The
Shadowrun
Supplemental
Issue #4

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Editors Notes

Another two months fly by. This is the fourth issue of The Shadowrun Supplemental, so, like usual, thanks for reading, and I hope that I have a few new readers with this issue :) (Judging by the email I keep getting, I do..)

No new fonts? NO new fonts?! That s right. I m making use of some of the fonts that haven t got much use in previous issues. If you are viewing this with plain standard Times New Roman, you re missing out, and likely causing the magazine to look and print out badly.

This issue contains the interviews with FASA employee s that I ve been hinting at for a couple months now. A huge special thanks to Steve Ratkovich for organizing and conducting them. And an ever larger special thanks to Mike Mulvhihill and Steve Kenson for submitting to the interrogations.. err, interviews. We were even more thorough than Lone Star, so we covered all the bases.

Contacting the Editor and Submissions

I can be reached at fro@lis.ab.ca and fro@sara.cas.nwu.edu, first address preferred, please. I can also be contacted on the ShadowRN mailing list, and on Undernet #Shadowrun. If you want submission guidelines or to ask a simple question, hell, even to complain, I don t bite. Actually, I have been known to bite, but I m usually pretty gentle.

My web page also contains submission guidelines and the like, and it can be found at http://shadowrun.home.ml.org

The newest section of The Shadowrun Supplemental is in need of submissions. It is The Cluttered Datastore , and is the general area where almost anything can be submitted. Thing s that a full article don t quite fit for, like a few spells, a new piece of gear, or a description of several contacts, these are the things that The Cluttered Datastore is for. This section should prove to have more *general use than some of the narrower topics we ve covered so far, and is also easier to submit things for.

Please note that the vehicle oriented Issue #5 has been postponed for at least a few issues. Apparently FASA plans on changing the vehicle statistics in Rigger Black Book II rather extensively, so Issue #5 will be a normal issue.

We will also be accepting articles about the Shadowrun Trading Card Game, although the emphasis of the magazine will stay on the Role-Playing game.

The Shadowrun Supplemental is looking for two Full Time staff members. The first would be a reviewer, for reviewing new FASA published books and novels. Expectations would be to obtain new FASA books close to release time (Within a month), and to be able to write an honest subjective review of them. The second is an artist, not a computer artist, but someone who does original paper work that could be scanned in and included.

If you feel you could fill either of these positions, please get in touch with me.

Legalities

Copyrights

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Skillsoft Expansion

Gurth <gurth@xs4all.nl>

Skillwires and skillchips are tremendously useful pieces of kit to own for a character, but their game rules aren't always easy to understand, and in some cases don't make all that much sense. This article is mostly an attempt to get it all straightened out, and make some aesthetical changes at the same time.

Skillsoft Memory Requirements

The way the table with the memory requirements for skillsofts (SRII p. 248 and Shadowtech p. 48) is set up causes great leaps in the memory needed at some points, and slow progression at others. Naturally, a skill at a high rating takes up more memory than a skill at a low rating, but as they are now, the memory costs are just too arbitrary.

In game terms, the actual difference between skill level 2 and skill level 3 is one die, and the difference between level 3 and level 4 is the same. However, for skill chips the memory difference between a level 2 skill and a level 3 skill is 10 Mp, while between level 3 and level 4 it's 170 Mp! Therefore, the following formulas can be used to calculate skill memory requirements in a different way than as per SRII.

General: $10 \times Rating^2$
Concentration: $6 \times Rating^2$
Specialization: $4 \times Rating^2$
Language: $3 \times Rating^2$

These formulas give different results than the table in the Shadowrun rules, but at least the sequence is more logical, as can be seen from the table below.

Skill Type	Rating									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
General	10	40	90	160	250	360	490	640	810	1000
Concentration	6	24	54	96	150	216	294	384	486	600
Specialization	4	16	36	64	100	144	196	256	324	400
Language	3	12	27	48	75	108	147	192	243	300

Apply the formulas given in SRII and Shadowtech for calculating the nuyen cost to the memory requirement from the table above.

[Editors note: Two small utilities should be included in the archive you got this from. SS-D.exe calculates these values automatically for DOS, and SS-W.exe calculates them in a Windows environment.]

Skillwires

As SRII indicates, the rating of a skillwires system limits the **total** ratings of all activesofts used at a time. This means that in a rating 6 skillwires system, a character could put six rating 1 chips for example, and use them all at the same time. Skillwires plus, from Shadowtech, double this maximum. This does pose the question whether skillwires plus can handle chips rated at double the skillwires rating, and Shadowtech also says that using a skill at any other rating than at which it was encoded is not possible. So what happens if you slot a rating 6 chip in rating 3 skillwires? FASA gives no rules to cover this situation, but a few solutions are available.

1. Nothing happens: the wires would want to reduce the skill level to 3, but use at a reduced level isn't possible, so the skill doesn't work at all. Skillwires plus may be an exception, depending on whether they can handle chips with a higher rating than the wires or not (gamemaster's discretion).
2. The skill is used at level 3 the reasoning behind this is that the wires simply do as much as they can, though the chip is capable of doing better. This can be compared to aiming a gun -- no matter how good a marksman you are, if the gun has poor sights the overall accuracy of the shot will be limited.

The following house rules can be used to cover these gaps in the skillwires rules.

Higher-Rated Chips: when using an activesoft of a higher rating than the skillwires, add a target number penalty for all skillsofts equal to twice the difference in ratings. For example, using a rating 5 chip in rating 3 skillwires gives a   4 modifier to all target numbers.

Skillwires Plus: these cannot use chips greater than the rating of the skillwires themselves. For example, even though a rating 4 system can handle up to 8 rating points of skills, none of the skills plugged in may have a higher rating than 4. Using higher-rated chips is subject to the same target number penalty as above.

Skillwires Costs

Like skill chips, the costs for skillwires have been very arbitrarily decided and display strange leaps, like a difference of 6,400,000 nuyen between ratings 6 and 7. (This is true for some other pieces cyberware and bioware that are available in a range of ratings as well, by the way.) The table shows suggested alternative prices for both skillwires and skillwires plus. Essence cost, Availability, and Street Index remain as they were.

Rating	Skillwires	Skillwires Plus
1	10,000	15,000
2	30,000	40,000
3	100,000	140,000
4	325,000	400,000
5	800,000	975,000
6	1,750,000	2,000,000
7	3,500,000	3,750,000
8	6,000,000	6,250,000
9	9,000,000	9,500,000

Chipjack Included. . .?

That's what it says in SRII anyway. This is a bit strange, since the Essence cost of a chipjack is ..2, while rating 1 skillwires cost only .1 Essence. It would in effect mean you get a chipjack completely for free, Essence-wise, so any character low on Essence but having too much nuyen to spend could purchase rating 1 skillwires in order to get the chipjack (the wires are all but useless at such a low rating anyway).

An easy fix is to add .2 to the Essence cost of all skillwires systems to account for the built-in chipjack.

Using Skillsofts

This is a somewhat gray area. It stands to reason that the chip must somehow be plugged into a chipjack or softlink, but SRII states that datasofts can also be accessed through datajacks. This is strange -- by normal reasoning, a chip is a chip, and therefore a chip that fits into one socket type (a chipjack for instance) won't fit into any other kind o socket (like a datajack). It would be like trying to put a 25-pin plug into a 9-pin socket: the design of the two type of plugs is similar, but one is about three times as wide as the other.

Thankfully, the solution requires only common sense: all skill- and datachips require a chipjack or softlink to use, but by means of an adapter they can be slotted into a datajack. Such an adapter should be available from all good body shops, and likely from electronics shops as well assume an Availability of 2/6 hrs, Cost 50 , and Street Index .75.

Plug the adapter into the datajack, and then stick the chip into the other end of the adapter. It'll protrude a few centimeters from your skull, but hey, it's cheaper than going under the knife again.

Alternatively, connect a computer or data display system to your datajack by means of a cable, and insert the chip into the computer or display system.

Keep in mind that the datajacks from Shadowtech still need either an I/O SPU or an encephalon before the user can access the skillsoft.

System Load Delay and Softlink System Load Delay

Explained on pages 44 and 46 of Shadowtech, this is a very good concept, preventing players from accessing all skillsoft all the time. Outside of combat situations this is not very critical, but having to wait a couple of turns for the softlink to load your Firearms skillsoft so you can use a gun with any degree of competence can cause some tense moments in the middle of a firefight.

However, the question that Shadowtech leaves unanswered is whether SLD and SSLD apply every time a character uses the skill, or only when the chip is inserted.

Reason suggests the skill needs to load only once, when the chip is plugged into the chipjack or softlink, but the description of first-in-first-filed (FIFF) headware memory makes this less clear. Because it recommends that skillsoft users upload the skillsoft into headware memory, to reduce the amount of delay time, it appears to say that the SLD (or SSLD) must be dealt with every time the skill is accessed.

This interpretations has its drawbacks, mainly in time-critical situations where the same skill will be used over and over again -- for instance in combat, a character using a Firearms(5) chip would have to spend 2 1/2 turns every time he or she wants to fire a gun, and then get that delay time **again** the next time a shot will be fired. This would put about 3 turns between shots, because the skillwires

have to read through the chip every time to find how exactly the gun worked again... If this is the case, then why would anyone make Firearms skillsofts at all? The market would die out really fast, since if you don't lose a firefight normally, you will if you slot one of these chips.

The (S)SLD, therefore, must represent the time it takes to load the chip the first time it will be used after that, it can be accessed without delay. At least, until it is unloaded for some reason.

So why is there a system load delay for headware memory? Isn't that satisfied when the user plugs a chip into a chipjack or softlink, and uploads its contents into the headware memory?
Not quite. Uploading isn't the same as accessing the skillsoft. What happens when a skillsoft is inserted into a chipjack and uploaded into headware memory, is that the data on the chip is copied directly into the memory, without passing through the skillwire's processors. Only when the character actually decides to USE the skill will the skillwires sift through the data to find out how exactly to do the action the character wants to perform. This takes some time, hence the SLD.

Data Flow Rate

This brings us to another point that Shadowrun conveniently ignores: upload and download time. Datajacks have a data flow rate (DFR) that governs how fast data can flow through the jack, either to or from the user. So for downloading a skillsoft into headware memory through a datajack, the necessary time is easy enough to calculate: look up the skillsoft's size, and divide by the DFR to find the number of turns needed. For example, with a level 2 datajack, loading a rating 5 Concentration takes 2 turns (100 Mp divided by a DFR of 50).
Softlinks, though, have no DFR listed, even though it can be quite important when you're in a hurry. By reading between the lines, though, it seems the DFR of a softlink is 100: the rules for SSLD says it takes a number of turns equal to the chip's size divided by 100 to load a skillsoft.
By this same reasoning, headware memory has a DFR of 250. In turn, that means it is impossible for any kind of DFR booster to push the DFR above 250. Sure, it can be done, but then you're limited by the speed of the memory, which can't store the data at the rate it's delivered to it. The situation with the marksman and the gun again.

Headware Memory

Apart from a lower system load delay, there is an added advantage to storing skillsofts in headware memory: you can have more skills available at any given time. With just a softlink, you're limited to the number of chips you can cram into the softlink if you upload as many of those skillsofts as possible into headware memory, you can remove the corresponding chips, and fill their slots with other skills.
A more concrete example: say you have a rating 2 softlink and 500 Mp of headware memory. You can load two rating 5 skills into that memory and put two more skill chips into the softlink, giving a total of 4 available skills, rather than just 2.

