coating), slacks (w/ carbon-boron coating), and shirt (w/ carbon-boron coating), trauma patch.
- Programs: Biofeedback Filter 10, ECCM 10, all common use programs at Rating 10, two rating 10 agents with Armor 10, Attack 10, Black Hammer 10, Analyze 10, Defuse 10, Exploit 10, Medic 10, Spoof 10, Stealth 10, Track 10.

Weapons:

Ares Predator IV [Heavy Pistol, DV 7P, AP –1, SA, RC 1, 15(c) w/ int. smartgun, barrel extension, concealable holster, custom look (Level 2), personalized grip, tracker, underbarrel Ares Redline and armor-piercing flechette ammo]

Ares Redline [Laser weapon, DV 5P, AP -half, SA, 5(c) w/ int. smartgun]

- Notes: All of the implants and devices subscribed to Damien Knight's PAN are slaved to his commlink. For any of these items to be hacked, the commlink must be hacked. Damien Knight has Combat Sense quickened on him at Force 12 at all times, adding 12 dice to his Reaction on Surprise tests and when defending against ranged and melee attacks. A bound Force 12 Guardian Spirit has been assigned to Damien Knight's personal protection; that means that it sustains its Guard power on him at all times, provides him with Counterspelling using its Magical Guard power, and has orders to sustain its Concealment power on him as well if he is seriously injured.
- Except if you watch any of his recent trideo appearances, he looks not just healthy and alert but downright spry. It's weird.

To me, these efforts point to a refusal of the man to acknowledge his limitations, such as age and mortality. With all that he's built and all of the good that he's arguably done for the world—fighting to vanquish both the Crash Virus and the bugs within his lifetime—he believes he has earned the right to live forever. That's clearly his goal, and the question is what he will sacrifice to achieve that end and how he will react if his plans stop working. So far, technology has kept up with Knight's aging, managing it like any disease. What happens when it doesn't?

Until recently, I would have said that Knight was one of the good guys, at least as much as that term can be applied to any corporate bigwig. I'd assumed that his current endeavors were limited to trying to wrest control of his own company back from Vogel and Daviar. The intel I've scooped recently, however, makes me seriously doubt that. If I were in a position to talk to Knight mano-a-mano, I think I know what I'd say: say it ain't so. Ares internal chatter indicates that Knight has recently signed off on an Unlimited Technologies R&D project looking to weaponize insect spirits. It's hard to believe—Knight should know exactly how dangerous the bugs are, since Ares Firewatch and Knight Errant have battled them since the 2050s—but corporate chatter indicates that this is exactly why Roger Soaring Owl quit. He couldn't condone the insect spirit research that Knight had green lit.

Of course, all of this is damn hard to confirm. You'll never see it on any public datafax or even most of the spectrum of pirate trideo—the Ares Global Entertainment spin machine is too efficient for that. My sources won't name their sources, and so on. Even if it did leak, I don't know if anyone would believe it. There's nothing I'd like more than some other explanation, another reason for Soaring Owl leaving Knight in the lurch after all those years, or another reason for Knight to be tampering with such a dangerous technology. I'd like to believe that he's still just looking for better, more efficient ways to kill them—the only research on bugs worth doing, in my opinion.

But I just don't know, and I wonder if any of us will before it's too late.

 As much as you don't want to believe it, if anyone could definitively prove this, it would mean a huge hit to Ares' rep and an even bigger hit to Knight's. Of course, that also means that going after this intel is a very dangerous move for any intrepid muckrakers, crusaders, or runners. This falls into the category of "things man was not meant to know."

Dr. Spin

[●] Kia

ANNE RAVENHEART

POSTED BY: PLAN 9

 You might want to file this one away under "stuff I wish didn't exist but does." There is a tiny division within Knight Errant tasked with investigating truly absurd occurrences. When I first heard about it I thought, "What could be more absurd than dragons on late night trideo shows?" One thing I've learned about the Sixth World is that the strangest things I can imagine are only the beginning of what is actually real.

FastJack

The way I understand it, the natural order of all things in the SINned world is you slave away at a wage job until something happens to push you further up that ladder. Once you hit one rung you keep clawing toward the next, until you've found a cushy spot where you can retire and let younger, hungrier wagers do the work for you. That, according to many managers in the corp drone world, is the way it should work. That is not, however, the way that Anne Ravenheart plies her business.

Back in '55, Ravenheart made headlines for being the "tip of the sword" with Ares Firewatch when they uncovered the Chicago Hive. She was regarded as Roger Soaring Owl's likely successor and the most upwardly mobile woman in the history of the corporation.

Then one day she disappeared from the rolls. There were no ceremonies, no corporate extraction replayed on trid news for weeks. Ravenheart was just gone. At first I was sure she quit Firewatch, or at least took a leave of absence. Before Bug City then-Captain Ravenheart had been a strong-willed soldier known as much for her political acumen as her skill on the battlefield. The decision to nuke Chicago hadn't been hers, but it affected her. In the weeks following the Cermak Blast, Ravenheart became withdrawn, even dour. Who can forget that interview she did with Chicago News 24-7 when she said, "We could have done more to stop this. We have to be ready to do more next time." Her interview touched off a firestorm of accusations against the corporation, which eventually resulted in Roger Soaring Owl being forced to testify in front of congress.

