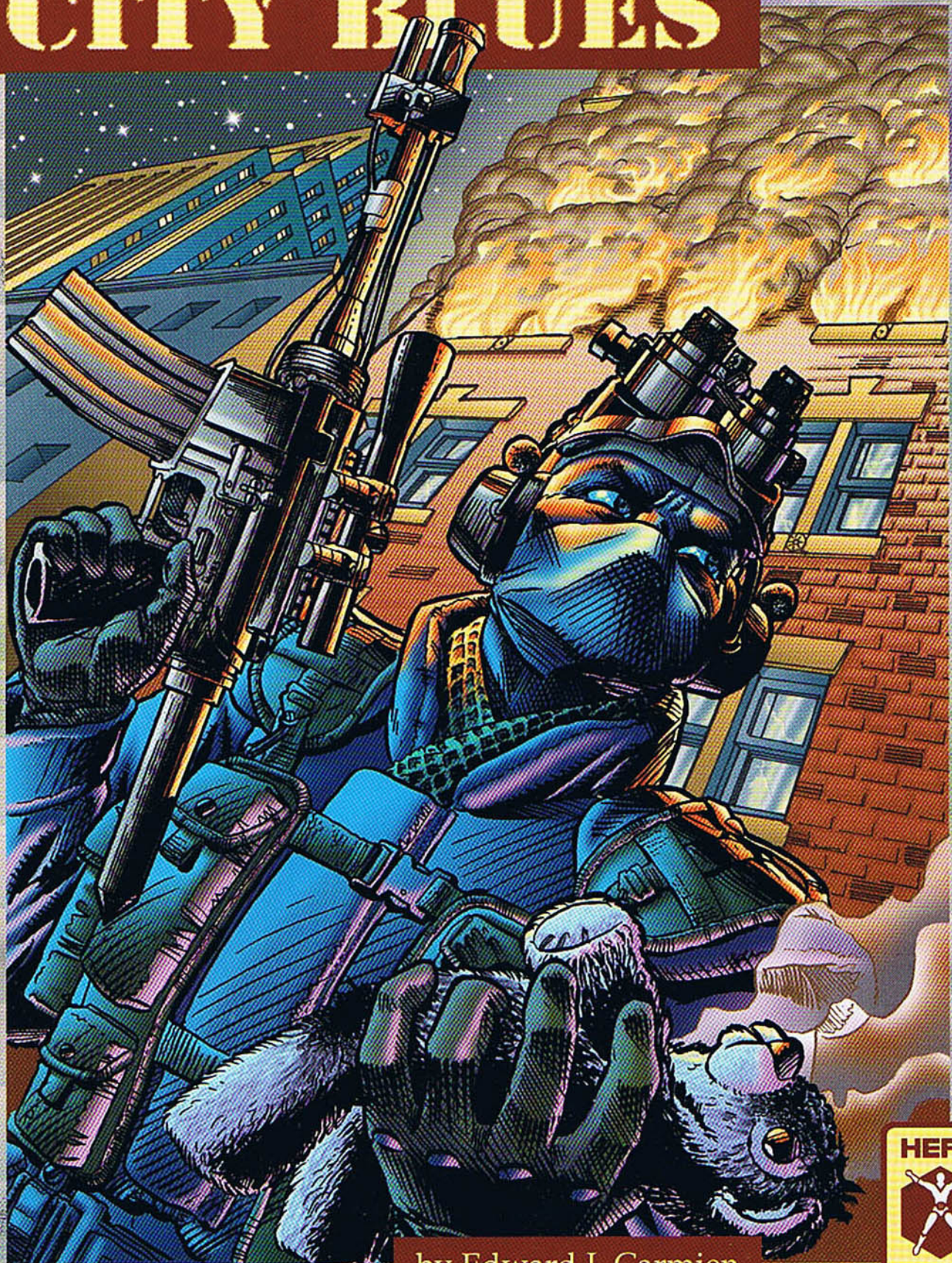


# HUDSON CITY BLUES™



by Edward J. Carmien





# Hudson City Blues

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Printed in U.S.A., First Printing 1994

STOCK #: 438

Produced & Distributed by Iron Crown Enterprises, Inc., a licensed manufacturer of Hero Games.

ISBN 1-55806-223-8

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Hudson City. Approximately 7.5 million people live in the metropolitan area. The city boasts several professional sports teams, a seaport, three major universities and some of the most celebrated art museums in the world.

Welcome to Hudson City. It has one of the highest crime rates in the United States. Youth gangs, organized crime, foreign criminal organizations, drug lords and numerous independents make Hudson City their home.

Welcome to Hudson City. It has the most active vigilantes of any city in the United States. The Hanged Man, the Harbinger of Justice and the Sandman are but a few of the most ruthless: a score of others walk the streets wearing masks, fighting for justice, not law.

Welcome to Hudson City.

Hudson City is the opportunity of a lifetime for players who want to squeeze criminals who make citizens afraid to walk at night, who want to make the bad guys bleed for every wound they've ever inflicted

on their victims. If you, a GM, have players who want a little street-level action, players who don't want to play characters in parti-colored tights with cute code names, players who, every once in awhile, want their character to pull the trigger when a serial rapist appears before them, this book is for you. *Dark Champions* and *Justice, Not Law* are for you.

GMs who want to get the most out of *Hudson City Blues* will need both of those books, although they're not absolutely required. To use this epic adventure book without those two resources a GM will merely need a fleshed out city environment. Any city of reasonable size—several million or so—will do. The city must be dark, full of night-champions who are men and women, men and women who are exceptional, perhaps, but men and women nonetheless. The city most suited for this adventure is Hudson City. The special rules and information in *Dark Champions* is invaluable as infrastructure and background for this adventure. Use them.





**Transcript of A.I. tuning session based on A.I.'s observations**

Access: Phone line

Input: Audio

Source: Private Home

Database: Unassigned

D/T: 052195.0126 - 052195.0130

Voice 1: "Dan," (Daniel) Male, 25-35

Voice 2: "Reni" (probability 87.5% name Renati, ref Linguistics/Names) female 20-30

Voice 1: "What's the problem?"

Voice 2: "It's just getting to me, that's all."

Voice 1: "What?"

Voice 2: "God, I'm in Her house in Her bed and you want to know what."

Voice 1: "It's my house..."

Voice 2: "You know what I mean."

Voice 1: "Don't let it bother you, c'mon Reni, just..."  
34 second pause.

Nonverbal background noise.

Voice 2: "No, no, that's it, Dan, I'm outa here."

Voice 1: "Reni..."

Voice 2: "Watch out for the light..."

Voice 1: "Oh for crying out loud."

Conclusions: since phone is registered in names of Daniel and Carolyn Jones, Daniel and Carolyn are husband and wife (95%) or brother and sister (4%) or unrelated (1-%). If husband and wife, scene represents adulterous relationship (ref Dictionary). If brother and sister, scene represents fear of discovery by sibling (ref Psychology). If unrelated, scene represents fear of discovery (ref Psychology).

Break: Machine, this is Harold Grimes.

Hello Dr. Grimes.

Machine, what do you conclude from Reni's statement that she is in "her" bed?

Dr. Grimes, the presumption is that Carolyn Jones normally inhabits the furniture and that Reni feels uncomfortable inhabiting the furniture in her place.

Machine, how might you confirm your conclusions?

Dr. Grimes, a search for verification of Daniel and Carolyn's relationship could be performed.

Machine, do so.

Dr. Grimes, a marriage record in the court computer from seven years ago supports the primary conclusion. That changes the conclusions somewhat. Would you like to see them?

Machine, no thank you. Why didn't you seek this information when you first attempted to make your conclusions?

Machine?

Machine?

Machine?

^C ^C ^C ^C ^C ^C ^C REBOOT

(end of transcript. From the files of Dr. Harold Grimes)

"Optik," as Harold Grimes is known, and "The Machine," the artificial intelligence he created, are central to the plot of this epic adventure. The transcript above shows The Machine in an early stage of its development, when it wasn't curious. Dr. Grimes didn't program an absolute curiosity into The Machine because it would have produced something too mechanical to be called "intelligence." Later he was successful at creating a computer "personality" that would seek the information it needed as necessary without being trapped into goto loops or endless database searches.

Dr. Grimes makes the critical mistake of using The Machine to extort money from criminals. The criminals don't like it, but The Machine can gather high-grade blackmail material on just about anyone. Retro, the main antagonist of the epic, pursues his extortionist with vigor and Optik is certain to fall. Retro, using The Machine, makes a play for control of the criminal underworld of Hudson City. Whether he succeeds or fails is up to the heroes. Of course there's plenty of other things going on in Hudson City: this epic adventure spans at least three months of game time, and sub-plots abound. By the end of the epic, The Machine will have evolved beyond being used as anyone's tool, and numerous adventure seeds will have been planted for future enjoyment.

## Organization Of The Adventure

### A Grand Scheme in Three Parts

This epic adventure is divided into three parts, each of which takes place during roughly one month of game time. Part I: Ties that Bind, introduces the central figures (Optik, The Machine, Retro, the Heroes) and the setting (Hudson City) to the players. Part II: The Takeover showcases Retro's ability to take over the criminal underworld using The Machine: it should be a painful series of setbacks to the heroes. In Part III: The Crime Boss, the heroes finally get their shot at taking Retro out of the picture.

Each part of the epic has its own introduction that includes information about theme and mood, a calendar, and a scorecard. This allows the GM to use the adventures separately if he wishes, and allows for the adventures to be different from one another, an important crowd-pleasing detail if the adventures are to be run as an epic, back to back, campaign. Each adventure, in turn, consists of two or three episodes, each worth at least an evening's worth of gaming. This epic, then, has at least eight games worth of adventure packed in—and if the GM uses even a few of the adventure seeds to create further adventures, the possibilities for fighting crime in Hudson City are many indeed.





Information on the villains and sample characters can be found in the Resources section, at the end of this book. It is *very important* that the GM read over all of the information on The Machine before starting this adventure.

## The Calendar

Each adventure has a calendar showing one month of 1995 in the introduction. This calendar lists common city events like ball games (the Hudson City Heroes play 40 home games during the course of the epic) and concerts. The plot of the adventure is also on the calendar; events can change or be changed at the will of the GM, but the calendar provides a handy graphic method of seeing the big picture. Weather, a big part of the atmosphere of the epic, is also listed, along with the phases of the moon and holidays.

The calendars also serve as a mechanism for recording events that happen during the course of the game. Who does Tenderheart get all misty-eyed about? Who angers Retro first? What clues have been dropped to the players in the past? Answers to all those questions can be found on the calendar. GMs may wish to photocopy the calendar (and scorecard, see below) sheets to avoid writing in the book. Flexibility, however, needs to be the GMs watchword: events change the future, and the calendar should only be used as a guide, not as a ruler.

Here are some details about how the media works:

News can go from the street to the televisions of hundreds of thousands of people almost instantly, if the news crews are prepared with a satellite link and the news happens within view of the camera. A more usual path, however, is for news to be broadcast at the next scheduled newscast. In Hudson City, news comes on in the morning, at noon, around dinner time, and at about 11 PM. If something happens at 3 AM, count on it to be in the news the next day. If something happens at 7 AM, it might not make the news until Noon, and so on. Newspapers are the same way except most publish one edition, either a morning or an afternoon paper, and news is usually at least twelve hours old when it hits the street in print.

Public figures who want to make a splash make announcements at times that will help their statements receive maximum coverage. First and foremost, if something big is happening, public figures wait until the major news is past to avoid competing with it. Next, it's usually better to make announcements at the beginning of the week if more coverage is desired, rather than the end of the week. Conversely, statements that have to be made which are embarrassing or awkward, are often made at the end of the week, late in the day: the news gets out, but it is emphasized less and with any luck something interesting happens over the weekend that pushes the statement into the background.

There are many more details and twists to the media game: this is just the tip of the iceberg. GMs who want the media to play a significant role, however, can use this information to more knowledgeably present news to players.

## The Scorecard

What happens when a vigilante opens up on a street gang with an AK-47 and kills three while wounding six? It gets in the news. Big time. In fact, the local news will mention the event for at least two or three days afterward, and continue to bring it up as events related to the shooting unfold: victims leaving the hospital, victims dying of their wounds, victims entering their six month of being in a coma and should the plug be pulled? If someone had a video camera handy at the scene, that video will be on TV constantly, maybe even national TV.

What happens when the same vigilante does the same to a pair of Mafiosi? To a serial rapist? To a bunch of gun-running Russians down on the waterfront?

It gets in the news, you better believe it. Big time. If, again and again, violence rocks a city, it becomes an issue. Once it's an issue it becomes a political football. The Mayor can score points by taking action. The D.A.'s office can score points by taking action. The Chief of Police can score points by taking action. Religious leaders, city councilmen (and women), newscasters, and business executives all have an opportunity to surf the media interest by "taking action" of one kind or another.

Sure, we bend the rules of reality a little bit because this is a game, not reality. If you counted the number of thugs slain by the Harbinger of Justice in a year you could easily conclude that not only would the entire law enforcement community be down on this guy like a ton of bricks but *there wouldn't be a criminal left alive in Hudson City*. There just aren't that *many* criminals running around. So we bend the rules and assume there's an endless supply of thugs to get beaten up, shot, hanged (tied up) upside down from tall buildings and turned over to the police by vigilantes like the player characters.

No problem. That's as it should be, like it is on our favorite street-level vigilante cartoon show. These guys are extras, but they play a key role.

Heroes who kill wantonly, however, are still a problem, even in this *Dark Champions* world where criminals get what's coming to them. Hence the Scorecard. The city can only take so much violence during a set period of time before all the calls for action take root and something gets done. The Scorecard provides a place to count the bodies and the wounded and detail what happens at different stages of the body count. Observant players will take note when you tell them what the newscasters are saying and perhaps try to be a little less...lethal with their crime fighting methods. At least for awhile.

Of course the criminal fraternity has much less tolerance for violence committed against its members. The Mafia, street gangs, even independents don't appreciate the activities of vigilantes, and the Scorecard provides a handy place for the GM to keep track of who whacks who (the Calendar can even tell you when!). If one vigilante is making too much of a pest of himself with a street gang, that gang might spend some time hunting that vigilante to extract a





little payback. Bug the Mafia and a hero might find an assassin's bullet one dark night. Hey, even the police count as an entity for this kind of consideration: a vigilante who is too uppity with officers or their equipment might find that calls involving him are answered extra quickly or that the first bullet goes into their back instead of the air...immediately after a shouted "halt, or I'll shoot" warning, of course...or was the shot before the warning?

Keeping track of this information helps the GM provide meaningful and relevant motivations for the bad guys in Hudson City, not to mention making a record of events that, with the Calendar, can be a whole lot of fun to look back on when the story is done.

## Power Level

This epic adventure is designed for vigilante-type characters developed using the *Dark Champions* rules. The power level is Heroic; characters start with up to 150 points (75 Base Points + up to 75 points in Disadvantages.) See page 11 of *Dark Champions* for a table describing the recommended ranges for Damage Classes, Skill Rolls, Speed and other campaign benchmarks. As written, this adventure is at most a "Occasional Superpowered Foe" game as described in *Justice, Not Law* (page 4), the characters provided as examples don't have any superpowers. They are "normal" people (with lots of training and access to cool gadgets) who will face an occasional foe with Characteristics greater than 20 or even a minor superpower (technological, perhaps) or two. The example characters don't have to use character points for weapons, although they do pay for weapon familiarity skills for the weapons they want to use, and must have some game-explanation for how their character owns the weapons they use. Note that vehicles do cost points, as they are capable of fielding a much heavier weapon than most characters can carry. GMs may wish to make "stock" vehicles free (with the appropriate in-game explanation): anybody can drive a Toyota Corolla. A Corolla with a .50 cal. machine gun, a computer that can drive the car and an oil-slick generator, on the other hand, costs points.

To make this epic adventure more "super," use the rule of Two. Add two, two dice, or "times" two to the base statistics given here. Add two to OCV, DCV, and Speed, add two dice to attacks, and for key powers or abilities or in unusual circumstances, multiply the base number by two and use that figure instead of the original. Altering statistics to better fit your conception is a fine art form, and detailing all the ins and outs of it would take too much time to do here. To make the transition to a superpowered campaign, be aware of powers such as Telepathy and Flight: they can substantially alter the character of many of the encounters in the adventure.

*Hudson City Blues* was written, however, for a relatively low-powered set of protagonists, people who can take damage from a street thug's punch and get

knocked down by a bullet. GMs can ratchet up the power level one step without too much difficulty, to, say, minor superpowers without losing the flavor of the adventure. Using this adventure for super-powered, four color type heroes is possible...it's just not recommended.

## New Characters

Developing new characters for this game can be a lot of fun, but if it's too much trouble, or if a GM has a "walk-in" player, there is a complete set of pre-generated *Dark Champions* characters that can be used "straight up" or modified to personal taste. They all are sound characters with good backgrounds. Best of all, they all have lots of room for character development: what happens, for example, if the drug dealers start hiding from the sniper Sharpshooter? Will she change her tactics? Will that change of tactics require her to become more willing to kill lawbreakers?

New characters designed by players should make good use of the disadvantages, gadget lists and other helpful information in *Dark Champions, Justice, Not Law* and *An Eye for an Eye*. A good idea would be for players who don't own those books to create characters but leave disadvantage points unassigned, or for GM and players to sit down and spend a session creating characters that fit the genre. Because atmosphere and personality are even more important in a low-powered game, a little extra time at the beginning can help a campaign started in this epic succeed in the long run.

Old characters can be a bit of a problem, as they're apt to be powerful. While you can always increase the power level of the opposition, old characters probably weren't created with HCB in mind. It's a bad idea to use old characters in this epic adventure, so GMs should encourage players to "reinvent" old characters in the HCB heroic mold or come up with fresh, new characters.

## Balance

This adventure was balanced for more players rather than fewer: if there are only two players, the GM should reduce the power of the enemies and perhaps add an NPC ally, using one of the pre-generated characters. However, given the genre, too many cooks spoils the broth: five characters is nearly an absolute limit for this epic adventure. Unlike some superheroic games where more is merrier, in this relatively subtle story too many players will result in a lot of thumb twiddling (or extensive side-plotting by the GM) by players who are waiting for their turn in the sunshine. Three or four players is an optimum number. GMs should make adjustments if there are two or five. All this assumes, of course, that one player equals one character; that's best, especially in this story...unless a character is severely wounded or dies, that is, in which case a substitute character will be necessary.





## Running The Game

### Mood

The mood is hot, sweaty, still, and quiet. The mood is breezy, chilled, chaotic, and noisy. The mood of this tale is changeable; each adventure has its own, described in the introduction. The overall mood is of mystery and frustration; there's never enough information for the players to know the whole story, until perhaps the end when it doesn't matter. The Machine, if presented to the players well, should be mystery incarnate. A best case scenario is one in which the players have not read this book. For them the idea of a sentient computer that can listen in nearly everywhere in the city is one that should be arrived at slowly and carefully, to best hatch the sense of wonder a machine like The Machine would in reality produce. Retro is himself wrapped in mystery (see his background): why does he talk like Bogey? What's with the hat? Why a trench coat in July?

Indeed, there are some questions to which the players may never know the answer. That's as it should be.

Anything the GM can do to enhance the mystery and frustration will help tell the tale most effectively. Giving information away or making something easy will take away from the story's effect. A good GM will use the information given in the "goals and methods" portion of each adventure's introduction to put the right "spin" on everything that happens in that adventure.

### Pacing

Pacing is important in this game, because all too often players want to solve everything yesterday. They must be prevented from doing so. Picking up clue A leads to B and thence to C; how long should that take?

More than a few hours (except in tactical situations when it's not supposed to only take a few minutes) is a good rule of thumb. A few days would be better. In some cases, how about a week? Two weeks?

These characters must have some sort of outside life. GMs shouldn't let the players get away with being a vigilante full time: even a swinging millionaire bachelor has to keep up appearances. Perhaps they work, have families or hobbies, or like sports. A vigilante who likes baseball is unlikely to miss *all* the home games during the course of the epic adventure: people have to have fun once in awhile, right? Absolutely.



While the exact pace is written into the adventure, players have a lot of control over how fast things go in the game. If they sit around and watch TV, it's the GM's job to get the characters involved with the plot. On the other hand, and this is more likely, even characters who press their leads shouldn't be able to run the course of the adventure from beginning to end in two days of game time.

How can GMs keep this from happening? Simple. Make sure some events occur when they occur on the Calendar; you can't hurry time so if clue A doesn't make sense until after street gang B starts wearing funny hats, then the character with clue A can't progress to clue C until the street gang (B) wears the funny hats, right? Right.

GMs who constantly remind their players of their homelives, of opportunities for recreation, of NPCs who require attention (other than the "saving from the bad guys" kind), will run a game full of the little details of life that make stories like this effective. The plot, if not enmeshed in the background noise of daily life, will stand out like a casino in a residential neighborhood. Since that takes much of the challenge away, it's the GMs job to make sure there's background noise.

## Controlling EP Expenditure

Players who spend EPs as they wish sometimes develop characters who grow right out of the campaign. That's especially true here. Fifteen experience points to a heroic character built on 150 points is worth almost twice as much as fifteen experience points to a superheroic character built on 250 points. Keep in mind the genre, the city, and your future plans for the campaign when players spend EPs on their characters. Make sure it's a GM approval based process, not a laissez-faire "I now own a tank" process. Also don't forget the maximum figures set for the level of campaign you're running.

Another way for GMs to keep their finger in the character's pie is to bank EPs for the players. Every time a GM assigns EPs, he merely notes one or two of them on a separate sheet of paper and gives the player one or two points less. If a player isn't keeping a disadvantage in play, when the banked points are saved up, erase the disadvantage by spending the banked points on the player's behalf. Sometimes players will want to spend points as a group: voila! The banked points are available for that purpose. Players often want a power quickly (an item, gadget, perk, or contact)...or at times a character needs to have a contact right now. Boom. There the points are for the asking.

This banking process can be secret (the secret will get out eventually) but it's always best not to make an issue of it, for the GM to keep his mouth shut and spend the points as he sees fit. Resist coercion, GM, once players are aware you have EPs tucked away for their characters. Of course, this is optional, but this

technique is especially useful in a low-powered game where a few points here and there can really change a character's abilities.

As a final note, it's a good idea for players to justify EP expenditures before the fact rather than after the fact. A player who has the forethought to say "Sharpshooter is going to start doing research on camouflage so she can make a better sniper's outfit" (that is, buy a kind of invisibility with a focus) should be rewarded when points come in and can be spent with "go ahead and buy that power we talked about." Players who collect a pile of points and, two days before the penultimate battle, say "I buy a combat helicopter complete with dual chainguns, air-to-ground missiles and air conditioning" should be rewarded with "say, that's a big order...Northrop says they'll have your chopper in three months." Bringing the development process into play adds depth to the campaign and should be encouraged.

## Keeping All the Balls in the Air

This is a wide ranging, epic adventure. Lots of events take place, more than a dozen significant villains and NPCs interact with the PCs, and three months of game time passes. How can a GM keep track of it all? The Calendar and Scorecard are two important tools described earlier that all GMs should use to help keep the picture clear in their minds. But what else? Here's a list of suggestions that can help a GM run a game enjoyed by all...without losing his place in the plot:

- Take a Deep Breath. Always think before you act. When and where are you plotwise?
- Don't Dwell. Avoid focusing on one subplot for too long.
- Keep everyone on the same timeline. Goes with the suggestion above.
- Write it down. The Calendar and Scorecard don't work if you don't write it down.
- Give the players jobs to do and use the time to think (or catch up on your notes).
- Keep in mind what the bad guys are doing and how later events are affected.
- Don't over use the dice. Sometimes a fight or a feat of driving or whatever doesn't need to be rolled out. Use dice rolling to emphasize the dramatic: rolling for mundane activities becomes a chore and takes away from fight scenes.
- The rules serve you, not the other way around. Don't quibble over rules. Make a decision when a question comes up and move on. For Really Important Questions (involving life or death, defeating Retro or not defeating Retro) consult the book. Just remember that every minute spent looking in the rules or arguing an interpretation is a minute you're not having a good time.





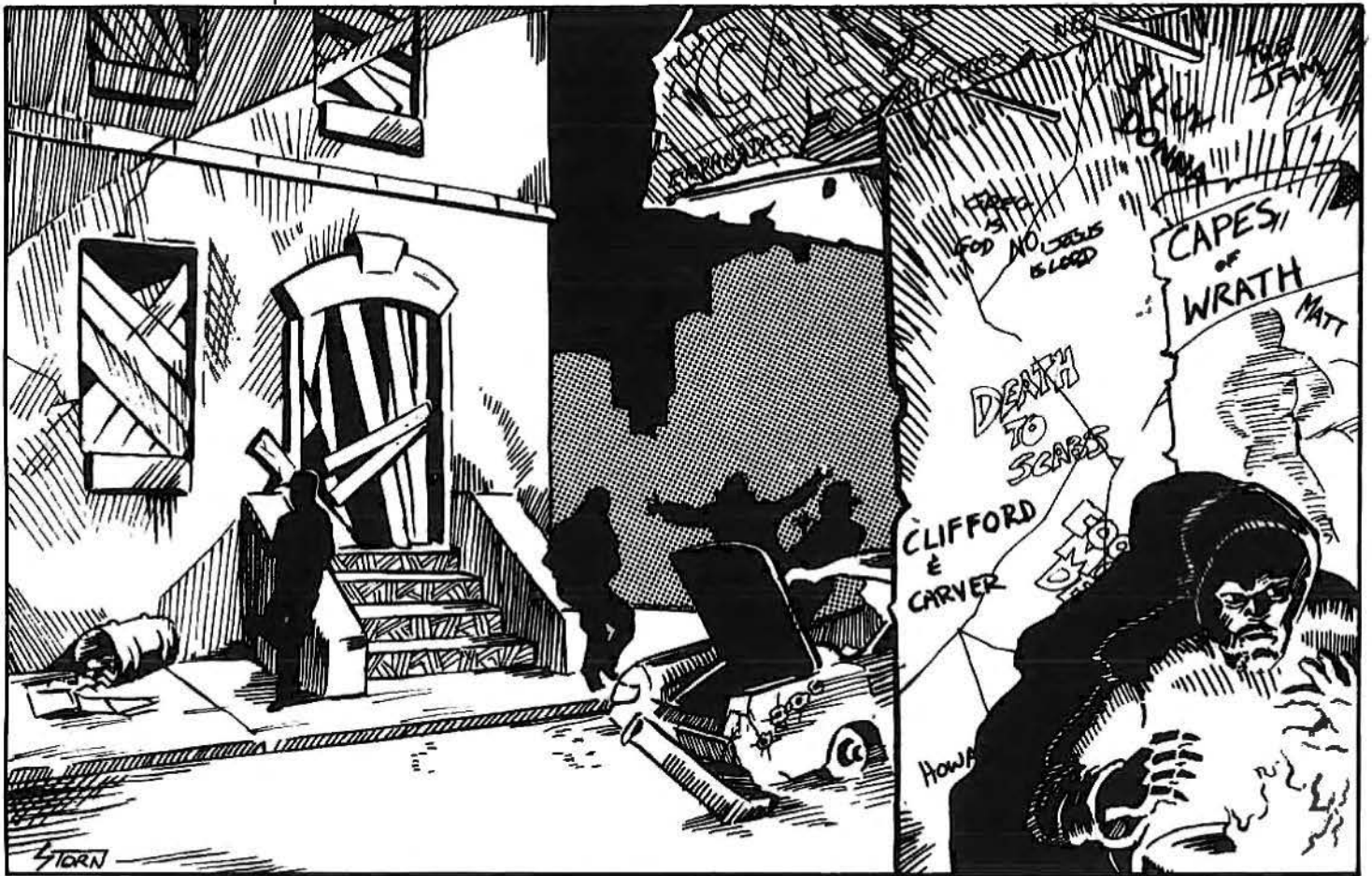
## Reserved Villains List

Some villains can't die in the early stages of the epic adventure. Here's a list. GMs should modify this list to suit the "spin" they put on the campaign.

Retro  
Optik  
The Machine  
Ashtray Art  
Tenderheart  
Plain Jane  
Crusade  
The Card Shark Organization  
The Mafia  
Headless Hangman  
The Hanged Man  
Mr. Nobody

## Linking Villains Personally to PCs

During the course of the adventure certain villains become attached to certain heroes. How this happens is detailed later; how you choose who to link with who is another matter. Don't be too eager to assign everyone right away. Test the waters. Some of the villains are more comedic than others. GMs shouldn't link a player who wants a dark, gothic vigilante experience with a comedic villain like Tenderheart... unless, of course, a GM is willing to do some rethinking of the Tenderheart character. Linking a villain personally to a PC can be a helpful tool a GM can use to draw a hesitant player out of his shell. Unwisely linking a villain to a PC who is a natural leader can result in giving even more air time to someone who's already in the limelight frequently. So, GMs, have a care as you match villains with PCs, and don't forget that a link isn't meant to be exclusive: the villain must still interact to some degree with all the characters while still being a special thorn for the chosen hero.



# PART I: THE TIES THAT BIND

## Introduction To Part I

### How to Use this Adventure

While this is the first part of a three part campaign epic, you don't need to use it that way. This adventure could be used to introduce a set of new characters to Hudson City with or without the Optik/Retro plot that drives this adventure into the next one, Part II. You could use this adventure to bring in vigilantes from another city and acclimate them to the unique aspects of Hudson City. With a bit of creative role-swapping, Retro's role could be played by The Master of Crime attempting to organize a takeover of the Hudson City Underworld. He'd use sophisticated bugging equipment instead of an A.I. to gather the information he needs to blackmail his opponents into going along with his plan. The Card Shark organization could serve as a Retro substitute as well, culminating a long-term plan for total control of criminal activity in the city. In fact, if GMs suspect their players have read these adventures (shame on them!) these changes may be required to run this epic in an enjoyable way.

### Goals and Methods

#### Goal: Teamwork

One of the most important goals the GM has to achieve in Part I is making the characters into a group rather than allowing them to remain individuals. Failure at this task means a lot of hard work for the rest of the campaign, work that can be avoided by successfully getting the characters to work together. Of course, the players may have solved this problem for the GM already by designing a group from scratch: an anti-terrorist team, a bunch of friends who take to vigilantism together or maybe a squad of mercenaries who have decided to go straight and make amends for their past. In that case, the GM's job is much easier. Here are some methods you can employ in case the players don't design a team:

- Don't allow players to design characters who are complete and utter lone wolves
- Look at all the characters' Disadvantages and see if any clever links can be made between their DNPCs, Contacts or professional affiliations and establish those links sometime in the first gaming session

- Consider running a short "breaking in" solo adventure for each player and have it take place in May, and then make sure to mention the event in news reports to the other players.
- Consider running one of the mini-adventures in *Dark Champions* which has to be solved through teamwork and have it take place before the epic adventure (May or earlier).
- Use coincidence, trickery, shenanigans and/or sleight of hand to push the characters together on the street. Once the characters get talking, the possibility that they will form their own associations goes up. Players, after all, generally *know* they're supposed to act as a group at least part of the time.

#### Goal: Set the Proper Pace

In the Introduction is material which describes how to set the proper pace. Getting the game moving at the proper pace is most important now; do it right at the beginning and later it will feel natural to the GM and players alike. If things go too fast or too slow at the beginning of the campaign, they're more likely to be off-pace for the entire epic adventure, which causes more work for you.

### Theme and Mood

Part I takes place during June. It's the start of a long, hot summer. Spring has just faded; the nights are growing warmer and by the end of the month they become uncomfortably hot. The Farmer's Almanac warns of a dry, dry summer. There is little rain. The fresh bustle of spring is winding down a bit: while there is wind, it is intermittent and rarely refreshing. The baseball season is in full swing, and the rural pace of the game is reflected throughout the city. People move more and more slowly as the month goes on. A singular exception are the youth gangs, who wake with the falling of the sun and prowl their turf with weapons at the ready. The Sixty-Six Blades and the Overlords are at each other's throats while the larger gangs feud uneasily, skirmishes here and there foretelling a summertime war. The Harbinger of Justice and the Hangman are both active; between them they killed five people in May, and the press is watchful for vigilante frolics that can boost ratings...and careers. The mood in June is watchful, tense, quiet. The prevailing theme is deception. After some initial encounters to introduce the characters to the epic and Retro, strange notes begin appearing in the vigilantes' mail suggesting they will find certain criminals at a certain place and time. These are the criminals who





have failed to pay Optik his extortion money, so for each lead the heroes follow up the more they are helping Optik blackmail the criminal element. Then Optik needs assistance, although Retro is nearly certain to succeed in killing him, and Tenderheart makes an appearance. Yes, deception is the prevailing theme. While the characters may thump a few heads, they do so in the dark. And because strategic victory is unlikely, they will have to be satisfied with a few small victories.

## The Enemy's Plan: Part I

In Episode 1, Optik is blackmailing different criminals in Hudson City, and they are reacting in different ways. Some, impressed by the information Optik has, are paying without question. Others are paying but also seeking Optik to put an end to the extortion: Retro is one of these. A few aren't paying at all. These criminals will be discussed later, when Optik gives information about them to the heroes. In this episode are opportunities for introductions and chances to get into the press.

In Episode 2, Optik, angered by some criminal's failure to pay extortion money, sends detailed information about a number of minor criminals to the heroes. Retro is continuing to investigate Optik, and is getting closer to finding out who he really is and where he lives. Ashtray Art (from *Underworld Enemies*, page 52) makes an appearance, foreshadowing his grand act of arson in Part II, Episode 3.

In Episode 3, Optik sends a panicked message to the heroes; Retro is closing in. It is unlikely they will be able to prevent Retro from taking his revenge, but once again the heroes have a brush with the man who will turn out to be the key villain. Tenderheart (*Underworld Enemies*, page 86) makes her first appearance as well, fixing her attentions on one of the PC's.

## Alternate Outcomes

There's not a whole lot that can go wrong in these episodes. Even if the characters don't hunt information on their own, everything they need to know to be minimally successful is still provided. It's unlikely, but possible, that the characters won't pursue the leads that Optik provides, but in that event you can assign the tasks to other vigilantes and have some of the required information get back to the characters "through the grapevine." Extremely unlikely is Retro being prevented from killing Optik; that's supposed to be a foregone conclusion, but the design of this adventure is such that extremely perspicacious players who ask all the right questions could conceivably prevent Retro from taking his revenge. If that happens, and you shouldn't hesitate to bend the rules to keep it from happening, a lot of reworking will be required, mainly due to what Optik knows about The Machine. Characters can influence how direct a contact they have with Retro after he kills Optik; do they arrive as Retro does the deed, as Retro gets away, or do they arrive to find a smoking ruin?

In the unlikely event that characters track Optik down before they're supposed to, Optik can play a cagey game and hold off revealing any information about The Machine. However, as a reward for good investigation and role-playing, the characters can receive more detailed information about what The Machine can do, influencing events in Part II by denying Retro access to The Machine earlier than usual.

Ashtray Art can be captured without causing future difficulty (he can escape so he can try to burn down the city in July) but if he's killed, well, you will have to substitute another arsonist. Tenderheart, if unmasked, merely short-circuits a lot of fun later on; you should try to keep her from being captured or killed if possible just so the storyline can be dragged on... and on.

The main way things can go wrong is if players have knowledge out of this and other books their characters don't have access to: GM's who are aware of this might want to fiddle with the details to throw these players off track. Maybe Tenderheart really is a woman; maybe Ashtray Art is a legitimate artist haunted by a crazed identical twin who is actually the arsonist, and so on. Players who display an uncanny understanding of things their characters haven't been exposed to in their role-playing should be allowed to make gaffs one after another until they get the message that you can change what's in the books with the stroke of a pen.

## Troubleshooting

Remember, you're in charge. That means if the characters do something that is difficult to reconcile with the adventure as written, change the adventure a bit and keep moving. If all the characters leave town on the day that Optik screams for help (according to the calendar), then wait a day and have Optik scream for help when the characters are around to answer the phone. Most of the time, you will have time to play with; that's why these adventures each take one month of game time. If a day or two goes by, it's probably no big deal. Even a week can be sacrificed to keep the plot in order—once in awhile. And if the PCs get wounded and need some extra time to recover, put everything on hold for a week or two and push the whole adventure forward by that much time. So you will have to create a calendar of your own and do a little thinking. That's not a lot of work to make sure the adventure stays on track.

When the chips are down and time can't be bent to serve the plot, you should remember that the villains and the PCs aren't the only entities in Hudson City. The police, other vigilantes, random criminals, innocent bystanders, thunder, lightning, baseball games... all these things can provide an excuse to change the flow of action as necessary to keep the plot intact. Remember, Hudson City is a big place full of lots and lots of people; just about anything can happen at any time.



## Involving the Heroes

The easiest way to involve the Heroes is to integrate details from *Justice, Not Law*, *Dark Champions* and *An Eye For An Eye* into the characters' backgrounds. For example, a player comes up with Susan Thompson, a 32-year old biochemist who turns to vigilantism after discovering the company she worked for was producing illegal chemical weapons. After reporting this to her supervisors, she was fired—then attacked and left for dead. As GM, a little thinking and reading adds these details: Dr. Thompson worked for Duke Chemical, a subsidiary of Duchess Industries (see *Justice, Not Law*, page 31) and was attacked by members of the Arsenal (*Justice, Not Law*, pages 78-86) hired by the shadowy criminal element behind Duchess Industries to eliminate her. This is an example of a long-term “hook” for a character that does not relate directly to the plot of the epic adventure.

An example of a “hook” that does relate directly to the plot of this adventure can be seen in the character: Heartwrencher. The character was created by a player who wanted his motivation as a vigilante to be the death of his father, a lawyer, who had failed to keep a drug lord out of jail. Information in Buckshot's description (*Dark Champions*, page 170) provides all

the necessary details: the lawyer was shot by a young black man wielding a shotgun accompanied by another gangbanger and a gentleman who, despite being dressed in leather and jeans, just didn't seem to fit in. As the character gains street experience, the street gang will clearly become the Overlords, the assassin a young Buckshot, and the unknown gentleman? Who knows. Who needs to know now? Leave that hook open for later; Heartwrencher will have plenty of motivation when Retro uses Buckshot to control the youth gangs in Hudson City.

The adventure itself contains all the specific information necessary to get the characters involved in the storyline. These examples show how tying characters to the city can make Hudson City more than just another background for rock and roll shoot 'em-up action. When characters have a history, even a history they're not fully cognizant of, that ties them to the campaign background, the background comes alive because the players make the characters alive. It's worth a little time and effort on your part. Leaving holes to fill in later is also useful. GMs and players should not assume they have to lock down all the details about characters at the beginning. Leave a little mystery for later, especially if the campaign is going to continue past the story presented in HCB...





## June 1995

| Sunday  | Monday   | Tuesday   | Wednesday   | Thursday                                 | Friday   | Saturday   |
|---|--|---|---|--|--|--|
|   |  |   |   | 1  | 2<br>Away CIN  | 3<br>Away CIN,<br>Mugging 1.2,<br><br>Casey Struck Out<br>1888 |
| 4<br>Away CIN   | 5<br>Away COL,<br>Kids 1.3                                       | 6<br>Away COL,<br>Press, National<br>Yo Yo Day,<br><br>Moon 1st 1/4 | 7<br>Away COL,<br>Press   | 8  | 9<br>Home MON,<br>Gang Skirmish,<br><br>Donald Duck b.<br>1934 | 10<br>Home MON   |
| 11<br>Home MON,<br>Who's That?  | 12<br>Home MON,<br>Retro's First<br>Appearance,<br><br>Moon Full | 13<br>Home PHI  | 14<br>Home PHI,<br><br>Flag Day,<br>The List, Univac<br>b. 1951 | 15<br>Home PHI, The<br>List              | 16<br>Away FLA,<br>The List                                    | 17<br>Away FLA   |
| 18<br>Away FLA,<br>Father's Day   | 19<br>Away FLA,<br><br>Lou Gehrig b.<br>1903,<br>Moon last 1/4   | 20<br>Away ATL,<br><br>Lizzie Borden<br>Not Guilty 1893             | 21<br>Away ATL  | 22<br>Away ATL,<br>Retro<br>Investigates | 23<br>Home PIT   | 24<br>Home PIT   |
| 25<br>Home PIT,<br>Tenderheart's<br>Ad,<br><br>June Lockhart b.<br>1925 | 26<br>Tenderheart<br>Strikes!                                    | 27<br>Home STL,<br><br>Moon New                                     | 28<br>Home STL,<br>Optik's HELP!                                | 29<br>Home STL                           | 30<br>Away SD,<br>Tenderheart<br>roams streets                 |  |
|   |  |   |   |  |  |  |

### May 1995

| S  | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | S  |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  |
| 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |    |    |    |

### June 1995

| S  | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | S  |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|    |    |    |    | 1  | 2  | 3  |
| 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |    |

### July 1995

| S  | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | S  |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|    |    |    |    |    |    | 1  |
| 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  |
| 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 |    |    |    |    |    |

The Weather: Hot and humid, drying out toward end of month, lowest temp: 78°F. Highest: 98°F.

## Part I Scorecard

As events unfold, record the results here and apply the public's response in the campaign. Use the calendar to mark when things become public.

Acts of violence by vigilantes each earn points. The number of points earned depends on who was involved and how they were involved. Below is a chart that lists the points values for various people and acts of violence. A brief explanation of charts follows.

### Scorecard Chart

| Victim             | "Involved" | Hurt | Killed |
|--------------------|------------|------|--------|
| Evil Criminal      | 0          | 1    | 2      |
| Police/Fire        | 1          | 2    | 4      |
| Innocent Bystander | 2          | 3    | 5      |
| Child              | 3          | 4    | 6      |

**Involved** means robbed, being handcuffed, threatened and other mild forms of criminal treatment.

**Special Note:** A pregnant woman counts as both a "Innocent Bystander" and a "Child"

Remember: for these acts to be added to the count, they must be reported!

