

CYBERPUNK[®]

Thicker than Blood



An Official Cyberpunk 2020[®] Adventure
by **Alison Brooks**

CYBERPUNK

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An Official *Cyberpunk 2020*®

Adventure

by Alison Brooks

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Contents

Prologue: First Blood	4
Part One: Beginnings	6
Part Two: Education 2020	11
Part Three: All the Lonely People	20
Part Four: Investigations	24
Part Five: A Shot in the Dark	29
Part Six: The Worm Turns	35
Part Seven: It's a Wrap!	42
Part Eight: Main Referee Characters	46

PROLOGUE: FIRST BLOOD

Alys Grant stares disbelieving into the phone. "Say again," she requests faintly.

The message is repeated. She remains silent. "Do you want us to call—"

"No!" She stirs herself. "Tell no one. If anything turns up, call me. No one else."

She touches the disconnect button. The screen goes blank. She stares at it. Her hands, shaking but possessed of a life of their own, fumble for a ganja stick. She puts it to her lips. The stick flares in self-ignition. She draws hard, several times, until the shakes subside. Then she keys the bulletin board for messages for her.

Nothing.

Nothing.

They might have gone directly to the corporation, in which case she's finished, whatever happens. But that assumes they know. More likely, it's a straight kidnapping, and they're toying with her, letting her sweat. She scowls into the screen. Everyone knows that the safest way of dealing with kidnappers is to sit quiet and when they deign to make their demands, obey. Hell with that.

Determination restored, she presses DIAL. It's a mobile phone, with no visual; when it's answered, the background is loud. Might be music, might not. Never can tell, these days.

"Sake Falle? I'm calling in one of those favors... The problem's an extraction. Now listen..."

Synopsis

A businesswoman hires the PCs to recover her kidnapped son. This starts out as a simple investigation leading to an extraction, but becomes more complicated when they discover that the son, Jase, has been willingly abducted. Jase wishes to remain with the woman, the surrogate mother who gave birth to him, and who loves him, unlike his official mother.

Whether the PCs decide to return Jase and collect their pay, or to help him escape, they become the targets of assassination attempts. This is because their employer was in fact raising Jase under instructions from her company — Jase is part of a research project into improved human-computer interfaces. Their employer does not want the company to know of her failure to keep Jase safe.

Involving the PCs

Most PC groups consist of a balanced range of PCs, which present no difficulties in justifying their recruitment to this scenario. Here are a few ideas for including the various types of characters.

Rocker

It is unlikely that a Rocker group would be hired for this scenario, although Rockers “daylighting” as investigators will be perfectly suitable.

Solo

These are traditional employees for dubious tasks, and should present no difficulties.

Netrunner

Netrunners are good at obtaining information, and so they are useful in an investigation.

Techie

The ability of Techies to handle information gathering equipment is useful, and so makes them valuable in an investigation.

Medic

If things come down to a firefight, the employer doesn't want the extraction bungled just because the team doing the extraction couldn't keep the target alive.

Corporate

These might be ambitious juniors that Alys Grant has been able to observe and decides are suitable. Furthermore, she knows just where to find them afterwards...

Cop

These should be competent at investigations. Someone along the line must have the idea that kidnapping is against the law, and that the Law should take a hand in dealing with it. On the other hand, a PC cop may be crooked, or otherwise looking to make some cash on the side by marketing his skills.

Nomad

Another traditional hireling for dubious tasks.

Fixer

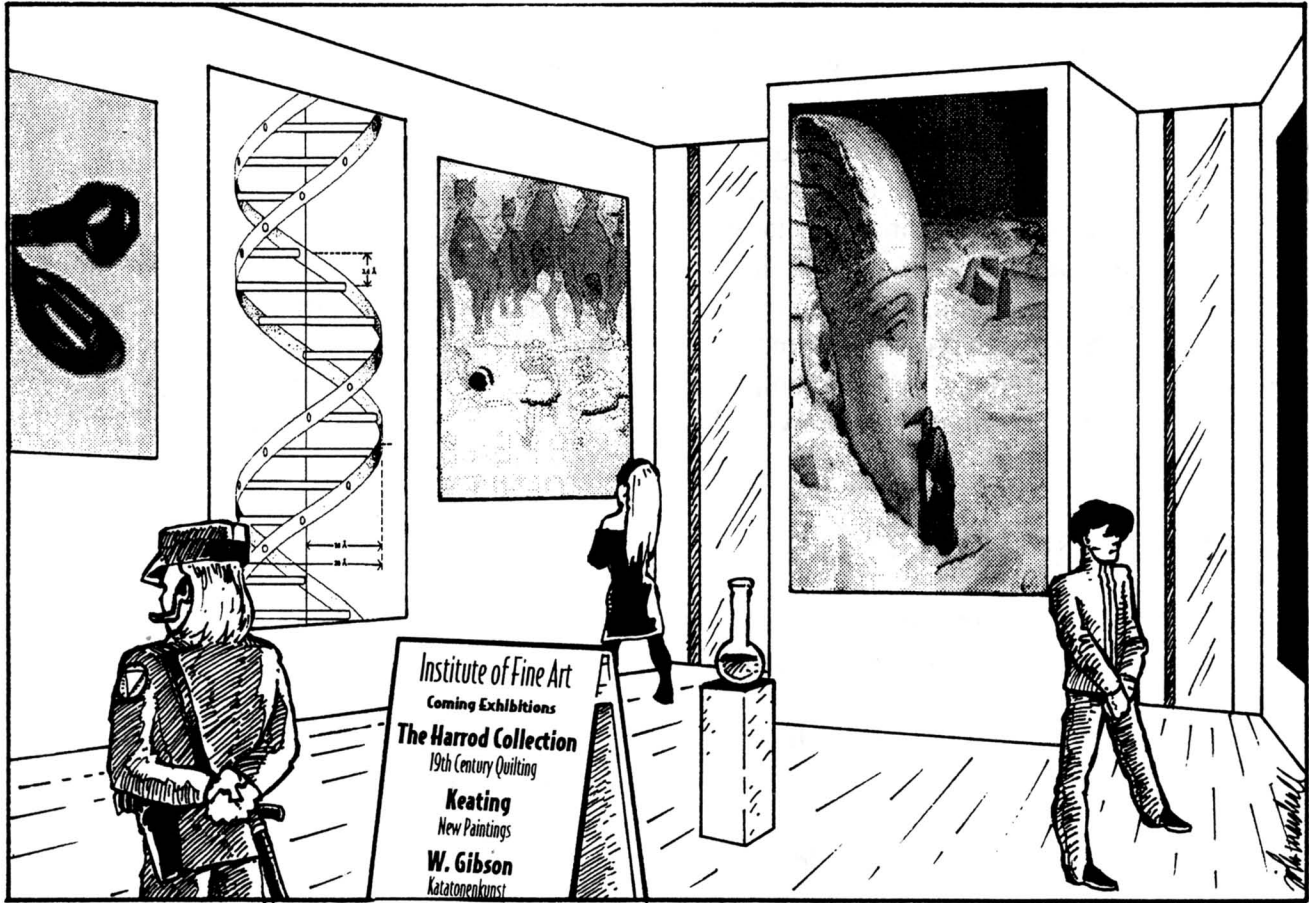
A fixer has the contacts to make a good investigator, and is a traditional hireling for dubious tasks.

Media

See “The Media Problem,” in Part 1.

PART ONE: BEGINNINGS

The PCs are contacted by Sake Falle, a Solo, who has an offer of employment. If the PCs are interested, they are introduced to their employer, whose son has been kidnapped. She offers 10,000 eb for his safe return. They are given a file with details of her son Jase, who was kidnapped from school. The PCs are not told who their employer is.



Scene 1: Just An Ordinary Day...

It's an ordinary day in the city. Pollution levels have reached classified status, the smog cowl the sun, the sky's an orange glow, but it's hot. Body count looks set to beat yesterday's record; hot weather always brings out the worst in people. The heat makes the city sound brittle; noise rattles around, echoless.

The PCs are contacted about an extraction job. The details of this contact are left to the discretion of Referees to match according to their particular campaign. Possible contact methods include an ad in

Solo of Fortune, or the local netrunners' bulletin board. These are given in Players' Handout 1.

Referees should feel free to modify the details as desired, and to fit the scenario into an established campaign. For instance, the part of Sake Falle could easily be taken by an established Referee character from an existing campaign. It would probably be most appropriate for the Referee character to be a Solo with an ambivalent relationship with the PCs; or perhaps a friend of some or all of the PCs could act initially as an intermediate in good faith, to be faced with a moral dilemma when subsequently ordered to betray them by someone who has a hold over the Referee character — either an owed favor, or blackmail. In this case, the

PCs might be able to join with the Referee character to deal with their treacherous employer.

If Sake Falle is to be used, the process could be reversed, with the Referee character introduced to the PCs in an adventure before this scenario is used (if you can bear to wait!). It always pays for the players and their characters to have some sort of relationship with important Referee characters.

In any case, they are informed that freelancers are wanted for an extraction job, and if they want it, they should present themselves at Cloud Nine, a tourist trap restaurant at the top of a very tall tower block. This has a very good view of the city, smog allowing. (Actually, the view is best at night — the lights from street lamps, buildings and vehicles have a certain grandeur; by day, the pollution is more obvious).

The decor is in airy shades of blue and white (with plenty of chrome and glass reflecting the views from the windows that occupy the whole of the exterior wall). The waiters have skin in matching colors; though their racial origins are mixed, all their skins are painted or nanoengineered blue and white. They are otherwise typical waiters — and undisguisedly arrogant.

A dress code enforced. The PCs can find this out from the city database (an Easy Library Search roll); a Moderate Streetwise roll is needed for them to recognize that this is the sort of place that would have one. During the daytime, an Easy Wardrobe/Style roll suffices to pass muster, depending on current fashions and the PCs' usual look. Nakedness, however stylish, is not acceptable. If any of the PCs are confirmed scruffs, allow the more stylish among them to advise the others for a 1-3 point bonus on their rolls if the advice is acted upon.

Blatant weapons are not normally taken into Cloud Nine, but when the PCs request Table 6, the waiter doesn't mention their hardware, but simply escorts them to a reserved table. (If the PCs turn up earlier, they are politely told that the table is reserved, and if they claim to be the people it's reserved for, they are politely told that that is impossible, as the table is reserved for a party to arrive at 1100). Once seated at the table, they are soon approached by Sake Falle. An Average Awareness/Notice roll will spot that this isn't just a badly-dressed Beaver. Although she wears an unfashionable blue jumpsuit, there is a heavy handgun stuffed into one pocket, and her eyes are calm and alert. Any PCs who make a Difficult Streetwise roll

recognize her; she's a cool Solo with a rep for quiet results.

"Needing dosh, choombas?" she opens.

If the PCs' response to the offer of money is "no," she shows her teeth (it must be a smile) turns and leaves. An Easy Awareness/Notice roll will allow the PCs to spot that the reason she's prepared to turn her back on them is all those mirrors, in which she can see any hostile moves on their part.

If the PCs' response is "maybe" or "yes," or if they attempt to find out more about the catch (there's always a catch) she says, "I'm agent, not employer. 10K euro for completion to employer's satisfaction."

If the PCs agree, she stands. "Let's go."

If asked where, "To meet employer. At SGJ Institute."

A taxi is waiting down at the street to take them.

If the PCs are Difficult

There are always players who will make life difficult for a Referee, and some will refuse an unspecific offer of employment. This is partly the Referee's fault; the PCs have not been kept impoverished enough.

You can persuade the PCs that they ought to look for Sake Falle by applying an immediate financial squeeze. Perhaps their Trauma Team subscriptions are due, or there is an outstanding bill from the last time they were hospitalized. Their car is involved in a crash, and they need to pay Trauma fees and repair or buy a new vehicle. A friend or relative suddenly needs money to pay a fine or insurance. The PCs find their vehicle stolen, or their flophouse gutted by fire and their possessions destroyed. Their mate-of-the-moment wants to eat real food for a change, or some really great rock concert tickets are going at 200 eb a pair.

Continue as though there is no problem (never let the players know when they've upset your plans; it encourages them), until later in the same day, then apply the financial squeeze. If your players aren't bright enough to remember the offer of money — well, why are you Refereeing for such Bozos, anyway? When they remember, allow them to have an anxious chase around the city, trying to find people who can tell them where Sake Falle might be found, and then to find Sake herself. After all, Sake might have found some other employees by now, so they'll have to hustle...

The Media Problem

The most difficult PCs for this scenario are not those with contrary players, but Medias. Obviously, a Media is a most unsuitable person to be involved in a secret hostage-extraction. If there is a single Media among the PCs, Sake makes contact with the others, and the Media is not invited to the briefing. If the PCs are known associates of the Media, they are warned pointedly that there must be no publicity, and that they will be held responsible for the Media, if they choose to involve him or her.

If the PCs are a group of Medias, then it must be that Sake Falle is truly desperate to find a competent group. The Medias are sworn to secrecy, before and after the event. Still, a Media group would have an advantage, in that kidnappers would never suspect a group of Medias to be on a covert mission, right?

Naturally, Sake and her employer will not be relying on sheer goodwill to keep Medias quiet after the operation — see “If the PCs Decide to Go to the Media,” in Part 5.

Scene 2: At the Institute

The Institute of Fine Art is an expansive old building from the “New Millennium” school of architecture of the 2000s. PC Medias, and any others with an arts background, know that it contains reproductions and originals of paintings, ceramics and needle craft from around the world and through history. Security guards frisk visitors at the entrance for weapons and suspicious packages that might be bombs. There have been a number of well-publicized attacks on artwork by crazies and political protesters. If any PCs insist on wearing obvious armor heavier than kevlar, they are not automatically refused entrance, but the search for weapons on them is more thorough.

Any PC Cops may evade the dress codes and weapons search, provided they’re in uniform and carrying ID; or if they are in plain clothes, carrying ID indicating that they’re plainclothes officers, and make an Easy Persuasion roll to indicate that they have legitimate business inside. This extends to the rest of the PCs only if the Cop makes an Average Authority roll.

Apart from this exception, weapons must be deposited at a security booth immediately inside the building —

something Sake does without having to be told. Suspicious packages are dismantled by demolitions experts and, if necessary, taken away for controlled explosion. If the PCs are carrying concealed weapons, they must make a Hide roll opposed by the guards’ Awareness/Notice skill.

The guards conduct a more thorough search if the PCs have been difficult or sassy, on PCs wearing obvious armor, and on Cops who failed their Persuasion or Authority rolls. Give them a +3 to +6 bonus on their search (+3 if the PCs have simply given them lip; +4 on armored types; +5 on lippy armored types; +6 if they have serious suspicions — e.g., Cops trying to abuse their authority).

If weapons are found, the PCs are refused entrance unless they can make an Average Persuasion roll to convince the guards that the weapons are solely for personal defence. If they succeed, the weapons are deposited with the rest, and the characters are grudgingly allowed inside.

In short, if the PCs are to meet their employer, they must dress reasonably respectably, and leave behind at least their more obvious weapons. This is not a coincidence. Their employer doesn’t want to meet them while they are heavily-armed, and their ability to get into Cloud Nine and the Institute is a way of testing whether they have any chance of making inquiries at the Bartholomew School without causing offense.

Note: Play out the conversations for the Persuasion skills, as well as making the rolls. Secretly give the PCs a modest bonus if they are convincing. Unconvincing talk should only be penalized if you’re sure the players can do better than that: not all players are good at fast-talk.

Institute Guards

INT 8	REF 8	TECH 5
COOL 8	ATTR 5	LUCK 5
MA 6	BODY 7	EMP 6

Cyberware

Varies; single random roll on cyberware table (*Cyberpunk 2020*®, p. 20).

Skills

Awareness +5, Brawl +6, Dodge +6, Handgun or Rifle +4, Human Perception +4, Interrogate +3, Streetwise +2

Equipment

Light armor jacket, steel helmet, Sternmeyer Type 35 pistol, mastoid commo

Combat Scores

Initiative: +8

Stun/Death Save: 7

Body Type Modifier: -2

Sternmeyer pistol (#Shots 8/ROF 2/DAM 3D6/VR):
+12

Armor: Head/Torso/R.Arm/L.Arm 14

Scene 3: Meeting with the Employer

The inside of the building is light and airy. There is a display advertising upcoming exhibitions of ancient 19th Century quilting, and paintings by some guy called Keating.

Sake leads them through halls of displays to the Andy Warhol collection, and an annex that is obviously in the process of being redecorated. An Average Notice or an Easy Electronic Security roll (allow the players to choose which) will allow the PCs to notice that the surveillance cameras have been turned off.

"Wait," Sake instructs them, and leaves.

There is a wait of about half a minute. Then Sake returns, with another woman.

The newcomer is a pale-skinned redhead power dressed in the latest Corporate fashions. An Average Style roll identifies her earrings as by DaMar, one of the more exclusive designers. Their nameless employer examines each of the PCs briefly. Then she says: "Sake tells me you are prepared to work for me. The terms are these. The job is child's play. Literally." She smiles thinly, tensely. "My son has been kidnapped. The kidnapers have not yet contacted me. I will pay 10,000 eb for the safe extraction of my son, and an extra thousand for dealing with the kidnapers, provided that my son is extracted safely. Failing that, I will pay one thousand eb for his location, provided that the kidnapers are not alerted."

The PCs may try haggling, but she does raise the price and, if they don't accept this, terminates the interview. (see "If the PCs Refuse the Deal," below).

If the PCs accept, she adds: "It must be understood that there is to be no publicity given to this case, whatever happens. I will hold you responsible for this." (See "The Media Problem," above).

With their agreement, their employer hands a file to their leader (unless it's obvious, she chooses the one

with the highest EMP + Leadership.) "I will instruct my son's school to cooperate, within reason, but obviously you will need to act as though you were civilized people, in order not to attract attention and publicity to yourselves."

If the PCs directly ask her name, she replies: "My son is in danger already. There is no need for you to know my name, and it could increase the risk to my son."

Since this appears to be a kidnapping, and the usual motive for kidnapping, ransom, is missing, the PCs are liable to question Alys to get some background about the job. She says that she has no political connections beyond that which any Corporate has; her Corporation is not getting involved in the business for profile reasons. "Do you really think that our usual operatives aren't being watched? It is better if you do not know who I work for; that way you won't need to be exceptional actors to convey the impression that you are freelancers not connected with them."

She leaves. Sake is standing between the PCs and the door. "Wait." She prevents them from leaving for a couple of minutes, to allow their employer to get away without being followed. If any of the PCs want to try facing her down, feel free; even if the PC wins, their employer probably has slipped away — and Sake Falle is not pleased with the PC...

The PCs may choose to examine the file immediately, in which case the decorators return to the annex to resume work. They shoo the PCs out of the area ("Closed to the public"), and if necessary call Security to eject the them.

Careful questioning (and an Easy Interview roll) elicits hints that the workers were bribed by Sake to take a long lunch hour while the PCs were having their meeting.

The PCs may examine the file in the public areas of the Institute, or they may prefer to take it somewhere safer.