- Funny thing about the Ravenheart statement is that it actually helped Knight Errant spin the whole affair. It made it seem like KE didn't have the investigative authority to uncover what was happening in Chicago, and had they been granted that authority ahead of time, the Cermak Blast would not have been necessary. It shifted the conversation from the fact that a corporation nuked a UCAS city to the reasons why it was both justified and inevitable.
- Kay St. Irregular
- The Bug City incident did something to Ravenheart. She no longer saw the world in the way that most do. I had the chance to meet with her over some business. I asked her a question about a specific summoning she'd done, and she answered in a way that I could not expect. Her answer showed an understanding of the metaplanes far beyond her depths of initiation. It was as if she were viewing the situation from the planes looking in on the world, if that is even possible.
- Man-of-Many-Names

While the corporation was doing spin control, Ravenheart turned her attention toward the bugs. Some reports indicate she was operating independently and against KE orders, using black assets to hunt down the remaining bug hives. I cannot find anything to corroborate those rumors. In fact, I managed to spend some time in the Ares root system and found out that her paychecks never stopped. Whatever she did during the years she went underground, it was with the support of the corporation.

- She was using shadowrunners to help her hunt down hives. The budget was
 completely black, likely pulled from Desert Wars excess and used to hire
 shadowrunners who were expendable and would keep their mouths shut.
 She runs her operations like she is still in the military, which is contrary to
 the way most of us do things. As a result, a lot of runners didn't follow her
 orders on scene and wound up as bug food.
- Sticks

Ravenheart officially resurfaced in 2060. Questions about her disappearance had led to speculation, even scapegoating, about her role in the Cermak Blast. Knight Errant spun the story, claiming Ravenheart was a true soldier who'd turned down a dozen promotions for the opportunity to remain in the field. Her reappearance meant she had finally succumbed to the pressure of a title change. She was given the military rank of colonel and named the director of special investigations. It was a title without a desk—or, before Ravenheart's promotion, a department. At one moment, there was no Office of Special Investigations. Then, suddenly, there was.

- Like some kind of fiscal magician, Ravnheart willed her division into existence complete with budget and staff. A massive amount of underthe-table negotiating had to go into this arrangement. Anne Ravenheart is old and powerful enough to have ascended to the top of Knight Errant had she so desired, but she didn't. She fought for the creation of the OSI and then inserted herself as its operational chief and lead investigator. The only question is: why?
- Mr. Bonds

Her first act as the head of her new department was to fly to Idaho and take over the scene of an arson investigation. She swooped in with a list of corporate writs and mandates providing her clearance to take over the investigation. According to the official police report, there was no one and nothing found inside the location save for a peculiar mechanical cage approximately the size of a person. The cage was damaged by the blaze and, according to the duty mage, had traces of an astral presence inside it. The mage went on to say that the fire was started by a spell that had been channeled through a small plant located in a vase near the front entrance. The spell touched off a fire that burned the building to the foundation. Once Ravenheart took control of the scene, she changed the official finding from arson to accidental fire. It was the first in a series of special cases Ravenheart would investigate.

- The case was about astral suspension. Someone managed to jail the aura of an individual in a cell that resembled a magical version of a Faraday cage. The purpose of the cage was to preserve the astral form past the point where a projection can naturally survive outside the body. The victim tried to escape through any means, eventually channeling a spell through what little biological matter it could find nearby. Unfortunately, the Faraday-like cage was all that was keeping the mage alive. When he damaged it, he brought about his own death.
- Elijah
- I know what you and Snopes are getting at, Elijah, but there has never been any proof that soul cages exist in this world.
- Frosty
- I was surprised by it as well. I tried to follow up on Ravenheart's investigation, and mostly I met with a lot of dead ends. I never located the victim, but I discovered that the home where the incident occurred was being leased out by an Ares subsidiary, Unlimited Technologies. As you know, they've been doing this sort of research for years.
- Elijah

After the SURGE, rumors began to surface of really weird magical phenomenon. The SURGE itself was an oddity, but the kind of things that started happening afterwards were things at the very edge of possibility. I started looking into these stories, and as I did, Anne Ravenheart's name popped up again and again.

- We are talking about a world where dragons become presidents, dangerous Awakened trees help push nations into wars, computers gain sentience, and, oh yes, giant bugs from astral space try to take over the world. So, please explain to me what "really weird" means in this context.
- Fianchetto
- You wouldn't believe some of the stuff I've come across in my research. Astral projection for mundanes, chaos waves, mirror auras, synthetic humanity, temporal dislocation, AIs implanting their neural structure into living fetuses, neural segmentation, thought casting—the list of what we are only beginning to discover about the Sixth World is endless.
- Plan 9
- Mirror auras? I heard something about that recently, connected to a strange double homicide in Kansas City. According to the investigators, a man and a woman were killed in their home. The killer left a tarot card on each victim's chest. The first thought was that it was the work of a serial killer, so investigators brought in a forensic mage. When she studied the victims she discovered their auras were identical. Mirror auras. It shouldn't be possible, and that is exactly what she said.
- Sunshine
- By any chance did the victims work for Horizon?
- Plan 9
- Actually, they were both Horizon employees. What's the significance?
- Sunshine

VITAL STATS: ANNE RAVENHEART

Age: 57Height: 1.67 mWeight: 65 kgHair: BlackEyes: BrownGender: FemaleRace: Amerindian humanMetatype: HumanAwakened: Yes



- When I was tracking Ravenheart's actions for this post I noticed she was investigating a string of murders involving current and former Horizon employees. There were three in LA, two in New York, one in St. Louis, and now the two in KC. All of them had tarot cards found at the scene. This is the first I've heard of mirror auras being involved, but considering the type of crimes she investigates, you can bet there is something to it.
- Plan 9

Ravenheart's OSI is a pet project with a big payroll and lots of support in high places. A great deal of that support is a result of who Anne Ravenheart is. She has always been a passionate leader who does everything in her power to get the job done. In this case, the job is to uncover these unusual phenomena. As part of Roger Soaring Owl's retirement agreement, Ravenheart's OSI was granted operational authority in any theater in which KE operates. The mandate isn't new. After Bug City, Ares made sure that Firewatch would have legal authority to take over any KE-controlled area in which dangerous magical activity was occurring. They called it the "bug rule." Ravenheart often invokes the bug rule to seize control of an investigation she feels may be connected to one of the many unusual phenomena the OSI investigates. On multiple occasions, Ravenheart's intervention has countermanded direct orders from higher-ups in KE. That has made her an enemy of Clayton Wilson, head of Knight Errant Security. He has tried to shut down her operation, but Ravenheart has the implicit support of Damien Knight to carry out her mission.