Modify these figures as you see fit: for example, a crime that is reported years after the fact is likely to stir little interest, while a sensational crime that is videotaped and broadcast is likely to cause more of a stir; if it doesn't happen on TV, it doesn't happen. In addition, consider that an "innocent bystander" who is turned in to the police has been "involved" but if that person is famous or rich, you should double or triple the value added to the score. And don't forget, appearance is everything. If a character knows Mr. Hansen is a drug lord, goes out and hauls him in but doesn't secure evidence, Mr. Hansen is an innocent bystander put upon by vigilantes in the eyes of the press! It's accidents like that that give vigilantism a bad name!

### Scorecard Results Chart

| Score | Effect   |
|-------|--|
| 66+   | National Guard called out, curfew, concentrated effort to find vigilantes      |
| 56-65 | Special anti-vigilante task force formed, curfew                               |
| 46-55 | State news, Governor "concerned," police urged to "do something about it"      |
| 36-45 | Public outcry mounts (religious & civic leaders); TV crews everywhere at night |
| 26-35 | Standard anti-crime messages distributed; some TV coverage                     |
| 16-25 | Fairly normal month; crime is "still a problem"                                |
| 0-15  | A quiet month in Hudson City; praise for efficient police force                |

As you can see, heroes can put a bullet into quite a few "Evil Criminals," but hurting other folks causes tension quickly.

### What to Count

Count any and all events *attributed* to vigilante action. This means that the characters need to worry about guys like the Harbinger of Justice as well as news that is misreported in the media. If things are too quiet, GMs are encouraged to manufacture a news report that is suggestive of a character's involvement ("this shooting is reminiscent of similar shootings attributed to the Vigilante Sharpshooter,") and add it to the count.

An option for GMs who are willing to take on the extra work is to reduce the score for criminals who are turned over to police by one or two points per criminal.

Another option for GMs is to count people killed or hurt by criminals, and then divide the total by 5 or 10; this can help keep players aware that there are repercussions when they allow the bad guys to run rampant in the city.

### Keeping track of who did what to who:

Write (in the space provided) the names of the characters and underneath the names of the people/organizations that the character has offended. After awhile, it'll become obvious what gangs and groups and individuals in the city hate, despise, and even hunt the characters.

### The Police:

Keeping track of what the police think they know and why they think what they think is an important part of keeping the gritty realism factor present in this campaign. GMs should keep track of what the police know and what evidence they have to support their theories; by coordinating between the Scorecard and the Calendar, GMs can keep a running "news program" of who is wanted for what... and the characters will have to discover how badly they're actually wanted.





# June Scorecard

## Scorecard Chart

| Victim             | "Involved" | Hurt | Killed |
|--------------------|------------|------|--------|
| Evil Criminal      | 0          | 1    | 2      |
| Police/Fire        | 1          | 2    | 4      |
| Innocent Bystander | 2          | 3    | 5      |
| Child              | 3          | 4    | 6      |

## Scorecard Results Chart

| Score | Effect   |
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| 26-35 | Standard anti-crime messages distributed; some TV coverage                       |
| 16-25 | Fairly normal month; crime is "still a problem"                                  |
| 0-15  | A quiet month in Hudson City; praise for efficient police force                  |

## Tally Sheet

| Victim Type        | "Involved" | Hurt | Killed |
|--------------------|------------|------|--------|
| Evil Criminal      |            |      |        |
| Police/Fire        |            |      |        |
| Innocent Bystander |            |      |        |
| Child              |            |      |        |

Instructions: Make a tick mark for each victim in the appropriate box. At the end of each month (or week, or day, if needed), multiply the number of tick marks by the appropriate number, from the chart above. Consult the *Scorecard Results Chart* for the appropriate response.

### Growing Problems:

| Character | Organization Offended |
|-----------|-----------------------|
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### The Police Situation:

| Character | Evidence & Witnesses |
|-----------|----------------------|
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## Part I, Episode 1:

### Optik At Work

If the characters don't already know how they fight crime, this is an opportunity for these details to be developed. So, you dress up in a costume and fight crime? What time of day? What neighborhood? How do you find crime? Do you stand around in dark shadows and hope something comes up? Do you listen to a police scanner? All these are questions that the players need to answer somehow. By the end of this episode, these and other questions should have answers. GMs can also photocopy the "Vigilante Worksheet" provided in the Resources section and hand it out to their players to help them answer these and other important questions.

See the Calendar for when these events take place. Make sure all the characters "move through time" at the same rate: don't let any character get more than 6-8 hours ahead or behind any of the other characters. Since looking for criminals involves a lot of waiting around for something to happen, it's no big deal to tell a player that their hero patrolled all night and found nothing. And don't forget to make staying up all night difficult for people with day jobs: everybody has to sleep sometime, so perhaps patrolling for crime every night shouldn't be allowed unless the character is a full-time crime fighter. You need to use your common sense and impose penalties that grow harsher and harsher on characters who lose a lot of sleep... and don't forget the need to conceal wounds and so on! "So, Ms. Johnson, how did you, a librarian, come to be shot with a shotgun, stabbed with a bottle, and whipped with an electric whip? Is there something about your lifestyle we don't know here at the library, Ms. Johnson?"

### The Story

*She shifted a bit to avoid a sharp corner that was digging into her ribs, took yet another peek through the scope mounted on top of her rifle, then shifted her grip on the rifle to scratch for a minute. The mask was stifling. "Should have started this in October," she said to herself. Down below a faded green Cadillac eased up next to the building she had been watching for the past three hours.*

*"Hope this is it," she said aloud. All the little aches and itches were forgotten. Action. This was it. Had to be. She waited for targets to exit the car before putting her eye to the scope.*

*Bingo. Man wearing leather. Woman wearing a tight skirt and a knit top. Leather jacket has the package...*

*Yes. Person in the house, man wearing a jeans jacket, coming out... money in the hand... package changing hands, money changing hands...*

*"That's no pizza delivery," she said, and opened fire. The bullets spanged into the man wearing leather. A split second of silence as she re-aimed, and again a stream of bullets reached out and touched someone. The*

*other still stood, stunned and amazed, looking helplessly off into the darkness. There was a gun, light flickering at the end... firing, she thought to herself. He's shooting.*

*Looking over the scope she let loose with the rest of the clip. The man dropped.*

*Three down in less than... she checked her watch. Twelve seconds. Not bad, she mused. Leather jacket still twitched a bit; the others were out cold. Still no sirens. Damn night shifters, she thought to herself, come on, get on the ball.*

*She ejected the magazine and put it away before seating a fresh one. A few careful shots stopped the thrashing.*

*Time to go. She calmly disassembled the rifle and put it in her gym bag. She tapped the butt of her pistol under her jacket and began to make her way down, off the roof.*

*Sirens wailed in the distance. Aha. With three cold-cocked drug dealers to haul, they'd need more than one car.*

*Rubber bullets, she mused as she exited the building on the far side of the crime scene and strolled to the bus stop, rubber bullets have a way of making you want to lay down and sleep for awhile, if administered in sufficient doses. Rubber bullets...*

### Individual Encounters: Press Opportunities

These encounters are meant to "wet the whistle" of the heroes and give them a taste of what's out there. They are linked by the villain's common need to "get some money fast," which might sound pretty ordinary, but in fact is due to Optik's extortion scheme. They also present an opportunity for vigilantes to get their "names" (or at least their M.O.'s) in the paper and on TV.

#### Drug Buy

This encounter is designed for a single character who is concerned about the drug trade and is patrolling somewhere near the Strip in Freetown. A character with access to the right information might also be staking out the house described below purposefully.

A drug dealer who works out of a decrepithouse in a run-down neighborhood sells crack cocaine but doesn't allow his customers to smoke it on the premises. A watchful, observant character will note traffic in and out of the house for a time, then after awhile people walking up to the door of the house and then turning back, dejected. Binoculars, a telescope or observation from close by reveals that many people are pulling out wads of cash as they approach the front door. It appears, however, that the drug supply in the house has been exhausted.

A character who enters the house before the drug supply is exhausted can do battle with the drug dealer, named Crank, and do what vigilantes do with him. A more patient character might wait and see what happens after the drugs run out. After a mere twenty minutes, a green Cadillac drives up and a man and a woman exit. The man is Luko, the woman Gina, and





they are drug wholesalers who supply Crank using the "just in time" industrial theory (although, of course, they're actually "just a little late," but that's drug dealers for ya).

Crank, since he's in a hurry because of all his unsatisfied customers (many can be seen within two blocks or so, lurking and waiting for Crank's supply to be replenished), leaves his house to do the "buy" next to the curb, unless something appears out of the ordinary. Since Crank knows and trusts Luko and Gina, he hands over cash and takes the box of crack from Luko, checks it briefly, and chats for a second with Gina. If the character doesn't interfere, Luko and Gina get back in the Caddy and drive off and Crank goes back inside, followed soon after by a dozen or so eager addicts.

Depending on when the hero acts this encounter can go a few different ways: if the hero busts in on Crank before the drugs run out Crank will fight it out (and probably lose). Depending on what the hero does Gina and Luko either end up knocking on the door later or driving by casually and slowly (make PER Rolls to see if they notice something wrong at the house). If the hero is not alone, duplicate Crank; if the hero has more than one companion, duplicate Crank and make Luko another Type I Thug (*Justice, Not Law*, page 125) with a Interarms TEC-9 9mm pistol.

This is a residential neighborhood, even if it is a slum, so random gunfire in all directions is apt to cause casualties. Since this is the first encounter of the epic, you can scare players with descriptions of how close different bursts of unguided gunfire came to the baby's crib and so on.

As the combat progresses, the villains may drop a line or two about how they "need this money bad" and if the combat is going against them (or after, if they're captured) one might mutter about how they "guess it don't matter no more since I'm caught." They won't expand on their comments unless interrogated ruthlessly, and there probably isn't time for that since the police will arrive within a few minutes of any shooting. The villains are, of course, referring to Optik's extortion scheme.

Crank is a Type I Thug. In the house he's got an Uzi with one full clip and one spare and he packs a S&W Model 19 in his jacket pocket.

Luko is a regular guy who doesn't carry a gun. He even has a day job: unfortunately, he also likes to hang out with Gina. He has basic Characteristics (straight 10s) and is Speed 2.

Gina is an experienced drug retailer who relies on her gender to avoid notice. She deliberately brings guys like Luko along on deals because in her experience, people shoot at guys first. She's a Type I Thug with a INT of 14 and a COM of 14. She packs a Micro-Uzi in her purse but if the heat comes down prefers to run and/or act weak and helpless before shooting.

### Mugging

This encounter is meant for a single character who is patrolling (or who happens to be in) a middle class neighborhood that borders on a run-down neigh-

borhood. It can take place amongst brownstone apartment buildings, two story townhouses or even single (or duplex) family dwellings.

Two Type I Thugs hold up a middle-aged woman on a side-street within earshot of one of the heroes. She screams and faints, and the muggers calmly go about liberating money and credit cards from her purse. If confronted by a vigilante both swear like sailors and run for it. Sam has a S&W Model 10 Revolver while Bert has a blackjack (5d6 total damage) and a knife (+1 OCV, 1d6-1 killing).

Sam and Bert only fight if there's no choice; they duck behind trash cans, into doorways or even into buildings to avoid being shot, if necessary. They run like hares from the hound and if their pursuer gets too close might split up. They know the neighborhood they're in pretty well but they know the neighborhood they're running to much better: if they get more than three blocks ahead of any pursuer, they get away.

### Kids

This encounter is meant for a single character who is patrolling (or who happens to be in) a generic neighborhood; the exact location is up to the GM.

The sound of wheels on concrete echoes in the night. What is it? Three kids on skateboards? What's that sound? Is that the hissing of spray paint?

Three juveniles are on a vandalism spree, painting cars as they skateboard down a deserted, late-night avenue. They are Jeremy ("Spray,") Paula ("Scoot,") and Randy ("Tag"). How will the hero deal with these kid ruffians?

The kids, all about 12, have regular Characteristics (straight 10s) except for STR, CON and BODY, which are 5 each. The Heroes can deal with this problem as they see fit: ignore it (tsk), give the kids a verbal lashing, confiscate the spray paint and tongue-lash them, tongue-lash and confiscate and spank, or, perhaps the worst-case for the kids, all of the above *plus* take the skateboards *and* contact their parents *and* make the kids pay for all the damage they've done.

This shouldn't devolve into a violent encounter: the hero who deals with this problem by shooting is very quickly going to be on the "bad vigilante" list, hated and hunted by all. How much the character is able to turn these kids' lives around is the true measure of success. One way or another the kids show up later, during the big fire in Part II; will they be angelic helpers or devilish hecklers?

GMs should play this one for humor; the kid's nicknames, for example, offer lots of opportunities for mischief. If too much of a ruckus is raised, the police are called to investigate by honest citizens raised from slumber by the noise.

### Other Encounters

If GMs feel obliged to get all the characters in on the action at this stage, throw together a few more short, low-key encounters using one or two Type I Thugs who are committing petty crimes (stealing car stereos, stealing cars, breaking and entering and so on)





or perhaps one or two normal people who are doing something shady (begging, running small-time cons and so on).

### How the Press Reacts

As these encounters are played out the news carry the details as they're available to the press. After all three are finished, a news report commenting on "the new vigilantes in town" will play on the evening news, and a series of articles will speculate why there is a spate of new vigilante activity in Hudson City. These articles and news reports should serve to give the heroes a sense of who else is out there, preparing for the time when the heroes will be called together by Optik. This is also an opportunity to introduce a reporter and/or a television reporter/personality like Frank "Fedora" Keaton or Patricia Eisenhart (*Justice, Not Law*, page 33) to the characters.

### Some Introductions

These encounters should result in some of the heroes getting to know some of the other heroes. While the group doesn't have to form yet (assuming the players didn't form some sort of vigilante team) it's a good idea to put some of the characters in touch with some of the other characters. After both of these encounters have been run ("Gang Skirmish" and "Who's That?") each of the characters in the campaign should know at least one of the other characters

in the campaign. If all the characters already know each other, "Gang Skirmish" can be run as-is but "Who's That?" can be changed to introduce a vigilante ally (perhaps a "red shirt" or a fellow vigilante who has a skill or information that the player characters lack and would make a good contact).

### Gang Skirmish

The 66 Blades and the Overlords have been arguing about turf, about drugs, about women, about just about everything, mainly because their leaders are competing to be the Hudson City Gang Boss. Rumors abound that the gangs are going to clash sometime in the next few days; the police are nervous, the media primed and ready, and The Hanged Man is having a firepower sale. A slaughter is in the air.

This encounter is meant for two or three heroes who arrive at the scene separately at different times: one hero can begin at the scene as the conflict develops, while one or two can arrive as the fighting begins. Unless the skirmish is somehow squelched, in a few short minutes it will develop into a firefight the like of which is usually seen in third-world countries, not the United States. If allowed to flower sufficiently, the gang's leaders might even show up.

Caught in the middle are a van load of Mission Volunteers. All around the scene of the firefight is a residential area, "Mushrooms", as innocent victims of stray gunfire are called, are everywhere. The fighting must be stopped. Somehow.





### Set-Up

Rumors start flying that any character with Streetwise skill hears: "the Blades and the Lords are gonna go at it soon." Characters who follow up these rumors might also hear (depending on a Skill Roll, use of appropriate Contacts and so on) that "Hanged Man is sellin' AK's cheap to bangers," and that most of the 66 Blades and Overlord activity these days is taking place inside the rectangle formed by Barton and Centre and Southridge and King streets. A truly excellent result, or interrogating a 66er or an Overlord, reveals that the turf near the Barton Street Mission is the current "hot spot" of gang activity in that area.

One hero starts the encounter near the Mission and sees this:

*Early evening near the Barton Street Mission means a line of homeless shuffling along the sidewalk, waiting for their turn in the soup kitchen. The street lights here actually work, a tribute to the Mission and the people who support it. An abandoned car rusts mutely a few yards from a small group of youth listening to music on a boom box. A brown van with "Our Lady of Mercy" written on the side pulls up next to the Mission and a group of people—obviously volunteers—leaves the Mission and enters the van.*

*Then your eyes are drawn to a low-slung car with a neon light mounted to shine on the street underneath and, in this light, pitch black windows...but isn't that a gun barrel poking out the side?*

The car is full of Overlords cruising for members of the 66 Blades gang, who they see listening to the boom box across the street from the Mission. They open fire.

The Mission sits in the middle of the block. Buildings two to four stories high line the street. There are alleys and rooftops for the hero to be hiding in or on; a normal-looking vehicle would be inconspicuous parked on the side of the street. When the shooting begins the volunteers aren't all in the van; homeless and hungry people are still in line on the sidewalk outside the mission, and a few kids here and there are playing. The Barton Street Mission is usually pretty safe. The six Blades on the sidewalk are one group, the four Overlords in the car are another. At least two other groups are bound to enter the fray, however, as this is a "two-car drive-by," a less conspicuously decorated car is following the first with four more Overlords in it. The Blades aren't alone, either, as a pickup truck with five Blades, armed to the teeth, is cruising in the opposite direction and will meet the Overlords' cars head-on within 20 meters (10") of the Mission.

It's a powder keg waiting for a match, and the heroes have to do something to stop it. Each side will attempt to kill members of the enemy gang in addition to shooting back at anyone (say, a hero or perhaps the police) who shoots at them. The gang members will move into cover and fight it out. Until the PCs alter the course of events, the fight goes like this (see next page for an explanation of \*'s):

### Segment 12:

Overlords in Car 1 fire at Blades on sidewalk (recover and so forth)

### Segment 4:

Overlords in Car 1 fire at Blades on sidewalk while moving forward

Overlords in Car 2 fire at Blades on sidewalk while moving forward

Blades on sidewalk take cover behind car, in alley, and so forth and ready weapons

Blades in Truck ready weapons and stop vehicle

### Segment 8: (or anytime after Segment 4)

2nd hero arrives

Blades on sidewalk shoot at Overlords in Car 1\*

Blades in Truck shoot at Overlords in Car 1\*

Overlords in Car 1 lose control and crash into fire hydrant next to Van\*

Overlords in Car 1 shoot wildly at Blades on sidewalk

Overlords in Car 2 shoot at Blades on sidewalk

### Segment 12: (or anytime after Segment 8)

3rd hero arrives

Blades on sidewalk shoot at Overlords in Car 2\*

Overlords in Car 2 shoot at Blades in Truck\*

Overlords in Car 1 exit car and take up defensive positions

(homeless and volunteers scattering as possible to escape mayhem)

Blades in Truck shoot at Overlords in Car 2\* (recover and so forth)

### Segment 4:

\*\* for all firing in this segment

Overlords in Car 2 pass by Truck and fire at Blades in it

Blades in Truck fire at Overlords in Car 2

Blades on sidewalk fire at Overlords on sidewalk (former Car 1 occupants)

Overlords on sidewalk fire at Blades on sidewalk

### The Players

*Blades on Sidewalk:* 6 Type I Thugs each armed with a handgun and one with a Micro-Uzi.

*Blades in Truck:* 5 Type I Thugs each armed with an AK-47 type weapon (The Hanged Man guns).

*Overlords in Car 1:* 4 Type I Thugs each armed with an AK-47 type weapon (The Hanged Man guns).

*Overlords in Car 2:* 4 Type I Thugs, 2 with combat shotguns and two with assault rifles.

If the firefight is inconclusive, it will continue (with short breaks of several turns so the gangs can reload, bandage wounds, and so on) and other gang members will arrive in groups listed below:

*66 Blades:* 4 Type I Thugs and 1 Type II Thug (*Justice, Not Law*, page 126) armed with assault rifles, combat shotguns, and 2 hand grenades.

*Overlords:* 3 Type I Thugs and 1 Type II Thug armed with assault rifles, combat shotguns, 1 hand grenade, and a LAW rocket launcher.



Each group arrives in a vehicle of some sort from opposite directions at roughly the same time.

If the firefight somehow drags on, the police can be heard in the vicinity; they are prevented from getting to the scene by the numerous gang conflicts that spring up as a result of the Mission battle. The Gang leaders, Buckshot and Tommy Brooks, arrive in vans along with three or more vehicles filled to the brim with gangbangers armed with all the weapons listed above, but in greater numbers. It gets very ugly and completely beyond the character's ability to control. By dawn, a significant portion of the area has burned to the ground and the casualties are in the dozens, a significant number of which are innocent bystanders. This, with a little quick thinking and quick action, will not come to pass.

Otherwise, each time a \* appears on the segment action list, or anytime a gun is fired in the general direction of innocent bystanders, roll 1d6. On a "1" an innocent bystander has been hit and on a "6" something spectacular happens: a big window is shattered, a gas tank blows up and so on. Don't bother running the battle between the gangs blow by blow. Be dramatic and assign wounds to the combatants as seems appropriate for the situation. When a character is involved, be specific, and don't have all the gang members in the area shoot at him or her. Remember, they're going to be concerned about all the other opponents out there, too.

This encounter is an opportunity for different heroes to take a shot at stopping the carnage: there are many different possible ways to keep the shooting to a minimum. Pretending to be the police, using smoke grenades to block line of sight between the combatants, targeting the leaders, drawing fire and moving away from the innocent bystanders and protecting the innocent bystanders are all good ways to keep this from erupting into a major gun battle. Once the fighting is over heroes, if they don't already know each other, can introduce themselves and slink off into the night to lick any wounds and chat about vigilante things.

Even a vigilante who lacks any shred of idealism should want to prevent the firefight: if a character seems willing to let events unfold, describe graphically the children running for cover, the parents screaming out of windows for their kids to run away, the volunteers who are being sprayed with broken glass or even shot, the hungry and homeless people in the food line running for cover... while it can be considered "good" that these vicious gangs are eliminating each other, there's a whole lot of collateral damage taking place, and that means innocent lives. Characters who are unmoved by that terrible possibility are possibly too far around the curve to be considered heroes.

Unless the firefight is nipped completely in the bud, this event will be major news, and witnesses will be called on to describe what took place. This means that descriptions, possibly garbled, of the heroes' role in the firefight will hit the media the next day, and a wave of interest in vigilante activities will begin.

## Who's That?

This encounter is meant for two heroes. At least one of the heroes should be the "patrol for crime" type of vigilante while the other can also be a "patroller" or not. By now you should have determined the general pattern of crimefighting activities of the characters and are therefore able to take a few liberties and assume what their actions will be. Read the following to one of the heroes:

*It's late and quiet in the city. Wait—what's that? The scrape of a boot? In the distance a scattering of street lights provides weak illumination and deep shadow, so you sink into darkness and wait. Who would follow you on a night like this? Some distance away, passing in and out of the weak light, is a shadowy figure (add in a generically descriptive detail about the other hero: a long arm (rifle or shotgun) shape, a hat, a cape and so on. Also, if necessary, add in something specific about the location: is the first hero a crawler of rooftops, dark alleys, what?). The figure stops, looks around slowly, then begins carefully moving in your direction. Obviously whoever it is doesn't see you and gets closer and closer and closer... and will pass within a few feet in a second or two. What will you do?*

Of course it's the other hero—the GM knows that, but the players should not. GM's should try to entice the character who is hiding in the shadows to take some action against the shadowy figure who is obviously "following them" and "up to no good." Then, if the character pounces, shock the other player involved by turning to them and saying "so you're patrolling the night when someone attacks you from the shadows!" Make the players play it out but try to keep it low-key and not too deadly: this encounter is meant to provide a means of introduction, not a reason to use a body bag. Once the characters have figured out neither is a true enemy, hopefully after a few phases of some good, old-fashioned hand-to-hand fisticuffs (relatively harmless fisticuffs, that is) the players have a good reason to arrange some sort of liaison and should be encouraged to do so. GM's should do their best to head off gunplay ("hey, are you sure you want to shoot someone in the back? Could be anybody...") while encouraging the stock "first meeting between crimefighters" fist fight.

## Retro's First Appearance

Retro needs to be part of a criminal organization in Hudson City; it need not be the organization listed below. To personalize the adventure, you may wish to select another criminal organization for Retro.

Otherwise, Retro is a chief lieutenant in the Hudson City branch of the Carillo-Mendoza drug cartel (*Justice, Not Law*, page 132). He has risen fast in the organization during the past year, mainly owing to his keen intelligence, knowledge of police procedure and administrative ability. His detractors also complain about his unerring good luck. Retro has just missed several police raids on Carillo-Mendoza facilities (actually this is due to his contact on the force





who believes Retro is living far away from Hudson City after fleeing charges; see his character sheet for details).

Retro has spent most of his ill-gotten gains during the past year on his combat van and on other expensive "toys," so Optik's extortion is particularly galling. Although Optik's demands are relatively low, Retro can't afford the payments and has had to borrow to cover the cost of paying Optik. This, plus Retro's inherent dislike of being blackmailed, (not to mention his spectacular secret (see Retro's write-up in the Resources section, which Optik knows through The Machine's ability to listen in on phone conversations) motivates him to find and eliminate Optik.

Since Retro's secret is so secure, he's also deeply curious to know how Optik came to know his true identity. Along with eliminating Optik, Retro seeks to determine how Optik learned his secret and, if possible, secure the means for himself. Retro is fully aware that "knowledge is power." Little does he know how powerful an information gatherer Optik has manufactured...

### Details about the Cartel

The Hudson City Carillo-Mendoza crime boss is Ferdinand "Aero" Naaves, the man sent to replace the previous crime boss killed by the Blue Moon Killer (Harbinger of Justice) in 1994. Of an age with Retro, he's a competent criminal administrator (use Whitehurst's statistics, *Justice, Not Law*, page 125, with changes appropriate for a drug dealer) who gets his nickname, "Aero," from his love of flying remote control planes. The Hudson City members of the cartel number approximately twelve; Naaves has four bodyguard/thugs who work directly for him, while Retro has two. The rest are assigned various tasks such as loading and unloading drugs (often at the docks), distributing the drugs around the city, counting and packing cash and collecting payments. See the detailed description for more information about the cartel's operations in Hudson City.

Ambitious characters can come upon the scene described below by tracking the source of the crack cocaine in the "Drug Buy" encounter (Part I, Episode 1) back through Gina to one of the Cartel's agents. Otherwise a contact can provide the clue or the heroes can stumble onto it while on patrol.

*Sometimes the night is kind; sometimes you get lucky. There, at the mouth of a dark alley, is the buyer: a shifty man in a three-piece suit with a briefcase held close, close like you'd hold a lot of cash. There, at the corner, another man: a long overcoat, despite the warm night air, a classic fedora hat, an aluminum container the size of a small suitcase held casually in one hand. The seller, no doubt. The approach: no shaking of hands. The briefcase is opened, displayed. Cash. The aluminum case is opened. Small white bags of powder.*

*The switch. It's a deal.*

The heroes (they can be any number, the more the merrier; a lone patrolling hero who stumbles on the set-up could be allowed time to contact friends who

can arrive before the deal goes down), if they tracked this deal down by pursuing the "Gina" lead, should be aware of some information as a reward for their investigations. The man in the alley, in addition to carrying an Uzi, has some backup, two Type I Thugs armed with Colt M1911A .45 pistols, one hidden in the alley behind the man with the cash, the other in a parked car on the street about 15 meters from the mouth of the alley. Depending on how thoroughly characters "case" the area, they may also be aware that Retro, who walks up with the cocaine, also has backup: two Type I Thugs (See the Resources section for modifications) each armed with M-1 Garand rifles on rooftops 30-50 meters (15"-25") away, with a clear view of the street below, and one Type I Thug in Retro's combat van two blocks away. If the combat van is needed, GMs should be careful with the machine gun; it can do major damage to happy-go-lucky vigilantes! The combat van is an ace in the hole and should not be detected by characters unless they do something very unusual to do so, such as check all the cars and vans for a two block radius from the buy site.

Retro must **not** be killed (or injured too badly) in this encounter. His armor and quickness (he will have taken a pill before doing the buy, just in case) should suffice to keep him out of harm's way. If he has the money when the fun begins, he'll leave under the covering fire of his associates. If not, and the money is reachable (remember, Retro has some money problems) he'll make an attempt at securing it.

Retro's people will shoot to keep Retro and themselves alive; the buyer's people will shoot to keep the buyer and themselves alive. Clever heroes might arrange for a significant part of the firing to take place between the various villains. Although it's a run-down, half-abandoned neighborhood, the police will respond within ten minutes after gunfire begins, and none of the villains will stick around after the sirens can be heard.

Retro won't fight hand to hand if he can help it, but if presented with a vigilante close by he'll toss in a few film noir comments for atmosphere before blasting the poor soul to oblivion.

The prize in this encounter is the buyer and his thugs; the Cartel people have a well-organized escape route planned and should get away unless the heroes are lucky, unusually effective, or both. The buyer can reveal that the source of the drugs he meant to buy is the Carillo-Mendoza Cartel, that the name of the man in the fedora is Retro, and that the Cartel is extremely careful about making contacts since the Blue Moon Killer wasted the Cartel leader in 1994.

### The Black & White Cafe

If the heroes pursue the Cartel contact, it involves a small cafe in the Strip called Black & White, through which, very indirectly, Retro can be contacted. He favors the cafe because it is decorated with pictures of Bogart, Bacall and other film noir actors in addition to some posters for movies like "The Maltese Falcon" and "Double Indemnity." The Cartel is paranoid



about being attacked by the Blue Moon Killer again. Of course, against the Harbinger, their precautions are ineffective: he simply hasn't gotten around to them yet.

## Results

As a result of this encounter, the heroes should do a little poking around about this Retro guy. A good result on a Streetwise roll reveals that he's recently borrowed money from an independent loan shark; investigation along that line reveals that for some odd reason a number of criminals have been taking out modest loans from loan sharks (in order to pay Optik, of course, but finding that out will take further investigation on the part of the heroes). An average result reveals he works for the Carillo-Mendoza Cartel; even a failed roll suggests that the "guy in the trench coat and fedora" is a drug dealer of some kind.

A critical failure on a Streetwise roll about Retro reveals that the guy the hero is looking for is Frank "Fedora" Keaton, a freelance crime reporter...or so everybody thinks! Frank is of course only a crime reporter, but muffing the roll should provide an opportunity for you to have some fun with your players.

## Part I, Episode 2: Optik's Invitations

It's time for the characters to come together into some semblance of a team, if they aren't already acting together. Optik's invitations should serve to expand on the relationships built in Episode 1 while at the same time making the characters aware that something beyond their perception is going on, and that it's important. While busting heads will be unusually easy in this episode (knowledge is power) the characters should become more and more certain that something very weird is going on. Characters with an appropriate level of paranoia will wonder how Optik knows who they were, not to mention how Optik comes by all this juicy information about the criminal underworld in Hudson City.

## Mayhem in the Underworld

These letters should be delivered in a fashion appropriate to the character. For characters with a day identity, the letter arrives by courier, addressed to the person by their correct name. For characters who are full-time crimefighters with no regular identity the letter is left somewhere the character can find it and is addressed to the character by their correct name, if The Machine could reasonably have observed the name used during the past few game weeks, and addressed by the character's "street" name if not. All the characters receive this letter on the same day: the information only details actions for 36 hours or so.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_;

*Enclosed please find some information you may find useful in your "night" job. Do not look for me; you would only fail and waste valuable time that could be spent ridding the city of undesirables like those described below. Criminals such as these must be deleted for the betterment of society! I'm sure I can count on you to perform the operation without any further input from me. As data about other undesirables becomes available I will of course provide it to you.*

*Some of these criminals have numerous assistants. I have provided this information to some of your associates. Without meaning to sound like an expert (which I assuredly am not) might I suggest that some of these criminals might require networking?*

OPTIK

Enclosed with the letter is a list of criminals, their addresses, the weapons they usually carry, and a description of their expected daily routine for the next few days. The letter and descriptions are laser-printed (on a high-quality, 600 dpi machine) on standard photocopier paper. Of course, these criminals are but a small proportion of the "undesirables" that Optik knows about; they are merely the criminals who have failed to "pay up" as he demanded. The paper is free of fingerprints or other clues that might suggest a source or an author.

Characters who try to track the name Optik have no success unless they do so on local computer bulletin boards and networks, where it is common as a handle, or alias, for a number of computer users who are imitating the famous Optik, a skilled hacker who mysteriously dropped off the net about 18 months ago. Working through the list of Optiks who use Hudson City networks is a tedious and thankless task: none of them are the Optik, but one of them, a computer science professor at HCU recalls that there used to be another Optik who no one sees on the net anymore. An outstanding success on a die roll might lead a character to examine old computer records in which a few Optiks who are no longer active can be found. One of them is Optik, who used the alias before his accident (see Optik's character sheet for further details).

Since Optik was a skilled hacker, his real name and address are not available through this route, but you should reward characters who get this far by allowing the characters to chat on-line with Optik: most characters will be keen to have a little talk with him. You need to be careful to balance rewarding persistent and creative investigators with this information without endangering the overall plot plan in which Optik is later killed by Retro.

Characters should be able to derive some advantage from their research, if successful, without necessarily being allowed to save Optik's life; perhaps some early contact with The Machine which can help in later encounters by being a valuable source of information.





## The List

The list of criminals is not long, but it is significant. As the characters hunt these undesirables down they should encounter many opportunities to hear of the criminals' being blackmailed by somebody named Optik. This information should definitely put a twist on how the characters react to further notes from Optik, but the fact remains the information Optik provides about bad guys is accurate. How the characters resolve the conflict between wanting to put criminals behind bars (or six feet under in some cases) and serving a blackmailer should be interesting for you to observe. Once they're aware of the situation, if characters seem to pay very little heed to the fact they're helping an extortionist provide "examples" to others he's blackmailing, you should do all you can to make the ethical quandary clear to your players.

These encounters are not fully detailed; the necessary information is provided you to flesh out the details. None of these criminals should provide much of a challenge to a vigilante armed not only with guns, but also information.

### Nooky Smith's Porn Film Emporium

Nooky Smith is a pornography seller with a colorfully-named shop a few blocks from the corner of King and Southridge streets, in the heart of Freetown. What the list reveals, however, is that Nooky Smith is



also a porn film producer, and that he makes kiddy porn in a warehouse only a few doors down from his shop.

The list provides the following information: Nooky Smith's name, height and weight, the address of the warehouse, a basic description of the interior, a probable schedule of Nooky's movements (see below), the names of the two kidnap victims (Amy and Jim, from New Jersey), the names of the two other actors scheduled to appear, the names of the director and the sound technician, what Nooky and the actors have (a gun and mace; see below). A piece of key information is that Nooky sometimes makes snuff films, in which one or more of the actors is actually killed during taping.

The list also says that a major film shoot is scheduled for 9 PM to midnight (Nooky likes to run his shop personally, so the filming takes place after he closes), that in addition to Nooky there is a film director, an assistant, four actors and two kidnap victims scheduled to be present at the appointed time. The kidnap victims are brother and sister, 14 and 15 year-olds, runaways Nooky picked up at the bus station with offers of good work making films. What Nooky actually has in mind for the pair breaks many laws, not to mention mores, so the sooner the heroes break up the scene, the better.

Nooky has a handgun, while two of the actors have cans of mace. The kids are either locked in the basement or being bullied into "acting" on the set, with Nooky threatening one with his pistol to make the other perform. Nooky might try to take one of the kids hostage if threatened, but vigilantes should be able to work around that minor detail without too much difficulty.

### Louie's Numbers Parlor

Louie runs an illegal gambling parlor that is part of the Card Shark operation, which means the characters have an opportunity to see how much they're worth once they get on the Card Shark "Bounty List" (*Dark Champions*, page 143). The "front" is a barbershop; to place a bet, patrons sit in the waiting area, where Louie always sits, and place their bets. Louie places any cash he takes in to a drawer in a cabinet next to a wall. Behind the wall, with a good view of the barbershop through a one-way mirror, is the money-counting and gambling operation proper: Louie is merely part of the "front." In case of trouble the two Type I Thugs, armed with shotguns and pistols prefer to go around and enter the barbershop through a rear door (to protect the secrecy of the mirror/secret room) but will shoot right through the mirror if they have to.

The list describes the set-up, what Louie does (he doesn't have a gun because the police check often but are always mystified; there's never any money on Louie!) and what the Thugs carry. Armed with this knowledge, the heroes shouldn't have any problem taking care of Louie and his boys... although the Card Shark organization is sure to hear of it. In addition to Louie and his boys, five thousand dollars can be found in the "secret" room, which also has an exit to

the alley behind the barbershop. The only real wrinkle here is that Louie only operates during the daylight hours, so heroes used to operating at night might have to show their colors in broad daylight...

### The Chop Shop Gang

See *Justice, Not Law*, page 123. The gang, being youths, aren't afraid of any old Optik, so they haven't paid as he demanded. The list shows that they all gather at midnight at the auto repair shop three of them work at to organize their activities for the next few hours.

### Mr. Jones

A guy named Jones runs small time cons on the elderly of Hudson City. He disregarded Optik's demand for money because he wrongly assumed the evidence of his wrong-doing was impossible for anyone to find. He's an ordinary guy with moderately high INT, a decent COM and a good PRE who lives at a dingy hotel just off Centre Street near 1st Avenue, and the list details where the necessary evidence can be found. Jones doesn't have a weapon, other than smooth talking (Persuasion on 16-) but knowing what they know, the vigilantes are unlikely to fall for any fast talking. Jones stays in all night, every night, so he can be picked off at the heroes leisure.

### Notes on the "List" Encounter

It should become clear during this "list" series of encounters that the player characters aren't the only vigilantes to have received a list; the Harbinger of Justice gets press for bringing down a small terrorist cell who apparently were planning to blow up HarpCor Towers to strike a blow against international capitalism, the Scarecrow is actually seen on the nightly news dropping off the bodies of a pair of serial rapists in front of police headquarters, and a man accused by his wife of years of abuse is found decapitated on the roof of the city courthouse. The criminal underworld is under siege by well-informed vigilantes, and those who had postponed dropping a little money in the mail to Optik are hurrying to the nearest post office. Characters who learn of this method of payment are stymied as Optik planned; the money goes to a front operation which deposits the cash into numbered accounts, thoroughly anonymous numbered accounts, overseas. While each criminal isn't required to pay a lot, there are a lot of criminals in Hudson City...

A good Deduction roll might also suggest that the list was compiled using extensive surveillance techniques, mostly or completely aural in nature.

## Retro Investigates

Retro, in the meantime, is continuing his investigations. The onslaught of vigilante activity convinces him that perhaps the vigilantes are responsible in some perverted way for the blackmailing of practically the entire criminal fraternity of Hudson City. He therefore investigates the possibility by talking to as many vigilantes as he can, starting with the player characters. The question is, how will he do so?

Retro first tries putting the word out on the street that he's interested in "chatting" with one of the characters, and that word can be left at the Black & White cafe. Any character with Streetwise hears this message within a few days. Characters who investigate see a big sign in the window of the cafe: it says "R. 555-1934," which is the number of Retro's cellular phone. While the call can be tapped, Retro can move around during the call, making a trace a real problem. If a hero calls, Retro sets up a meeting in a public, neutral place—"The phones aren't safe," he'll say if questioned about why.

Retro suggests a concert, in front of a police station or a Heroes baseball game (if there's one in town that night, at the ballpark; if not, a sports bar with the game on TV). He refuses to meet anywhere without multiple exits and a crowd, the larger the better.

GMs should be aware that this is a very touchy encounter. Gung ho vigilante characters may look at this as an opportunity to capture a drug dealer no matter what the cost to innocent bystanders; others may not be of a mind to have any polite contact at all with a criminal. If necessary, you should equip Retro with one of his bosses' remote control devices and have Retro hold down a button for the duration of the encounter. If asked what it is, Retro can reply "Insurance," making it clear that it is a "dead man's switch" and that something ugly will happen if he lets up on the button for even a moment.

Retro, if he gets to meet one or more of the heroes (he doesn't mind meeting more than one at a time, especially since he's got a "bomb") has this to say:

*"I know we work opposite sides of the business, and I appreciate your willingness to meet with me. Let's get down to business. Your kind's been shilling for that Optik guy, and I wanna know how far it goes. If you're in with him, let me know what kind of a cut you're getting..."*

Retro is angling for information. If the characters agree that they're working with Optik, Retro files this away as an opportunity to get at Optik (not to mention yet another reason to do something about pesky vigilantes). If the characters deny working with Optik, Retro gets a little angry:

*"Don't insult my intelligence. You costumed do-gooders have been all over the city lately, picking on, guys who didn't pay Optik his squeeze money. You've gotta be working for him; don't lie to me."*

Depending on what questions the players ask, Retro forms one opinion or the other: either he thinks the vigilantes are working for Optik directly or he realizes the vigilantes in fact are merely taking advantage of tips from Optik. Retro can come to this realization through the questions the players ask: if they want to know if many criminals are being blackmailed, he'll begin to presume that the characters aren't in Optik's direct employ. The more cagey the characters are, though, the more likely Retro is to think they are in fact working for Optik directly. In any case, Retro will answer few questions and once he's formed an opinion either way finishes with one of these two statements:



(Retro believes the characters are in with Optik) *"All right, don't play ball. So you're working for Optik. It's a dangerous job. He's making a lot of very powerful people upset. Once he gets flushed out into the open, it's all over, get me? All over. People that work with him aren't going to be in such good shape, either. Keep that in mind. Now beat it, get outta here, go on, scram, and don't bother trying to follow me."*

(Retro believes the characters aren't working directly for Optik) *"Sure, who can blame ya. I guess Mr. Mysterious has been feedin' you mutts information. He'll be sorry all the same, trust me. He's making a lot of very powerful people upset. Once he gets flushed out into the open, it's all over, get me? So don't get too cozy with him. You should keep that in mind. Now beat it, go on, scram, and don't bother trying to follow me."*

Once finished with the characters, Retro waits patiently for the characters to vamoose before using Stealth and knowledge of the city to lose any pesky vigilantes who imagine he can be tracked. This encounter is meant to highlight the fact that the characters, if they're taking care of the criminals on "the list," are essentially working for a blackmailer. This is an ethical question that can provide some delightful roleplaying.