If the PCs Refuse the Deal

If the PCs try to back out after meeting the employer, they are allowed to. However, they then find that they have problems — not a predictable assassination attempt on them, but the rather more insidious effect on their reputation. Word gets out that they turned down a job, and rumor starts to spread that the PCs just aren't up to jobs that require subtlety and intelligence. Future offers of employment start to dry up. The characters find that as the jobs dry up, their reputation goes down because they are not getting the jobs, which

“proves” that they can’t be up to much. The word gets round fast enough that the PCs might reconsider the job to save their rep.

Of course, if the PCs look as if they are nosy (and Alys Grant is paranoid enough to interpret almost any curiosity as nosiness) then they find themselves the victims of well-planned assassination attempts — like netrunners finding their bodies attacked while they are off in the Net (see also Part 5). Feel free to be as nasty as you like, and wish the PCs good luck in finding out who is doing it, and then stopping them...

File Contents

Most importantly, the file contains a credit transfer for 1000 eb down payment.

It also contains a recent photograph of the child, along with a few bare details (see handout, below; Atlas Games grants you permission to photocopy this handout and provide it to your players in the course of this adventure).

There is also a contact number; if the PCs attempt to trace the address belonging to the number, an Average Library Search roll shows that it is an unlisted number; a Very Difficult roll reveals that it is an unregistered one.

And they have no idea who their employer is.

MISSING PERSON DATAFILE

NAME: Jase

AGE: nine years

HEIGHT: 1350 mm

WEIGHT: 39 kg

EYES: Brown

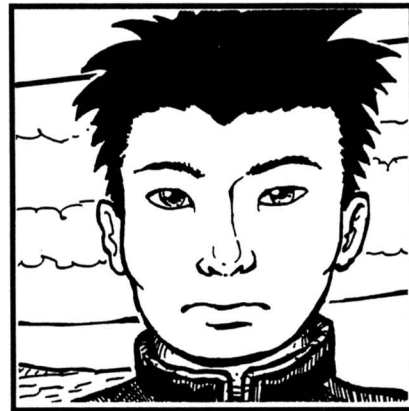
HAIR: Black

SKIN: Tanned

Jase was attending the Bartholomew School of Advanced Studies when he went missing.

There were no signs of violence; the child simply vanished.

CONTACT: 555-9013



Recent Photograph

PART TWO: EDUCATION 2020

The PCs investigate Jase's school; they may make progress towards finding the kidnapper.

Big business needs two types of people in the 2020s: intelligent, highly skilled ones to design new products and keep business running; and an unskilled mass to be passive consumers, and to do the jobs that are too badly paid, dangerous or awkward for robots.

Although robots can be programmed to cook soy-burgers, it requires less capital outlay to use human labor; humans can simply be laid off if the job becomes redundant; and robots are distressingly prone to breakdowns from smoke, grease on floors, and hot oil burning sensitive cybernetics. And, even if you need a skilled worker, one using a chipped skill is cheaper than one who has wasted time learning it. The lack of creativity that chipped skills bring is not a problem for most jobs.

Schools have adapted to the requirements of business. Most schools are little more than child-minding facilities where any education acquired by the students is incidental.

The Bartholomew School is not like this.

The aim of the school is to give the children a thorough grounding in everything they will need to succeed in the Corporate world. Academic achievement is given the highest priority; and competition of all sorts is strongly encouraged. There are annual prizes in all subjects, and team and individual sports are stressed, developing toughness, fitness and physical skills, tactical sense, team spirit and individual initiative, as well as the will to win.

Obviously, children are expected to become computer literate. Philosophy is a major subject — it teaches pupils to work things out for themselves. Other academic subjects are fully represented, and the children are expected to learn things that most people would prefer to look up on a datanet, or obtain via chipped skill. The rationale is that the more trained the mind, and the more it knows, the more it can gain from the benefits of modern technology. It also helps the mind to be alert to hidden biases in other sources of information. The children are not fitted with cyberware or implants, being too young.

Children are taught in small classes, in which both teamwork and competition are stressed, as well as being expected to complete assignments on their own

in their free time. Typically, classes run from 7.00-12.00 and 13.00-17.00, including two hours sports.

City Database Information: The Bartholomew School

Your players may want to do some homework before contacting the school. On the other side of this page is a sheet of information available from the city's public access database. Any netrunner should be able to find this information with minimal difficulty. Included in the database is a map of the facility; however, there is no legend online. (A map key for you, the GM, is located on p. 13.) You may photocopy this handout for personal use.

Scene 1: Making Contact

The players may decide to phone Ms. White for an appointment to visit the school; such politeness wins them +1 on a single Empathy skill roll with Ms. White. Alternatively, they may phone to state that they will be visiting, or simply turn up and demand to speak to her. Alys Grant has requested that Ms. White cooperate with them, but she is in such an instance cooler towards the PCs and less willing to volunteer suggestions as to who they might ask for further information.

If the PCs decide to attempt to break into the school, they are treated as burglars; teachers and pupils scream, run, and call for Security; Security attempts to catch them, beat them, and then hand them over to the cops for due process of law.

The Value of Manners

The Bartholomew School is an old-fashioned sort of place. It's not ignorant of the modern world (it wouldn't last long if it was), but children and staff are expected to behave with old-fashioned politeness and courtesy. So are visitors. If the PCs throw their weight about, or otherwise act naturally, staff and pupils quickly decide that they are boorish, uncivilized and (their ultimate insult) uneducated. They become less

CITY DATABASE

>SEARCH:

TO SEARCH, ENTER FIELD AND SEARCH STRING

>FIELD: SCHOOLS, STRING="BARTHLOMEW"

OK...SEARCHING...

SEARCH SUCCESSFUL. TEXT AND GRAPHIC AVAILABLE.

THANK YOU FOR USING CITY DATABASE.

[BEGIN TEXT]

Information: THE BARTHLOMEW SCHOOL

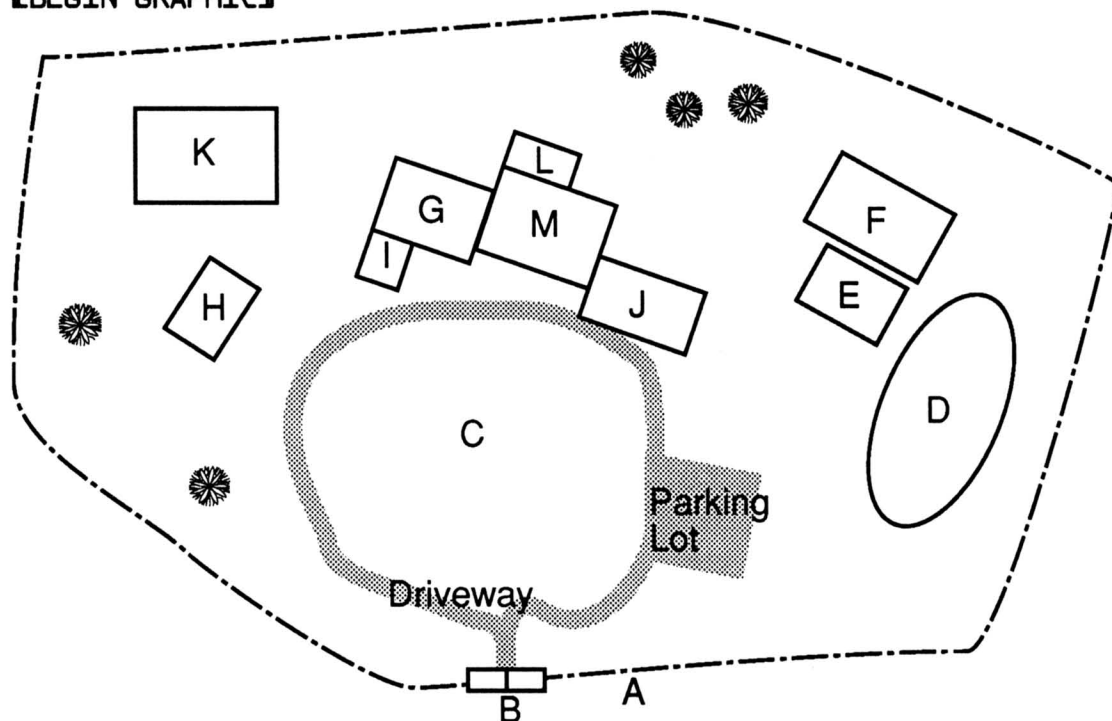
Founded 1996. Privately held corporation, majority shareholder (45%)
C F White.

The Bartholomew School is the city's premier private primary
educational establishment. 400 pupils, ages 4 to 11. 45% of the
students board at the school; the rest are day pupils. Head teacher
Carina White. Security by IntCop.

Phone 555-8791

[END TEXT]

[BEGIN GRAPHIC]



[END GRAPHIC]

and less cooperative, and if the PCs do not wise up, they appeal to Ms. White to have the PCs thrown out. If this happens, or if the PCs are rude to Ms. White herself, she gives them a warning that they are not on the Street now.

If their behavior does not improve, then they are politely but firmly escorted off the premises by security guards, and denied permission to visit the school in future. This would severely hinder their investigations...

The Setting

The Bartholomew school is set in its own grounds, surrounded by a security fence. When it was built, it was on the outskirts of a fashionable suburb; now it is surrounded by a shantytown (known as Hill View) populated by slum dwellers. The buildings are made of scrap, and almost all lack the basic amenities. Water is obtained from stand-pipes, refuse is emptied into open drains, lighting is generally by flashlights, and cooking is done on fires of wood and other flammables, or, among the more affluent residents, on camping stoves. It is, in short, barely distinguishable from thousands of slums in the Third World.

Self-respecting criminals stay well away from Hill View.

School Map (Legend)

A: Security fence. **B:** Gate. **C:** School garden. **D:** Sports ground. **E:** Changing rooms. **F:** Sports hall. **G:** Classrooms. **H:** Music rooms. **I:** Science labs. **J:** Admin Block. **K:** Dormitories. **L:** Kitchen. **M:** Hall.

Security Fence

A metal fence 3 meters high with overhangs both inwards and outwards, and topped with razor wire. On both sides of the fence run simple chain-and-post fences about a meter high and a meter from the fence. Within this, movement and IR sensors operate, radio-triggering an alarm at the main gate if anything bigger than a cat tries to get through. The sensors also alarm if tampered with. Someone good with hardware might be able to disable it, but this is an Extremely Difficult task, as the hardware is designed to be proof against tampering!

At the Main Gate

The gate is a standard type, with a guard post of bullet-proof glass protecting the guard who controls the gate

opening. A guard comes out to check visitors for weapons before the visitors are allowed through.

Four guards are on duty here; another four are patrolling the grounds. At night, the numbers are two and two. If there is trouble, they radio to IntCop for backup, which is contracted to arrive in 2D6 minutes in an AV-4 similar to that used by Trauma Team Inc; a dozen guards armed with assault rifles, submachine guns, and heavy autopistols.

The PCs are relieved of their weapons and electronically scanned for concealed weapons by two guards, while a third watches and the fourth radios the Admin block. The school secretary gives permission for them to enter. They are given electronic tags, and instructed that they must wear them while on the premises, then one of the guards escorts them to Ms. White.

On the way, they pass the school sports ground and garden. The sports ground has a SpringTurf™ surface marked with lines in different colors to denote half-sized pitches for football, baseball and handball, and running tracks.

The garden is a riot of color — petunias, daisies, four o' clocks, etc. A Difficult Awareness Roll is needed to spot that all the flowers are artificial except for a few struggling weeds.

Guard Stats

Stats

INT 7	REF 7	TECH 5
COOL 8	ATTR 6	LUCK 5
MA 6	BODY 7	EMP 8

Skills

Awareness +4, Brawling +7, Interrogate or Intimidate +4, Martial arts (random) +3, Melee weapon +3, Relevant gun skill +6, Stealth +4, Streetwise +4

Cyberware

Radio link (2 channels; to IntCop and to school administration center.) Additionally, single random roll on cyberware table (*Cyberpunk 2020*, p. 20).

Combat Scores

Initiative: +7
Stun/Death Save: 7
Body Type Modifier: -2
Colt AMT Model 200 (shots 8/ROF 1/Dam 4D6+1/VR): +13
Arasaka Minami 10 SMG (shots 40/ROF 20/Dam 2D6+3/VR): +13

Militech Ronin Assault Rifle (shots 35/ROF 30/Dam 5D6/VR): +13
Armor: Head/Arms/Legs 14, Torso 20

Scene 2: Interview with Ms. White

Ms. White is a woman in her late 60s, her white hair blue-rinsed to a pastel turquoise. She affects old-fashioned, flowing, frilly clothes of flowery prints. Her manner is equally flowery, and slightly rushed, since she is addicted to mild euphorics. The PCs may find that her attitude towards them seems overly familiar; the pupils react best to her in the role of an aunt or grandmother, and since she rarely leaves the school, the professional role has become second nature to her. If they are misled by her familiarity into thinking she's a soft touch, they will quickly find out otherwise; the role is restricted to the surface only.

Ms. White's office has the usual items, all modern and expensive: desk, data terminal, several upright seats, a corner with soft chairs around a coffee table for informal consultations, and so forth. The decor is a cool white, and decorated with prints of school life through the ages: an Ancient Greek gymnasium; a 19th Century governess; a log-cabin school from the Old West; and several 20th Century classroom scenes. Underneath the top of the desk are three buttons: green indicates to her secretary to provide a distraction in the form of a phone call; amber brings the secretary in with news that something has cropped up requiring Ms. White's immediate attention; red is a panic button, bringing the security staff at a run.

Assuming that the PCs behave reasonably, Ms. White answers their questions, and gives them permission to go around the school, provided that they do not disrupt lessons.

Ms. White's Information

"Well, let's see now my dears. The first we knew about this *distressing* business, most distressing indeed, the first we knew, as I say, or did I? Well, the first we knew was when Jase was not keyed into his dormitory that night. He had had his dinner at seven, and it was a free evening, you know. We expect our older children to be able to amuse themselves and budget their own time on the evenings when they don't have assignments.

"Naturally, of *course*, I instituted a search *straight* away, but there was no sign at all. The poor dear boy had simply *vanished!*"

Q & A

Ms. White happily expounds upon the school and how it works and also on Jase's school record.

Jase appears to have been a typical pupil, perhaps slightly more ruthless than average. His record is good but not outstanding for the school, except that he was consistently at the top in tests of reflexes. He was good at, and evidently enjoyed, music. He had been receiving additional computer science lessons, and obtained good marks.

If the PCs ask Jase's surname, or the name of his mother, Ms. White titters politely. "My dears, I never allow my children — I call them my children although of course they're not mine in that sense — to know each others' surnames. It can prejudice them towards each other, and lead to pecking orders based on who their parents are. A *dreadful* thing, my dears. After all, when they get out into the real world, they will be judged on their *own* merits, not their parents, and the child from the, well, not quite from the *Mallplex*, you know, but nearly, can end up at the top of the corporate ladder, and I would not want him to bear grudges against his schoolmates who ignored him just because they had richer parents!"

The PCs may observe that she has not answered their question. This is because she has been instructed by Alys Grant not to. If they press the case, she claims that she doesn't want to risk their telling the other children Jase's surname, that the information is confidential, irrelevant, and otherwise unnecessary. In short, she avoids answering.

If the PCs accuse her of this, she smiles. "And now, perhaps my dears, you will want to get about your investigations."

If the PCs continue to pursue the matter, she presses one of the distraction buttons; if they threaten her, she will press the panic button. If the panic button is needed, she has the PCs escorted off the premises. If the PCs prevent her from getting to the panic button, a successful Interrogation or Intimidation roll opposed by Ms. White's Authority and Cool obtains the information, but Ms. White has the PCs removed from the school as soon as possible. She also informs Alys Grant, who may arrange some unpleasant surprises for them (see Part 5).

Ms Carina White

INT 8	REF 5	TECH 4
COOL 8	LUCK 7	ATTR 4
MA 3	EMP 9	BODY 4

Skills

Authority +7, Awareness +5, Education +9, Forgery +3, Gambling +4., Human Perception +6, Interrogation +5, Pick Lock +4, Social +2, Streetwise +2, Teaching +3

Scene 3: The Investigation

There are many ways for the PCs to investigate the problem, and the Referee must use judgement in serving up clues. There are two main ways for investigations to go sour and prove a flop for both players and Referee: the PCs may flail around failing to discover a single clue; alternatively, the answers may be handed to them on a plate denying them the feeling that they have cleverly ferreted out the clues and worked out what they meant.

The Referee must keep the investigation exciting. Clues must come at the right frequency, and preferably in the right order. In fiction, the author has complete control over the approaches taken by the characters, and the speed at which they deduce the truth; in a role-playing game the Referee has no direct control over either of these. On the other hand, you have direct contact with your audience (the players), and can start things moving again when they become bogged down or start to lose interest. A fiction writer has to guess how much talk, investigation, and red herrings the audience will put up with before becoming bored.

You, the Referee, are better placed than the author of this scenario to judge your players. For this reason, the scenario does not contain a fiendishly complex investigation where the PCs must ask exactly the right question of exactly the right person out of the 450 in the school in order to get any ideas. Instead, you should judge the PCs. Make them work for their information, keep them interested, and don't hand it to them on a plate. Feel free to throw in extra red herrings if they are making progress too quickly, or if they short-circuit the investigation with a leap of deduction.

If, for instance, one of the first questions they ask Ms. White is whether they can interview the ancillary staff, then have Ms. White mention that Dr. Carey has been

sick since Jase went missing, but of course he couldn't possibly have had anything to do with it...

If they are bogged down and persistently asking silly, unhelpful and useless questions, a Referee character could volunteer a piece of information which they can then follow. If they are convinced that they've interviewed everyone of interest, have (for example) Ms. White trot along and ask whether they've seen XX yet? Don't have XX be a simple source of information, but have XX mention that if they ask YY...

If they have the information, but don't seem to be making any headway with working it out, have a teacher (or child) express interest in how they are doing. Explaining their evidence to a third party may help them to see what is important.

Despite this, you mustn't let them get the idea that if they sit around being useless, a kindly Referee will give them further hints! If they need persuading to investigate harder, then at the end of the day, the PCs are escorted out of the school, and Sake Falle turns up to enquire whether they've made any progress, and expresses contempt at their lack of initiative. The contempt of Referee characters is often a good spur to PC endeavor. After this, if they are still appearing useless, Alys Grant is likely to get the idea that they are useless, and order them disposed of (see Part 5).

If the PCs Screw Up

It is quite possible for the PCs to offend someone at the school and get thrown out before they have a chance to complete (or even start!) their investigation. In this case, there are still ways they can approach the problem. They might infiltrate (or pose as members of) IntCop; they might try to break into the school or enter it via the Net; they might try asking the school's neighbors; they might follow pupils or staff members to their homes and question them there.

In this case, the investigation should be harder, and they PCs have difficulty in persuading anyone to help them. But if they work at it, the answers will still be possible...