When doing this, the player should state which skills are in memory and which are in the chipjack or softlink. Also keep track of which skills are currently being accessed by the skillwires, so as to apply (S)SLD when the character switches to another skill. If accessing another skill would exceed the maximum rating of the skillwires, one of the currently-accessed skills must be closed first assume this takes a Free Action. Only then can the next skill start loading, with its associated delay.

The Cluttered Datastore
Various Authors

❯ Here you go folks, a general clearing house for some of the data deemed too small to fit in as an article in itself. Feel free to read through and comment, and if you see something that will fit in the datastore, let me know. Of course, no copyrighted corporation items allowed!
❯ NuDawn

Cold Ball

An area-effect spell that causes Physical Damage. The cold ball spell can freeze material in it's blast area. It can freeze more than plant tissue, animal, or metahuman flesh. Freezing has diferent effects on man-made technology. Make a roll on the object resistance table, force of the spell against a target number of the objects resistance. One success indicates the item in question is covered with a thin layer of ice, two or more successes mean the item is completely frozen through. (Gamemasters discretion, of course.

Type: Physical	**Damage:** (F)D	**Range:** LOS
Target: Body(R)	**Drain:** [(F ÷ 2) 2]S	**Duration:** Instant

Freezing Grasp

A spell in which the magician grasps the target with his hands to cause physical damage with cold.

Type: Physical	**Damage:** (F)L	**Range:** Touch
Target: Body (R)	**Drain:** [(F ÷ 2) 1]L	**Duration:** Instant

Fairie Fire

A mana spell which surrounds the target with purple fire. The effect reduces his target number by the Force of the spell for every two successes during a special spell success test vs. The spell resistance test. This makes the target easier to hit.

> Adolf, a hermetic mage, casts this spell at Wedge. Wedge is surrounded by violet fire. Adolf makes his spell casting test with a number of dice equal to the spell's force: 6. Adolf's numbers are 1, 4, 5, 6, 6, 6. Wedge makes a willpower test against the Spell's force. His willpower is four. He gains 6, 6, 5, and 4. If Wedge would have made one success against the spell, his target number would be reduced by one. But the spell effect fails.

Type: Mana	**Range:** LOS	**Duration:** Sustained
Drain: [(F ÷ 2) 2]M	**Target:** Willpower (R)	

❯ That one is real popular with some of the magicker musicians for special effects. Nothing like bathing your lead guitarist in purple fire while he solo s away.
❯ #1F-A-N

❯ If you really say so..
❯ Lil ole me

Manipulation Spells

All are alteration manipulations, which are quite different than transformation manipulations in that they alter the elements and materials used rather than transform them. After the alteration, the elements return to normal, leaving behind the physical effects to tell the tale.

Lightning Bolt
A lightning bolt is actually shot out of the caster's palm or finger. This is a spell which does physical damage.

Type: Physical   **Damage:** (Fx2)D   **Range:** LOS
Duration: Instant   **Target:** 6   **Drain:** ([F ÷ 2]   2]D

❷ This one is hard as hell to learn folks. I ve seen mageboys down at the college studying this one for days on end, trying to understand it, but they can t channel the power right. A few minor electric shocks, and that s all. Supposedly the students are forbidden to study it, but we all know what students are like.
❷ Xdean

Water Bolt
A bolt of water is shot from the caster's arm. This is a spell which does physical damage.

Type: Physical   **Damage:** (F)S   **Range:** LOS
Duration: Instant   **Target:** 5   **Drain:** [(F ÷ 2]   1]M

❷ Toned down, this one makes great dorm room pranks.
❷ Xdean

Ice Bolt
A manipulation spell which does physical damage, water in the air is frozen into a bolt of ice about the size of the caster's hand. The bolt is then shot from the caster's hand at the target. This spell also does damage on barriers and vehicles as well.

Type: Physical   **Damage:** (F)D   **Range:** LOS
Duration: Instant   **Target:** 4   **Drain:** [(F ÷ 2)   3]S

Mana Shield
An area effect spell that is somewhat like mana barrier, except a small shimmering effect is created in front of the magician. It acts exactly like a mana barrier and also is an astral barrier against spells. This spell is ineffective against physical objects and non living things.

Type: Mana   **Range:** LOS
Duration: Limited   **Drain:** [(F ÷ 2)   1)M

Earth Barrier
Much like the Barrier transformation spell, except this barrier is constructed out of Earth and is about 10'x10'x5' feet thick. Projectiles can be shot through the barrier, but are effectively stopped or dispersed. The earthen barrier's damage is recorded using a vehicle damage monitor and treated like a physical barrier with the spell's force used as the target number.

Type: Physical   **Range:** LOS   **Target:** 5
Duration: Permanent (until destroyed)   **Drain:** [(F ÷ 2) + 2]M

Inertial Barrier

Also like the Barrier transformation spell, this spell creates a barrier of dense, churning air which slows bullets, arrows, and even attacks by dampening their inertial value. The mage must make a test using a number of dice equal to the force of the spell. The test is made against the attacking weapon's damage code to reduce the power of the bullet's or arrow's damage. Every two successes against the bullet reduces the damage code by one stage. After that, a normal body test applies. Note, this spell is effective against speeding vehicles. If used in this way, the speed of the vehicle is reduced by 10 x the force of the spell. The size of the barrier is 10x10xforce.

Type: Physical	Range: LOS	Target: 6
Duration: Sustained		Drain: [(F ÷ 2) 2]S

> Wedge fires his Ares Predator against Wolf's Mane, a shaman. Wolf's Mane has cast this spell to construct an inertial barrier. The spell has a force of 6, so Wolf's Mane rolls six dice and comes up with 2, 4, 6, 6, 6, 6. Then he rerolls those four dice to beat a target of 9. The results are: 6, 5, 4, and 3. With four successes, the spell effectively stops the bullets because the Ares Predator has a damage code of 9M, reducing the damage stage to zero.

Shambling Mound   *shablus Moundius*

Identification: The average shambling mound's height is 1.9 meters. They appear as heaps of rotting vegetation. They are actually an intelligent form of plant life, with a rough humanoid shape. A shambling mound has a 6-foot girth on it's lower half.

Habitat: Swamps, marshes, bogs, and Rain Forest

Similar Species: The shambling mounds (IE Shamblers) are often confused with leshies, but they are entirely unrelated. Some have postulated that the shamblers are related to Treants (included in this selection), but this is also untrue.

Young: Shamblers bread like any other plant life, using seeds.

Habits: They are active by day, able to generate energy by photosynthesis. They also supplement this with an omnivorous diet, they have been known to eat small animals and engulf larger ones. They also eat plants. Shamblers are almost totally invisible in their natural habitat, and attack with a surprise modifier of -2. Shamblers are also excellent swimmers and can survive for 30 years.

Range: Tropical, subtropical, and temperate regions.

Commentary: The presence of the shambler has led many parabotanists to believe that the shambling mound is an awakened form of plant life. Shamblers caught and dissected had reported that their make-up has no nervous system, but uses hormones and plant chemicals to move. Also, thorough investigation has reported a brain like organ of plant flesh is located in the creature's chest area. Experiments conclude that the shambler can grow if electricity is applied to it, thus healing of it of all damage.

Powers: Electro-growth (can absorb electric spells to grow and repair damage), Immunity (fire), Resistance (cold), regeneration, Plant Engulf

B		S	C	I	W	E	R
6	3	7		3	3	6	3
Attacks	Humanoid						
Powers	Electrogrowth, Plant Engulf, Immunity (Fire), Resistance (Cold), Regeneration						

Treant

Hardwood: *Angiospermia Sapiens*
Coniferous: *Coniforia Sapiens*

Identification: Almost indistinguishable from trees, a Treant has thick, textured, brown bark. They have eyes, a face, and arms, but do not move about except in extreme emergencies. During winter, a Treant will not lose their leaves, but the leaves do change color. The female has no mammae.

Habitat: Any Forest

Habits: Treants consider themselves the protectors of the hardwood forests that they inhabit. They are very intelligent, and often can speak many languages, including Elvish (at least enough to say Get out of my trees!). Humans and metahumans are unable to spot a Treant if they are untrained *and* if the Treant is trying to blend in with his trees. The base target number is 6 for spotting a Treant. Rangers and those who live around Treants have a base target of 4.

Treants were recognized as Sentient by the United Nations in 2045 A.D. when they were first discovered. They are intolerant of evil, particularly when fire and wanton destruction of trees is involved. It's said that Treants helped create Amazonias.

Treants have a working relationship with many Amerindian tribes and roving rangers. A Treant's life span is unrecorded and are now being observed.

Young: Young are grown from off-shoots which the female Treants then protect and care for until the stalks are grown.

Range: Worldwide.

Magic Capability: Some are magically active as plant shamans.

Commentary: Treants, like all trees, gain sustenance from photosynthesis. They sleep for long periods of time (the longest of 3 years have been recorded) during which short roots grow into the soil beneath them gathering water and minerals from the soil. It seems that the treant is an awakened variant of oak trees, since they are indistinguishable from these great trees. All though there has been Treants from several species of trees. It's been said that 1 out of one hundred normal trees will awaken into a Treant.

Powers: Alienation, Plant Control

❯ Boy, I hope those crazy loggers don't take to much trees down for wood. These guys will get mad at them.
❯ Datajaq

❯ You re right, Datajaq. I had the opportunity to face one of these. They are quite mean when their anger was aroused. He geeked one of my pals before we got away from it.
❯ TechnoAsp

❯ Who cares? How many of us have actually Seen one of them?! As long as they stay out of the city, we ll always be safe from them!
❯ CityBouy

B		S	C	I	W	E	R
10	4	8	2	5	5	8	5
Attacks	6M						
Powers	Alienation, Plant Control						

Cyberware

Cybernetic Facial Disguise System: This little piece of cyberware allows the user to alter his face. Comes in three levels. Level one uses CO_2 bags and special motors implanted in the face to make the character appear fat or very gaunt. Level two uses muscular motors to change the arrangement of the facial muscles, making him appear as someone else. Level three is a combination of the two systems. Each level adds   2 to the target number of a perception test.

Prices: Level 1: 120,000¥   Level 2: 500,000¥ Level 3: 700,000¥

Essence Cost: Level 1: .3 essence   Level 2:.5 essence Level 3: 1 essence

Availability: 5 days/level   **Street Index:** 2.5

◗ Gotta be really careful with this one , peoples. I ve heard some not so nice things about those CO2 bags if they get exposed to a little too much heat, ya see..
◗ Snoopy Assassin
         Damn that little white dog!

Cyberarmor: This dermal armor system is implanted directly on the skin. It is used to cover vital areas and the upper limbs. It acts like partial armor for ballistic and impact ratings. Note, the genitals are not covered by this technology, and it also offers a body rating increase of   2 (Unnatural). Armor rating of 3/4

Price: 125,000¥

Essence Cost: .9   **Availability:** 15 days   **Street Index:** 3

Skeletal Reinforcement: This one-time chemical treatment reinforces the skeleton to save you from breaking bones. The lacing is metallic, and effectively adds   3 to the body attribute (unnatural). The treatment is porous, allowing blood vessels to continually feed the living bone underneath. However, this means that the character can never get other bone enhancements or use a vehicle control rig.

Price: 200,000¥

Essence Cost: 2   **Availability:** 10 days   **Street Index:** 4.5

Tiger Totem

Characteristics: Tiger is a warrior. Strong and Powerful, Tiger relies on his great strength and prowess to defeat his enemies, not technology. Like Lion, his methods are to the point, direct and he prefers to work from ambush. Unlike Lion, Tiger is the first to attack, often using his most powerful spells first and his weakest last. Tiger Shamans are often found where tigers are found: Asia and India mostly although there are tiger shamans in the Americas.