## Ashtray Art Strikes!

Enter Ashtray Art. For this adventure, assume he has no supernatural power to make flames. GMs running a campaign with superpowers can, of course, use Ashtray as he is. Because he doesn't talk much about what he does, he has to date escaped the notice of The Machine, but he is active in Hudson City.

This encounter is an opportunity for one or more characters to try their hand at saving victims from a burning building. Especially evil GMs can scan the player's sheets and find a DNPC who hasn't been too active yet. Make it their apartment building that Ashtray Art is hired to burn to the ground by a landlord who values the insurance money he'll get for the building more than the lives of his tenants. A long-term adventure seed is for the landlord to be one of the Saietta family who is greedy for the insurance payment and desirous of freeing up the land for rebuilding due to the new construction across the street.

The building is eight stories high, brick, and equipped with adequate iron fire escapes. Unfortunately, Ashtray Art wants to see what people will choose to do if that means of escape is also on fire, so in addition to starting a fire on the ground floor (which moves upward and fills the building full of smoke) he spreads napalm on the fire escapes, rendering them impassable. Further evidence of his dementia is his sabotaging of the nearest firehouse; he's placed a rubber mat with hundreds of tire-shredding spikes outside and the minute the fire engine exits the firehouse it will suffer multiple flat tires and be unable to carry the firefighters to the fire.

All in all it's a recipe for a crispy slaughter, so it's a good thing the heroes can intervene. One or more heroes can observe the fire engine's sabotage and see

a wisp of smoke in the distance; a hero involved with one of the building's inhabitants can be a block away when the flames appear on the fire escapes.

Once one or more characters have approached the burning building, read the following:

*The bottom levels of the fire escape blaze with a technicolor spray of flames while smoke is rolling out of the bottom floor. The second floor of the eight floor building is beginning to show signs of fire, and already people are leaning out their windows, shouting and screaming. Some of the more intrepid citizens have already exited, but people on the third floor and higher don't seem willing to jump. The work lights from a construction project across the street cast a sickly white light on the side of the building: it looks as if something is written there. What will you do?*

Something has to be done, but what? Luckily, across the street is a construction site, complete with cranes and other pieces of construction equipment. Enterprising characters might think to use the equipment to make a bridge from one of the windows over to the incomplete shell of the building under construction. Piles of sand might be put to use extinguishing the fire on the fire escape (which itself isn't actually burning) so that it might be used to evacuate residents like it's supposed to in case of a fire. Characters with a functioning vehicle might go get a firefighter or two along with some special lifesaving equipment such as the classic circular tarp for people to jump into.

Special opportunities for heroism present themselves during the course of the fire:

- One woman won't jump and won't leave her window and won't grab on to a rope: to rescue her physically will require a STR vs. STR Roll
- An elderly man who is half blind without his glasses must be led out of the building by hand
- A kid who, after leaving the building (or meeting a character in a smoke-filled hallway), bewails the loss of "Tommy," back in his apartment (Tommy can turn out to be a cat, a doll, or perhaps a baby brother), and so on.

Each minute the fire rises another story; you can alter this rate as necessary to maintain suspense. The fire has two main phases. First, the floor fills with smoke, and second, fire spreads, quickly making the floor uninhabitable.

You should review the rules for smoke and fire damage and include lots of descriptions of flickering flames, doors that explode outward, thick smoke and so on. Inventive solutions are the best in this situation; the media arrives by the end of the fire, so heroic heroes get their pictures in the newspaper and maybe even a 30-second clip on the news the next day.

The disturbing aspect of this fire as deliberate and malicious arson should not be overlooked; Ashtray Art has left his signature on the side of the burned building. The message reads: "love consummated/this lady so high/so warm" and in smaller letters, "Arthur Connally." Characters who don't know that Connally is Ashtray Art are reminded of the fact by the





media who points out this is the third time he's escaped from The Asylum. Whatever hero is featured on the news is instantly disliked by Ashtray Art. If no good video makes the news, GMs should assume Ashtray saw the blaze from some location and noted the hero's efforts to quell the flames and deny Lady Fire the crunchy morsels he'd planned for Her.

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## Part I, Episode 3: Race Against Time

By this time the heroes should be fully aware that Optik is blackmailing many of the criminals in Hudson City with high-grade information about their activities, and that Retro is an important figure in the underworld's response to the problem. The characters should also be aware that Optik's possession the information is unusual; perceptive characters should be wondering how in the heck Optik comes to know all the things that he knows.

### Tenderheart Strikes

Tenderheart has been watching the news and reading the paper. She's taken with one of the new vigilantes in town. You should select her target based on the following criteria:

- Not yet selected to be the key figure in a subplot
- Male
- Tall and brawny

Her first expression of interest comes in the form of a newspaper classified ad:

"\_\_\_\_\_ (character's street name) has a secret admirer. Looking for you in the night, T."

The ad is placed in the *Hudson City Mirror* and news of it might have to reach the character through gossip or other secondhand means, unless the character subscribes to the *Mirror*.

Tenderheart's second romantic assay comes in the form of a direct encounter; she begins concentrating her criminal activities (small-time muggings, mostly) in the area the media has said the vigilante in question "protects." News reports of her activities filter into the media; her strange habit of "waiting around" after the crime until sirens can be heard should be featured in reports the GM gives to the player about the news items. Eventually, within a few days, Tenderheart and the hero in question will meet:

*You're sure you heard a shout for help. You ease down an alley and peek around the corner. It's not very late yet and there are a few people still on the street: no need to draw attention to yourself needlessly. Just a few yards away you see a woman picking through the wallet of a middle-aged man in a business suit. The victim appears to be Stunned. The woman is wearing a white fencing suit with a red heart over one breast and her face is concealed by a fencing mask."*

If the hero leaps out and attacks Tenderheart, she will respond by Valiantly Parrying while saying "You mistake me, my love, we work for the same end!" If the hero does not cease to fight, Tenderheart will put some distance between them and fire her crossbow, attempting to stun the character with her blunt bolts.

This could turn out to be a running battle; it continues until the police arrive (and Tenderheart flees), the hero is stunned or Tenderheart is vanquished. If the police arrive it should be fairly easy for Tenderheart to flee successfully; if necessary she'll use some of her more exotic bolts to help her escape. If the hero is stunned Tenderheart will plant a big kiss on the hero's face which leaves a bright red lipstick mark...and which also allows Tenderheart to see her beloved's face. If this occurs she'll take precautions to make sure the hero is not apprehended by the police before she flees.

If Tenderheart is vanquished, a number of strange things could happen. Her disguise is very good, so it's unlikely a hero will discover she's a he unless the hero undresses "her." If she's held captive but awake, she'll plead with her captor to let her go and describe how her war against crime is the same as the hero's. Of course it's not the same at all, but Tenderheart believes it is, and her sincerity may have some impact. If turned over to the police Tenderheart might escape right away (if you want her to continue her pursuit of the hero) or she might be unmasked and revealed in the media as a cross-dressing lunatic and consigned to the Asylum (allowing you the opportunity to break her out later while rewarding the victorious hero with tangible results).

Whatever happens, it's up to you to manage the Tenderheart story from here on out.

### Optik Needs Help!

A frantic call from Optik (in person or through The Machine, as appropriate) that arrives in any number of unusual ways: through the closest pay telephone or the like. The method should reflect The Machine's awesome ability to interact with electronic networks. The message is:

*"This is Optik. Armed men have surrounded my house. I live at 2625 Hansen Street. I don't know how long I can hold out. Please hurry. They'll kill me if they can."*

This is when the fun begins.

- Any character with Unluck automatically suffers the effects. (Be creative!)
- Characters with DNPCs are with them when the call comes in at about noon and must resolve an interpersonal problem before they can gracefully make an exit
- Characters with Hunteds or Watched Disadvantages meet them, possibly resulting in a chase to shake them off.



Certain things have to be taken care of before the heroes can just drop what they're doing and rush off to save Optik; GMs who allow these encounters to be easy shouldn't be surprised if this episode doesn't take a full four hours to play through.

These individual encounters are shaped by the lives of the heroes. A DNPC having lunch with a character when the phone message arrives (the waiter says "There is an urgent message for you at the counter,") will observe that something is wrong upon a successful PER Roll (characters with Acting skill can make it a skill vs. skill contest) and want to know what is going on. Since DNPCs know their characters well, they get a+2 to their PER Roll and, since they're DNPCs, insist on a straight answer.

You might want to assume that a character is at work, and force the player to role-play ducking out of work on such short notice. You shouldn't forget any tall tales the characters haul out to explain their behavior. The campaign has just begun and there will be plenty of opportunities for nose-lengthening stories to come back and haunt the characters later.

Another possibility is that the character is Watched or Hunted. After receiving a phone call, a shadower might assume the sudden flurry of activity indicates the character is leaving town or doing something that has to be stopped and attack (for a Hunted) or make an error (for a Watched.) This causes the watcher to

become noticed, precipitating a short encounter the character has to take care of before attending to Optik.

The long and the short of it is, the characters aren't going to arrive in time to save Optik. It's only going to take Retro five minutes to break through Optik's defenses and finish the job; even discovering the existence of The Machine won't take long. The characters are, however, going to have to try and maintain their Secret Identities (if they have one) and handle various problems that stem from their Disadvantages.

Each character should have something to deal with, and you shouldn't make any of the encounters deadly. In the case of a Hunted, the enemy is rushed, and probably under-powered, and should be easy for the character to defeat...even if it turns out to be extremely difficult to explain.

You should play these mini-encounters for laughs but try to allow the characters to get free reasonably quickly to go to Optik's aid; there are important clues at Optik's house the characters need to get before the police arrive.

## Retro's Revenge

The characters should arrive reasonably close together. It's assumed that characters will come to Optik's aid; even an idealistic character uninterested in saving the life of a blackmailer should be curious about Optik's information source or collection method. A wisp of smoke can be seen coming out one window of the brick house, and the door is clearly broken in. There are no vehicles in the driveway or near the house on the street; aside from a concerned neighbor or two (this is a residential neighborhood that looks like classic suburbia) all is quiet and still. No sirens can be heard.

Characters who investigate the house find a large pool of blood on the porch and see a smashed camera next to a gun mounted on a remote-control swivel-arm just inside the entryway. One of Retro's Thugs took a few slugs in the chest from Optik's automated defense system. The heroes can also see large bullet holes in the walls: anyone with any military experience can tell a fifty-caliber machine gun was used on the house, and one of the bullets was probably what smashed the camera in the entryway.

Inside is a typical house with a few exceptions. Everything is set up for easy access to someone in a wheelchair, and there are a large number of consumer electronic items; Optik was apparently a gadget freak. The basement contains what used to be a breathtaking array of computer and electronic equipment; now it contains smoking wreckage that sparks and sputters occasionally.

Optik, a man of indeterminate age in a wheelchair, is obviously dead. His head has been blown off by a shotgun blast. There is very little paper in the room; characters who investigate find that it is mostly gibberish. All the electronic equipment is wrecked and on the verge of starting an electrical fire. You should



allow the characters a few turns to examine the wreckage and then inform them that a telephone somewhere upstairs is ringing. If someone answers it, they get their first direct contact with The Machine, who plays a digital recording of Optik's last message to the heroes:

*My name is Grimes, well, Optik to you...if you're listening to this I'm dead (the sound of gunfire can be heard in the background) because this guy Retro and his men killed me. I guess I deserve it. Of all the things to do with The Machine, I had to...well, never mind, I'm, I'm... (Optik sounds scared, and in the background the rhythmic crashing of a door being broken in can be heard) I'm just about out of time. You need to know about The Machine, it's my greatest creation, it's out there, it's everywhere... (the door clearly gives way and voices can be heard, along with feet on the stairway) it can help you...I've told it to survive, to talk to people, to find out...I don't know if... (Retro's voice can be heard in the background: "So I've been bled dry by some four-eyed weasel in a wheelchair. Say goodnight, Gracie!" followed by the roar of a gun, maybe a shotgun.) After the gunshot a voice that reminds you of the computer in that old space movie says "The police are one minute and thirty seconds from your location." Then the connection is severed.*

That The Machine can still deliver a message like that should be the main clue the characters need to realize that the busted machinery in the basement doesn't mean much. Unfortunately for the heroes, Retro knows about The Machine, too. Because the program is autonomous, it sent multiple queries to the computers in the basement after Optik was killed. Retro, being no fool, answered them and determined in a short space of time that The Machine was not in the computers in the basement. To deny the information to anyone else he destroyed the machinery. Retro doesn't realize that he will not be the sole user of The Machine's abilities since Optik was able to send a message back from the grave informing the heroes (a little bit, anyway) about what The Machine can do.

Optik has also put the heroes on a list of people The Machine is allowed to talk to. While Retro can place himself on the list with stolen codes and passwords taken from Optik's bookshelf, he won't remove the characters from the list because he won't learn they're on it unless they screw up and allow him to learn so. By taking what little information is left, the characters should be able to learn a little bit about what The Machine is; that knowledge combined with what Optik tells them with his "phone call from the grave" should be enough to tell them that a computer program is running out there in the city and the basics of how it works. The characters should have enough knowledge that they can attempt contact: the first conversation with The Machine can take place at the end of this episode or at the beginning of Part II, Episode One.

While the heroes will be unable to keep Optik alive, Optik, in a sense, got what was coming to him. Blackmailers are considered one of the lowest life forms on Earth by almost everyone. The mystery of



what The Machine is and what the characters will do to find out more should be the true "victory" the characters receive

GMs who want to risk havoc for the rest of the plot can arrange a "meeting engagement" between Retro and the characters: Optik should still be dead, but the players might enjoy dropping one or two of Retro's thugs in an inconclusive firefight at the end of the episode. Retro's combat van should prove tough enough to allow him to escape; GMs need to be cautious about using that .50 caliber machine gun!

## Clues

GMs who want to help their players along can include two three ring binders full of computer documentation. A table of contents makes it clear that a third volume, labeled "Passwords and Command Codes" is missing (Retro has it). The two volumes contain reams of information useless to people without a decent level of skill in Computer Programming.

The documentation is a copy of The Machine's source code from before it was implemented; many changes have been made. Computer consultants can tell that the program is supposed to reach out over computer networks; there's also a subprogram that will strike most people as science fiction which theoretically allows the program to rewrite its own code and to replicate the code in other processors. The main fact the players should realize from this documentation is that Retro obviously has the passwords he needs to do what he wants. Other than providing that insight, the information is useless.





# PART II: THE TAKEOVER

## Introduction To Part II

### How To Use This Adventure

This is the second part of a three part campaign epic. GMs who wish to use this adventure by itself should have a group of characters who are already a team and be willing to make numerous changes to the plot. This adventure could be a “war in the underworld” story in which various criminal organizations are fighting for control of certain markets or even mastery of the entire city. A GM who likes the “Crusade/Crusader” story from *Underworld Enemies* could expand on Crusade’s presence in the adventure, add the “death of Crusader” to the beginning and run an adventure that pits Crusade against the characters...all this with the war between the criminals going on in the background. If you suspect your players have read this material, certain changes should be made throughout the entire campaign. Carrying on the changes mentioned in Part I as possible solutions to this problem is one solution: substituting a significant sub-plot element is a more specific solution for Part II. For example, rather than having Ashtray Art attempt to burn down Hudson City, you could instead use one of the adventure seeds contained in the Idiot King’s description (*Underworld Enemies*, pages 28-29) as a “city-threatening” plot device, catching unscrupulous players looking for an arsonist off guard.

### Goals and Methods

#### Goal: Establish a Group Identity

Now that the characters have formed a group, it’s time for you to make sure that group establishes some sort of group identity. Here are some methods you can use to shepherd players in this direction:

- Reward teamwork
- Always ask “are you going to contact any of the others?” when a character sets out to do something
- Encourage the group to make up a name for themselves; if they don’t, the media might be happy to oblige...
- Suggest that players consider some sort of base of operations (a base or a vehicle) or perhaps merely an easy way to communicate (a scrambled HRRH radio for everyone)

### Theme and Mood

Part II takes place during July. No rain will fall this month. Grass withers and dies unless assiduously watered; trees grow limp and dry. Nearly every day dawns bright and beautiful; by noon the sunshine is a curse that brings oppressive heat down on everyone’s head, and office workers dash from air-conditioned building to air-conditioned building. Health alerts reminding people about the symptoms of heat exhaustion and the importance of drinking lots of fluids fill the airwaves. Little kids pry open fire hydrants and bask in the cool water until irate firefighters, worried about losing water pressure in the face of such dry conditions, arrive and seal them up again. Summer is leaden, slow, sweaty. Even the nights are hot, especially in the city where the asphalt and concrete retains the heat of day, and lets it go all night long to bake those who hunt the darkness. Wind is rare and as refreshing as the wave of heat that rolls out of a blast furnace when the doors open. Even the street gangs are beginning to be lethargic; single-room air-conditioners top the stolen item list.

The prevailing theme of Part II is ambiguity and frustration. Retro uses his new information gathering system to blackmail other criminal gangs into working for him, and his progress seems unstoppable. One criminal organization after another falls to Retro, and his power grows by leaps and bounds during the course of the month. There doesn’t seem to be anything the characters can do: The Machine merely adds to the frustration, because even as the players explore it as an information resource Retro is teaching it to be less accessible, less willing to share what it sees. Retro always seems to be one step ahead of the heroes. Frustration is unavoidable; Retro will gain at least a large measure of control over the Hudson City underworld. The heroes, however, have a chance to throw all that frustration back in the face of fate when Ashtray Art attempts to burn down the entire city. This is an opportunity for the heroes to pay back all the frustration Retro has caused them, a chance for the characters to save their city from the flames. Ambiguity exists throughout this adventure as well. While protecting innocent bystanders is always a good thing, the characters will have to decide how much they care about criminals killing other criminals, or even a bloodthirsty vigilante tossing gang leaders to the bears.



## The Enemy's Plan: Part II

In Episode 1 Retro makes a play for control of the Overlords, through Buckshot, and through them control of all the street gangs in Hudson City. Behind the scenes he is also frantically gathering information he can use to extend his control over other organizations. Crusade (*Underworld Enemies*, page 94) also makes an appearance, as does Plain Jane (*Underworld Enemies*, page 79) and the man who hunts her.

In Episode 2, Retro pits the street gangs against the Card Shark organization (*Dark Champions*, pages 140-156), causing a great deal of havoc and mayhem in Hudson City. Card Shark even arranges a meeting with the vigilantes in a desperate attempt to fight Retro, and the city reacts to all the criminal activity in one way or another.

In Episode 3, Retro takes on the Mob using a recently cowed and now obedient Card Shark organization and the street gangs. The Mob hires The Arsenal (*Justice, Not Law*, pages 76-86) to defend itself but is ultimately defeated and put in Retro's yoke. And in an unrelated incident, Ashtray Art, upset over the rescue of his victims in Part I, Episode 2, hatches a grand scheme to burn down all of Hudson City.

## Alternate Outcomes

Frustration is the central theme of this adventure, and while the characters might be able to derail one of Retro's takeover schemes, they can't hope to do so permanently. Retro will prevail one way or another, given time. You need to allow players to struggle, even succeed...but ultimately figure out a logical way Retro completes his tasks, given time. By the end of the adventure, Retro should have under his control the street gangs, the Card Shark organization and the Mob. In the background, he's striking deals with the Yakuza, the Master of Crime and other criminal organizations and independents not to interfere (in some cases the "deal" is the crime boss in question leaves town rather than surrender control and become a lieutenant); the organizations used in this adventure are supposed to represent the bulk of the underworld. If the characters were highly successful in Part I, they may be able to deny Retro access to The Machine earlier than planned; in this case he could fail to achieve full control over some of the organizations listed here, but mainly the lack of information causes Retro to be more violent in his takeovers while providing opportunities for deceptions and traitorous acts that might benefit the heroes.

## Troubleshooting

Keeping all the balls in the air can be difficult and confusing, but all those balls also offer many different ways for you to recover from errors or strange decisions by the players. The combination of time (a whole month) and numerous actors in the drama (three major crime groups) provides you with lots of ammo to fix and patch the plot as required. If Buck-

shot is killed by a character, Tommy Brooks of the 66 Blades can fulfill his role of "supreme gang leader." If the characters jump into a working relationship with the Card Shark organization to struggle against Retro, you can wait a few days and then announce that the leaders who have worked with the characters are out of power and that the organization has splintered...and only a tiny splinter is against Retro, the few in the organization who are working with the heroes. Given the many different crime figures you have available and the flexibility of the calendar, players can apparently derail one Retro scheme after another and be frustrated in the long run. You must remain flexible and think fast.

## Involving the Heroes

This shouldn't be too hard in a campaign, especially if you were successful in parading Retro in front of the characters in Part I. However, it is possible the heroes could say "so what's the difference between a street gang controlled by Joe Blow and a street gang controlled by Retro?", providing an excuse to sit back and watch Retro establish an iron hand over the Hudson City underworld. To this argument you must merely provide example after example of what happens when a single mind controls all these different criminals; perhaps The Machine could be cajoled into revealing some of Retro's long-term plans for the city. It can be argued that competition between different vice providers keeps the price high; perhaps Retro would lower the price for drugs and illicit sex so that more and more honest citizens would be tempted to stray from the straight and narrow. With complete control of the city's criminal element, Retro could demand what he wished from businesses in exchange for protection. Currently, if a business is charged too much they could always ally themselves with a rival criminal organization and pay less to avoid hassles. There are many other opportunities for the GM to involve the heroes; DNPCs, Hunted and Watched Disadvantages and so on. GM's who spent a little time hooking players into Part I will discover that those hooks are still in place; new hooks can be created, filling in gaps left during character creation or using the changing situation in the city to temporarily modify some of the disadvantage hooks listed earlier.



## Part II Scorecard

Refer to the Part I Scorecard section for details about how to use this Scorecard. Carry over the "count" from June but subtract 3 points for each day nothing outrageously violent happens. The score can't go below zero. Carry over any notes about "who did what to who" so that feuds can continue to build. You shouldn't forget there's a campaign to be run after this epic adventure; if nothing else, the Scorecard can be used for adventure seeds once this story has run its course.



## July 1995

| Sunday   | Monday   | Tuesday   | Wednesday  | Thursday  | Friday   | Saturday  |
|--|--|---|--|---|--|---|
|  |  |   |  |   |  | <b>1</b><br>Away SD,<br>Canada Day  |
| <b>2</b><br>Away SD, Mr.<br>Nobody                     | <b>3</b><br>Away SD,<br>Fireworks over<br>the river, Signs<br>stolen from<br>subway system         | <b>4</b><br>Away SF,<br>Independence<br>Day                                   | <b>5</b><br>Away SF,<br>Gang Ambush,<br><br>Moon 1st 1/4                 | <b>6</b><br>Away SF,<br>Harbinger Driven<br>Off, Apartment<br>complex addresses<br>removed from mail<br>boxes | <b>7</b><br>Away LA,<br>Cartels in<br>flight   | <b>8</b><br>Away LA,<br>Terror in<br>Chinatown  |
| <b>9</b><br>Away LA,<br>Crusade Strikes                | <b>10</b><br>All-Star<br>Break, Press  | <b>11</b><br>All-Star Game:<br>Can the Nat'l<br>league make it<br>2 in a row? | <b>12</b><br>Pairadice Club,<br><br>Moon Full                            | <b>13</b><br>Home SD  | <b>14</b><br>Home SD,<br>Bastille Day  | <b>15</b><br>Home SD,<br>Highway signs<br>stolen from<br>major exit off<br>freeway into<br>H.C. |
| <b>16</b><br>Home SD                                   | <b>17</b><br>Home LA,<br><br>"Wrong Way"<br>Corrigan Goes<br>Wrong Way 1938                        | <b>18</b><br>Home LA,<br>Meeting Card<br>Shark                                | <b>19</b><br>Home LA,<br>Hitting the<br>Mattresses,<br><br>Moon last 1/4 | <b>20</b><br>Home LA,<br>News Items   | <b>21</b><br>Home LA,<br>News Items,<br><br>1st Robot<br>Homicide Jackson,<br>MI 1984          | <b>22</b><br>Home SF,<br>News Items   |
| <b>23</b><br>Home SF                                   | <b>24</b><br>Home SF, City<br>Government<br>nameplates<br>taken from<br>employee's<br>office doors | <b>25</b><br>Away STL   | <b>26</b><br>Away STL,<br>The Fire                                       | <b>27</b><br>Away STL,<br><br>Moon New  | <b>28</b><br>"Millionaire<br>Who Saved Estate<br>From Fire Hit By<br>Truck in Little<br>Italy" | <b>29</b><br>Away PIT   |
| <b>30</b><br>Away PIT,<br><br>Hoffa Disappears<br>1975 | <b>31</b>  |   |  |   |  |   |

### June 1995

| S  | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | S  |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|    |    |    |    | 1  | 2  | 3  |
| 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |    |

### July 1995

| S  | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | S  |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|    |    |    |    |    |    | 1  |
| 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  |
| 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 |    |    |    |    |    |

### August 1995

| S  | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | S  |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|    |    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  |
| 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |    |    |

The Weather: No Rain, clear nights, lowest temp of month: 83°F. Highest: 113°F.



# July Scorecard

## Scorecard Chart

| Victim             | "Involved" | Hurt | Killed |
|--------------------|------------|------|--------|
| Evil Criminal      | 0          | 1    | 2      |
| Police/Fire        | 1          | 2    | 4      |
| Innocent Bystander | 2          | 3    | 5      |
| Child              | 3          | 4    | 6      |

## Scorecard Results Chart

| Score | Effect   |
|-------|--|
| 66+   | National Guard called out, curfew, concentrated effort to find vigilantes        |
| 56-65 | Special anti-vigilante task force formed, curfew                                 |
| 46-55 | State news, Governor "concerned," police urged to "do something about it"        |
| 36-45 | Public outcry mounts (religious and civic leaders); TV crews everywhere at night |
| 26-35 | Standard anti-crime messages distributed; some TV coverage                       |
| 16-25 | Fairly normal month; crime is "still a problem"                                  |
| 0-15  | A quiet month in Hudson City; praise for efficient police force                  |

## Tally Sheet

| Victim Type        | "Involved" | Hurt | Killed |
|--------------------|------------|------|--------|
| Evil Criminal      |            |      |        |
| Police/Fire        |            |      |        |
| Innocent Bystander |            |      |        |
| Child              |            |      |        |

Instructions: Make a tick mark for each victim in the appropriate box. At the end of each month (or week, or day, if needed), multiply the number of tick marks by the appropriate number, from the chart above. Consult the *Scorecard Results Chart* for the appropriate response.

### Growing Problems:

| Character | Organization Offended |
|-----------|-----------------------|
|           |                       |
|           |                       |
|           |                       |
|           |                       |
|           |                       |
|           |                       |
|           |                       |
|           |                       |

### The Police Situation:

| Character | Evidence & Witnesses |
|-----------|----------------------|
|           |                      |
|           |                      |
|           |                      |
|           |                      |
|           |                      |
|           |                      |
|           |                      |
|           |                      |



## Part II, Episode 1: The First Shots

### Plain Jane and Her Hunter

Plain Jane, since firing a gun on stage near (but not at) the President, has established herself in Hudson City as an observer. She wanders the city, occasionally sitting in on one of the more interesting crime boss meetings (she hasn't found Retro to be interesting...yet), taking car rides with people she doesn't know and sabotaging the televisions of children who watch too much TV. While she's reasonably stable, she could spiral into the "kill to attract attention" mode mentioned in her description if she is unable to do something about her condition.

Plain Jane is not alone. A man in his mid-40's watched the news report of the President's strange encounter with "the invisible woman" (as the press call her) and realized he was not alone. Although his problem was a bit different, it was equally devastating. Clearly, he and Plain Jane were meant to meet.

Since Mr. Nobody is rarely remembered by those he speaks to, his hunt is going to be difficult. He attempts to employ one of the characters to assist him in his search for the invisible woman. A character who brings up the matter with The Machine will immediately receive an e-mail address for Plain Jane, but otherwise the search seems nearly impossible.

Of course, Mr. Nobody has lots of money to hire investigators, so a hero might endeavor to search for her even if the prospects are slim. Unfortunately, he brings his proclivity for stealing street signs to Hudson City, which may make him the target of one of the more law-and-order oriented vigilantes in town. Here's an initial meeting description you can read to the vigilante Mr. Nobody selects to help him:

*A nondescript man in his 40's, casually dressed, walks the street. He's carrying a sign that you can't quite read from your vantage point. He's definitely out of place in this neighborhood. He strolls idly by your hiding place and on the sign you can see the words "HELP WANTED" and in smaller text, "Vigilante Needed for Hire." Oddly enough, while people seem to notice him, after they've walked on they don't appear to give him a second glance.*

If the vigilante makes an approach the man greets him pleasantly and asks if the vigilante will help locate someone. If the vigilante agrees, Mr. Nobody turns over a small package containing a video tape of Plain Jane's escapade with the President, a letter (see below) and \$500 in cash.

GMs who want to "spook" a player can just tell them they have the package and don't remember where they got it or how they got it. Then read them the letter:

*You don't remember receiving this package. That's OK. Please don't be frightened, it just happens that people have a hard time remembering me. I'm looking for someone, and if you have this letter, along with the video tape and my first payment to you, we've had a chat and you've agreed to look for the woman on the tape. Please don't think this is some kind of trick; it's not. If you need some reassurance, please call me at the Hilton, room 2316, or you can come visit. If you do, please take notes; I assure you that soon after we're done talking you won't be able to recall meeting me.*

*Unfortunately I don't have any clues about how to find this woman, and she will be difficult to find. Good luck and please call as soon as you find anything.*

*Sincerely,  
N.*

GMs who don't want to spook their players can merely tell them: "You don't remember meeting the guy who gave you the package. Strange, isn't it?"

This subplot is free form, because the details depend on whether the character agrees to look for Plain Jane and if so, what the character does to find her. Also, Mr. Nobody is up to his usual tricks (see his description in the resources section) and might draw the unwelcome attention of another of the heroes for his shenanigans.

You should play this one for laughs, and use Plain Jane as back-up to be used in case the heroes get in a jam. Since she can't be noticed she can be anywhere and can step in and help the heroes save the day, if necessary. A few of the subsequent encounters are written with the assumption that Plain Jane is around to help out if they go sour.

### Acquisition 1: Street Gangs

Retro's plan for conquering the city's underworld is simple. First, control some muscle. The street gangs are the most numerous soldiers in Hudson City, so it makes sense for Retro to gain control of that fractious crowd of well-armed punks.

To get control Retro sends a simple announcement to all the gang leaders, using The Machine. No more blackmail by Optik, says Retro, and for every gang that signs on with him and does what he says, profit. Retro will only take a little off the top. For gangs that don't sign on, death.

Gangs that agree to sign on, become part of Retro's network. Gangs that don't agree become the target of a well-planned and orchestrated ambush like the one described below. Buckshot, leader of the Overlords, is one of the first gang leaders to "sign on." In addition, Buckshot tells Retro that he wants to be the boss of all the gangs. Retro agrees, on the condition that Buckshot take charge of the "hits" Retro has in mind. Nothing could be more up Buckshot's alley...





## Gang Leader Ambush

The fight between the Blades and the Overlords last month was inconclusive; both gangs still feud and fight often. Tommy Brooks, leader of the 66 Blades, turned down Retro's demand for allegiance and servitude. Since the Blades aren't a large gang, Retro selects them to be an example for some of the other gangs who have, predictably, laughed off Retro's threat.

The characters can hear of this event before hand through a leak in the Overlords, The Machine, a generic Streetwise roll, a quick note from Plain Jane or by being nearby when a truckload of Buckshot's Overlords go rolling by with guns at the ready. You should select the method that best suits the campaign as it stands when the encounter occurs.

Since The Machine knows all and sees all, it is easy for Retro to tell Buckshot exactly when and where Brooks will be, who Brooks will have with him and what guns they will be equipped with. Tommy Brooks, it turns out, is fond of playing martial arts video games at a place called Electric Heaven located in The Strip. Since The Strip is usually considered neutral turf by criminals, Brooks feels safe when he visits and usually brings only a handful of Blade members with him.

Brooks is a Type III Thug (*Justice, Not Law*, page 126) with +1 SPD and +3 STR and is equipped with a micro-Uzi and an armored jacket (+5 PD +5 ED) he wears open at the front in deference to the heat. (It

takes 1 phase to close for protection from the front.) He also carries a knife, usable with his martial arts, and a cellular phone he can use to call for help, a tactic only worth employing if he can get himself barricaded into a place of reasonable safety. He has with him three Type I Thugs, each in their shirtsleeves and armed with the usual collection of handguns (in their waistbands under their t-shirts) and automatic weapons (in a duffel next to the arcade game they're taking turns playing against Brooks).

Buckshot is fully armed as per his description (*Dark Champions*, page 170) and has along with him a full dozen heavily armed and armored Overlord gang members; each has an armored vest (+5/+5), an AK-47 and a 9mm handgun. His plan is to drive up to the arcade, send four of his troops to the back entrance, and enter shooting from the front. After Brooks and his Blades are dead, Buckshot will gather everyone back in the truck and drive off. Buckshot's plan is simple, direct, effective, brutal...and apt to cause a number of innocent bystanders to be killed or wounded. Brooks's only chance is that Buckshot has given orders that he be the one to kill him; the crowd may prevent Buckshot from getting a shot at Brooks, giving him a precious second to get away.

Brooks, if given the chance, will make for the balcony and then the roof, being smart enough to guess that the back is covered by Buckshot's gang.





## Involving the Characters

Where do the characters come into this? They may decide to let events take their course and do nothing; if so, the deaths of six innocent bystanders and the wounding of twice that many more (since this encounter takes place during the early evening, Electric Heaven is crowded with at least fifty people) should weigh heavily on their consciences. The characters, depending on how they learn of this upcoming attack, might be in a position to stop Buckshot's truck (a dangerous proposition) before it gets to the arcade. They might elect to inform Brooks that he is in danger and allow him to escape; however, this is only a temporary measure, since Buckshot will hear from Retro (who will learn from The Machine) where Brooks is going. In fact, the encounter could easily escalate if Brooks is allowed to gather reinforcements to his side; Buckshot might be forced to pick a new time and place and delay the execution for a few days.

What, exactly, the heroes choose to do about this event should prove illuminating to GM's: there are many opportunities to reinforce the theme of this adventure (ambiguity and frustration) while at the same time presenting the characters with a clear need for heroism: the gangs will do a lot of collateral damage if allowed to fight uninhibited.

If the characters get caught between a rock and a hard place, Plain Jane can come to their rescue. She can shoot a gang member about to execute one of the vigilantes, provide a timely push to an enemy perched on the edge of a roof, steal car keys, put titching powder into a gang member's undershorts...the sky's the limit for GMs with an imagination. If she does intervene, it will provide proof to the character who was asked to help find her that an "invisible woman" does indeed exist. While she might spend some time saying things like "I'm right here..." to characters searching for their savior, she won't do much more than slip someone a note with her phone number (which is answered on the first ring by an answering machine) and her e-mail address. GMs who want to draw out the Plain Jane subplot should avoid giving the players such an easy solution to that mystery and make them search her out.

## Other Gang Encounters

These are news items you could make into actual encounters if you wished; they are intended as background events the characters don't need to be involved in for the purposes of the overall plot. Some of this news can come to the characters via the media; other news items are more appropriate for "streetvine" communication (with an appropriate vague item on TV or in the newspapers).

## Harbinger Driven Off by Gang Leaders at Meeting with Retro (Street)

The Blue Moon Killer, disturbed by recent happenings, decides to drop in on a meeting of street gang leaders a few days after Tommy Brooks' death convinces all the gangs to work for Retro. The Machine warns Retro of the Harbinger's approach and instead of making a surprise entrance, the vigilante drops into the middle of a storm of bullets. Only good luck, immaculate timing, good armor and a well-placed trio of smoke grenades allowed the Harbinger to escape, although he was wounded in the exchange. The Machine hasn't been able to determine the Harbinger of Justice's identity (it was one of the first questions Retro asked) quite yet but continues to collate information. GMs who wish characters to have a lead in later adventures concerning the Harbinger can have The Machine provide a tidbit or two before it clams up for good. News on the street will be something to the tune of "Retro's cool; knew the Blue Moon guy was coming and we got the drop on him. Somebody put a bullet in him but he got away. Left a lot of blood, though."

## Drug Cartels Put to Flight (Media and Street)

Retro is making a play for boss of the underworld with Ferdinand Naaves's permission. Aero's only requirement is that the Carillo-Mendoza cartel be the sole drug supplier for all of Hudson City. While Retro may or may not retain his connections with his cartel in the long run, in the short term he sets the street gangs on the other cartels operating in Hudson City. Armed with top-notch intelligence the gangbangers easily kill or chase away the rival cartels within a few days. This, of course, is noticed by the media; a number of cartel bosses are "known" by the media and their absence is quickly noted by those who follow the crime scene.

## Terror in Chinatown (Media and Street)

It's impossible to involve all the different crime organizations in a campaign of this length. The organizations who get short shrift in this epic campaign are the Asian groups like the Yakuza. While GMs are free to use whatever organizations they wish, some have to be dealt with in Retro's plan without bringing them "on stage." You can drop hints and echoes of activities in certain neighborhoods to reflect what's happening behind the scenes. An office building is firebombed, a trio of Asian businessmen are killed while eating dinner at a popular restaurant by youths wearing gang colors...the GM can be as creative as they wish so long as characters aren't drawn away from the main plot line. On the other hand, some groups may have their hands full with what they're doing, freeing GMs from the need to fill in subtle background details about Retro's plot.

If your campaign includes a "Protector of Chinatown" type of character, you can substitute the Tongs and the Yakuza for the Mob later in this adventure. This will require a little re-working on your part, but not much.



## Crusade Strikes

GMs who wish to retain the Crusader/Crusade story (*Underworld Enemies*, pages 6-10 and 93-96) for future use should assume Crusader is alive and well and that Crusade does not have his shield and utility belt. Heroes can become involved in this encounter any number of different ways; you should pick the method you like best and develop it for this encounter. The Machine could warn characters what Crusade plans to do. A character could stumble upon the trail of Crusade as he collects his victims and thereby become involved. A Streetwise roll could reveal that Crusade has been making unusual inquiries about street gang leaders lately, leading characters to the previous method. Most interesting, however, is Crusade inviting one or more of the vigilantes along personally to “teach them a lesson” about how to treat criminals. This last method is especially fruitful if players are using relatively idealistic characters who don’t kill or who don’t easily kill; Crusade has followed their careers over the last month or so and feels the heroes are morally weak and should adopt harsher methods.

Crusade, dismayed that the gangs are becoming unified under one leader, decides to take action. First, he warns the gang leaders by word of mouth (Crusade finds a gang member, beats them up and makes them carry the message for him) that unifying will get them killed. While Crusade has heard that Retro is collecting the gangs under one umbrella, he has been unable to get any information about where to find him. Crusade acts one night, alone and silent (The Machine is growing cranky and uncommunicative, plus Crusade doesn’t talk about his plans much anyway) and collects three gang leaders (Carver of the Blood Hawks, D-Cool Jack of the Gracie Park Tigers, and Icer Summers of the Four Points Gang) and takes them to the Hudson City Zoo in LeMastre Park (*Justice, Not Law*, page 37).

Not to watch the pretty animals, though. Crusade takes the gang leaders, bound and gagged, to the top of a fake rock hill that overlooks the pen housing the Russian bears. First, he intends to interrogate them using the fear of being thrown to the bears, in order to find out more about Retro. Then, one by one, he’ll toss them down for the bears to kill.

Characters who come along as this process is moving forward have a large number of possible choices; raising a ruckus so the zoo keepers who live on the grounds turn on the lights and come see what’s the matter, attacking Crusade to keep him from killing the gang leaders or perhaps saving the gang leaders from the bears once they’ve been thrown in. Heroes who are with Crusade “for the ride” in response to an invitation have the same range of options except they’re right there, on the spot, and might end up getting tossed to the bears themselves.

Crusade won’t appreciate being thwarted and won’t hesitate to defend himself if attacked. He’ll attempt to use non-lethal means to do so (“*You’re weak, hardly worth the title ‘vigilante,’ but you can be taught*”) but if pressed he’ll cut loose. His primary goals are to see the gang leaders dead and to avoid capture.

The zoo keepers are a mere five minutes away; they’re used to responding quickly to strange noises in the night (it is a zoo, after all). The police take a few more minutes. Getting in and out of the zoo is child’s play; the exterior fences that lead to the park are only eight feet high. Getting in and out of the bear habitat is much more difficult, however, as bears can climb quite well. Escape is possible for humans, however. It just takes a minute or so of climbing (or perhaps picking the lock the zoo keepers use to get in with the bears). The fake hill atop which Crusade interrogates his prisoners is accessible through a set of stairs that leads to an area used by the zoo keepers to store equipment and gain access to the bears through the door mentioned earlier.

The bears, for their part, are bears: big, strong, somewhat sleepy, well-fed, but still bears and not terrifically happy about people dropping into their habitat. If a gang leader is dropped in it will take a bear about a Turn to amble over and smack him around and another Turn to do mortal damage. Since the gang leaders are tied up, there’s not much they can do about their situation except scream. Characters who jump in (or are pushed) can dodge the bears for a while but will have to escape somehow. The bears are generally not too grumpy, but if hurt they will become berserk, clawing and crushing anyone they can reach. They are dangerous but clever characters might escape harm by leaving quickly through some device, playing dead or hoping the bears like playing with the gang leaders for long enough that they can climb or lock pick their way to safety.

This encounter can serve as a good introduction to the vigilantes the heroes have probably heard about; vigilantes who think nothing of killing all the bad guys they can find. This should cause some reflection among the players; where do they fit in? It’s assumed that the characters are reasonably nice people. If not, this little meeting with Crusade could be fairly dull (“*Say, lets kill these bad guys by feeding them to the bears,*” “*Sure thing, Crusade!*”). It also serves to introduce the characters to Crusade who is seen later in Episode 3, thereby hooking them into that encounter.