The Clues

There are two sets of clues for the PCs to find. Dr. Carey is the red herring, and obviously the PCs must be persuaded to investigate him before going after the real culprit. The simplest way of doing this is to have Dr. Carey mentioned first, allow the PCs to chase off after

If the PCs decide to try and get into the school computer via the Net, the Referee should note that the computer is not connected to the Net at all times. This might mean the PCs “lurking around”, waiting for the computer to be uplinked. In the meantime, they are in NetSpace, waiting. It is up to the Referee as to what encounters they might have, if any, during the wait. If the Referee is feeling generous, they might come across potential sources of information, such as Dalmar Chang at play. They might come across a more-or-less neutral encounter, such as an outside Netrunner trying to access the school records for reasons unconnected with the case. They might have a dangerous encounter with a wandering computer virus, an anti-personnel program which has mutated and broken free, or a Netrunner who enjoys virtual combat.

Item	Type	Title	MU
B2, B3	Virtual reality	Complex Office (Currently loaded with an extremely detailed super-realistic medieval castle.)	20
B7	Alarm	Sports ground (linked with 4)	—
B8	TV Camera	Sports ground	—
B9	File	School Records — children	1
B11	Defense	Watchdog	5
C2	File	Inter-teacher memos	1
C4	Terminal	Teacher access	—
C5	Files	(For pupils’ use)	1
C6	Defense	Speed trap	4
C9	File	School records — teachers	1
D3	Videoboard	School messages	—
D4-6	Files	(For pupils’ use)	3
D7	Alarm	Head’s room	—
D8	Terminal	Head’s	—
D9	File	School records — IntCop and Upstairs Downstairs Inc	1
E3	Terminal	Secretary	—
E5	File	Equipment transactions	1
E6	Terminals	Children’s	—
E7	Defense	Bloodhound	3
E8	Defense	Krash	2
F4	TV Camera	Gate	—
F5	Control	Gate	—
F6	Alarm	At gate; linked to 19	—

Skills: Accounting, Education, Library Search, Mathematics, Programming, System Knowledge, Teaching

Donny Bierce, School Secretary

A competent young man of African-American descent, Donny secretly compiles information on the pupils and their parents for future use in networking or blackmail. This nets him a moderate extra income already, and he has every expectation of increasing returns over the years.

Donny knows ‘nothing useful; if he did, he would attempt to sell it to Alys Grant. However, he does control one of the computer terminals from which it would be easy for the PCs to discover Alys Grant’s name and address. He lets the PCs “accidentally” have access to the terminal if bribed with 500 eb, or if the PCs discover his blackmail activity and blackmail him in turn. The PCs could discover this by raiding the computer at his home, by noticing him making surreptitious notes, or by wondering how he can afford the flashy rings and earring on a school salary (Average Style roll to notice that the pieces are more expensive than expected). Obviously, he has a stack of reasons why he can afford these if he is asked; these include the pieces being family heirlooms, his being lucky at gambling tables (he might even claim to have a system, which he might consider selling), or his receiving gifts from a former lover of considerable wealth and free-spending habits.

Stats

INT 9	REF 4	TECH 6
COOL 7	ATTR 8	LUCK 5
MA 5	BODY 4	EMP 8

Skills

Accounting +4, Awareness +5, Human perception +3, Library Search +3, Persuasion +3, Programming +3, Seduction +2, Wardrobe +2

Guards

The guards are unable to tell the PCs anything significant. The guards on duty that shift reported nothing unusual. They have since been reassigned by IntCop to a research post in Antarctica.

IntCop

IntCop itself is a typical up-market security firm, which makes a living out of its reputation for doing the job well, and without a hidden agenda (unlike, say, Arasaka).

Computer access is well-protected. If the PCs succeed in ‘running through the defenses, or if they make a Very Difficult Persuasion roll (give them a bonus if their

argument makes it clear that the IntCop guards are not suspects, but that the PCs are looking for evidence against third parties) they will be allowed access to the security camera tapes covering the school gate. This shows a normal school day: day pupils arriving then leaving via car, helicopter, AV, or taxi; teachers arriving and leaving; normal deliveries of supplies; and an Upstairs Downstairs Inc vehicle arriving and leaving during the evening. A Difficult Notice roll allows the PCs to spot that the vehicle is searched (briefly) on entry to the school, but not on leaving.

The Teachers

There are some 20 teachers at the school. They are all competent, often in two or more subjects. Several of them act as secondary sports instructors and referees.

Besides the “typical teacher,” several notable individuals on the teaching staff are described below.

Typical Teacher Stats

INT 7	REF 6	TECH 6
COOL 7	ATTR 6	LUCK 6
MA 5	BODY 5	EMP 7

Skills

Authority +4, Awareness +2, Education +8, Human perception +4, Teaching +4. Two or three areas of specialization at +6.

Dr. Phil Carey (Corporate Law)

He is currently absent sick, and has been since Jase disappeared. Ms. White or Donny Bierce will give his address if convinced on an Easy Persuasion roll. (See Part 3)

Wax Nolan (Head of Computing)

Let’s face it, who’d teach computing when the Corps will pay plenty for competent computer experts? Wax is only mediocre stuff. She is, however, stylish — if she can’t be an actual Edgerunner, she can at least look like one. She would be helpful source of information, if the PCs reciprocate. She’d be keen to know what’s the latest “in” thing.

INT 7	REF 6	TECH 8
COOL 7	ATTR 9	LUCK 4
MA 5	BODY 4	EMP 6.

Skills

Authority +3, Awareness +2, Education +7, Human perception +4, Personal grooming +3, Programming +5, System knowledge +4, Teaching +4, Wardrobe +5

Ulyss Skinner (Philosophy)

Argumentative, aggressive and very, very intelligent. He loves a good argument, but only if the opponents are sharp. He sees his role as teaching his pupils (and the world in general) how to think for themselves, by questioning each of their assumptions, and making them justify each one.

PCs who question Ulyss are liable to find him questioning them back, about why they are questioning him, and by what logical process they chose to approach him. If they say that they are speaking to all the teachers, he suggests they assign priorities to the more likely. On the other hand, if they say that they have come to the most likely information source (i.e. him), he is not impressed, but criticizes them for making unwarranted assumptions, and theorizing before they had data.

It requires the PCs to be persistent, and able to provide solid justification for their actions, if they are to win his respect. They could of course simply barge through his arguments and persist in interrogating him, but in this case, he gets annoyed and uncooperative. It is not, he snaps, his job to solve their problem for them.

INT 10	REF 6	TECH 4
COOL 9	ATTR 6	LUCK 6
MA 5	BODY 5	EMP 4

Skills

Authority +4, Awareness +4, Education +8, Expert — Philosophy +8, Human perception +4, Oratory +7, Persuasion +7, Teaching +4

Delmar Chang (History)

A hopelessly perfectionist academic of Chinese ancestry, Delmar specializes in creating virtual reality reconstructions of social history for the pupils to explore. Some of these reconstructions have been accessible from the Net, and netrunning PCs may recognize her or them (Reputation 4); if they do and express an appreciation for them (and are prepared to put up with an explanation of how the new version will be without some amazingly obscure error), she does her best to be helpful, introducing the PCs to people or children who might know something.

INT 8 REF 5 TECH 7
COOL 5 ATTR 6 LUCK 6
MA 5 BODY 5 EMP 7

Skills

Authority +4, Awareness +2, Education +8, History +8, Human perception +4, Programming +3, +Teaching 4

Isaac Hussein (Human sciences)

He teaches about street culture, as well as more mainstream topics like psychology. He is fascinated by the PCs and continually asks them questions about their backgrounds, favorite musicians, and so forth. Having Jewish and Arabic parents, he is particularly interested in non-WASP, non-African contributions to popular culture.

INT 7 REF 6 TECH 6
COOL 7 ATTR 6 LUCK 6
MA 5 BODY 5 EMP 7

Skills

Authority +3, Awareness +2, Education +8, Expert — Psychiatry +4, Expert — Psychology +6, Expert — Sociology +6, Human perception +4, Teaching +4

The Pupils

There are about 400 children in the school, so don't expect detailed stats on them. Most of the children did not know Jase well — Jase was rather a loner. The children fall into two types: those fascinated by the exotic PCs, and those with an arrogant attitude towards anyone they perceive as less rich than their parents. Some of the second type can be won round if the PCs take time to get to know them and be nice to them.

One of the pupils, and perhaps the closest thing Jase had to a best friend, is Seng Lho. Seng has Asiatic features, and is small for his age. Seng is a bright child, with an eye to the profit motive. Although he hasn't any knowledge which could help, Seng may suggest that he could get them an introduction to a gang in Hill View — the Dead Dogs — who might have information.

If asked how he knows the Dead Dogs, Seng grins, and swears the PCs to secrecy. "We got a business going. Anything the kids want, they come to me, and I ask my friends, *namaste*? They come to the fence at night and throw the goods over, and I throw the euros back to them. Now, what's an introduction worth?"

Seng's initial demand is 10% of the PCs earnings on the job, but he doesn't expect to receive this. What he'd

really like is a promise of a favor by the PCs in the future.

If the PCs agree, Seng tells them to go to the first alley on the right outside the main gate at 2300 that night (see Part 4).

Ancillary Staff

The staff from Upstairs Downstairs Inc perform the cooking, cleaning and so forth for the school. They are so discreet as to be nearly unnoticeable; cooks remain in the kitchens, while the cleaners work mainly in the evenings and early mornings. It is up to the Referee as to whether to draw the PCs' attention to these workers.

The ancillary staff can tell the PCs about their work, about Upstairs Downstairs Inc; and they know that 'Rya Mendez has left recently. A Difficult Interview roll allows the PCs to discover that the staff felt that 'Rya tended to disappear sometimes during work hours, although she always completed her tasks. A Difficult Human Perception roll reveals that the staff suspect that 'Rya was spending time with one of the pupils.

PART THREE: ALL THE LONELY PEOPLE

In pursuit of their kidnapper, the PCs find only a red herring. Dr. Carey has been absent from school, caring for his insane wife. He does not know what has happened to Jase, but can point to a connection between Jase and one of the cleaners.

Introduction

The PCs should have found it suspicious that Dr. Carey, one of the teachers, has been allegedly sick since the day Jase went missing. They do not find it difficult to convince Ms. White to give them his address: 2450 West Park.

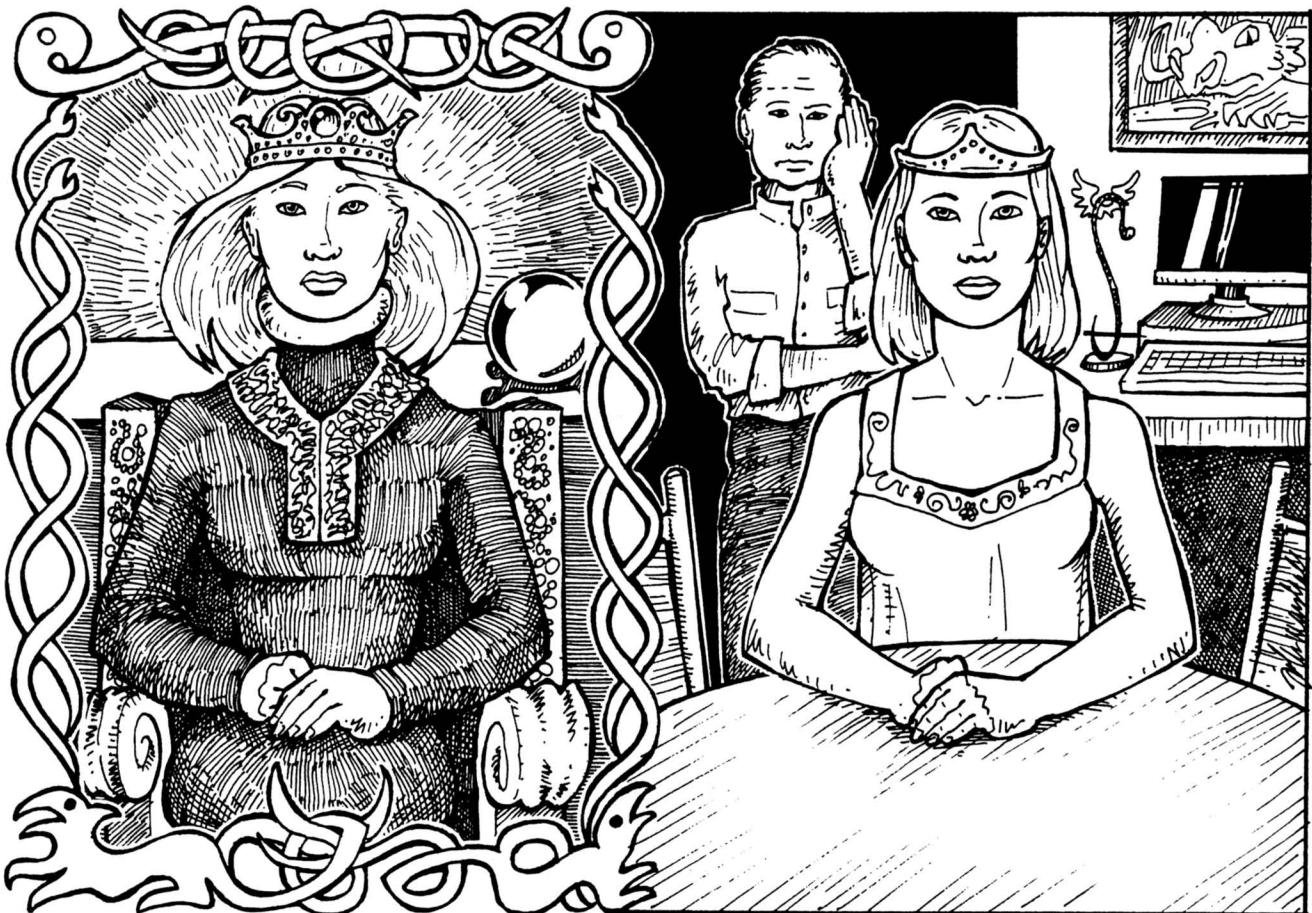
West Park

West Park is a small version of a Mallplex not too far from the school, an address that the PCs may realize (on an Average Social roll) is somewhere down-market

from what a well-paid private teacher should be able to afford.

When they get there, the PCs find the security lax — an Average Persuade roll convinces the guards that they have legitimate business there; a good excuse (goods delivery to a neighboring apartment?) makes it easier to get in (give them a bonus of 1-3). There are questions about obvious and excessive weaponry — shotguns and the like (a Difficult Persuade roll to get them through), but the PCs are not searched, nor required to hand over handguns.

The place is grubby and run down compared to a proper Mallplex; sparkling clean and neat compared with the Street. Perhaps because of the poor security,



the doors of the apartments are mostly reinforced, with fancy locks (Difficult Pick Locks roll to open) and spyholes to allow the tenants to see who is outside before opening the door.

From the outside, Dr. Carey's apartment is just like the rest.

Scene 1: The Neighbors

The PCs may decide to ask the neighbors about Dr. Carey. No 2449 is an unmarried young man, Darren Trent, who works at the Nutro™ food-irradiation plant. Darren is pathologically shy, and stammers. He doesn't wish to get involved with anything; a Very Difficult Interrogation roll (Interview doesn't work; he just clams up) will get him to admit that 2450 is a married couple; he doesn't know their names, and doesn't care; he doesn't know anything else useful.

No 2451 is a married couple; the Smythe-Smiths. They work in telemarketing. In contrast to Darren, they are almost unendurably chatty, especially if given the idea that any of the PCs are Medias (they just love the idea of being interviewed for a media expose of, well, anything at all). Baz Smythe-Smith is originally from Europe. Given the slightest opportunity, he goes on (and on) about how much better it is over there, and his "interesting" life and times. Lucee Smythe-Smith's specialist subject is comparing West Park with other areas of the city: the violence here isn't too bad, but there are occasional robberies, and the security guards don't do their jobs properly...

With an effort (and an Average Interview roll) the PCs can bring the subject round to Dr. Carey.

"Do you mean Dr. Carey or Dr. Carey?" comes the reply. Barely giving the PCs a chance to wonder what they mean, the Smythe-Smiths explain (constantly interrupting each other to get the details right) that Dr. Carey's wife is also Dr. Carey. They don't go out much, they're rather stand-offish, but the Smythe-Smiths always do their best to be sociable when they see either of them. The PCs might be starting to pity the two Drs. Carey...

Neither of the Smythe-Smiths are aware of any children around the apartment; Baz is vaguely aware that Phil Carey might have been off work lately as he often used to run into Phil Carey when they were both leaving for work, and he hasn't in the last few days. Since the

Smythe-Smiths are both out during the day, they don't know whether Phil Carey has gone out during the day.

They are fascinated to think that the Careys are the subject of media or cop, or indeed any sort of interest. They will hang around outside to watch the PCs approach the Careys, and even if convinced (an Easy Convince roll) that there may be danger, watch around a crack in their door. They are witnesses of what happens, and would not hesitate to contact the cops if necessary.

Scene 2: Getting Into the Apartment

Phil Carey is reluctant to allow the PCs into the apartment, assuming that they claim to have some reason to need to speak to him. He offers to meet them at the Caffeine shop a level down. (If the PCs go with this proposal, he denies knowing about Jase's whereabouts; but of course the PCs have no proof that the child is not in the apartment.) The PCs must make an Average Persuasion roll to be allowed in.

If they come clean and explain that they're looking for the missing child, they must explain the situation (Phil Carey has been away from school and, the disappearance having been kept quiet, he was not aware of it), at which Phil Carey will be concerned and invite the PCs in.

If the PCs simply break in, Phil Carey will be outraged and threaten to call the cops (something the Smythe-Smiths probably already have done); and while the PCs are able to search the apartment, they get no useful information from either of the Careys.

The Apartment

The apartment, like all the others, consists of two tiny rooms, with a washing-cubicle off the inner bedroom, and a cooking cubicle off the outer living room.

When Phil Carey opens the door, the PCs notice (an Easy Diagnose roll) that he looks tired and drawn rather than ill.

The living room is cluttered. In one corner, the computer terminal is covered with a tablecloth that close inspection (a Difficult Notice roll) shows is hand-embroidered; along one wall is a free-forming mobile art sculpture, which flows and moves in heat and air currents. A great many computer chips lay about on

every available surface. A large table is covered with a sheet; under the sheet there are tools for miniaturized circuit welding; an Average Notice roll shows that there is no sign of recent use. An airbrush painter sits on a sideboard; paintings almost cover the walls. The subjects are fantastic landscapes and animals. An Easy Zoology roll indicates that they are not current (natural or bioengineered) animals; an Average roll that they are not species which went extinct in the previous century; an Average Education roll reveals that they are mythical animals. An Average Paint/Draw roll indicates that the paintings are competent but amateur.

The PCs begin their inquiries, when out of the bedroom bursts Toni Carey. She is dressed in a long night-gown, with a tiara made of plaspex and colored chips of synthetic material.

Her eyes light up at the sight of the PCs. "My subjects!" she exclaims dramatically. "Kneel before your Queen!"

Phil Carey rushes over to her, and tries to coax her back into the bedroom; Toni Carey refuses. "I must enthrone myself," she announces, sitting on the table. "Now, subjects, what do you wish of your lady — speak and I shall grant!"