- Are you suggesting these phenomena have a central causal agent?
- Nephrine
- That isn't likely, but as magic and our awareness of it grow stronger, we are discovering new ways to manipulate mana. I believe these phenomena will only intensify until they become as commonplace as spring rain.
- Jimmy No
- The same rule applies to science. Old timers used to preach about the singularity, but it feels to me our scientific knowledge is more like a young child. Every time we take a step back, it is followed by a tremendous leap forward. The Renraku Arcology Shutdown made us aware of Als. Crash 2.0 brought us technomancy and the wireless Matrix. Now we technomancers are having our own children, and that is sure to bring forward a host of revelations.
- Netcat
- I don't see technomancy as the next step forward. It is much more like a brief diversion. Soon it will be back to datajacks and hard wires. Winternight has seen to that.
- Clockwork
- What do you mean by that?
- Netcat
- Doesn't matter.
- Clockwork

The OSI still doesn't have a staff to speak of. There is a Boston office staffed by Ravenheart's administrative assistant, Staff Sergeant Erika Knowles. She may have formed a spirit pact with a free spirit named Seeks-The-Moon. It is clear she's getting technical support from somewhere, but there isn't a hacker on the payroll, and Ravenheart doesn't have the talent to do it herself.

- Outside contractor, or maybe a friendly AI?
- Dr. Spin
- It isn't an AI. I dealt with her once during a job where I was running overwatch trying to protect a corporate site. One of Ravenheart's people came in looking for data, and it felt like a person. It even moved like a person. It seemed familiar to me and was quite personable. It played games with me before booting me out of the system in order to get what it wanted. I've dealt with AI before, and that was no AI.
- Netcat
- Nice try, Netcat. Ghosts in the Machine are fairy tales. I'm sure you and I
 would love to have back some of the friends we lost when the Matrix fell, but
 there is simply no proof that this particular phenomena does or even could
 exist.
- Snopes
- I'm afraid that isn't true, Snopes. Dig into the stories being told about people connected to the Matrix during the crash and you'll find dozens of reports of witnesses seeing those people in Matrix form. In a couple of cases it could have been a sprite or a thief accessing a dead person's user data, but in some cases these were high-security penetrations by individuals who would have had to read the dead user's mind in order to find out what they needed to know to obtain the targeted data. You have to admit there is something more going on here than the existence of some truly talented—or lucky—thieves.
- FastJack
- I'm more concerned about why an Ares subsidiary is investigating this stuff. At their core, Ares is a military producer. There is no sense of altruism there, so they're not involved in this for anything like the common good. Whatever they are researching is likely to be weaponized and deployed against an opposing force.
- Marcos
- Getting nervous about the future of your way of life, Marcos?
- Hard Exit

Beyond those few core members, there are no other official members of the division. When Ravenheart needs additional manpower, she requisitions a Firewatch unit, but the units rotate out very quickly. None stay for longer than three months. It could mean that whatever she is doing is so hush-hush that she doesn't want anyone sticking around long enough to find out what she's up to. I am more inclined to believe that the work she does has a high rate of attrition.

40 🔳 ANNE RAVENHEART

- I concur with that theory. I know a guy who worked with her on one of these cases. He was hesitant about giving out specifics, but it involved something called astral echoes. We spoke a few times on the front end of his contract. The next time I saw him was in a San Francisco psych ward. He stayed there for over a year. He was retired from Knight Errant with full disability pay, and now he sits around his house all day afraid to go outside.
- Kia

There are plenty of areas where Ravenheart could turn her attention these days. The research Aztlan is rumored to be doing into anti-dragon technology is something that could draw her attention, as could the recent tumult in DeeCee (some witnesses say she has already been seen in the city). What is most likely to draw her attention, however, are the tales circulating about a recent adventure Roger Soaring Owl had in Denver. Some of the stories include information that points to Ares being back in the bug business, and if that's the case, you can bet Ravenheart will be doggedly pursuing it. If she decides to confront her employer on whatever it is they may be doing, she could provide yet another item in the megacorp's growing list of difficulties.

- She's already been forbidden from communicating with Soaring Owl—which, from what I know of her, means that tracking him down and having a conversation with him will be high on her to-do list.
- Sunshine

ANNE RAVENHEART

В	Α	R	S	C	Т	L	W	М	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
4	4	5	3	4	6	5	6	14	7	5.6	11	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/11

Armor (B/I): 4/0

- Skills: Arcana 6, Assensing 6, Astral Combat 6, Athletics skill group 2, Banishing 3, Binding 4, Close Combat skill group 3, Computer 2, Counterspelling 5, Data Search 1, Enchanting 4, Etiquette 5, Firearms skill group 5, First Aid 4, Heavy Weapons (Machine Guns) 4 (+2), Instruction 4, Leadership 4, Parachuting 2, Perception 6, Pilot Aircraft 3, Pilot Ground Craft 4, Ritual Spellcasting 4, Spellcasting (Combat Spells) 6 (+2), Summoning (Spirits of Man) 5 (+2), Survival 3, Tracking (Urban) 4
- Knowledge Skills: Criminal Groups 4, Magical Groups 4, Public Relations 3, UCAS Politics 4, Folk Music (Native American) 4 (+2)