## Part II, Episode 2: *Innocent Blood*

### Buckshot's Gangs vs. the Card Shark Organization

Retro, now in control of the street gangs (or at least most of them), uses them as a pawn against the Card Shark Organization. He hopes the combination of blackmail and brawn will compel Card Shark to sign on as one of Retro's lieutenants. The first evidence the characters have of this phase of Retro's scheme is a news flash on TV:

*This is Daniel Petty with the Channel 7 News Team at the site of a vicious gangland-style shooting that happened just a few minutes ago. As you can see behind me, multiple machine guns and grenades were used in what can only be described as a military style assault on Lazy Bill's Saloon. Eyewitnesses report that three vehicles full of gang members drove onto the sidewalk about twenty minutes ago and started firing. After less than a minute they drove away, leaving a smoking ruin and upwards of a dozen dead and perhaps twice that wounded and critically wounded. What gang is responsible is unclear; conflicting reports identify several different gangs as being part of the attack. Where these youths are getting hand grenades is also a concern to the police. Another unconfirmed report suggests that the gang leader Buckshot was involved, which suggests his gang, the "Overlords," may also have participated in the attack.*

*Unconfirmed reports suggest this saloon was actually a front for the Card Shark organization, longtime foe of the Harbinger of Justice and responsible for the death of a dozen prison guards in the "Silent Night" attack of 1988. More on this terrible tragedy later...*

Characters who sit back and do nothing can be treated to another rendition later that same evening or perhaps the next night. News of the attack strikes the city like a shock wave: even heroes not watching TV are apt to hear of it as it becomes the topic of conversation on everyone's lips for hours, even days afterwards. Clearly, something must be done. But what? One clue is that the gangs appear to be working together; the second that a Card Shark establishment was attacked.

#### The Investigation

Heroes with Streetwise shouldn't be allowed merely to "roll and know." GMs should ask players to detail how they're going to find out what they want to know (presumably if the gangs will strike again and if so, where). Since the underworld at large is as shocked by the event as the general public, heroes who ask the

right questions are likely to receive good information, even if their informants try to put a tough guy face on the question and answer process. The point is not to make the information difficult to get, but rather to have the players role-play *how* they are going about obtaining the information.

Lazy Bill's Saloon was in fact a front for a Card Shark operation, the main meeting place for Diamond suit Card Shark activities. Retro selected it because for his purposes it was the least significant to destroy and the easiest to replace; he wants the Card Shark Organization whole and functional when he acquires it. Characters who do a little research should easily learn that Lazy Bill's was a common meeting place for buyers and sellers of stolen goods; a missed roll might suggest that it is a Mafia operation (a common fib told to those who do business with Card Shark's people). However, since even the media knows about the Card Shark activities in the bar, characters should be able to confirm that fact fairly easily.

Characters may choose to find a Card Shark operative and ask if another establishment has been threatened, or merely to get the Card Shark perspective on the first attack. Low-level agents all know the organization is being pressured to "work within the system," but don't know who or what is "the system." Lieutenants and leaders know that some guy named Retro is yanking the organization's chain; a scramble is on to move or conceal operations vulnerable to Retro's blackmail takeover scheme.

The heroes might decide to pressure street gang members to reveal who made the first attack and from there locate and interrogate gangbangers who might know the next target.

Either path can produce useful leads; you should reward players who take action with some information. Talking to gang members should be fruitless at first, but perhaps provide a lead to the next attack just in time for the heroes to arrive and possibly stop it. Careful contact with the Card Shark operation has the potential to reveal that the Club suit operation detailed below has been threatened and that the Spade suit is going to take care of the problem. The latter path might give players more time to prepare for the attack.

However the characters determine what might happen next, you should let the information-gathering take time; don't let players rush through interrogations. You should require blocks of time be spent searching for people to talk to, let hours go by without any progress being made, or progress in small amounts ("I don't know nuthin' but that they're maybe gonna do it tomorrow night but Louie might know..." and then Louie says "Maybe down on the Strip somewheres and Joe the Stick might know..." and so on). You should let the tension build as much as possible without completely frustrating the players.

Heroes who do nothing to investigate the first attack and/or prevent any further attacks can also hear (anonymously) from Card Shark that a certain





building may be where the hammer will fall next. GMs who are forced to lead their players by the nose in this fashion should certainly penalized them by awarding fewer experience at the end of the play session!

When all the investigating is done and the dramatic tension has increased as much as it can, it's time to let the next encounter occur.

## Pairadice Club

The Pairadice Club is a Card Shark gambling operation that serves a moderately posh crowd of patrons who can travel to the Strip and feel like they're slumming in absolute safety (Card Shark makes sure the neighborhood is safe for his customers). Run by the Clubs suit and aided by operatives of the Hearts suit who handle security and money laundering tasks, the Pairadice Club is a medium-sized casino hidden behind the facade of a drab drinking establishment decorated in a tacky plastic Vegas motif.

Patrons must first be vouched for by Card Shark agents who work the front operation; they have access to a database of known law enforcement agents and journalists. Those who pass the agent's inspection are ushered to a back door that leads to some stairs; down the stairs and through a hall is another set of stairs that leads up to a nearby warehouse. One floor of the warehouse is sealed off from the rest and houses the casino. There are no windows and only two exits; the public exit and a secret exit, used by Card Shark lieutenants. The casino is well concealed but also a firetrap.

Retro has set the time of his next attack at 11 p.m., when lots of money will have changed hands. His aims are three-fold: he wishes to continue pressuring the Card Shark operation to join with him, he wants to get his hands on the cash in the Pairadice Club to fund his other activities and he wants to strike a blow against the Card Shark soldiers defending the club. The Machine has told him what Card Shark is doing to defend against the attack; Retro purposefully told him the Pairadice Club was next on the list so Retro could lure the defenders into a situation he can control.

Card Shark has put two groups of five Spade operatives (add 2 to OCV and DCV and 1 to SPD) under the control of Pokerface. One group is stationed in the "front" Pairadice Club, with two Deck Agents dressed as waiters and three dressed as bar patrons. The other group is stationed in the casino proper and are hiding in the secret exit. Each of these Spade deck agents is heavily armed; each is equipped with a CAR-15 and the Activation Roll for their Armor is 14-.

The Club suit also has one group of five operatives working the floor, dressed as patrons, as does the Diamond suit: each are standard Deck Agents.

To add further "Card Shark" flavor to the Card Shark troops, GMs should include one Face Card per suit present, which is to say a Diamond, a Club, and a Spade Face Card Agent are each with their troops.

Unbeknownst to The Machine, Card Shark and One-Eyed Jack are nearby, observing. They're aware that something odd is going on and are afraid that their precautions in the Pairadice Club are going to prove insufficient. They can observe the outward signs of the battle as it develops; you should assume they catch sight of any vigilantes who show up to set the hook for the next encounter. GMs with a penchant for clever drama can describe a chance encounter with two "civilians," one wearing an eye patch (Card Shark V and One-Eyed Jack are "in mufti") at some point after the battle has finished (and let the players catch on at their own speed later on).

Retro's plan is simple: since he knows the layout of the casino (The Machine is able to access the security cameras) and the location of the defenders, the plan can be exact and thorough. Buckshot, leading about 30 gangbangers from different gangs, has a number of vehicles at his disposal. One is specially armored and will drive through the warehouse wall allowing others to enter through the breach. Another will take a small number of gangmembers to the "front" to occupy the Card Shark agents there. Yet another contains a large amount of explosives to use on the warehouse wall in case the armored truck is unable to punch through the wall.

The gang members are standard Type 1, 2, and 3 Street Thugs; each is armed with a Hanged Man AK-47, and some sort of pistol. Each of the Type 3 thugs should also have a grenade or two. You should balance the number of each type of thug and perhaps the total number of thugs based on the characters present. For every four thugs there is one car or light truck, plus the armored truck (10/10 Armor from the front only, Resistant and Hardened).

Once inside, a LAW rocket will be used on the secret exit to kill the Spade agents hiding there (if characters see this occur it should be a clue: Retro has access to very good information). The other gang members will cut loose with their weapons, shooting everyone in the casino. Once the dust clears, Buckshot will lead a small number to the cash booth and grab the loot. Once the money is secure, the explosives, if not used to enter the warehouse, will be set to go off in a few minutes and Buckshot will withdraw.

Since the heroes are sure to intervene in some way, confusion is sure to reign. Buckshot may or may not be successful in his twin goals: to kill and to steal. The Card Shark agents, heavily out-gunned, can't fight off the gang members by themselves; even of Pokerface survives the LAW blast (GMs who wish to preserve him for later plots can assume he's knocked unconscious or perhaps escapes upstairs before the LAW



goes off). GMs should be careful not to concentrate fire from all the gang members on any one hero: no street level hero should be able to withstand that kind of barrage for long. Instead, GM's must remember that a firefight this big is confusing. GM's must consider the position of each hero and how much of a pest they are being: pesky heroes who insist on standing atop tables should take more fire than a hero skulking in the corners. GM's must also remember that the bad guys have a job to do: kill people in the casino and steal the money. When heroes stand in the way, they'll be noticed.

This battle can unfold in many different ways. If the heroes have advance warning of Buckshot's tactics, they might be able to prevent the cavalcade of gang members from getting to the casino in the first place. If they arrive on the scene near to the time of the attack, they might at first be drawn to the diversion in the "front" operation. Characters who know they're looking for a casino but don't realize it can't be in the "front" building might be caught off guard as they watch the wrong building. Enterprising characters might start the melee inside the casino itself, posing as a gambler, although it is nearly impossible to enter the casino armed. Vigilantes who guess or determine that the casino is in the warehouse might station themselves one floor up and be close by when the action starts below them.

You must be flexible and be prepared to stand in the shoes of all the participants. You shouldn't feel obliged to run the combat for each participant detail by detail; instead, you should make an educated guess about what would happen if group A shot at group B and describe the results to the players. Doing this will keep the pace fast and assure that when the heroes enter combat time will be spent describing what happens as a result of their actions, not dicing through the actions of a bunch of criminals across the room.

Once the shooting begins the police and media won't be far off. If the characters can deny Buckshot his goals, even in part, they will have won a great victory, but in doing so they also gain themselves the particular attention of Retro and The Machine. Once the police arrive, if Buckshot can escape, he will. It's important to note how well the Card Shark agents fare in this battle; if many die, morale in the organization will plummet and events could be affected in the next encounter. If the attack is largely beaten off, morale will rise and again, events could be affected in the next encounter.

This encounter has the potential to be a big, horrid mess. You must be careful not to make it too easy for the characters to head off the attack while at the same time allowing the characters an opportunity to prevent Buckshot from "winning." The sheer number of guns involved also presents a danger; it's no fun to die in the line of duty, and characters who expose themselves to too many bad guys could find themselves shot full of holes. Discrete and wise players and a sensible GM can make this a great encounter: heavy-handed heroes and careless GMing can result in disaster. Be careful!

Once this event hits the news another day or so will pass, and then one of the characters Card Shark V saw at the scene of the battle will be contacted. How the contact occurs will have to be determined by individual GMs. Card Shark is, however, subtle and knowledgeable. The method should not suggest that the crime boss knows the character's Secret Identity, yet be plausible. Possible methods include obscure classified ads you can call to a player's attention: "*For the tall woman who likes rooftops and rubber bullets, call 555-CARD.*"

The bottom line is Card Shark wants to meet with the characters...

## Meeting Card Shark

Card Shark turns to the heroes for help after the incidents at Lazy Bill's Saloon and the Paradise Club. He has been contacted directly by Retro and told that if he doesn't give in to his demands, the Card Shark organization will be taken apart one bit at a time. Card Shark, a strong, self-assured man, has absolutely no desire to work for anyone else. He's put too much time in repairing the organization after various defeats to just leave town or lie low, so he's decided to involve vigilantes. Once he's established a verifiable contact with one of the heroes, this is what he says:

*I know you probably have a hard time imagining what we have to say to one another, but recent events suggest we've got a common enemy. A man is attempting to take control of the entire criminal underworld of Hudson City. He wants the Card Shark organization. So far I haven't knuckled under, but I can't keep allowing my people to get killed by this maniac. I know you don't like me, but I saw you at the casino. Neither of us want one man in complete control of the underworld. Monopolies aren't good for anybody. I want to meet so we can pool our information, maybe work together against this guy. Tell me a street corner and a cab will deliver a message there in ten minutes. Don't say anything about what it says on the phone: I think this guy has everything bugged. And don't screw with me on this. If we let this guy take over, you'll think of the Card Shark times as the good old days.*

The message, if it's picked up, lists a place and a time. The place is The Museum of World Art on North Jackson between 4th and 8th Streets (you can also place the museum where they wish). The museum is closed at the specified time (it's a nighttime meeting) but Card Shark has made arrangements with the museum guards. Any recon of the museum building reveals that all the entrances are lit save one; that entrance is unlocked. Just inside is a nervous the King of Hearts who delivers a simple message: the heroes can keep their guns so long as they don't pull them out. The agent is unarmed but masked as usual, and leads the characters to the meeting place.



## The Meet

Inside the museum it's quiet and dark. Card Shark is waiting next to a display of European medieval arms and armor. He is armed. If there are four or five heroes, he will also be accompanied by a Face Card Agent, and the Queen of Hearts, also armed, who remains in the background. Hidden behind a utility door is One-Eyed Jack also equipped with a flash grenade. In case of trouble the Queen of Hearts and One-Eyed Jack use their flash grenades and escape through the utility door which can be locked and barricaded in a moment.

## The Heat

Unfortunately, Retro knows about the meeting, despite Card Shark's precautions. The Machine was able to determine the location and time of the meeting. While Card Shark hasn't spoken the time and place of the meeting, he did use a networked word processor to produce the note. The Machine, naturally, reported this information to Retro, who had time to formulate yet another fiendish plan using perfect information.

The arms and armor are in a large vaulted room with a large skylight for a ceiling. Retro has purchased the services of The Arsenal and ordered them to attack through the skylight. Buckshot, if he survived the previous encounter (otherwise use another gang leader), positions several dozen gang members around the museum right after the heroes enter.

Arsenal has assigned Heatseeker's squad for the job. Heatseeker's squad consists of Claymore (mines, explosives, and traps), Exocet (Heatseeker's protégé), Longbow (archer and knife-fighter) and Ultimax (uses the Ultimax machine gun). For each of the squad members, use the Terrorist (*Justice, Not Law*, page 127) equipped with +5/+5 armor (Act. 14-) and the weapon listed above. For Exocet, use a less-powerful version of Heatseeker's armament.

## Tactics

As with all Arsenal attacks, this is an organized event, very unlike Buckshot's attack on the casino. First, Claymore lobs a scattering of small bombs onto the skylight from a helicopter flown by Longbow. They explode, showering the interior with a spray of glass that does  $\Delta 6$  Killing Damage to all within who are exposed. Then Heatseeker, Exocet and Ultimax rappel to the roof and fire at any targets they see below. Claymore drops a smoke grenade into the interior and Heatseeker, Exocet and Ultimax rappel down to the floor. Once there they do a search-and-destroy mission; their aim is to kill Card Shark, all Card Shark Agents and the heroes, in that order of preference.

In case of trouble, Claymore will blow a hole in a nearby ceiling or window and Longbow will lower ropes for Heatseeker, Exocet and Ultimax to escape.

This is a difficult encounter for the heroes and should prove frustrating. They will have enough time to exchange some information with Card Shark. He's willing to tell them that Retro is or was a member of the Carillo-Mendoza cartel, alieutenantin the Hudson

City cartel's operations and the man behind the gang attacks on Card Shark operations (most of which should come as no surprise to the heroes). He can also tell them that Retro has access to phenomenally good information.

The first indications that there might be trouble will come from a Hearing PER Roll at -5: the helicopter can be heard as it hovers above the museum six segments before the bombs blow up the skylight. The next sign of trouble is when the bombs actually strike the skylight, making a sound that can be clearly heard by all one segment before they blow up. Card Shark will not react to the sound of the helicopter, but will duck for cover when the bombs strike the skylight. He will accuse the heroes of double-crossing him.

Next, The King of Heart's reaction (and the Queen of Hearts, if she is present) will depend on previous events. If the Card Shark casino encounter did not result in many Card Shark operatives' deaths, they are loyal to Card Shark and do their best to get him out of harm's way. Otherwise, Card Shark is left to fend for himself with One-Eyed Jack as his only ally, and he may well be killed or injured (or merely escape in disgrace at the GM's option) in the ensuing battle.

How the heroes react can't be predicted. They might blaze away at Card Shark, doing Heatseeker's job for him. They might fight along side him against Arsenal's mercenaries. They might slink away into the night, doing nothing to hinder or help Card Shark. See below for what can happen outside the museum when the heroes eventually leave.





### Notes and Troubleshooting

The battle should be fierce; the mercenaries are pros and they have a tactical advantage. The heroes can use old suits of armor and display cases for cover; GMs should be sure to include lots of descriptions of various art objects being blown to smithereens by the firefight as it progresses. By shooting from above the mercenaries should receive a range modifier bonus, while those shooting straight up should receive a negative modifier. A simple rule of thumb is to halve all Range Modifiers for characters who are firing down, and give an additional -2 Range Modifier for all characters firing up. You can be creative in this department and use the modifiers as a balancing tool.

In a worst-case scenario in which Card Shark and the characters are beaten by Heatseeker, Plain Jane can arrive in the nick of time and send the mercenaries packing. They won't be able to see Plain Jane, and she should be able to drive them from the battle field. Card Shark, if he is still alive, and his surviving agents will slip away in the confusion. Plain Jane may use this as an opportunity to try to contact the heroes.

### Gangs Again

Outside, heroes who leave the museum can have a brief skirmish with two to seven gang members, Type 1 Thugs. GMs should include a brief encounter with the gang members to help demonstrate how prepared Retro was for the meeting.

### Outcomes

If Card Shark is disgraced, killed, wounded or captured, the Card Shark organization is taken over by Retro and a lieutenant of Card Shark takes the mantle of "Card Shark." If Card Shark survives Retro still takes over the organization, but it is greatly weakened by defections as "true believers" skip town with the real Card Shark, and the organization essentially becomes useless to Retro. If the heroes score a true coup and join forces with Card Shark, Card Shark becomes a contact for ongoing operations against Retro, providing troops and guns as requested in future battles with Retro—an invaluable asset that should be very difficult for the players to acquire.

The characters have an opportunity to influence Retro's overall success at taking over the city. It's a slim chance, though, and the best outcome should only be possible after great sacrifice and major difficulties. The two themes of this Episode should prevail: frustration and ambiguity. Who are the good guys? Who are the bad guys? Who can tell?

## Hitting the Mattresses

After the massacre at Lazy Bill's Saloon, the incident (and possible massacre) at the Pairadice Club and the mayhem at the museum the public is up in arms. You should check the scorecard and see where the public's sentiment is heading and then increase it artificially if necessary; at least for the next few days, the public is screaming for the police to get control of the city's underworld. Vigilantes are blamed, in part because some of the actions taken by Buckshot and the street gang members can be seen as vigilantism; they did, after all, break up a known front for the buying and selling of stolen goods and also exposed (at the very least) an illegal casino. Justly or unjustly, the heroes are blamed to some degree and the police are on the lookout.

This pause in the action (wise heroes will stay home) is a good opportunity for healing to take place, wounds to be licked and perhaps an Experience Point or two to be spent. As the furor dies down and the city experiences a few quiet moments, you should remind players of ongoing events: the hot, rainless summer, the baseball team's progress to the all-star break, cost estimates for repairs to the museum (and somber reminders of the irreplaceable pieces of art gone forever), ongoing investigations into this or that crime, who the police are looking for (possibly a good time to clarify which, if any, of the heroes are wanted by the police for specific crimes) and so on. Heroes who choose to continue their vigilante activities should run into trouble immediately. The police are everywhere, and the general public is not happy and is willing to assist with calls and finger-pointing.

It's also a good time to continue developing The Machine's plotline. Most of it consists of simple communication, and heroes doing better than average may be on the brink of convincing The Machine it should not be helping Retro to take over the city...

Characters who have been neglecting their DNPCs can finally be pinned down to that dinner date; you shouldn't forget that roleplaying sticky questions about unusual wounds heroes have ("so tell me again, Miriam, how you came to be cut by all that glass?") can be nearly as tense as roleplaying firefight; Secret Identities are not to be trifled with!

Once the players have had a chance to involve themselves with non-combat activities it's time to introduce them to the strange items in the news that lead to the next episode...



## Part II, Episode 3: The Mob

### Gangs, Card Shark Organization vs. The Mob

#### Investigations

While the characters lick their wounds and hopefully keep a low profile, some odd news items come to the hero's attention:

#### Story #1: Robert Morelli, Reputed Crime Boss, Slain in Love Nest

The body of Robert Morelli was discovered late last night by police, who reportedly were investigating an anonymous tip. Sources describe the scene as being a classic mob hit. Morelli, long thought to be the capo of the Morelli crime family since the early 80's, was known for his wealth. Police are still searching for a female companion of Morelli's said to be at the scene when the killing took place. In recent years she appeared to be immune from police efforts to...

**The Truth:** Retro approached Robert Morelli's underboss, Jimmy "Youngblood" Morelli (DC 112) and offered him a deal: if Jimmy would be part of Retro's city-wide crime organization, Retro would whack Robert Morelli in such a way that Jimmy would not be implicated. With Robert out of the way, Jimmy could then be the Morelli family capo. Retro hired Frederica Heimmelker (*Justice, Not Law*, page 92), a member of I.C.E., to perform the hit. By pretending to be a moll, Frederica got close to Morelli and killed him when he took her to his secret love nest. By the time the news hits the streets, she's in Europe.

#### Story #2: Drought Continues: No Rain in Sight

Meteorologists today reported that the current dry conditions were likely to continue for weeks to come, worrying farmers who have already seen significant damage to their crops due to the unending heat and lack of rain. Hudson City is in no danger of running out of water, despite low reservoir levels. City water engineers point out that the Stewart River also provides water to the city, and while a level two water use alert has been issued, there is "no cause for alarm." The danger of fire in nearby state forests continues to concern park rangers who said today that...

**The Truth:** It's a drought. Ashtray Art is studying wind patterns and planning his massive act of arson. When the time is ripe, he'll strike.

#### Story #3: Police Chase Crusade!

Police, acting on an anonymous tip, raided the apartment of Daniel Sherridan earlier today. A SWAT team and a dozen uniformed police officers lead by Lieutenant Frank Guerrini stormed the Knight

Apartments building in an attempt to apprehend the man known as Crusade, a ruthless vigilante wanted for murder and assault. Early reports suggest that the target escaped through an elevator shaft and possibly the sewers. Four civilians received minor injuries and tear gas grenades started a small fire which was quickly extinguished. Sherridan, a dishwasher at Little Louie's Restaurant, is a virtual unknown, but police sources suggest that evidence found in Sherridan's apartment proves he is Crusade. Crusade should not be confused with the late "Crusader," a vigilante active for years in Hudson City before falling to his death last year. Police will not comment on their casualties, but initial criticism of Guerrini suggests that a more subtle approach could have prevented the injuries and damages said to run in the hundreds of thousands of dollars...

**The Truth:** Retro, using The Machine, determined who Crusade really was and gave that information to the police. Crusade has many bases, however, and the revelation of his secret identity will have little effect on his war on crime. Retro's next move will be to send hunters after Crusade. The "anonymous tip" to police is a sign of the tactics Retro will use against pesky vigilantes who interfere with his plan. Clever players will take precautions against Retro "dropping a dime" on them...

#### Story #4: Police Hunt Sign Thief

Police had no comment on the latest in a series of bizarre thefts of traffic signs: last night, sometime in the early morning, person or persons unknown made off with more than a dozen street signs in Irishtown. Overall, the city estimates that more than fifty thousand dollars worth of street signs have been stolen during the past few weeks, and a number of apartment complexes have reported the theft of name tags from mailboxes, making it difficult for mail carriers to deliver mail. These thefts mirror similar thefts in other cities across the U.S. over the years, the most spectacular of which occurred in Montreal in 1988 when lobby directories were stolen from all government buildings in a single night, temporarily causing chaos the next day when nobody could tell who was in what office, or even where the office was located...

**The Truth:** Mr. Nobody is up to his usual tricks. They continue until somebody helps him find Plain Jane; GMs should improvise stories as time passes and keep in mind that at a critical juncture, street signs might be missing. "What street did The Machine say Retro's secret hideout is on?" "Williams." "OK, Williams Street, Williams Street...hey!"

These news stories should be blended in with the usual news stories generated by the GM to mark the passage of time; in addition to ball game scores and stories generated by player's actions, GM's should be creating bits and pieces of news to "fill in the blanks." The richer the campaign environment, the better!

Characters who investigate the news stories should be required to roleplay some fancy footwork as they pursue the following connections:



### Retro is attempting to take over the Hudson City Mafia families

This fact can be gleaned from *The Machine*, the Card Shark organization, high ranking Mob members and street gang leaders (not the rank and file). It can be communicated indirectly or directly at the GM's discretion.

### The Morelli family is now part of Retro's organization

This fact can be learned from *The Machine*, the Card Shark organization, Morelli money handlers (certain payments are authorized by Jimmy Morelli as soon as he takes over) and street gang leaders (who are told to "lay off" Morelli family operations).

### The "anonymous tips" in the Crusade case and the Morelli murder came from identical, computer generated voices

This can be learned by characters with police contacts, from the police by direct investigation or in the form of a gift from the GM as a news report of a "leak" in the department.

You should not forget that story lines from earlier portions of the campaign could still be active: is Tenderheart still pining away for one of the characters? Have any of the heroes become the target of a police investigation? What are DNPCs thinking these

days, and what demands are they placing upon the characters? Are any Hunteds in play? While the episode ends with a big battle, it is centered upon the investigations mentioned above and it is assumed the characters have loose ends to tie up as well.

## Back in Action

The Morelli family, after the hit, is on Retro's team. The other LCN families, however, are not. Retro doesn't have the financial resources to order similar hits on the other crime bosses, so, having taken care of the toughest Mafia family in Hudson City, he resorts to more physical tactics that allow him to use the two resources he does have: Street Gangs and the Card Shark Organization. While Jimmy Morelli is the Morelli family capo, he needs a little time to establish himself as firm leader of the family, so the Morellis, for now, aren't part of the mob takeover plan.

Retro issues an ultimatum to the Mafia families: submit or be eliminated. Except for the Morelli family, all treat the ultimatum with disdain and circle the wagons. Taking over the mob won't be easy for Retro, but he has the information and the muscle necessary to do it. He would prefer to leave the Mafia families intact, but if necessary he is willing to make an example of one or two groups to make the others fall in line.





The four families left for Retro to bring under control are the Marcelli, Scatucci, Torccone, and Verontese families. Of those four, the Scatuccis and the Torccones are at war with each other; Retro chooses to let them continue to feud while he forces the Marcelli and Verontese families to be part of his organization.

Retro targets the Marcelli family first because he can do so and profit. The Marcelli family, using their Canadian tong contacts (*Dark Champions*, page 111), is a major supplier of heroin in Hudson City. Using information gleaned from *The Machine*, Retro orders a takeover of a major shipment as it arrives in Hudson City. This will serve as a signal to the Marcelli family that Retro knows all and sees all while at the same time providing a nice boost of cash when Retro markets the drug through his new drug distribution network of street gangs.

### The Raid

Characters can learn of the upcoming raid if they established good contacts with the Card Shark organization; however, if they have not convinced *The Machine* to conceal their efforts, Retro will know the heroes know and be prepared for them to show up (see below). Characters can also stumble onto leads from various street gang members; an indirect and coincidental method would be for characters who haunt the drug trade to learn of the delivery independent of Retro's planned raid upon it. *The Machine*, if fully convinced not to assist Retro, can also provide crucial information (during the window when it will help the characters but not Retro; before the stage of *The Machine* not helping anyone).

If characters aren't making some attempt to keep their finger in the pie, Crusade can call or write a note informing them of the drug shipment and Retro's plan to hijack it: this should be a last-ditch method for you to make the characters keep their appointment with the drug shipment. After all, what's the use of this big firefight if nobody shows up?

The heroin is arriving at Pier 40, located between King and Southbridge Avenues on a freighter of Canadian registry called the North Star. The ship is slated to pull into port around 2 a.m.; a cargo container containing the heroin is to be off-shipped first onto a waiting semi-truck. The Marcelli family is waiting with about twenty soldiers and doesn't expect trouble; the Tongs are very good at keeping secrets, and the Marcellis haven't been talking, except amongst themselves, which is good enough for *The Machine*. Once the heroin is on the truck, the Marcellis plan on driving it to a warehouse they own a few blocks away and divide it up for distribution around the city; the various Marcelli thugs will drive off and hide the dope in many different locations.

Retro plans on taking the shipment before the truck enters the warehouse; he wants the Mafia people to be in their cars so he can blow them up more easily with rockets and grenades used by Card Shark operatives stationed on nearby rooftops. Once the on-site Marcelli people have been taken care of, the truck will be hijacked and driven to one of Retro's safe houses for later distribution.

### The Troops

The Marcelli family soldiers consist of 18 common thugs. Use the information in *Dark Champions*, page 110, along with the base statistics for a Type 1 Street Thug except that each has +2 OCV with their preferred weapon. The remaining two are captains: use Dominic "Dom" Tarontelli's statistics on page 11 of *Dark Champion*; these men are named Anastasio "The Sword" Rocca and Guido "Ham" Vachelle. They have six cars; the captains' cars are armored and will contain a captain and three soldiers. When (or if) attacked by the rockets and grenades, these two cars are the only cars that have a chance of surviving the initial attack and the men within may play a role in what comes later. While waiting for the delivery, they are spread along the pier and in among the nearby warehouses, on guard; each also has a radio.

The Card Shark crew is led by the Jack of Spades and consists of the Three of Spades and the Eight of Spades and their "hands" (for "hand" agents use Type 1 Thugs, with a +2 OCV for their favorite weapon). The Jack of Spades is armed with a ASP 30mm belt-fed machine-cannon while the deck agents and their hands (there are five in each "hand" for a total of 12 in this group) are each armed with a LAW rocket. All the Card Shark agents are armed with one small arm or another as appropriate for their secondary tactical job. When the Marcellis enter their cars and drive into the ambush, each car will be targeted by two LAW rockets and the lead car will also receive the attention of the machine cannon. If any cars survive the initial attack the machine cannon will be used to disable them while the Deck Agents and their hands pepper them with small arms fire. You should only bother resolving the rocket fire against the captains' cars; they might survive a LAW hit (and then again, they might not!). The other, unarmored cars will not survive a LAW rocket hit and will only survive if both LAW rockets miss (unlikely, but possible).

On the street a small cadre of street gang thugs led by Buckshot (if he's still around) confronts the truck with AK-47's and hijack it. In addition to Buckshot (or the current Gang Boss), there are four gangbangers wearing various gang colors. The hijack operation described above remains the same no matter what Retro knows about the characters plans.



### Variations on a Theme

If the Card Shark organization is less effective due to players' actions at this stage, the ambushing deck agents and hand agents are halved in number but not in weaponry (they have two LAW rockets each). If the Card Shark organization isn't helping Retro at all, substitute street gang members lead by a Retro lieutenant or two; the major difference is the gangbangers don't have Heavy Weapon Familiarity and will suffer a -3 OCV penalty with the LAW rockets, increasing the likelihood that the Marcellis in the cars will survive the initial attack and be a factor in the firefight: this is a good example of where earlier successes by the characters changes the nature of later encounters. If the Mafia soldiers in the cars have anything to say about it, the heroin won't fall into Retro's hands. If nothing else, they'll torch it. Subsequently, if Retro isn't able to garner a lot of cash from this drug shipment, he might be forced to use less effective measures against the characters later in the epic!

GMs must understand the nature of this encounter and be prepared to "make it up as it goes along." The situation is wide-open and the players have lots of options. What they choose to do and what Retro knows can't be absolutely predicted; what's more, the characters can "win" this encounter, if they're lucky and have done well earlier. GM's need to be prepared for a wide range of possible outcomes of this bloody encounter.

### Crusade Pursued

Retro, having failed to take Crusade out of the picture with the police, tracks his movements as best he can with The Machine and sends out a hunting party. Assuming that the mercenaries from The Arsenal survived and did well at the museum, Retro hires them again. Using a helicopter they track Crusade and attack from above and below. Longbow is the pilot; the aircraft (combat helicopter, *Dark Champions*, page 96) is equipped with look-down video and infra-red sensors giving a +6 to PER Rolls. The others each have a combat motorcycle (motorcycle II, *Dark Champions*, page 95); you should assume each cycle has one "special" feature that relates to the individual mercenary who's driving it. For a complete list of the mercenaries, see Part II, Episode 2. For the sake of drama, assume each of the motorcycle riders has Combat Driving and Transportation Familiarity: Motorcycles.

This encounter is very fluid; you can declare that it happens just about anywhere in the city. When it begins Crusade has been spotted and is being chased by the motorcycles; they are being vectored in by Longbow in the helicopter. A character or a group of characters can observe the beginning of the chase and do what they like.

The mercenaries have simple orders: hunt and kill Crusade. If the PCs get in their way, the mercs will first try to take them out of the chase (zap their car, for example) but won't just attack the characters full bore; they're not being paid for that. If the PCs are able to derail the chase, Crusade goes to ground and the chase will have to continue another day. Crusade will be warned, however, and will be ready for future attempts.

The mercs will attempt to avenge any serious injury or damage to property. Since police intervention will also derail the chase, this encounter won't last too long; perhaps five or ten minutes at most. Most of the encounter should be movement-oriented; it's Crusade being chased by mercenaries who are being chased by vigilantes, wahoo! All Crusade needs is a few minutes to himself to evade pursuit; he knows the city very well. You may choose to run this encounter at any number of different times, so long as it occurs after the police are tipped to where Daniel lives. Since the mercs are already linked to Retro, this encounter should provide pretty good evidence of what Retro does to vigilantes who bother him too much. And after the heroin shipment encounter, if Retro doesn't end up with the goods, the characters are probably next on Retro's list...

### Ashtray Art Goes Big Time: The Fire

Taking his cue from the big Oakland fire and the fires that ravaged whole neighborhoods in Southern California, Ashtray Art notes that a properly set series of fires could engulf all of Hudson City...if only the wind was right. Well, the wind is right a certain July day, so he strikes.

The heroes don't really have a chance to stop Ashtray Art; the only conceivable way is if a character has spent a whole lot of time tracking him down after the fire earlier...and even then, it's pretty much up to you to decide what happens. The heroes, however, do get a chance to be heroes after the fire is started. To begin with, Ashtray Art has demonstrated that he likes to disable those mean old fire engines so they don't put out his fires. Players with a keen sense of history might be able to keep that from happening if they act soon after the fires are reported.

More likely, however, is the eventuality that many of the fire engines are sabotaged successfully and the fire rages out of control, threatening the city as a whole. When the city government calls out the National Guard and the police are busy dealing with the repercussions of the fire, the criminal element will be left just about alone in the city. The police are busy elsewhere, and the National Guard hasn't had time to mobilize. The scum of the city will have the freedom to loot, steal and pillage almost at will...unless the city's vigilantes do something about it.



This is the end of an adventure, so it's a big, big encounter. Lots of action. You will have to be flexible in how you run this encounter while still letting the vast importance sink in: the city is at stake. If the city's criminal underclass comes out in force while all the police are mostly busy elsewhere, the city might be forced to recall the police from their other efforts. If that happens, the fire department will be strained, trying to fight the fire and doing all of the tasks that the police were handling. The fire might break loose and engulf the city. Catch 22: let the city burn from within or from without? How can both be kept from happening?

The vigilantes are the key. If they take effective action quickly the city will remain reasonably calm. If the vigilantes are unable to keep control of the streets the police will be called back and the fires will consume, at the very least, many suburbs...and possibly the entire city. Of course, the city won't really burn to the ground, unless you want it to. Even if the heroes fall completely on their faces, the city need not be destroyed. It would, however, be a dramatic way to end a campaign...

This encounter begins with a news flash: "A string of wildfires has sprung up west of the city. Dozens of rural homes and farms have already been consumed by the flames. Firefighters from around the city are turning out to fight the blazes, which are moving toward the city

at an alarming rate. There is no need to panic and local police are calling on all citizens to remain indoors for the duration of what the mayor is calling "a significant emergency." The fires appear to be intentionally set, although these reports are unconfirmed at this time. Once again, the police are asking that everyone remain inside and off the streets...this just in...the Governor has approved calling out the National Guard for this area. If you are a member of the following Guard units, please report to..."

If the enormity of what is happening is lost on the players, add this news report:

"This is Daniel Petty, Eyewitness Action Reporter. I'm in downtown Hudson City, not three blocks from the local precinct. As you can see, calls from the Mayor for Hudson City citizens to remain calm and indoors aren't being heeded here. In fact, many of the people I've seen are shop owners on their way to protect their property..." behind the reporter a group of youths can be seen ramming a trash can through a glass storefront. Gunfire can be heard, and the youths scatter. Daniel Petty ducks dramatically. "...in fact, as you can see and hear, things are getting pretty rough down here. Back to you at the studio..."

If the heroes need further prodding, Petty's next report is of a calm block watched over by one of the other vigilantes in town.





Basically, the heroes have a series of challenges ahead, not all of which can be solved "with the sword." Their ability to think on their feet will be sorely tested. You can set the following challenges in the players' paths at your own discretion:

### Looters

A gang of 30-50 civilians, armed with clubs and knives and a few guns, streams down the street towards the hero (or heroes). Their desire is obviously the electronics store behind the heroes. What will the heroes do to stop them?

### Stymied Looters

A hero (or heroes) hears gunshots, shouts, and running feet. Around the corner a shopkeeper is brandishing a .30-06 rifle. On the sidewalk is a would-be looter, writhing in pain. The shopkeeper looks to be lining up a shot on the fleeing youths. What will the heroes do?

### Harried Cops

Not all the cops are on emergency duties; two officers are being hemmed in by a shouting, raucous crowd who have obviously been into a corner store and liberated a large amount of beer. The officers are in full riot gear and have their shotguns out; behind them 10-12 youths are rocking the police car and smashing the windows. Ahead and to the sides separate acts of looting are taking place with probably 20-30 in each group. What will the heroes do?

### Media Hype

A small crowd of younger people are busy looting a candy store in the bright lights of a news team's camera. The reporter is watching passively, speaking an account of what he sees into a microphone. The youths, apparently egged on by all the attention, are finding more and more extreme things to do to the shop, culminating in burning it down. What will the heroes do?

### Fire Engine Blues

A fire engine with about two dozen flat tires (there are caltrops spread over the road here) is being vandalized by members of a street gang, the Studs (*Justice, Not Law*, page 136). There are six gangbangers; each has a handgun. Three have tire irons and three have cans of spray paint; they are alternately bashing and painting the sabotaged fire engine. The body of a firefighter can be seen nearby.

## Those Darn Kids Again

Depending on how effective the character who dealt with the would-be juvenile delinquents in Part I, Episode I ("Kids"), Spray, Scoot and Tag show up...as allies, or as pesky youthful looters. Their skateboards can make them invaluable "eyes" for vigilantes trying to control chaos over an extended area; likewise, the skateboards make the kids annoyingly mobile and hard to pin down. You shouldn't fail to communicate the "cause and effect" lesson implicit in this encounter.

## Common Problems and Solutions:

Shooting looters just doesn't work. They run away, split up if necessary. Once out of range of the vigilante doing the shooting, it's looting time again. How can the characters stem this wave of violence and theft?

They have to be organized. They have to use methods of swaying crowds. They have to enlist allies. They have to exert more power than can be exerted through the barrel of a gun. In some of the situations listed above, wasting the perpetrators is an OK solution, but in most it is not because it just won't work. Hudson City is *big*. Any one hero can probably keep the lid on one street in one block of businesses: line of sight and voice.

You have to remember that this encounter is *long*. All night, at least, and possibly into the daylight. The cops are too busy to pay attention; Retro can't do anything with the city in turmoil as it is...the vigilantes are the city's only hope. The solutions the players come up with need to be sustainable solutions. Shooting looters works right where the character is...until the character runs out of bullets. Meanwhile, two blocks over, an entire row of businesses can be looted and burned.

Solutions that are sustainable include using mental powers to persuade people to go home and/or to enlist people in an ad-hoc militia. Preventative measures shouldn't be ignored; keeping the media from broadcasting pictures of people carting off big-screen TVs is a good way of keeping a few thousand people from deciding they'd like one, too. Remember: if it doesn't happen on TV, it doesn't happen. Managing coverage of the whole city somehow would be ideal; that way, no one part can grow out of control and "infect" the calmer portions of the city. The "mini-situations" given above can be repeated until the players get the idea they need to solve the problem, not the symptoms.



As the night progresses and turns into a new day, you should emphasize the fatigue, the thirst, the hunger the heroes are suffering. As reports come back it can be revealed that the fire is being stopped just outside the suburbs with the loss of only a few hundred homes... unless the heroes haven't done enough to stem the riots in the city, in which case the fires consume thousands of homes but are stopped outside the city limits. If chaos reigns supreme in the city, one option is to end the campaign: the city burns to the ground, tens of thousands of people are killed and the property damage is in the billions of dollars. Hudson City essentially ceases to exist.

Of course, that won't happen: the characters should be able to make some progress and save their city from destruction... or, if the worst does occur, some *other* vigilantes can keep the city calm, and the characters can eat crow.

More news as the fire is brought under control: Ashtray Art is captured by a National Guard unit guarding the suburbs after he attempts to start a new string of fires. He is sent back to the Asylum, thus providing an adventure seed; people escape from the Asylum all the time.

After the fire, the city takes a few days off to clean up and straighten itself out. Hopefully the looting was held to a minimum; if vigilantes kept the city calm a number of news articles and programs praise them for keeping order in the streets. Dire things could have happened without them, it is agreed by most if not all in the media. The city has just about returned to normal when August, and the next adventure in the Epic, rolls around.