Favored Environment: Rain Forest or Taiga.

Advantages: 2 dice for Combat and Manipulation Spells   2 Dice for conjuring Forest Spirits.

Disadvantages: -2 dice for healing and illusion spells. Tiger is cool under pressure, but will go berserk as Bear does when wounded. Tiger inspires respect and fear about those around him. A Tiger Shaman is usually trained in Kung-Fu, but cannot be a Physical Adept.

H.O.G.   Holographic Online Glove

The H.O.G is a black glove that fits up on the arm just below the elbow. Placed it its fingertips are tiny holographic projectors which are connected to a small microprocessor located halfway up the sleeve of the glove. Attached to the back of the glove is a datajack port that can interface directly with any standard datajack, cyberdeck jack, or computer jack. Also on the glove is a small chipjack, and disk reader. When jacked in to any port, the user can download information to the glove and store it in a temporary backup, or immediately use the information. The glove reads the information and produces a 3 dimensional image directly above the palm of the hand. Technical information, documents and writings, blueprints and skematics can all be displayed.

The glove has the ability to download information from any memory stored inside the head or in a cyberdeck. Or if the user prefers, he or she may load a chip or disk into the reader on the glove and utilize the information from there as well. Information can be temporarily stored in memory backup on the glove, which can be upgraded if more space is needed. Full color images can be displayed in sizes ranging from 2 inches at the smallest to 15 inches at the largest. Gloves come with a standard booster pack and 1000 MP for storage of information.

Concealability	Weight	Availability	Cost	Street Index
5	2.5	8/48 hrs	30,000	1

❯ I've heart a few bad things about these gloves. The first is that the optical chip mounted onboard is of real low quality, and doesn t store data very well. The second is the overall durability of the glove. Jarring movements or impacts can ruin it real easy, chums.
❯ Idol

Warblade

This pistol is modeled after the original Slivergun with some MAJOR differences. First off, it is able to fire normal ammunition as well as Flechette rounds with a flip of the switch (as long as the right clip is inserted). It is equipped with a built in silencer, Smartlink II, and a new Gas ent   (detailed below). It is able to mount top and underbarrel accessories and is definitely considered a Heavy Pistol. A high velocity system is activated when the ammunition mode is switched to Flechette, increasing the lethality of the weapon considerably. Not only this but more rounds are fired in this mode to accommodate the high velocity system.

If Regular ammunition is used: SA   9M damage
                                     BF   12S damage

if Flechette ammunition is used: SA--10S damage
                                     BF--14D damage

Damage is considerably increased using Flechette round because of the high velocity system. 4 rounds are fired instead of 3. This makes the first burst at a penalty of   4 to the target number and the second burst at   8.

Because of its dual modes, the Warblade is a convenient weapon. Since Flechette ammunition is illegal, after using it, the ammo can be dumped and left behind. Normal ammo can be inserted and you can avoid problems with the local authorities.

Since there is only one in existence, availability for this weapon is nil. Though I suppose if your runners were able to get in touch with Warpath (quite the Fixer BTW), he might let it go for a price. He He He. 8)

Conceal	Ammo	Mode	Damage	Weight	Avail	Cost	Street Index
3	40	SA/BF	aries	4.5	?	?	?

❯ From what I ve actually seen of this weapon (A little bit of a surveillance tape.), it s creator is a little over-zealous with it s abilities.. it s not all it s cracked up to be, so to speak.
❯ TechnoAsp

❯ And it isn t all that original either.. Ares has been field testing a very similar weapon lately, and it will likely go into production sometime late next year, from what I ve heard. Maybe you should sell that single model for a good price before it goes into mass production..
❯ Idol

Warpath Super Gas   ent

This gas vent recoil system was created exclusively for the Warblade. It can be mounted to any weapon capable of mounting gas vents. It follows all rules for gas vents with 2 differences   recoil compensation is 5 points and concealability is reduced by 4 points.

Concealability	Weight	Availability	Cost	Street Index
-4 to gun	1	7/24	2500	1

RICS   Rigger Intrusion Control System

This system allows a rigger to locate a remote signal from another rigger, monitor that signal, and if so inclined, take control of that signal. A small portable satellite setup is used. The programming then searches the area for recognizable Remote Control Rigger signals. It then monitors the signal, allowing the user to see what the rigger is doing in regards to any drones or vehicles that might be in use. It also allows for temporary jamming of this signal for non-riggers, and if a rigger is using the system, it is possible to jack in and take control over whatever is currently in use. This requires a contest between the rigger using the RICS and the rigger controlling the drones/vehicles. If the intruding rigger is successful and defeats the opposing rigger, he/she/it may now take over, totally locking out the other rigger.

❯ Which is one reason most vehicles still have a physical key.   Said locked out rigger yanks out the key, and the vehicle stops. Although this isn t always fun, it s better than going like a bat out of hell down some road with someone else in control. Especially when they likely don t have your best interests in mind.
❯ Idol

This highly sophisticated system includes the following:

Data Codebreaker	Level 10
Data Line Tap	Level 10
Signal Locater	Level 10
Data Encryption System	Level 10
Data Line Scanner	Level 10
Jammer	Level 10

Portable Satellite
All systems have an ECM rating of Level 10, thus ensuring complete access and control over rigging systems. This system is dedicated only to Rigger signals and nothing else. It will not monitor radio transmissions, communication transmissions, T   transmissions, etc.

Concealability	Weight	Availability	Cost	Street Index
None	15	24/48	2,000,000	2.5

❯ Yes folks, that s right, six zero s. Effectively putting it out of the reach of all real runners and making it a corporate monkey-toy.
❯ Idol

❯ Um, Idol, aren t you a corporate monkey?
❯ Trix

❯ Must have gotten me mixed up with I-dull , my chum.
❯ Idol

Ranger

Commentary: The ranger is a modern mountain man. A ranger may also be a mage or a shaman, concentrating in spells that aid him in the wilderness. Or he may use the latest in weapons and equipment. But whatever the method, the Ranger's greatest weapon is his wits, his savvy, and his knowledge about the wilderness where he often makes his home. Whether it be urban or natural.

Attributes
    Body: 3
      uickness: 4
    Strength: 3
    Intelligence: 5
    Charisma: 2
    Willpower: 4
    Essence: 6
    Magic: 6
    Reaction: 4
Initiative: 4   1D6
Dice Pools
    Combat: 6
Cyberware
    None
Contacts
Choose (2) contacts
 Spells

Skills
    Car: 3
    Firearms: 6
    Etiquette (Tribal): 5
    Sorcery: 4
    Conjuring: 3
    Magical Theory: 1
    Etiquette (Street): 3
Special Skills
    Tracking: 4
    Wilderness Survival: 3

Gear
    4 Antidote (4) Patches
    Binoculars
    Bow and 20 arrows
    Ares Predator w/ 20 ammunition
    Real Leathers
    Ford American
    Street Lifestyle

Combat:	Detection:	Health:
Manaball: 4	Detect Life: 3	Heal Moderate Wounds: 3
Sleep: 4	Personal Combat Sense: 5	
Power Bolt: 3		

Starting Cash: 15,734
Special Note: If the Ranger is a shaman, then the Ranger must choose a totem that gives emphasis to intelligence. Usually this will be either Coyote, Snake, Eagle, Mountain Lion, or Wolf.

Techno-Ninja

No, I'm not like those Hollywood Ninja wannabes. I'm not your average physical adept at ninja skills either. I use chrome, real chrome chummer, to aid me in my goals. Besides, cyberware gives you an edge, and boy do you need on the streets.

You either have to have the edge, or risk personal extinction. I have the skills for your shadowrun, I have the time, the question is . . . do you have the money?

Commentary: The Techno-Ninja has forsaken the way of the physical adept and has turned to cyberware to get what he needs. He's a trained assassin in the art of Stealth. An armored predator with a finesse that surpasses that of the Street Samurai, deception and strength are always his goals.

Attributes:

- Body: 4
- uickness: 5
- Strength: 2
- Willpower: 4
- Intelligence: 4
- Charisma: 5
- Reaction: 4(8)
- Essence: 1.5

Skills:

- Unarmed Combat: 5
- Firearms: 5
- Stealth: 5
- Psychology: 3

Special Skills:

- Ninja Body Postures: 4
- Ninja Martial Techniques: 2

Initiative: 4(8)   1D6(3D6)

Dice Pools:

- Combat: 10

Cyberware:

- Retractable Spur
- Wired Reflexes (level 2)
- Cybereyes /w Lowlight and flare compensation
- Datajack
- Skillwires: 4

Gear:

- Katana
- Ares   iper Silvergun /w 50 flechette rounds
- ninja Uniform
- Fine Clothing (5 suits)
- Low Lifestyle
- Ares Predator /w 20 rounds of ammunition and silencer

Note: The Techno-ninja starts out with 3D6x100

Target: Stephen Kenson
Interviewer: Steve Ratkovich

First, the important question. How did you get involved with FASA?

Entirely a matter of right place, right time. I was active on the Shadowrun discussion areas on GEnie, back when FASA used that service. When the second edition Grimoire was in the works, Tom Dowd ran an online contest for submissions to fill in the extra space in the book with new spells, physad powers, etc. I submitted everything I could think of and Tom used most of it.
Then Paul Hume had to back out of writing the Way of the Mage essay for the book, so Tom asked me to. That led to the proposal for Awakenings and the rest, as they say, is history.

This, of course, begs the question of whether some of your more recent posts/surveys to the ShadowRN mailing list is something similar to what Tom did on GEnie?

I wish I could say it was. I don't have the authority to recruit new freelancers for FASA. Some of my recent posts are tied to a Shadowrun project, but I can't say anything more about it at this time. I do value the feedback of the listmembers and all Shadowrun readers I think it makes Shadowrun what it is and can help make it better.

[Author's Note: Steve is referring to the Shadowrun 3rd Edition, scheduled to debut at Gen Con '98.]

How long have you been Playing Shadowrun?

Since it came out in 1989. My friends and I played several short-lived campaigns and one medium length one.

Tell us a little about yourself, if you would. Where do you live, how old you are, that sort of thing.

I live in Milford, New Hampshire, where I moved after college. I turned 28 just yesterday (as I write this). I live with three roommates, two of whom are members of my gaming group.

[Author's Note: Steve's Birthday is June 16th, as I received this on the 17th.]

Have you written anything for any other games, or done any work for anyone other than FASA?

Yes. I've written material for Earthdawn (the Earthdawn Survival Guide and contributions to a few sourcebooks). I've also done material for White Wolf (the Enchanted sourcebook for Changeling), Steve Jackson Games (contributions to three In Nomine sourcebooks so far), Mayfair Games (most of which will never see the light of day), and Daedaleus Games (some write-ups in a Feng Shui sourcebook). Also various articles in different gaming magazines like Pyramid and Shadis.

I've read your work in the Scrawls from the Sprawls, the Shadowrun APA you were involved with several years ago. How did you get involved with that, and how long were you a part of the APA?

For those who don't know, an APA is an Amateur Press Association: a bunch of people who write material on a single topic (in this case Shadowrun), copy it and mail it to a coordinator, who puts all of the submissions together into a fanzine that gets mailed out to all of the members of the group. Actually, I'm still involved with Scrawls from the Sprawls, although not as regularly as I used to be. Scrawls got started back in 1991 by Niko Wieleba. I saw an ad she ran in Challenge Magazine and wrote to her about doing stuff for the APA. I tried out many Shadowrun ideas in the APA that eventually found their way into Awakenings and other books I've done, and I've always appreciated having the feedback from other people writing for Scrawls. A fellow member of Scrawls (Jon Szeto) is writing the Rigger Black Book 2.0 for FASA as I write this. An APA like Scrawls is a great place to practice your writing skills and get feedback from other writers.