If the PCs begin to explain, Toni Carey's eyes gradually glaze over, and she takes less and less interest in her surroundings, and begins to rock gently back and forth, humming tunelessly. If instead the PCs allow Phil Carey to deal with her, he talks quietly until she begins to glaze over, then gently leads her back into the bedroom.

Dr. Carey's Explanation

"I'm, uh, afraid that I must apologize for my wife. She, she isn't usually as bad as she is at the moment. I've had to pretend to be sick for several days to look after her — I can't leave her alone when she's like that or she'd go wandering out. Something dreadful might happen." Having been forced to talk, Phil Carey suddenly seems anxious to explain to the PCs. "She used to be brilliant, you know. A hotshot programmer — we met at the University. But she wasn't very strong, and she loved virtual reality fantasy games, she'd play them all day and every day, and she lost touch with reality — and now she's like this. Most of the time she manages. She's got a little job in a burger bar flipping tofu-burgers. It's all she can manage. She used to be so wonderful when she was a student." Dr. Carey buries his face in his hands and cries.

Phil Carey needs to talk to someone about the situation, and the PCs happen to be there. Why Toni Carey is this way is for the Referee to decide. Some possibilities are:

- 1 It was the effect of too many virtual reality fantasies upon a weak mind.
- 2 She encountered a pernicious program while in the Net that caused her mind to withdraw into this safe alternative life.
- 3 She encountered a very pernicious program or malign AI while in the Net. It has taken over her mind, and her crazy fantasies are used by it to convince people that she is harmless and may be ignored. Meanwhile, it gets mobility, and the chance to carry on its own schemes whenever Toni is left alone...

As for Jase, Phil Carey didn't know that he was missing, and doesn't know what has happened to him. If the PCs have been reasonably sympathetic, he tells them that he remembers Jase having asked him about the law regarding children and parents, and that he had seen Jase talking to one of the cleaners; but he didn't know the cleaners apart, or which this one was.

Dr. Phil Carey

Average height, thinning blond hair, worried expression. Dr. Carey is a lonely man coping badly with his wife's insanity.

INT 9	REF 6	TECH 4
COOL 4	ATTR 7	LUCK 4
MA 6	BODY 6	EMP 9

Skills

Awareness +2, Education +6, Expert — escapist fiction +2, Expert — law +6, Expert — myth +2, Library Search +4, Programming +3, Teaching +4

Dr. Toni Carey

Average height, with long blonde hair; quite pretty. She swings between complete withdrawal, and delusion that she's some sort of medieval princess. (In her more normal periods, she simply gives the impression of being withdrawn and rather stupid.) If threatened, she first deals with it "in character", demanding that her guards deal with the villeins; if this fails, she withdraws into silence. Even if the PCs are quick enough to catch onto what is going on, and play along with her, she quickly loses interest; she lacks the ability even to maintain her fantasy for long.

Stats are irrelevant at present; but when fully sane they were:

INT 9 REF 5
 TECH 7
 COOL 7 ATTR 8
 LUCK 3
 MA 5 BODY 8
 EMP 4

Skills

Education +5, Electronic Security +5, Expert — escapist fiction +4, History +2, Library Search +6, Programming +6, Social 4, System Knowledge +5

Getting Help

If the PCs have a gentler side, they may wish to help Toni Carey. Her husband has been paying for her to see a psychiatrist, but he cannot afford the fees for the residential treatment that she really needs; weekly sessions simply keep her able to function enough to work in a burger bar. Every now and then, Toni decides that she

doesn't need treatment, fails to attend, and quickly relapses into the state that the PCs see her in now.

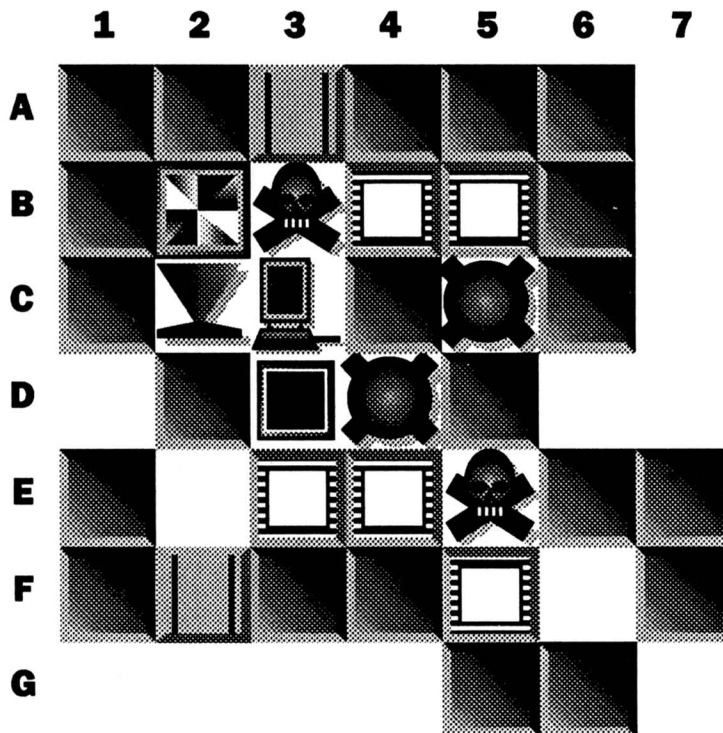
If the PCs still want to help, the process would be expensive, prolonged, and Toni would still need outpatient psychiatric help for the rest of her life. On the other hand, the PCs would gain the undying gratitude of Phil Carey, a legal expert, as well as Toni — who will never be able to interface with a computer again without risking her sanity, but who knows a lot about systems and programming.

Going In Through the Net

The Drs. Carey have an ordinary computer system linked to the Net (see attached diagram).

Item	Type	Title	MU
B2	Virtual reality	Photo-realistic fantasy tavern	32
B3	Defense	Hidden virtue	1
B4	Memory	Computer mail	1

The Careys' Net Subgrid



B5	Memory	Artwork prompter	1
C2	Display	Music system	2
C3	Terminal	—	0
D3	Videoboard	Lighting control system	1
E3	Memory	Escapist fiction	1
E4	Memory	More escapist fiction	1
E5	Defense	Flatline	2
F5	Memory	Income/expenditure accounts	1

Skills: Play electronic music; composition; paint/draw; teaching; mythology.

The income/expenditure accounts show that Toni works in the burger bar, and that she has been attending a psychiatrist weekly for at least several years. The computer mail is to and from friends from the couple's university days.

PART FOUR: INVESTIGATIONS

The PCs make inquiries at Upstairs Downstairs Inc. Otherwise or additionally, they meet a nervous gang. The evidence leads them to 'Rya Mendez in Hill View, and a decision about their task.

The heat is still rising, the humidity is still rising, the pollution levels are rising; the sky is tinged yellowish green. Storms are forecast. People are edgy, and meaningless violence is on the rise. Still, it's not all bad. The criminals are concentrating more on keeping cool than on meaningful violence.

Scene 1: Upstairs Downstairs Inc

The company has its head office at a smart uptown address. The corporate logo shows a 19th Century maid, and in keeping with its old-fashioned image, staff at the office are dressed in mini-skirted maids' uniforms or footmen's livery; managers have more choice of clothing, but stick (more or less) with the 19th Century theme. The employees who do the actual cleaning work are less romantically but more practically dressed in overalls; but then, they are not visible at the office.

When the PCs come requesting information about their employees, they are passed up the management ladder from receptionist (a pretty woman in maid's uniform) to shift-manager (a woman in an imaginative interpretation of men's evening dress — black tights and a tail-jacket) to the senior manager.

Mr. Denz Stone

The senior manager is an imposing man in a butler's uniform. He is a tall African-American with greying hair.

To persuade Denz that a member of Upstairs Downstairs Inc may be involved with a kidnapping is difficult; as he states over and over, all staff are vetted for criminal connections before they are employed. The PCs have to make a Difficult Persuasion roll to get his cooperation. This is modified by the argument they use; if they explain that they merely want to eliminate the suspect from their investigation, he is more likely to agree (reduce it to an Average Persuasion roll).

If the PCs persuade him, he checks briefly in the computer files.

"The only one of our cleaners that fits your description is 'Rya Mendez, one of the cleaners. According to the records, she has resigned. She left us two days after the incident... Hmm, according to this, on the day of the incident, she took one of our vans to the school to collect floor-cleaning machines for maintenance."

'Rya Mendez's address is 3722 Brownstone.

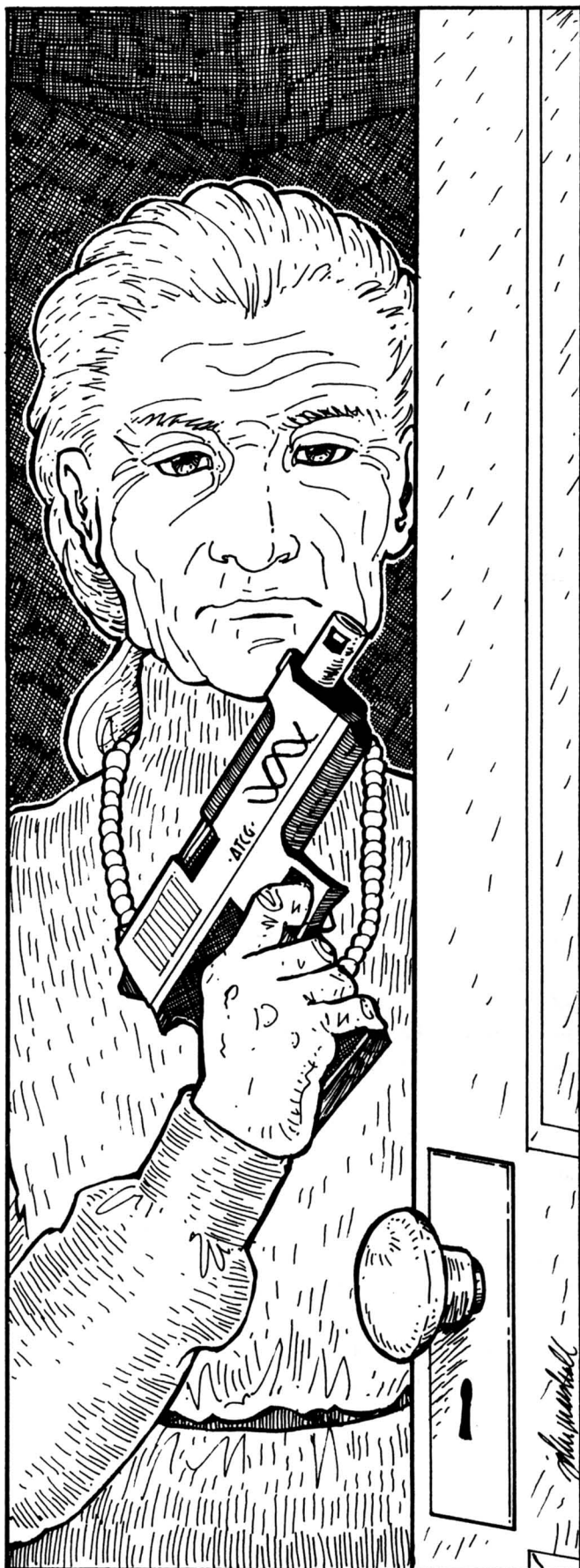
By Net

The PCs may prefer to obtain their information from Upstairs Downstairs Inc's computer files, or they may be forced to do so if they fail to obtain Denz's cooperation.

Upstairs Downstairs Inc has the sort of security that might be expected of an expensive firm in the Service sector — fairly secure, but not proof against experienced netrunners. The PCs must wade through several different files to get their information: the staff on duty at the Bartholomew School on the day of the incident; duty rosters; resignations; and ex-employees addresses (if they try to access the current employee address file, they do not find 'Rya Mendez listed).

Scene 2: 3722 Brownstone

This address is in a poor area of the city. It is owned by Marta Anders, a little, white-haired old lady. Marta runs it as an accommodation address for people who need an address in order to obtain employment — flophouse dwellers, slum residents and people of no fixed abode. Marta provides a useful service for people who cannot afford to pay for normal accommodation because they don't have a job, and can't get a job without proper accommodation. Marta claims to be a relative of her clients, and to be putting them up on the sofa in her living room; she passes on messages and letters for them, and allows them to make or receive phone calls by prior arrangement. Marta charges very reasonable rates, and has nearly 100 clients — enough to net her a comfortable income, but not so many that she cannot remember them all.



The PCs might be familiar with her type of business. Some of them might even have used it themselves. A Very Difficult Streetwise roll means that they are familiar with Marta; an Average Streetwise roll allows them to recognize the type of business once they have found out about it.

Marta's neighbors can report that Marta lives alone, but she has many and various visitors (often quite rough-looking), and receives a lot of mail, not all addressed to her.

Marta's door bristles with locks, surveillance devices and other security measures (a Very Difficult roll to break in); Marta is usually at home.

Marta plays the role of everyone's loveable white-haired old grandmother, but she keeps a Sternmeyer Type 35 heavy autopistol in her pinny — she does deal with some rough clients, after all. If the PCs initiate violence, breaking in or threatening her, she does not hesitate to use it, if it seems the best course.

If the PCs ring at the door, Marta's response is friendly but non-committal, trying to find out who the PCs have come to see. She is not keen to allow the PCs inside, but if they insist, she complies. The house is a two-roomer, cluttered, with lots of ornaments around. Because of all the clutter, it takes a Difficult Notice roll for the PCs to spot that there is no sign of any possessions other than Marta's (this is deliberate — the apartment looks as though two people are in residence, without including possessions which would be inappropriate for some of her clients, such as razors or lipstick).

If the PCs ask for 'Rya Mendez, she states that 'Rya isn't home, but will call them back. She is deliberately vague as to where 'Rya is or when she will get back, and of course she doesn't want the PCs to wait for 'Rya to return, since 'Rya doesn't actually live there. She can't be at all helpful about 'Rya's doings — for instance she does not even know that 'Rya has left her job.

The PCs may be shameless enough to try threatening an old lady; Marta values her skin and crumbles easily enough. If they bother instead to explain their business, Marta is horrified at having apparently had a kidnapper as a client, and helps to the best of her ability. She keeps the records of all her clients in a card-index. (She has a home computer, but rarely uses it, and does not leave incriminating evidence in it.)

'Rya used to call every other day to collect messages, although she has not been along for a couple of days.

Her actual address is given as “End of Row, 12th Alley, Hill View.”

Marta Anders

INT 9	REF 7	TECH 3
COOL 4	ATTR 7	LUCK 6
MA 2	BODY 3	EMP 8

Skills

First Aid +4, Forgery +2, Handgun +5, Human Perception +2, Perform (role of lovable granny) +4, Persuasion +2, Streetwise +3

Scene 3: Gone to the Dogs

The Dead Dogs are local to Hill View, and an obscure little gang of the sort of losers that end up in Hill View. They trade drugs and anything else that will make them a profit. It requires a Difficult Streetwise roll for anyone who does not know Hill View to have even heard of them.

By 2300, it is dark; that is to say, the sky glares orange with sodium lighting. It is hardly less hot than it was during the day. In Hill View, pale ghosts of light are visible at the holes that pass for windows in the shacks. Many of the houses are dark and silent, their occupants having gone to sleep or working on night shifts; others are quiet, trying to avoid attention resting on them, for attention in Hill View is something to avoid. A few defiantly blare out music. The throb of the bass line is the city’s night-time heartbeat.

The alley where the PCs have been told to meet the Dead Dogs is like alleys everywhere, littered with rubbish, and with dozens of lurking-places. There are also 1D6 riff-raff attempting to bunk down in the alley, and avoid any trouble.

The PCs are liable to be wary. So are the Dead Dogs. The Dead Dogs begin to gather from 2230 (Seng got a message to one of them at 2200, and it takes awhile for the message to spread.) By 2300, there are twice as many of them as there are PCs. They wait for the PCs to approach them. If the PCs start out violently, the Dead Dogs simply fade away.

If the PCs ask nicely (or at least ask), the Dead Dogs stop to talk, starting with a ritual boast from their leader: “This is our turf, choombas, so make nice to us or there not be enough left of you to bury, *namaste?*” (An Average Human Perception roll — or a facedown — spots that

this is pure bluff.) The gang members recall that no one unexpected has been in the area or shown an interest in the school. They can confirm Seng’s story of how they trade with the rich kids — the Dogs despise all the “rich kids” apart from Seng, who has traded fairly with them. The trade is mostly in sweets, videos and records, alcohol and nicotine and other similar minor drugs.

If shown the photograph of Jase, the Dogs pass it around among them. One of them obviously (Easy Human Perception roll to spot) recognizes it, and demands 50 eb for information. The PCs may pay up, or they may attempt to beat the information out of the Dog — the other Dead Dogs will try to defend their choomba, and this will lead to a fight.

The information that the Dead Dog has is this: on the evening in question, an Upstairs Downstairs van stopped briefly at 12th Alley, a woman and the child got out and went down the alley; shortly afterwards, the woman returned and drove off. The child appeared to be quite willing, and the Dead Dog assumed that they were mother and child.

Typical Dead Dog

INT 5	REF 8	TECH 4
COOL 6	ATTR 4	LUCK 2
MA 4	BODY 6	EMP 5

REP 2 (4 for the leader)

Skills

Brawling +4, Gamble +3, Hide/Evade +3, Shadow +2, Streetwise +2, Weapon (as appropriate) +3

Cyberware

One or two of the gang members will have a single random piece of cyberware.

Hardware

One or two have handguns; the others have knives.

Combat Scores

Initiative: +8

Stun/Death Save 6

Body Type Modifier -2

Handgun — Dai Lung Streetmaster (shots 12/ROF 2/Dam 2D6+3/Rel UR): +11

Knife (Dam 1D6): +11

Armor: some might have heavy leather, +4, arms, torso.

Scene 4: 12th Alley

Hill View was not laid out by city planners, and which is 12th Alley is neither sign-posted nor obvious. The PCs may request (for an extra 10 eb) or coerce one of the Dead Dogs to show them where it is, or they may ask one of the residents to show them. The residents of Hill View are not keen to help outsiders; make an Average roll on a Special Ability if possible (e.g. Authority; Credibility) or Persuasion if the PC's Special Ability is not appropriate (e.g. Interface).

There are half a dozen shacks in 12th Alley, and the PCs have no way of telling from outside which is the one used by 'Rya.

On the left side are the druggist's, the peddler's, and the kid's den. On the right is a disused shack, the old couple, and 'Rya's shack.

Druggist

A cottage-industry drugs operation; the shack is filled with chemical apparatus. Three small-time dealers (use the stats for the Dead Dogs) are present, who don't want to talk to anyone (especially anyone that looks like authority), or to have anyone looking around the shack. There is also the chemist, Zen Roget, a defrocked academic who is exceedingly nervous of anything resembling violence.

Peddler's

Jan Kowalska ekes a living selling snacks around the streets. The snacks are made in the shack by her partner, Bets Edrich.