Languages: English 6, Sioux N, Spanish 2

Qualities: Magician, SINner, Spirit Affinity: Spirits of Man

Initiate Level: 8

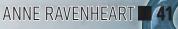
- Metamagics: Absorption, centering, cleansing, divining, invoking, masking, quickening, shielding
- Spells: Analyze Truth, Blast, Detox, Increase Reflexes, Mana Barrier, Mass Confusion, Phantasm, Powerbolt, Prophylaxis, Silence, Stabilize, Stunbolt
- **Spirits:** 1 x spirit of man (Force 7, 3 services; manifest as a old Lakota woman), 1 x spirit of air (Force 7, 2 services), 5 x watcher spirits
- Augmentations: Cybereyes [Rating 1, w/ flare compensation, lowlight vision], datajack
- Gear: AR Gloves, area jammer (Rating 7), armor clothing, Chrysler-Nissan Patrol-1 [Military and Security Vehicle, Handling +3, Accel 10/45, Speed 180, Pilot 3, Body 10, Armor 10, Sensor 1], earbuds [Rating 3, w/ audio enhancement 3, select sound filter 3, spatial recognizer], Erika Elite commlink [Response 3, Signal 4, Firewall 3, System 4], holo projector, mage sight goggles, medkit (Rating 3), plasteel restraints, power focus (beaded necklace, Rating 4), 20 x RFID Tags

Weapons:

Fichetti Security 600 [Light Pistol, DV 5P, AP —, SA, RC (1), 30(c), w/ folding stock, laser sight, explosive ammo]

Stoner-Ares M202 [Medium Machine Gun, DV 6P, AP –2, FA, RC —, 50(c) or 100 (belt), w/ laser sight]

Vibro blade knife [Blade, Reach —, DV 4P, AP -2]



"HA! FRAGGIN' HA!"

POSTED BY: BULL

I'm uploading a series of chats I had with a concerned local fixer on ShadowSEA. The talks paint a picture of a very shadowy character operating behind the scenes in magical circles and Elven high society, a former regular of Shadowland who posted as The Laughing Man, and probably the strangest motherfragging metahuman being I've ever had the distinct displeasure of meeting. I'm talking about the very "devil" I mentioned in my tell-all that I posted to this same directory. As much as I'd like to joke that I'm doing this because he's not worth the Panther ammo, chip-truth is I don't even know how I'd find him to shoot at him. He comes and goes as he pleases.

No, this is the best payback I can manage—bringing some of his history and his true nature into the light.

If you're able to read this, then this matters to you. You never know when the bogeyman will show up on your doorstep, or when the devil will ask you to dance.

- If this mystery man is as bad a motherfucker as you say he is, aren't you afraid of retribution?
- Mihoshi Oni
- You mean like hiring someone to have me geeked, or just doing it himself? I'm not too scared of that. That's not his style. If there's ever been someone to adhere to that old "revenge is a dish best served cold thing" it's him. If this even registers as a blip on his radar at all.
- Bull
 Bull
 Constant
 Second Seco

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/user Bull has logged on

/user Saint James has logged on

- [Saint James] Salutations! I hope I haven't got you at a bad time.[Bull] Nah, chummer. Just looking over some security plans for the O.R.C. rally this weekend. What's biz?
- [Saint James] The broad sketch is that a team I'm handling has become curious about a piece of work they just did. I made some inquiries, which led back to you.
- [Bull] Who gave you my name in connection to this?
- [Saint James] <snip>
- [Bull] All right, I'm all ears.
- [Saint James] I must stress it's *not* what you'd call urgent. The salient question here that my associates are asking is not "What are we getting into?" so much as "Oh God, what have we done?" Past tense.

[Bull] Go ahead and give me the long version.

[Saint James] The instructions and compensation information came to me through a trusted contact. A mentor, you might say—someone I apprenticed under in the '50s. The job was to grab a sword—a three-million-nuyen sword—from the private collection of a very wealthy man named Emilio Vasquez. Vasquez, formerly a drek-hot programmer for UCAS Data Systems, is currently the owner of a boutique software firm specializing in AR/VR sculpting. He has a very large weapons collection, largely as a hobby—he's a history buff. The sword was apparently one of a kind, and it was sitting with the rest of his collection in a secure vault in his corporate office on the 56th floor of a skyscraper in downtown Denver.

[Bull] None of this is ringing any bells for me so far.

[Saint James] Needless to say, it was a tough run, but they managed to pull it off. It wasn't until they had the sword in hand that they started getting spooked. They were curious about its value versus what they were getting paid, so they had a fixer who specializes in that kind of things date it for them. The sword—an ornate basket-hilt rapier with both edges razor-sharp—was forged in the late 17th century. The weird thing is, the team's mage swore up and down that the sword was an active, bound weapon-focus, and *had been since it was forged*.

[Bull] Again, not really my department.

- [Saint James] Hang on, I'm just getting to the really strange part. The drop-off was at a retro arcade on the Tacoma docks. The only instructions I was told to give them was that they would know the recipient when they saw him. Apparently, that was no problem. There was only one guy in the arcade. An elf, playing skee-ball, at the only functioning machine in the building. There was at least two hundred nuyen in tokens scattered on the machine beside him. And he was wearing facepaint like a goddamned clown! Is that weird enough for you?
- [**Bull**] Oh. That slitch. Yes, we're acquainted. Did he say anything to your team, when they gave him the sword?
- [Saint James] As a matter of fact, he did. He said "Swords are like women. Sometimes, any one will do. And sometimes, not so much." The mage said that this guy's signature read like a mundane, but the sword's power seemed to spike on the astral when they put it in his hands to a level beyond anything he'd ever seen before, before it too suddenly scanned as mundane. Over all, they all just had a really bad feeling about it, and asked me to check into what they'd just done on account of that.
- [**Bull**] Your team has good instincts. If the job's done—hell, even if it isn't—they should stay the frag away from him.
- [Saint James] Why, pray tell, is that? Just who is this gentleman with a penchant for swords and ski-ball?
- [**Bull**] I've actually gotta slot and run for now. One of my regular teams needs me to arrange a meet for them with their Johnson.
- [Saint James] Seriously? Now, when my curiosity is most piqued?
- [**Bull**] This bastard goes by the name Harlequin. I'll catch up with you later and fill you in on the rest.
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- ::11/02/73//



HA! FRAGGIN' HA!