What advice would you give someone who was interested in writing something for FASA?

Start small. I know everyone has the one sourcebook they dream of writing, but very few people get that opportunity right off. If you want to write stuff for FASA long-term you need to win their trust and prove you can do the job. It's best to start out some place where you can get some writing experience like Shadowland magazine or an APA like Scrawls. Then try submitting for one of FASA multi-author projects an adventure collection, for example. That gives you a small project to start out with and demonstrate your ability. Build it up from there.

On the other hand, if all you ever want to do for FASA is your dream sourcebook and that's it, there's no reason not to send FASA a proposal. They might love your idea and want you to do it anyway, but it's rare for first-time authors to get a whole sourcebook right out of the box. Keep in mind that FASA plans their product schedule at least a year in advance, so they aren't going to be able to even consider doing your sourcebook idea for as much as another year.

The one thing you definitely DON'T want to do is start off a proposal or introductory letter with these are the parts of Shadowrun that suck and how I want to fix them. You'd be amazed how many submissions FASA gets that start out that way. It's just bad form to try and get work from a company by telling them their product sucks.

I know from the APA that Talon is one of your old Shadowrun Characters. You've also used him in a Short Story in Awakenings, and as a "Shadowtalk" poster in the comments sections of the various Sourcebooks. Tell us a little about him.

Talon was my first Shadowrun character, a street mage from Boston who ended up in Seattle for our first game. He worked his way through several different campaigns until I started gamemastering more regularly. I made him into an NPC and contact for other characters. He's now become a kind of prime runner for my campaigns. When I started writing Shadowrun material I used Talon and some of the other player characters and NPCs from our campaigns in source material. Some of the members of Dunkelzahn's fixer-network from Portfolio of a Dragon are former player characters, for example.
Talon actually has a guest appearance in Jak Koke's third Dragonheart novel Beyond the Pale. Jak needed a mage for the book and he asked me if I minded him using Talon. It was cool with me, so Talon ends up working with the other characters in the book in a very cool story.

What is your favorite type of character to play?

Magicians, bar none. I nearly always play mages in whatever RPG I'm playing. The whole thing that got me into Shadowrun was the fantasy/cyberpunk fusion. Regular cyberpunk games tend to bore me everyone is either a decker or a samurai most of the time. I started out playing mages, but I've tended more in the shamanic direction lately.

Do you still play SR on a regular basis?

I haven't played Shadowrun in a little while because I've been involved in running other things (particularly my Earthdawn campaign). Gaming for my group tends to go in cycles, but I'm getting to where I'd be psyched to do Shadowrun again.

Do you GM SR? If so, do you prefer being a GM or a Player?

I usually gamemaster. *sigh.* I love to play Shadowrun, but our group currently doesn't have anyone else who can run it due to various constraints. I like both gamemastering and playing, but I think I'd rather play Shadowrun than run it right now.

Do you have any other duties that you perform for FASA, other than a freelance writer?

Not formally. I do a fair amount of playtesting for them for new stuff. I recently playtested the Shadowrun Card Game, which is a blast and has in-jokes and inspiration galore for long-time SR players, not to mention some GREAT artwork for the cards. There's going to be a Talon card in the expansion set planned for next year, which I'm pretty psyched about.

How does FASA get playtesters for their material? Is it mostly just freelancers like yourself, plus the full time employees, or do they accept applications for "playtesters"?

It is mostly in-house (which includes freelancers like me much of the time). Sadly, FASA doesn't usually have time for a lot of out-of-house playtesting. They do keep a database of people interested in playtesting, however, so people who are interested should contact FASA.

Do you write much fiction, Shadowrun or otherwise?

Not as much as I would like to. I write a lot of stories about my SR characters. In fact, the Talon story in Portfolio of a Dragon first appeared in Scrawls from the Sprawls. It fit the theme of the book well, so I updated it to include the events of the Big D's death and will and sent it on to FASA. They liked it and included it in the book.

Would you consider writing a Shadowrun Novel, if given the opportunity?

Actually, I already have. I sent off a final draft of my first Shadowrun novel to FASA about a week ago. It's entitled Technobabel and, without giving anything away, I can say it connects some old Shadowrun plot threads with some new threads planned for next year. It should be published sometime in the Spring of 1998. I'm already working on ideas for the next one.

What is your opinion of Immortal Elves, Horrors, and all the other oddball things in SR?

As I understand it, a lot of this stuff was part of the Shadowrun background from the very beginning, and FASA gradually revealed it as time went on. I think the IDEA of the Cycle of Magic and the connections to the Previous Age are cool, but I think they've been over-done. There are so many cool parts of the Sixth World it makes no sense to focus on just one faction or plotline. I don't want the immortals wiped out en masse like some extremists, but I also hate the concept where every important event in human history is controlled/inspired by the immortals (a la ampire from White Wolf). It cheapens the accomplishments (and the failures) of humanity. In my writing I try and use the immortals as part of a larger picture without having them dominate the scene. I see the immortals as very distant from the kind of street level events most shadowrunners are involved in.

What do you like to do to relax?

I net-surf a fair amount. I also really like to read. I read comic books, sci-fi/fantasy, lots of new age and metaphysical books and just about anything else I can get. I've also started doing yoga and getting out on my bike more.

Since you netsurf, what do you think about Shadowrun on the Net?

For the most part I'm quite impressed with them. I think there is a lot of net-support for Shadowrun and people turn out some really great web-pages and net-books (like the NERPS supplements, for example).

Do you think the Internet in general helps or hurts the Shadowrun community in general?

I think the 'net is a great source of support for Shadowrun. I would really love to see Shadowrun strongly supported on the Internet and the Web by FASA, and I think they're moving in that direction.

Have you ever published anything for Shadowrun online? If so, where can we find these?

I have written a few things (mostly for the ShadowRN mailing list) that people have put on their own web pages. There's even a Kenson Page out there with some of the short Shadowrun articles I've written. Excerpts of my stuff has also shown up on the FASA web page, of course.

 Are you going to get your own website put up?

Sigh. Someday. It's one of those projects I've been meaning to do for a long time, but using AOL on a Mac, I'm always waiting for the latest upgrade to the web-page software and haven't had time to sit down and work on a page. I'd love to get my own page up and running, but I want to do it right, not slap something up on the web just for the sake of having something out there.

What was the last good movie you saw?

I saw Austin Powers recently and liked it, which surprised me. It was the way I always thought spy movies should be done: they should have kept James Bond in the Swinging Sixties where he could

hang out with villains like Dr. No and Goldfinger and hip chicks with names like Pussy Galore and Plenty O'Toole. The modern Bond just hasn't worked for me.

What other Role Playing Games, if any, do you play or GM?

I've got a lot of background in super-hero games, since I'm a big comic-book collector. I've played most of the major ones (Champions, Marvel, DC Heroes and even illains and igilantes). I've got an ongoing Earthdawn campaign as well. I've played and gamemastered too many other games to count over the last fifteen years or so.

What is one thing you would like to accomplish some day?

Once I get another Shadowrun novel or two under my belt I would like to write a more mainstream science-fiction or fantasy novel where I can create my own world-setting and characters. I love playing around in the Sixth World, but I think every writer wants to create a place of his own sooner or later.

What would be your idea of the "ideal" world to work in ,whether it was to write a novel about, or to game in?

Hmmm, that's tough. I don't know if there is an ideal world for me. I like lots of different fictional settings. It'd be difficult to be limited to just one. I guess, if I had to pick one thing, it would have to be a world with some kind of magic in it. Not necessarily the fantasy-and-fireball magic of Shadowrun, but some sort of magical side to it.

What is one thing about you that we never needed to know?

Laughs Where to begin? I suppose that I am a practicing pagan with a mostly Celtic/Nordic background. I bring a fair amount of real-world mythology and magical theory into my Shadowrun work. One of the things I've always liked about the Shadowrun magic system is how it models parts of how real pagans and magicians believe magic works. I try to be respectful in my use of different pagan faiths and traditions in the game, just as a Christian would be portraying his religion in a game setting. I think there is such a thing as too much realism in a game like Shadowrun, though. At least part of the heritage of Shadowrun's magic system is fantasy wizards chucking fireballs and magic missiles.
I've played around with a more realistic magic system for Shadowrun but, honestly, real magic works very subtly through coincidence and happenstance without all of the cool special effects. It's just too slow and boring for most gamers (including me) to put up with! I want my street mage to be able to throw lightning bolts, damn it!

Anything I missed?

I am always interested in hearing what people who read my work think of it. You can write to me at talonmail@aol.com. It may take me time to reply to an email, but I do read everything I get. I am a Shadowrun fan-boy at heart and want Shadowrun to be the coolest and most kick-ass RPG out there. I think FASA does a great job and like to hear from people what works and doesn't work in the game. If I agree, and there's a way, I always try to take feedback I get into account in the next book I write.

Neuro Blade

Adam Jury <fro@lis.ab.ca>

[Authors Note: Neuro Blade is based on an idea Skye Comstock came up with earlier this year. Many thanks to him for letting me use it.]

Neuro Blade, a free-for-all decker combat arena, was established in 2057 by currently unknown ownership out of the Denver area. Egotistical deckers have found this to be a haven, of sorts. Most of us meet someone at one time or anther that we would like to get back at, and this is the place many people are doing so, virtually. Most of the time.

All lethal forms of combat inside the main arena is outlawed. Sealed 'rooms' are available if you have a major deal to settle with someone. From 04:00 - 24:00 everyday you can engage in non-lethal combat with other deckers. Or you can just hang around in the virtual bar, chatting with the staff and the other deckers.

❱ When you order a drink at the bar, there s this real fragging nifty decker with a robot persona that brings you your drinks. I don t know how he does it, whenever I m there, he s there, delivering drinks all day!
❱ ONURNEEZ

❱ Chuckle   because it s a Smart Frame?
❱ Delirium

Neuro Blade changes SAN's every other day, sometimes more frequently. Some of the things going on in there aren't exactly legal Lone Star deckers have found and attempted to shut down Neuro Blade several times, but nobody has found out it's exact physical location.

Game Note: Neuro Blade s SAN isn t particularly tough to come by. A decker or related contact would likely share that information for free, as it doesn t have any value in itself. The current SAN is usually posted to Shadowland only minutes after it changes, publicly accessible.

Neuro Blade appears as a megalithic ebony dome, roughly the size of six combat biker arena's, with a peak so high you can't see it. Rows of virtual lights hang above the stadium, but don't actually illuminate the ground below. The stands are dark opal in colour, with leatherlike chairs. The main arena is floored in chrome and neon, with giant 'vidscreens' every 30 metres, featuring action from around the arena. Attached to the east and west sides of the dome are large pyramids of tinted glass, non-translucent. The dome to the west is the one in which lethal combat and hidden meetings take place in, the dome to the east contains a virtual bar, a virtual store, and areas for the staff and organizing the tournaments.

❱ From the outside, it looks HUGE. From inside, it doesn t seem near as big..
❱ Tryster

When a decker is bested in the non-lethal combat, about two dozen miniature crabs come out of the heating ducts under the bleachers and carry the fallen decker back into the waiting area, much to his or her embarrassment.

Typically 100 or so deckers will be hanging around, ranging from kid hackers on 10-yen toys to some of the real heavy hitters. There are usually 8-12 staffers online, keeping track of who enters and leaves, what's going on in the main arena, tending to the stores and bar, and keeping a discreet eye on the private rooms. ery little is known about the owner, he appears rarely, and doesn't make a big deal of himself, preferring to watch the people in the club and give pointers to some young prodigies.