Kids' Den

A disused shack which has recently been taken over by a gang of homeless street-children.

Old Couple

A retired couple who were forced to move into Hill View and poverty because their pension fund was embezzled by an unscrupulous manager. Steph and Ron McGraw cling to pathetic remnants of gentility — eating kibble off chipped bone china plates, and so forth.

'Rya Mendez's Shack

A typical shack from the outside, it is shabby but clean inside. Within, 'Rya Mendez and Jase are finishing packing a couple of overnight suitcases.

Scene 5: The Confrontation

The PCs have several choices for their actions from here. They might burst in, guns blazing, in which case 'Rya will be an easy target. There is a risk of accidentally killing Jase in the process (stupid actions bring their own penalties!), as she tries to shield him, and he clings to her. Even if they do not damage Jase, he begins screaming and crying if 'Rya is killed, and they have to physically drag him away from the scene. They may be able to piece together the story from Jase later — if they can overcome his natural resentment of the fact that they have murdered the one person he loved.

Alternatively, the PCs might burst in and threaten, or go in carefully, asking questions, in which case 'Rya begs to be allowed to keep Jase — and explains why she has taken him.

If the PCs wait in ambush outside the shack, 'Rya and Jase come out in a few moments, but in the meantime the PCs are liable to be approached by other residents of the alley — the drug pushers to see whether the PCs are potential customers, or heavies trying to take over their business; the kids to see what the PCs are up to, and whether they have any items or money which might go missing; etc.

If the PCs follow the two to see where they are going, they walk to the nearest phone, call a taxi, and get taken to the airport — from where they get on a plane to Bogota.

'Rya's Story

"I arrived here from Colombia ten years ago, to work in your hospital. I was a nurse. One of the doctors was doing research sponsored by one of the companies here, and she did genetic tests on me. Later she said that someone from the company wanted to do a deal with me — a businesswoman who wanted a child, and who was unable to have one of her own. I was sorry when I heard about her, and she offered to obtain me a better apartment in return for the work, and so I agreed.

“By the time the baby was due, I regretted the agreement, but she would not let me change my mind. She said that if I did not keep to the contract, she would sue me, and I would be fined, imprisoned, and sent back to South America. She said that I had no genetic claim on the child, and no more legal rights than a nanny. And she had me admitted to a private room in the hospital until the baby was born. They took the baby away straight away — I never even saw him.

“I tried to find out about the baby, but before I could trace him, I was fired from the hospital. I know that she had done this, although the hospital administrators denied it. It was a warning against trying to find my son. I lost the apartment, too — they took it away from me, and when I asked a lawyer, he said that the agreement only gave me temporary not a permanent tenancy.

“But that only made me more determined. I had to take menial jobs, and it took me years to find him, but in the end I did, and I took the cleaning job at the school to be near him.

“I had not intended anything else, but I saw how unhappy he was, and how much he was missing a real mother’s love. He was going to an expensive school, and he had everything he could want — except love.

“So I knew that if he wanted it, I must take him away to where he would not be rich, but would be an ordinary child with his mother. Please, will you let me do that?”

‘Rya Mendez

‘Rya (short for Maria) is in her 30s, tall, with typical Hispanic appearance. ‘Rya does not know why she was chosen by the PCs’ employer. She does, however, know Alys Grant’s name, address (Clouds Villa) and employer (InTech); she is happy to share this information with the PCs if they are prepared to let her and Jase go.

INT 10	REF 10	TECH 7
COOL 5	ATTR 7	LUCK 6
MA 7	BODY 5	EMP 9.

Skills

Diagnose Illness +3, First Aid +5, Hide/Evade +4, Human Perception +3, Know Language (English) +6 (First language Spanish); Driving +3, Medical Tech +3, Streetwise +5

Jase

Jase is of similar appearance to his mother ‘Rya (see description in Part 1). Jase also knows about Alys Grant.

INT 10	REF 10	TECH 5
COOL 3	ATTR 4	LUCK 7
MA 5	BODY 4	EMP 9

Skills

Accounting +2, Athletics +2, Brawling +2, Dodge +5, Education +4, Library Search +3, Mathematics +4, Perform (music) +3, Programming +5, System knowledge +2

What Next?

The PCs are faced with the choice of what to do next. They may take Jase back to their employer (perhaps killing ‘Rya, perhaps not); they may allow ‘Rya and Jase to depart; or they may actively help the two to get away. ‘Rya is convinced that with the help of her family in Columbia, she and Jase will be able to hide from Alys Grant.

What will the PCs do?

PART FIVE: A SHOT IN THE DARK

The PCs have decided whether or not to return Jase to their employer. Whichever, they find themselves in trouble. They may not realize it, but they are now in big danger.

Scene 1: Services Rendered

What happens next depends on how the PCs decide — whether to fulfill their contract by returning Jase to their employer, or whether to allow Jase and his mother to leave for a life together.

If the PCs Decided to Return Jase

This is the most straightforward option. The PCs have been given (see Part 1) an unlisted number to call. Dialling this, they discover that it is connected to an answer-phone, on which the message is:

“If you have the merchandise, bring it to Central Plaza at 0600 tomorrow. Leave your message after the tone.”

The PCs have to keep Jase overnight. This is a problem, as Jase treats the PCs as though they were the kidnappers, and outsiders may be inclined to meddle (calling the cops; telling the PCs to go somewhere else with their illegal schemes; or demanding a percentage, as appropriate). Jase himself attempts to escape back to ‘Rya, and generally causes problems. Give the players a chance to realize that kidnapping a child is not as easy a way of making money as it looks!

The Hand-Over

0600 — the last revellers have gone home to bed, and the place is quiet. Cleaning vans, road-sweepers, and occasional early-starting employees are about the only signs of life. Overnight, the weather has broken at long last — brownish rain hammers down, cooling the city down, reducing visibility, and staining non-waterproofed clothing (or even dissolving fragile fabrics! Give the PCs an Average Wilderness Survival roll to be aware of the effects of acid rain on clothing, and to know of suitable protection; see the *Night City Sourcebook*, p. 6, for information on acid rain in 2020).

Jase is still miserable and whining and reluctant, and has to be watched for escape attempts.

Sake Falle arrives sharp at 0600, in a cab, followed by a second cab. She motions the PCs to take the second cab.

If the PCs question this, she says: “Careful employer, not wanting ambush. Make exchange on neutral ground. Drivers don’t know destination, so don’t get clever.”

The two cabs drive off. If the PCs have any reinforcements hidden in the area, they need to find transport of their own to attempt to follow them. If Sake notices this she first orders the PCs to desist (via the cabs’ radios), and then orders the cab drivers to lose the pursuit. (See “Follow that Cab,” below, for suggestions on the chase.) When the cabs have lost the pursuit to Sake’s satisfaction, her cab leads the way out of the city into the country. At a suitable flat, featureless area (chosen to make it clear to the PCs that there is no one waiting in ambush) is a cab with their employer inside. (She stays inside, having no intention of risking her own clothes in the rain!)

The employer examines Jase briefly, takes delivery of him, tells him sharply to stop whining, thanks the PCs briefly and coolly, hands over a credit transfer for the rest of the agreed fee, and drives off.

And that’s that, right?

If the PCs Decide to Make Some Extra Cash...

It may occur to the PCs that now that they have Jase, they are in a better position to make some extra cash by ransoming him back to their employer. In this case, they presumably proceed as above, leave a message to this effect on the answer-phone, and turn up to the meeting the next morning.

If they don’t have Jase with them, their employer points out that she is not going to pay them until he is. She agrees to pay once only, in return for the child. Sake arranges for another meeting for the exchange.

If/when they do have Jase with them, Alys Grant reluctantly agrees to their demands, hands over the money, takes custody of Jase, and leaves.

If the PCs Make Some Excuse for Their Failure

This is made easier by the answer-phone. The PCs can simply make some sort of excuse about not having been able to find Jase, and hang up—their consciences salvaged. No one turns up to the meeting the next morning, there being nothing to exchange.

And that's that, right?

If the PCs Just Lay Low

The advantage for the PCs of simply laying low is that they don't need to do anything special. Their employer takes a while to realize that they are no longer working on their commission — and that's that, right?

Except that once their employer *does* realize it, she also realizes that the PCs have double-crossed, and she will want payment out of their hides. And the PCs don't know when their employer will realize...

If the PCs Call In the Media

This is a very dangerous move, as far as Alys is concerned, and she tries to neutralize the threat.

The media is interested in a story, the bigger the better, and it is especially concerned with high profile names. Public figures rate very highly. The trivial doings of Johnny Silverhand are a major news item, while a low profile nobody would have to do something very dramatic just to get a mention. Alys is not high profile, and while the Media might lap up the Corporate angle, there is not a great deal to the story. The story of a poor mother, a minor Corporation official, and a custody contest is small to everyone except the people involved.

So, if the Media is brought in at this point, Alys calls in a favor or two, and leaks a much more dramatic story about the return from retirement of Revelation Brown, a mega-star of the Rocker scene, who retired after getting religion in a serious way a couple of years ago. He became a recluse and moved to Tibet. Or was it Nepal? No one really knows for sure. The story is (probably) fake, but it will do to keep minor news items from becoming serious stuff.

Doing Things Legally

The PCs might decide to try to legally dispute custody of Jase. Unfortunately, any halfway competent lawyer

can decipher 'Rya's agreement to show that they do not have a leg to stand on: 'Rya signed away all rights over Jase. The promise of an apartment in exchange did not guarantee long-term use of the apartment, so Alys has not broken the agreement. (For technical reasons, the apartment was not even in exchange for the child; selling children is illegal, although recompensing someone for the inconveniences and costs of pregnancy is not. The apartment was ostensibly a compensation for lost income due to the pregnancy.) A lawyer might take on the case for a *large* fee up front, but not on a contingency basis. Legal charities are sympathetic, but unable to waste resources on pursuing such a hopeless claim, based solely on emotion.

If the lawyer makes a Difficult legal roll, he or she will suspect that the contract was written by a Corporate lawyer, rather than a civil lawyer, as would be expected.

If the Punks Get Clever

It's always possible that the players may think of some new wrinkle which is not covered explicitly here. They might, for instance, phone to say that they've got Jase, and then turn up to explain that they've lost him (after returning him to 'Rya). The trick then is to have the Referee characters act according to what they know — Alys Grant initially turns up expecting to receive Jase, is dumbfounded to learn otherwise, but accepts it, while secretly setting Sake to find out what the PCs are playing at, and contacting her assassins...

Follow That Cab!

If the PCs have anyone following them, or attempt to follow their employer after the hand-over, use the following guidelines for the chase.

There is not much traffic around, so they will have to follow with care (Hide rolls versus Sake or Alys Grant and the cab driver/s), while it will be easy to Shadow the cab (don't forget to require a few Driving rolls, too!) The cab drives around until Sake or Alys is confident that she is not being shadowed (a Hide roll 5 higher than her Awareness roll). If she is uncertain, the cab continues, the roads quickly fill up, making it harder to Shadow the cab, but easier to Hide.

The PCs have to "persuade" their cab driver to follow Alys Grant, as the cabs have orders not to do so. To take over the cab, they must get through the bullet-proof glass (30 SP, SDP 5) surrounding the driver's compartment (the doors are locked, too).

If the PCs succeed in following Alys Grant, they soon find that her cab mingles with about a dozen cabs from the same firm; these proceed back to the city, and then split up, driving around for about ten minutes before the empty ones go back to normal business. Make it at least a Very Difficult Shadow roll for the PCs to keep track of which cab their employer is in. If they took the cab's number, they find that all the cabs have consecutive numbers, making it that much harder to be sure which cab they are after, even when they can see the number plate.

If she can't lose them, Alys Grant orders the cab to drive to the Bartholomew school, where she can deliver Jase back, and call for a helicopter to get away.

If the PCs do follow the cab without raising suspicion, Alys Grant and Jase get out at Clouds Villa.

Cab Drivers

INT 6 REF 7

(determine others if necessary.)

Skills

Awareness +3, Drive +5, Hide/Evade +3

The Sting in the Tale

The trouble with any of the PCs' plans for dealing with their employer is that they assume that their employer will react immediately. Actually, while Alys Grant has no intention of leaving the PCs alive to publicize her failure to keep Jase safe, she is painstaking and patient in tying up loose ends. As a result, there is a quiet period for the PCs, with the possibility of other jobs and activities. It is only later, when the matter is one that the players have written off as finished, that she moves.

Alys Grant expects the PCs to return Jase in the simplest way, and has been laying plans on that assumption. The PCs will be given a while to relax. Some time later, when they are off their guard, they are attacked by a bunch of assassins. The assassins have been recruited much as the PCs themselves were, so that the attack cannot be traced to Alys Grant. If the PCs try to ransom Jase on their own account, Alys Grant brings the attack forward — partly because this will allow the recovery of whatever extra she's been forced to pay for Jase's ransom, and partly because she is annoyed. If the PCs offer an excuse, the attack is also brought forward, because Alys Grant suspects some sort of double cross; if she moves quickly, the PCs can be taken alive and questioned, while there is still a chance of recovering

Jase. If the PCs simply go quiet...well, it depends on how long it takes for Alys Grant to realize what's up.

Sake Falle has been quietly keeping an eye on the PCs, so that if they simply stop investigating, it will soon be obvious to her. If the PCs pretend to continue the investigation, then it's a matter of how long they can be bothered with the pretence, how soon they find they need to earn a living and how long before their other interests beckon...

Of course, if the PCs start nosing about, Alys Grant will have to take action against them...

Scene 2: The Bounce

The number of assassins would best be the same as the number of PCs. Several assassins are given; feel free to substitute Referee characters from your own campaign, and add extras if necessary.

The PCs are just returning from a contract of one sort or another, possibly weakened and very probably down on ammo, and they have just reached what they might laughingly regard as safe territory. It's evening or night, cold, with driving rain. Pedestrians hurry past — no one hangs around in filthy weather. Cars send up showers of spray.

The PCs are well away from shelter when they are approached by Toser Harris. Toser comes between the PCs and their haunt, which prevents their diving back in there once the fireworks start. He picks on the largest and toughest-looking of the PCs — preferably a Solo — and says "I don't like your face, so I'm gonna rearrange it till I do!" (This may not be a stunningly original line, but Toser wasn't picked for originality.)

Toser then leers, flashes his wolvers, and strikes!

Because Toser couldn't resist showing off, give the PC a chance to dodge the first blow at +4.

Meanwhile, PCs not immediately concerned with the show-down may spot a robo-cab coming in on a collision course. Unless any of the players have specified that their PCs are keeping an eye out, make this a Difficult Awareness roll because they will be watching the fight with Toser; for any PCs who are keeping an eye out, it is an Easy roll. The PC who is fighting Toser does not get an Awareness roll at all; this PC is concentrating entirely on not getting sliced!

Unless prevented, the robo-cab hits the group in round 4 of the fight. PCs can dodge the robo-cab if they are aware of its presence — if they have either Noticed it, or been warned by PCs who have. Make it an Easy roll — the cab is going quite slowly, ostensibly to avoid Toser, but actually because it is more a challenge to Netrunners than a serious physical threat.

If any PCs are hit squarely by the robo-cab, the ramming damage is (speed/20) X 3D6 — probably enough to make them into jelly.

But that's not all the PCs' problems! A sniper is taking pot-shots at them using a small crossbow — silent, no muzzle-flash. It is a Very Difficult Awareness roll to spot his activities at all (let alone where the bolts are coming from) unless one of the bolts sticks into something near one of the PCs such as a door-frame, a passer-by, or a PC, at which point it becomes Easy. It doesn't even require a dice-roll if a PC falls or a passer-by starts screaming!

Toser Harris

Toser is big; a good, old-fashioned bully who just loves getting paid to do what he likes best — bust heads. Toser has a shining chrome dome and a much-scarred face — he didn't come up with the idea of wolvers all by himself, you know.

In the fight, Toser goes for the PC he chose initially, and thereafter for the one he considers the toughest or most threatening. He uses the wolvers.

If convinced that there's a real danger to him from the ambushers, Toser wavers. Then, realizing that he's been set up, he goes for Doc (if he can find him!)

Toser was paid 100 eb by Doc to give the PCs some hassle. That's all he knows. Or cares.

Stats

INT 3	REF 7	TECH 4
COOL 5	ATTR 4	LUCK 6
MA 6	BODY 8	EMP 1

Skills

Brawling +4, Handgun +3, Intimidate +3, Melee +6, Strength Feat +4

Cyberware

Wolvers (3D6 damage); Cowl (SP 25 head (1)).

Gear

Light armor jacket (SP 10); leather pants (SP 4).

Combat scores

Initiative: +7

Stun/death Save: 8

Body Type Modifier: -3

Wolvers (Dam 3D6+1): +13

Armor: Head 25, Torso/Arms 14, Legs 4

The Antares Family

The Antares siblings are of mixed race, with black hair and brown skin. They usually work as a group, and have had some bad luck lately, leaving Red crippled (and unable to afford suitable cyberlegs), and all of them with confidence badly shaken. On the other hand, they have absolute loyalty to each other, and many years of experience of how they each think, making them a superb team.

They all know that they were recruited by Sake Falle to ice the PCs, but not who she was working for.

Doc Antares

Solo

Doc is of average height, his brown skin dulled with charcoal to increase his camouflage. His long black hair is tied back. His cyberarm is plastic covered in matte black, matching his matte black clothing.

In the fight, Doc acts as a sniper, using the crossbow (this is why he only needs a helmet by way of armor). He is also recording the kill as evidence for their employer. He moves position only when necessary — when spotted, or when the PCs approach.