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/user Saint James has logged on

[Saint James] Thanks for getting back to me so promptly. [Bull] Null sheen.

[Saint James] Did you know that there was a hermetic mage who ran under the street name Harlequin way back in the day? Apparently, he was killed summoning an elemental that was too powerful for him to handle—overreached and got obliterated by drain.

[Bull] Yeah, I don't think that's the same guy.

- [Saint James] I figured as much. So tell me what you know.
- [Bull] Did you know that I was in Chicago when the Windy City became Bug City?

[Saint James] Your reputation certainly precedes you; I did.

- [Bull] We were behind the wall, in hell, for almost a year. Trapped in the containment zone, not hustling for nuyen but just flat out struggling to survive. I saw a lot of good friends get literally eaten during that year; anyone in the CZ did. Anyway, just when I'm starting to think that we would all die there, no matter what, this elf appears. I remember him pretty much like you described. Clown's motley, I think you call it. Leather jacket, lots of band pins and smarmy buttons, all of them ancient and outdated even by my standards. I asked what the frag he was doing there. He said "prospecting." Like the bugs weren't even a danger to him, just a natural phenomenon he was observing. He was like someone going out in the country to watch a meteor shower. I don't remember the exact details—this was a long, long time ago. But essentially we cut a deal, that he'd get our families out of Chi-Town in exchange for some unspecified favor later. On that topic: Generally speaking, my advice to future generations would be if an enigmatic man wearing clown makeup offers you a deal that sounds too good to be true, you SAY FRAGGING NO.
- [Saint James] People used to say "never trust an elf," but naturally I find that offensive, as far as sayings go. I wonder how dragons feel. Anyway, what happened then?
- [Bull] Like, right then? Nothing. Years later, though, the slag came calling to collect his due. It's hard to say what happened then-the entire thing was like a red mescaline trip, so I doubt you'd believe me if I told you what little I do remember. It's hard for me to even remember which parts of it were real. The part that I think I remember is that we took a road trip to the site of the Great Ghost Dance, where what he called a mana spike had ripped a hole in our reality, where something a hundred times worse than the bugs was trying to claw its way in. By the time we were at that point, we were scared shitless. We'd been briefed not at all on what was happening. But the biggest surprise was right at the end. Harlequin sacrificed my friend and partner to plug this hole. He said it was our only choice, or we'd all die—but he never considered the possibility of sacrificing himself. He never warned us. If Johnny hadn't willingly sacrificed himself, Harlequin and I would have come to blows while the whole fragging world ended. But Johnny did it, taking the decision out of our hands. I've still never forgiven that clown-shoed slag for the situation he put us in.



- [Saint James] That is ... quite a lot to take in, to say the least. Do you really expect me to believe all of that really happened?
- [Bull] Not really, chummer, but don't you dare tell me it was all a dream. I lost my best friend that day.
- [Saint James] Fair enough. Well, thanks for all the background. It really is helpful. My team is, apparently, considering taking another job from this Harlequin.
- [Bull] What job?
- [Saint James] They wouldn't say; the few details I have, I can't share out of professional courtesy.
- [**Bull**] That's a shame. I'd be willing to pay good nuyen to know what the Laughing Man is up to these days.
- [Saint James] Well, it just so happens that my team is interested in his past exploits. Perhaps an information trade is in order?

[Bull] Deal. I'll see what I can dig up. /user Saint James has logged off /user Bull has logged off //chat session archived::user Bull ::11/03/73//

- It's courteous of Bull not to mention my involvement in all of this, but I too was involved in closing that rift, and I can attest to much of what he said. I was Harlequin's protégé at the time. I doubt he'd like me announcing that in an even semi-public venue—I also don't especially give a shit.
- Frosty
- Then how come Bull's never mentioned that before? How come he doesn't seem to hate you anywhere near as much as he hates this other guy?
- Netcat
- Maybe Bull is just a sucker for a pretty face.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- Actually, I don't know if I've ever seen them really talk to each other on here. Maybe that's no accident.
- Snopes
- Can we back up a second? Was his protégé?
- Winterhawk
- I don't feel especially obliged to explain my personal or professional relationships to any of you, but read the next chat log if you're that curious.
- Frosty

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[Saint James] Evening.

[Bull] It was a productive week. I figured out what the deal is with that sword. I hope you've got something equally juicy, chummer.

[Saint James] I trust that I do. Please, go on.

- [Bull] I talked to <snip>, possibly the last surviving member of a team that *thinks* they worked for him in the '50s. This predates my encounter with the Laughing Man by years. [Saint James] Thinks?
- [**Bull**] Harlequin, apparently, rarely does anything in person or even through one proxy like a single fixer or Johnson. This team thought they were doing completely unrelated

runs—almost ten of them, over the course of a number of years—and only began putting the pieces together once it was too late, since they had plenty of work in between his jobs. You see, every job they did, they left something related to the previous job at the scene. Like a message.

[Saint James] What kind of things did they leave behind?