Tournament play

Earn a hot new util, or even some nicer warm nuyen. For four hours every night Neuro Blade is turned into a virtual hell pit, and everyone loves it.

Exactly at midnight every night the entire arena is cleared. Thedays competitors have 30 minutes to register and choose a position. At exactly 00:30 the first 'game' is lodaed. The goal? Don't get dumped. The arena is a null zone lethal biofeedback can't be created there, so no deaths accidental or otherwise, can take place.
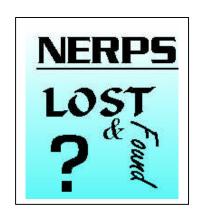
After an hour, there's a ten minute pause. Scores from the first round are tallied and the deckers have a few moments to make any adjustments. Then they fill the floor for the second round. Same process, 60 minute round, then another ten minute break until the final round starts.

Each round has it's own unique construct: The first round may be a huge lush forest, the second an underground parking garage, the third like the pits of a purple hell. Reality filters have no effect in the game, whoever adapts the best has the advantage.

The scoring breaks down as follows:

1st Round	
Time Eliminated	Points Scored
First 20	Out of competition
21-40	40
41-60	60
61-80	80
81-99	100
Not Eliminated	125

2nd Round	
Time Eliminated	Points Scored
First 30	Out of competition
31-60	50
61-80	80
81-99	100
Not Eliminated	125

3rd Round	
Time Eliminated	Points Scored
First 40	Out of competition
41-70	50
71-90	80
91-99	100
Not Eliminated	125

In the case of a tie after the third round, the remaining deckers go head to head, last one standing takes home the nights prize.

The prizes vary considerably. The most common is 'Creditz', where a number of Creditz are added to your total, and can be traded in at the store for a better prize, or simply spent at the bar. Occasionally proper Nuyen is given out, or some new software. Sometimes Neuro Blade gives frequent winners 'special' prizes, either computer equipment, and in the rarest cases, Matrix info such as passcodes or hidden system locations.

❯ The trick is, very few people ever get enough Creditz to earn anything useful, so they abandon the cause and the club ends up paying nothing..
❯ PerSeptIve

❯ Not a scam, but a simple way of doing business that has been around for many many years, and will be around for many many more.
❯ Ze Cloned Accountant

❯ Say, haven t I seen you before?
❯ Blarph!

❯ Who, me? Naw.. your eyes must be playing tricks on you, youngin..
❯ Ze Cloned Accountant

Quicksilver Lightning Part 3
Steven "Bull" Ratkovich

Chapter 4

For the second time in 24 hours, I opened my eyes with a groan. This time, however, I wasn't lying in my bed at home, with friends and family worrying over me. As pain lanced through my head, and then through every nerve in my body, I really wished I was at home. With a grunt of pain, I forced myself to look around.

Flat gray walls. That's all that surrounded me, on three sides... I couldn't turn and look behind me, because I was suspended in mid air, my arms and legs chained to the side walls, forcing me to hang in a large   shape. My arms ached from supporting my bulk, and I could feel dried, crusty blood covering my face. Every bone and muscle in my body ached from being slammed around in the accident. Considering I'd just been blown up, it could have been worse.

I must have twisted a muscle in my neck during the explosion, or during whatever beating that troll gave me for running over his buddy. Either way, though, I could barely move my head.

The room seemed to be about ten to twelve feet wide, and the wall I was facing was maybe five or six feet in front of me. Thick metal chains held me suspended to the walls. Despite my somewhat artificially enhanced strength (Hey, runners these days need every edge they can get), there was no way I could bust my way out of this one.

There was a metallic clang behind me as the door opened, and with a loud growl, something struck me hard in the back. I let out a grunt as yet more pain shot through my body.

 So, this is the Ork that's been meddling in my affairs. A deep, quiet voice said from behind me. Slowly, the owner of the voice walked around in front of me, followed by an enormous troll holding a metal baseball bat.

The man was tall and this, with short, well groomed dark hair and an expensive, tailored suit. The troll was likewise wearing a suit, but the nasty grin on his face and the bat in his hand made it quite obvious that he was the muscle, and that he truly enjoyed his job.

 I believe your name is Bull, is it not? The man said. He talked slow and leisurely, obviously used to being in charge and have everyone obeying him. When I didn't reply, he motioned to the troll, who swung the bat into my gut. This time I screamed and spit up some blood and bile.

 Now, cooperate with me, Ork, or I allow Smith here to continue his work. Now, are you the Ork known as Bull? He had a slight smile on his face as he talked. He was enjoying seeing me in pain. I glared daggers at him, but nodded.

 Good, that's better. His grin sickened me. Now, tell me, where is your partner, the Shaman known as Johnny 99?

Good, that meant Johnny was alive, and that this mad man didn't have him. Go to hell, you bastard.

Stars exploded in my field of vision as the bat struck me in the side of the head.   aguely, through the pounding of my skull, I could hear the Troll laughing. The vision in my right eye turned a filmy red as blood poured down my face. I felt sick, and it was all I could do to stay conscious.

 You are really pissing me off, you wretched scum!   The man roared. It seemed my refusal to cooperate was really getting to him. I felt a grim satisfaction at that.   Now tell me what you know of uicksilver Lightning! Tell me!

I summoned all of my remaining strength to raise my head up and glare at him. I spit a stream of saliva and blood at him, spattering the collar of his white silk shirt. With a snarl he motioned to the troll again and stalked out of the room.

Mercifully, I passed out after the first blow.

I have no idea how long I was unconscious, but when I came to, I wished I hadn't. Every breath was torture, and my lungs burned with the effort. I knew I had several broken ribs, and from the searing pain in my right shoulder, it felt like the joint was out of socket. That damned troll had worked me over but good.

I heard the door behind me open again, and I winced. All I could think of was Marie and the kids. With a sigh, a very painful sigh, I prepared myself to deal with the suit and his pet troll again.

 So Bull, how's it hanging?   A grinning, familiar Amerind face appeared in front of me, an annoying smirk on his face.

 Johnny!   I gasped, wondering if the pain was making me hallucinate.   What? How did you...?

 Shhh.   He said, motioning for me to be quiet. He pulled out his enchanted blade and sliced through the chains holding me up. I immediately collapsed in a painful heap on the floor.

The Shaman helped me to a sitting position, then placed his hand on my forehead. With what he claimed was an ancient Indian chant passed down by his ancestors (I suspected it was just jibberish), he cast a spell and a warm sensation passed through me as my body was healed. Well, kinda healed. My ribs still ached and I was sore from head to foot, but I could move.

 C'mon, Bull. We need to get out of here. Now.   Johnny said, helping me to my feet. He ran out the door, and I stumbled out after him.

In the hallway outside my prison, there was an unconscious Ork with an Uzi lying next to him. He must have been guarding the cell when Johnny showed up. I grinned and we paused long enough for me to grab the Uzi and strip off the guard's armored Long Coat. I felt a little better with some clothing on. Running around naked doesn't do well for your self esteem.

 What the hell is going on?   I whispered to Johnny as we crept down the hallway.

Did you see a dark-haired man and a hulking troll?   he asked me.

Yeah. And I owe those bastards some payback.   I snarled. Just the thought of that Troll beating me made me wince.

Well, the man was Kano Sorennto, the man we were hired to find. The troll's name is Smith. He's Kano's bodyguard.   He whispered back at me. We ducked around the corner as two men wearing lab coats walked by. We crouched, and I saw Johnny set to cast a spell should one of them look around the corner.

I couldn't really catch much of what they were saying. They were talking in hushed tones, but I did catch the word   uicksilver. This immediately piqued my interest. After all, this is what we were getting paid the big money to find out about. Though compared to the cost of that van, what we were getting paid was pocket change. Yet something else to talk to the Johnson about.

Bull, you coming?   I started and looked up to see Johnny waiting for me.

Sorry John... Was thinking.

Well, let's get going.   he said, and we moved down the hall. When we got near the exit, Johnny cast an invisibility spell on the two of us, and we slipped out past a couple more unconscious guards. I paused long enough to look over the guards uniform, and noted the Aztech Logo on the collar and the sleeve.

And then we were gone from that cursed building, but I planned to be back. I owed someone big time.

So how the hell did you ever find me, Johnny? And what did you find out on the streets.   I asked once we were at our safehouse. We have three apartments in the low rent section of Cleveland that we used a hidey holes when the heat came down. We got ahold of Marie and   uxa, and they and the kids were fine, and once we warned them, they took off for Tailspin's place. While our house was fairly heavily guarded, they would be a lot safer with the Old Coyote Shaman and the ghost if we weren't around. And Tailspin had more than a few tricks up his old sleeve.

Johnny gave me that irritating grin again.   Actually, I didn't find drek on the streets. Nobody had ever heard of this slag Sorrento, nor this   uicksilver Lightning.

However, I got a call from Joey about 10 minutes after your van was blown to pieces. He recognized it, and snagged a couple things out of the wreckage before the rest of the Star got there.   With that, he pulled out a battered case with a familiar red and black camo pattern on it. My cyberdeck! Joey is a Detective with Lone Star, and one of Johnny best buds. Johnny supplies plenty of donuts, as well as a few other things, and Joey sends us some useful data, as well as the occasional pulling our asses out of the fire with the Star. It's a nice little arrangement, and for saving my Deck, Joey was getting a huge fragging reward.

Great. I figured I'd lost this too. Thank God for miracles. I'm surprised it survived that crash.   I muttered, opening the case and running a quick diagnostic on the deck. All the systems were in one

piece, and the memory with the stole Azzie data was intact.   So, if you didn't find anything, how did you know who Sorrento is, and how did you find me.

Johnny 99 chuckled.   Well, finding you was easy. Remember that Tissue sample I asked you for? Me and Penth had you tracked in less than 5 minutes with it. As for Sorrento, I almost ran into him in the hallway while I was looking for you. I managed to turn invisible and hide, and got to eavesdrop a little.

 Seems he was talking to his boss. I never caught the name of the boss, but they were talking about you. You're lucky I found you when I did. Bossman told Sorrento to wax you if you didn't talk. Anyway's, they didn't say much about   uicksilver, but apparently it has something to do with computers. I couldn't make most of it out, you know how I am with that techie crap. But he did mention something about a double speed processor, or something like that.

 Hmmmm... Ok. cool. Mind watching out for me while I deck again. I need to check a couple contacts in the matrix, and see how my decrypt programs doing with that data I snagged from Aztechnology.   Johnny nodded once, and I moved over to a corner to jack in and got back to doing what I do best.

CHAPTER 5

Three hours later, I pulled the datajack out of my head and looked around, my head throbbing. You know, decking with a concussion is really not a healthy thing to do, but unfortunately, I didn't have time for several days of bed rest. I looked over to see Johnny opening up a steaming pizza box.

 Yo Bull! Hungry? Got some Papa Joe's. Extra Cheese.   he said around a mouthful of pizza.

Rubbing my temples I nodded and shuffled over to the table, my body feeling like a giant bruise as I moved. Johnny tossed me a cold Cola, and settled down to eat a few slices.

Johnny let me eat for a few minutes, then asked So what did you get?

I set down the crust on my sixth slice of Pizza, and sighed.   Well, you were right. This is definitely something computer related. Looks like it's pre-production designs for a new Cyberdeck processor, and from the performance readouts, it moves twice as fast as anything on the market. Looks like it could be a prototype for an 8th Generation Cyberdeck.

Johnny nodded, not quite understanding.   Ok, speed. Can't you buy programs and such to speed up your deck already? Is this something similar, just a little faster?