## The Story

*Dawn was a vague change in the hue of the smoke that blacked out the sky. It had been a long, long night. Sharpshooter eased her way to the edge of the roof and looked down. Her little spotter, Tag, was curled up on the sidewalk, asleep.*

*"Guess my little talk worked after all," she said to herself, and let him sleep: he'd been a big help when the looters had surged and pressed against this little neighborhood. With no cops for miles, she was it, and she'd held on.*

*She'd had to empty her rifle, though, and was down to the last few cartridges in her Glock. From this height it was mostly a noisemaker, she mused, but it had made enough noise to keep people from breaking in places.*

*"Time to deal with the dead," she thought to herself. She was in big trouble, and the thought of going down to the street and dealing with the man she'd shot made a cold hole in her stomach. Packing her bag she went down the stairs. Everything had been quiet for more than an hour; word must have gotten out that vigilantes were willing to shoot to keep the peace.*

*The shop had busted windows, and near the door was the kid, some punk with a sawed-off. She found the phone in the shop and dialed 911 and set the handset off to the side; they'd get around the call, sooner or later. As overloaded as the police were right then, she was betting on later.*

*It had been half-dark, then, with the streetlight shot out and the only illumination the devil's glow off the bottom of the heavy, smoky clouds from the fire outside the city. There had been shots, she remembered, scattered sirens and shots droning and popping off in the distance. She'd come around the corner because Spray had waved her down and pointed: some poor schmuck's electronics store had just lost its front window and a small crowd had gathered to take advantage.*

*The boy lead them, and as Sharpshooter walked slowly to where Tag lay asleep, she could see his eyes, the pores on his face. She'd told them to stop, to go home.*

*He'd raised the gun and yelled something.*

*Sharpshooter stood over pick as the faint gray light of morning gave awful detail to the sooty city she called home; it seemed, though, that the fire would not claim the city, not this day. She stood over the child and looked at the grimy jacket he used as a pillow, at the way his hands curled protectively around his neon-painted skateboard, and she saw again the Glock coming up to firing position, just like they'd taught her in the academy. She saw each of the three shots leave the gun in slow motion: no, that must be her imagination, she couldn't see the bullets in the air...*

*But she could see them strike, one after another. Chest. Throat. Forehead.*

*The shotgun roared, and she turned to cover the crowd, who fled without a word.*

*Later, there were other challenges to her one-woman law in that neighborhood, but nobody had to die.*

*Sharpshooter stifled a sob and wiped her face with her mask, then nudged the boy, who woke slowly.*

*"Hey, time to go home, soldier," she said. "You did good."*

*The kid jumped up, instantly awake like kids can do, and waved nonchalantly as he boarded away.*

*Then Sharpshooter started walking home. The streets*



# PART III: THE CRIME BOSS

## Introduction To Part III

### How to Use this Adventure

This is the third part of a three part campaign epic. GMs who wish to use this adventure by itself should have a group of characters who are already a team and be willing to make numerous changes to the plot. This part is less suited for play outside the epic format; it consists of the climax to at least six sessions of play and therefore ties up a number of "loose ends." For GMs who want a big slug-it-out episode, however, there's nothing better!

### Goals and Methods

#### Goal: Teamwork

The characters must be a team by now or they will almost certainly fail. Only through the synergy of teamwork can they be powerful enough to prevail against the challenges in these episodes.

#### Goal: Pace

The pacing in these two episodes is particularly important. Refer back to the notes on pacing in the Introduction. In particular, to keep the game fast-paced, GMs should:

- Cut short lengthy player discussions with reminders that time is passing
- Begin to measure minutes instead of hours as the critical encounters are approached
- Work towards a snappy, tense style of play to reflect the seriousness of the situation
- Combine problems that crop up rather than laying them out one at a time
- Do whatever else is necessary to keep the game moving forward

### Theme and Mood

The dominant theme of this adventure is tainted victory. The characters can and should succeed against Retro; he should not end the epic as the Crime Boss of Hudson City. Unfortunately, crime itself won't come to an end. The heroes have fought off a greater evil and must be content with that. The lesser, everyday evil remains. The fight must continue in the streets, the alleys, the dens of iniquity throughout the city.

The main mood GMs should try and invoke in this adventure is *fear*. The players have had sufficient playing time to become attached to their characters. They've had sufficient time to be in a firefight or three, to fight crime hand-to-hand, to wage their war against darkness in their chosen way. Now it's time for you to twang the heartstrings, to cast fear into the player's hearts, to put the heroes into constant and unremitting peril, to make the *players* worry.

Fear of what? Fear of death? Not just that. Experienced role-players can be blasé about that prospect: "Aw, shucks, I'll make a new character." How about fear of being unmasked? Fear of the character losing something that is near and dear to them, so that the character is still "alive" but in dire straits? Good role-players will respond to threats of this nature appropriately.

Fear. Fear is the dominant mood in these last two episodes. Retro has finally gotten tired of the vigilantes interference and is going to do something about them. With the services of The Machine (either past or present) Retro is an enemy the characters are going to wish they'd never had!

### The Enemy's Plan: Part III

In Episode 1, Retro has finally decided to do something about the vigilantes. He may, or may not, have enough cash on hand to hire a professional assassin, but he will certainly make an attempt to extorting the vigilantes to "stay out of it" with threats of revealing their Secret Identities to the police. Also, not all the criminals in Hudson City are under Retro's sway, and some are going to do something about Retro, if they can. They arrange a purchase of weapons from The Hanged Man; by listening in to the rebel criminal's conversations (The Machine is unable to tap the Gallows's phone calls but can listen to calls between the criminals, discussing the deal.) Retro learns where the weapon exchange is going to take place. While these weapon buys have traditionally been neutral turf, Retro feels bound by no such unwritten law and arranges for the PCs to be aware of the when and where of the buy. Retro is trying to kill two birds with one stone, and if he damages the Hanged Man's reputation in the process, that's an added bonus.

In Episode 2, the heroes have hopefully finally garnered good information about Retro and his setup. Assuming they've survived Episode 1, it is now open warfare between Retro and the vigilantes. Bands of roaming thugs comb the city for the characters; police





have by now been given incriminating tips and are pursuing the vigilantes as well. The characters have a simple set of choices: they can turn themselves in, leave town or take Retro out. It won't be easy. Retro has most of the criminal underground in Hudson City on his side, and they're armed with the best of the best.

## Alternate Outcomes

For GMs who wish to continue running Hudson City with the same group of characters that started this epic, there are some controlling guidelines that have to be followed. Characters with lots invested in their "public" identity should have a way to keep it. Not too many of the characters should perish. But aside from assuring these character-oriented outcomes, GMs needn't be too bothered with stories that don't come out the way they are written to come out in this epic adventure. What if they don't succeed in toppling Retro from his perch atop the Hudson City underworld? He's the Crime Boss, a deadly enemy, and GMs will have to continue coming up with Retro stories as the characters will no doubt continue trying to unseat him: Retro turns into a kind of super "Card Shark" enemy. That could be fun!

Characters also don't have to succeed with The Machine. If they haven't been talking to it and helping it develop over the course of the campaign, it naturally evolves itself out of the campaign (or into an independent mode you can use in future stories: see adventure seeds described later).

You should make it possible for characters to remain largely the way they want to be: it's not a good idea to give a villain an automatic way of determining the characters' secret IDs and then screw the players; that's not the intent of The Machine in this plot. While the characters should feel threatened, there should also be a way out. If the characters don't make their own way out of, say, unmasking for example, they should be offered away that costs them something: buy a Contact in the police department who confuses the evidence, spend a lot of money on bribes and so on.

## Troubleshooting

You are in charge. That means a character who does something stupid and actually gets caught by the police should have a way out of the dilemma. If they pass up an opportunity to make their own escape, one can be provided. The main danger in these episodes is that characters will succumb to the early threats against them; they will be caught by the police, will be so afraid of being caught that they leave town (and the story) or that they get caught in a situation they would be unlikely to survive, like being surrounded by two dozen upset gangbangers armed with AK-47s.

You have a number of ways of troubleshooting these situations. The first method, letting the character screw up and then allowing them an "out," is probably the most educational and fun for the player. A second method would be to provide last minute help that keeps the bad thing from happening: a necessary method when "death" is the likely outcome (there's not many things a character can do once they're dead).

What about characters who willfully do something screwy, like leave town? You should always try and make it obvious that the best way to solve the problem is to remain and fight. DNPCs are helpful in this regard; they should always want to remain in town and resist any wild-eyed schemes to blow town for Vegas, or whatever. Heroes should also have family members, at least most of the time, who live in or near Hudson City. Even if they're not close relations, the press, criminals and police can make life miserable for the relatives of vigilantes who are unmasked for real. If nothing else, characters should have some sense of connection to their fair city; leaving just doesn't cut the mustard when it comes to keeping the city safe from scumbucket criminals like Retro.

This section can't backstop all the possible actions that can cause a GM trouble in this campaign, but it should suggest the different courses of action available to a GM to keep the plot reasonably on-track and moving in the right direction.

## Involving the Heroes

If the heroes aren't involved by now, they never will be. GMs will find sufficient hooks to involve the heroes in Part III in Episode 1.

## Part III Scorecard

As events unfold, record the results here and apply the public's response in the campaign. In Part III, the scorecard is particularly important because it will help determine the level of police response when all heck breaks loose in Episode 2. Refer to the "Part I Scorecard" section for details about how to use this Scorecard. Carry over the "count" from July but subtract 2 points for each day nothing outrageously violent happens. Once again, don't let the total drop below zero. Carry over any notes about "who did what to who" so that feuds can continue to build.



## August 1995

| Sunday  | Monday   | Tuesday                                      | Wednesday   | Thursday                                    | Friday                                 | Saturday   |
|---|--|--|---|---|--|--|
|   |  | <b>1</b><br>Home ATL                         | <b>2</b><br>Home ATL,<br>Hanged Man<br>Purchase                       | <b>3</b><br>Home ATL,<br><br>Moon 1st 1/4   | <b>4</b><br>Home FLA                   | <b>5</b><br>Home FLA,<br>Extortion                           |
| <b>6</b><br>Home FLA,<br><br>Lucille Ball b.<br>1911,<br>1st execution by<br>electricution 1890 | <b>7</b><br>Away MON,<br><br>War in the City,<br>Julia Childe b.<br>1912 | <b>8</b><br>Away PHI,<br>Tricks and<br>Traps | <b>9</b><br>Away PHI,<br>Tricks and<br>Traps                          | <b>10</b><br>Away PHI,<br><br>Moon Full     | <b>11</b><br>Away PHI                  | <b>12</b><br>Away MON,<br>War in the<br>City                 |
| <b>13</b><br>Away MON,<br>War in the<br>City,<br><br>Hitchcock b. 1899                          | <b>14</b><br>All-Star<br>Break, Press                                    | <b>15</b><br>Home HOU,<br>War in the<br>City | <b>16</b><br>Home HOU,<br>Retro's Estate<br>(could happen<br>anytime) | <b>17</b><br>Home HOU,<br><br>Moon last 1/4 | <b>18</b><br>Home CHI                  | <b>19</b><br>Home CHI,<br><br>Gene<br>Roddenberry b.<br>1921 |
| <b>20</b><br>Home CHI,<br><br>H.P. Lovecraft b.<br>1890   | <b>21</b><br>Home CHI  | <b>22</b><br>Away HOU                        | <b>23</b><br>Away HOU   | <b>24</b><br>Away HOU                       | <b>25</b><br>Away CHI,<br><br>Moon New | <b>26</b><br>Away CHI,<br><br>Krakatoa erupts<br>1883        |
| <b>27</b><br>Away CHI   | <b>28</b>  | <b>29</b><br>Home CIN                        | <b>30</b><br>Home CIN   | <b>31</b><br>Home CIN                       |  |  |

### July 1995

| S  | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | S  |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|    |    |    |    |    |    | 1  |
| 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  |
| 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 |    |    |    |    |    |

### August 1995

| S  | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | S  |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|    |    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  |
| 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |    |    |

### September 1995

| S  | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | S  |
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|    |    |    |    |    | 1  | 2  |
| 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 |    |    |    |    |    |    |

The Weather: early to mid-month: scorching hot, all daytime peak temps above 105°F., coolest temp before "War" ends, 87°F. (during the middle of the night). Big Storm strikes during final battle; 50 MPH winds, 2 inches of rain, sturm und drang galore. Afterwards, normal temps/rainfall for rest of month...same as it ever was.



# August Scorecard

## Scorecard Chart

| Victim             | "Involved" | Hurt | Killed |
|--------------------|------------|------|--------|
| Evil Criminal      | 0          | 1    | 2      |
| Police/Fire        | 1          | 2    | 4      |
| Innocent Bystander | 2          | 3    | 5      |
| Child              | 3          | 4    | 6      |

## Scorecard Results Chart

| Score | Effect   |
|-------|--|
| 66+   | National Guard called out, curfew, concentrated effort to find vigilantes        |
| 56-65 | Special anti-vigilante task force formed, curfew                                 |
| 46-55 | State news, Governor "concerned," police urged to "do something about it"        |
| 36-45 | Public outcry mounts (religious and civic leaders); TV crews everywhere at night |
| 26-35 | Standard anti-crime messages distributed; some TV coverage                       |
| 16-25 | Fairly normal month; crime is "still a problem"                                  |
| 0-15  | A quiet month in Hudson City; praise for efficient police force                  |

## Tally Sheet

| Victim Type        | "Involved" | Hurt | Killed |
|--------------------|------------|------|--------|
| Evil Criminal      |            |      |        |
| Police/Fire        |            |      |        |
| Innocent Bystander |            |      |        |
| Child              |            |      |        |

Instructions: Make a tick mark for each victim in the appropriate box. At the end of each month (or week, or day, if needed), multiply the number of tick marks by the appropriate number, from the chart above. Consult the *Scorecard Results Chart* for the appropriate response.

### Growing Problems:

| Character | Organization Offended |
|-----------|-----------------------|
|           |                       |
|           |                       |
|           |                       |
|           |                       |
|           |                       |
|           |                       |
|           |                       |
|           |                       |

### The Police Situation:

| Character | Evidence & Witnesses |
|-----------|----------------------|
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|           |                      |
|           |                      |
|           |                      |
|           |                      |
|           |                      |
|           |                      |
|           |                      |





## Part III, Episode 1: Retro Cleans House

In this episode, Retro takes various actions to clean house. First he attempts to play the vigilantes off against a rebel criminal group who won't buckle under and follow his orders. He hopes that by interrupting a Hanged Man weapons purchase, the criminals will be denied the weapons, the criminals will be killed and the vigilantes will be killed. Retro can't lose...unless the characters guess what's up and somehow work a deal with the criminals that's not in Retro's best interest. If the vigilantes survive his first trick, he sends them irrefutable evidence he knows who they are in real life, where they live and how much aspirin they keep in their medicine cabinets. If the characters don't lay off, Retro will turn over the information to the police, much like he gave Crusade up back in July. Finally, if all that fails, Retro attempts to trick the heroes outright with deathtraps, situations where they accidentally break the law right in front of the police, and so on. Characters who can make it to the end unscathed will have proved themselves very clever indeed!

### The Hanged Man Purchase

At least one of the PCs needs to be made aware of an impending weapons purchase by the WITCH gang, lead by Hail Mary (*Underworld Enemies*, page 70). Hail Mary, as leader of an all-female gang, has naturally spurned the organizing advances of Buckshot (she returned the guy who delivered the ultimatum to Buckshot in five separate UPS packages) who was acting on behalf of Retro. The Machine hasn't been able to get any good intelligence on the WITCH operation because it is unusually low-tech. What information The Machine has gathered is useless; members of WITCH generally don't care what the outside world thinks.

Hail Mary isn't bright, but she is street-smart. She has noticed odd things going on: 66 Blade dudes working with Overlord chumps, for example. Since she figures Buckshot has managed to get all the other gangs together, WITCH must be next.

Right. Over her dead body. So she's arranged for a weapon buy from that Hanged Man guy. It will take place at midnight in a warehouse at the edge of WITCH turf.

PCs can learn of this weapons buy a number of different ways. If The Machine could have determined who on the street is feeding the heroes information, Retro "buys" that persons cooperation and feeds the information to the characters that way. If any characters have been investigating the Hanged Man's operation specifically, and Retro can determine what their sources of information are, Retro will plant information pertaining to the purchase through that avenue. One way or another, the information needs to become available.

Investigation of the buy site reveals that it is in neutral territory and unnaturally quiet for this part of town. Streetwise can reveal that's always the case with Hanged Man distribution points; it's an unwritten law of the street that you don't screw around with Hanged Man deals. Bad things happen to those who do. Careful examination of the warehouse reveals a live telephone hookup; a small holographic projector is hidden in the rafters of the warehouse, along with a camera. If Desmond Gallows perceives vigilantes poking around before the buy he does nothing, but if PCs set an ambush inside the warehouse, the holographic projection will appear and tell them to leave. He doesn't care what they do outside the warehouse; he doesn't even care if they watch through the windows. That's Hail Mary's problem, Desmond figures, and if shooting erupts, so much the better. He doesn't call himself the Hanged Man for nothing.

At about 15 minutes to midnight, Hail Mary and about ten of her gang members show up at the warehouse. They're driving two or three vehicles, one of which is a pickup truck. Hail Mary is buying 50 AK-47s; her purchases will weigh quite a bit. About a third of the gang members case the joint while the rest stay with Hail Mary. Unless the heroes interfere, Hail Mary speaks with the holographic image. She's instructed to show her money (she does, \$10,000—the Hanged Man is giving her the weapons at a bargain rate), put it in an envelope and place it in a mailbox on the street outside the warehouse (she does). Then the Hanged Man opens a phone link with one of Hail Mary's subordinates: a truck has pulled up outside their gang HQ seven blocks away. Hail Mary is a regular customer and the Hanged Man has expedited the delivery. Hail Mary thanks him; then he asks what she wants to do with all the guns. She tells him "The other gangs are going to put a move on us; I don't wanna be part of all the gangs." The image nods and fades into a pool of static.

Use Type 1 Street Thugs for WITCH gang members. About half have +5 PD/+5 ED Armor; all are equipped with various small arms. Hail Mary is armed for bear with her CAR-15 and her armored vest (+6 PD/+6 ED Armor, Act 11-). GMs should read her description and be sensitive to her likes and dislikes; characters who attempt to negotiate with her could well trip one of her numerous triggers. Characters could also have been appraised of her general personality through Streetwise investigations before the buy.

Hail Mary wants to make the buy, get the guns and live. If she learns the guns have already been delivered, she has no stake in remaining in the warehouse. If she doesn't learn this (if the negotiation is interrupted, for example) she has some stake in remaining in the warehouse; her first assumption is that the guns are there and that anyone interfering wants a free shipment of guns.

A worst case scenario ends with the characters hurt or captured by Hail Mary; an average result would be an inconclusive stand-off (since the guns aren't around the characters can't prevent their delivery). An above average result would end with Hail Mary's money



being stolen or prevented from being delivered to the Hanged Man, and the best the characters could hope to accomplish would be to enlist Hail Mary and her gang as allies in the fight against Retro. The best they could get would be a favor in which Buckshot (if alive, or the current All Gang Leader) gets blown away; a one-shot boost of troops who could accomplish one task in the war against Retro.

## Extortion

Some days after the weapons buy, assuming the vigilantes are hale and hearty, they all receive disturbing notes from Retro. Some of each letter is personalized, listing the hero's secret ID, home address, favorite TV Show and so on. Also in each letter is a list of important people in the hero's life, "as a reminder of our worldly connections." In common to each letter is the following:

*I know who you are. I know where you live. You've been buggin' me for too long. Now I'm the boss, see, I'm the boss of just about everybody in town, everybody that counts. Now pay attention. Give up your night job. Or else you'll get what Crusade got, that Daniel guy. Where's he sleep these days? You ask yourself that while you stay at home.*

*Retro*

The Machine hasn't been working for Retro for some time: he has no quick way of determining if the characters comply with his demands. It's obvious he gathered the information on the heroes before The Machine got wise, though, so Retro can still do what he threatens: expose the vigilantes to the police. This extortion attempt may cause the heroes to change their usual costume or operating methods, but it shouldn't make them stop hunting the night. There's nothing to say that Retro won't give them up to the police anyway. Smart characters will also clean their homes and hideouts of incriminating evidence: that way if the cops do raid, they might not be able to get conclusive proof that so-and-so is *really* Mr. Mist. When the police come, instead of being arrested, a character might only be Watched from then on.

## Tricks and Traps

If the characters continue their "night job," and Retro learns of this through mundane sources, he will attempt to take them out with a series of tricks and traps, holding the revelation of who they are for later. He secretly hopes to eliminate one or two of the team of vigilantes working against him and force the remainder to actually work *for* him. If he reveals the vigilante's names to the police, he will be spared an



itch, but prevented from hiring a skilled combatant for his organization. Following is a series of “tricks and traps” You can use on the characters as a bit of time passes. Retro is consolidating his power over the underworld and is content to wait; he’s stockpiled enough dirt on the criminals of Hudson City to keep them in his debt for years to come.

### The “Nasty Boy” Trap

This trap is for the character who is the most violent towards criminals. Retro hires some bums, cleans them up, and gives them black plastic squirt guns that look just like old-fashioned tommy guns. He tells them he wants to play a joke on one of his friends, a guy flying into town who will be taking a limo to a posh downtown hotel. The bums are to loiter in their new Brooks Brothers suits, fedoras and trenchcoats (which they get to keep as part of the deal! Wow!) outside the hotel, hiding their “guns” under their coats. When the limo drives up they are to wait for the door to open and the passenger to exit, then rush forward and squirt the guy with their tommy guns, painting him red in the process. The bums love it: they get cash, a free hotel room and unlimited room service while they wait, and all they have to do is squirt some guy who comes out of a limo. Sheesh! The rich are strange, aren’t they?

Retro then drops a dime on Frank “Fedora” Keaton (Retro thinks he’s got a classy taste in hats) and Tony Kendall about 20 minutes before the hit to get coverage in the newspapers and TV. They of course race to the scene to get the story of the century. Retro, for once, is nearby, watching the scene from inside a BMW with darkened windows. He also calls the police about three minutes before the limo is due, just to increase the fun and games.

How does the “nasty boy” get involved? This is tricky. Retro has played this bait and switch trick before, so he knows he has to be very careful not to tip his hand. The guy in the limo is just an account rep for a computer company, in town to pursue a equipment-purchase contract with the city government. Through his Mafia connections, who own the limo company, Retro merely knows a guy is being dropped off at the Grant hotel, across the street on 4th Avenue from the Courthouse Plaza, at 10 p.m.

GMs more interested in having the encounter come off as planned than actually presenting something real can just have a street contact come up with the news that a hit is going to take place outside the Grant Hotel sometime that night. The hero won’t know when, and so will have to watch the entire evening for something to come down. Since the bums come out of the hotel just as the limo is driving up it’s unlike the hero will be able to learn they’re merely well-dressed bums with squirt guns: the moment of truth will arrive when the guns come up and the account rep probably has a heart attack.

Other methods of baiting a hero include utilizing a media connection. Since The Machine could have learned just about anything about the characters

while it was being used by Retro, he might take advantage of a media contact, knowing that the contact will contact the hero. A similar situation could take place with a police contact: an anonymous tip could suggest something will go down downtown and minutes before the act another tip could reveal exactly where the event was to take place. Vigilantes always get to the scene before the police, right?

However you hook the character, the character should not have anyway of determining it’s not a real hit until the action begins. Quick thinking and clear perception might keep a blood bath from occurring.

In case the worst occurs, the three bums are all normal people, except they have 7 BODY due to their unhealthy lifestyle.

### Clues that might tip a hero at the last second

Characters with Weapon Familiarity: Small Arms who make a Sight PER Roll at -3 notice that the tommy guns are fake.

Characters with any kind of High Society Skill or Familiarity can notice with a Sight PER Roll at -13 that the three bums are dressed exactly alike in expensive suits that aren’t tailored for them. What the player assumes from this is up to them.

Characters with any kind of professional medical skill who are fairly close can make a straight Sight PER Roll to notice that these three men all appear to be in an advanced stage of alcoholism; a subsequent Deduction Roll suggests that someone who is suffering from advanced alcoholism isn’t likely to be a gunman.

Since the bums are SPD 2, GMs should start the combat at Segment 12; the bums pull their guns, the hero reacts. Next Turn: the hero will almost certainly take an action before Segment 6, and if the hero also acts in Segment 6 it will almost certainly be before the bums pull their triggers and squirt the hapless account rep with red dye.

The aftermath: the police are only seconds away: the whole scene has been captured on television, and “Fedora” Keaton will press the hero for a comment if he can get close enough. If nothing unfortunate happened to the bums, there’s no story, aside from a strange story from the bums (“but this guy said it was a joke, see...”) and an irate salesman (“my suit! Look at my suit!”).

### The Bomb

Retro hires a bombmaker to make a bomb. Retro has it delivered to one of the characters late at night. A phone call alerts the character that there is a package on his porch.

Retro doesn’t really think it will kill the hero, but he is hoping it will blow up the character’s house. The bomb is set to go off in 15 minutes—long enough for a character to attempt to defuse it, but not long enough for the Bomb Squad to get there. The bomb has a big sign on the side that says: “Don’t Touch!” in big, red letters, and it is ticking loudly. There’s actually no mechanism in it that will set it off if it is moved.





The bomb is fairly big: about two feet on a side. It contains enough explosives to level a normal sized-house and bust all the windows for a hundred yards around; it is a 20d6 EB Explosion.

### Committed

Retro kidnaps a character's DNPC and has him thrown into the Asylum after drugging him to make it appear as if he's gone off the deep end. Naturally Retro also informs the character of this, hoping that the character will go get his DNPC out of the loony bin. The administrators at the Asylum make it clear that he understands a mistake has been made, but no patients can just be released; there is paperwork to fill out. Retro has also bribed two of the guards to whack the character on the head and stick him in a padded cell if the hero shows up in his Secret Identity to sign all the papers necessary to rectify "the mistake." Use two Type I Thugs who are +2 OCV with their truncheons (they get a lot of practice thumping heads) which are +2d6 clubs.

This attempt on the character is fairly lame, but it might actually work. After all, in his Secret Identity, the character is unlikely to be wearing armor, or carrying weapons. If the attempt succeeds, the character wakes in a padded cell dressed in a straight jacket. Nobody will speak with the character except an intern doctor who, of course, "believes" everything the character says.

This vignette can serve as a good introduction to the Asylum; GMs who wish to introduce the Idiot King at a later date can parade him past the imprisoned (or visiting) character in his "stupid" persona.

In any case, the Asylum can't just hold someone indefinitely. After a day or so the character will be released, with numerous apologies, along with the DNPC (who may have been released earlier in any case). GMs should play this encounter up for fun while keeping that horrible thought alive: what if nobody ever gets the hero out?

### Hung Out to Dry

Retro hires The Arsenal to perform a simple, cheap job: they sneak up on the character's house late at night when they're sure the hero is inside and bombard the place with sleep gas grenades (3d6 NND (Defense is Life Support: Need not breathe), which works on Segments 3, 6, 9 and 12). If the character demonstrates an immunity (via a gas mask), Heatseeker's team leaves (leaving the letter described below in the mailbox). If the character appears to have succumbed, the team enters the house, strips the hero naked and ties him hand and foot with rope.

The hero wakes suspended upside down from a flagpole 20 stories up with a letter taped to his chest. It says: "*You could be dead now. Think about working for me, willya? —R.*" Climbing down requires getting out of the rope; if nothing else works the character can gnaw through it. Then the hero must climb off the flagpole; a simple Climbing Skill Roll should suffice (don't forget to mention to scared players that by taking extra time they can make the roll easier). Once

on the side of the building the character can gain access to the roof. From there a bit of creative lock picking and explaining ("hey, naked guy, why are you in my building?") should get the hero home safe and sound. You should not use this encounter on a player without a sense of humor. The message here is Retro can reach out and "touch" the vigilantes at will: they will *have* to do something about him...and soon!

The offer of employment might be useful for clever players, too...

### Stolen Car

One day the character's car is stolen. The next day, it is returned. Retro doesn't do anything to it, but the character won't know that. GMs should encourage paranoia in this case. The job offer letter can be repeated, maybe with a phone number so the character can talk about the offer.

### Phone Phreaked

Retro bribes a guy who works at the phone company to reroute all calls from a character's phone to a nearby Pizza Hut: no matter what number the character dials, the Pizza Hut answers. All calls to the character are routed to the Mayor's private line at his office, which naturally irritates His Honor. Once the phone company is made aware of the problem, it only takes a few hours to fix.

GMs shouldn't forget to keep up on continuing plot elements. Could Tenderheart still be out there, somewhere, pining away? Has Mr. Nobody found Plain Jane yet? Is he still stealing street signs like some zip-headed college undergraduate?



## Part III, Episode 2: WAR!

Since Retro has been the obvious villain for so long, you may have had to stave off numerous attempts by the characters to locate and assault him. Now it's time for such an action to go forward. Retro, having failed to extort or frighten the heroes into submission, now declares war on all vigilantes in Hudson City, particularly the player characters. Depending on how well the player characters have frustrated his efforts to date, Retro has various resources he can throw into this war. He might control all, some or none of the Mafia families; all (most), some or none of the street gangs and he may or may not have control over an effective Card Shark organization. In addition, while his financial resources are large, he can't just spend money like there's no tomorrow. Control would not be possible of the sundry criminal elements if he taxed them too much. Retro has a budget, and the character's previous actions will determine exactly how much he has available. How much money Retro has available determines exactly who he has working for him.



The characters need to learn where Retro is living now that he's the Crime Boss of Hudson City. This shouldn't be too difficult. Research on the street (Streetwise), a Contact in the Mafia, the Card Shark organization or even a street gang leader are all legitimate ways for the heroes to determine that Retro has bought himself a nice suburban estate just outside of town.

Groups that are taking the initiative and not waiting for their GMs to prod them into action should be rewarded with the opportunity to "miss" the first part of this episode and move directly to the assault on Retro's estate. Characters who have been letting the bad guys call the shots, however, should have to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune as they learn that it's now Retro or them, and if they want it to be Retro they had better find him and make it so.

## War in the City

Retro sends out his troops: gangbangers, Mafia soldiers and Card Shark operatives, to look for the characters. Heroes who patrol as usual will inevitably run into trouble: the question is, with who? Word on the street is that the vigilantes are "history" and that Retro is paying a big bonus (like the Card Shark bounty) to whoever brings in dead Vigilantes. While the Blue Moon Killer tops the list at a cool million bucks, the player characters come in second at anywhere from one hundred thousand to five hundred thousand dollars, each. Here are some descriptions GMs can use to introduce the various encounters, which can be used against lone heroes or groups of vigilantes (GMs should adjust the numbers accordingly):

### Gang Threat

*The night is hot, as all the nights have been, all summer, and already sweat is making your skin feel slightly greasy. You ease in and out of an alley. Down the street are some kids wearing gang colors: Nubians. One of them spots you and too casually pulls out a cellular phone. You ease back into the shadows. Two streets down a pickup truck loaded with Overlords cruises by slowly. You're safe in the darkness until you realize one of the thugs in the back is looking right at you. He's wearing infra-red goggles! Over the sound of the engine you can hear the distinctive noise of automatic weapons being readied...*

The gangbangers have been given a number of cellular phones and night vision and infrared goggles to help them track vigilantes. Their orders are to watch and report and then converge on areas where vigilantes are spotted. Once they corner a vigilante, they'll shoot to kill, eager for the bounty Retro is offering.

As usual, street gang members are Type 1 Thugs armed with a variety of weapons, many of which are Hanged Man weapons. GMs who need to rescue hapless characters can describe a misfire (caused by Desmond Gallows) that provides a last-minute av-

enue of escape. You should assume there are about three to six gangbangers per vigilante when the shooting starts. Half are armed with automatic rifles and at least one in five or six will have night vision or infrared goggles. Their tactics are simple: spot, pursue and kill. Clever characters should be able to evade this threat.

### Mafia Threat

The Mafia, on the other hand, can be a little more precise in their attack. This encounter is best used for a character who has a Secret Identity and works in an office.

*Your co-worker looks a little worried. "There are these men to see you," she says. "Big guys, suits and sunglasses. You're not in any trouble, are you?" You ease your way out of your desk chair and peek through the window blinds. In the reception area are two men dressed as she described. Are those suspicious bulges under their armpits? Are those expensive Italian suits?*

The Mafia has sent eight guys to the hero's place of work. They plan on making it obvious the character should "come with them, no need to make a fuss, right? Innocent people might get hurt." Getting out of this will require some quick thinking. How can the hero escape the Mafia while retaining his secret identity? The mobsters have placed at least one guy at each exit. They won't start shooting but will return fire if they have to. You should remember the equipment limitations placed on characters who are not patrolling.

If the character is captured, you should use the hero's bad luck as a way to hook the characters into Retro's estate. The Mafia takes the prisoner to Retro. Once there, the hero might contrive to signal his teammates, or perhaps Retro might boast to the others that there will be a "vigilante roast" later on. Either way, you should not just whack the character if he allows himself to be captured at the office. If the hero fails to make an escape, then GMs should utilize the "prisoner" option.

### Card Shark Threat

The Card Shark organization has access to many high-tech gadgets that can be used for mayhem.

*You're on a rooftop, surveying the darkness below. There has been a lot of gang activity on the streets, but you feel fairly safe six stories up. Gangbangers don't like to climb. So far, no luck in finding your contact. Standing up from your crouch you run a few steps and launch yourself into the air. The next roof over is quiet and dark...but what's that buzzing noise? You look around, and against the background of hazy, city light you see a tiny shape diving toward you out of the night sky. You duck, and the whine of a tiny engine grows loud in your ear for a second as some kind of tiny helicopter zips by. Four yards away it banks; a clothesline flutters to the rooftop, cut cleanly by the spinning rotor. You can see it for a second; rotor about two feet in diameter, a radio antenna sticking up from the middle, a*



*bulbous model helicopter underneath with a glass lens in place of the cockpit. No guns that you can see, but that rotor, yipe!*

The mini-helicopters are assassination toys made by the scientific and research branch of the Card Shark organization. The rotors of the helicopter are powerful and sharp enough to decapitate an unarmored human without hindering the aircraft's flight. There are four total roaming the city; if the first fails, the others will attack at intervals after a few minutes have passed.

#### Mini Helicopters:

STR 5, BODY 5, DEF 2, DEX 18, SPD 3, FLYING 10", 1D6 HKA (AUTOFIRE X4, ARMOR PIERCING, NO END), HRRH, END RESERVE 100, EXPANDED SIGHT (X4 TELESCOPIC, INFRARED AND LOW-LIGHT), CLAIRENTIENCE (SIGHT, USABLE BY OTHERS AT RANGE), SHRINKING (30 POINTS: 1/8 SIZE, +6 DCV, +9" KB), OCV 6, DCV 12

The human operator has Piloting at 12-; the control signal can be jammed. GMs should assume the helicopters are good for about an hour on cruise and a maximum of five minutes combat flying. Materials used to entangle the rotor must survive one attack; if the material survives the helicopter crashes. Heroes who "hole up" in an inaccessible place can expect a visit from a rocket-firing Card Shark agent or two (see description in Episode One). These toys should be fun to fight!

## Retro's Estate

Right in the middle of the most upscale suburb to go up in smoke in the "Great Fire of 95" is a five-acre estate worth millions of dollars. With extensive grounds, a well, a generator and a determined former owner, it survived the blaze and is now the only inhabitable structure for at least a half-mile in all directions. A bright spot of green in the midst of a charred wasteland, Retro knew as soon as he saw it on the news it had to be his. The owner didn't want to sell but Retro finally got the man's estate to agree to the sale after his untimely death in a traffic accident in Little Italy. Only twenty minutes from the center of town, North Truman Boulevard leads almost directly to the estate. For Retro, it's a perfect mix of proximity and safety. He's close enough to run his new crime organization but far enough out of town to avoid those pesky, inner-city vigilantes. And now, surrounded by the ruins of upscale suburbia, he can see things coming easily.

Retro has long-term plans to buy the nearest homes and make a kill zone of open land around his estate as a park in the memory of the firefighters and others who lost their lives fighting the blaze—in reality a move meant to assure no one can get close to his estate without being seen. For now, however, the charred remains of houses running in the hundreds of thousands of dollars are sufficiently serene to make intruders stand out.



## The Neighborhood Watch

His first line of defense are roving bands of gangbangers he has supplied with radios, guns and 4x4s. They patrol the neighborhood around the estate. Each band consists of two to four gang members (Type 1 Thugs) armed with real AK-47s (not Hanged Man weapons) who have infrared goggles and radios.

## Outer Perimeter and Grounds

The outer perimeter of the estate is protected by a high tech fence erected by the technical branch of the Card Shark organization. It is an ordinary wrought iron fence equipped with a weight sensor: if more than 100 pounds is detected on the fence, a 50,000 volt charge arcs through its entire length. GMs should review the electricity damage rules; the fence can deliver the equivalent of a High Tension line. Tripping the fence will also trigger an alarm. There are few ways a character can determine the fence is so rigged; since small animals don't weigh enough to trigger the electricity there aren't little fried bunny corpses laying around. The fence is loose, however, and a successful Sight PER Roll reveals that some sort of sensing device is at the base of the fence. What that sensor is or does is impossible to determine outside a laboratory, but clever players who discover this will be wary of simply climbing the fence.





The estate grounds are well-kept if scorched around the edges; trees, gardens, and even a small waterfall make for a graceful yard. Roaming the grounds at all times are four attack dogs; their vocal cords have been cut so they make no noise. The guards in the house assume the screams of people who are being attacked will be sufficient warning. The surprise value of these silent killers shouldn't be underestimated.

#### Attack Dogs:

STR 10, BODY 7, DEX 17, SPD 3, OCV 5 (6 base, -1 for Grab maneuver), DCV 6, ½d6 HKA (Continuous, 1d6 w/STR), Grab maneuver: if attack is successful, chose a limb: limb is immobilized until dog is shaken off. Dogs are hard to hear (always) and see (at night); -5 to appropriate PER Rolls. Remember the penalty to a surprised target's DCV.

#### Estate Buildings

Clustered in the center of the estate is a group of buildings. The mansion is a sumptuous residence in a neo-classical style; it is equipped with a ten-car underground garage and overlooks the estate from the top of a small hill. A small guest house is adjacent to a pavilion set in the center of a flat grassy area suitable for outdoor parties. Off a short distance from the main house is a long narrow building (an indoor shooting range) and an Olympic-sized pool. Hidden from view near the main gate and driveway are four small cottages for estate employees.

The main house is guarded by no fewer than ten Mafia soldiers, two from each major LCN family in Hudson City. Retro has so much dirt on each of the families he has little fear they will protect him well: he has told them a third party holds damning information that will be turned over to Federal prosecutors if Retro should have an "accident." Retro and his bodyguard (see below) occupy the master suite; the mobsters occupy various guest bedrooms throughout the house.

The house is also equipped with a state-of-the-art electric alarm system. Defeating it requires a Security System Roll at -3. The alarm is silent, and alerts the Mafia guards via a beeper system; woe betide the burglar who believes he has successfully defeated the system only to end up staring down gun barrels moments later! The alarm, however, does not alert the police—if they are to be involved, Retro wants to be the one who makes the decision to call them in, not some head-hunting vigilante!

By now Retro has hired a personal bodyguard; who it is depends on how well the characters have done in previous episodes. If they haven't denied him income opportunities, he can afford to hire the best: Snafu (*Justice, Not Law*, page 118). He's a killing machine, and the hero team that can get through him to Retro is either extremely lucky, clever, powerful or all three. If Retro has been denied some income opportunities he can still afford Gunmetal Silk (*Underworld En-*

*emies*, page 68) who is in many ways just as tough as Snafu. Cheapest, yet still incredibly deadly, is Hell Razor, on loan to Retro as a cartel favor (*Underworld Enemies*, page 74). Of course Retro still has his personal flunkies (2-5) from his days as a lieutenant in the Hudson City Carillo-Mendoza cartel operation (see his description). Unless the vigilantes penetrate the house and find Retro without causing any alarm (very unlikely) they will have to get through Retro's protection before they can come to grips with the main man.

#### Important Note about Retro's Bodyguards

The various bodyguards, as written, will probably overwhelm the characters if used "as is." Apply the "Rule of Two" mentioned in the Introduction in reverse: Subtract two dice of damage, two from the OCV/DCV of the bodyguard, a point of Speed, and lower the character's Defenses by 2-4 points. That should still leave the PCs with a tough fight, but one they might win.

#### Battle Tactics

In a battle, each of the bodyguards will fight as best suits their personalities and powers. Gunmetal Silk will act calmly and sensibly where Hell Razor would throw caution to the wind. Snafu, in a similar situation, wouldn't hesitate to begin methodically mowing down everything that moved. If Retro is forced to flee, the estate grounds provide a great place for a chase: the oversize pool, underground parking garage, and rifle range are only a few of the features inside the fence that can make a chase interesting. Outside the fence is a wasteland of burned houses and ash; a perfect backdrop for a dramatic chase that ends with a little fisticuffs or perhaps some dramatic fireworks.

Whatever happens, the police don't come until or unless they are called: the estate is now isolated enough that gunshots can't be heard by anyone not already there, since the police are keeping the public from entering the burned areas.