- [**Bull**] Weird unrelated shit. A manuscript page, a cooler full of severed ear tips, an occult tome, a rare flower. Whatever. Each time, the thing they left behind was something they'd stolen on the last run. The runs had nothing in common either; they took the team all over the world, from Seattle to the Bavarian Alps to Amazonia. All of them came from different Johnsons and fixers, some of whom might have been Harlequin himself, one of which was definitely the mentor you mentioned, Anson Helm.
- [Saint James] Can't say I'm entirely pleased that my connections are so easy to look into.
- [**Bull**] They wouldn't be, for most people. Anyway: all of this convoluted drek turned out to have a very simple motivation, according to <snip>. You know Ehran the Scribe?
- [Saint James] Elven social theorist, general windbag—yes, I'm familiar with his work.
- [**Bull**] Besides his day job as a writer, apparently he's also a powerful mage who's taken a recent interest in arcanoarchaeology. Anyway, absolutely everything that the runners did that year was somehow an indirect attack on his holdings and position. The guy I talked to said that Ehran had maimed Harlequin in the past. Like, if their story is to believed, *three hundred fragging years* in the past. It all culminated in a rematch, with dueling swords, where the team was shoehorned into acting as seconds. As a final kiss-off payment, they got tossed the priceless antique sword, which they pawned for a hundred large. I guess its value appreciated quite a bit in the interim, huh?
- [Saint James] And I guess something happened to make him want the sword back. Badly.

[Bull] Seems that way.

[Saint James] Hold on a tick. Sorry to do this to you, but I've got an urgent call coming in.

[Bull] Drek!

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/user Bull has logged off

- //chat session archived::user Bull
- ::11/07/73//
- Since the duel, Ehran and this Harlequin must be on much better terms. If Ehran had been involved in any kind of major shadow warfare in the past ten or twenty years, I think I'd know about it.
- While an entertaining yarn, this is all thoroughly impossible, isn't it? I mean, elves don't live that long, and there were no elves or magicians for that matter in the 18th century? Am I right?
- Slamm-O!
- Right. Any mage can tell you that it's bullshit. I wouldn't lend any credence to any of this.
- Haze

44 🔳 "HA! FRAGGIN' HA!"

- Do not assume that because you know something about how magic works, you know everything about how magic works. You do not—none of us do. There is legitimate research published on far stranger phenomena than the seemingly "immortal" elves. You must ask yourself: what would such a being be like, really? Terrifying to us, I think. Unfathomable. And what would we be like to it? Primates? Insects? Less?
- Arete
- The question to ask is not: "Is this true?" The question to ask is what will befall all of us for discussing our "betters" so frankly, when they have valued their secrecy at so high a price for so long? I worry that Bull might have just opened Pandora's Box.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- They don't truly value secrecy. They value coyly flaunting their hidden knowledge. It's pretty disgusting. You should read some archived Shadowland posts some time—the few that survived—and look at the conversations between Orange Queen, Laughing Man, Wordsmyth, and company.
- Frosty
- They may still have more secrets than the ones you know.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- Whatever. I still don't believe any of this shit. Isn't there enough weirdness in this world without making up more?
- Sticks

//attach chat file

/user Bull has logged on

/user Saint James has logged on

- [**Bull**] Thought you'd gone squirrely on me. You had a few minutes left, *omae*, before I broke into your commlink and burned it to the ground.
- [Saint James] My team decided not to take the job.
- [Bull] Good for them. What was the job?
- [Saint James] They had to swear up and down not to tell anyone just to get out of doing it. That might be the only reason they're alive. I can't betray their confidences like that.
- [**Bull**] You'd better tell me something, chummer! I called in favors to get you that intel.
- [Saint James] Fine, I can tell you what little I was able to dig up. Harlequin has been a fragging ghost since the Second Crash. I can find almost no record of what he's been up to in any of the shadow, government, or corporate databases I have access to. He's been sighted in isolated locations around the globe—Seattle, New York, Hong Kong, Denver, Prague, Edmonton out in the Athabaskan Council Lands—he's kind of hard to miss. But no one in my extended network has a guess about what he's doing. The most recent sighting was in DeeCee, where there was some kind of a *major* shakeup on the astral plane. It seems to have fucked him up. Seriously.

[Bull] Is that what made him want—or need—his sword back? [Saint James] As far as I can tell. Your guess is as good as mine.

[**Bull**] Do better than that. I'm compiling these little chats we're having for an upload to JackPoint, but without information on his recent activities, it's just ancient history. I know he's not majorly involved in the artifact rush, at least not the traffic I've seen go through Seattle.

- [Saint James] I can't guess as to *his* recent activities, but I can tell you about the recent activities of something that looks like him.
- [Bull] Something that looks like him?
- [Saint James] Right. It's not really him, though. Different makeup, different clothes, different astral signature—a spirit, of almost grotesquely high force who's not making any efforts at hiding it. But eerily similar, at least according to the third-party descriptions I've got.
- [Bull] What's this eerily similar, Harlequin-like spirit up to?
- [Saint James] Well, if you can believe it, it's backing some Seattle-area gangs. I have eyewitness accounts of the spirit—which looks like Harlequin, only with black hair and makeup, and wearing "a long black flowing coat and cassock and a floppy, wide brimmed hat"—talking to leaders of the Spikes in Tacoma and the Rusted Stilettos in Glow City.
- [**Bull**] No fragging way. The Spikes might not be as fanatical as they were a couple years back, but they're still not progressive enough to let anything that even looks like an elf wander into their territory without curb-stomping it into oblivion.
- [Saint James] That's what I'd have thought, but it's true. What's even weirder is that all this newcomer has encouraged them to do, so far, is kill more elves. The Spikes have begun taking it to the Ancients again, this time backed by better firepower and magical support, and they're making some progress. The Stilettos were literally dying out, but they seem to be on the rebound and out for elven blood too.
- [**Bull**] This all seems way below Harlequin's level of interest, if not *against* his interests.
- [Saint James] Well like I said, it's not him. But it could be his twin.
- [**Bull**] I have no idea what to make of any of this. I'm going to post it up on JackPoint and see what they think. Maybe they can help me connect the dots.
- [Saint James] I don't suppose I could ask you to leave my name out of it?
- [**Bull**] Don't worry, your rep will come out fine. You just come off as a concerned fixer looking out for his team. Hell, your business should go up.