 No, not really. What this does is makes E ERYTHING in a Cyberdeck move faster. OK, look at it like this. Imagine an engine in a car. If you make one part of that engine work better and faster, while it improves how the car works, and makes it go a little faster, it's not going to make all that big of an impact.   I replied, trying to explain it in simple terms for Johnny.

 Now, imagine being able to replace something on the car that made everything on it move twice as fast, and twice as efficient. You would have a car that could travel twice the speed of the old one, with half as much gas, and being able to travel twice as far before needing a tune up or such because it was that much more efficient.

Johnny nodded and I could tell he at least understood the basics. And fortunately, knew enough not to ask anymore questions about how it worked.   So, the question is, what do we do about it?

 Well, I figure this is why we've gotten hired. Aztechnology has this tech now, and is ready to put it in production. If they do, they'll have all the patents and such, and no one else will be able to produce a version of it for a couple of years, until they find a way to design one that works the same way, only different.   I could tell I lost Johnny again, but I just pushed on.

 Anyways, chances are our employer works for one of the Big 10, probably Fuchi or Renraku, but maybe even Ares. This tech here   I held up a chip with the data on it   Is worth Billions to the corp that can market it first, and not only that, but before hand, their deckers will be able to slice through pretty much anything sent their way. When you're moving that fast, their ain't much that can keep up with you.

 Of course, the IC SOTA will catch up pretty quick, and things will settle down, but for awhile deckers with this tech will be kings of the datalines.

Johnny nodded again.   And we're getting paid how much for this gig?

 Ummm, 10K each, I believe. Though with my van blown to hell and myself getting tortured, I think the price just went up.   I replied.

 Think we should try taking this to the highest bidder?   Johnny asked, a twinkle in his eye. I always got worried when he decided to get mischievous. Sometimes he took the whole Coyote Shaman thing a little too far for our own safety.

 As much as I'd like to... No. You should know better than to ask that.   I gave him a stern look. Remember last time?

Johnny grunted and nodded. He remembered all too well the last run that we tried that. We ended up with four different corps and a pissed off Yakuza clan on our asses for nearly a year. I think the only reason they stopped looking for us is that most of the primary players in that little drama were in Chicago like us when the bugs came to town.

 Yeah, ok. I know, we stick with the original deal.   He said.   Besides, last thing we need is to get our rep blown to hell by double crossing our Johnson.

 Right. But we can and will ask for a good deal more for this info. Provided we can stay alive for the next few days. When is our Johnson supposed to contact us?

Johnny glanced at his watch.   Friday afternoon, around 1:00. It's Wednesday now. So we got 2 days. Besides, don't we need to dig a little more on this Sorennto character?

I nodded grimly. Yeah, and if I get my way, it'll be dirt on his grave.

 So, where do we start?   Johnny asked.

Where do you think? Same place we just came from. Itlan Industries, where Sorrento apparently has his headquarters, and definitely has his private little torture chamber. It's time for a little payback.

What can I say? I get a little cranky, vindictive, and melodramatic when I get tortured. You should see me when you threaten my family.

I had a few hours before nightfall, and we planned our raid for 3 AM. That's long enough after Midnight, but still a few hours before Dawn, the two most common times for breaking into an installation like this. That gave me about 8 hours, so I slept. The bed was little more than a board with some worn out padding, but with everything I'd been through the last couple days, I slept like a rock.

Johnny woke me a couple hours before the run was planned, and I looked up to see a couple of semi-familiar faces. Johnny apparently decided that we needed some backup on this one.

One was an enormous female troll named Sally. Sally ran with Shark and Spill's gang, but wanted to break into the biz, so to speak. She'd been pestering me and Johnny for a chance to go on a run with us, and I guess he finally decided that it was time. I hoped that nothing would happen to her, She was a nice kid, and I really wouldn't want to have to explain things to Spill.

The other was a hard-faced cyberdude that we'd worked with a couple times before named Angel. Angel wasn't the ideal partner for a team like ours. He was in the biz solely for the money, and I didn't trust him any further than I trusted my Johnsons to tell me the entire truth about a run. Plus, he killed far too casually. Johnny and I always try to keep the body count to a minimum, but Angel never even considered non-lethal tactics.

Johnny must have figured that we would need some heavy hitters if he was bringing in Angel. Of course, Johnny said he found me on the first floor. He said that he knew there was at least one basement level to the complex, and it was guarded by a heavy duty ward. Chances are, that's where we need to go.

Besides. On this mission, I wasn't feeling overly merciful. We'd run into trouble with Aztechnology before, and this Sorrento joker hadn't exactly made me his bosom buddy. I fully intended to pull no punches.

 You feeling better, Bull?   Johnny asked, helping me stand up.

 I've been worse.   I muttered, stretching the kinks out. I nodded to Angel, who silently returned the nod.   I looked over at Sally, and she immediately started talking a mile a minute.
 Isn't this really fragging cool, Bull? I mean, a real shadowrun! Wizzer! The gang'll never believe me when I tell them!   She babbled. I inwardly sighed, but tried to keep a cheerful face. Working with newbies was always such a trying experience. I made a mental note to keep her close by and try and keep her alive.

Sally kept talking, but I mentally tuned her out and gathered up my gear. Looking up at Johnny I said You got anymore surprises, chummer? Or is this it?

This is it. Couldn't get ahold of anyone else on such short notice.

 That's kinda a shame. I'd really like to have a little more punch, but... I suppose this will have to do.   I grumbled with a sigh.   So, you figure out exactly how you want to run this one, John?

Normally I make the plans, and then Johnny screws them up. However, since I needed time to recuperate from all the drek I went through, and Johnny was at least familiar with the layout of the first floor, I let him do the planning for once. Plus, it annoyed him to no end to be put in charge.

 Yeah.   Johnny said with a grin.   Basically, we break in and find what we want. We do it quietly as possible, and if the drek hits the fan, we open up hard and blow the roof off the place.

I sighed, but didn't argue. I was still far too tired to even think about convincing him to plan a little better. 'Besides,' I thought, more than a little anger welling inside him again. 'I owe these jokers and would LO E to blow the wretched place to kingdom come.'

 Ok Johnny. We need to dip into the stores and get these guys outfitted. We need to go in heavy.   I sighed.   I hate to do things this way, but there's no other way. And I need to get inside the building if I'm gonna be able to hack their system.

Johnny nodded,   Yeah, there ain't no sneaking into this one. After they find you gone, they'll be waiting for us to come back anyways. I figure we'll need to get you inside, probably into the lower levels of the place. That way you can get into any isolated system they might have. Angel here will cover you while you do the decking.

 Then me and Sally will locate the prototype, and then we bail. Anything that gets in our way, we drop.

 Sounds good, I said, surprised that Johnny had thought ahead that far, or that he even knew what an isolated system was.   But...?

Johnny 99 chuckled.   And you thought I didn't pay attention when you talk to me.

I laughed lightly, especially at the bewildered looks we got from Sally. Angel, of course, looked on stoically. I stood up, and we led the way out, and we headed over to a warehouse to suit up. Dread balled up in my stomach for the upteenth time since this damned mission started.

TO BE CONTINUED...

Unconventional Physical Adept Abilities
Gurth <gurth@xs4all.nl>

Physical adepts are too narrow as characters   the vast majority of the powers available to them, either from FASA or on the net, are either intended for use in combat or to support those combat functions. This may be in keeping with the general view of physical adepts as martial artists, ki warriors, and so on, but it does put them at a disadvantage when combat is not the focus of the game. Players view these adepts as combat monsters, and thus play them as such, while in fact there are many more areas where the physical adept's particular kind of magic could be developed.

This article, conceived during a conversation about physical adepts with Mark Steedman (thanks for the feedback BTW), has a number of those powers. Some are obviously inspired by spells or cyberware, but I've deliberately tried to give them just a little twist that makes them different that's not synonymous better or cheaper, mind   and hopefully interesting for current or future physical adept characters.

Blend In/Stand Out
Cost: .75
A power with two distinct sides, that are nonetheless similar, the adept can use it to either blend into a crowd, or stand out from it. The power is not normally active, but once activated (costing a Simple Action), the adept may choose whether he wants to be part of the crowd, or be noticed. The adept must concentrate on the use of the power, which counts as sustaining a spell, and incurs a   2 to all other magical target numbers for the adept (including spellcasting, if the adept is a physical magician). The use of the power is not evident from astral space, though, unlike a sustained spell.

When blending in, the adept is easily overlooked by people searching for him (whether they search him specifically, someone fitting his or her description, or just want a generic person) on the other hand, when the adept chooses to stand out, he will be noticed sooner than others. For example, by choosing to stand out the adept can increase his chances of being picked from the audience in a quiz show, while by blending in he can avoid being volunteered for a hazardous mission. The exact reaction of other characters (player and non-player) to use of the power is judged by the gamemaster, keeping in mind other activities the adept engages in, since these may give him or her away anyway.

For this ability to work, the adept must be in a crowd, or at least a small group of people. No tests or target numbers are normally involved, though the gamemaster may choose to give characters trying to spot the adept a   2 or -2 to their Perception test target numbers, depending on whether the adept wants to blend in or stand out.

Mask

Cost: .5 per die

This power allows the adept to alter his or her physical appearance, from minor changes to appearing like a person of a completely different metatype. It cannot be used to reproduce unnatural features, like green hair, blue skin, cyberware, etc. Any cyberware the character has will appear unaltered, which may lead to discovery, since a troll with a human-size cyberleg does look a bit strange.

To use the power, the adept rolls the Mask dice against a target number taken from the table below. To spot the mask, onlookers need to roll a Perception test with a target number equal to the adept's Magic Rating, and score more successes than the adept rolled on his or her Mask test. If this test succeeds, the character sees the real adept rather than the person he or she pretends to be.

Desired changes	Target Number
Simple (e.g. hair or skin color)	4
Average (e.g. gender, close metatype)	7
Drastic (e.g. distant metatype)	10

Modifiers	
Attempting to imitate a specific person	4
Wounds	Normal Modifiers

Although it is possible to try and change into a completely different metatype, this only works well if the physical characteristics of the adept and the intended metatype are similar. A human physical adept masquerading as a troll will usually be a very short troll, for example, while this same adept attempting to look like a dwarf will be a very tall dwarf. The same adept trying to impersonate an elf or an ork would have little trouble, because their body sizes are similar to a human's. When such differences are a factor, the adept should roll his or her Mask dice in an open test (see Shadowbeat, under Impact Test on page 10) this test is in addition to the above test to see if the power works at all. Assume the maximum height difference that can be attained is equal to the adept's Magic Rating multiplied by the result of the open test, in centimeters. The maximum body weight difference is the same, except in kilograms.

Hairy Harry is trying to chat up a girl, who frankly doesn't like the looks of him all that much   mainly it's Harry's trademark hair that puts her off. So he decides to use his power to look like himself but with a normal hairdo. This is a simple change, so Harry rolls his 3 dice in Mask against a target number of 4, getting 2 successes. The girl now needs 3 or more successes on a Perception (6) test (because Harry's Magic Rating is 6) to spot that Harry hasn't gone to the hairdressers, but is only trying to make her think he did.

Sometime later on, Harry needs to get into a troll bar to try and get info from someone being a human, Harry feels the trolls might kick his ass just for the fun of it, so he tries to Mask himself as a troll. This has a target number of 10, since it requires Harry to grow about a meter and make major changes to his features. However, Harry must now also roll an open test, which comes up as 2, 5, and 7. Multiplying the 7 by his Magic Rating of 6, Harry can appear to grow 42 cm and put on 42 kg of weight, which makes him appear to be a troll of about 2.25 meters and 125 kg.   ery short and very skinny, not to mention very likely to stand out as much as Harry would if he went to the bar the way he normally looks.