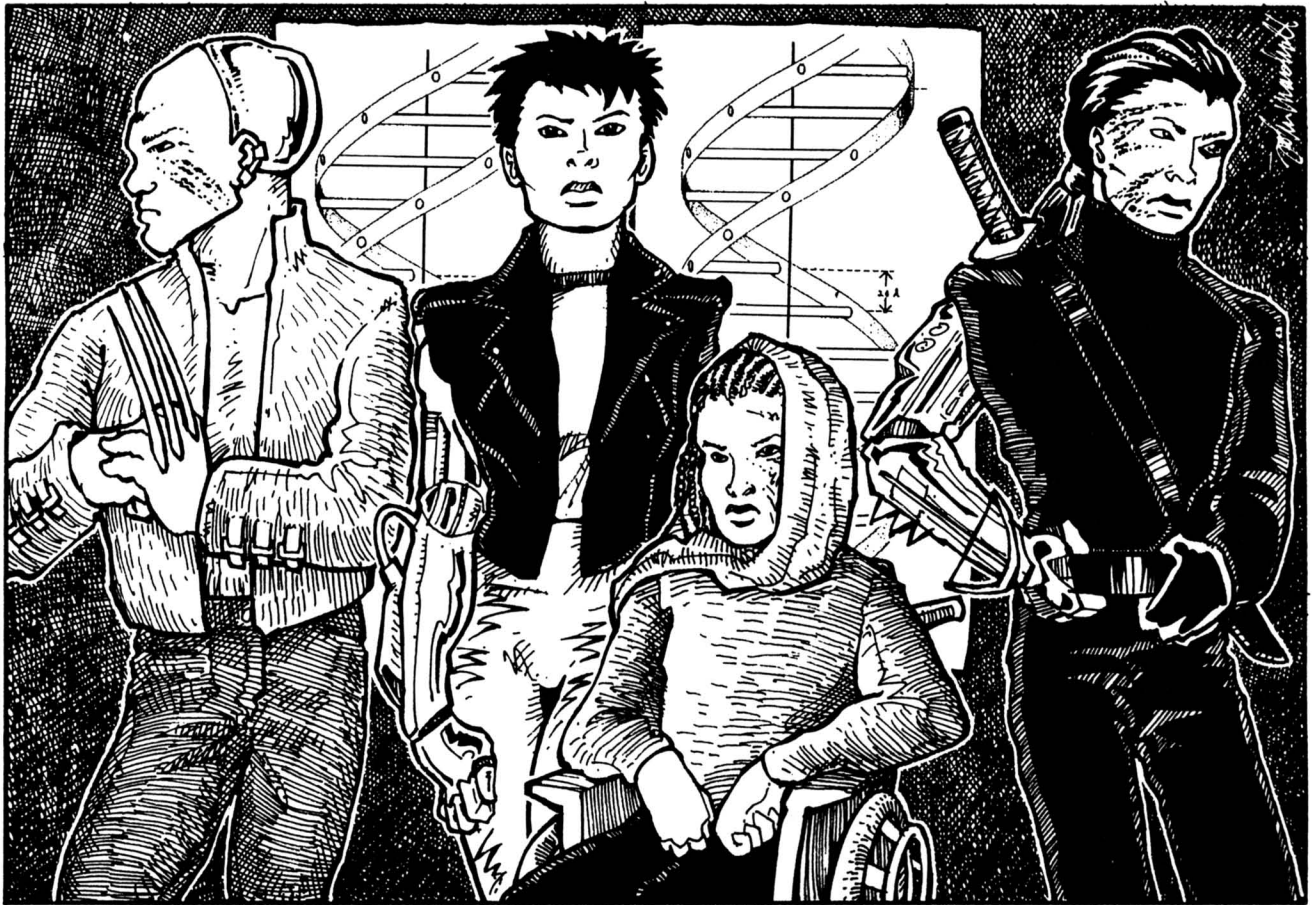
Doc is a professional — he neither likes nor dislikes killing, regarding it simply as a job which is better than working in an office. His weakness is his concern for his sisters; he's always anticipating another disaster happening. If it looks as if either of his sisters is going to be threatened physically, he hurries to alert them, move them out of the way, and defend them if necessary.

Stats

INT 10	REF 7	TECH 3
COOL 2	ATTR 4	LUCK 4
MA 10	BODY 9	EMP 4

Skills

Archery +8, Athletics +7, Awareness +5, Brawling +6, Combat Sense +6, Endurance +4, Handgun +4, Melee +4, Rifle +5, Shadow +6, SMG +4, Stealth +8, Streetwise +5, Weapons Tech +7



Cyberware

Cyberaudio (Level Damper), Pain Editor, Cyberarm with crossbow (3D6 damage), Cyberoptic (Infrared, Image Enhancement, Microvideo optic)

Gear

Kendachi Monokatana (4D6 damage), nylon helmet (SP 20), crossbow

Combat Scores

Initiative: +13

Stun/death Save: 9

Body Type Modifier: -3

Crossbow (Dam 3D6): +15

Monokatana (Dam 4D6+1): +11

Armor: head SP 20.

Red Antares

Netrunner

The youngest of the Antares siblings, Red was badly scarred and crippled by a recent job which went wrong, and she is currently confined to a wheelchair. Her hair is braided with multi-colored beads in a traditional African pattern; her clothes are plain, their

distinguishing feature a red scarf, which she wears up around her face to cover the worst of the scarring. Red doesn't much care for killing (preferring jobs with more subtlety), but she is desperate for the cash to repair her legs and face.

Red's wheelchair is around the block from the ambush, in their getaway vehicle.

In the ambush, Red's role is to locate remotes such as robo-cabs and street-cleaning robots, and take control of them, running them at the PCs. This functions as a distraction, and is also a lure for Netrunner PCs in the group — Krait is waiting to ambush any who go into the Net to challenge Red.

If things start to go badly for the siblings, Red can distract the PCs with remotes, take control of nearby sound-systems to provide a distraction in the form of explosions and gun-noises, and in extremity, operate the getaway vehicle — a stolen Toyo-Chrysler Omega with improvised cybernetic controls (+1 bonus to driving through Vehicle Link, rather than the usual +2).

Stats

INT 9 REF 8 TECH 4
 COOL 5 ATTR 3 LUCK 3
 MA 2 BODY 4 EMP 4

Skills

Awareness +4, Basic Tech +5, Cyber Tech +5, Cyberdeck Design +6, Driving +6, Education +6, Electronic Security +5, Electronics +4, Interface +6, Library Search +4, Operate Heavy Machine +6, Programming +7, System Knowledge +6

Equipment

Cybermodem Link; Elysia Deck — Speed +3, CPU 1, 20 memory stores:

	Str	MU
Viddy Master	4	1
Soundmachine	4	1
Dee 2	3	1
Hot-wire	3	1
Open Sesame	3	1
Crystal Ball	4	1
Invisibility	3	1
Watchdog	4	5
See Ya	3	1
Force Shield	4	2
Killer	4	5

Cyberware

Interface Plugs, Vehicle Link, Voice Synthesizer.

Combat scores

Initiative: +8

Stun/death Save: 4

Body Type Modifier: -1

Krait Antares*Netrunner*

Krait is slender and sharp-featured, her hair cropped very short. She wears a one-armed black leather jacket (which leaves the polished cyberarm free), metallic leggings and military-style boots. Though good-looking, she is cold, and despises the frailty of meat (excepting her family). She enjoys killing.

She is positioned between the ambush and the getaway car, so that she can cover the getaway if necessary.

In the ambush, her primary role is to ambush any Netrunners who try to take on Red. If a getaway becomes necessary, she will drive the PCs back using the flame-thrower. Preferred tactic is to ignite vehicles' fuel tanks close to the enemy.

Stats

INT 7 REF 7 TECH 7
 COOL 5 ATTR 10 LUCK 3
 MA 5 BODY 5 EMP 2

Skills

Awareness +3, Basic Tech +5, Cyber Tech +4, Cyberdeck design +8, Demolitions +3, Education +7, Electronics +4, Grooming +4, Hand Gun +5, Heavy Weapons +3, Interface +7, Programming +7, System Knowledge +6, Weaponsmith +8

Equipment

Cybermodem Link; Elysia Deck — Speed +3, CPU 1, Memory 20

	Str	MU
Invisibility	3	1
Armor	4	2
Dragon	4	3
Brain-wipe	3	4
Knockout	4	3
Re-rezz	3	1
Force Shield	4	2
Hellbolt	4	4

Cyberware

Interface Plugs, Kerenzikov Booster +1, Cyberarm with Reinforced joints, Microwave/EMP shielding, Flame thrower

Combat Scores

Initiative: +8

Stun/death Save: 5

Body Type Modifier: -2

Flamethrower (Dam 2D6 first turn, D6/2 two subsequent turns; 4 shots)

After the Fight

The PCs (or at least the survivors) will be interested in who wants them dead. If they have any of the Antares siblings alive, they may be able to question them. They may find a note in the getaway vehicle — or in the pocket of one of the siblings — noting a rendezvous. If the PCs stake out this rendezvous they will discover that it was to be with Sake Falle.

If they don't, or if they were rescued from the ambush by Trauma Team Inc, then they will have no clues as to who wanted them dead, so they will have to work it out by logic — or wait for the next attempt for another chance to get some clues!

PART SIX: THE WORM TURNS

The PCs attempt to trace their former employer, and ensure their own safety by disposing of her. They may even be interested in what the whole thing was about.

Tracing the Employer

Although Alys Grant has attempted to prevent the PCs discovering her identity, a number of clues or sources of information have been scattered through the adventure. For instance:

- ▲ Alys Grant was wearing DaMar earrings (see below).
 - ▲ The Bartholomew School's records would contain Jase's mother's name and address. If questioned closely, some of the pupils may know Jase's surname, and/or the city block he lived in.
 - ▲ Jase and 'Rya both know Alys Grant's name, address, and that she was an employee of the InTech Corporation — information they will share, on request, if the PCs are helpful.
 - ▲ The PCs may have succeeded in following Alys Grant to Clouds Villa.
 - ▲ The PCs could try questioning Sake Falle (which may, of course, require them to find Sake Falle, and will certainly require them to induce her to talk).
 - ▲ If any PC has a friend in the Corporate world, and especially in the Corporate intelligence, sabotage or head-hunting fields, that contact may (a Difficult roll) recognize Alys Grant from the PCs' information.
- s The PCs might access and plough through population records — whether city-based or national (Referee's choice!) — for boys of Jase's age and name. This would be an exceedingly lengthy business unless they could add further information to help with the data search. Still, if the PCs are prepared to be persistent (spin the playing out so that the players get an idea of how bored their PCs will be), they should be able to come to the following conclusions: Jase is not registered as the child of 'Rya Mendez, nor is he registered as adopted; of children of the right age named Jase registered to single mothers who could plausibly be their employer, there are some half-dozen. The PCs will have to visit each

address in turn — and some of the families may have moved since the birth was registered...

Triangulating the Apartment

If the PCs thought to attempt to get a direction on the phone call, and had or could rig up the equipment, they could attempt to triangulate it by getting two directional indicators from different parts of the city. Where the lines intersect is the location they want — in theory. In practice, it's not that easy to get a very precise direction; if they make a Moderate Electronic Security roll, they have a general idea of the location — say to within a few blocks. If they make Difficult Electronic Security, they have a good idea — within a block or so. If they make a Very Difficult roll, they pinpoint Alys Grant's apartment.

Hospital Records

The information 'Rya gave them about Jase's birth may enable the PCs to trace him and Alys through the hospital records. 'Rya knows that the hospital was the Lister Sanatorium (note — Referees are free to modify this to a suitable hospital in their own setting), and the date of birth was 20 January, 2011. From this, the PCs might be able to trace who paid the hospital bills. Obviously, the hospital isn't going to just open up its files to the PCs; there is still such a thing as patient confidentiality. The PCs can get the information by netrunning into the hospital's computer. If they attempt this, use a suitable data fortress; it has the expected levels of security for a private, rather expensive, hospital (moderate).

If they go in person, with some concocted reason for wanting to know (they might claim to be long-lost relatives, for instance), the characters are ushered in to see the Chief Administrator.

Jeanne Moret is a slightly plump French-Canadian in her late 60s with iron-grey hair tied back; she looks like a traditional no-nonsense hospital matron (the sort all the doctors go in fear of). She does, however, have a romantic streak, and if the PCs are convincing (judge by their presentation, or require a Moderate Persuasion roll), she gives them Alys Grant's address with the

admonition not to let anyone know who told them. (Blackmailing players will find that she doesn't crumble if they attempt to profit from her soft-heartedness. She realizes that she is valuable enough to the hospital that they won't simply fire her for one lapse.)

If the PCs approach Jeanne in an official capacity — cops requesting help with their investigations, or to get evidence for legal proceedings against InTech, Jeanne is less helpful. Confidentiality comes first with her. The PCs had better have an injunction to allow them access to the records. Otherwise, Cops might try an opposed Authority roll to convince her that the information is needed urgently. If they try appealing to emotions — telling the whole tragic story of Jase and 'Rya, a Very Difficult Fast-talk roll will be needed — and then she stresses that the information is *not* being given officially, and must *not* be used to embarrass the hospital in any way. Otherwise, she expresses sympathy, and regrets that she is unable to help.

Alternatively, the PCs may attempt to bribe their way to finding out the information. In this case, they meet Jane Bryan. Jane is a data technician (clerk), badly paid and in debt. Jane is in her 20s, blonde, pretty, but not too bright. For 100 eb she will obtain the information. Make any attractive male PCs make a Seduction roll; on an Average result, Jane will be attracted to him, attempting to chat him up, trying to persuade him to see her again, and so forth (if more than one PC makes the roll, Jane will be attracted to the highest roll). If the feeling is mutual, Jane could go on to become a regular part of the PC's life...

Hospital security is good; hospitals have a lot of valuable equipment, as well as drugs, to protect.

Jeanne Moret

INT 9	REF 8	TECH 7
COOL 10	ATTR 3	LUCK 4
MA 3	BODY 4	EMP 10

Skills

Accounting +2, Authority +4, Diagnose illness +3, First Aid +2, Intimidate +3, Know Language (French) +10, Library Search +4

Jane Bryan

INT 4	REF 7	TECH 6
COOL 3	ATTR 10	LUCK 5
MA 7	BODY 5	EMP 8

Skills

Library Search +5, Perform (dance) +4, Personal Grooming +3, Programming +2, Seduction +2, Stock Market +3

Cabs

The sharper PCs may have noticed that Alys Grant hired a number of cabs to cover her escape at the swap. On an Easy Notice roll, they recognized the cabs as Red Cabs.

If they inquire at Red Cabs, they meet Jonny Fuller. Jonny is an ex-cabbie who was crippled by a fare who went cyberpsycho in his cab; he now operates the radio control of the cab fleet, and was on duty at the time of the hand-over.

Jonny is in his 50s, with greying blond hair. He is a typical cabbie, and loves to give people the benefit of his thoughts on politics, sport, the weather, and anything else. Since he doesn't get much chance to indulge this any more, he is only too pleased to talk at length to the PCs, breaking off at intervals to answer the phone and order a cab to a rendezvous, and then recommencing the conversation in mid-sentence. The PCs may have some difficulty in getting him onto the subject of their inquiries, and keeping him there, but if they persist, he happily informs them that the cabs were ordered by a lady — he remembered that one because it isn't often that one person needs so many cabs, and if they'll give him a moment he'll look up the details, and what do the PCs think about last night's big game? personally he'd have shot the ref...and so forth. Eventually, he is able to inform the PCs that the lady lives at Clouds Villa.

Jonny doesn't bother to tell the PCs that he has already been bribed by the lady to inform her if anyone comes asking questions, and this he does once the PCs leave. This will result in Alys Grant being aware of the PCs' intentions. The PCs could avoid this by killing or intimidating Jonny, but killing him will bring the police onto the scene, and intimidating him could lead to future troubles with cabs. Jonny would distribute the PCs' likenesses to every taxi in the city (even from other firms), and none would accept them as rides ever again. Well, some of the more unscrupulous might, but you don't want to think about the fares they'd charge... Cabbies are vulnerable to nasty people, and have found it useful to act in union. Security cameras at Red Cabs will have recorded the PCs' faces. These require a Difficult Awareness roll to notice, and a Very Difficult Electronic Security roll to disarm or wipe.

Jonny Fuller

INT 8	REF 7	TECH 8
COOL 5	ATTR 7	LUCK 3
MA 1	BODY 5	EMP 8

Skills

Drive 4 (in suitably converted vehicle); Wheelchair (6)

The DaMar Earrings

DaMar jewelry is available from a single exclusive outlet in the city — Powerdress™. This shop caters almost entirely to female senior executives, and is situated near to the Corporate sector of the city. It sells the full range of things a female executive might need — clothing, shoes, makeup, shoulder pads, jewelry, briefcases, personalized pen sets, executive toys, weaponry, bodyguard services, escort services, etc., etc. It is open 24 hours, to suit the busy lifestyle of today's executives.

The decor is stylish but subdued, the muzac provided by a live string quartet (playing classics of the 1970s and '80s such as "Holiday in Cambodia", and "I don't like Mondays"), the sell soft. Products are displayed more like museum exhibits than items for sale; prices are available on request.

The sales staff are a kaleidoscope of good-looking and cultured young men, beautifully dressed and groomed.

The average PC group will not feel comfortable in this setting!

Examining the display of DaMar jewelry, an Average Wardrobe roll will identify the earrings worn by Alys Grant as the "Ack-Ack" design.

Questioning the jewelry salesman, make a Luck roll (average of the PCs' Luck + 1D10 to reach 10+) to determine whether he does know/remember Alys Grant. An Average Persuasion roll, and a plausible line in patter, is needed to prevent the salesman calling for the manager. The PC doing the talking might claim to be shopping for a piece for his lady friend which would go the piece she already has, and does the salesman know which that was — his lady is a red-head... If successful, the PC discovers Alys Grant's name, that she works for InTech, and that she lives in Clouds Villa.

If the salesman realizes that the PCs are really after information about a customer, then he calls for the manager. Mrs. Europa Spiro, a distinguished middle-aged woman, can be persuaded to assist the PCs with their inquiries if one of them can make an Average

Authority or Credibility roll to convince her that they are making legitimate inquiries rather than Corporate mischief. Mrs. Spiro can give the PCs the same information as the salesman.

The PCs might netrun their way into Powerdress's sales accounts; if so, they find the DaMar sales listed by design — Ack-Ack, Asdic, Corvette, Spitfire, Stuka, etc. If they know which design they are looking for, they will find only three sales listed...