/user Saint James has logged off /user Bull has logged off

//chat session archived::user Bull

::11/08/73//

- Well I for one can't help Bull make heads-or-tails of any of this, but it certainly was an interesting read.
- FastJack
- Frosty, anything you'd like to share with the class?
- Netcat
- I guess Bull really hasn't given me much chance of getting out of this without airing my dirty laundry for everyone to see. I'll try to be short, punchy, and at least a little cryptic, as I know he'd want me to be. Harlequin is a very powerful mage who's at least three hundred years old. Maybe a lot older—he didn't tell me everything. He barely told me anything. He has an infuriating habit of withholding key information at the most crucial moment. Harlequin taught me a lot but told me as little as he could. For all his power and mystery, he's really a lot like the rest of us: prone to fits of deep, nihilistic depression and

long binges of completely shirking his responsibilities to get wasted and fuck around—that's what the whole skee-ball thing is about (he loves the game.) Occasionally, he gets off of his ass to do something. But the long stretches of moping and self-pity in between can be tough to take. The ritual Harlequin was involved with in July in Washington may have saved all of our lives, but it took a *lot* out of him. It also more or less dissolved my "apprenticeship," although I can't say whether or not that's for the best. It was a mutual decision, and for the most part I'm an independent runner now, just like you all. The last thing he said to me, the last time I saw him, was tantalizingly cryptic as always and made me want to smack him in the mouth. It was just after the assassination of Hestaby's speaker, Elliott Eyes-of-Wyrm, and just before he went to go get his sword back. He said: "It's time for me to take a side." Cross-referencing that with an off-hand remark he made twenty-on years ago, I am deeply, deeply worried. But what else is new?

- Frosty
- You were his protégé for the better part of two decades. Just how close were you?
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- I'm pretty sure that's none of your business.
- Netcat

<u>HARLEQUIN</u>

В	Α	R	S	C	I	L	W	М	Edg	Ess	Init	IP	
4 (9)	7 (10)	6 (9)	4 (9)	8 (12)	7 (10)	5 (9)	6 (9)	30	7	6	13	1	

Condition Monitor Boxes: 10/11

Armor (B/I): 14/12

- Active Skills: Astral Combat 6, Arcana (Ally Spirit Formula) 6 (+2), Archery 5, Artisan (Steel Guitar) 6 (+2), Assensing (Astral Signatures) 6 (+2), Blades (Swords) 7 (+2), Climbing 3, Conjuring skill group 6, Counterspelling (Combat Spells) 6 (+2), Dodge (Ranged) 6 (+2), Electronics skill group 3, Enchanting 6, Escape Artist 5, First Aid 5, Forgery 5, Gymnastics (Tumbling) 6 (+2), Influence skill group 6, Instruction (Magical) 5 (+2), Intimidation (Mental) 6 (+2), Longarms 3, Medicine 5, Outdoors skill group 4, Perception (Scent) 6 (+2), Pilot Aircraft 4, Pilot Groundcraft 4, Pilot Watercraft 4, Pistols 3, Ritual Spellcasting 6, Running 6, Stealth skill group 6, Spellcasting (Illusion Spells) 6 (+2), Swimming 3, Throwing Weapons 5, Unarmed Combat 6.
- Knowledge Skills (Not An Exhaustive List): Beer 4, Biology 4, Bluegrass Music 4, Botany 4, Carpentry 1, Classical Art 4, Classical Music 4, Classic Rock 6, Chess 6, Combat Biking 4, Comic Books 6, Conspiracy Theories 6, Contemporary Literature 4, Cooking 1, Cults 4, Fast Food 4, Flatvid Movies 6, Gangster Rap 4, Gardening 1, History 6, Insect Spirits 6, Late 20th Century Video Games 4, Linguistics 4, Literature 4, Magic Theory 6, Matrix Games 4, Matrix Chatrooms 4, Painting 4, Parazoology 4, Philosophy 4, Poetry 6, Punk Rock 4, Security Design (Magical) 4 (+2), Spells 6, Spirits 6, Theology 4, Tír Politics 4, Toxic Hazards 6, Trash Trid Shows 4, Urban Brawl 4, Wines 4.
- Languages: Cantonese 6, English 6, French 6, German 6, Italian 6, Japanese 6, Latin 6, Mandarin 6, Or'zet 6, Russian 6, Spanish 6, Sperethiel N
- Qualities: Aptitude (Blades), Bad Luck, Exceptional Attribute (Intuition), Geas (Incantation), Immunity (Age, Disease, Pathogens, Toxins), Lucky, Magician, Murky Link, Photographic Memory, Quick Healer.

Initiate Grade: 24+

Metamagics: Absorption, ally conjuration, anchoring, centering, cleansing, divining, extended masking, filtering, flexible signature, flux, geomancy, great ritual, invoking, masking, psychometry, quickening, reflecting, sensing, shielding, sympathetic linking

Spells: Harlequin has any spell available to him when needed.