Pheromone Control

Cost: .5 per level

By consciously controlling his or her pheromone glands, the adept can affect the reaction people have toward him or her, much like the tailored pheromones bioware.

Each level adds 1 die to the adept's Charisma and Social Skill rolls. This power is effective out to twice the adept's Magic Rating in meters, in a windstill situation, and the power's level is halved (rounded down) when applied to a person of another metatype than the physical adept.

The maximum level that may be purchased is equal to the adept's natural Charisma Attribute Rating.

The adept may choose to specialize his or her Pheromone Control power to a specific gender, in which case the number of dice rolled for tests made against members of that gender are increased by 50   (round up) but for tests against the opposite gender, they are halved. This is in addition to the normal halving for using the power against persons of another metatype.

Specializing must be chosen when the power is bought if an adept wants to specialize later on, he or she must be the Pheromone Control power a second time.

> Marissa, who is a dwarf, has specialized her Pheromone Control power (at level 4) to affect males more than females. When she attempts to use a Social Skill against a dwarf male, she rolls 6 dice, while against a dwarf female she only gets a 2 dice. With males of other metatypes, Marissa rolls 3 dice, and against females of other metatypes, only 1.

 irtuoso

Cost: .5 per   1 to Performance Rating

Adepts with this power possess an uncanny ability to perform music on nearly any instrument. They add their   irtuoso level to the Performance Rating whenever they play a musical instrument, as explained on pages 12 and 13 of Shadowbeat.

This power only works when the adept must actually touch the instrument that is, it works fine for pianos, guitars, flutes, triangles, and so on, but not for instruments controlled entirely by computers or by thought   when programming a computer to play a piece of music, the physical adept doesn't receive the   irtuoso power bonus (because the adept isn't playing the music himself), while for an instrument controlled through a synthlink the bonus is halved, rounding down, due to the greater metaphysical distance between adept and instrument.

  irtuoso also cannot be used to compose a piece of music, or when singing without playing an instrument.

oice Alteration
Cost: 1.5
The adept can make his or her voice produce any natural sound this takes practice to get right especially if the adept has never heard the sound before and must try to picture to himself what it would sound like.

In game terms, the adept rolls an Intelligence test against a target number of 8 to correctly reproduce the sound. For every two previous successful attempts, subtract 1 from the target number if the target number drops below 0 (i.e. after 16 successful attempts), the adept can reproduce the sound flawlessly in future.

If the adept has never heard the actual sound before, he must apply a   6 modifier to the target number -- this even applies if the adept has successfully produced the sound himself without ever hearing the real thing.

Reproducing a (meta)human voice of a specific person in order to fool others into believing the adept is that person has a target number of 14, modified as above. In case the adept is trying to fool people for personal benefit, they are allowed a Perception test against the adept's Magic Rating to spot that the adept is not who he or she pretends to be they must roll more successes than the adept. If they can see the adept, this test may automatically succeed if the adept isn't disguised as the person he is trying to imitate, while if the sound quality is poor (like when the adept is talking over a bad telephone connection), the adept may get a lower target number, at the gamemaster's discretion suggested is -1 to -4, depending on how bad the connection really is.

> Paul's team wants to break into a secured area, so they have Paul call up the guard station and impersonate the guard commander, in order to draw the guards away to a non-existent intruder. Paul has heard what the guard commander sounds like on a previous visit to the compound, so his target number is 12, and has practiced the voice four times: his target number is 10. He rolls his Intelligence of 5, and gets 3, 4, 4, 5, and 11. The guards now may roll a Perception test (3 dice) against Paul's Magic rating of 7. The first guard scores no successes, while the second gets only one. That isn't enough to make him completely disbelieve the voice he heard through the telephone, and the guards go off to where Paul tells them to go.

Target: Mike Mulvihill
Interviewer: Steve Ratkovich

First, the important question. How did you get involved with FASA?

Long story, I'll try and make it quick and short. I worked for a comic book publisher called NOW Comics, based here in Chicago (We published Speed Racer, the original Terminator, The Ghostbusters, etc.). Many of the artist at NOW were FASA artists, Jeff Laubenstein and Jim Nelson to name a few. So I knew of early FASA stuff from them (mainly BattleTech since that's mainly what FASA was doing at that time). I also knew the marketing team from going to conventions and hanging with the Chicago crowd at various shows, (Back in those days Chicago was the home to 3 comic book companies and 3 game companies, as well as the freelancer HQ to both industries). Jill Lucas the current President (of FASA) was one of those that I met at those shows.

Sidetrack (standard procedure for me...:) during NOWs big collapse the editor of NOW went to FASA to interview for an editor position. What she did would be considered what I do - she was a continuity and plot editor, not a text editor. FASA was looking for a text editor. So the NOW employee called Sharon (my wife) who was working for a local book publisher, because she knew what Sharon did and thought that Sharon would like the job...Sharon faxed her resume to FASA, met with that person for dinner and had a job with FASA the next day.

Of course lightning only every strikes once - it took me more than 2 years to get a job with FASA. I originally was a finalist for Sales and Marketing job, but Sam Lewis (FASA's former President) knew that I had writing and convention skill from my NOW days and he held out until there was a position he felt better suited my skills. That job was a development assistant. I started that Dec. 14 1992 (exactly 2 weeks after Lou) I worked with the developers as a utility infield (grunt boy, dogsbody, slave boy - you get the picture) until I was promoted to SR developer in Oct. of 1995.

Another sidetrack: besides myself, Jim, Jeff and Sharon (the last three as freelancers mind you), four others from NOW have worked at FASA. One editor and three artists... weird eh.

How much different do you think things would be for you if you had gotten the Marketing job rather than your current one?

At some point I probably would have requested to freelance on a game line. Would I have been happy? At some point my creativity would have forced it's way to the fore - either as a Freelancer on our product or doing a bunch of stuff on the web, magazine articles and the such. Life would be very different.

Tell us a little about yourself, if you would. Where do you live, how old you are, that sort of thing.

OK, I hope I don't bore you to death....

I was born in Chicago and raised in the city and in a near suburb called Niles. I went to a very small mid-western college, Morningside in Sioux City Iowa. I majored in Literature and Theater and minored in Philosophy. I worked for a year with a traveling theater troop out of the University of Nebraska. I went back to school to get a master's degree in Literature at St. Cloud State University in St. Cloud, Minnesota. I met my wife at Morningside College and we were married after I left SCSU. We both now lived in Chicago and I worked in retail at a book store, I left there to work at a software store and left there to work at NOW. After NOW I worked at the book store again and left there to work at a Public Library. I left the library to work at FASA.

I'm 34 years old, one wife, no kids, two cats. I bought my grandparents house (in the NW side of Chicago - if you have Bug City handy, I live right at the NW corner of the C   at Harlem and Irving park, inside the CZ (Containment Zone) of course...) and have spent the last year looking though 50 years of collected junk (but I did find a flag with only 48 stars on it!)

Hobbies, besides games...sports (baseball, soccer, basketball #1, #2 and #3, although I'll watch or play anything), history and philosophy (so therefore I love reading), sci-fi and mysteries (books and movies/T) and cooking (yep, cooking)

Have you written anything for any other games, or done any work for anyone other than FASA?

Nope, I'm a FASA lifer. I did write some fan based stuff when I worked at NOW, but once I was at FASA any hopes of freelancing were left behind.

What advice would you give someone who was interested in writing something or working for FASA?

First, and this may seem stupid, but read and write. Without a knowledge base to fall back on and the ability to communicate those ideas you can't go far. I always tell people to don't worry so much about the number crunching but tell me a story. Tell me what interests you in the universe (in this case SR). Don't try to second guess my ideas for the future of SR...it will never happen. I need to think 2   years down the road. There's no point in you trying to do that. What I like to see is a person with good solid ideas based in the SR universe and using something that doesn't get much attention. In other words tell me something that interests you. That's why I stated earlier that there is no real gaming background (besides playing games) - everything you read you should be able to use...history, philosophy, science, magic, sci-fi, mystery.

Next...just write. There are many outlets for writing besides actual game product and face facts with only 8 products a year (for SR) it's tough to crack the big time. Use all other the sources...I read all the submissions to Shadowland magazine and comment on them. I receive all of the Scrawls from the Sprawls the Amateur Press Association Shadowrun product. I check out web pages. I read other game material by other companies. So if you are active the better the chance I'll see what you can do.

Finally, don't just send in a single proposal and think that's it. Keep sending things in. Many times in reading a proposal, the theme may be so foreign to anything I'm working on at any given time that I may just not like it because of that. So send other things in.

The final and single biggest point I can make is that freelance writing is a lot like batting in baseball. The greet hitters are those that hit over .300. What that means is that they get 3 hits for every 10 at bats. That means they make an out the other 7 times. It takes time an effort to make it as a writer and even once your foot is in the door doesn't meant that reject means you are no good. For Missions, for instance, which consists of 4 adventures, I received over 21 proposals, which means 17 people get rejected, so even names like Steve Kenson get a no thanks letter. It doesn't mean Steve is a bad writer or that he won't work for me again. All it means is that on this single project there were 4 better ideas.

Our submission guidelines are on our web page. (www.fasa.com)

How long have you been playing Shadowrun?

I've been playing since just after 2nd edition. Actually I read 2nd Ed, in manuscript form (because it was one of Sharon's first gigs at FASA). I am in most cases I am the GM now.

Do you still play on a regular basis?

Yep, I play SR at least minimum of once a month. More often in the winter when I'm not a convention or my players aren't.

What is your favorite type of character to play?

My favorite character was my first, a gator shaman named Bayou Earl. Earl came to Seattle from the swamps around New Orleans. He spoke creole and very little street talk and lived most of his time in the sewers because that's where the gators were. He was disgusting and unkempt, look like a total anachronism in Seattle but he was fun to play.

As a class I like shamans because they need to be different based on their totems. But my favorite class I believe is the Rigger. That's why I have gone nuts in trying to make the Rigger 2 book so over-the-top. As I have stated, nothing is cooler to me than having a bunch drones under the control of one guy, all flying or moving down a hallway with some humans on a full out assault. That image to me is the image of Shadowrun!

How much of the Hardcore Cyberpunk (ala Gibson) do you see as the basis of Shadowrun? Is it a core background, or merely a light backdrop splashed (and sometimes overshadowed) by Magic, Elves, and the other "Fantasy" aspects of the game.

We seem to live in the post cyberpunk world and those that love it won't let me forget it. *GRIN* I was not here for the early Shadowrun concept meetings but I know what we have and what developed out of those meeting. FASA knew Cyberpunk was going to come out (by R. Talsorian) so our take was to take many of the futuristic trappings and give it a twist. We created a world, a new mini-genre if you will, though some prefer to think of it as fantasy game set in the cyberpunk future. Others prefer to think of it a cyberpunk game with fantasy elements. My job (and FASA position) is that the game/world is such a combination of both that something new was created...that reflects it's parts but in essence is something wholly new.

Going along with that, how dark and gritty do you view the Shadowrun world? I know every player has their own opinion of the Shadowrun world, and what Shadowrunners are. Do you view them as the "good guys", the "Bad guys", or something in between?

Geez, that's a tough one on many levels. In my opinion I think that the world of Shadowrun is actually much more noir than cyberpunk .   ery, very individual, very much your own man and it's me against them (in SR's case it's Corps...but it could easily be corruption or even evil or good). Can this make them anti-heroic, yes of course it can. Good Guys? Yep. Bad Guys? Just as easily.