Clouds Villa

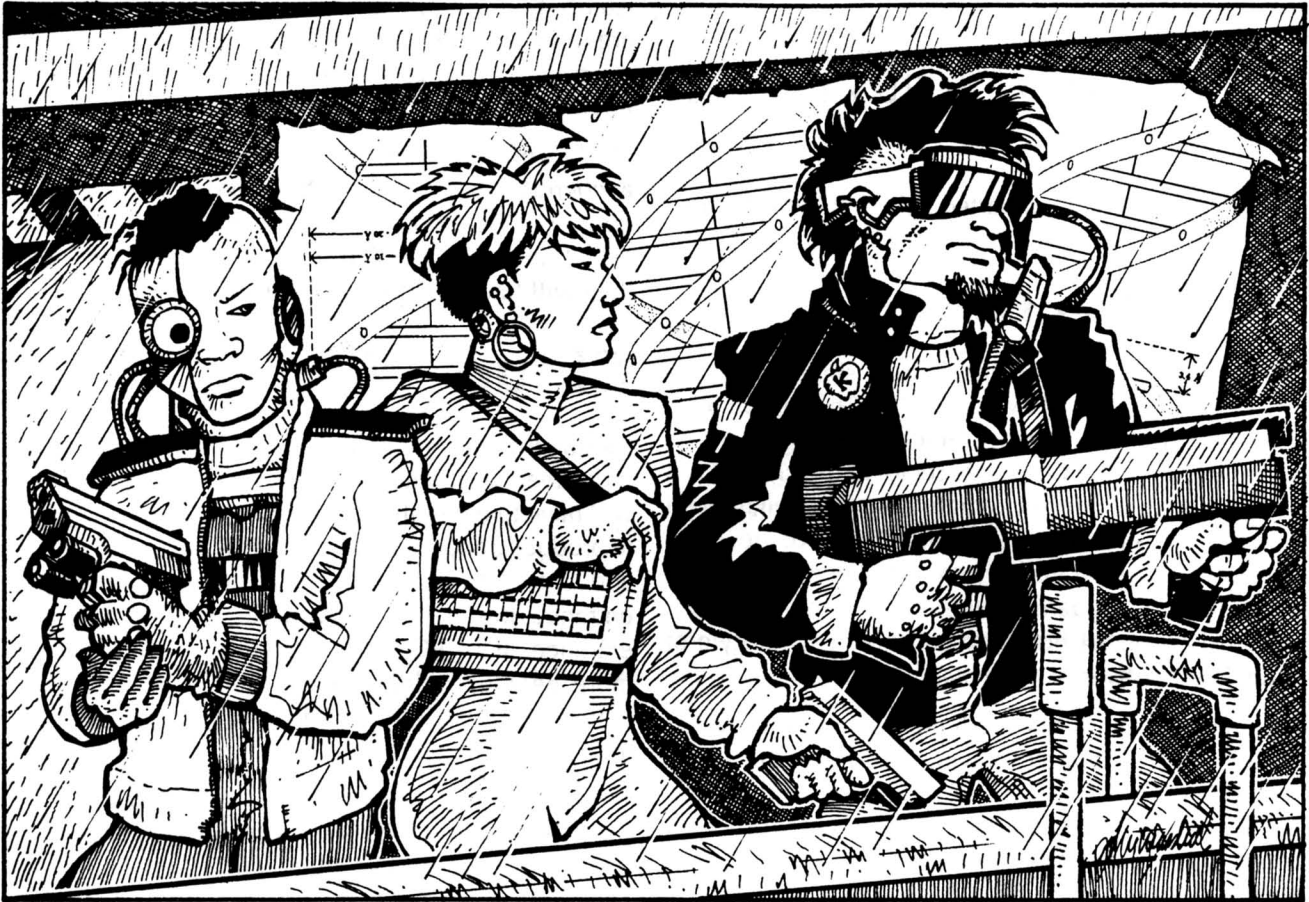
Clouds Villa is an elite tower of apartments. Security is discreet but efficient and persistent; to get in, the PCs will have to either think of a good excuse (and be able to produce documentation) or be prepared to fight hard and fast. Obvious ways in are covered; the service entrance has a guard on it, as well as the main entrance. If the PCs *do* start anything, a number of the more nervous residents have their own bodyguards who would pitch into any battle which appeared likely to involve their employers.

Frankly, if the players haven't wised up by now, they deserve problems. If they try to shoot their way in, don't be generous. Have the guards operate in pairs. Their first response to trouble is to press their alarm buttons and get into cover, rather than trading shots with the PCs and allowing themselves to be shot easily.

There are plenty of excuses the PCs can use to get in, from befriending a resident of the Villa in order to get an invitation inside, to bringing a real or faked delivery. The PCs might also make a distraction, such as a fire, and try to sneak in while this is being dealt with (though unless the fire is a full-scale emergency, some of the guards will remain in place anyway).

Two NPCs who might be useful to the PCs in getting in to Clouds Villa are:

Rupert Pilger-Ward; a rather cynical photo-journalist who specializes in getting clip photo shots of the influential that he sells to any data source prepared to pay. His usual sources are the media, but he also contributes to libraries and private data-banks (Infocomp, for example). He is a freelancer, and receives more payment from kill fees than from actual sales. He is interested in getting into Clouds Villa himself, and is liable to regard the PCs as a convenient distraction to enable him to get in. Since photo-journalists are not welcome at Clouds Villa, he suggests that the way to get an entry would be as an MEO



(Medical Emergency Operative); equipment can be concealed as part of the medical gear, and guards might be persuaded that haste in the case of a medical emergency is acceptable. It does need more than one person, and it does mean that the people going in need to be clean and hygienic.

Cassie Ragnar; she is a fixer who specializes in getting people into and out of places, jail breaks a speciality. As she will explain, it is trivial to get into or out of somewhere guns blazing. Actually being able to do anything inside, or staying alive and outside is quite another matter. "I arrange for the customer to enjoy after-sales service not related to the morgue." She will only consider a consultation for a fee of 100 euro, non-refundable; 1,000 euro is her fee if the extraction/infiltration is successful. "I like money. The difference ensures that I do a good job for you. And if you fail to pay up, then I can ensure that there is no way that you will ever have a safe hide-out. Just remember that if I can get a person into a place, I can get a claymore mine in as well. And you will never know if I know where you are staying. Maybe you could ice me, but firefights are a chancy thing, and is a thousand bucks enough to

risk casualties?" Her suggestion, on hearing the set-up, is very simple. Guards are not likely to be questioned once inside, and to get inside, they need to pass a couple of electronic surveillance tests. "I will get you documentation that will pass these examinations, and then you are inside, reasonably secure, and I will have fulfilled my part of the contract. Don't all of you die on the job — I want the balance of my payment."

Alys Grant's Apartment

The door-lock is Difficult to pick. The apartment consists of a generous two bedrooms, living room, kitchen and bathroom. There is little trace of Jase in the rest of the apartment — all his belongings are kept strictly in his own bedroom.

The apartment is decorated in the restrained, tasteful style of Alys Grant. If the PCs have broken in to search the apartment, there is a desk in Alys Grant's bedroom which is locked (a Difficult Pick Lock or an Average Strength Feat with a suitable lever to open), and inside the desk is a file labelled "Project".

Confronting Alys Grant

Alys Grant is usually at her office between 0800 and 2000; outside these hours she is usually in her apartment. If the PCs reach her in her apartment without her expecting it, they have little difficulty in killing her (if that is their aim). The sound of gunfire, or other suspicious sounds (like screaming), attracts the attention of the Villas' security, however, and leads to a full-scale firefight.

If the PCs confront Alys Grant, her priorities are 1) personal safety, 2) finding out how much they know and what they intend to do with it, 3) calling the security guards to remove the PCs if they know nothing significant, 4) buying the PCs off and then seeing about them if they do know something significant (see Part 7).

In short, she talks, attempts to bribe the PCs, attempts to convince them that the hit was not her intention but that Sake Falle had acted without orders, and if all else seems to be failing, offers to explain what was going on with Jase anyway. If they are threatening (which they probably will be), she hastily adds that her employers had had her fitted with a biomonitor, which will fry her brain if her condition exceeds certain prescribed parameters. "So unless you can get information from a corpse, it is in all our interests to discuss this as though we were rational human beings." (It is for the GM to determine whether this is actually true — it's certainly not unknown — and what the prescribed parameters are.)

If, however, Alys Grant has reason to suppose that the PCs are not being cooperative little pawns, or for the period between the first hit on them and their successful assassination, Alys realizes that her apartment could easily be a death-trap for her, and she moves out to a nearby apartment. Her own apartment contains a couple of useful little devices to report on unauthorized access. The door opening will trigger one (Very Difficult Notice to spot unless the PCs specify that they are looking for such security devices, and a Difficult Electronic Security roll to disarm). In addition, the apartment's computer is monitoring the lights in the apartment (which is left dark), and will spot flashlights or IR, as well as use of the lights. Either of these will send an alarm to Alys Grant.

Once Alys Grant receives an alarm, she will hasten to the apartment, along with a bunch of InTech guards disguised as police. The actual resources available to

her will depend on how the scenario has gone so far. If Jase has been returned, Alys will have to arrange for the guards on her own seniority — she will get as many as there are PCs. If Jase has not been returned, and InTech has had to be informed that he is missing, the numbers of guards will be at least twice this.

Going In by the Net

Alys Grant's computer contains the usual things — personal finances and so forth. It does not contain any files marked "Secret file on Jase" for the simple reason that Jase is supposed to be good with computers, and is not supposed to be able to find out about himself!

Examination of her finances shows (on an Easy Accounting roll) that Alys Grant should not be able to afford the apartment on her salary — she is only in middle management. A closer examination (an Average Accounting roll) discloses that the apartment was given to her by her employers on a lifetime lease — for a nominal payment — nine years ago (if the players don't realize, make it an Easy Notice roll to spot that this was just about the time Jase was born).

The "Project" File

The file contains several things: a long printout of code letters (GGAGTAAGCCC...) which takes an Average Biology roll to determine is a print of a genetic code. A Nearly Impossible roll will realize that it is of human DNA.

There is a sheaf of Jase's school reports and other aptitude tests, with reaction times and computing scores highlighted. Jase's computing scores are very good, but not abnormal; the reaction times are very quick indeed (to realize this, allow either an Education roll for the PC to know what normal reaction times are, and that this is about half that, or a Combat sense roll for Solos to know how long it takes them to react, or any other suitable INT or REF skill).

There are four technical reports — "Necessary changes to neuron structure to speed up information-processing capacity"; "Baseline requirements for changes"; "Best-fits from available sample"; "Genetic alterations required".

It's a big file. The players are unlikely to understand exactly what's happening simply from the list of contents of the Project file, and the technical language would defeat anyone but an expert anyway.

Ad Libbing the Script

Sometimes it helps to remind oneself: Adventures are made up of suggestions, not rules. When we provide you with an adventure, we're not saying, "Here's our Art for you to re-enact verbatim," we're giving you a bundle of plot threads to weave as you see fit.

Take this adventure's conclusion, for instance. The author suggests numerous ways that *Thicker Than Blood* might turn out. It's quite possible (if not likely) that your players will choose to approach the situation in some way not covered here.

That's fine — in fact, it's great, because seeing players trash your best-laid plans is one of the joys of being a gamemaster. You get that adrenaline rush as you scramble to bring everything together to a satisfying conclusion...

What makes a conclusion satisfying? You need to gauge your own players, as you know them best. There are no sacred cows. If the PCs mop up the floor with Alys Grant and Sake Falle in the end, so be it. Or if they become fast allies against a greater foe, you can groove with that as well. Have fun.

After all, Referees are *Cyberpunk* too, right?

—The Editor

The PCs can try to find an expert who can explain it to them (someone who can make a Very Difficult Zoology, Biology or suitable Expert roll), or they can try to find out more at InTech.

(Why did Alys Grant leave the file where the PCs could find it? Perhaps she was confident of getting them before they could get it, or perhaps she thought that it would delay the PCs long enough for her to arrive there with reinforcements. Perhaps she simply overlooked it. In dramatic terms, the file lets your players know what's really been going on.)

At Gunpoint

Meanwhile, Alys Grant and the InTech guards (still disguised as police) have arrived at Clouds Villa. They hasten on up to the apartment. If any of the PCs have remained as lookouts, the guards will attempt to take them out silently with stun-darts or similar devices. (Take the player or players in question away from the rest of the group to run this, to cut down on the chances that the other players will "magically" realize something is wrong even if no alarm has been raised.) If things go according to Alys's plan, the first the PCs will know is the click of a gun as the guards level weapons on them.

"You do realize that if I had you shot, the police would write it off as 'reasonable force'?" Alys Grant enquires. Knowing that she has the PCs cold, Alys Grant is easy to draw out into conversation — or rather boasting — about Jase, the Project, and the PCs' role.

(Why do villains do this? Shouldn't they know better? Well, yes, but the fact is that villains are usually in it for the power, and being able to boast to someone who lives or dies at your word is a very big power trip, and almost irresistible.)

If Jase is still missing, she will also be wanting to find out where he is — perhaps shooting PCs one at a time, asking the survivors each time where Jase is.

The Story

InTech's project was simple. In human interfacing with computers, by far the slowest component is human neural speeds. Yet a human is more flexible and more controllable (to expert psychologists) than almost any artificial intelligence.

InTech's idea was to speed up the transfer of information across human synapses by altering the neurons. This would require illegal genetic engineering of an embryo, so it was done secretly, under the cover story of surrogacy for Alys Grant. 'Rya Mendez was chosen as the surrogate because her genetic makeup was the suitable for the necessary manipulation. It was a bonus that she could be persuaded to carry the child to term — it saved Alys Grant the bother.

As far as can be told, Jase's neurons have been improved, to about 10% above what would have been expected from his parentage. This may not sound like much, but gets very significant in dealing with computers.

Alys Grant was chosen by InTech to be the mother; she accepted because it was an important project and could lead to career advancement for her. She doesn't care about Jase as an individual, and dislikes children in general. When Jase disappeared from school, Alys Grant feared that a rival company had discovered the project, or that kidnappers wanted to blackmail the company; her second thought was that if she could get Jase back without InTech finding out, then there would be no harm done. For this reason, she went to great lengths to prevent the PCs finding out what was going on, and to dispose of them afterwards. Even at this stage, she can recoup most of her losses with InTech by successfully getting rid of the evidence (the PCs) and regaining Jase.

Escape?

If any of the PCs are to survive, they will have to make an escape bid.

InTech Guards

INT 6	REF 9	TECH 5
COOL 7	ATTR 4	LUCK 3
MA 5	BODY 8	EMP 4

Cybernetics

Smartgun link; Interface plugs; Sandevistan speedware (+3 initiative); Nasal filters.

Skills

Athletics +6, Awareness +6, Combat Sense +2, Heavy Weapons +5, Karate +4, Pistol +7, Rifle +7

Equipment

Grenade launcher (3 gas grenades (sleep, tear, nerve), 2 smoke grenades, 1 dazzle grenade); smartgoggles (targeting/times square/low lite/anti dazzle); nylon helmet (SP 20); medium armor jacket/pants (SP 18); smart Armalite 44 or smart H+K MPK-9 or Sternmeyer Stakeout 10. Cop uniform.

Combat Scores

Initiative: +12
 Stun/Death Save: 8
 Body Type Modifier: -3
 Armalite 44 (Shots 8/ROF 1/Dam 4D6+1/ST): +17
 Sternmeyer Stakeout 10 (Shots 10/ROF 2/Dam 4D6/ST): +17
 H+K MPK-9 (Shots 35/ROF 25/Dam 2D6+1/ST): +17
 Grenades (as type): +15
 Armor: Head 20, Rest 18

Clouds Villa Guards

There are 20 guards on duty. They think the InTech guards are cops. The InTech guards requested that they guard all entrances to the building. The PCs will need to escape past them if they succeed in beating the InTech guards. The InTech guards specifically requested the Clouds Villa guards to stay away from the floor of Alys Grant's apartment, so the PCs may be able to bluff their way out if the guards have not been alerted. There are five guards at front and service entrances; the others are about their normal duties about the block.

Stats

INT 7	REF 7	TECH 5
COOL 6	ATTR 5	LUCK 5
MA 7	BODY 7	EMP 6

Cybernetics

Sandevistan speedware (+3 initiative), interface plugs, smartgun link, cyberoptics (targeting, low lite, times square)

Skills

Authority +3, Awareness +7, Human perception +4., Melee +5, Pistol +6

Equipment

Steel helmet, heavy armored jacket, flak pants, Colt AMT Model 2000 (smart), radio links, first aid kit, breathing mask.

Combat Scores

Initiative: +7
 Stun/Death Save: 7
 Body Type Modifier: -2
 Colt (shots 8/ROF 1/Dam 4D6+1/VR): +13
 Armor: head 14; rest 20

Going to InTech

The PCs may decide, either after encountering Alys Grant, or instead of it, to try looking for information at InTech. This is not being given in detail; InTech is a typical Corporation with very high security on its data fortress. All the information about the project is available in protected files on InTech's computer titled Project:1, Project:2, etc. This includes the information above, and a lot more, including the doctors and scientists who were involved. InTech's buildings are again typically Corporate, and have a good many guards (see above for stats) just itching for the chance to earn a promotion by tear-gassing burglars.

PART SEVEN: IT'S A WRAP!

The Story So Far...

Depending on the PCs' decisions, and how things went in play, the adventure may have gone in a great many different directions by now. It is perhaps worth summarizing the main possibilities before considering what further consequences may arise.

- 1) ***The PCs may have returned Jase to Alys, perhaps killing 'Rya in the process.***
 - 1a) Suspicious, they investigated further. They may have confronted or attempted to blackmail Alys or InTech. Alys and/or InTech respond by trying to flatline the PCs.
 - 1b) They considered the case closed. Sometime down the line, Alys attempted to close the case to her own satisfaction by flatlining the PCs.
- 2) ***The PCs may have let (or helped) 'Rya and Jase flee to South America.***
 - 2a) Alys found out about this in time to recover Jase, and ordered the PCs iced.
 - 2b) Alys wants the PCs captured and questioned, so that Jase may be recovered even at this late stage.
 - 2c) Alys was forced to admit her failure to InTech, and it or she wants revenge on the PCs.
- 3) ***The PCs attempted to help 'Rya through legitimate channels.***
 - 3a) By Media exposure of InTech's (or Alys's) wrongdoings. Alys's response is to swamp the media with a more interesting story (see Part 5). InTech has more resources at its disposal...
 - 3b) Through the courts. On a simple 'Rya versus Alys action, 'Rya has no legal claim. It might be possible to get a different decision if the full story is known...
- 4) ***The PCs may have bungled the case, perhaps killing Jase, perhaps failing to find him. Their lives are not worth a teaspoon of kibble...***
- 5) ***The PCs may be dead. The players are keen to avenge them through their successors...***

In addition, of course, the PCs may have found out about the Project, or they may not. They may have come up with some way of dealing with Alys Grant, such as killing her. The PCs may also have made friends or enemies of some of the other Referee characters in the scenario.

Murder Charges

If the PCs killed Alys Grant, then the police naturally treat the case as murder. InTech pressures the police to find the murderers if they don't realize that the Project was involved. If they do realize that the Project was compromised, they send their own people after the PCs instead.

These corporate investigators, trouble-shooters, or assassins (pick your favorite phrase, there's little difference) consist of a team of competent investigators to find the PCs, and who can call on corporate Solos as backup to do the disposal once the PCs have been found, and any evidence they have recovered.

Incidentally, if investigators (corporate or police) are on the PCs' trail, you may be surprised how many clues the PCs have allowed to fall. It is very likely that anyone prepared to do the legwork, to investigate all possible leads, and to interview all potential witnesses, can identify the PCs with little difficulty.

If the PCs have been casual about the fate of innocent bystanders such as Jonny Fuller, they may also find themselves on the receiving end of a murder charge...

Vengeance

Some PCs might consider suitable revenge to be to capture Alys and sell her to another Corporation, along with details of the project. InTech doesn't like this. It matters little to them whether Alys defected willingly, and Alys and the PCs may become temporary allies against InTech.

The PCs may have preferred to reveal Alys Grant's failure to InTech, to allow them to deal with her — sweet revenge, and no risks with the cops. Two consequences may follow. Firstly, if InTech has reason to think the PCs know little about the Project, it may decide to recruit them. (The PCs may not be given a choice in the matter.) InTech can use them for difficult and dangerous missions, and it's heads they win, tails the PCs lose — InTech either gets its missions done, or gets rid of a security risk.

On the other hand, InTech may not take the expected course of killing Alys Grant, but merely demote and humiliate her. In this case, she is keen for revenge



against the PCs, and to recover her position, perhaps by regaining Jase. She is considerably poorer in resources to fulfill these goals, but she still has friends in the corporate world, and other favors that she could call in. The PCs may find odd things going wrong, reports of tax evasion against them, occasional messages concerning corporate employment going astray, information about them going to their enemies, and so on.