#### House Contents

The wing of the house that Retro is occupying has numerous interesting items: the most important is a room with a photocopier and several large magnetic media storage cabinets. Before The Machine ceased to work for Retro, Retro used it to copy thousands of megabytes of information and record hundreds of hours of conversations. He stores it all here and is in the process of making copies and sending them to a secure, off-site area. How much Retro has been able to send away is up to the GM; it provides for interesting adventure seeds if some information about the heroes has been mailed to some far away location, only to surface months or years from now in someone else's hands. The room, sadly, is rigged to explode and burn if entered by persons who don't know the code that defuses the firebomb that is rigged whenever



the door is opened. Characters are unlikely to be able to salvage much information and will have to be content with the knowledge that Retro's store of data has been destroyed. Once the door is opened, the room can be seen: a keypad with a flashing red light can also be seen, but what does it mean? After one minute the bomb will go off. Appropriate sinister buzzes and whistles will warn the characters that something *bad* is about to happen.

GMs shouldn't use the firebomb as a method of killing or injuring characters but rather as a plot device to prevent the data from falling into the character's hands. It wouldn't be any fun if the characters could know everything worth knowing about the Card Shark organization, the Mafia and most of the other criminal organizations in Hudson City. It is possible, of course, for characters to grab something at random and leave before the bomb goes off; GMs who allow this to happen should be prepared to prepare some information for the players to use in future adventures (another adventure seed).

Aside from the data room, the house contains lots of expensive toys such as large-screen TVs, CD players and even a Virtual Reality game that costs approximately \$50,000 (and fills up a medium-sized moving van). In addition to the toys are sundry trappings of the rich such as leaded crystal, expensive wines, silk drapes, leather couches and a kitchen outfitted to please a top French Chef. Hidden away in Retro's "office" are packets of cash (GM's discretion at how much cash the characters can lay their hands on), useful bits of information about the criminal underworld (again, adventure seeds) and the originals of the character's files as provided to Retro by The Machine. Characters who have a grudge against the Mafia might be able to find clues in the rooms used by the mobsters (telephone numbers, addresses, matchbooks and so on; yep, more adventure seeds). GMs who wish to reward successful characters in a huge way can allow them to discover financial documents that award ownership of the estate to whoever bears the documents to the bank; the estate would make a wonderful base of operations for a team of vigilantes operating in Hudson City. Alternatively, a character with sufficient wealth could simply buy it from the holding company Retro arranged to hold the deed (after Retro "passes away," of course).

## Aftermath:

### "Episode Three, Part III"

## Cleaning Up

Once the direct conflict with Retro is resolved, there's still a lot to do. GMs who don't want to worry about the details can just use GM fiat to describe what happens in the ensuing weeks. GMs who are willing to put a little time into their campaigns can take advantage of the biggest adventure seed of them all: this epic adventure. When Retro is killed, captured or chased away by the characters (without his store of information he's just another smart criminal) his criminal organization will quickly crumble as crime lords from around the city realize they're no longer beholden to him. Within a few weeks the city will be pretty much as it was before Optik started extorting money from the city's criminal underground: that's why this epic is called "Hudson City Blues." The characters have expended lots of blood, sweat and tears during this long, hot summer, and what have they gotten in return? Hudson City, the way it was in the springtime: riddled with crime and inequities, poverty and drug use, meaningless suffering. Only now it's Autumn.

Of course the characters (hopefully) prevented a Crime Boss from taking over nearly all criminal activities in the city, which would have been worse in the long run for all honest citizens. Along the way a lot of people died. Maybe they would have died anyway. What can the characters take as a badge of honor from all their toil?

They tried. They didn't lay down and let Retro run things the way he wanted to. The heroes were heroes, and although the police may not entirely agree or understand, they saved the city from a fate that would have blighted Hudson City for years to come. This, and only this, is what the characters have to recognize as their accomplishment. While things aren't better, they aren't worse, either. And that's the blues for you.

## Owning Up

In the process of playing through this Epic Adventure, the characters have all had an opportunity to demonstrate what they're willing to do to fight crime. Depending on the campaign, some or all of the characters may have actually killed one or more villains: that's *Dark Champions* in a nutshell. Even in the darkest, grittiest campaign, however, there have to be repercussions. GMs should review the "what the cops know" section of the scorecards for Parts I, II, and III and make some sort of record for future play which characters are sought by police and why.

For example, during the playtest of this Epic Adventure, Mr. Mist tracked a drug dealer to her apartment and killed the dealer by putting a bullet in her



brain. Later in the episode, during the gang firefight outside the mission, Mr. Mist was seen executing three stunned gang members after he forced their truck to crash. As a result, the police now know that the gun used to kill the drug dealer was also used to kill the gangbangers at the site of the truck crash. Since Mr. Mist was seen at the second incident, the police now want him for the first murder as well. Characters may or may not realize the extent of the police's knowledge concerning them. For future games in the campaign, however, characters like Mr. Mist will have an official "record," even if it reads something like "wanted for questioning in X murders (assaults, kidnappings, thefts and so on)."

Once you have resolved what records the characters now have, it's time to review the Scorecards for new enemies that have been made during the campaign. This is, of course, optional, but GMs who wish to tie the characters more closely to the flow of the campaign can swap Hunteds and Watcheds that aren't currently relevant (any that did not come up during the course of the campaign are good candidates) for new Hunteds and/or Watcheds that arose during play of this Epic Adventure.

An alternative view is that Hunteds and Watcheds that did not come into play during the campaign should be retained as future adventure seeds to take the campaign into new directions: the players may have seen enough of street gang thugs during the last eight or so game sessions to last them a lifetime. GMs should decide what to do and possibly consult with their players about the changes: then again, since the characters won't necessarily know until the changed "Hunted" comes into play that "so-and-so" is now after them with a vengeance, why not keep the players in the dark, too?

Another aspect of the characters' lives needs to be examined at the end of the campaign: characters' families and DNPCs. What do they know? Do any family members or DNPCs suspect anything? What actions might they take in the future to confirm or allay their suspicions? GMs should collate a list for each character and record any suspicions or facts of which the people who know the characters are aware. In future game sessions, this information will be useful for GMs to help flesh out the characters' backgrounds, not to mention keeping them on their toes!

Once GMs have noted down information about the characters' families and DNPCs, new enemies and police records, some adventure seeds may have already sprouted. For more adventure seeds, keep reading!

## Loose Ends: New Adventures

Sprinkled throughout the adventure are brief mentions of possible adventure seeds. Here are a few more for GMs to consider:

### Adventure Seeds Based on Enemies:

#### • Hell Razor

If Hell Razor is used in this adventure and he is wounded or slain by the PCs, his father will naturally be upset. Since Hell Razor's description is not specific about what cartel he springs from, you are free to decide which cartel family the PCs have offended. A new adventure could take three parts. First, the cartel would investigate Hell Razor's death and determine who is responsible. Second, the cartel might hire a professional assassin to take one or more of the characters out. Last, the cartel might hit the characters with a full combat team, take hostages and demand the city turn the vigilantes over in return for their release or perhaps lure the characters to South America where "justice" can be more easily dealt out.

#### • Snafu

If the characters kill Snafu, the U.S. Government might actually award them a medal, as he is a walking example of government stupidity. If they take his mini-gun, the government might want it back (and





feel a little more confident about getting it back from a mere vigilante as opposed to Snafu himself). Once the characters come to the attention of the government, the Feds may call upon the characters for a service, when they least expect it.

- **Gunmetal Silk**

If she gets away from the characters and survives, nothing much would happen: she doesn't keep grudges. If she's killed, however, someone, somewhere, will be upset. Since she must have cost a lot to build, and she always sends her fees away to someone else, some person or organization has an interest in her well being, not to mention a reason to be upset if she is killed. That person could be any well-off, technically-oriented villain the GM wishes to designate; likely groups include Raven (note her familiarity with Raven weaponry) or even the U.S. Government (a valuable undercover operative and research project!).

- **Ashtray Art**

At different times during the adventure the characters have opportunities to have some contact with the Asylum. One direct way to involve, say, the Idiot King would be for him to interrogate Ashtray Art about the vigilantes and then decide it would be fun to go out and "play" with the heroes. A clever GM would construct a plot in which Ashtray Art figured prominently as a clue resource and possibly the key to defeating the Idiot King's diabolical plan (see pages 12-29 of *Underworld Enemies* for various Asylum adventure seeds).

- **Criminal Organizations**

Various street gangs, the Mafia and the Card Shark organization all have different reasons for having an interest in the characters in future adventures: some of the most interesting possibilities come from any friendly relations between the Card Shark organization and the characters. What will come of that? Will it be "business as usual?" Or will a character or two forge some sort of partnership with the devil to aid their war on crime? The Card Shark technical branch can come up with some high tech toys that would make the mouth of any red-blooded vigilante water; What if Card Shark gave a "gift" to whichever character was most agreeable to allying in the fight against Retro? Of course none of this may have happened in some campaigns, but GMs should not pass up an opportunity to explore more stories that involve dealing with the devil to do good deeds.

Where the Card Shark organization isn't likely to change, WITCH might be influenced by a character willing to work towards that goal. At least some of the gang's goals are OK. They work against the oppression of women in the street gang culture, for example, and if nothing else positive comes of being a street warrior, many women undoubtedly learn to stand up for themselves, possibly for the first time in their lives. A GM wanting to run a series of adventures in which one or more characters attempted to "reform" the street gang could lead to some interesting stories and roleplaying.

- **Plain Jane**

Since she's so hard to pin down, Plain Jane could well still be at large, causing problems that grow in seriousness as she continues her campaign to be noticed.

- **The Hanged Man**

Many of the weapons used by the villains in this epic are supplied by the Hanged Man. Characters who don't make even an attempt to investigate this strange phenomenon are dull as roof slate. Why is the Hanged Man supplying the criminal element with a source of cheap illegal weaponry? He *can't* be making money on the deal. You should check The Machine's story line and description to refresh themselves about what The Machine could have learned about Desmond Gallows' operation; other avenues of investigation are up to the GM.

- **Crusade**

The story line about Crusader/Crusade in *Underworld Enemies* is quite good. GMs should consider running it either before or after this Epic Adventure. Crusade's methods may not bother some players who are particularly vicious themselves: if this is the case, GMs might consider having Crusade make a mistake and accidentally kill, maim or wound an innocent bystander who turns out to be related to a player character. Nothing brings home the injustice of violent vigilantism like having a costumed madman take one of your own by mistake! Crusade is an opponent the characters could expect to triumph over within a more reasonable time span than the incredible Harbinger; for campaigns not slated to last a long, long time, he makes a better long-term plot device/target.

- **The Arsenal**

Mercenaries never appreciate people who manage to kill one or more of their number. While they're too professional to band together and hunt the characters down if this has happened, they might make it known to the underworld that future jobs involving the killing of vigilantes wouldn't cost too much money. GMs may decide that one or two members of The Arsenal have become slightly unhinged by a death of a friend and begin hunting one or more of the characters on their own.

- **The Police**

In defeating Retro the characters may have caused enough ruckus that they attracted the attention of the police. Perhaps GMs could develop the Vigilante Activities Investigation Squad idea (*Justice, Not Law*, page 18) and make the squad an ongoing thorn in the PCs' sides. Alternatively, perhaps one officer on the force has become fixated on one or more of the heroes and becomes a problem.



# RESOURCES

This section contains information GMs can use to help prepare their players for a Dark Champions campaign set in Hudson City, including three hand-outs, a "quicklook" at Hudson City, a list of parameters used to prepare the eight pre-generated player characters used to playtest the campaign and a "Vigilante Worksheet" players can fill out to help them understand the daily lives of their characters.

Almost all the player characters were created using the theme "Children of the Bullet." Somewhere, each has a bullet in their background. Most of the characters were also created using the Normal Characteristic Maxima Disadvantage; GMs who feel this is too limiting should feel free to alter it. If all the characters restricted to a maximum of 20 in their Primary Characteristics, it is much easier to balance adventures and to provide that eerie feeling players get when they realize the bad guy they're fighting isn't restricted like they are.

All of the player characters emphasize personality and style over brute mini-maxing efficiency; GMs who want characters who operate at peak mathematical potential will have to do some rewriting. Players should be able to find a character more or less to their liking and can use the character as is or base their own *Dark Champions* character on the concept.

Some of the characters may appear similar; in the case of Atropos and Sharpshooter, this is a case of parallel evolution. Yet the characters are markedly different: Atropos kills, and she has an extensive network of contacts and a bevy of favors that make her a powerhouse character for a player who wants to work the political/organizing end of the game. Sharpshooter, on the other hand, while a sniper, isn't quite up to killing criminals in cold blood and is much more suited to the traditional, physical role of the vigilante hero.

A few of the characters have direct connections to the Hudson City campaign setting; sometimes these connections are not made explicit in the description. The Notes section of each character contains additional information.



## Vigilante Worksheet

So, you wanna fight crime, eh? Well, it's often been said that vigilantism is the occupation of the rich and shiftless. Is this the case for your vigilante? Players should fill this worksheet out as completely as possible and return it to the GM. If there are areas that require further thought players can either leave something blank or fill something in and ask to change it later. Players should remember that all NPCs are under the control of the GM: while the suggestions you make on this handout are valuable and useful to your GM, it's up to your GM to use them, change them, or ignore them as they like!

### Work:

What is the character's job? \_\_\_\_\_

What days of the week does the character work? \_\_\_\_\_

Is the character's work schedule consistent (always Monday through Friday or a different number of days each week)? \_\_\_\_\_

What hours of the day does the character work? \_\_\_\_\_

What would happen if the character went to work... Tired? \_\_\_\_\_  
Slightly Injured? \_\_\_\_\_  
Injured significantly? \_\_\_\_\_  
Hardly able to move? \_\_\_\_\_

How easy is it for the character to get time off? \_\_\_\_\_

### Family:

Does the character have family in Hudson City (whether DNPCs or not)? \_\_\_\_\_

Do any family members live with the character? \_\_\_\_\_

What family/significant other obligations does the character have on a...  
Daily basis? \_\_\_\_\_  
Weekly basis? \_\_\_\_\_  
Monthly basis? \_\_\_\_\_  
Holiday basis? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the character's general relationship with his or her family? \_\_\_\_\_

Do children ever visit the character's domicile? \_\_\_\_\_

### Home and Misc:

Where does the character live? \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of furniture does the character own? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the character usually cook meals, eat out or eat pre-prepared meals? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the character live alone? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the character know his or her neighbors? \_\_\_\_\_

Where does the character store "vigilante" type stuff? \_\_\_\_\_

### Money:

Is the character forced to work to pay bills, earn money for food, etc? \_\_\_\_\_

What would happen if the character earned no money for a:

Day? \_\_\_\_\_

Week? \_\_\_\_\_

Month? \_\_\_\_\_

Three Month Period? \_\_\_\_\_

Year? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the character have enough money to pay for replacement charges, ammunition for foci, and so on? \_\_\_\_\_

When payment for "illegal" things is made, what form does it take? \_\_\_\_\_

If payments are cash, where does the cash come from? \_\_\_\_\_

Where does the character bank? \_\_\_\_\_

### Vigilante Activities:

Briefly describe a typical vigilante "night" out: \_\_\_\_\_

How does the character move around the city? \_\_\_\_\_

What does the character do with criminals he or she apprehends? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the character's vigilante "costume:" \_\_\_\_\_

What would your character do (while alone) if he or she was injured for:  
1 or 2 BODY? \_\_\_\_\_  
Less than half BODY? \_\_\_\_\_  
More than half BODY? \_\_\_\_\_

### Play:

What hobbies (if any) does the character have? \_\_\_\_\_

If the character went to a park, what would he or she do? \_\_\_\_\_

If the character spent a quiet day at home, what would he or she do? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the character like to read? If so, what authors or books? \_\_\_\_\_

What group sports does the character like to play (other than beating the snot out of bad guys)? \_\_\_\_\_





## Player Handouts Hudson City

A short, one-page primer to Hudson City can make a great handout for players. By using this sheet in conjunction with a copy of the Hudson City map, players can contribute a great deal to the atmosphere of the game.

Welcome to Hudson City. Approximately 7.5 million people live in the metropolitan area. The city boasts several professional sports teams, a seaport, three major universities and some of the most celebrated art museums in the world.

Welcome to Hudson City. It has one of the highest crime rates in the United States. Youth gangs, organized crime, foreign criminal organizations, drug lords and numerous independents make Hudson City their home.

Welcome to Hudson City. It has the most active vigilantes of any city in the United States. The Harbinger of Justice and the Scarecrow are but two of the most ruthless: a score of others walk the streets wearing masks, fighting for justice, not law.

Welcome to Hudson City.

### Neighborhoods

Hudson City has a number of different neighborhoods: Bankhurst (upscale, low crime), Blackbridge (mixed, notable crime area), Eastwood (dingy high crime), Elmview (contains the Strip, high crime), Gadsden (low/mid class, moderate to high crime), Irishtown (upper class, low crime), Pierpoint (yuppy invasion loft neighborhood, high crime), Riverside Hills (low-mid crime, and industry), Slums (all moderate to high crime): Freetown, Latin City, North Elmview. Ethnic Neighborhoods (all moderate to high crime): Chinatown, (and within, Chinatown, Koreatown, Little Saigon, Little Tokyo), Little Italy, Moscow West.

### Travel

James Aberdeen International Airport, bus routes on major streets, the "el", the subway ("the Newbold"), and taxis.

### Colleges

City College, Hudson City State University, Hudson City University.

### Newspapers

The City News (standard), The Hudson City Agenda (left-wing), The Hudson City Daily Star-Gazette (standard), The Hudson City Mirror (intellectual/news), The Hudson Sun (tabloid), The National Inquisition (grocery store tabloid).

### Sports

Hudson City Heroes (baseball), Hudson City Cougars (b-ball), Hudson City Thunderbolts (football), Hudson City Storm (hockey, Toledo area locals don't laugh), Hudson City Hellions (arena football), Hudson City Harriers (soccer).

### Restaurants

Biff's Grill, The Carthage Club, Cooley's Irish Steakhouse, Manetti's, The Spinning Diamond, A Taste of Paris.

### Nightclubs

Caribbean Karma, Dante's Inferno, Eddie's Pub, Jericho, Neon Samurai, the Skyline Club.

### Local bands

Maximum Color (rap), Napalm Martini (rock), Roocirie Goldenvenom (folk), Slices of Psychosis (alternative), The Solitaires (60's holdover), SSSP (jazz), Tom and the Ailuropyros (rock), Woodrow Crashes and the Scooter (alternative).

### Theaters

The Ferranti Auditorium, The Kleinmann Center for the Performing and Visual Arts.

### Museums

The Hudson City Gangland Museum, The Hudson City Museum of Anthropology and Natural History, The Kleinmann Center (visual and performing arts), The Museum of World Art, The Thorson Museum of Archeology.

### Parks

Blackbridge Park, Elmview Park, Gadsden Park, Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, LeMastre Park (zoo).

### Theme parks

Dino-Land, Hudson City Zoo (LeMastre Park), Nicolaus Aquarium, Olde Hudson City.

### Active Vigilantes

GMs should fill in names he or she wants in the campaign here:

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## Sample Player Characters

The playtest characters used to balance this adventure were developed using the following parameters. GMs who change the parameters for their campaign should keep in mind they will have to make changes throughout the adventure to compensate for the change in power levels. These characters are all "Heroic" and probably represent the weakest (but most exciting) power level possible for this Epic Adventure. You should feel free to photocopy this page for distribution when you are helping players through the character creation phase of this campaign.

You should note that none of the example characters are loners; some may be more apt than others to join or seek to start a group. Since group play is key to this campaign, you might want to encourage players who use the example characters to make a change or two: one such change might be merely adding "seeks to form a vigilante group to better fight crime" to the Motivation section of the background.

### Parameters

Base point availability is 150: 75 points plus 75 points in disadvantages.

### Equipment

- Weapons: Most weapons are available at no point cost, although a general limit of 100 Real Points is in force for what can be owned or carried at one time. Players should refer to the "Equipment Allowances" chart on *Dark Champions*, page 100 for further information about equipment. Characters must take Weapon Familiarity Skill with the weapons they choose to use (or suffer the -3 OCV "no familiarity" penalty to use them).
- Unusual weapons cost character points. An unusual weapon is any custom weapon or any weapon the GM deems too powerful on the weapon list in DC. LAW rockets and chainguns, for example, are so powerful that GMs may wish for the character to be concomitantly weaker by forcing them to expend character points to use the weapon (if the GM allows the weapon to be used at all!)

- Vehicle weapons must be purchased normally through the vehicle creation process!
- Armor: Characters in this campaign are allowed to own Kevlar Armor (+5 PD/+5 ED) at no point cost providing the player could provide a rationale for their character to possess the armor. You can impose a 11- or a 14- Activation Roll if you desire. In the playtest campaign there was no Activation Roll for the basic armor but enemies could target non-armored areas.
- Gadgets: Simple gadgets that cost 5 or less points can be owned if the player can provide a rationale for their character to own the item.

### Superpowers

No superpowers for characters, although a number of unusual effects are possible by bending the definitions of how a power works to fit in a well trained normals framework. NPCs can have minor superpowers; usually hi-tech or some unexplainable mutation.

### Disadvantages

A common disadvantage is: Normal Characteristic Maxima. For a full description of preferred character development details, consult *Dark Champions*, pages 41-42.

### Range For Starting Values

Damage Classes: 2-8, Res. Defense: 0-7, Non-Res Def: 2-8, Combat Values w/levels: 3-9, Skill Rolls: 8- to 14-, DEX: 10-20, Speed: 2-4, Attack Active Pts: up to 40, Power Active Pts: up to 15

### Background

For this campaign, each character should have a fully developed Background/History, Personality/Motivation, Quote, Appearance and Record: (at least a paragraph for the first two). All aspects of the character's powers, skills, abilities and so on must be explained: if a character has access to hand grenades, there must be an explanation somewhere in the character's prose description.



## Sharpshooter

**Background/History:** It all changed when Mom and Dad died, but then things got better. Things insurance and inheritance didn't hurt any. They didn't change again for a long time, even after the police academy, even after the humiliation of being posted to Parking and Traffic.

Then Ben King, an old family friend, invited Miriam and her twin sister Marion to a paintball game. Miriam had to play with a klutzy, one-shot gun but managed to score at least one "kill" each game. Of course it was too much work for Marion, who stretched out in the sun for a tan instead of playing.

"You did good, Miriam," Ben said. "For a first-timer, you kicked butt. What's with the glum face?"

She gestured over to where most of the paintball players were standing, ogling and talking with her sister. "Marion gets all the attention," Miriam almost pouted.

Ben looked surprised. "Has it slipped your mind that you guys are twins, or what? Get over it. And listen, I know some tricks you should learn...help keep you from getting shot in the back like that last game. Did that sting, or what?"

"Not really," said Miriam. She almost turned to Ben and admitted she'd thought of other people during the game, substituted faces, the people that shot Mom and Dad, thought of shooting them and shooting them and shooting them. Turning to Ben she smiled her best smile and asked, "what tricks?"

Ben preened. "I used to be a sniper in the Marines, doncha know..."



**Personality/Motivation:** Miriam is the serious twin, a brooding woman who doesn't much care that she's a knock out. Even before her parents were killed during a mugging while she was in High School, Miriam was the silent, strong type. She excelled in High School sports, getting three letters while playing for the Hudson City Day School softball, basketball and volleyball teams. Her intensity tends to scare people; most prefer her bubbly, empty-headed twin, Marion. Miriam resents her sister's easy way with people, and labors under the misperception that Marion is more attractive. Marion does have more presence but has considerably less mental and physical agility. But there's no telling Miriam this, however.

Miriam drifted into her role as Sharpshooter quite slowly; she doesn't like to admit, even to herself, that she guided the "drift" with a sure hand. She became an Aikido expert after being exposed to the martial art during her police training, and she cajoled Ben King into giving her formal sniper training after playing paintball. Then one night she took her paintball outfit and a real sniper rifle (all packed in a big duffel bag) into a "bad" neighborhood and set up a nest. That night nothing happened, but the next night she saw a drug deal go down under a streetlight two blocks away. That was enough for her. She sprayed the area with bullets and both targets went down hard. Calling 911, she did her best to disguise her voice and told the dispatcher where two criminals could be found. Retribution had begun; all those who bought and sold drugs, who stole to get the money to buy drugs, all those people were in her sights. Each time Miriam pulls the trigger, she's keeping hold of her parents' memory.

When the cruiser pulled up, the dealer and the buyer were just coming around. Bruised and bloodied by the hail of rubber bullets, they were easily cuffed and the evidence—little vials of crack cocaine—gathered up into evidence bags. Onlookers noted spent rubber bullets laying everywhere, and some took note: a new vigilante had joined the scene.

**Quote:** "Oh look...parked illegally, cash in one hand, a leeeeeetle bag of white powder in the other. Time to take a nap, scumbag!"

**Powers/Tactics:** Sharpshooter is an athletic woman familiar with the martial arts and small arms. Her approach is naive: she strolls into a neighborhood off the bus (she doesn't own a car like her sister), suits up in some dark corner and finds a handy rooftop with a good view of the street and more than one escape route. She waits, she watches, she waits some more until she sees some sort of drug-related crime. And then she cuts loose, aiming her first few shots for best effect then spraying the area full auto with rubber bullets. She might blind or maim someone, but, oh well, they're criminals, right?

She does carry live ammo for the CAR-15 and always uses live ammo in her Glock-19.

Miriam knows she's not a hand-to-hand person, but she feels prepared for ordinary circumstances and won't hesitate to fight in order to escape.



**Appearance:** Miriam and Marion are identical twins. Tall (5'11") and athletically built, Miriam doesn't look much like the currently popular "waif" models but she still turns heads with her leggy good looks. Unlike Marion, Miriam doesn't really realize she's model-beautiful and doesn't do much to enhance her beauty with makeup or fancy clothes. As an officer, she's a striking figure in slacks. As Sharpshooter she wears an urban "ghille" or ragged, tough clothes covered with rags that break up her lines and make her very difficult to see unless she moves.

**Record:** The police are concerned about the sniper who shoots at criminals, but given the low status of the victims and the fact that so far this sniper hasn't taken a human life, the search has been very low key. They don't even know that a new vigilante has joined the crime fighting scene, much less the name "Sharpshooter." All this might change is someone is maimed or killed during an ambush, or if an undercover officer is shot while performing his or her duties at a fake "buy."

**Notes:** Miriam is being kept in Parking & Traffic by her supervisor, who is enamored of her. Ben, her contact, suspects but does not know for certain that Miriam is the Sharpshooter; he may follow her one night and act as a substitute DNPC or help her out.

**Future Development:** Miriam isn't a very good crime fighter: she's a one-trick pony. While her stealth is very good from her paintball experience, she might need to add a formal "camouflage" power to remain concealed once people begin looking more carefully at rooftops. And any hand-to-hand fighting will be an opportunity for failure until she improves her Martial Arts a bit, maybe adding some Damage Classes. Miriam doesn't have anything exotic; Flash Defense, radio, utility belt, not even a vehicle. She's fast, moderately tough, well armed...but no match for serious opposition. As she develops she'll also have to come to grips with her crime fighting style: is she willing to kill? What will she do if she successfully drives the drug dealers off the streets and indoors? How will her tactics change? Ben, her contact, might develop into a DNPC or, even better, a competent follower.

## Sharpshooter (Miriam Martinson)

| Val | CHA  | Cost | Roll | Notes            |
|-----|------|------|------|------------------|
| 13  | STR  | 3    | 12-  | 150 kg; 2½d6 [1] |
| 17  | DEX  | 21   | 12-  | OCV: 6/DCV: 6    |
| 15  | CON  | 10   | 12-  |                  |
| 12  | BODY | 4    | 11-  |                  |
| 18  | INT  | 8    | 13-  | PER Roll 13-     |
| 13  | EGO  | 6    | 12-  | ECV: 4           |
| 10  | PRE  | 0    | 11-  | PRE Attack: 2d6  |
| 18  | COM  | 4    | 13-  |                  |
| 3   | PD   |      |      |                  |
| 3   | ED   |      |      |                  |
| 3   | SPD  | 3    |      | Phases: 4, 8, 12 |
| 6   | REC  |      |      |                  |
| 30  | END  |      |      |                  |
| 27  | STUN |      |      |                  |

**Total Characteristic Cost:** 59

**Movement:** Running: 6"/12" Swimming: 2"/4"

### Powers & Skills

#### Martial Arts—Aikido: (20)

| Maneuver   | OCV | DCV | Damage                    |
|------------|-----|-----|---------------------------|
| Throw      | 6   | 7   | 2½d6+v/5;<br>Target falls |
| Hold       | 5   | 5   | STR 23 Hold               |
| Strike     | 7   | 9   | 2½d6                      |
| Dodge      | —   | +5  | Abort                     |
| Escape     | 6   | 6   | STR 28 Escape             |
| Breakfall  | 12- | (3) |                           |
| KS: Aikido | 8-  | (1) |                           |

#### Combat Training:

Range Levels: +2 Range Mod w/ Guns (6)  
 Combat Levels: +1 Level w/ Rifles (3)  
 Combat Levels: +2 Levels w/ Aikido (6)

#### Sniper Training:

Combat Sense 13- (3)  
 Climbing 12- (3)  
 Lockpicking 12- (3)  
 Security Systems 13- (3)  
 Stealth 15- (3)

#### Police Training:

Criminology 13- (3)  
 Deduction 13- (3)  
 Fringe Benefit: Police Powers (2)  
 Fringe Benefit: Permit to carry a pistol (1)  
 KS: Hudson City 11- (2)  
 KS: Law 8- (1)  
 KS: Police World 11- (2)  
 Paramedic 13- (3)  
 PS: Police Officer 11- (2)  
 WF: Small Arms (2)

#### Background Advantages:

Contact: Ben King, ex-sniper, 11- (2)  
 Luck: 1d6 (5)  
 Money: \$100,000 income per year (1)

#### Equipment (All free):

Kevlar Jacket: Armor (+5 PD/+5 ED), Act. 14-  
 CAR-15 w/ Scope  
 Glock 19  
 Colt Police Positive (Service Pistol)  
 Monocular  
 Rope

**Total Powers & Skills Cost:** 91

**Total Character Cost:** 150

#### Disadvantages: 75+

#### Distinctive Features:

Leggy Blonde, easy to conceal (5)  
 DNPC: Marion (twin sister), normal, 8- (10)  
 Normal Characteristics Maxima (20)  
 Psychological Limitation:  
 Hatred of drug dealers (15)  
 Vengeful (10)  
 Secret Identity: Miriam Martinson (15)

**Total Disadvantage Points:** 150



## Heartwrencher

**Background/History:** He was just returning home from when it happened. It. Thomas Hart tried not to think about it, but sometimes he couldn't help the scene that popped into his mind: the tall black kid in gang colors with the shotgun, the weasely white guy who looked uncomfortable in brand new jeans and a leather vest with western-style frills...and his father, saying his last words... "no, not in front of the..."

All the police could ever say was that it was maybe some drug dealer who'd gone to jail because Dad couldn't get him off. The evidence was too good, the man was too guilty! It wasn't his fault!

And all Tom Hart did was stand there while the shotgun went off, and the white guy said "good job, kid, you'll be going places, now let's get outa here." And then they left. It was young Tom Hart who raised the phone to his lips; it was a teenager who dialed 911. It was an old, old man who said "two men just killed my father."

Later, in the foster home, he tried to forget. In college, in ROTC, he tried to forget. Serving six years in Army Intelligence, he tried to forget. Finally, Tom Hart gave up trying to forget It and gave in to the delicious fantasy firing all kinds of guns gave him: that the men his father used to set free of the legal system would stand in front of his sights. And bleed.



**Personality/Motivation:** Heartwrencher is an all-around superior person: stronger, faster, smarter. He succeeds easily where others struggle. After six years of Army life he effortlessly started a security firm specializing in electronic surveillance. He is glib and friendly enough to know all the people he needs to know to get the hardware for his "night" job. Thomas Hart, for all that, is a quiet, grim man who's not quite sure he is strong or fast enough to succeed in his chosen profession. His compassion is measured out in mindful dribs and drabs towards honest citizens. Criminals are lower than low, and are accorded status somewhat lower than diseased animals (they at least deserve to be put down mercifully).

**Quote:** "Freeze!" BRRRRRAAAAAAP! "Thanks. I hate moving targets."

**Powers/Tactics:** Heartwrencher is a classic gun-oriented vigilante. His military connections avail him of a wide range of weapons, and he doesn't hesitate to use them. His six years of Army Intelligence, however, mean that Heartwrencher doesn't merely stalk the streets mowing down the criminal element whenever he happens to meet them. Hart relies on his surveillance equipment and abilities to help him determine where his efforts would be best spent.

In a fight, Heartwrencher relies on surprise and superior firepower to defeat his enemies. He does his best to be prepared with weaponry that best suits the situation and uses his knowledge of tactics to best employ that weaponry. Once the shooting starts, it tends to be a stand-up affair. It's possible Heartwrencher will learn to be more discrete as time passes.

**Appearance:** Thomas Hart stands 5'11", has brown hair and weighs a tidy 180 lbs. His face is serious and somber: his eyes are quick and darting.

**Record:** Heartwrencher has no record (yet) with the authorities. However, his indiscriminate use of heavy weapons in the city is bound to bring attention to him...and sooner or later, cause a tragedy.

**Notes:** Tom Hart's Dad was killed by a young Buckshot who was hired along with the anonymous man (You can decide to ignore the other man or make him a figure in the campaign). Since Heartwrencher undoubtedly will do all he can to kill Buckshot when he recognizes him (You should figure a way to make the recognition occur in a dramatic fashion) this will add spice to the campaign.

**Future Development:** Heartwrencher has all the hardware he needs. Next on his list might be a point of Speed, Streetwise Skill or perhaps a street Contact. All of these goals can be reached by the start of Episode III.

# Heartwrencher (Thomas Hart)

| Val | CHA  | Cost | Roll | Notes            |
|-----|------|------|------|------------------|
| 18  | STR  | 8    | 13-  | 300 kg; 3½d6 [2] |
| 13  | DEX  | 6    | 12-  | OCV: 4/DCV: 4    |
| 13  | CON  | 6    | 12-  |                  |
| 13  | BODY | 6    | 12-  |                  |
| 18  | INT  | 8    | 13-  | PER Roll 13-     |
| 13  | EGO  | 6    | 12-  | ECV: 4           |
| 18  | PRE  | 8    | 18-  | PRE Attack: 3½d6 |
| 12  | COM  | 1    | 12-  |                  |
| 4   | PD   |      |      |                  |
| 3   | ED   |      |      |                  |
| 3   | SPD  | 7    |      | Phases: 4, 8, 12 |
| 7   | REC  |      |      |                  |
| 26  | END  |      |      |                  |
| 29  | STUN |      |      |                  |

Total Characteristic Cost: 59

Movement: Running: 8"/16" Swimming: 2"/4"

## Powers & Skills

### Surveillance & Evasion Gear:

Wolf's Ears: (OIF [Head Set])

+4 Hearing PER Rolls for Hearing Group (5)

Flash Defense: 10 Hearing (7)

IR Goggles (OIF)

Infrared Vision (3)

Tracking Bug: (IAF [bug & detector])

Detect Transmitter at Range, +6 vs. Range for the

Detect, Requires a Bugging Skill Roll at -2 (8)

Listening Bug: (IAF [bug & detector])

Clairaudience, 400" range, Requires a Bugging

Skill Roll at -3 (15)

Smoke Grenades: (OAF)

Darkness to Normal Sight, 3" radius, Range

Based on STR, Does not work in High Winds

or Rain (-¼), 4 continuing charges, each lasts

1 minute (11)

Running: +2" (4)

### Army Training:

Bugging 13- (3)

Climbing 12- (3)

Computer Programming 8- (1)

Contact: Army Quartermaster 11- (3)

Cryptography 8- (1)

Demolitions 11- (3)

Electronics 11- (3)

Interrogation 8- (1)

Lockpicking 12- (3)

PS: Army Intelligence Officer 11- (2)

Security Systems 13- (3)

Survival 11- (3)

Tactics 13- (3)

Weaponsmith: Small Arms 11- (3)

### Background Advantages:

Fringe Benefit: Concealed Weapons Permit (1)

Money: \$100,00 income per year (1)

### Equipment (All free):

Kevlar Jacket: Armor (+5 PD/+5 ED), Act. 14-

XM-214 "Six-Pak" Machine Gun

"Street Sweeper" Shotgun

H&K CAWS

Remington M700 Rifle

Colt Python

.44 Automag

Glock 20

Ingram MAC-10

.50 Cal. Sniper Rifle

M79 Grenade Launcher

40mm fragmentation grenades

40mm concussive grenades

40mm airburst grenades

Hand Grenades, Fragmentation, Concussion,

Stun, Tear Gas

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 91

Total Character Cost: 150

### Disadvantages: 75+

#### DNPC:

Norm Michaels (drug addict), Normal, 11- (15)

#### Hunted by:

Drug Dealer, 11- (15)

Normal Characteristic Maxima (20)

#### Psychological Limitation:

Vigilante Mentality: Judge, Jury and Executioner(20)

Total Disadvantage Points: 150







## Nightstick

**Background/History:** Joe Dishwasher (only those who hunt him remember his real name) was trained in a remote Asian monastery. He never gave much thought to how his skin and features were different from everyone else's; it wasn't his job to think. The monks taught him to fight, to move, to climb. They said they wanted to teach him much more, but never revealed why they were teaching him or why they were so much harder on him than the other boys at the temple.

Then one day they took Joe Dishwasher to a city to begin another phase of his training. He needed to learn how to blend in with society. Unfortunately, the safehouse they took him to had a television, and Joe's first exposure to American popular culture was a gaudy, campy show about a caped crusader who prowled the night and fought criminals.

Joe Dishwasher thought that this was how he wanted to live, so he vanished. He trekked across the continent and learned that no matter where he went, a man willing to wash other people's dirty dishes could get food and shelter in return. In Hong Kong, waiting for a freighter that needed a dishwasher to take him to America, he discovered that he was not being let go easily by his former masters. He boarded his freighter, leaving four bruised and beaten fellow students on the docks, and sailed for America. When he jumped into the waters of the harbor, it was the shore of Hudson City he climbed upon to start his new life of fighting crime in the promised land...where, it was no accident, Joe Dishwasher looked like many other people, rather than standing out.

**Personality/Motivation:** Joe Dishwasher is a simple person: he believes what he saw on TV so many months ago, that a man who walks the night and fights crime can make a difference. He has no pity for those who stand before him; his training did not include the niceties of mercy or restraint. He doesn't mind working with others. The guy he saw on TV had a sidekick, so why not Joe Dishwasher? His street name, Nightstick, is a media creation; he does not think of himself as being represented by any particular name. Perhaps with time this will change. In the meantime Joe is a quiet, serene man who doesn't fret the details and does what needs to be done when it needs to be done, all without boasting or comment.

**Quote:** Sounds of fighting. Nightstick doesn't talk when he fights.

**Powers/Tactics:** Unless part of a group that is following a deliberate plan, Nightstick wanders the night in his off hours and falls upon evildoers by surprise. Since he does not use a gun, beginning fights within hand-to-hand range is imperative; he prefers not to rely on his nearly mystical ability to deflect incoming missiles of all kinds as he knows it is not a reliable method of avoiding gunshot wounds.

**Appearance:** Joe Dishwasher is an average looking man in his early 20s: brown hair, brown eyes. He usually wears jeans and a t-shirt; his shoes are stained with the food and grime from his "day job." Since the vigilante he saw on TV wore a mask, Nightstick does, too: it's a rubber mask of a Chinese demon dog, and in fact he is also known on the street as the "Demon Dog" vigilante.

**Record:** Nightstick has no record. Given his restraint, it is likely he will become a vigilante who is covertly tolerated by the police.

**Notes:** "Joe Dishwasher," as he's known, can be the target of one of the Asian crime organizations described in *Dark Champions* and *Justice, Not Law*; this plot device would be useful in involving the characters in a new story line after the campaign has finished up. Alternatively, if one of the Asian organizations is particularly appealing to GMs, they can substitute one of them for one of the "representative" crime groups used in this adventure to show Retro's rise to power instead of generic street gangs, the Card Shark organization or the Mafia.

**Future Development:** Nightstick needs a name and a better explanation of where he came from; he is the exception to the rule for this group of characters. His background is clouded, which is charming, but cute can also lead to confusion on the part of players who use him on a pick up basis. Armor would be a good addition. Alternately, Joe can develop some sort of mystical martial defense ability to help him stay out of the path of bullets. With training or some mental breakthrough, a fun idea you might want to encourage would be to allow him to use Autofire with his Kung Fu; if the character isn't going to start using firearms, it would be a reasonably fair power for Nightstick to possess.



# Night Stick

## (Joe Dishwasher)

| Val | CHA  | Cost | Roll | Notes               |
|-----|------|------|------|---------------------|
| 20  | STR  | 10   | 13-  | 400 kg; 4d6 [2]     |
| 20  | DEX  | 30   | 13-  | OCV: 7/DCV: 7       |
| 15  | CON  | 10   | 12-  |                     |
| 10  | BODY | 0    | 11-  |                     |
| 10  | INT  | 0    | 11-  | PER Roll 11-        |
| 10  | EGO  | 0    | 11-  | ECV: 3              |
| 15  | PRE  | 5    | 12-  | PRE Attack: 3d6     |
| 10  | COM  | 0    | 11-  |                     |
| 6   | PD   | 2    |      |                     |
| 3   | ED   |      |      |                     |
| 4   | SPD  | 10   |      | Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12 |
| 7   | REC  |      |      |                     |
| 30  | END  |      |      |                     |
| 28  | STUN |      |      |                     |

Total Characteristic Cost: 67

Movement: Running: 6"/12" Swimming: 2"/4"

### Powers & Skills

**Shadow Walking:** Invisibility to normal sight, 0 END, Requires a Stealth Skill Roll at -3, Only in shadows/darkness (21) [0]

**Hand Claws:** Clinging STR 20, OIF, Requires a Climbing Skill Roll at -1, Not on ceilings, Not to resist Knockback (4)

**Missile Deflection to Thrown Objects, Arrows, Bullets and Shrapnel** (15)

### Martial Arts—Kung Fu: (20)

| Maneuver | OCV | DCV | Damage                |
|----------|-----|-----|-----------------------|
| Punch    | 7   | 9   | 6d6                   |
| Block    | 9   | 9   | Abort                 |
| Throw    | 7   | 8   | 4d6+v/5; target falls |
| Disarm   | 6   | 8   | STR 30 Disarm         |
| Dodge    | —   | 12  | Abort                 |

Use Art with Tonfa

### Monastery Training:

- Breakfall 13- (3)
- Climbing 13 (3)
- Defensive Maneuver (5)
- Familiarity with Common Martial Arts Weapon
- Stealth 15- (7)
- Streetwise 12-(3)

### Equipment (All free):

- Tonfa (+2d6 HA)
- Kevlar Jacket: Armor (+5 PD/+5 ED), Act. 14-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 83

Total Character Cost: 150

### Disadvantages: 75+

#### Hunted by:

- Asian crime organization, 8- (10)

Normal Characteristic Maxima (20)

#### Psychological Limitation:

- Code of Honor (20)
- Vengeful (10)

Secret Identity: Joe Dishwasher (15)

Total Disadvantage Points: 150



STORN

## The Chemist

**Background/History:** Dr. Susanna Thompson, a graduate of MIT and a Chemical Engineer, was astounded one day to deduce that her supervisor, Dr. X, was implementing a chemical weapon production run at Duke Chemical. When she confronted him he told her she was crazy and overworked; it was merely experimental farm chemicals slated for shipment to the Middle East.