I tend to look on the Shadowrunners as necessary, something that was discovered to be needed and then allowed to continue. At some point in the SR world's history what was created took on a life of it's own and here is where players/GMs I think miss the biggest point - they are autonomous. They have a life of their own. It makes for a more vibrant world if everything from corp. espionage by government agents to gang fights are actually in the realm of shadowrunning. My feeling is that shadowrunning has grown to mean anything. The corps. created something and that thing has spawned to haunt them because they no longer control it. They need to use it like everyone else but they can't determine the results like they could before.

Do you GM SR? If so, do you prefer being a GM or a Player?

Well I'm used to being the GM (I do like the control - hee hee!). Actually, I like being a GM because it's great to play director and offer up the beginning of the story so that I can watch the story unfold when it get into the players hands. Of course, being a player is much easier to do but it allows you to explore different personalities and themes you normally never would do. Being a player is much more escapism than GM.

What exactly are your duties as Shadowrun Line Developer?

Boy you are asking all of tough ones aren't you...

[Editors note: Well, we could have asked a few questions about your cats, but this isn't a pet magazine.. :)]

Any Line Developer at FASA is the final decision maker for the game universe they are in charge of. Think of Line Developer as Producer/Director of a movie. I'm in charge of everything from the ideas to approving anything that has the SR logo on it. Think of the writers and actors... it's my job to line the writers up provide them with a skeleton of idea and they perform (write), if I do my work (pre-concepts, product focus, universe continuity etc.) then have an easier time doing theirs. More I allow them to be creative and to know what I need and want the better they can perform. In many ways you can't see my hand in a product and yet without me the product doesn't exist.

Besides the esoteric level that I described above. I must read and develop (which means continuity/rules edit) every product produced by FASA for my line including novels. I am the SR spokesperson which means I do any and all PR for SR including conventions, answering   's on-line, on the phone etc. I approve anything that gets the SR logo on it... which includes everything from reading Shadowland submissions to deciding what we will give away at GenCon. Finally, I also get approval/development on anything created for SR but not strictly by me. The card game for instance and the upcoming SR Computer game are two of the most recent examples.

I know you have several Pet Peeves concerning Shadowrun. Could you tell us a few of them? Also, what is your opinion of Immortal Elves, Horrors, and all the really big, oddball stuff that has crept into SR over the years?

Geez...my reputation precedes me!

I started my pet peeve list because there are thing in Shadowrun that I feel were never fully though about before they were implemented. Of course those are the things that everyone wants to know about because, of course there are inconsistencies with what went before them and what needs to happen next. Most are from those that came before me because I feel they had great ideas and so thoroughly mis-fired on them that they became a hindrance to my job and to any future continuity that I may want to create.

In no particular order the biggest are...

1. ED/SR links
2. Immortal Elves
3. Spell Locks
4. Incomplete World

Again just so people fully understand.. it's not that I don't like any of the ideas above...it's just that how they are implemented and how they function in MY UNI ERSE AS OF RIGHT NOW and the problems and lack of forethought mean THEY DO NOT WORK AS THEY SHOULD. In many cases they make no sense at all.

I have other pet peeves dealing with gaming as a whole...

1. People who refuse to let games be fun.
2. People who place the real world over a game universe to find flaws
3. People who refuse to understand that it's important to adapt their playing style to the entire group
4. People who refuse to use their imagination and force me to use it for them
5. Bigots

And in my opinion the thing that drives me the most crazy!

1. People who refuse to accept the spirit of the game and insist that it's more important to exploit the holes of the universe and system strictly for their own benefit.

OK, I can understand the Immortal Elves and the Spell Locks... there's lot's of inconsistencies with those. However, what are you're thought's on the SR/ED Links (Specifically, why is it a peeve.) Also, what are your thoughts on the "Incomplete World" of SR, and can you tell us of any plans to complete the world?

This is tough because I will try an comment on both of these without pointing fingers because in the long run there is no real reason to do that. While I acknowledge that those creators who came before me made excellent decisions (heck, I wouldn't even be discussing any of this with you if they hadn't), some things weren't given the same focus and energy and in the long run both were not really strongly though about before implemented.

ED/SR links suffer from the same problems as Immortal Elves. Poor design and execution. They created ED and then after the fact added the SR links. ED was not created from the outset to be Pre-SR, if it had my guess it would be very different. By making the links they assumed that ED would benefit from SR what never occurred was that SR would suffer simply from the from the fact that it comes AFTER! ED being sooooo very different in how magic works, game tone, characters, world, etc. - these thing are now left up to me to alter my game to fit, because ED did it first in a magical cycle. What I inherited is a series of questions of why and when my game will change to fit the events as everyone already knows will happen. That was irresponsible of the creators that went before me because they thought, like immortal elves, it would be fun to do but never really figured out how it works, leaving me to back figure events, manipulate my world and game to match something that was not there when SR was created.

The lack of a complete world bothers me more than anything else. To set the record straight. The world was never fleshed out. Only the North American Continent. Everything written about the world was created as need on the spot. I REALLY HATE THAT!!!!!! That means every time I need to expand the world I have to go through all kind of products looking for the one reference here to India... one reference there for Amazonia... another reference here to Japan. While very cool, it leaves the player with the sense that all of that was already done and all we are doing is waiting to put the next place out. That can't be further from the truth!

The problem with fleshing the world out at this point is that doing the entire world is like doing a project that never gets seen. It takes the full amount of time by me and the freelancers to produce the world. Plus doing it in a sit down and lets flesh it fashion out means that stuff begins to feel the same. While I have ideas about the world and what's where - writing it all down and then making sure that input from players our international publishers, freelancers, etc. make the areas exciting to Shadowrun in is another major time block. Finally at that time would I release the info to the public. So they only way that makes sense if or me to flesh out areas as they come up (like in the Cyberpirates book).

It's just very frustrating because in both of the examples above I feel that by doing the work at the creation of the game world would have resolved so many problems that I encounter now. Instead I am locked into continuity I did not create and I'm forced to make sense out of bunches of factoids that may or may not be based on anything other than the writer thought it might be cool to add. It makes my job that much harder and by not taking care of the sloppiness at the beginning I am held responsible to the fans and must constantly patch holes in the mixing and matching those who went before didn't think about.

What do you like to do to relax?

Read comic books, watch sports, play soccer and baseball, watch movies, gaming, gaming, gaming, gaming

What was the last good movie you saw?

5th Element! See it immediately if you haven't seen it. American action with European style. Par excellence. Realize that Face/Off opens tonight and that may push 5th Element off the top spot.

[Editors note: This interview was conducted in late June, so this bit is a tad out of date..]

What other Role Playing Games, if any, do you play or GM?

I do try and play games still (yeah time seems to escape me lately) - Besides SR. I play a Earthdawn on a regular basis and BattleTech when we get a game going. Other RPG's I enjoy are Feng Shui and Call of Cthulhu. I have a weak spot for DC Heroes but haven't played it in a while. I usually read more games than I play. Right now I'm reading both Deadlands and The Legends of the Five Rings RPG.

As for card games...Shadowfist, BattleTech, Mythos, Legend of the Five Rings and of course the Shadowrun Card game...We have color demo cards just in today - AWESOME!

I also have been going back to my roots playing board/war games including the great Avalon Hill collection. If you have never played the board game Civilization...do so if you can. Others include Axis and Allies, Britannia, Dune, and beginning to learn Squad Leader and Supremacy.

I know there are some mixed feeling about the upcoming SR CCG among the SR Gamers. Tell us a little about the Card Game, if you would, and how close to the RPG it will be.

Yeah, this is a bit of a problem. There is a lot of anti-card game hype right now - it seems mainly to be focused against WOTC, which may or may not be deserved. Our game is 100   done by FASA. Myself, Mike Nielson and Jim Nelson are the creators/designers of the game. This game feels and plays so much like the RPG that I think fans of SR will be amazed. In fact a Shadowrun undertaken the CCG feels exactly like one in the RPG.

For those who haven't played the game or know nothing about it... you play runner gear and contacts out of you hand as well as cards called Challenges (which are played face down on an Objective (i.e. the objective of a Shadowrun and where you get you Reputation Points to win the game!). You don't encounter your own Challenges (you played them so you know what they are) but rather you encounter the Challenges played by the other player - so like the RPG your team of runners is never sure exactly what you will encounter at any given time on a Shadowrun. The game is super easy to learn. You can pick it up after two turns around the table and equally fun playing a two player or multi-player (funny thing that those two phrases which should mean the same thing, don't). There are cards that fans of Shadowrun will understand perfectly and shadowrunners from the fiction of the game.

I realize CCG world make RPGers nervous and I agree, but I think they will enjoy the SR CCG because it feels so much like the RPG and can actually give you hints and plots for future RPG setting... honestly, this is not hype but a pleasant effect of the game as we designed it.

What is one thing you would like to accomplish some day?

I would like to visit all 7 continents (well, 6...) and write a novel. I have visited 3 continents and have read many novels so I'm not there yet.

What is one thing about you that we never needed to know?

The only SR rule I can remember is the damage code of is the Ares Predator (9M). Everything else I need to look up. In real life...I prefer being cold to being hot.

Review: Target: UCAS

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Vital Stats
Title: Target:UCAS
Authors: Stephen Kenson, Linda Naughton, and Jonathon Jacobson
Publisher: FASA, July 1997
ISBN: 1-55560-314-9
Pages: 104
Suggested Retail Price: $15 American

I've been eagerly awaiting Target: UCAS since early March, when I got word from Mike at FASA that they would be using one of my nicknames as a decker comment in the book. I m on pages 16 and 52 with the name Fro and the tagline Leading by Example . Other people from the internet community that got taglines in the book are Bull, Spike, Granite, and CCCampbell. Needless to say, this added five easy sales of the book, and helped solidify FASA s reputation as one of the Good Guys in the RPG business.

Target: UCAS is set up like a standard Shadowrun book, an online post on Shadowland, with users interjecting comments where appropriate. It starts with the State of the Union address, with has been available on FASA's web page for awhile now. Then it moves to The Scott Commission, the group investigating Dunkelzahn s death.

The first location profiled is Boston, and in my opinion, it s rather bland. The catacombs, a giant underground maze of rooms and passageways, was the only thing that really grabbed my interest here.

Detroit was much better, especially with the background information on Ares and Damien Knight. Actually, there's more Ares and Mr. Knight than there is Detroit, but it s still an interesting read, and can certainly be worked into an existing campaign.

Chicago has been under siege from the bugs for awhile, does it deserve more space in official products? Well when something as big as what s going on there happens, it certainly does! If you're currently playing a campaign set in Chicago, don't read this book, it will spoil your fun. As a matter of fact, I consider the entire book to be a Gamemaster only book, no peeking for the players.

Without giving too much away for any players still reading this, I ll say that the method used to get rid of the bugs was interesting, and has some great possible side affects and plot hooks.

The last part of the book has Game Information , rules for playing ghouls, plot ideas for each of the cities presented, and information about the individual cities. This includes population, details on getting in and out of the city, and local prices for goods. My main beef with this section is the See Bug City for this information line, since I don t own Bug City, but that s a minor quibble.

The book's layout is well done, the cover art excellent. The interior art is a lot more subtle and darker than previous FASA products, and looks good to me. There's also little bugs crawling across the Chicago section, a nice touch. The entire book is heavy on the text, and very heavy on 'shadowtext'. My main gripe is a lack of maps, two half page maps, one for Detroit, one for Boston. I feel more attention could have been given to them, with at least a couple maps for each city.

Altogether, a worthy edition to any Shadowrun library, and a needy addition if you have or will be running in Chicago sometime soon.

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