Preferred Spells: Analyze Magic, Area Thought Recognition, Armor, Astral Armor, Awaken, Borrow Sense, Catalog, Catfall, Chaotic World, Clairaudience, Clairvoyance, Combat Sense, Control Emotions, Deflection, Demolish Gun, Demolish Pants, Detect Dragons (Extended), Detect Magic, Heal, Hot Potato, Improved Invisibility, Increase Agility, Increase Body, Increase Charisma, Increase Intuition, Increase Logic, Increase Strength, Increase Reaction, Increase Willpower, Increase Reflexes, Influence, Levitate, Magic Fingers, Mana Barrier, Manabolt, Mind Link, Mob Control, Mob Mood, Net, Orgy, Petrify, Physical Barrier, Physical Double Image, Physical Mask, Poltergeist, Punch, Shape Air, Shape Earth, Shape Fire, Shape Water, Shapechange, Shattershield, Slay Dragon, Stabilize, Stench, Stunball, Swarm, Trid Phantasm, Turn to Goo, Translate

- **Bound Spirits:** Great form spirit of air (Force 20, 6 services, invoked with 14 successes; all great form advantages plus Body 19, Agility 24, Reaction 25, Strength 18, Charisma 21, Intuition 21, Logic 21, Willpower 22 when materialized)
- Gear: Ares Predator I (no ammo), certified credstick (1,000,000¥ Balance), clown makeup, nanopaste disguise (large), leather jacket, random assorted buttons/pins (12+2d6 of them) apparently grabbed from the bargain bin (each button is a Force 1d6 + 4 sustaining focus), Sony Emperor w/ Redcap Nix OS [Response 2, Signal 3, Firewall 1, System 2]

Weapons:

Rapier [Blade, Reach 1, DV 7P, AP –1, Force 16 weapon focus w/ personalized grip]

Notes: Harlequin's magical tradition superficially resembles that of a hermetic mage and shares the same spirits and associations, although in truth it is far older, more personal, and more esoteric. An argument could be made that he is the only living practitioner of his tradition. In any case, he resists drain with Intuition + Willpower. The initiate grade and Magic attribute given here do not necessarily represent the upper limits of Harlequin's magical capacity, merely the upper limits of what the Sixth World is likely to require of him. Harlequin has the following nine spells sustained on his person at all times using some of his buttons/pins: Increase Body (Force 6, 5 Hits), Increase Agility (Force 7, 3 Hits), Increase Reaction (Force 6, 3 Hits), Increase Strength (Force 5, 5 Hits), Increase Charisma (Force 10, 4 Hits), Increase Intuition (Force 7, 3 Hits), Increase Logic (Force 6, 4 Hits), Increase Willpower (Force 6, 3 Hits), Increase Reflexes (Force 10, 4 Hits). He has the following spells quickened: Armor (Force 20, 12 Hits), Combat Sense (Force 20, 16 Hits). Harlequin has the following spells anchored: Heal (Force 30 with 12 hits, triggered by extensive physical damage on self), Oxygenate (Force 30 with 12 hits, triggered by the absence of breathable air), Improved Invisibility (Force 20 with 10 hits, triggered by physical damage on self). Finally, Harlequin has at least 250 unspent karma free to use for anything he may need it for.

ORITY MESSAGE

COULROPHOBIA

If you believed his account of it, Harlequin first designed the formula for, conjured, and bound this particular ally after he was maimed by Ehran in the 18th century. He powered the spirit with all of his rage and pain, somehow fueling it into existence in the down-cycle of mana immediately preceding the Fifth World. After the Awakening, the spirit gained an increasing amount of power but remained within his control. He had long ago recognized that the spirit was too dangerous to use in any but the most dire of situations—it had absorbed all of the worst parts of Harlequin's character, and none of his more noble qualities. He kept it around only because there was no other alternative besides releasing it, which was too dangerous to the world at large.

Of course, Gwynplaine—for lack of any other name he's willing to divulge—would probably tell a *very* different version of this story.

In any case, when struck by the magical backlash of the closing Watergate Rift, Harlequin inconveniently "forgot" Gwynplaine's true name and lost control of the spirit. Gwynplaine then became uncontrolled and free. Its long-term goals and motivations are unknown and unknowable for the immediate present, but its short-term aims are plain-causing as much damage and suffering as possible, for the fun of it. The spirit harbors a particular hatred of elves and Awakened individuals, which perhaps is a reflection of Harlequin's own buried self-loathing. It also tends to gravitate towards places of technology in decay. For the most part, the spirit is a sadistic prankster. Gwynplaine is statted below as a Force 12 harrow (toxic spirit of man, p. 145, Street Magic) using some of the special rules for Ally Spirits, but some of its motivations might be more comparable to a shadow spirit. Its Force should be increased as necessary for it to be a serious threat to most parties; it is an extraordinarily dangerous if not insurmountable foe.

Needless to say, regaining control of (or if necessary, permanently destroying) Gwynplaine is just one of Harlequin's short-term goals.

GWYNPLAINE

В	Α	R	S	C	I	L	W	М	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
12	14	15	10	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	27	2

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 12/12

Skills: Assensing 12, Astral Combat 12, Counterspelling 12, Dodge 12, Perception 12, Pistols 6, Spellcasting 12, Unarmed Combat 12, Influence Skill group 6.

Metamagics: Masking, quickening.

Spells: Acid Stream, Agony, Alter Memory, Analyze Device, Animate, Chaotic World, Control Actions, Death Touch, Decrease Body, Manaball, Mass Agony, Mass Animate, Mass Confusion, Mind Probe, Mob Mood, One Less Elf, One Less Human, Shattershield, Spirit Barrier, Spirit Zapper, Swarm

Powers: Accident, Astral Form, Concealment, Confusion, Desire Reflection, Enhanced Senses (Low-Light, Thermographic Vision), Fear, Hidden Life, Immunity To Normal Weapons, Innate Spell (Toxic Wave), Influence, Materialization, Movement, Mutable Form, Personal Domain (Off), Psychokinesis, Sapience, Search, Spirit Pact