A particularly “interesting” (as in the old Chinese curse about living in interesting times) combination is if the PCs are working for InTech, alongside an Alys Grant bent on their destruction. They could even be given assignments together. It might amuse someone in senior management to see what would happen...

Media Exposure

If the PCs bring in the media against InTech, then the more information they have, the bigger the story is. InTech of course attempts to prevent the story from being published. The PCs’ media contacts may turn up dead, or may decide to take a sudden holiday (voluntarily, by bribery, or involuntarily, by kidnap).

It is a Media proverb that: “The freedom of the press is the freedom of the editor to print as much of the owner’s views as the advertisers will allow.” InTech may attempt to persuade the owners or advertisers (and InTech is an advertiser itself, after all) to squash the story.

If this approach fails, InTech sends out press releases stating that the story was due to the unauthorized actions of an employee, whom they throw to the media (and maybe legal) wolves. This scapegoat is unlikely to be Alys Grant — who knows too much of the truth — unless, of course, she happens to be conveniently dead.

Legal Process

If the Project was brought to public or police attention, there results a lengthy legal process, probably requiring Jase and ‘Rya to be brought back, and for ‘Rya to contest custody of Jase. InTech first attempts to prevent the case from coming to court, with the usual range of blackmail, bribes, and attacks (disguised as accidents) on the PCs or others involved in the case. The case probably fails if the PCs are unable, or unwilling, to testify.

Should the case make it to court, InTech then tries legal tricks—using sharp lawyers to discredit dubious witnesses, such as the PCs. InTech supports Alys Grant (or her next of kin) as legal guardian of Jase, or throws her to the wolves by claiming that Project was nothing to do with InTech, depending on how the trial progresses.

If InTech loses the case, the corporation can afford to wait until the publicity dies down, and then attempt to extract Jase quietly.

There could also be a court case over the use of cop uniforms by InTech guards. InTech would naturally blame this on an employee acting without orders, and produce a scapegoat (a minor employee paid very well to take the rap for them). They can, even in the worst case, afford the fine.

Sake Falle

The PCs may wish to have a word with Sake Falle about having been set up by her. Sake defends herself if necessary, and if she discovers that the PCs want revenge, Sake may well view it as in her best interests to get rid of them.

If possible, however, she would like to make a profit on the deal. If the PCs have enemies who would pay for information allowing them to get their hands upon the PCs, then Sake sells to them. Has she discovered any special tricks the PCs like to use; new and secret cyberware or other equipment; their hideouts? Remember that she was keeping an eye on them during much of their investigation.

If Alys was killed, Sake's rep suffered a bad knock, as certain embarrassing records (details are left to the Referee's discretion) were subsequently released. Sake's revenge for this would be to do something similar to the PCs; e.g. icing an important contact of the PCs in a future adventure, or getting some humiliating snaps of the PCs to distribute.

It is remotely possible that the PCs would get hold of the records themselves, and use them to blackmail her. Sake does not like this at all, and the PCs had better make sure they don't push her far enough that she kills them anyway, despite the likely consequences. The records are with a lawyer (see Part 8).

Other Adventures

Any of the Referee characters which appeared in this scenario could reappear in the PCs' lives. Marta

Anders, Rupert Pilger-Ward and Cassie Ragnar could obviously be useful to the PCs in the future. In Part 6, the possible problems arising from the PCs' intimidation of Jonny Fuller were mentioned.

As suggested in Part 3, the Careys could become regular contacts for the PCs, being experts in the theoretical sides of computing and law.

Toni Carey could provide future scenarios — what if she wanders off in a distressed state, and Phil Carey begs the PCs to help find her? If her madness is caused by a malign artificial intelligence, then defeating it and its plans could form the basis of a whole scenario. Or perhaps Toni goes into the Net, and Netrunning PCs are asked to find and retrieve her before her mind is completely destroyed...

If any of the Antares family survived, then they will be a) anxious for revenge against the PCs, b) desperately short of cash, and c) terrified of another encounter with the PCs.

One way they might try to get revenge and cash at the same time, without risking a direct face-off against the PCs, would be to get face-jobs from a shady plastic surgeon. Disguised as the PCs, they could pull off some easy robberies, allowing the PCs to take the blame. The theory is that they would be able to regain their own likenesses, and be free from suspicion of the crimes. Unfortunately, the plastic surgeon will have to be paid off (the work will have been done on credit; and they'll need to raise extra money to be changed back; and the surgeon may decide the blackmail them), leading to their having to keep the faces and continue the crime-wave for longer than they would like.

Meanwhile, the PCs' faces will be plastered across the screamsheets, wanted for crimes they have not committed...

And Krait might go cyberpsycho any time...

The Bartholomew School

A number of contacts at the school could prove useful to the PCs later on. Referees are invited to decide for themselves how experts in various academic subjects might be useful, or whether the ability to claim an acquaintance with their children might help with approaching various rich and powerful Corporates.

The PCs' connection with the school might lead to police interest in them whenever anything happens at the school. After all, if the PCs were involved in a

kidnapping, they might equally be responsible for an arson attack on the school...

Another scenario could be built around Donny Bierce. His prying for information for blackmail might reveal something altogether more serious — in which case, he might contact the PCs for protection. Do the PCs want to protect a blackmailer in order to expose more serious wrongdoing? Or for money? Even if the PCs refuse to get involved, the group or person Donny had information on might not believe this.

Seng Lho

Seng Lho might get into trouble at school, or with his extra-curricular smuggling activities, and want the PCs to help him out. He may get an order for something which the Dead Dogs are unable to supply. The Dead Dogs may not appreciate the PCs taking over as Seng's contacts...

Alternatively, perhaps Seng calls in his favor with the PCs in a different way, asking them to give him a tour and share their expertise. After all, he knows little about the seamy side of life, and it's not taught at school. Seng isn't stupid, though — he knows his limitations. If the PCs accepted, he would not insist on throwing his weight about, or wandering off and getting into trouble. He obeys orders. He would, however, continually ask questions: "Why have we taken this road rather than that?"; "Which of these people sleeping on the street are dangerous? How can you tell?" and so forth. It could provide the basis of a change-of-pace scenario.

The Dead Dogs and Hill View

Hill View might be the setting for future scenarios. Being a derelict area, it might be used by a drug baron to experiment with a new creation which has bad side-effects (cf. *All Fall Down*, also available from Atlas Games); it might become the site of a gang-war among gangs who don't want to damage their own turfs. A Corporation might buy the site and level it for future development, without caring what happens to the residents. A war criminal might decide to hide out there.

The Dead Dogs are no-hopers; having nothing to lose they have nothing to fear. They could make the strongest of allies. The PCs may discover this — but so

may a political or religious movement, criminal or corporation.

Getting the PCs' Successors Involved

Just because the lead characters pass away doesn't mean you have to abandon the storyline. If the PCs have got themselves flatlined, their successors may be drawn into the plot. They might be hired by the ex-PCs' grieving friends and relatives to investigate their deaths. Otherwise, they might stumble across the plot and become involved accidentally, they might meet and befriend 'Rya and Jase in South America, and be drawn into helping them if InTech kidnaps Jase back, or they might be friends of other Referee characters. Cassie Ragnar might want to know why she hasn't been paid, which would lead the new PCs to discover that the old PCs had been iced, and then they would naturally wonder why...

The Future of the Project

Meanwhile, the scientists and doctors are capable of recreating the Project — and possibly have already done so... Are the PCs interested in following this up and interfering?

'Rya and Jase

If 'Rya and Jase were separated during the scenario, the PCs' consciences may have been pricked into stealing him back again — which would require them to break into the school. 'Rya's assumption that they could escape in South America may turn out to be false — remember that 'Rya had no idea that this was anything but an individual tug-of-love between herself and Alys; would the PCs be prepared to help if Jase was later abducted by InTech?

'Rya and Jase could have other difficulties in South America which lead them to need the PCs' help; alternatively, they may find that South America does not suit them, and return to seek the PCs' help in resettling in their country.

And what of the future? How long before Jase becomes the best Netrunner in the hemisphere?

PART EIGHT: MAIN REFEREE

CHARACTERS

Sake Falle

Solo

Sake is in her mid-thirties. She is short and stocky, with a slight Oriental cast to her features, although she speaks in idiomatic English. She is hard working, painstaking, thorough, and always, always on her guard. She would be called paranoid if it wasn't for the fact that it has been this paranoia that has kept her alive through many troubled years. If she has feelings, she keeps them to herself.

Sake dresses in a quiet, conservative manner with a Kevlar vest underneath. Reliability is more important than flashiness to Sake, so she carries a mix of half a dozen grenades and a Sternmeyer Type 35 heavy autopistol. A casual observer might mistake her for a badly dressed Beaver or Mallplexer.

Sake uses words as though they cost an eb each; just enough to convey her meaning, not so few that she needs to repeat herself.

Although Sake has cybernetic radar to give her an eye in the back of her head, she does her best to avoid revealing this, taking nearly as great care of her back as if she did not.

Stats

INT 8	REF 9	TECH 6
COOL 10	ATTR 5	LUCK 7
MA 7	BODY 7	EMP 4

Reputation 6

Skills

Athletics +3, Awareness +5, Combat Sense +7, Demolitions +8, Driving +5, Electronic Security +5, First Aid +4, Handgun +7, Martial Arts (Choi Li Fut) +4, Melee +5, Rifle +7, Shadow/Track +5, Stealth +6, Streetwise +4, Submachine gun +1, Weapons Tech +2

Cyberware

Cyberoptic with Teleoptics, Times Square Marquee, Infrared, Anti Dazzle; Radar Sensor — Sensor built in to base of skull, allowing rear scanning without turning head, displayed to Times Square Marquee; Nasal filters — anti gas for 4 hours.

Combat scores

Initiative: +16

Stun/Death Save: 7

Body Type Modifier: -2

Sternmeyer Type 35 (shots 8/ROF 2/Dam 3D6/Rel VR): +16 — or as required

Armor: Torso 10 — or as required

Alys Grant

Corporate

In her early 30s, Alys Grant looks like what she is: an upwardly mobile Corporate who would sell not only her own granny, but everyone's grannies in a job lot for scrap, if it would improve her own career prospects.

Naturally red-headed and pale skinned (hence the Nanowear® Ozoneshield™), she dresses in the latest Corporate fashions. She carries a concealed Militech Arms Avenger (Medium Autopistol, damage 2D6+1).

Alys does not care about Jase on a personal level, but wants Jase back safely before InTech realizes that she has failed in the project of keeping him safe.

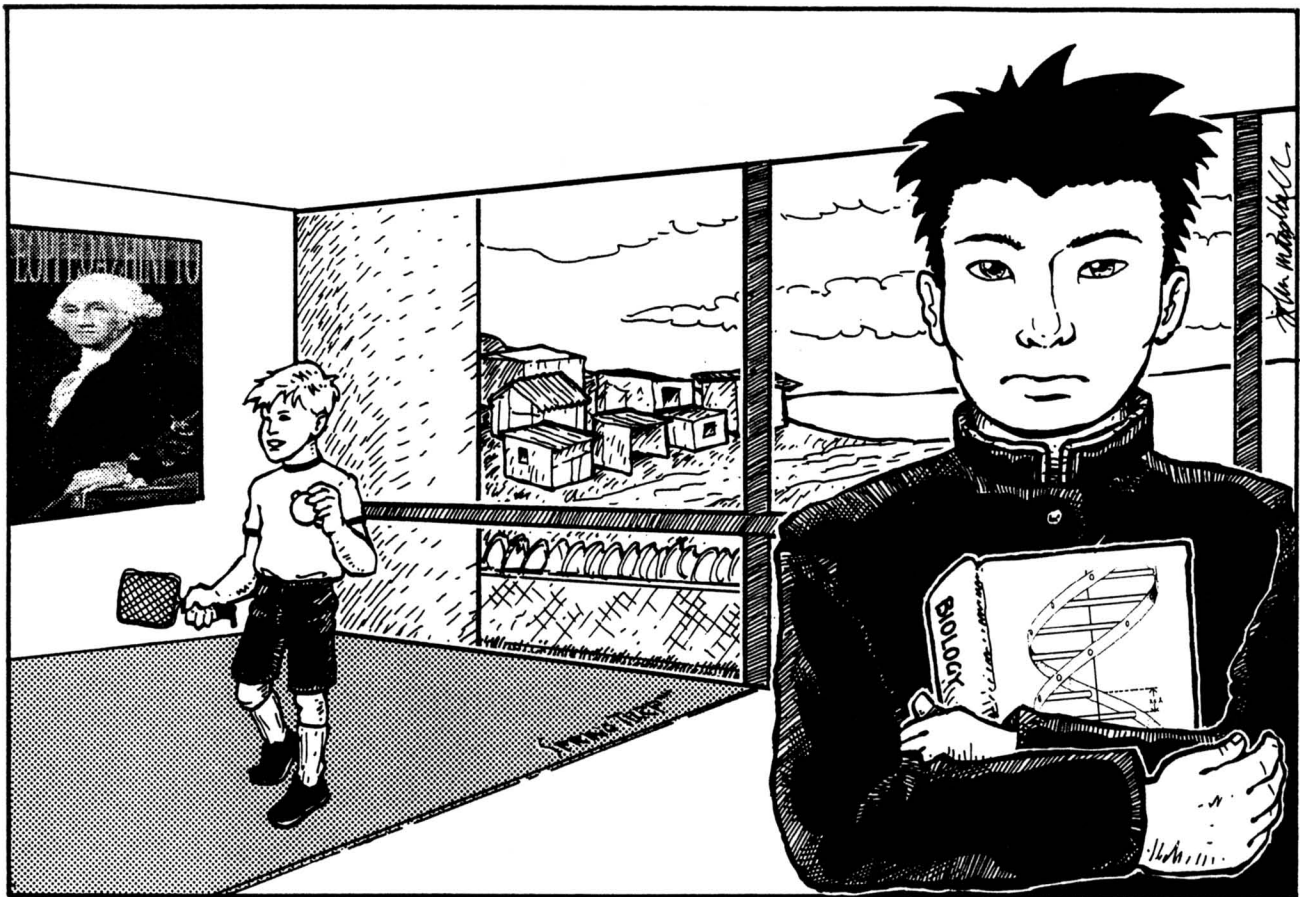
Sake works for Alys Grant because she owes Alys her life after an earlier, botched encounter. Both would refer to favors owed. Alys Grant is confident that the reason she can trust Sake is that Alys holds records of this encounter that would destroy Sake's rep if they ever got out. For obvious reasons, Alys Grant has these records held somewhere safe (not in her apartment, nor at InTech). They are held by a lawyer who has orders to release them if anything suspicious happens to Alys Grant.

Stats

INT 10	REF 7	TECH 6
COOL 9	ATTR 9	LUCK 7
MA 5	BODY 6	EMP 6

Skills

Awareness +5, Education +4, Handgun +4, Human Perception +6, Interview +3, Library Search +2, Personal grooming +3, Persuasion +2, Resources +6, Seduction +2, Streetwise +4, Wardrobe +4



Cyberware

Cyberaudio: Amplified hearing with sound editing and voice stress analyzer; Scratchers; Bioware — Ozoneshield (TM), by Nanowear (R), an ultraviolet light filter.

Combat Scores

Initiative: +7

Stun/Death Save: 6

Body Type Modifier: -2

Militech Arms Avenger (shots 10/ROF 2/Dam 2D6+1/Rel VR): +11

Scratchers 1D6: +7

Nanowear® Ozoneshield™

A modification of Skin Weave bioware, it weaves the upper layers of skin with a polymer thread that is colorless in the visible spectrum, but reflective to UV light. The polymer has no significant effect on skin strength. It is not usually used along with SkinWeave — having two layers of polymers in the skin tends to compress and/or starve the skin cells, leading to a case of incurable psoriasis. You have been warned...

The process takes one week to complete. As well as protecting against UV light that causes burns and cancer, it also suppresses the skin's natural response to UV — tanning. Naturally fair skinned users must either stay fair, or resort to artificial tanning.

Bioware: Surg. (N); Cost 2000; H. loss 1 pt.

From the cold depth of the Pacific Ocean rises

THE BONIN HORSE

Awakened at 5:56 AM, Saburo Arasaka is very angry.

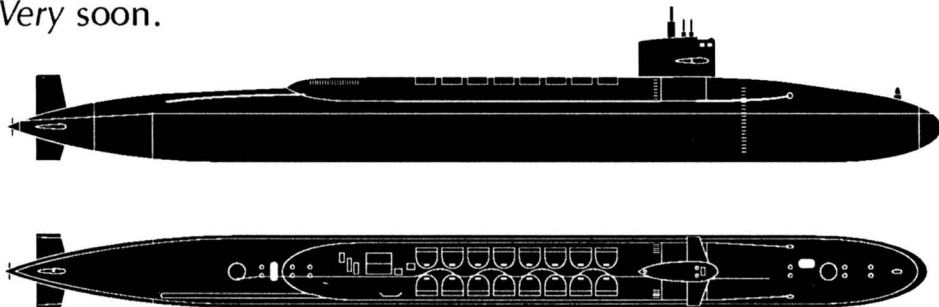
A submarine of his, the *Eel*, vanished at approximately 5:47 this morning. The submarine carrying Project 5.

By 6:15, Arasaka has bought out an entire company — International Defense Alliance — because it owns the *Sentinel*, the submersible closest to the *Eel*'s last known location.

By 6:24 your cyberpunks are on the *Sentinel*, and already descending into the Bonin Trench.

They must recover Project 5. They don't know what's down there, waiting for them.

They will know soon.
Very soon.



"There's nothing worse than being trapped in a confining submersible with a claustrophobic cyberpsycho.

"Well, I guess if there were two cyberpsychos..."

—Spirit

The Bonin Horse features:

- ▲ Flexible entrances — Player characters may be Arasaka special operatives, crewmembers of a submarine-for-hire, or even stowaways.
 - ▲ A new and dangerous adventuring environment — the deep ocean
 - ▲ Relentless pacing — a story of non-stop, heart-pounding action
- THE BONIN HORSE: Product No. AG5050, 32 pp, \$7.95

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A **CYBERPUNK**[®] Technothriller by Eric Heisserer
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CYBERPUNK®

In the neon jungle, there are predators and prey; Corporations that steal your soul, and gangs that blow away your body. In the shadows, the predators of the city ruthlessly track down their prey.

The law of the jungle is Power — and survival. The strong do what they want, the weak struggle to survive. There is no mercy, only life, death, and the fears of the weak.

The blood of those who failed smears the streets, but what of the predators? What do they fear?

What is thicker than blood?

It's an extraction with a twist. A mother, who desires to remain anonymous, comes to the cyberpunks with a plea for help. Her child has vanished and she suspects kidnappers. She wants her son back, even if that means meeting the kidnappers' price. But no ransom note has appeared...

This scenario depicts another side of the Cyberpunk® world: a private school, where tomorrow's elite are trained to command and exploit the masses. It's emphasis is on role-playing, as the player characters face delicate situations and moral dilemmas where guns offer no solution.

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