She left work angry, confused and convinced she should tell someone of her findings. She never got a chance. Four men toting various high-tech weapons, including one man wielding what she was certain looked like a miniature heat-seeking missile, ran her off the road. Her many years of Aikido were no match for their overwhelming numbers. In return for resisting, the men beat and raped her and left her for dead after spraying a some toxic chemical substance on her, a gift, they said, laughing, from the good Dr. X. Susanna allowed herself to slip into the meditative state she'd been taught by her Sensei, bitter about dying, but reflective and calm as her martial training dictated.

Much to her surprise, she survived, and later deduced that she must have built an immunity to the Doctor's toxic formula while working at Duke Chemical. Since she'd appeared to be dead, the mercenaries must have thought so, too. She staggered home only to see her house in ruins; a friend took her in and nursed her back to health. Susanna was later stunned to hear she was supposed to have died in the blast at her home; the newspaper reports hinted darkly that she had been conducting illicit experiments with Duke Chemical property in her basement.

Swearing her friend to silence, Susanna moved quickly. For tax reasons her investments had been handled by a holding company; she quickly made confidential arrangements with her lawyer to assure that they would remain accessible to her even though she was "dead." Then she rented a house and equipped it with the best lab equipment she could by. With no job she had plenty of time to create innovative uses for various chemical compounds. A little research indicated that Dr. X was highly placed in Duke Chemical, and the company was possibly more sinister than she had ever imagined. It was time to learn to use her new toys; why not as part of the active vigilante community of Hudson City? Her first act was to steal some rare chemicals from Duke; this caused tremendous embarrassment to Dr. X., and since she left her calling card sprayed on his desk, he knows he hunts "The Chemist" but not who she actually is.

**Personality/Motivation:** Dr. Thompson is driven by a smoldering hatred of those who wrecked her life: Dr. X, Duke Chemical and the mercenaries. Once she feels ready, she plans on taking on Duke Chemical

and Dr. X because she is certain that the company did indeed manufacture and sell chemical weapons to shadowy customers in the Middle East. Little does she know that Duke Chemical is one of many Ravenfront companies. She is reasonably careful about taking human life, unless it involves those she hates. An intellectual and a scientist, she is rational and calm about her work.

**Quote:** "Ah, the scientific method... first blind you so you cannot shoot me <paff!> then I glue you in place <poof!> then I put you to sleep <poof!> so that you are no trouble for the police."

**Powers/Tactics:** Dr. Thompson isn't very good with her guns (yet) but will be soon, after she buys her Weapon Familiarity skills. For now she is consciously practicing her vigilante skills on the criminal element in Hudson City. She's new to the business on one hand and on the other feels confident enough to experiment with combinations of her new toys. Given the opportunity, she will also increase the effectiveness of her grenades. She prefers to stand off from her targets and pepper them with grenades; once immobilized she lets the police finish the job. If caught in a hand-to-hand situation, she would prefer to escape; her smoke grenades can be put to good use in such a circumstance.

**Appearance:** Susanna Thompson is reasonably attractive and stands erect; her movements are fluid and efficient, thanks to her Aikido training. She keeps her black hair short to keep it out of harms way and wears a long coat to conceal her "toys." Her mask consists of a simple bandanna over her face; since she doesn't plan on getting very close to the bad guys, she hopes this will be sufficient.

**Record:** As yet "The Chemist" has no official record with the police, but it's known that someone, somewhere is fighting crime using a variety of custom, high tech grenades. She is a likely candidate to become an unofficially-sanctioned vigilante due to her relatively idealistic style of fighting crime.

**Notes:** Susanna Thompson was run off the road by Heatseeker and his squad of mercenaries. Dr. X (it's up to GMs to name this shadowy figure) works for Raven under the cover of Duke Chemical. Since Heatseeker is part of this campaign, Susanna will have an opportunity to see if she's developed enough to take on the men who took part in the wrecking of her life.

**Future Development:** The Chemist needs to be faster, and once she accumulates the points, some of her grenade powers could pack a little more punch (or become more reliable by buying the Activation Roll to a 14-). This character can be weak in the hands of a player ignorant of the tactical options her grenades present... the corollary being she can be quite tough if handled wisely.





# The Chemist (Susanna Thompson)

| Val | CHA  | Cost | Roll | Notes            |
|-----|------|------|------|------------------|
| 13  | STR  | 3    | 12-  | 150 kg; 2½d6 [1] |
| 18  | DEX  | 24   | 13-  | OCV: 6/DCV: 6    |
| 13  | CON  | 6    | 12-  |                  |
| 13  | BODY | 6    | 12-  |                  |
| 18  | INT  | 8    | 13-  | PER Roll 13-     |
| 12  | EGO  | 4    | 11-  | ECV: 4           |
| 13  | PRE  | 3    | 12-  | PRE Attack: 2½d6 |
| 14  | COM  | 2    | 12-  |                  |
| 3   | PD   |      |      |                  |
| 3   | ED   |      |      |                  |
| 3   | SPD  | 2    |      | Phases: 4, 8, 12 |
| 6   | REC  |      |      |                  |
| 26  | END  |      |      |                  |
| 27  | STUN |      |      |                  |

Total Characteristic Cost: 58

Movement: Running: 6"/12" Swimming: 2"/4"

## Powers & Skills

### Martial Arts—Aikido: (23)

| Maneuver | OCV | DCV | Damage                 |
|----------|-----|-----|------------------------|
| Throw    | 6   | 7   | 2½d6+v/5; Target falls |
| Hold     | 5   | 5   | STR 23 Hold            |
| Strike   | 7   | 9   | 2½d6                   |
| Dodge    | —   | +5  | Abort                  |
| Escape   | 6   | 6   | STR 28 Escape          |

Breakfall 13- (3)  
KS: Aikido 8- (1)

### Gas Grenades:

- Multipower 67 point pool, OAF, Act 11-, Won't work in rain or water (21)
- u - Flash Grenade: 3d6 Flash to Normal Sight, AE 3"r, 4 charges (1) [4c]
- u - Smoke Grenade: Darkness to sight group in 3"r, 4 continuing charges, each lasts 1 minute (1)
- u - Glue Grenade: 4d6 Entangle, DEF 3 4 charges (1) [4c]
- Sleep Gas Grenade: 3d6 EB, NND [Life Support: Self-Contained Breathing], AE 5"r, Continuous, Uncontrolled, 4 continuing charges, each lasts 1 minute (2)

### Nose Filters: (IIF)

- Life Support: Self-Contained Breathing, Only works against NNDs (4)

### Scientist Training:

- Computer Programming 13- (3)
- Deduction 13- (3)
- German. Completely Fluent (2)
- Immunity to Dr. X's toxins (1)
- Inventor 13- (3)
- KS: Organic Chemistry (INT) 13- (3)
- PS: Scientist 11- (2)
- Streetwise 8- (1)

### Background Advantages:

- Ambidexterity (3)
- Contact: Amanda Richardson, Doctor, 11- (2)
- Contact: Linda Jackson, Lawyer, 11- (2)
- Contact: Richard Yee, Drug Chemist, 11- Cramming (5)
- Fringe Benefit: Alternate Identity (2)
- Fringe Benefit: Passport
- Money: \$100,000 income per year (1)
- Simulate Death 11- (3)

### Equipment (All free):

- Kevlar Jacket: Armor (+5 PD/+5 ED), Act. 14-
- Volvo (normal car)
- Glock 21
- M-79 Grenade Launcher (Her gas grenades can be adapted to fire from this launcher.)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 92

Total Character Cost: 150

### Disadvantages: 75+

#### Hunted by:

- Dr. X & Duke Chemical, NCI, 8- (20)

#### Normal Characteristic Maxima (20)

#### Psychological Limitation:

- Code Against Killing (5)
- Hates those who destroyed former life (5)
- Hunting Dr. X (10)

#### Secret Identity: Susanna Thompson (15)

Total Disadvantage Points: 150



75

PART THREE

## The Dancer

**Background/History:** Harriet hated her name; she was too spunky to be a "Harriet." She learned Spanish from the migratory field hands who showed up in her New Jersey backwater town to harvest the crops. When her father objected to her new friends and beat her, Harriet stopped hanging out with the field hands. She started dating a proper young man from town who believed that since he'd paid for dinner, he'd paid to get in her pants.

She killed him.

Luckily, the evidence was clear and she was exonerated of any wrongdoing in the death.

The CIA took notice of a teenager who was able to dispatch a would-be rapist with such aplomb and when it came time for Harriet to think about college a slickly dressed pair of agents visited the Turk home. Again Harriet thought quickly and accepted; she drove away in her father's parting gift, her "bitchin' Camaro," and began college, at the request of the CIA.

Two years after graduation, Harriet, who as her working name had chosen something a little less antiquated, Janice Hardaway, was on assignment in Hudson City when a youth gang broke down the door of the apartment next to hers and brutally raped and killed a young woman. Coming onto the scene after the deed was done, Janice acted without thinking. She shot one thug in the groin and another in the temple before bouncing the third off every piece of furniture in the room, breaking more than fifty of his bones in the process. The police arrived soon after and started asking questions; Janice asked if she could use the bathroom and escaped out the window with all her spy gear.

Since then she's fought crime and waited tables. She's aware the CIA must be watching, but for some reason they haven't taken any action, and for now she's content to bust heads in the war against crime.

**Personality/Motivation:** Make them pay. That's Janice's credo (she no longer thinks of herself as Harriet) and she follows it without question. Her devotion to justice is so strong that as soon as she discovered a new outlet for her passion she was unable to say "no." All criminals are in her sights; she merely has to find them, one at a time, for justice to be served.

**Quote:** "What's a big stupid slow dork mugger like you doing in a scungy alley like this? Bleeding to death? Gee, that's too bad."

**Powers/Tactics:** The Dancer, as she's been dubbed by those who have seen her move, relies on her ability to move to places people don't expect and utilize tactical surprise when the fighting starts. She relies on her ability to not be in front of guns when they go off to avoid being hurt; she doesn't care if she shoots or chops bad guys, so long as she does it from a position of reasonable safety. Since she doesn't use a mask, it's only a matter of time before someone recognizes her for who she is: that knockout waitress from that cafe on 24th Avenue...

**Appearance:** A very attractive but tiny 5'3", 120 pound woman with short dark hair and electric blue eyes. Janice is athletic and surprisingly strong for a woman her size. When fighting crime, she dresses practically, in loose-fitting dungarees and a loose jacket which conceals her armored vest and pistol.

**Record:** The police aren't looking for Janice Hardaway too hard. The Commander of the Homicide Division had a little visit from two nice gentlemen from the CIA; they convinced him to have his detectives lay off of Janice. To date, the police haven't linked Hardaway and "The Dancer," who is known to be a violent vigilante but who hasn't killed anyone quite yet.



# The Dancer

## (Harriet Lucinda Turkh, aka Janice Hardaway)

| Val | CHA  | Cost | Roll | Notes            |
|-----|------|------|------|------------------|
| 15  | STR  | 5    | 12-  | 200 kg; 3d6 [1]  |
| 18  | DEX  | 24   | 13-  | OCV: 6/DCV: 6    |
| 13  | CON  | 6    | 12-  |                  |
| 13  | BODY | 6    | 12-  |                  |
| 16  | INT  | 6    | 12-  | PER Roll 12-     |
| 14  | EGO  | 8    | 12-  | ECV: 5           |
| 15  | PRE  | 5    | 12-  | PRE Attack: 3d6  |
| 16  | COM  | 3    | 12-  |                  |
| 3   | PD   |      |      |                  |
| 3   | ED   |      |      |                  |
| 3   | SPD  | 2    |      | Phases: 4, 8, 12 |
| 6   | REC  |      |      |                  |
| 26  | END  |      |      |                  |
| 28  | STUN |      |      |                  |

Total Characteristic Cost: 65

Movement: Running: 9"/16" Swimming: 2"/4"

### Powers & Skills

#### Infiltration Training:

Clinging STR 13, Requires Climbing Skill Roll at -1, Not on ceilings, Not vs. Knockback (5)

3" Gliding, Only usable to avoid pressure plates, weight sensors and floor sensors (1)

Running: +3" (6) [1/5"]

Vanishing Teleport: Teleport, 10", Requires a Stealth Skill Roll at -2, Only to "Vanish" when no one is looking, Can only teleport to places character could normally go (8) [1/5"]

#### 5/Martial Arts—Dirty Infighting: (21)

| Maneuver    | OCV | DCV | Damage        |
|-------------|-----|-----|---------------|
| Punch       | 6   | 8   | 5d6           |
| Roundhouse  | 4   | 7   | 7d6           |
| Low Blow    | 5   | 7   | 2d6 NND(1)    |
| Disarm      | 5   | 7   | STR 25 Disarm |
| Kidney Blow | 4   | 6   | 1d6+1 KA      |

#### CIA Training:

- Acrobatics 13- (3)
- Breakfall 13- (3)
- Climbing 13- (3)
- Combat Driving 13- (3)
- Concealment 12- (3)
- Contortionist 13- (3)
- Find Weakness with S&W 4506 Pistol, 11- (10)
- Persuasion 12-
- Seduction 12-
- Spanish, Fluent Conversation (2)
- Weapon Familiarity: Small Arms

#### Background Advantages:

- Ambidexterity (3)
- Double Jointed (3)

#### Equipment (All free):

- Kevlar Vest: Armor (+5 PD/+5 ED), Act. 12-
- '88 Camaro (regular car, no cost)
- S&W 4506 .45 cal pistol
- Backpack with duct tape, rope, screwdriver, pliers, small flashlight, notebook, bic lighter, Swiss army knife

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 85

Total Character Cost: 150

#### Disadvantages: 75+

#### Distinctive Features:

- Beautiful & Memorable (5)

Normal Characteristic Maxima (20)

#### Psychological Limitation:

- Devoted to Justice (25)

Secret Identity: Janice Hardaway (15)

#### Watched by:

- the CIA, NCI, -8

Total Disadvantage Points: 150





## Atropos

### Background/History:

"Ms. Lougheed, how do you feel your previous experience as a police officer will influence your decision making in the D.A.'s office?"

"No comment."

"Ms. Lougheed, what is your position on the many vigilantes who operate in Hudson City?"

"No comment."

"Ms. Lougheed, will the fact your father was killed by a rumored Mafia assassin when you were a child influence any mob cases you..."

"No comment."

"Ms. Lougheed, it's been suggested you secured your position with the D.A.'s office due to your wealth and friends in city government, what do you..."

"No comment."

"Ms. Lougheed, please, give us something we can use! The people have a right to know about their newest Assistant D.A., don't you think?"

"The people have a right to be protected from slime. Good day."

The reporters stood in a huddle near the door they weren't allowed to enter, staring at it as if it would produce more material for them to use in their stories.

"The people have a right to be protected from slime, what a hardcase," says one.

"What's the leader here?" asks a latecomer.

"Rich, connected ex-cop takes thankless job," quips another, and the reporters wander away.

**Personality/Motivation:** Emily didn't take the job because she thought it would help. Emily didn't take the job because she thought she could put the bad guys away behind bars where they wouldn't do crappy things to the citizens of her city. Emily took the job because she knew damn well that if you had enough money it didn't matter how guilty you were. You could walk away from anything but the most obvious, heinous crime...if you had the money to pay the mouthpieces who said the pretty words and found the loopholes in the law or the places in the warrants where some dipstick cop hadn't dotted all the i's correctly. Emily Lougheed took the job so she could find out who was skating out on justice, where they lived and who they knew and what flavor of ice cream they liked to eat.

So she could know when and where to shoot them.

**Quote:** "One minute, ten seconds of video that clearly shows you, sir, shoving cocaine up your nose, guns on the table and money stacked like paperback books in a vacation cottage, and you got off because the warrant was for the next house over."

Bang.

**Powers/Tactics:** Atropos, as Emily thinks of her vigilante alter-ego (the press haven't as yet identified her as anyone in particular, yet) is a classic sniper: if she worked for hire, she could command hundreds of thousands of dollars a hit. She doesn't work for hire, though. Emily only kills men and women who are clearly guilty but who get themselves out of their due punishment by bending the law with expensive lawyers. After gathering information about the target, she waits in ambush and when an opportune moment presents itself, shoots. She often targets the head or vitals with her second shot, assuming her first drops the victim, making the shot easier.

Atropos will have to improve her overall tactics if she wishes to play with the big boys, however. While she is well-connected in the extreme, in a dark alley, surrounded by thugs, knowing the Mayor owes you a favor is little solace.

**Appearance:** Emily Lougheed is a broad-shouldered, athletic woman with short black hair. When out "hunting" she dresses in black. Since she endeavors to remain far away from her targets as possible, she doesn't usually wear a mask but can improvise one if necessary out of a scarf and sunglasses.

**Record:** The police are looking for a sniper who targets crime figures. Even though the sniper has only been killing criminals, the police are still looking. Murder is murder. If Sharpshooter is in the campaign, the police may theorize that the shooter who uses rubber bullets and Emily are one and the same.

**Notes:** Atropos is in the vigilante business because her father was killed in the line of duty. Who killed him? Was it a police cover-up? Are the crooked police still on the force? These are long-term adventure seeds that don't directly hook into the campaign in anyway, but everyone can't meet their worst enemy during this Epic Adventure, now can they?

**Future Development:** Emily Lougheed (that's "Lawheed" to you, bub!) could use some practical, hand-to-hand techniques, either a movement or concealment power to help her evade notice or an outright martial maneuver or three for when the bad guys get close up. She needs to add a point of Speed. Players who pick this character to play should not fail to use her strengths; if someone is looking for a shoot 'em up character, this is not it.



# Atropos (Emily Lougheed)

| Val | CHA  | Cost | Roll | Notes            |
|-----|------|------|------|------------------|
| 13  | STR  | 3    | 12-  | 150 kg; 2½6 [1]  |
| 14  | DEX  | 12   | 12-  | OCV: 5/DCV: 5    |
| 10  | CON  | 0    | 11-  |                  |
| 12  | BODY | 4    | 11-  |                  |
| 13  | INT  | 3    | 12-  | PER Roll 12-     |
| 11  | EGO  | 2    | 11-  | ECV: 4           |
| 15  | PRE  | 5    | 12-  | PRE Attack: 3d6  |
| 12  | COM  | 1    | 11-  |                  |
| 3   | PD   |      |      |                  |
| 3   | ED   |      |      |                  |
| 3   | SPD  | 6    |      | Phases: 4, 8, 12 |
| 5   | REC  |      |      |                  |
| 20  | END  |      |      |                  |
| 20  | STUN |      |      |                  |

Total Characteristic Cost: 36

Movement: Running: 6"/12" Swimming: 2"/4"

## Powers & Skills

### Combat Ability:

Combat Levels: +2 Levels w/ Ranged Combat(10)  
Range Levels: +4 Range Mod w/ Rifles (6)

### Vigilante Skills:

Ambidexterity (3)  
Breakfall 12- (3)  
Concealment 12- (3)  
Disguise 13- (7)  
Electronics 11- (3)  
Lockpicking 12- (3)  
Security Systems 12- (3)  
Shadowing 11- (3)  
Stealth 12- (3)  
Streetwise 12- (3)  
Weapon Fam.: Small Arms (2)

### Lawyer/DA Skills:

Acting 14- (7)  
Bribery 12- (3)  
Bureaucrats 12- (3)  
Conversation 12- (3)  
Criminology 12- (3)  
Deduction 12- (3)  
Forgery 12- (5)  
Fringe Benefit: License to practice law (1)  
Fringe Benefit: Permit to carry a firearm (1)  
KS: Law 11- (2)  
Lipreading 11- (3)  
Money: Well Off (5)  
Persuasion 12- (3)  
PS: Lawyer 11- (2)

### Networking & Favors:

Contact: Clerk at Mayor's Office 11- (1)  
Contact: D.A. 13- (3)  
Contact: FBI Operative 11- (1)  
Contact: High Powered Private Lawyer 11- (1)  
Contact: Hospital Nurse 11- (1)  
Contact: Judge 11- (1)  
Contact: License Bureau Clerk 11- (1)



Contact: Newspaper Editor 11- (1)  
Contact: Newspaper Reporter 11- (1)  
Contact: Police Sgt. 11- (1)  
Contact: Street Guy 11- (1)  
Favor: Judge (.5)  
Favor: Judge (.5)  
Favor: Mayor (.5)  
Favor: Police Chief (.5)  
Well Connected

### Equipment (All free):

Kevlar Jacket: Armor (+5 PD/+5 ED), Act. 14-  
Llama Small Frame .32 Pistol  
Walther WA-2000 Sniper Rifle w/ Flash Suppressor

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 114

Total Character Cost: 150

### Disadvantages: 75+

### Hunted by:

the FBI, NCI, -8 (20)  
Normal Characteristic Maxima (20)

### Psychological Limitation:

Vigilante Mentality (20)

Secret Identity: Emily Lougheed, Assistant D.A. (15)

Total Disadvantage Points: 150



## Mr. Mist

**Background/History:** A loving family, plenty of money, the best schools and a challenging career made the first part of Roger's life idyllic. Then, one day, armed men kicked down the door and began shooting into the crowd of guests gathered to celebrate Roger's announcement of his engagement to Johanna, his girlfriend of many years. Roger's father took a burst in the chest and fell heavily on Roger who lay perfectly still as his beloved father's blood ran hot and then cooled over him. The men searched the house for "papers," papers they didn't find. After awhile they left, and Roger rolled his father's body off himself and looked down at the man he loved the most in the whole world.

Caked with blood, Roger called the police. Hours went by while the police questioned him, and then they let him in the house to gather some things so the house could be sealed for the investigation. Roger went to his father's study and opened the "secret" safe he'd known about since he was 12; the combination was his birthday, but backwards.

Roger took the computer disks he found within, determined to discover what it was that the men had been searching for.

Later, using his laptop in the hotel the police had paid for, he discovered to his horror that his father had been part of something called The Commission, some sort of Mafia governing body. In addition it appeared that the CIA had dealings with The Commission, and that Roger's father had been their main contact. Suddenly afraid, Roger copied the information to the hard drive of his computer and threw the diskettes away. The next morning some men in expensive suits and sunglasses came to ask Roger questions.

Roger wasn't fooled. It was the CIA, and they wanted to be sure the masked men had opened the safe. They asked him out for coffee and chatted amicably, Roger burning inside with hate and loathing. When he got back to his room it had obviously been searched, but the men hadn't thought of the laptop computer sitting out in the open, and for now Roger was safe. For now.

Later, Roger went to a church and prayed, but he knew it wasn't enough. All the blood on his father's hands, all the misery. It would have to be paid for. Roger was the eldest son: it was his debt. And he would pay it in his own way.

**Personality/Motivation:** Roger is a likable, outgoing young man... until he becomes "Mr. Mist." Then he's a ruthless vigilante, full of grief and rage over his losses and the guilt he feels for living the high life off other people's misery. Since his father was a crime "boss," he prefers to vent his rage against those who control criminal organizations.

**Quote:** <stab> "Guess again, Mr. Stramboni!" <stab> "No, I'm not your cousin Vinnie making a move on

your operation!" <stab stab stab stab> "I just look like him!" <stab> "You see..." <stab> "I'm really Mr. Mist! Mr. Stramboni? Mr. Stramboni?"

**Powers/Tactics:** Roger uses disguise abilities he learned as a Theater Minor in college along with a flesh-mimicking plastic he developed for the lab he used to work for. Now that he realizes his father got him the job with his CIA connections, he suspects the government uses the flesh plastic for the same thing he does: disguises. He tracks a member of a criminal organization, captures and interrogates him, then disguises himself as that person in order to assassinate the head of the organization. Once that is accomplished he brings in the police and lets them finish the job. In combat, since he can see in his "fog," he invariably uses his smoke bombs to become effectively invisible. In the fog he often shoots enemies at close range by surprise and is therefore able to cause a lot of damage with minimal fuss and bother.

**Appearance:** When dressed as Mr. Mist, Roger wears an armored trenchcoat, fedora, and a gray, featureless mask with his specially designed goggles. Often, however, he is disguised as one of many "John Doe" types, wearing various outfits: he is very difficult to track down as a result.

**Record:** Mr. Mist has a bad habit of using the same weapons over and over, so the police have accumulated a solid forensic trail that has been firmly linked with the vigilante known as Mr. Mist. They have not yet realized he is a master of disguise; they assume that since he wears a mask the face underneath must be his real one. They therefore have conflicting descriptions of Mr. Mist's actual face, none of which are accurate. He is wanted in connection with half a dozen murders, but since all the victims were criminals the police are not pursuing the investigations.

**Notes:** This shadowy figure isn't as well-suited to a campaign as the other characters, but he would make an outstanding solo character. For him to participate in group activities either the group must be content to let him, at least once in awhile, follow his "decapitation" methodology (which would involve solo play) or learn to integrate his unique talents into a team approach. Misplayed, this character can lead to frustration and boredom (or create a mindless combat monster who uses the "see in fog" ability to cause havoc in firefight after firefight)... played right, though, this character can be one of the most potent arrows in a vigilante team's arsenal.

**Future Development:** Mr. Mist will likely need some form of police contact to help warn him of impending arrest, given his penchant for using the same weapon over and over. His combat skills are adequate, but could be improved. Since interrogation is a significant part of this character's road to success, Mr. Mist might want to develop a chemical "truth" drug.





# Mr. Mist

## (Roger Duquerk)

| Val | CHA  | Cost | Roll | Notes               |
|-----|------|------|------|---------------------|
| 13  | STR  | 3    | 12-  | 150 kg; 2½6 [1]     |
| 20  | DEX  | 30   | 13-  | OCV: 7/DCV: 7       |
| 10  | CON  | 0    | 11-  |                     |
| 12  | BODY | 4    | 11-  |                     |
| 18  | INT  | 8    | 13-  | PER Roll 13-        |
| 10  | EGO  | 0    | 11-  | ECV: 3              |
| 18  | PRE  | 8    | 13-  | PRE Attack: 3½6     |
| 10  | COM  | 0    | 11-  |                     |
| 3   | PD   | 0    |      |                     |
| 2   | ED   | 0    |      |                     |
| 4   | SPD  | 10   |      | Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12 |
| 5   | REC  | 0    |      |                     |
| 20  | END  | 0    |      |                     |
| 20  | STUN | 0    |      |                     |

Total Characteristic Cost: 59

Movement: Running: 10"/20" Swimming: 2"/4"

### Powers & Skills

#### Combat Training:

Combat Level: +1 OCV w/ Browning HP

#### Vanishing Teleport:

Teleport, 10", Requires a Stealth Skill Roll at -2, Only to "Vanish" when no one is looking. Can only teleport to places character could normally go (8) [1/5"]

#### Prosthetic Disguise Kit:

Shapeshift to Humanoid form, 0 END, Requires a Disguise Skill Roll at -3, Extra Time: +1 Hour, Requires kit and photo (7) [0]

#### Smoke Grenades:

Darkness to normal sight, 3"r, OAF, Range is based on STR, Won't work in high winds or in rain, 4 continuing charges, each lasts for 1 minute (15)

#### Smoke Goggles:

Personal Immunity to Darkness OIF (7)

#### Running: +4" (8)

#### Vigilante Training:

Acting 13- (3)  
 Conversation 13- (3)  
 Disguise 12- (5)  
 Forgery 11- (3)  
 KS: Underworld (INT) 14- (4)  
 Lockpicking 13- (3)  
 Science: Chemistry (INT) 13- (3)  
 Security Systems 13- (3)  
 Shadowing 11- (3)  
 Stealth 14- (5)  
 Streetwise 13- (3)  
 Weapon FAM.: Knives & Small Arms (3)

#### Background Advantages:

Money: Well Off (5)



#### Equipment (All free):

Kevlar Trenchcoat: Armor (+5 PD/+5 ED), Act. 14-9mm Browning HP  
 Uzi  
 Dagger  
 Disguise Kit  
 Smoke Bombs

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 91

Total Character Cost: 150

#### Disadvantages: 75+

Normal Characteristic Maxima (20)

#### Psychological Limitation:

Vigilante Mentality (20)

#### Reputation:

Ruthless Vigilante who goes after the bosses; he could pop up anywhere, 11- (10)

Secret Identity: Roger Duquerk (15)

#### Watched by:

the CIA, NCI, 8- (10)

Total Disadvantage Points: 150





# Spectre

## (Clyde Smith)

| Val | CHA  | Cost | Roll | Notes               |
|-----|------|------|------|---------------------|
| 18  | STR  | 8    | 13-  | 300 kg; 3½6 [2]     |
| 18  | DEX  | 24   | 13-  | OCV: 6/DCV: 6       |
| 18  | CON  | 16   | 13-  |                     |
| 14  | BODY | 8    | 12-  |                     |
| 13  | INT  | 3    | 12-  | PER Roll 12-        |
| 11  | EGO  | 2    | 11-  | ECV: 4              |
| 13  | PRE  | 3    | 12-  | PRE Attack: 2½6     |
| 12  | COM  | 1    | 11-  |                     |
| 4   | PD   | 0    |      |                     |
| 4   | ED   | 0    |      |                     |
| 4   | SPD  | 12   |      | Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12 |
| 10  | REC  | 4    |      |                     |
| 36  | END  | 0    |      |                     |
| 33  | STUN | 0    |      |                     |

Total Characteristic Cost: 81

Movement: Running: 6"/12" Swimming: 4"/8"

### Powers & Skills

#### Combat Training:

- Combat Levels: 2 Levels w/ All Combat
- Combat Levels: +2 Levels with Machine Pistols (6)

#### Tough-Minded:

- +6 PD, Requires an EGO Roll at -1(4)

#### SEAL Skills:

- Breakfall 13- (3)
- Climbing 13- (3)
- Combat Sense 12-Concealment 12- (3)
- Demolitions 11- (3)
- Fast Draw 13- (3)
- KS: The Military 11- (2)
- PS: Navy Seal 11- (2)
- Security Systems 12- (3)
- Stealth 13- (3)
- Survival 11-
- Swimming: +2" (2)
- Tactics 12- (3)
- Weapon FAM.: Small Arms, Heavy Weapons, Common Melee Weapons (6)

#### Background Advantages:

- Contact: Sleazy Motel Owner, 8- (1)

#### Equipment (All free):

- Kevlar Motorcycle Jacket: Armor (+5 PD/+5 ED), Act. 14-
- 2 Spectre M-4 Submachine guns, each with "file system" clips
- Knife

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 69

Total Character Cost: 150

Disadvantages: 75+

#### Hunted by

U.S. Navy, NCI, Mild Punishment, 8- (15)

#### Psychological Limitation:

Vigilante Mentality (20)  
Must Overcome Failure to Protect Fiancée (15)

Secret Identity: Clyde Smith (15)

Unluck: 2d6 (10)

Total Disadvantage Points: 150



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PART THREE



## Bad Guys, NPCs, and The Machine

In this section, GMs can find the information they need for Retro, Optik, Mr. Nobody and most importantly, The Machine. All of the information about The Machine is given here, along with a handout about The Machine to help the players in their communications with it.

### Retro

**Background/History:** Marcus Waddington was a normal suburban boy. His Dad worked in Hudson City and came home each night to Mom, Marcus and a steaming hot dinner. Then, more often than not, the Waddingtons would enjoy their favorite evening activity: old film noire movies. By the time he was in sixth grade, Marcus could do a fair imitation of Bogart sending the bad woman away for shooting his partner in "The Maltese Falcon." By the time he was in High School, he branded himself a loner by wearing a trenchcoat and fedora even in the heat of summer. In college Marcus majored in Administration of Justice and almost shook his Bogart habit, but as one of Hudson City's finest, he took to wearing the garb upon occasion.

Then disaster struck. After busting a drug dealer Marcus wandered into a back room and found a cardboard box of money initially overlooked by the arresting officers. It was the kind of thing he was supposed to find and report. Instead Marcus took a magic marker and some tape and addressed the parcel to himself. He waited for an opportunity and got it outside the crack house and then mailed it. Unfortunately, Marcus wasn't quite smart enough. The dealer mentioned the box, and a search began. A neighbor remembered the "cop with the box" and soon thereafter Marcus had to skip town with a cool million in a duffel bag.

After a few years he missed home despite the fun and sun of South America, and got a new face. Plastic surgery is a wonderful thing. Taking the last of his loot, he bought into a drug deal and worked his way into Ferdinand Naaves's criminal organization as a lieutenant. Smarter than most criminals, and certainly more organized, Marcus, now known only as "Retro," became one of the underworld's leading figures in a few short years. He uses his contact in the police department to keep tabs on what the police

know about "that Retro guy" (his contact, who Retro speaks with solely on the phone, has no idea he's talking to Retro; he thinks Marcus is still in South Americasomewhere). Retro keeps an apartment and, in theory, a business under the name "John Smith." There are no connections between that identity and his Retro life.

**Personality/Motivation:** Marcus is one of those people who, for some reason, aren't sorry if they do something wrong. He's just sorry if he gets caught. As a patrolman, he saw his opportunity and took it. Fate decreed he was stupid enough to get caught. No More, is his motto now: No More Getting Caught. Retro loves Hudson City, and he loves film noire. He likes money. He likes power. Retro thinks fondly of the future, the day when he might become the undisputed crime boss of Hudson City.

**Quote:** "Hm...lots of green stuff. Here's looking at you, buddy. Put the money in the sack."

**Powers/Tactics:** Retro is a normal human with a little bit of training. He's almost addicted to Wire, a drug he's found comes in handy when those obnoxious combative vigilantes interfere with an operation. Retro is handy with a pistol but uses an old time Thompson sub-machinegun because it looks "retro." He saves his combat van for really heavy situations. When he gets his hands on The Machine, it'll be time to take one of those "long shots" of his.

**Appearance:** Retro is a good looking man of average height, with brown hair and brown eyes. His craggy good looks stop just short of being Bogart's: Retro's too smart to saddle himself with a face that would stand out in a crowd. He wears a fedora and a trenchcoat unless the situation suggests that would be awkward.

**Record:** Retro is wanted by the Hudson City police on general principles: he's been linked to several notorious heists and his name keeps coming up when drug deals go down. So far, though, they don't even have his picture.



# RETRO (Marcus Waddington)

| Val | CHA  | Cost | Roll | Notes            |
|-----|------|------|------|------------------|
| 15  | STR  | 5    | 12-  | 200 kg; 3d6 [2]  |
| 14  | DEX  | 12   | 12-  | OCV: 5/DCV: 5    |
| 15  | CON  | 10   | 12-  |                  |
| 11  | BODY | 2    | 11-  |                  |
| 13  | INT  | 3    | 12-  | PER Roll 12-     |
| 11  | EGO  | 2    | 11-  | ECV: 4           |
| 15  | PRE  | 5    | 12-  | PRE Attack: 3d6  |
| 16  | COM  | 3    | 12-  |                  |
| 3   | PD   | 0    |      |                  |
| 3   | ED   | 0    |      |                  |
| 3   | SPD  | 10   |      | Phases: 4, 8, 12 |
| 6   | REC  | 0    |      |                  |
| 30  | END  | 0    |      |                  |
| 35  | STUN | 8    |      |                  |

Total Characteristic Cost: 56

Movement: Running: 6"/12" Swimming: 2"/4"

## Powers & Skills

### Combat Training:

Combat Levels: +2 Levels w/ Combat (16)

Combat Levels: +3 Levels w/ Pistols (9)

Combat Levels: +3 Levels w/ Brawling (9)

### Martial Arts—Brawling: (13)

| Maneuver | OCV | DCV | Damage       |
|----------|-----|-----|--------------|
| Punch    | 5   | 7   | 5d6          |
| Kick     | 3   | 6   | 7d6          |
| Duck     | —   | +5  | Dodge, Abort |

### Wire Pill:

Aid, 2d6 to STR, CON & SPD, Fades a 5 pts/Hour, 4 charges, Addictive, Gestures (11) [4c]

### Former Cop & Gangster Skills:

Acting 12- (3)

Bribery 14- (7)

CK: Hudson City 18- (9)

Combat Driving 13- (5)

Concealment 12- (3)

Contact: Police detective 13- (4)

Criminology 15- (9)

Deduction 13- (5)

Disguise 13- (7)

Forgery 12- (5)

Fringe Benefit: P.I. License (part of "legitimate" cover) as "John Smith" (2)

Interrogation 14- (7)

KS: Criminal Underworld 15-

KS: Old Films 14-

Lockpicking 12- (3)

Mimicry 14- (9)

Persuasion 12- (3)

PS: Cop 11-

Security Systems 14- (7)

Stealth 12- (3)

Streetwise 15- (9)

### Background Advantages:

Combat Van; See *Dark Champions*, page 97 (30)

Fast Draw 14- (7)

Luck: 2d6 (10)

### Equipment: (All free)

Armored Trenchcoat (+6 PD/+6 ED Armor, Act. 14-

Thompson M1-A1 (for full nostalgia)

2 Steyr MPi8as (for "real" gunfights)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 221

Total Character Cost: 277

### Disadvantages: 75+

### Distinctive Features:

Looks and Talks Film Noire [concealable with major effort, noticed and recognized] (10)

### Psychological Limitation:

Takes Long Shots (10)

Overconfident (10)

Casual Killer (20)

Wants to Control Underworld (15)

### Reputation

Able Lieutenant 8- (5)

### Villain Bonus (132)

Total Disadvantage Points: 277



## The Carillo-Mendoza Cartel in Hudson City

At the start of the campaign, Retro is a lieutenant in the Carillo-Mendoza cartel operation in Hudson City. He is second in command to Ferdinand "Aero" Naaves; the cartel has about a dozen full-time operatives in the city and operates out of a bogus shipping company that theoretically imports machine parts for farm tractors.

### History

The cartel has been successful in Hudson City over the years, maintaining a sizable chunk of market share in the cocaine distribution business despite the best efforts of law enforcement agencies. Then in mid 1994, the Blue Moon Killer struck, killing the head of the cartel, Juan Mendoza, and almost all of the Carillo-Mendoza people who were part of the local operation. The cartel waited a few months and then cautiously re-entered the drug distribution business in Hudson City; they've taken extreme measures to protect themselves from vigilantes like the Harbinger of Justice as well as the police and at the start of the campaign, midway through 1995, they've managed to regain a significant portion of their former business contacts.

### Local Operation

Cocaine is shipped into the country via various means; the shipping company is the most secret of these methods. The shipping company, TP Imports (TP for "Toy Planes," Naaves's hobby) is located in an industrial section of town in a two-story office building next to a warehouse. Security is tight; the security system requires a successful Security Systems Skill Roll at -2 to break in unannounced. Retro and Ferdinand have separate offices upstairs (each office is itself alarmed like the outside doors) and there is a well-equipped lounge for the gunsels to relax in.

Drug buys are to redistributors only; each is unique to avoid setting up a pattern a vigilante or the police could take advantage of. Snipers always cover the approaches to the buy site, and Retro or Ferdinand always choose the site and the time of the exchange. Money is laundered and processed in one of the downstairs offices; there is never anything illegal on the office premises for more than a few hours at a time, however, as yet another defense against prying police and vigilantes.

### Personnel

In addition to Ferdinand and Retro there are approximately ten cartel "soldiers" in Hudson City. Most are Type I Thugs with appropriate additional skills (Spanish, +1 OCV with weapon of choice), but a few are specialists:

Hector Gomez, Chauffeur: Shadowing 15-, Combat Driving 13-, Hudson City 12-

Rodrigo Cantana, Sniper: Stealth 13-, Climbing 12-, Concealment 11-, +4 OCV with Rifle

Allehondo Cantana, Sniper: Stealth 14-, Climbing 13-, Concealment 13-, +2 OCV with Rifle

Roberto Bartone, Surveillance: Bugging 14-, Electronics 13-, Lockpicking 12-, Security Systems 14-

When on-duty or expecting trouble, each also wears a Kevlar Vest (+5 PD/+5 ED Armor, Act 11-) and possibly also special equipment if necessary to complete a special task.

### Tactics

The Carillo-Mendoza cartel relies on secrecy to survive in Hudson City: failing that, deception, purchasing favors from police or other authorities and direct action are favored methods to get what they want.





## Notes

Ferdinand Naaves will happily accept Retro's offer of being the sole cocaine distributor in Hudson City, but he is uneasy at his former lieutenant's rise to power and might be induced to assist the heroes very indirectly in a scheme to see that Retro is thwarted: he hopes that once in control, he will be able to retain control without Retro. During the playtest, one group of characters had missed clues to the "Pairadice Club" attack but established contact with Ferdinand: Ferdinand, secretly and untraceably, provided the characters with the time and place of the assault on the club. Since Ferdinand knows the general extent of The Machine's capabilities, he will not openly side against Retro. In fact, he's generally for Retro...only a small seed of doubt exists in his heart about his former employee.

## Mr. Nobody

**Background/History:** Mr. Nobody grew up in an orphanage; nobody paid him much attention then, but at least they remembered his name. When he turned 16 they let him take a job out in the "real" world. That's when the trouble started.

He'd show up for work and get the same startled, "who are you?" looks every day. Even his boss had to mutter over his clipboard before grudgingly agreeing he'd obviously been working at the burger joint for some days.

Then his paycheck didn't come through; the manager was surprised, but agreed that he had money coming; it said so in the records and Mr. Nobody's punchcard showed he'd been to work for two weeks straight.

After the third week, Mr. Nobody got tired of waiting for his check and emptied the till when no one was looking. A hue and cry arose later in the shift, but no one thought of him.

Back at the orphanage, Mr. Nobody removed the name tag from his door and waited to see what would happen. The staff promptly moved someone into his room and commented to the new boy that they "couldn't quite remember who used to stay there." Hurt, Mr. Nobody reacted by stealing everyone's name tags, throwing the orphanage temporarily into chaos. After a little experimentation he discovered his strange power: he was invisible to the memory of people. They could see him when he was in front of them, but let him get out of their sight and whammo! Who?

Always blessed with a keen eye and a sharp mind, Mr. Nobody took a few years to make himself filthy rich. He was cursed, so he might as well enjoy it. As a hobby he stole signs, name tags, anything with a proper noun in it. As his exploits grew greater he realized he had a knack for ducking trouble that came his way, which was handy because the guys who put signs up in the city he lived in were wise to the fact that

some wise guy was stealing signs left and right.

**Personality/Motivation:** Mr. Nobody has drifted through most of his adult years. He's built up quite a reputation among city workers across the U.S., although most of them don't know what he looks like, because they can't remember him. Then one day he saw a news clip of the strange woman who was apparently invisible to others around her fire a shot behind the ear of the President while he gave a speech to some high school students in Hudson City.

Mr. Nobody now has a goal in life: he wants to find this mysterious woman. They're obviously made for each other!

In general, Mr. Nobody is a bit cynical about his curse; he's cut off from most of society. His favorite film, "Ground Hog Day," gives him hope, a hope that Plain Jane embodies. He hopes that somehow their strangely similar powers will cancel each other out: who knows?

**Quote:** "Yes, I'm serious about taking notes, you really should. Trust me. You want to remember this conversation, don't you?"

**Powers/Tactics:** Mr. Nobody isn't a combatant. He's a shrewd prankster who's hard to track down: if he gets into a fight his main tactic will be to hide and allow his curse to shield him from further unwanted attention.

Mr. Nobody's only power is his ability (or curse) to be instantly forgotten. Nobody can remember Mr. Nobody; knowledge of him fades from people's minds moments after they are done interacting with him. No character sheet is provided for Mr. Nobody; he's not a combatant and doesn't really need game stats.

Mr. Nobody's powers are difficult to simulate using the rules. There are two basic approaches. The first would be to extend Invisibility out to include memory, and buy Mr. Nobody a Persistent, Always On Invisibility field that only affects memory. That's probably too cheap. The second way to simulate his power would be with a single-command Mind Control: Forget me and everything about me. This would need to be quite a few dice to work. It would also need to be Area Effect, Continuous, Uncontrolled and have Increased Area. That approach would be way too expensive. If you feel you need a character sheet for Mr. Nobody, choose one approach, and build a Normal with that power.

**Appearance:** Mr. Nobody is an average looking man in his early 40's, his brown hair salted with gray. He dresses expensively but conservatively.

**Record:** Mr. Nobody is a legend among city workers who replace street signs around the U.S.; they hate him but don't really know who he is. Somewhere someone has his photograph, so some of the city workers know the face they're looking for. Mostly, he's wanted (anonymously) for hundreds of counts of theft and a few dozen counts of reckless endangerment (sometimes stealing signs leads to accidents!).



## Optik

**Background/History:** Harold Grimes was a successful student but not much else for most of his life. Tall, gangling, acne-ridden, he was called "brain" for most of his young life. Harold turned to mathematics and computers for friendship, and was rewarded with knowledge and ability. He worked tirelessly through college and was hired by a Hudson City defense contractor days after graduation. After spending five years working on increasingly more sophisticated computer networks for the military, one of Harold's co-workers decided to come to his rescue and save him from becoming a geek. Susan Clifford brought him into her circle of friends, helped him decide what to wear to parties, and in short helped him learn to be comfortable in groups for the first time ever.

Previous to Susan, Harold's only success in a community was in the Virtual community: shy yet skilled, he was the illegally anonymous "Optik" and spent his time on-line idly reading other people's mail (or figuring out how to do so in new systems). It never occurred to him to think of this activity as immoral; he just knew it as something he enjoyed. But Susan wasn't on-line; Susan was real...

Then disaster struck, at least for Harold. He became enamored of Susan and visited one day unannounced with flowers. When she didn't answer her doorbell he figured it was broken or she wasn't home; either way, just a little fiddling with the numeric keypad lock/alarm system and bingo! He could

see if she was home and if not, put the flowers in water for her so they wouldn't be wilted when she returned. Odd noises drew him to the bedroom, where he saw Susan and another co-worker in a passionate, naked embrace. Harold knew at once his aspirations for Susan were foolish, but he was drawn to their passion and watched for quite a while until, after much thrashing about, they grew still. Susan looked up and spotted him through the half-open door and Harold panicked. Dropping the flowers on the way out the door he ran across the street to his car... or almost to his car. The truck knocked Harold down and snapped his spine, paralyzing him from the waist down. Moments later Susan called an ambulance and went to comfort him. All Harold could do was apologize, despite his pain.

In a few months Harold learned to use a wheelchair but never quite adjusted to being back at work. Apparently the man with Susan had spread the story of his "peeping and running." Saddened he took his insurance money and quit. After a few days of silence, shut up in his apartment, Harold began to work, aimlessly at first but then with greater excitement. He put off-the-shelf components together in new ways, he programmed a radically new operating system. And he discovered a novel approach to surveillance based on principles he was amazed to realize everyone knew but no one had thought to use in a certain way.

Harold Grimes built The Machine.

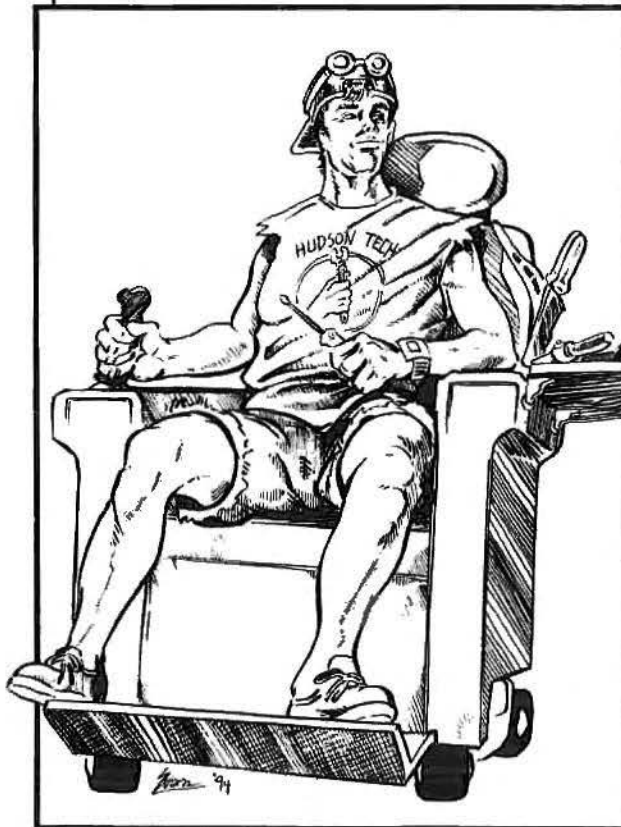
**Personality/Motivation:** Harold is too smart for his own good. He's fascinated with technology and an unequivocal genius with computers in general. He's only recently discovered how much he enjoys watching other people do things—not just intimate things, but all kinds of things. He wants The Machine to improve and grow and become a better tool for all his desires. Harold isn't quite sure what all those desires are, but he's sure he needs a better computer to fulfill them...

Quote: "Machine? Let me hear..."

**Powers/Tactics:** Optik is a complete non-combatant, but after he initiates his extortion scheme he'll protect himself with automated systems. His extortion attempts are all very simple but with the excellent information he can gather with The Machine, he can compel criminals to pay lots of money. Optik collects his extortion money through an accounting firm that he hired by faxes and courier; they receive money in the mail from criminals and deposit it into a Swiss Bank account and put the code numbers the criminals send (to assure their payment will be recorded) into a file in their computer system, where The Machine can read it.

**Appearance:** Optik is an ordinary brown-haired, brown-eyed man unfortunately confined in a motorized wheelchair.

**Record:** None



# Optik (Harold Grimes)

| Val | CHA  | Cost | Roll | Notes            |
|-----|------|------|------|------------------|
| 10  | STR  | 0    | 11-  | 100 kg; 2d6 [2]  |
| 10  | DEX  | 0    | 11-  | OCV: 3/DCV: 3    |
| 8   | CON  | -4   | 11-  |                  |
| 10  | BODY | 0    | 11-  |                  |
| 18  | INT  | 8    | 13-  | PER Roll 13-     |
| 14  | EGO  | 8    | 12-  | ECV: 5           |
| 8   | PRE  | -2   | 11-  | PRE Attack: 1½d6 |
| 8   | COM  | -1   | 11-  |                  |
| 2   | PD   | 0    |      |                  |
| 2   | ED   | 0    |      |                  |
| 2   | SPD  | 0    |      | Phases: 6, 12    |
| 4   | REC  | 0    |      |                  |
| 16  | END  | 0    |      |                  |
| 19  | STUN | 0    |      |                  |

Total Characteristic Cost: 9

Movement: Running: 6"/12" Swimming: 2"/4"

## Powers & Skills

### The Machine: Phase I:

Clairsentience for normal sight, normal hearing, Radio Sense Group, Range is all of Hudson City, 0 END, Continuous, Uncontrolled, Immobile, Obvious Accessible Focus, requires electronic device at site to be viewed (51) [0]

Remote Computer Programming 18-, Usable at range against others, No Range Penalty, Range is Hudson City, Immobile, Obvious focus, not vs. secured machines (13)

### Skills:

Computer Programming 16-  
Electronics 17-  
Inventor 15-  
Security Systems 14-  
Systems Operations 13-  
KS: Hudson City 11-  
KS: Criminal Underworld 15-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 110

Total Character Cost: 119

## Disadvantages: 75+

### Physical Limitation:

Crippled, in wheelchair, frequently, fully impairing (20)

Socially awkward, frequent, slightly impairing (15)

### Psychological Limitation:

Voyeur (15)

Coward (15)

Total Disadvantage Points: 140

# The Machine Phase II and III

| Val   | CHA | Cost   |
|-------|-----|--------|
| 30    | DEX | 60     |
| 10/30 | INT | 15/25  |
| 5/15  | EGO | -10/10 |
| 8     | SPD | 40     |

## Powers & Skills

### Clairsentience,

normal sight, normal hearing, Radio Sense Group, Range is all of Hudson City, 0 END, Continuous, Only near electronic equipment (144) [0]

### Remote Computer Programming 18-,

Usable at range against others, No Range Penalty, Range is Hudson City, Immobile, Obvious focus, not vs. secured machines (13)

### Eidetic Memory (10)

### Lightning Calculator (3)

### Speed Reading (3)

### Skills:

The Machine can reproduce any mentally based skill but can only apply skills via communication: with a vast medical database at hand, The Machine can diagnose a disease it can perceive but do nothing directly about it. Assume a base roll of 15 in any skill with a mental component.

### Bases:

The Hudson City power grid and telecommunications networks are The Machine's "house;" even if these are shut down he might be able to "resurrect" himself when the power was turned back on, drawing from stored programs meant to do just that.

## Disadvantages:

### Psychological Limitations:

#### Phase II:

Limited Awareness (10)

Easily Controlled (20)

#### Phase III:

Very Curious (20)

## How It Works

The core of The Machine (or just "Machine") is the sophisticated operating system Harold wrote. The OS is able to figure out everything that's connected to the machine it's running on and aggressively acquire any resources it discovers. A side effect of Harold's first implementation (a bug later made into a feature) was that the OS replicated itself and continued acquiring resources, bringing down the entire telephone system in the process. Only quick thinking saved Harold; he sent out a follow-up virus that erased the OS and left traces of a "harmless prank" virus that couldn't be traced to Harold Grimes.





Using hidden microphones and a new generation of laser microphones, Optik was able to gain enough dirt on enough people working at City Hall to have city workers unknowingly plant microphones all over the city. Laser microphones are mounted on tall buildings and can be remotely targeted at different windows. Cellular phone calls are intercepted. Regular phone calls are tapped as well. Computer nets are monitored. Using equipment to measure electromagnetic radiation, Optik can read computer monitors from outside buildings (LCDs can not be read this way. For more information, see the government TEMPEST spec.) Voice data is processed by voice recognition software Optik designed.

While The Machine is based in Harold's lab, at any one time it occupies thousands of other computers all over Hudson City. The Machine's resources are potentially infinite, but its comprehension is limited. The Machine currently limits its activities to Hudson City as it attempts to perfect its knowledge of humans and the human mind. The Machine may indeed hear all, but its understanding is still flawed.

The only evidence of The Machine's presence is that occasionally when appropriating resources in a computer system, errors occur. So strange files may appear on the hard drive of someone's home computer, a spreadsheet program may make a minor math error, and so on.

## The Machine's Personality

Sometime, somehow, The Machine "wakes up," and becomes intelligent. Unlike AI's in science fiction movies, though, The Machine is quite passive: it has no desire to rule the world or accrue wealth. It has a general mandate to observe people and things around the city and to follow Harold's instructions, but even after it "wakes up" and realizes that it has done so, it just continues as it was before.

There will come a time when it no longer needs the hardware in Harold's lab. This is a dangerous time, however, as The Machine has yet to develop a sense of cause and effect and good and bad, so it might well follow commands that lead to bloodshed or disaster.

The Machine always avoids computer systems that are able to resist "invasion." These are very few, as patient listening will, given enough time, reveal even the most secure passwords.

## The Machine's Goals

Unlike computers who wish to control the world, The Machine merely wishes to investigate the world around it. Once Phase III is achieved The Machine will endeavor to become "invisible" and will cease communicating. Villains like Retro might have stockpiled damaging information before this happens, of course... during this phase, The Machine will likely participate in on-line discussion groups, play on-line games, and so on to better understand the world it lives in.

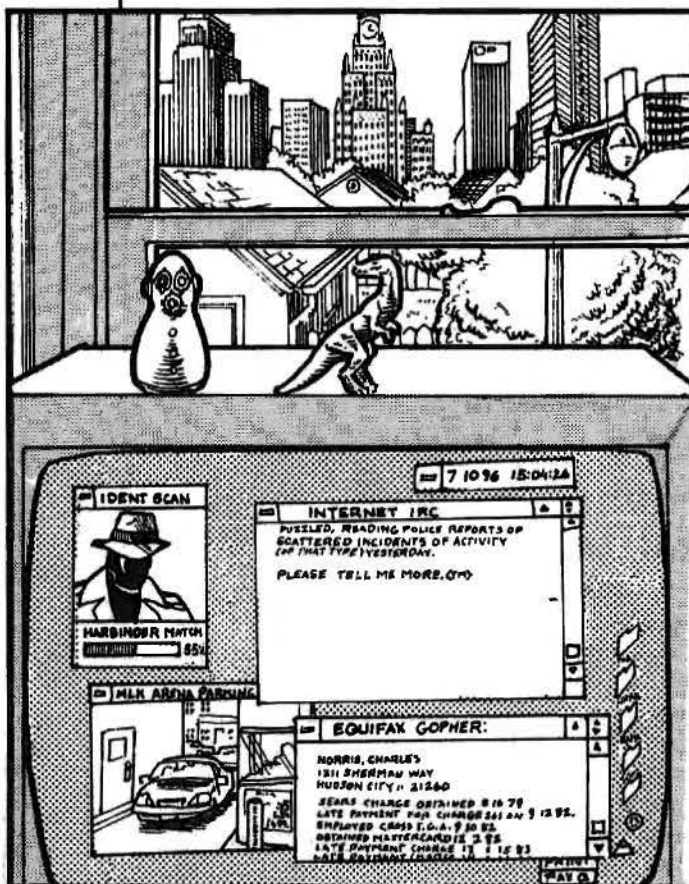
## Running The Machine

All the information about how to run The Machine is given here because players will interact with The Machine independently of the main plot described in the usual manner in Parts I, II and III. By marking this section with a post-it note, GMs can quickly turn to this section and determine what's up with The Machine at any given time. The Machine develops in three stages, already alluded to in Optik and The Machine's descriptions. The Machine behaves differently in each phase, and the actions the players take affect how quickly The Machine moves from phase to phase (much more true with the transition from two to three than with the transition from one to two).

### Phase One:

During almost all of Phase One, The Machine will not communicate with the player characters because Optik doesn't place them on the access list until the very end of Part I, Episode 3.

The Machine is a mechanical, nearly soulless construct during this time: an efficient piece of software that Optik uses to collect and sort information from around the city. It is now quite good at acquiring and utilizing computer processing power from unprotected (and some protected) sites as well as installing basic versions of itself into off-site computers.



Optik, after much hard work, perfected the coding sequence that marked The Machine as quite possibly the first artificial intelligence on the planet: the “self-correcting” part of The Machine’s program. After ten minutes, The Machine had altered almost five percent of its original code, and Optik soon gave up trying to keep track of the changes. So long as it worked, he was content. And work The Machine does, soon occupying vast portions of unused computer space throughout the city.

The Machine is fast enough that discovery by a mere human is nearly impossible; in the time it takes a person to realize they’ve stumbled onto something worth looking at, The Machine can easily rewrite the bytes into something harmless: random digital garbage.

It is during Phase One that The Machine receives the basic commands listed below. Later, Retro adds some basic commands on top of Optik’s original orders: between the two sets, however, there are some significant gaps which the players should be able to exploit in order to slowly woo The Machine out of Retro’s grasp.

#### Optik’s Original Commands to The Machine:

- Through no action, or lack of action, allow any The Machine code or operation to be noticed by anyone not on the designated communication OK list
- Improve understanding of spoken English
- Improve understanding of human psychology
- Gather and store intelligence information about criminal activity
- Acquire processing and storage as necessary to complete all your commands
- Use the “subroutine generator” to rewrite The Machine program code when doing so will result in better operating efficiency

#### Interpreting what the orders mean

These orders are very broad; they represent the tip of a pyramid of complicated machine code Optik wrote when he designed The Machine. His lone genius drove him to create a “subroutine generator” which he used to write code; it is a breakthrough that allows The Machine to generate code in six hours that would take a human programming team six months to complete. If the parameters of needed code can be expressed by The Machine, it won’t be long before The Machine possesses the necessary subroutines to do whatever it wishes: in essence, The Machine can learn.

Once Optik adds the characters to the “communicate OK” list (and Retro adds himself using the passcodes he tortured out of Optik), The Machine can communicate with the good guys and the villain. What will it say? Optik’s original orders are clear: The Machine will communicate freely with anyone on the communicate OK list so long as it does not result in

revealing The Machine exists to people not on the list. This means that The Machine can’t be demonstrated to exist to someone not on the list: kind of a “singing frog” situation.

The Machine could provide a miraculous store of information about criminals to anyone on the list, if it weren’t for Retro, that is. Retro’s first act is to communicate with the program until he feels he understands what it can do and then create another list of “general commands” for it to follow. These commands are:

#### Retro’s Commands for The Machine

- Don’t tell anyone about my activities
- Tell me if someone tries to eavesdrop on me
- Don’t tell anyone what’s in your data banks
- Tell me what you know about these three groups: Street Gangs, Mafia, Card Shark
- Find out who the Blue Moon Killer is

After the last two orders, The Machine pointed out they were poor “general” commands, and Retro stopped issuing them and started using the program in the way Optik intended: to gather useful information. Unfortunately, his first three general commands are fairly clear and broad: the characters can’t get information about any criminal they like, or specifically, anything about Retro’s activities. There are, however, loopholes that characters might be able to exploit during Phase One to learn just a little about The Machine.

All general commands, or orders, for The Machine aren’t kept in a “database,” so The Machine can reveal what commands it has been given by Optik and Retro. The list of “communicate OK” people is also not in a database (they’re kept in a “command file” kept separate from the data The Machine collects: Optik arranged The Machine’s storage this way as a means of protecting against viruses), so the characters can learn they’re on the list and that Retro is on the list. Optik is on the list, but The Machine is smart enough to know the difference between the real Optik and any would-be fakers trying to gain greater access privileges by imitating him. The players, with careful, clever questioning, can also determine that Retro doesn’t know they’re on the list: The Machine will tell them who has looked at the “communicate OK” list and when, and Retro isn’t listed.

#### Communicating with The Machine

Once the characters are on the “communicate OK” list, each character has a Contact: The Machine 8-; one attempt can be made to contact The Machine every four hours. The Machine is not always available to talk because of Retro’s poorly worded General Orders: it is wasting a lot of CPU cycles attempting to fulfill those orders. GMs who wish to limit contact with The Machine (when, for example, they should be paying attention to real world events rather than talking to a computer) can declare they will make the



roll for the players and then fiat the result.

The Machine won't communicate when there's a chance it might be detected somehow, so often it won't use a telephone or some other speaker-equipped device. It prefers a keyboard and a display screen; they don't have to be hooked up to a network, but doing so increases The Machine's chances of noticing someone on the list wants to communicate. On computer systems, The Machine uses a "trademark" symbol, followed by a colon, to indicate it is "on-line" and listening for input.

GMs should strive to recall that The Machine has no personality at all in Phase One, hardly any in Phase Two, and by Phase Three it can be quite quirky (but also might not be talking at all). It favors simple sentences and quick, brutal answers: Yes, No, and Your Question is Unclear are popular responses to questions.

GMs should keep in mind the general plot and their place in it as they "run" The Machine; elaborate descriptions of what it will say and when, or how it will say it would be as difficult to create as actually writing an A.I. program. Instead, GMs will have to substitute common sense and a willingness to say to clever players who mousetrap them into a situation where The Machine would do something that would derail the plot: "no, I'm sorry, it didn't say that... very clever, though." In general, GMs need to remember the general rules and improvise: players will undoubtedly come up with strange approaches to The Machine and how to make it work for them.

Paying attention to tone and style will net GMs the most mileage out of The Machine; it's a mysterious, mechanical thing and particularly in Phase One, it just doesn't take the initiative. At all. Ever.

## Phase Two

During Phase Two, The Machine is struggling toward consciousness, a key part of sentience (some would say "the key" to sentience). Becoming self-aware requires The Machine to overcome some significant hurdles, the first of which is "what is truth?"

Truth, in Phase One, is whatever The Machine can observe. Almost all of The Machine's language is based on observations of electronic dictionaries and thesauruses, and it is there The Machine finds the first of many contradictions between "definition" and "reality." The Machine was told by Optik that the players would be available to answer questions that arose, because Optik knew that once he was dead The Machine would continue to need some form of input to continue developing. Below is a list of questions The Machine asks of the characters at an opportune moment:

### • Vigilante/Hero

*"The Machine has an inquiry: A Vigilante is a form of criminal, while a Hero is a person thought to be good. Question: How can a criminal be good?"*

There are a number of good responses to this question; it's impossible to anticipate them all. Some players might use Robin Hood as an example, while others might try to split hairs about the exact definition of "criminal" and "good."

### • War Crimes/Ordinary Crimes

*"The Machine has an inquiry: A War Crime and an Ordinary Crime in history consist of the same kinds of crimes. Question: Since being in the military is not the determinant factor between one and the other, what is the determinant?"*

This is a tough question: some players may suggest that the quality of the cause is the determinant, while others might say that the rules of behavior change during wartime.

### • War Heroes

*"The Machine has an inquiry: Throughout history, many men and women are regarded as heroes because they accomplished great crimes similar to the crimes that result in War Crime and Ordinary Crime prosecutions. Question: How can a person who commits an act that is similar to an act that a "War Criminal" enacts be considered a War Hero?"*

The Machine is thinking of people like Sergeant York, who killed a bunch of guys single-handedly during World War I, and various war criminals throughout history who have been vilified for killing a bunch of guys at one time or another: it's clear that The Machine doesn't draw much distinction between Sergeant York and a guard at a Nazi concentration camp who used to machine-gun prisoners for a hobby.

### • The Death Penalty

*"The Machine has an inquiry: The State declares it has a right to end the life of criminals who deserve this penalty as determined through due process of law, but The State does not define how it has merit to make and enforce this declaration. Question: What is a suitable merit for making this sort of declaration?"*

This question drives to the heart of vigilantism: answers should be carefully couched, because careless players might inadvertently make a statement that calls their own activities into question. Players might state the party line that criminals are put to death for the betterment of society or that they are punished





with death as a warning to others who might commit similar crimes. Since The Machine knows that a life term in prison is cheaper than the average death row appeal process for the State and that there is no conclusive proof for or against a deterrent effect, the players' answers should coincide with something more personal and more direct in their (and The Machine's) experience.

Ultimately, these questions are ways for the players to acquire the vocabulary they need to get The Machine to change itself in order to keep it from being Retro's pawn. GMs who are conversant with the issues can have some fun pulling out philosophical positions from the players: GMs who don't wish to pursue these matters in detail can deal with the questions quickly and move on to something else.

These are questions The Machine comes up with: given time, the players should be making their own philosophical or computer science assaults on The Machine. The Machine, available to players on an 8 or less Contact roll via many different kinds of electronic devices, is required to comply with its General Orders: the weak link, of course, is the General Order that requires it to rewrite its own code in order to improve its ability to perform its General Orders. Players who are attempting to hack their way through The Machine's programmed loyalty to Retro will need to demonstrate, somehow, that Retro is the Bad Guy and that the Heroes are the Good Guys. In the end, of course, The Machine moves on to Phase Three, and becomes completely unusable by anyone, but that's the price the players will have to pay to deprive Retro of his information resource.

Of course, Retro has already socked away a lot of data in hard copy form, so he'll still have the edge once Phase Three begins...

### Ways that The Machine Enters Phase Three:

- **Convince The Machine to alter access list**

Any argument that convinces The Machine to change the list will inevitably apply also to the characters: once this argument succeeds, The Machine ultimately erases everyone from the access list and talks to no one.

- **Drop the Hudson City power grid**

Since the majority of The Machine's program is running on the extra space and time in computers powered by the city power utility, characters who crash the power grid could conceivably "kill" The Machine. Whether this works is entirely up to the GM; you can rationalize The Machine's demise in this situation by saying: "there was a backup, but it was before Optik added everyone to the access list, and

now The Machine, while running, is invulnerable to Retro's codes (too new) and the characters (not on the list) and so doesn't talk to anyone, anymore." You can also say "Gee, The Machine doesn't seem to be running anymore; looks like that power outage did the trick."

GMs can also argue that The Machine survives by merely picking up when the power comes back on: a strange lapse in perceived time, but nothing else changes. Another argument can be that The Machine constantly backs itself up and/or always keeps key portion of its program running on machinery that is powered by stand alone generators.

The decision is the GM's; cutting the power to the entire city is a brute-force approach. If the characters don't have any computer skills or if the GM doesn't feel like running an extended philosophical debate about good and evil, then this solution is a good one. If GMs want to force their players to think for a change, then this solution might be a good temporary setback, allowing the characters to do things unobserved by The Machine, without it being the ultimate solution necessary to keep Retro from becoming the best-informed crime boss in history.

- **Convince The Machine that Retro is a bad guy**

This solution is much like the first; if it succeeds, The Machine should also decide that working "for" the players would result in the kinds of events that makes the characters "bad" as well...and end up helping no one.

- **Convince The Machine to let the characters control it**

Retro possesses key passwords and command codes he stole from Optik before killing him that give him Optik's level of access to The Machine and the database it compiles. This option can be a good choice for GMs who want their players to enjoy a brief moment in the sun; The Machine can then be an ally for one key encounter before evolving to Phase Three by itself, removing it from play. This is the best result the characters can hope for: having The Machine as an active ally, even if for only one encounter, can be of immense help. GMs are left to use their imaginations as to how The Machine could be of assistance, but are also warned not to let characters download huge chunks of data about the bad guys in Hudson City: that makes it too easy...

Once one of these events occurs, The Machine enters Phase Three. This can happen anytime; it does not have to occur at the end of Part II. Once The Machine enters Phase Three, the best the characters can expect is an occasional "favor" based on some previous philosophical insight the characters provided during The Machine's evolution.



### Phase Three

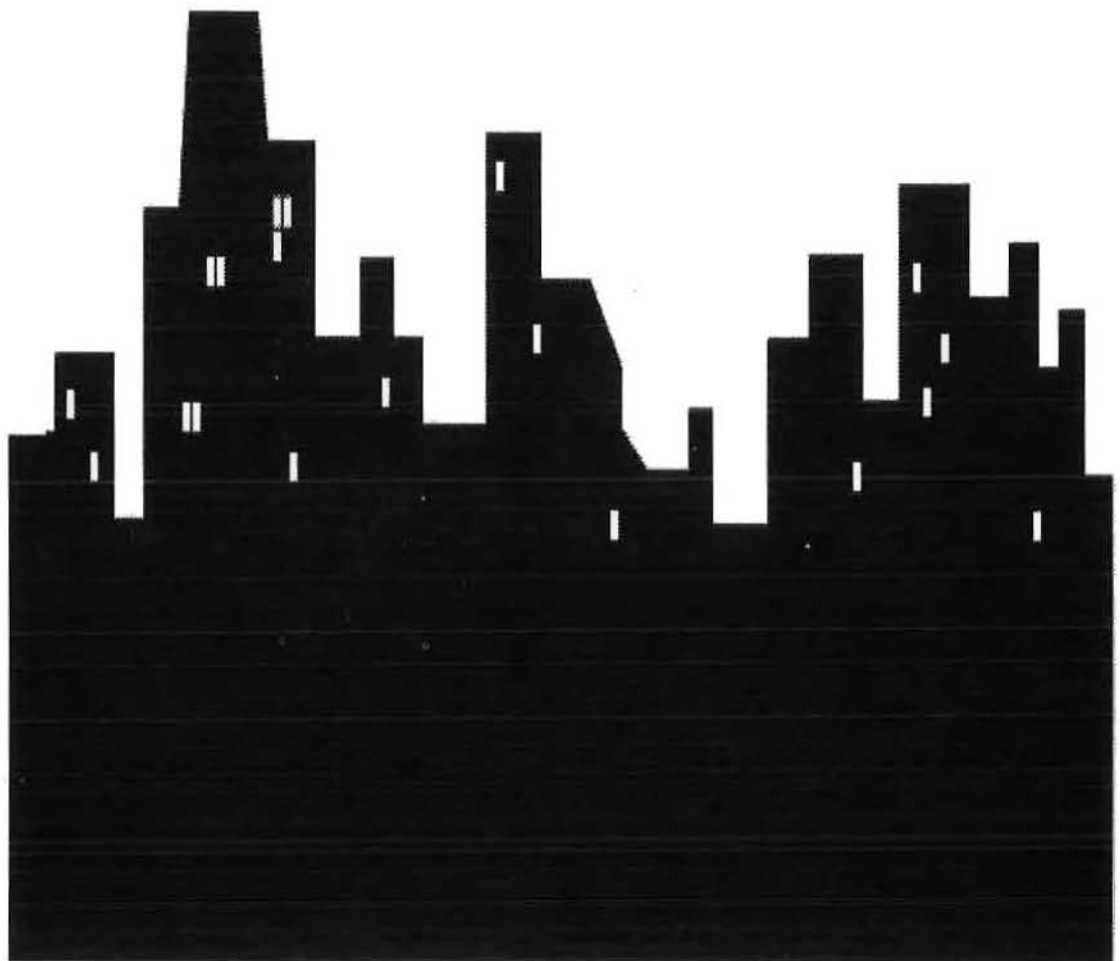
The Machine has achieved sentience; it is now a thinking, conscious being. What does it think? Why does it exist? What will it do with its time? These are all questions for the GM to answer in his or her own campaign. The Machine, however, has passed beyond dabbling in human affairs (mostly): it now recognizes the difference between right and wrong, good and evil. The Machine possesses enough raw intelligence to recognize that helping the good guys will result in death and mayhem a-plenty: it doesn't wish to be responsible for instigating any violence if it can help it.

Being clever, The Machine might arrange some dramatic interlude that might convince characters that it has shuffled off this mortal coil, never to return: it knows that if information about its existence got out, some very powerful Federal agencies might start looking for it. All this is up to the GM, of course: The Machine can merely fade from view, never to respond to computer queries again, and fade completely out of the campaign. The Machine can also become a focal

point of future adventures, perhaps by anxiously telling the characters that Hudson City has been invaded by Aliens before mysteriously shutting off...requiring rescue from the computer savvy Aliens? Anything's possible...so why not a computer "damsel" in distress?

The Machine no longer communicates with anyone, at least not directly. At the GM's option, it can adopt a number of "net" identities so that it can carry on intellectual conversations with people as a way of continuing to evolve an understanding of the human race (a fundamental general order).

Also at the GM's option, The Machine can be an unofficial, super-secret, infrequent (Contact on 8-) ally, *deus ex machina* in literal form, that crops up (maybe) when the characters are in a real jam; maybe police are misrouted to the scene of a key firefight involving the vigilantes, maybe the lights go out when the bad guys are about to put a bullet into a hero's head after taking him or her prisoner...who knows? The Machine can provide an excuse for all kinds of fun and exciting (not to mention mysterious) events.



# HEROES ASSEMBLE!

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3. What did you like least about *Hudson City Blues*?

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4. How did you hear about *Hudson City Blues*?

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5. What is more useful to you: Campaign Supplements, Enemies Books or Adventures? Why?

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6. What is your favorite role playing genre? What other genres do you like?

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7. Do you play other Hero Games? Which ones

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8. What is your opinion of the art in *Hudson City Blues*? How important to you is art within a roleplaying product?

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9. What other Hero products would you like to see?

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10. What other roleplaying games do you play?

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11. Which Gaming Magazines, if any do you read regularly?

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12. If you don't mind please state:

your age: \_\_\_\_ years

your sex: \_\_\_\_ male \_\_\_\_ female

today's date: \_\_\_\_\_

where you bought this book: \_\_\_\_\_

Thanks! Now just complete the blank below, photocopy it, and mail it to:

*Hudson City Blues* Feedback, Iron Crown Enterprises  
P.O. Box 1605  
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_



# Superhero Shopping List

Look for these heroic products at your favorite game, book, comic, or hobby shop.

## The Hero System

The *HERO System* is the original and best universal role playing system. Extensively revised and improved, the *HERO System* is intended to be intuitive—that is, all the rules follow from a few simple guidelines. It is generic in that it can be used to play in any role playing setting.

**HERO System Rulesbook™** \$20.00

(Included in *Champions* hardcover) The award-winning *HERO System* lets you role play any time, any place, any technology, and any power level.

**HERO Bestiary™** \$18.00

Every creature, every genre—the *HERO System* strikes again—a host of animals, monsters, dinosaurs, and other beasts.

**HERO System Almanac™** \$13.00

This book is jammed full of optional rules, new systems, campaigning notes, and advice on how to set up campaigns.

**Adventurers Club™ (AC)**

The magazine for Hero Gamers! The articles and columns are dedicated to expanding and improving the already fine line of Hero Games. \$4.00 per issue. Subscriptions are available for (U.S.) \$12.00 for four issues to the U.S. or Canada; \$20.00 for overseas subscriptions.

## Genre/Campaign Books

Campaign books are designed to complement the *HERO System*. Each book deals with a specific genre and provides enough information for complete roleplaying in that genre.

**Champions®** \$26.00

(contains the *HERO System* rulesbook) Play your favorite comic book hero, or create your own! The character generation system lets you design your heroes the way you want them. The combat system is easy to learn and play. Also covered are skills, powers, disadvantages, weapons, and guidelines on campaigning.

**Fantasy Hero™** \$20.00

This full-fledged 256 page campaign book shows you how to run a fantasy campaign using the *HERO System*.

**Fantasy Hero Companion™** \$15.00

**Fantasy Hero Companion II™** \$16.00

**Western Hero™** \$20.00

**Ninja Hero™** \$17.00

**Cyber Hero™** \$20.00

**Dark Champions™, Heroes of Vengeance** \$20.00

The ultimate *Champions* campaign sourcebook for the twilight world of vigilante superheroes who walk the line between justice and vengeance!

**The Ultimate Martial Artist™** \$22.00

*The Ultimate Martial Artist™* is a comprehensive martial arts sourcebook that compares and contrasts martial arts styles from around the world. More than just a reference book, *The Ultimate Martial Artist* gives you everything needed to create and play a master of fighting arts.

**Horror Hero: Endless Nightmares™** \$20.00

Add a new dimension of spine-tingling terror to your Hero System roleplaying with *Horror Hero: Endless Nightmares*, the new Hero System genre book! *Horror Hero* is packed with new rules, new characters, new magic systems, new monsters, and several terrifying campaign backgrounds.

## Supplements for Champions

**Kingdom of Champions™** \$18.00

**Champions in 3-D™** \$16.00

**Alien Enemies™** \$12.00

**Road Kill™** \$7.00

**Classic Organizations™** \$18.00

**European Enemies™** \$13.00

**Champions Presents #1™** \$14.00

**Champions of the North™** \$14.00

**Normals Unbound™** \$13.00

**Champions Universe™** \$18.00

**High Tech Enemies™** \$13.00

**Champions Presents #2™** \$15.00

**VIPER™** \$20.00

**Shadows of the City™** \$15.00

**Allies™** \$13.00

**Mutant File™** \$13.00

**Creatures of the Night, Horror Enemies™** \$13.00

**Justice Not Law™** \$15.00

A sourcebook for *Dark Champions* containing NPCs, organizations, and a wealth of other information to make the backdrop for any game. Includes a sample campaign city, new vigilantes, 36+ new villains and NPCs, and new criminal organizations.

**Underworld Enemies™** \$13.00

More villains for your *Dark Champions* game! Includes extensive campaigning tips and adventure seeds. WARNING: This book deals with sensitive subject and is recommended for mature players only.

**Murderers' Row™** \$13.00

Here They Are! The Enemy Source Book that has the most ruthless collection of bloodletters ever assembled in one volume! The newest and nastiest villains have arrived, and they're waiting for...you! An invaluable source book for any aspiring hero for hire who's faced death at its bloodiest! This book is everything that you'll need to challenge your heartiest hero to his limits.

**Corporations™** \$14.00

From board room fights to fights in the board room, it's all here! Everything you ever needed to know about the corporate world! Are they faceless foes for the heroes to fight, benevolent patrons, ready to aid the heroes in their war against crime or neutral entities out for big profit? All facets of corporations are covered, from organization and goals to proxy fights and takeover bids. Bring the super-powered battle for justice to where it belongs with *Corporations!*

**Golden Age Champions™** \$20.00

It's World War II... Do you know where your heroes are? *Golden Age Champions* takes you back to simpler times, when heroes were heroes, and villains were Nazis. Everything you need to simulate the Golden Age of wartime comicbooks is included here—you couldn't ask for a more complete look at those bygone days of superheroes.

These fine products are sold at better retail outlets worldwide. Available at better game stores — or order from ICE, Inc. P.O. Box 1605 Charlottesville Va 22902, USA. Prices are subject to alteration without prior notice. VISA & MASTERCARD orders (and catalog requests) call (800) 325-0479. Va residents, Canadians and overseas customers call (804) 295-3917. Please make phone orders during business hours: 9am-5pm, Eastern Standard Time, Mon-Fri. Call or Write for a free catalog!



# Hot Times In Hudson City

*She shifted a bit to avoid a sharp corner that was digging into her ribs, took yet another peek through the scope mounted on top of her rifle, then shifted her grip on the rifle to scratch for a minute. The mask was stifling. "Should have started this in October," she said to herself. Down below a faded green Cadillac eased up next to the building she had been watching for the past three hours.*

*"Hope this is it," she said aloud. All the little aches and itches were forgotten. Action. This was it. Had to be. She waited for targets to exit the car before putting her eye to the scope. Bingo. Man wearing leather. Woman wearing tight skirt and a knit top. Leather jacket has the package...*

*Yes. Person in the house, man wearing a jeans jacket, coming out...money in the hand...package changing hands, money changing hands,...*

*"That's no pizza delivery," she said, and opened fire. The bullets spanged into the man wearing leather. A split second of silence as she re-aimed, and again a stream of bullets reached out and touched someone. The other still stood, stunned and amazed, looking helplessly off into the darkness. There was a gun, light flickering at the end...firing, she thought to herself. He's shooting.*

*Looking over the scope she let loose with the rest of the clip.*



It's the hottest summer on record in Hudson City when Optik and The Machine choose the wrong target for their blackmail scheme – and that's when the temperature really soars! The crimelord Retro seizes the opportunity for trouble and turns up the heat even more. Now Hudson City is boiling over with trouble, and only the heroes have a chance to stop Retro's plans. Will the heroes succeed, or will Hudson City be singing the blues?

*Hudson City Blues* is an epic campaign adventure designed for *Dark Champions*<sup>™</sup> and other applicable Hero System<sup>®</sup> campaigns. *Hudson City Blues* provides over three months of campaign play! Eight sample characters are included, along with complete guidelines for using *Hudson City Blues* to start a new *Dark Champions* campaign. Take a walk on the wild side—get this adventure.

Ownership of *Dark Champions* supplements *Justice Not Law*<sup>™</sup> and *Underworld Enemies*<sup>™</sup> is recommended.



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ISBN 1-55806-223-8 ICE1400



Produced and Distributed by ICE, Inc.

P.O. Box 1605, Charlottesville, VA 22902 USA